



# The Paducah Sun

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**Chris Shaw**, Midtown unit director at the Boys and Girls Club on Oscar Cross Avenue, says goodbye to club members Wednesday after announcing his resignation. The club director, Don Dorris, and club board announced Wednesday that the club will close June 1 to address needed repairs, stating it is unclear when and if the midtown facility will reopen.

## Oscar Cross closing midtown club

**BY LAUREN P. DUNCAN**

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The Oscar Cross Boys & Girls Club of Paducah will be closing the doors to its midtown location on Oscar Cross Avenue indefinitely on June 1.

"It was a tough choice," said Todd Faulkner, the club's board president. "A lot of people see that midtown location as being there for so long. We the board made the best decision possible for the children of the club. It was not an easy

decision."

The club's board unanimously decided to close the midtown facility due to financial constraints and because the midtown building needs "significant repairs at a tremendous cost," according to information from the club.

"It's an older building, there are lots of issues, and we decided for the time being we need to shut it down by June 1 ... and assess from here on out to decide if we want to sink money into that one, or put

money into expanding the Park Avenue location," Faulkner said.

The Oscar Cross Boys & Girls Club of Paducah started in 1953 when the late Oscar Cross began organizing meetings with young men at Washington Street Baptist Church and in the basement of the courthouse where Cross worked. Today, the club serves more than 150 youths on weekdays through its after school and summer pro-

Please see **OSCAR CROSS** | 11A

## Comer raps Heiner over abuse claim

**BY ADAM BEAM**

Associated Press

**LOUISVILLE** — After this week, when gubernatorial candidate James Comer had to defend himself against allegations that he abused a former girlfriend in college, things seemingly couldn't get uglier in this bitterly contentious Republican primary.

Enter Christian Laettner.

The star of the early 1990s Duke basketball teams is a four-letter word in Kentucky after a thrilling East regional final game in the 1992 NCAA Tournament when Laettner stomped on a University of Kentucky player before hitting a buzzer-beating shot to break the hearts of Kentucky fans everywhere.

So when questioning candidate Hal Heiner during a debate Wednesday on "Kentucky Sports Radio" — the most popular sports talk show in the state — Comer was sure to speak in a language Kentucky's Big Blue Nation would understand.

"You are the Christian Laettner of Kentucky politics," Comer said.

It was one of several jabs leveled at Heiner from both Comer and candidate Matt Bevin, an indicator that both candidates see him as their biggest threat for the



Comer



Heiner

Please see **RAPS** | 11A

## Tornadoes hit Oklahoma City and its suburbs

**BY KEN MILLER**

Associated Press

**OKLAHOMA CITY** — A tornado grazed Oklahoma City and its suburbs Wednesday, destroying dozens of homes and prompting schools to hold children in safe rooms. No major injuries were reported.

The Storm Prediction Center had warned that bad weather would come to Tornado Alley. Tornadoes were also spotted in rural parts of Kansas and Nebraska, causing some damage. In Oklahoma, a twister destroyed homes at Bridge Creek and Blanchard, southwest of Oklahoma City, but Wednesday's storms were far weaker than na-

Please see **TORNADOES** | 6A

## 1,000 runners to line up for Iron Mom

**BY LAUREL BLACK**

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About five years ago, Cindy Medford came up with an idea she just couldn't shake.

A self-described "motivated shuffler," Medford had traveled outside Paducah to run several half marathons. Why not create an event closer to home?

"You look at the calendar of May events, and there's this spot around Mother's Day that I just couldn't let go of," she said. "It's perfect for somebody like me who

is ready (to run) a little bit later in the season. And it's a beautiful time to be in Paducah."

The community embraced the idea right away, Medford said, and the Iron Mom Half Marathon has been going strong ever since, drawing more runners and raising more money for charity every year. This Saturday marks the fifth year that runners will lace up to celebrate Mother's Day and to raise funds for Family Service Society, a local crisis resource center.

Race organizers expect to see

close to 1,000 runners from about 13 states at the starting line Saturday morning.

"(The race) gives Paducah exposure and draws people in," said Pam Truitt, executive director of Family Service Society. "When you have people calling to say, 'I'm flying in for this,' that's really exciting, so we want to make sure we're putting on a good race for them."

Truitt said close to 300 volun-

Please see **IRON MOM** | 11A

## Mother wants to take talk of suicide out of shadows

**BY GENEVIEVE POSTLETHWAIT**

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Freda Fairchild's natural reaction to everything is curiosity. She asks questions. Her reaction to her daughter's suicide was no exception.

"It is the most devastating thing that can possibly happen to a mother," Fairchild said. "My reaction was to start researching. How? How come? Why? *What can I do?* I don't have all the answers, I just know

that I'm learning, and one of the things I've learned is that people don't want to talk about it."

But Fairchild does.

Just over a year ago at the age of 47, Fairchild's daughter Cricket Alexander took her own life — a life that had been brilliantly lived.

Cricket, like her mother, was a prolific artist. By the time she was 4 she was using a sewing machine and making her own

Please see **SHADOWS** | 6A



**Freda Fairchild** is surrounded by the work of her late daughter, Cricket Alexander, on Wednesday at Jefferson Street Studios in Paducah. The work is for the exhibition "A Celebration of Cricket Alexander's Life," which is meant to create awareness and guidance to prevent suicide. An opening reception will be held at the studio from 5 to 8 p.m. today.

JOHN PAUL HENRY | The Sun

### NATION

#### CLINTON CHALLENGES BUSH

Hillary Clinton proposes allowing people in the country illegally to gain citizenship, challenging a centerpiece of Republican presidential prospect Jeb Bush.

7A



### REGION

#### PEACE, LOVE MESSAGES IN THE SKY

Over seven days of the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, a skywriter inscribed smiley faces, peace signs, hearts and words like "jazz," "amen" and "transform."

3A

### Forecast

Today



Mostly sunny

11A

### Index

- Agenda ..... 2A
- Ask Annie ..... 6B
- Business..... 10B
- Classifieds... 11B
- Comics ..... 8B
- Crossword..... 8B
- Deaths..... 10A
- Opinion..... 4A
- TV Listings ..... 7B



**SHADOWS**

CONTINUED FROM 1A

dolls, an art she adored and never gave up. She painted and performed and traveled the world, greeting it with gusto.

But she also suffered greatly. She dealt with daily physical pain. She had early arthritis, fibroid tumors and Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease, a condition that wears away at nerve endings and muscles in the limbs.

"I actually knew from almost the moment she was born that she was vulnerable," Fairchild said.

"Oh she cried, and she wanted to move, and the more she could move and do things the calmer she got. She was exuberant, and vivacious, and happy, and one of the most talented, creative people I've ever met. The way I felt about it was, she was traveling on a road, and she was fine. But if she happened to step on a hole beside the road, it was like a black hole, and she could get lost in it."

Fairchild wants to celebrate her daughter's life and art, and she also wants to open a

door into its darker corners, the "black holes." She wants conversations surrounding suicide to exist outside the shadows, out among the living, so that they might prevent deaths like her daughter's.

Tonight from 5 to 8 p.m., Jefferson Street Studios at 1149 Jefferson St. in Paducah will host an opening reception for "A Celebration of Cricket Alexander's Life," an exhibit curated by Fairchild and friends.

For the celebration, the front gallery is filled with Cricket's artwork — her dolls, her paintings, even the remnants of a silk chiffon dress she made and wore — as well as artwork by other artists inspired by Cricket. She was an artist, as well as a muse, especially for Fairchild.

"She was such a natural, she just flowed," Fairchild said.

As for Cricket's work, people often thought it was dark, which Fairchild said annoyed Cricket to no end. But her work had a humor to it too. It was full of contradictions, Fairchild said, as was Cricket.

"Some of her friends say, my God, she must have been

**"Being loved is cool ... But actually loving someone is better. And I loved her so much."**

**Freda Fairchild**  
Mother

a terrific actress, because she always seemed so upbeat and happy," Fairchild said. "And I say yes, she was. She was. As long as she was on that road, you know. Unless she had fallen into a hole."

Fairchild spent Cricket's lifetime learning to recognize her daughter's lows. They were "very, very, very close" — three verys. Even once Cricket was older and living across the globe, she'd always find a few months out of the year to spend with her mother. They would share creative space at Studio Miska on Madison in Paducah. Fairchild knew her daughter just about as well as any one person could know another.

"But there are so many lay-

ers to a person, you can't ever really know someone totally," she said.

Hanging from the ceiling in the center of Jefferson Street Studios is one of Fairchild's pieces, "The Ultimate Gamble." It's a dress with a long train covered in smaller baby dresses and tiny portraits. On the wall behind it hangs a framed photo of Cricket wearing the dress.

"It's like, when you have a child, you don't know what you're going to get," Fairchild said of the dress's inspiration. "You really don't. There's so much that's in our DNA, but then the culture, the time, the things that happen to you, nature, nurture — it's all mixed up. I'm very curious, and I've always been intrigued by what makes us who we are."

In the year since Cricket's death, Fairchild said many people seem afraid to talk to her about it and about suicide in general, as if not talking about it makes it nonexistent. That bothers her.

"It's the 10th leading cause of death in the country, and the leading cause of death for young people," she said. She

knows all of the statistics at this point. She's happy to talk about it, she said. She *wants* to. If talking about it can help even one person, one family avoid the pain of suicide, she'll be happy. For her, talking about it isn't the hard part.

"One of the hardest things for me is I figured out a long time ago that loving someone is one of the most important, best, most joyful things," she said. "Being loved is cool. I like that. But actually loving someone is better. And I loved her so much. It's like, well what do I do with this love now? I thought, I'm just going to send it out there. And I'm not going to say, I loved her. I'm going to say, I *love* her. It doesn't go away."

Following tonight's opening reception from 5 to 8 p.m., the gallery will be open by appointment during the week and from 3 to 6 p.m. this Saturday and next. For questions, or to schedule an appointment, contact Fairchild at 270-519-2341.

Contact Genevieve Postlethwait, a Paducah Sun staff writer, at 270-575-8651.

**TORNADOES**

CONTINUED FROM 1A

ture's worst. There was no widespread destruction.

More storms were possible later in the week.

"People just really need to stay weather aware, have a plan and understand that severe storms are possible across portions of the southern Plains almost daily through Saturday," National Weather Service meteorologist Jonathan Kurtz said.

In Oklahoma on Wednesday, Grady

County Emergency Management Director Dale Thompson said about 10 homes were destroyed in Amber and 25 were destroyed in Bridge Creek.

As the storm moved to the east, forecasters declared a tornado emergency for Moore, where seven schoolchildren were among 24 people killed in a storm two years ago.

Wednesday's storms didn't appear to have been nearly as strong.

Ten to 15 homes were damaged at Roseland, Nebraska, near Grand

**"People just really need to stay weather aware, have a plan and understand that severe storms are possible across portions of the southern Plains almost daily through Saturday."**

**Jonathan Kurtz**  
National Weather Service meteorologist

Island, and between Hardy and Ruskin, near the Kansas line.

At least nine tornadoes were reported in Kansas, the strongest of them in the sparsely populated

north-central part of the state. That included a large tornado near the tiny town of Republic just south of the Nebraska state line, where some homes were damaged. In

Harvey County, a tornado destroyed a hog barn and damaged trees, according to the National Weather Service.

At Will Rogers World Airport in Oklahoma City, people were twice evacuated into a tunnel outside the security zone.

Tornado sirens blared across southwestern Oklahoma as a supercell thunderstorm rolled closer to the capital. By rush hour, it was bearing down on Oklahoma City's southern suburbs.

School districts held

their pupils in safe places and the Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management opened its operations center in anticipation of aid requests, though none came in immediately, spokeswoman Keli Cain said.

Officials closed Interstate 44; radar images showed the storm hugging the highway as it approached central Oklahoma. Oklahoma Highway Patrol Capt. Paul Timmons says a tractor-trailer truck overturned on the interstate.

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