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THE REGION

'Threat' keeps students at home

BY LISA FURUS

The overwhelming majority of students stayed away from school Friday at Coral Shores High as police patrolled the Tavernier campus watching for signs of violence after someone left an ominous note scrawled on a table near the school cafeteria.

More than a dozen uniformed deputies patrolled the school's sprawling grounds, watching for anything or anyone suspicious.

Florida deputies also were on campus, but they had few people to watch, said school Principal Al Rother.

Only 137 of Coral Shores' 804 students showed up for classes Friday, the day police and school officials feared a presumed threat might be carried out.

The scrawled message, discovered Thursday by an assistant principal, said "If you hate you going to (blank space) so will your friends (5-16-01, 12:45h)."

Police still don't know who wrote the profane comment and plan to continue their investigation, said Monroe County Sheriff's Office spokeswoman Becky Herms.

Although the message wasn't a clear threat, police were alerted by the specific date and time mentioned and feared that the author likely a student, would act violently.

Absent from the mass student absence, Rother said Friday was like any ordinary school day — except at lunch.

There were those of us who never felt the message was explicitly threatening and didn't expect anything to happen, but there was certainly a little nervousness among some people when 12:45 p.m. came around," Rother said.

Rother is now concerned about the possibility of copycat messages that could prompt future missed school days.

Students who obtained a note from a parent stating that they kept their child home Friday because of the threat will receive an excused absence from school.

Gay groups plan pink St. Patrick's parade

ZIONIST PRESS

KEY WEST — Responding to a New York organization's edict prohibiting gay marches in its St. Patrick's Day parade, several gay groups and local business people in the Keys plan their own St. Patrick's procession today.

This year's New York City parade will mark the 11th time that the New York-based Irish Lesbian and Gay Organization has been banned from marching under its own banner. The Ancient Order of Hibernians, the fraternal Roman Catholic group that organizes the parade, has maintained its right to exclude the gay group.

Pink is likely to be the dominant color along Key West's Duval Street where revelers garbed in pink beads and carrying pink umbrellas are expected to participate in a "Gay St. Patrick's Day Parade," according to organizer Jim Gillman. Pink shawarsh, pink beer and even a pink champagne mascot are to be featured.

"Why go to New York to feel unwelcome when you can come to Key West and be welcome?" Gillman asked.

FANCY FOOTWORK ARTISAN PURSUING A SOLE LOVE



Leonard Papan's Watson, aka 'Fuzzy', is owner and operator of Fuzzy's, a cobbler and craftsman's shop in Key West.



MAKING SURE THE SHOE FITS: Leonard Papan's 'Fuzzy' Watson is a cobbler and craftsman's shop in Key West. Papan has been in the business more than three decades ago, and his handmade shoes, an example of which can be seen at top, are highly regarded by shoe aficionados — a term that still is in vogue. He is known as the original cobbler and craftsman's shop, at 320 Catherine St. Watson set up shop on Catherine Street six years ago, and it is from there that he runs his business and practices his craft. At right, Watson uses a deft touch on a pair of leather soles.

Capacity report meeting planned

Impact of land use in Monroe studied

BY LISA FURUS

Monroe County residents and business leaders are being urged to attend a series of public workshops next week that could potentially shape the economic and environmental future of the Keys.

Public meetings scheduled for Key Largo, Islamorada, Marathon and Key West will address the long-awaited Florida Keys Carrying Capacity Study.

The \$6 million project, which is being conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and implemented jointly by the state and federal government, has been commissioned to scientifically analyze the impacts of land development in the Keys and address related community, environment and socio-economic concerns.

The 2½-year study will result in the creation of an Internet-accessible database that local planners and the public can access to help them realize the impact of various development proposals on land-use regulations within the county.

A full draft of the computer model was completed in December, and project officials now are seeking feedback from the public before a final test version is released in June.

Environmentalists say the draft is a good start toward addressing sustainability issues, but contend the preliminary version lacks mention of numerous concerns, such as air pollution,

State officials ordered the carrying capacity study in 1995 after years of haggling with Monroe County over proposed changes to its comprehensive plan.

renewable energy usage and the environmental impacts of cruise ship traffic.

"It's very important that everyone attend these workshops because there is so much in this draft we feel is missing," said Joel Biddle, educational coordinator for Reef Relief. "Before anyone can consider adding to the Key's capacity, we first have to fix the problems that are keeping us from efficiently carrying the number of people we already have."

State officials ordered the carrying capacity study in 1995 after years of haggling with Monroe County over proposed changes to its comprehensive plan, which is used to establish boundaries for development and zoning. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has been charged with the major project because it is considered a part of the effort to restore the Everglades north of the Keys.

Because the state-mandated Rate-of-Growth Ordinance is scheduled to expire within the next two years, organizers expect the carrying capacity study will provide a framework that will replace RGOs which is based on hurricane evacuation corridors.

The capacity study public workshops are as follows: Tuesday, 5:30 p.m., Marathon Government Center; Wednesday, 5:30 p.m., Islamorada Visitors' Bureau; Thursday, 7:30 p.m., Key Largo Public Library; and Thursday, 5:30 p.m., Harvey Government Center, Key West.

Amnesty group criticizes teen's life sentence

PALATKA, Fla. — (AP) — Amnesty International, for the second time in a week, is criticizing a life prison sentence without parole for a Florida teenager — this time over a 15-year-old convicted of strangling his 15-year-old playmate.

Jane Silva was sentenced Thursday to life behind bars for the May 26, 2000, murder of Perry Law Akley. The slaying took place in a rural neighborhood north of Jacksonville, where the boys lived.

"We're opposed to any child being sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole," said Elaine Drakopoulos, a spokeswoman for Amnesty International, in Washington, D.C.

"The Jane Silva case like the Lionel Tate case, is indicative of a growing trend of sentencing children to life imprisonment without parole, and at the moment, Florida seems to be leading the way," she said.

Drakopoulos said Silva's sentence is in violation of international law. "International law exists to protect children from their own governments, when they attempt to steal away their childhood," she said.

Assistant State Attorney Garry Wood said after the sentencing Thursday he believes Silva would kill again if he were ever freed from prison.

Last week, 14-year-old Lionel Tate was ordered in Fort Lauderdale to serve the rest of his life in prison without parole for beating to death a 6-year-old family friend.

Backlash, including a protest from Amnesty International, over that life sentence led to Tate's speedy transfer from an adult prison by Miami to a maximum-security juvenile facility north of Lake Okechobee.

Golfer drowns in water hazard after losing control of cart

FORT MYERS — (AP) — A 71-year-old Illinois woman drowned in a golf course water hazard when the cart she was driving veered off a steep slope into the pond.

Other golfers, including her husband, Maurice, were unable to rescue Margaret Scott in the Thursday accident at The Landings Yacht Club & Tennis Club when the cart sank quickly. Scott, of Park Ridge, Ill., didn't know how to swim.

Lee County Sheriff's Deputy Larry King said that Maurice Scott had just hit a chip shot to the green on the seventh hole when he motioned for his wife to pull the electric cart forward.

Margaret Scott was sitting on the passenger's side and lost control of the cart. "We are not sure how she lost control," said sheriff's Lt. Jim Nygard. "It's very steep along the cart path and the cart sank very quickly."

Six people attempted to rescue her by jumping into the 30-foot-deep water, but the cart had settled at the bottom and they couldn't reach her.

A law enforcement officer at the scene, said Jane Harris, a resident of a condominium at the club, "It is so upsetting, I started to cry when I realized someone had drowned."

Divers were able to pull Scott from the water and they tried to revive her for 30 minutes, but could not.

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