

'05 FILMS WORTH PAYING FOR

LAWRENCE TOPPMAN PICKS 10 IN E&T



No New Year's plans?

Don't worry. Here are 10 places to ring in 2006 IN E&T

# The Charlotte Observer

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## INSIDE

Business | 1D

### Champagne by the...can?



Filmmaker Francis Ford Coppola has an offer he hopes you won't refuse. He wants Americans to drink his champagne from cans. Sofia, named after the movie-maker's daughter, retails for \$5 a pop or \$20 for four.

Nation | 10A

### Lucky kitty survives a close call

A Montana calico was rescued after being locked in a cage, thrown from a bridge then stranded in an icy puddle of river slush.



Nation | 3A

### Before space travel, consider these tips

The feds released more than 120 pages of proposed rules regulating the future of space tourism.

Sports | 12C

### Bobcats keepsake page inside

Get a souvenir page of Rufus, the Bobcat's mascot



Also in the News

► Seven to Watch: UNCC Vice Chancellor David Dunn | 1B

Coming Saturday

### Return on remodeling

Which home remodeling jobs next year will offer the highest return at resale? At Home

**Sunny**  
High: 56. Low: 38.  
Mild this afternoon. Mostly cloudy with rain overnight. Forecast, 6B.

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## Getting even tougher on drunken driving



JEFF SENER - FILE PHOTO

Hoping to prevent more deaths from drunken driving, police plan numerous sobriety checkpoints like this one in 2004 throughout the Charlotte region on New Year's Eve.

### Police seek reasons, solutions as alcohol-related deaths rise

BY CARRIE LEVINE AND DIANNE WHITACRE  
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It's been a deadly holiday season on Charlotte-area highways.

At least six people have died in alcohol-related wrecks since Thanksgiving, compared with two in 2004 and none in 2003, database searches show.

Police have increased enforcement and training, and arrests for drunken driving have gone up. Still, heading into New Year's Eve, no one knows why the number of fatalities is rising.

"You feel like you get a handle on this and the next thing you know it turns around and sort of bites you, because the number does go up," said Cheryl Jones of MADD, a group that campaigns against drunken driving.

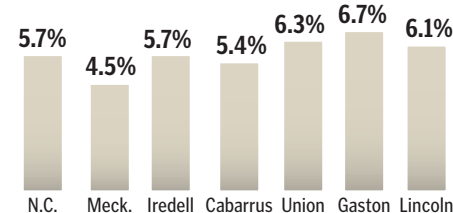
To stop drunken drivers New Year's Eve, police and state troopers in both Carolinas will concentrate

SEE DRUNKEN | 14A

#### Drinking and Driving

The number of alcohol-related crashes varies widely by year, with 82 people killed in the Charlotte area last year, up from 47 in 2003.

#### PERCENT OF CRASHES INVOLVING ALCOHOL IN NORTH CAROLINA 2000-03



SOURCES: S.C. Department of Public Safety, N.C. Department of Transportation

#### Alcohol Facts

■ Beer: 80 percent of drivers whose blood alcohol content was 0.05% or higher had been drinking beer. Drivers are legally intoxicated at 0.08%.

■ Men: Male drivers were four times as likely to be legally intoxicated as females, 2.5% compared with 0.6%.

■ Fatal crashes involving alcohol are three times more common in rural areas than cities.

SOURCE: 1995 survey, Highway Safety Research Center

#### ALCOHOL-RELATED VEHICLE DEATHS

	'00	'01	'02	'03	'04
Mecklenburg	26	11	20	14	27
Cabarrus	3	3	9	2	2
Gaston	6	7	8	7	9
Iredell	5	8	4	4	7
Lincoln	2	4	3	3	1
Union	6	7	5	3	6
York	5	8	7	1	19
Lancaster	3	4	10	10	5
Chester	3	2	5	3	6
Total	59	54	71	47	82

JASON WHITLEY - STAFF

NEWS YOU CAN USE | Ways to ensure a safe start to 2006. 14A

## MEINEKE CAR CARE BOWL

### Sales slow for Pack and ... who?

Things you ought to know about Charlotte's fourth college football bowl game: The Meineke Car Care Bowl pits the N.C. State Wolfpack against the South Florida Bulls at 11 a.m. Saturday (ESPN2) at Bank of America Stadium.

#### Why aren't N.C. State fans buying out Bank of America Stadium?

UNC fans bought more than 60,000 tickets when the Tar Heels played in last year's game, which drew more than 73,000. Total ticket sales this year just broke 50,000.

The reasons Pack grads gave:  
■ While N.C. State has more students than UNC, it does not have as many alumni. (Wolfpack grads are outnumbered 2 to 1 in Mecklenburg, for instance.) Half of State's 141,000 grads left the Raleigh campus since 1984.  
■ Many fans made post-Christmas vacation plans after the team started the season 2-4.  
■ A small bout of bowl fatigue. This is the Pack's fifth bowl in six years; UNC has made two in the same time.

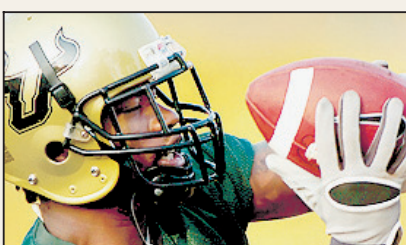
"I wouldn't say we're fickle," said Randy Ham, associate executive director of the N.C. State Alumni Association. "But fans deemed the season a disappointment. ... Fans like to go to other cities. Nothing against Charlotte, but (bowl) games are usually in Florida."

#### Bowl Hoopla Today?

Just look along South Tryon Street. Fans can walk through an all-day street festival between Second and Fourth streets. Live music starts at 3 p.m.

The big event is the 5 p.m. pep rally at Third and Tryon streets, featuring the coaches, players, marching bands and cheerleaders.

There's also a special guest: George Foreman - former heavyweight boxing champion, countertop grill salesman and Meineke's national mouthpiece.



#### Bowl Coverage

SPORTS | USF's Darren Haliburton (above) to face brother in game. 1C

BUSINESS | For main sponsor, name of this game is exposure. 1D

#### Who are these guys the Wolfpack is playing?

Meet the University of South Florida: Its football team is relatively new, its student population is big and it's not exactly in South Florida.

The Tampa-based school will celebrate its 50th anniversary next year, making it 69 years younger than N.C. State. But it's much larger, with 43,000 students to State's 30,000.

Why haven't you heard much about USF? The football program is just in its ninth year, and graduates haven't exactly flocked here. About 1,700 of its alumni live in the Carolinas. (N.C. State has 6,400 alums in Mecklenburg alone.)

And what's with the name? Most of us think of South Florida as Miami, Fort Lauderdale and the Keys. Certainly not Tampa, a four-hour drive from South Beach.

When USF was founded, it was the state's southernmost public university, school spokeswoman Michelle Carlyon said.—ANDREW SHAIN, RICHARD RUBIN AND RON GREEN JR.

## Katrina affected elderly the most

### Analysis: Assumptions on victims were incorrect

BY JOHN SIMERMAN, DWIGHT OTT AND TED MELLNIK  
Knight Ridder

NEW ORLEANS — Four months after Hurricane Katrina, analyses of data suggest that some widely reported assumptions about the storm's victims were incorrect.

For example, a comparison of locations where 874 bodies were recovered and U.S. census tract data indicates that the victims weren't disproportionately poor. Another database of 486 Katrina victims from Orleans and St. Bernard parishes, compiled by Knight Ridder, suggests they also weren't disproportionately African American.

Both sets of data are incomplete; Louisiana state officials have released no comprehensive list of the dead. Still, they provide the most comprehensive information available to date about who paid the ultimate price in the storm.

The one group that was disproportionately affected by the storm appears to have been older adults. People 60 and older account for only about 15 percent of the population in the New Orleans area, but the Knight Ridder database found that 74 percent of the dead were 60 or older. Nearly half were older than 75. Many of those were at nursing

SEE KATRINA | 6A

#### Breakdown of Victims

**1,100** Approximate number of people killed in Louisiana during Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath.

**874** Number of bodies recovered from Orleans and St. Bernard parishes.

**62** Percentage of African American victims in Orleans Parish.

**92** Percentage of white victims in St. Bernard Parish.

**74** Percentage of victims age 60 and older.

— KNIGHT RIDDER

## HE DIDN'T TELL PARENTS

### Fla. teen risks life on a solo journey to Iraq

BY JASON STRAZIUSO  
Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Maybe it was the time the taxi dumped him at the Iraq-Kuwait border, leaving him alone in the middle of the desert. Or when he drew a crowd at a Baghdad food stand after using an Arabic phrase book to order.

At some point, Farris Hassan, a 16-year-old from Florida, realized that traveling to Iraq by himself was not the safest thing he could have done with his Christmas vacation.

And he didn't even tell his parents.

Hassan's dangerous adventure winds down with the 101st Airborne delivering the Fort Lauderdale teen to the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, which had been on the lookout for him and promises to see him back to the United States this weekend.

SEE JOURNEY | 4A

#### More Inside

**4A** | Iraqi government says Kurdish troops follow its orders, not regional leaders.



Farris Hassan, 16, a Florida high school student, traveled on his own to Iraq.

PETER DEJONG - ASSOCIATED PRESS PHOTO

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