

# AN OLYMPIC CHALLENGE

Many hope landing Games will lead to mass-transit improvements



# A boot camp for parents

'Supernanny' gives Plainfield couple marching orders



# Chicago Tribune

FINAL

50¢ City & Suburbs; \$1.00 Elsewhere

MONDAY, MARCH 12, 2007

★ ★

CHICAGOLAND

160TH YEAR — NO. 71 © CHICAGO TRIBUNE



**THE REGION'S BEST NCAA COVERAGE**  
The brackets, the matchups and more. **SPECIAL SECTION**

## Cinderellas raise bar on midlevel programs

Success in NAAs adds pressure to win, can cost coaches jobs

By David Haugh  
Tribune staff reporter

Ask George Mason basketball coach Jim Larranaga about the far-reaching implications of the Patriots' improbable NCAA tournament Final Four appearance in 2006, and his favorite example involves a female fan who followed the team all the way to the altar.

The grateful woman related to Larranaga that she met her future husband at a George Mason tournament party and that the couple became closer with each of the team's four bracket-busting victories last March.

"When you realize how our winning in the tournament can have that kind of effect on people's lives, how do you quantify that?" Larranaga said.

Indeed, the NCAA tournament holds even the most casual sports fan in thrall for the duration of its three-week run, and success in or mere entry into "March Madness" can produce bliss for everyone associated with so-called midmajor college basketball programs such as George Mason.

This season's pairings were announced Sunday, and the resulting buzz can be a significant boon to universities that value the prestige as much as any profit.

But for as much fun as Larranaga had recalling the unexpected benefits such as the marriage he unwittingly nudged along, he also acknowledged contributing to the rising divorce rate between athletic directors and head coaches.

Little Valparaiso of the Mid-Continent Conference and slightly larger Gonzaga of the West Coast Conference gave Cinderella a modern-day makeover in the late 1990s, but George Mason's deep tournament run as a No. 11 seed confirmed how much parity in college basketball has increased even since then. Consequently, patience has decreased among midmajor athletic directors who have re-

PLEASE SEE NCAA, PAGE 17

In Texas, a white teenager burns down her family's home and receives probation. A black one shoves a hall monitor and gets 7 years in prison. The state NAACP calls it 'a signal to black folks.'



Shaquanda Cotton, 15, will spend up to 7 years at the Ron Jackson State Juvenile Correctional Complex in Brownwood, Texas, after shoving a hall monitor at Paris High School.

## To some in Paris, sinister past is back

By Howard Witt  
Tribune senior correspondent

PARIS, Texas — The public fairgrounds in this small east Texas town look ordinary enough, like so many other well-worn county fair sites across the nation. Unless you know the history of the place.

There are no plaques or markers to denote it, but several of the most notorious public lynchings of black Americans in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries were staged at the Paris Fairgrounds, where thousands of white spectators would gather to watch and cheer as black men were dragged onto a scaffold, scalded with hot irons and finally burned to death or hanged.

Brenda Cherry, a local civil rights activist, can see the fairgrounds from the front yard of her modest home, in the heart of the "black" side of this starkly segregated town of 26,000. And lately, Cherry says, she's begun to wonder whether the racist legacy of those lynchings is rebounding in a place that calls itself "the best small town in Texas."



"Some of the things that happen here would not happen if we were in Dallas or Houston," Cherry said. "They happen because we are in this closed town. I compare it to 1930s."

There was the 19-year-old white man, convicted last July of criminally negligent homicide for killing a 54-year-old black woman and her 3-year-old grandson with his truck, who was sentenced in Paris to probation and required to send an annual Christmas card to the victims' family.

There are the Paris public schools, which are under investigation by the U.S. Education Department after repeated complaints that administrators discipline black students more frequently, and more harshly, than white students.

And then there is the case that most troubles Cherry and leaders of the Texas NAACP, involving a 14-year-old black freshman, Shaquanda Cotton, who shoved a hall monitor at Paris High School in a dispute over entering

PLEASE SEE PARIS, PAGE 16

## Woman is questioned in fatal fire

Wrigleyville blaze ended the lives of 4 small-town friends

By Jeff Long and Andrew L. Wang  
Tribune staff reporters

Chicago police on Sunday questioned a homeless woman they consider a "person of interest" in setting a Wrigleyville fire that killed four friends and severely injured another, all of whom traced their roots to Belvidere, Ill.

Charges had not been filed late Sunday against the woman, believed to be in her 40s, who police suspect set at least three small fires several hours before the nearby fatal blaze Saturday morning at an apartment building at 3553 N. Fremont St., police spokeswoman Monique Bond said.

"She had a very strong odor of smoke, which also led detectives to believe that she was involved," Bond said. The woman appeared to be mentally unstable and made some self-incriminating statements, Bond added.

Meanwhile, the victims' friends and relatives in Belvidere struggled to accept that their loved ones were gone. The fire killed the apartment's two tenants and two of three friends visiting from the northern Illinois town.

One tenant, Jennifer Carlson, 24, was a single mom who was studying to become a massage therapist while working as a waitress to support her son. Her roommate, Jason Bowers, 23, was a recent college graduate with eyes on a career in investment banking. Friends said they always turned to him for financial advice.

Bowers was the glue that

PLEASE SEE FIRE, PAGE 16

'You wake up coughing black stuff.'

—Chai Wenhong, who lives in Linfen, one of China's most polluted cities



A vendor in Linfen, China, sells coal bricks for home use. Coal has given the inland city wealth—as well as choking pollution.

## In China's toxic air, winds of change

Beijing risks braking boom to cut pollution

By Evan Osnow  
Tribune foreign correspondent

LINFEN, China—Here in one of the world's most polluted cities, where coal dust blackens apples still on the branch, something new is in the air.

It's not the brown smoke chugging out of coke plants and iron smelters day and night. The stranger is talk of an ultimatum.

Three years after China first cited Linfen for the nation's worst air quality, local officials have in recent weeks begun shuttering factories that for

years had fouled the environment with impunity. And more than 100 other plants in the city face a deadline: adopt environmental protection equipment by the end of March or be shut down.

Vows to crack down on polluters are nothing new in China and have brought little improvement. But what makes this case intriguing is that local officials in one of the country's worst-affected cities are closing factories, saying they have been warned that their political careers will hinge on successfully curbing pollution.

"We are under strong pressure" from the central government, said Yang Zhaofeng, depu-

PLEASE SEE CHINA, PAGE 13

## Art lovers bristle over Italy's decision to lend a Leonardo

With the 500-year-old 'Annunciation' headed to Japan, an Italian senator asks: 'Why is this painting traveling so far?'

By Christine Spolar  
Tribune foreign correspondent

FLORENCE, Italy—In a city steeped in Renaissance intrigues, add a modern tale of political and artistic dispute: how and why a masterpiece by Leonardo da Vinci—deemed by many to be an essential draw of the Uffizi Gallery—is being

flown halfway around the world to boost trade with Japan.

Uffizi Director Antonio Natali vowed to stay home Monday to protest the crating and removal of "The Annunciation," a 15th Century work he argued for months was wrongly swept up in a government campaign for business and tourism.

Deep-pocketed donors who

raise private cash for restorations have lamented the deal. Hundreds of Florentines have signed petitions to stop the trip. A senator from Florence—ignored in his monthslong quest for answers from the Culture Ministry and the Italian officials in Tokyo—said last week he'd retaliate with a bit of performance art Monday on mov-

ing day.

"I'm going out and buying a chain to lock myself up near the front door," said Sen. Paolo Amato.

The furor over the "The Annunciation," a stunning, 6-foot-wide depiction by a young Leonardo of the Virgin Mary and

PLEASE SEE ART, PAGE 14

### BUSINESS

Stepping back in time  
Sears mixes nostalgia, modern offerings in store redesign.

Weather: Rain; high 59, low 42  
COMPLETE INDEX, PAGE 2  
Online at [chicagotribune.com](http://chicagotribune.com)



7 49485 00001 2

# PARIS: Parents allege discrimination in Texas town

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

the building before the school day had officially begun.

The youth had no prior arrest record, and the hall monitor—a 58-year-old teacher's aide—was not seriously injured. But Shaquanda was tried in March 2006 in the town's juvenile court, convicted of "assault on a public servant" and sentenced by Lamar County Judge Chuck Superville to prison for up to 7 years, until she turns 21.

Just three months earlier, Superville sentenced a 14-year-old white girl, convicted of arson for burning down her family's house, to probation.

"All Shaquanda did was grab somebody and she will be in jail for 5 or 6 years?" said Gary Bledsoe, an Austin attorney who is president of the state NAACP branch. "It's like they are sending a signal to black folks in Paris that you stay in your place in this community, in the shadows, intimidated."

The Tribune generally does not identify criminal suspects younger than age 17, but is doing so in this case because the girl and her family have chosen to go public with their story.

None of the officials involved in Shaquanda's case, including the local prosecutor, the judge and Paris school district administrators, would agree to speak about their handling of it, citing a court appeal under way.

But the teen's defenders assert that long before the September 2005 shoving incident, Paris school officials targeted Shaquanda for scrutiny because her mother had frequently accused school officials of racism.

## Retaliation alleged

"Shaquanda started getting written up a lot after her mother became involved in a protest march in front of a school," said Sharon Reynerson, an attorney with Lone Star Legal Aid, who has represented Shaquanda during challenges to several of the disciplinary citations she received. "Some of the write-ups weren't fair to her or accurate, so we felt like we had to challenge each one to get the whole story."

Among the write-ups Shaquanda received, according to Reynerson, were citations for wearing a skirt that was an inch too short, pouring too much paint into a cup during an art class and defacing a desk that school officials later conceded bore no signs of damage.

Shaquanda's mother, Creola Cotton, does not dispute that her daughter can behave impulsively and was sometimes guilty of tardiness or speaking out of turn at school—behaviors that she said were manifestations of Shaquanda's attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, for which the teen was taking prescription medication.

Nor does Shaquanda herself deny that she pushed the hall monitor after the teacher's aide refused her permission to enter the school before the morning bell—although Shaquanda maintains that she was supposed to have been allowed to visit the school nurse to take her medication, and that the teacher's aide pushed her first.

But Cherry alleges that Sha-



A corrections officer leads Shaquanda Cotton to her dorm last month. She has tried to harm herself, Shaquanda said, out of depression, desperation and fear.

Tribune photos by Antonio Perez



Creola Cotton visits her daughter, Shaquanda, at the correctional center last month. Supporters say the teen was singled out because her mother frequently accused school officials of racism.



Creola Cotton (center) and Brenda Cherry (left) speak with Paris resident Carolyn King last month about plans for a "unity rally."

quanda's frequent disciplinary write-ups, and the insistence of school officials at her trial that she deserved prison rather than probation for the shoving incidents, fits in a larger pattern of systemic discrimination against black students in the Paris Independent School District.

In the past five years, black parents have filed at least a dozen discrimination complaints against the school district with the federal Education Department, asserting that their children, who constitute 40 percent of the district's nearly 4,000 students, were singled out for excessive discipline.

An attorney for the school district, Dennis Eichelbaum, said the Education Department had determined all of the complaints to be unfounded.

"The [department] has ex-

plained that the school district has not and does not discriminate, that the school district has been a leader and very progressive when it comes to race relations, and that there was no validity to the allegations made by the complainants," Eichelbaum said.

## Not so clear

But the federal investigations of the school district are not so clear-cut, and they are not finished. In one 2004 finding, Education Department officials determined that black students at a Paris middle school were being written up for disciplinary infractions more than twice as often as white students—and eight times as often in one category, "class disruption."

The Education Department asked the U.S. Justice Depart-

ment to try to mediate disputes between black parents and the district, but school officials pulled out of the process last December before it was concluded.

And in April 2006, the Education Department notified Paris school officials that it was opening a new, comprehensive review to determine "whether the district discriminated against African-American students on the basis of race" between 2004 and 2006. Federal officials say that investigation is still in progress.

According to one veteran Paris teacher, who asked not to be named for fear of retribution, such discrimination is widespread.

"There is a philosophy of giving white kids a break and coming down on black kids," said the teacher, who is white.

Not everyone in Paris agrees, however; that blacks are treated unfairly by the city's institutions.

"I've lived here all my life, and I don't see that," said Mary Ann Reed Fisher, one of two black members of the Paris City Council. "My kids went to Paris High School, and they never had one minute of a problem with the school system, the courts or the police."

## A peculiar inmate

Meanwhile, Shaquanda, a first-time offender, remains something of an anomaly inside the Texas Youth Commission prison system, where officials say 95 percent of the 2,500 juveniles in their custody are chronic, serious offenders who already have exhausted county-level programs such as probation and local treatment or detention.

"The Texas Youth Commission is reserved for those youth who are most violent or most habitual," said commission spokesman Tim Savoy. "The whole concept of commitment until your 21st birthday should be recognized as a severe penalty, and that's why it's typically

the last resort of the juvenile system in Texas."

Inside the youth prison in Brownwood where she has been incarcerated for the past 10 months—a prison currently at the center of a state scandal involving a guard who allegedly sexually abused teenage inmates—Shaquanda, who is now 15, says she has not been doing well.

Three times she has tried to injure herself, first by scratching her face, then by cutting her arm. The last time, she said, she copied a method she saw another young inmate try, knotting a sweater around her neck and yanking it tight so she couldn't breathe. The guards noticed her sprawled inside her cell before it was too late.

She tried to harm herself, Shaquanda said, out of depression, desperation and fear of the hardened young thieves, robbers, sex offenders and parole violators all around her whom she must try to avoid each day.

"I get paranoid when I get around some of these girls," Shaquanda said. "Sometimes I feel like I just can't do this no more—that I can't survive this."

hwitt@tribune.com

# FIRE: Victim's son was not home during blaze

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

bound a loose circle of friends from Belvidere together, often inviting them to taste the urban life they loved and stay at the Wrigleyville apartment, family members said.

"He was kind of like the border between country and city," John Bowers said of his brother. "If people got tired here in Belvidere, they could go to the city and see him. And he would come back here to see them when he got tired of the city."

The Cook County medical examiner's office could confirm Sunday only that Carlson died in the fire. The other three victims, all of whom appeared to be in their early 20s, could not immediately be confirmed because the bodies were too badly damaged by fire, and officials needed dental records to positively identify them.

Bowers' family members, however, said Sunday that police have told them that both he



Jason Bowers and Jennifer Carlson were among four friends killed in a fire Saturday in a Wrigleyville apartment.

and Carlson were killed in the fire.

The person of interest was arrested around midnight Saturday near Belmont Avenue and Broadway, Bond said. She matched a description released by police earlier in the day.

Residents of the block where the smaller fires occurred identified the woman as the one they saw setting them, Bond said.

The fatal fire was reported just before 7 a.m. Saturday in a three-story building that sits at Fremont and Addison Streets, authorities said. Carlson, Bowers and the three friends were in the only occupied unit on the third floor, in the rear of the building.

Police said the fire appeared to have started in a stairwell between the second and third floors and spread quickly through the nine-unit structure.

A 20-year-old man in the

apartment opened the front door to the apartment, and fire burst into the unit, according to law-enforcement sources. He ran back into the apartment and tried to climb out a window, then fell to the ground.

He was taken to Advocate Illinois Masonic Medical Center, where he was in stable condition and being treated for a fractured pelvis and wrist, police said Saturday. A hospital spokesman would not release his condition Sunday.

According to David Tyrawa, a friend in Belvidere, the injured man had spent much of Saturday in surgery to help mend his pelvis and was told by the man's parents that he would be set to undergo additional surgery within the next few days.

Carlson's body was found in the north bedroom, sources said, while the body of one male victim was found in the living room and two others were found in another bedroom. Fire Department spokesman Larry Langford said there were multiple smoke detectors in the building, some of which were working, while others were not. It was unclear how many smoke or carbon-monoxide detectors were in the apartment or whether they were working, he said.

Several samples of debris from the scene were sent to a state crime laboratory, and the state fire marshal's office and

the police bomb and arson section were both conducting investigations, officials said. A police source close to the investigation said Saturday that a fire dog with the fire marshal's office found an area where an accelerant may have been used, but Bond could not confirm that.

In Belvidere on Sunday, the mothers of two of the victims declined to speak at length with reporters, both saying their sons had not been officially pronounced dead by the medical examiner's office.

Bowers' family gathered at his mother's home and tried to make sense of his death.

He graduated in 2005 from Southern Illinois University with a degree in business administration. After a stint doing construction work after college, he found a job at a Chicago bank about a year ago and had recently been promoted, his brother said.

"He was just getting his life together and knew what he wanted to do," said his half-brother Joe Zobel. "He wanted to be in the city with the hustle and bustle."

Although he was making new friends in the city, his mother, Kathleen, said he stayed in close touch with his friends from home.

"They would just come to visit" him in Chicago, she said.

"They do that a lot—back and forth, here and there. They'll just go kick up their heels and go run around Chicago."

Bowers ran track in high school and was on a YMCA swim team when he was younger. He enjoyed the outdoors and loved water sports. He also liked to rock-climb and had been on whitewater rafting trips, his family said.

His father, John Harold Bowers, who was in the Army, died of a brain tumor in 1987. The family had lived in North Carolina and Louisiana and was stationed in Germany when he died. Kathleen Bowers moved to Belvidere to be near her husband's family. Her son Greg Zobel died in a truck accident about five years ago.

"My kids aren't supposed to go before me," Kathleen Bowers said, shaking her head slowly at the latest loss.

Friends and family said the lease on the Wrigleyville apartment was set to expire in about a month, and Carlson and Bowers planned to part ways.

He was searching for a new place in the city with another friend; she was set to return to Belvidere soon with her son, Blake, 4, who was staying with a baby-sitter in Itasca the morning of the fire because his mother had to work a late shift the night before.

Carlson was the youngest of

three children and dropped out of Belvidere High School in 2000 during her senior year, though she earned a GED later that year, said her aunt Cheryl Greenlee.

She moved to Chicago two years ago to attend college, her aunt said, and though she loved the city, she was also happy to come back home.

"She was moving back home to start her career," Greenlee said.

On Saturday, family members had feared that Carlson's son had also died in the fire but rejoiced when the baby-sitter brought the boy to the scene that afternoon. A day later, they wondered whether he could understand what happened.

"We just answer his questions specifically and don't give any more details," Greenlee said. "We let him talk when he wants to talk and let him play when he wants to play."

On an already trying day, she said, family members went to the medical examiner's office Sunday to identify Carlson's body. They needed only to see the tattoo of the Celtic cross on her back to know it was her.

"It's been a difficult day today," her aunt said. jjong@tribune.com alwang@tribune.com

# Can't even give 'em away

Blackhawks struggling to bring in fans BUSINESS



## SPORTS FANTASTIC FOUR

Florida vs. UCLA, Ohio St. vs. Georgetown



# Chicago Tribune

FINAL

50¢ City & Suburbs; \$1.00 Elsewhere

SATURDAY, MARCH 31, 2007



CHICAGO

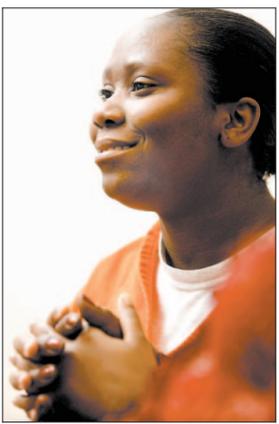
160TH YEAR—NO. 90 © CHICAGO TRIBUNE

### TRIBUNE UPDATE

Teen is first of possibly hundreds to be freed from a scandal-ridden juvenile justice system

## Girl in prison for shove to get released early

By Howard Witt  
Tribune senior correspondent



Tribune photo by Antonio Perez  
**Shaquanda Cotton, 15, learned from her mother on Friday that she would be going home.**

HOUSTON — Shaquanda Cotton, the black teenager in the small east Texas town of Paris whose prison sentence of up to 7 years for shoving a teacher's aide sparked nationwide controversy, will be released Saturday morning, prison officials confirmed on Friday.

Her release, ordered by a special conservator appointed to overhaul the state's scandal-ridden juvenile prison system, is the first of what could be hundreds as a panel of civil rights leaders begins reviewing the sentences of every youth incarcerated by the Texas Youth Commission to weed out those being held arbitrarily.

"We have no confidence in the system that was in place," said Jim Hurley, spokesman for the conservator, Jay Kimbrough. "And this case is an example of what we expect to happen if something wrong has been done to youths being held inside that system."

Cotton, who is 15, had no prior criminal record when she was incarcerated a year ago under an indeterminate sentence that could have lasted until her 21st birthday. Her case rose to national prominence and became the focus of ongoing civil rights protests after a March 12 Tribune story detailed how a 14-year-old white girl convicted of the more serious crime of arson was sentenced to probation by the same judge.

Cotton's case occurred against a backdrop of persistent

allegations of racial discrimination inside the Paris public schools—allegations that are the subject of a continuing probe by the U.S. Department of Education to determine whether black students in the district are disciplined more harshly than whites.

PLEASE SEE RELEASE, PAGE 22

### IN THE WEB EDITION

Read all of Howard Witt's stories about alleged racial discrimination in Paris, Texas, and view photo galleries at [chicagotribune.com/paris](http://chicagotribune.com/paris)

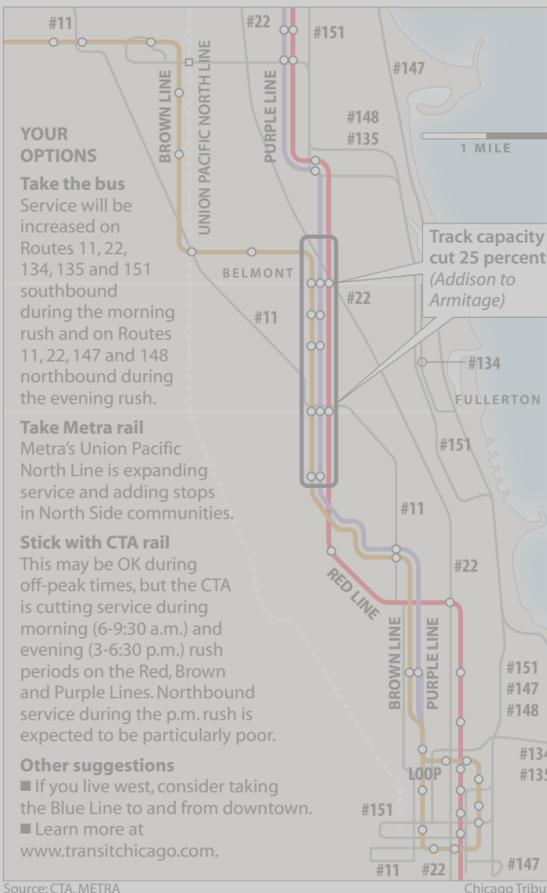


CTA commuters, waiting for trains Friday at the Fullerton station, will see fewer trains and longer commutes beginning Monday. Tribune photo by Alex Garcia

# CTA gives go-ahead for a rail headache

## What to expect starting Monday

o Rapid-transit stations #00 CTA bus routes with expanded service



Source: CTA, METRA

## Work to start Monday will tie up 3 'L' lines

By Jon Hilkevitch  
Tribune transportation reporter

Almost three years of unprecedented service reductions will start as scheduled Monday on the CTA's busiest rail corridor, the transit agency's board decided Friday, despite calls from riders and some aldermen to postpone construction work until better transportation alternatives can be worked out.

"Monday, hell begins," CTA chairwoman Carole Brown said, echoing the sentiments of a transit blogger, after the board voted 6-0 to accept the recommendation of transit agency president Frank Kruesi to implement a 25 percent reduction in track capacity on the North Side corridor served by the Red, Brown and Purple/Evanston Express Lines.

Steep rush-hour service cuts, necessary to accommodate work on the \$530 million Brown Line reconstruction project, will result in already crowded trains being even more packed and will considerably lengthen

travel times, CTA officials said. "People need to expect that this will be an unpleasant experience in their commute," acknowledged Kruesi. But he insisted delaying the project would increase costs.

"We are ready to go," added Richard Winston, the agency's executive vice president for transit operations. Winston said the agency has fixed jamming problems with track switches, and he is confident that many months spent training and testing crews on new procedures will pay off.

But Brown and board member Nicholas Zagotta said they based their yes votes solely on Kruesi's assurances that the CTA has done all it can to prepare and to minimize disruptions for the 185,000 people who use the three rail lines, as well as for thousands of transit users on other rail lines and bus routes who will feel the crunch due to increased ridership.

"What if we're wrong?" Brown asked Kruesi before the

PLEASE SEE CTA, PAGE 22



'Monday, hell begins.'

—CTA chairwoman Carole Brown

## Blagojevich deals on business tax

\$1 billion higher levy would cut property tax

By Ray Long and Rick Pearson  
Tribune staff reporters

SPRINGFIELD—Gov. Rod Blagojevich and Senate President Emil Jones teamed up Friday on a new version of the governor's already controversial plan to place a new levy on businesses by proposing to increase the size of the tax by \$1 billion to provide property-tax relief.

The proposal, the outcome of discussions between the two political allies, would increase the take from Blagojevich's proposed gross receipts tax to \$7 billion annually from the \$6 billion

the governor proposed in March to bolster education funding and enact a broad health-care coverage plan. Extra revenue would come from increasing the tax rate beyond what Blagojevich originally proposed on the revenues that businesses receive.

Unlike a tax on corporate profits, Blagojevich has proposed taxing each time a business takes in revenue. Supporters argue that the tax would more efficiently capture revenue in an economy shifting from manufacturing to services. Opponents contend the tax would unfairly compound at each stage of a product's development, jeopardizing the business climate and increasing

PLEASE SEE TAX, PAGE 6

## Miglin needs financial makeover

Court defeat over failed business venture forces socialite and salon owner to file for bankruptcy

By Ameet Sachdev  
Tribune staff reporter

Cosmetics maven Marilyn Miglin, a regular on Chicago's civic and social scene as well as the Home Shopping Network, has filed for bankruptcy protection from creditors.

Earlier this month, the 68-year-old widow of murdered real estate developer Lee Miglin lost a lawsuit related to a Las Vegas company she invested in that resulted in a preliminary \$16.8 million judgment against

her. The verdict forced her to file for bankruptcy Thursday in Chicago, according to a statement she released Friday.

The Las Vegas company marketed a medical device used to improve the appearance of women's legs. Miglin said in her statement that the bankruptcy filing is a "prudent step to ensure the continued and uninterrupted operations of the companies that bear my name."

Over the last 40 years Miglin



Tribune file photo by Bill Hogan  
**Marilyn Miglin, as seen in 2002, faces a \$16.8 million judgment from a lawsuit.**

## City will close one school, give an overhaul to second

By Stephanie Banchemo and Noreen S. Ahmed-Ullah  
Tribune staff reporters

Chicago Public Schools officials announced Friday that they will close one North Side elementary school and turn over a South Side grade school to a private management company that plans to fill it with highly qualified teachers.

Under the proposal, part of the Renaissance 2010 reform, LeMoyne Elementary School would be shuttered at the end of the school year. The 50 pupils in

the North Side school would transfer to two nearby campuses with better academic records than LeMoyne.

But Harvard Elementary School in the Englewood-West Chatham neighborhood would undergo a complete transformation.

Under the proposal, the district would turn over Harvard—one of the lowest-performing schools in the district—to the Academy of Urban School Leadership. The group would close

PLEASE SEE SCHOOLS, PAGE 6

### INSIDE

#### NATION

FDA names new toxin in pet deaths

Melamine in wheat gluten likely cause of poisonings, agency says. The gluten was also found in one dry food product. PAGE 3

Weather: Rain; high 70, low 53  
Index, Page 2  
Online at [chicagotribune.com](http://chicagotribune.com)





Zach Schultz of Lakeview waits Friday for a Brown Line train. Tribune photo by Alex Garcia

## CTA: Plan is OKd despite pleas for a delay

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

board voted. "Well, then I'll be in very deep doo-doo," answered Kruesi, a longtime adviser to Mayor Richard Daley.

The CTA plans to operate 24 fewer trains during the evening rush and nine fewer trains during the morning rush because one of four tracks will be shut down between Addison Street and Armitage Avenue to make room for crews to install elevators and expand platforms at the Belmont and Fullerton stations.

Critics of the CTA's management of the Brown Line project say the transit agency's advice to its customers is insulting because it focuses on asking riders to alter commuting times and switch to other train lines or to buses. Some called for a halt to the project until traffic studies and City Council hearings are conducted.

"The CTA's alternate transportation plan, consisting of a vague plan for extra buses and a recommendation to find other means of transportation, is no plan at all and simply reflects arrogance and incompetence," Tom Lisy, a board member of the Rogers Park Community Council, told CTA board members before the vote.

But CTA officials insisted riders can help operations go more smoothly by staying off northbound trains leaving downtown between roughly 4:45 and 6 p.m., when the number of passengers

is expected to exceed capacity. The second busiest period is expected to be from 7:30 to 8:30 a.m. for southbound travel, officials said.

Commuters are asked to consider using CTA buses.

Service will be increased on seven CTA bus routes during the morning and evening rushes in the hope that some regular rail commuters will shift to buses, transit officials said.

Forty-two bus routes serve the area affected by the Brown Line project.

But to critics of the plan, inconveniencing commuters for almost three years is unacceptable. Several community activists, aldermen and a Brown Line corridor business owner who testified before the board Friday accused CTA officials of being short-sighted.

Aldermen Joe Moore (49th) and Ricardo Muñoz (22nd) called on the CTA to delay planned construction on the Fullerton and Belmont stations that is prompting the shutdown of one track.

"This three-track operation is off on the wrong track," Moore said in a statement read by an aide at the meeting.

"Rapid transit, it ain't—and it isn't safe transit, either, I fear," Moore added.

[jhilkevitch@tribune.com](mailto:jhilkevitch@tribune.com)

### IN THE WEB EDITION



The Tribune's Jon Hilkevitch provides updates on Brown

Line reconstruction project, and the resulting delays caused by the work at [chicagotribune.com/gettingaround](http://chicagotribune.com/gettingaround)

## RELEASE: Faced up to 7 years, served less than 1

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"When I learned about this case, I thought, this just looks so bad and smells so bad it made me hurt," said state Rep. Harold Dutton, the influential chairman of the Texas Legislature's juvenile justice committee. "I told [prison officials] I wanted her out of there immediately."

The superintendent of the Ron Jackson State Juvenile Correctional Complex in Brownwood, Texas, where Shaquanda Cotton is being held, called the girl's mother, Creola Cotton, Friday afternoon and told her she could come pick up the youth, Creola Cotton said.

But because it is a five-hour drive from Paris to Brownwood, and the weather in the area on Friday was severe, Creola Cotton said she couldn't reach the prison until Saturday morning.

Later Friday, prison officials, who had not told Shaquanda of her impending release, allowed her to call her mother.

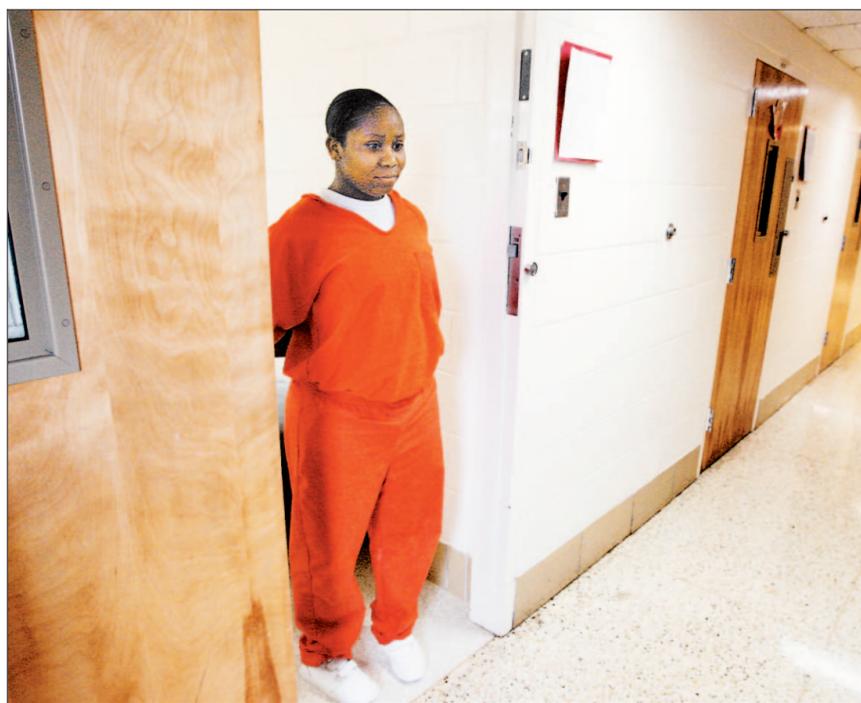
### 'She nearly fell on the floor'

"She thought they were bringing her to the office to tell her I was not going to be able to visit this weekend like I was planning because of the bad weather, so she was already crying," Creola Cotton said. "I said, 'Oh, I'm still gonna come see you tomorrow. But you're going to be coming home with me.' She nearly fell on the floor."

Officials said Shaquanda Cotton was being released on 60 days' probation to allow her to access state health and counseling services. But after that, she would be completely free, they said. Creola Cotton said her daughter would not return to the Paris public schools but would pursue her GED at home.

What effect her release might have on the pending legal appeal of the youth's case was unclear.

Since she has been in prison, Shaquanda Cotton said that she had grown despondent surrounded by other youths who were hardened criminals, and that she had tried to commit suicide. Her sentence, which ulti-



Shaquanda Cotton, shown in February, said she grew despondent and attempted suicide during her imprisonment. Prison officials extended her sentence twice. Tribune photo by Antonio Perez

mately was up to the discretion of prison officials, had twice been extended, first because she would not admit her guilt as required by prison regulations and then because she was found with "contraband" in her cell—an extra pair of socks.

Those sentence extensions drew the attention of Kimbrough, who was confirmed by the state Senate on Thursday as conservator of the youth prison system, which has been rocked by a sex scandal over allegations that guards and administrators coerced inmates for sex.

Kimbrough, a former deputy attorney general, said last week that he was convening a special committee to examine the sentences of all 4,700 youths in Texas juvenile prisons to determine how many might have had their sentences unfairly extended by prison authorities—and that Shaquanda Cotton's was the first case he intended to review.

Prison officials said it was Kimbrough who personally ordered the girl's release on Friday.

Since the Tribune's first account of Shaquanda Cotton's case, her story has been circulated on more than 400 Internet

*'When I learned about this case, I thought, this just looks so bad and smells so bad it made me hurt.'*

—Texas state Rep. Harold Dutton

blogs and featured in newspapers and radio and TV reports across the country. Two protests demanding her release were held in Paris and a third, to be led by Rev. Al Sharpton, was scheduled for Tuesday.

Even before news of her impending release broke Friday, the Lamar County District Attorney's office, which prosecuted her and pressed for her to be sent to prison for up to 7 years, made an abrupt turnaround and said the youth had served enough time and ought to be freed.

### Court discrepancy revealed

"Let her out of TYC," said Allan Hubbard, spokesman for Lamar County District Atty. Gary Young. "Hell, she's done a year for pushing a teacher.

That's too long."

Hubbard also backed away from claims he and Young made this week in numerous media interviews that the judge in the case, Lamar County Judge Chuck Superville, had had no choice but to send the youth to prison because her mother had testified that she would not cooperate with probation officials had the judge sentenced the teen to probation.

On Thursday, Young's official Web site contained this assertion: "This juvenile's mother (Creola Cotton) told the judge she would not comply with conditions of probation."

But a review of the full court transcript shows no such testimony. In fact, Creola Cotton repeatedly answered "yes" when asked in court whether she would comply with any conditions of probation that the judge might impose.

On Friday morning, after an inquiry about this discrepancy by the Tribune, the district attorney's Web site was altered to read: "Through her actions of non-cooperation, Ms. Cotton told the judge she would not comply with conditions of probation."

[hwitt@tribune.com](mailto:hwitt@tribune.com)

ACHIEVE FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE THROUGH REAL ESTATE INVESTING

**\$ GUARANTEED CASH FLOW \$**

### MEET THESE LOCAL PEOPLE AT THE EVENT!



**Adam W**  
"I benefited over \$400,000 in one year! I was able to leave my job and do Real Estate full-time."



**Kelly Y**  
"I thought it was an outrageous lie until I held the \$9,750 check in my hand!"



**Romere S**  
"I made over \$300,000 last year in cash and equity working with the people at American Dream."



**Annah C**  
"Real Estate and education is the way to go. I made over \$100,000 so far this year. If I can do it anybody can."

## OVER 100 HIGH QUALITY INCOME PRODUCING CHICAGOLAND PROPERTIES AT THE EVENT!

1st Come 1st Serve Basis

### WHY THIS IS WORTH YOUR TIME AND WHAT YOU WILL LEARN:

- How to buy income producing property with guaranteed cash flow
- How to cash flow 10k per month or more with none of your own money
- How to create cash flow in 21 days or less
- How to own income property without being a landlord
- How to spend more time managing your portfolio NOT your property
- How to have a true "Turn Key" arm chair Real Estate investment
- How to get approved on the spot to buy today
- How to invest in property using only your high credit score

----- DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU READ, COME SEE FOR YOURSELF -----

DON'T WAIT TO BUY REAL ESTATE... BUY REAL ESTATE AND WAIT!™

AMERICAN DREAM INC.

NO TIME SHARES OR GET RICH QUICK SCHEMES

### REGISTER NOW

**Thursday April 12**  
Marriot O'Hare  
8535 West Higgins Road  
Chicago, IL 60631  
7:30pm

**Saturday April 14**  
Holliday Inn Skokie  
5300 West Touhy Avenue  
Skokie, IL 60077  
10am & 2pm

**Sunday April 15**  
Marriot Schaumburg  
50 North Martingale Road  
Schaumburg, IL 60173  
10am & 2pm

**Monday April 16**  
Marriott Oak Brook  
1401 West 22nd Street  
Oak Brook, IL 60523  
7:30pm

EVENTS LAST ONE HOUR SO BE PROMPT

**\$10 at door  
Veterans FREE**

\*\*Seating for this exclusive event is limited and fills up fast, make your reservation now before sessions are full\*\*

Free Admission for online registration. Bring your confirmation for entrance.

EXPRESS REGISTRATION  
**847-632-9128**

OR  
[americanScashflow.com](http://americanScashflow.com)

**BOTTOM LINE... WE HAVE THE DEALS!**