

# Guilty plea ends baby-snatching trial, B3

## Local News

How long should lawmakers' e-mail be saved? B4

**3,333**

The number of crime guns seized in 2007 in Orange County — only 500 fewer weapons than the total seized in all 5 boroughs of New York City, which has 8 times the population.

OrlandoSentinel.com/local

### STOPPING DEADLY SPIRAL

Orlando police are developing a questionnaire for domestic-violence victims that's modeled after one used by Harbor House, which includes questions such as these:

Have you recently separated from or talked about leaving your partner?

Is there a firearm in the house or accessible to your partner?

Do you believe your partner will kill you?

Does your partner control all or most of your daily activities?

Is your partner violently and constantly jealous of you?

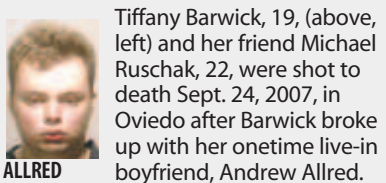
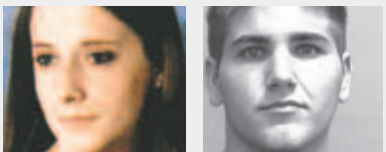
SOURCE: Harbor House

#### When abuse escalates

ANDREW ALLRED CASE



RED HUBER/ORLANDO SENTINEL FILE



Tiffany Barwick, 19, (above, left) and her friend Michael Ruschak, 22, were shot to death Sept. 24, 2007, in Oviedo after Barwick broke up with her onetime live-in boyfriend, Andrew Allred.

By MARK SCHLUBER || SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

Orlando cops will soon carry a new weapon when they respond to domestic-violence calls: a questionnaire designed to predict whether a victim could eventually be killed by an abuser.

It might not sound like much, but experts say the short list of questions represents a radical shift in the way domestic battery is handled — and could cut the city's rising murder rate.

"This is a huge, outside-the-box step for OPD. It's this kind of thinking that saves lives," said Carol Wick, CEO of Harbor House of Central Florida, which runs a shelter, hotline and other services for domestic-violence victims.

Too often, domestic violence spirals into murder, records show. Eight of Orlando's 42 homicides last year were related to domestic violence.

But few of those victims had contact with domestic-violence advocates, who typically wait until their abuse hotline rings or a victim walks in the door looking for help.

That's about to change. In a few weeks, Orlando officers who respond to a domestic-violence call will be required to go over the questionnaire — known as a "threat-assessment checklist" — with victims. It's designed to determine which cases are similar to ones that have ended in death. It includes questions such as "Is there a firearm in the house?" and "Has your partner been stalking, following or watching you?"

A Harbor House advocate will check the questionnaires and contact individuals whose scores are high enough that experts think they are in grave danger.

PLEASE SEE VIOLENCE, B5

#### State budget crisis

## Schools brace for another big hit

By DAVE WEBER  
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

Still reeling from a series of staggering budget cuts, Florida public schools learned Tuesday that they can expect another whack early next month.

Education Commissioner Eric Smith told school-district superintendents to brace for another 2 percent cut in state funding when the Legislature convenes in early March.

And the worst is yet to come, Smith told local school-district heads: Prepare for a 15 percent cut for next school year.

Details on the impact statewide and for local school districts were incomplete late Tuesday but center around a continuing decline in state revenue because of the failing economy.

Bill Vogel, superintendent of Seminole County schools, said the hit for his school system would be \$8.6 million, to be absorbed through the remainder of the current school year. The estimated loss for next school year is \$64 million, Vogel said.

Vogel was at a loss for how he would cover the new cut because so much of the school year has passed and money has been spent.

"We are going to have to go back and look at what our options are," Vogel said.

John Pavelchak, finance director for Seminole schools, told the School Board on Tuesday that state officials anticipate another \$700 million drop in revenue that must quickly be covered with reductions in state spending.

The new cut for Seminole comes on top of a \$9.1 million cut by the Legislature in a special session last month when it reduced education spending statewide by about \$480 million.

If next year's cuts materialize, the Sem-

PLEASE SEE SCHOOLS, B2

#### Orange looks at rezoning, schedule-swap savings, B2

## For now, cash isn't king on new toll road

By DAN TRACY  
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

Greater Orlando's road-building agency has a Valentine's Day gift for motorists: a new stretch of highway opening Saturday near Apopka.

Called the John Land Apopka Expressway, the 3-plus-mile toll road runs east from State Road 429 to Hiwassee Road.

But there's a catch. Forget about paying the \$1 toll in cash. For the next several months, the road will be open only to motorists with SunPass or E-Pass transponders that electronically debit prepaid accounts.

The cash-collections baskets are not ready yet — and won't be until the remaining 2 miles open between April and June.

So what's a vehicle without a transponder to do?

Stay off the road — or expect unpaid-toll notices to arrive in the mail at the end of the month. There won't be any fine attached, at least initially.

"This is a unique situation. We don't want to penalize people who end up on the road accidentally," said Lindsay Hodges, spokeswoman for the Orlando-Orange County

PLEASE SEE HIGHWAY, B5



#### Amber Alert

**Name:** Haleigh Ann-Marie Cummings  
**Race:** White  
**Sex:** Female  
**Age:** 5  
**Height:** 3 feet, 3 inches  
**Weight:** 39 pounds  
**Hair:** Blond  
**Eye:** Brown

## Search is on after 5-year-old vanishes

By HELEN ECKINGER || SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

About 10 p.m. Monday, the girlfriend of Haleigh Cummings' father put 5-year-old Haleigh to bed. Sometime during the next few hours the child from Putnam County vanished.

Authorities launched a massive search for Haleigh in this rural county about 80 miles north of Orlando but had found no trace of the little girl by Tuesday evening.

Ronald Cummings was working Monday night, and his girlfriend, Misty Croslin, woke up and realized Haleigh was missing just before he returned home about 3:30 a.m., according to Lt. Johnny Greenwood of the Putnam County Sheriff's Office.

Croslin alerted authorities while Ronald Cummings began to search for his daughter.

He was soon joined by officers from multiple law-enforcement agencies with bloodhounds and helicopters.

The double-wide trailer on Green Lane where Haleigh lived with her father, Croslin and a 2-year-old brother showed no sign of forced entry, according to Lt. Johnny Greenwood of the Putnam County Sheriff's Office.

PLEASE SEE GIRL, B5



## Deltona fired me in flap over slur, consultant says

By SATTA SARMAH  
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

DELTONA — The president of an Orlando consulting firm says Deltona unfairly terminated her contract because she refused to sign a hold-harmless agreement about an anti-Semitic remark she alleges the city manager made.

Biddle & Associates President Mary Biddle said that Deltona City Manager Faith Miller made the anti-Semitic remark during a November meeting with city officials to discuss payment and contract issues.

Biddle's company was hired by Deltona in September to audit vendors and make sure the city wasn't being overbilled for services.

When the company suggested at the meeting that the city contact its vendors to discuss reducing costs, Biddle says Miller used an ethnically offensive phrase to refer to the negotiations.

Biddle said she and the company's vice president, Jay Goldberg, who is Jewish, walked out of the meeting, also attended by Deltona Mayor Dennis Mulder and City Attorney George Trovato.

Miller and Mulder did not return phone calls or e-mails Tuesday.

Goldberg said there was no mistaking the comment.

"There is absolutely zero embellishment here. It was almost glib, and the room went

PLEASE SEE DELTONA, B4