



newsLetter

A compilation of newsTicker 2 articles
with Exercises

May 2006

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2006-05-01

EARTH DAY

Bush promotes alternative cars

President George W. Bush marked Earth Day by promoting technology that could reduce US dependence on oil, while Democrats used a spike in gasoline prices to slam White House energy policy.

With oil prices hitting a record high this week and gas at the pump topping 3 dollars a gallon in some places, Bush said he knew Americans were suffering and predicted a „tough“ summer driving season.



US President George Bush boards Air Force One

When the price of gasoline goes up ... it's a serious problem „we've got to do something about," he said. „We're watching very carefully to make sure people are being treated fairly."

Democrats, hoping to take control of the U.S. Congress in November elections, have seized on the issue to make a populist argument against big oil companies and Republicans' ties to them. Bush, a former Texas oilman, has called for the United States to kick its „addiction“ to oil, but there is little he can do to bring the cost of gas down in the short term.

In Sacramento, Bush toured the California Fuel Cell Partnership, a consortium of auto makers, energy companies and government agencies supporting the commercialization of vehicles run on hydrogen fuel cells that would emit no pollution and be more efficient than gas-powered cars.

I strongly believe hydrogen is the fuel of the „future," Bush said, „not a foolish dream."

Activity

Find out more about Earth Day by visiting the website below.

www.earthday.org

1. What goes on during Earth Day? What kinds of events or activities are available?
2. The website has information on global warming. What are some of the direct results of global warming? Name five things you can do to help the situation.
3. How did Earth Day begin? What is its history and who is behind it?

2006-05-02

LETHAL INJECTION

May cause agony

Execution by lethal injection may cause excruciating pain, contradicting its reputation as a humane and thus publicly acceptable way to impose the death penalty, Human Rights Watch said.



Executioners fail to take the steps needed to ensure a painless death and use a drug that veterinarians have deemed too cruel for putting down dogs and cats, the group said in a report.

Undated photograph shows death chamber at Central Prison in Raleigh North Carolina

However, a leading death penalty proponent dismissed the report as „blind speculation,“ saying there was no evidence of someone being conscious and in agony during lethal injection.

Human Rights Watch, which opposes the death penalty in all cases, issued the report amid increased scrutiny of lethal injections across America.

A North Carolina man was executed by lethal injection by officials who, following a judge’s order, used a brain wave monitor to ensure he did not suffer undue pain. In other states such as Florida and California, executions have been delayed while courts consider whether the lethal injections cause agony.

There is mounting evidence that prisoners may have experienced „excruciating pain during their executions. This should not be surprising given that corrections agencies have not taken the steps necessary to ensure a painless execution,“ Human Rights Watch said.

Human Rights Watch does not endorse any alternative method but said it wanted to enforce international human rights laws requiring the least possible suffering.

Activity

Read the article and answer the following questions.

1. How many people in your class are for the death penalty? How many are against it? Give reasons that support your stance.
2. If you had to choose the most humane way for legal execution, what would it be and why?
3. Does it matter whether the prisoner suffers a painful death? Explain.
4. Which philosophy better describes your beliefs, "An eye for an eye" or "Turn the other cheek"? Explain.

2006-05-03

NY GRAFFITI LAW

Violates free speech?

Seven young artists sued New York City over its strict anti-graffiti law, saying it violated their constitutional right to free speech.

The group, backed by fashion designer Marc Ecko, argued in federal court that the city went too far by banning people under 21 from possessing spray paint or broad-tipped markers.



Subway graffiti

Gabriel Taussig, a lawyer for New York City, said the law „strikes a proper constitutional balance between the First Amendment rights (to free speech) and the need to control the long-standing plague of graffiti.“

City Councilman Peter Vallone, who sponsored the law and has sparred with Ecko over the issue, accused the designer of hiding behind free speech rights to promote his video game and brand name. The city says its aggressive police tactics, which combat even minor vandalism to send a message that no law-breaking will be tolerated, have helped dramatically lower crime.

The feud between Ecko and Vallone erupted last year when Ecko launched a video game featuring graffiti art and later got a city permit for a „block party“ that included painting graffiti on mock subway cars. Vallone saw it as a corporate promotion of Ecko’s video game.

The suit names Vallone and Mayor Michael Bloomberg, saying they have „waged a personal war against graffiti art and graffiti artists, fueled by their personal, subjective distaste for the art form.“

Activity

Read the article and complete the activities.

1. Define "graffiti". What distinguishes it from other types of artwork?
2. What do you think...is graffiti just rebellious scribbling or a modern day form of artistic expression. Explain your views.
3. Come up with some rules that protect artists' freedom of expression and the city's need for a clean image. Share your ideas with the class.

2006-05-04

BEACH RIGHTS BATTLE

Seal pups win over kids

If the stench and bacteria from a local seal population at a San Diego seal pupping beach hasn't kept people away, then maybe a rope will.

A school of about 200 harbour seals has won the battle between those who want to protect one of California's top seal-spotting places and those who cherish the „Children's Pool“, a cove built 70 years ago to give tots a safe place to swim.



Harbour seals at La Jolla

The decade-long feud took a new turn last week after San Diego officials roped off a prime stretch of the La Jolla shoreline to keep people from disturbing the harbor seals.

Any move, even a walk across the sand, can spook the skittish animals to flee into the ocean and abandon their newborn babies on the shore, thus violating federal marine mammal protection laws.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration urged the city to act after receiving many complaints that angry residents were harassing the marine mammals during their breeding process.

The council voted last week 7-1 to erect the barrier each year from January 1 through May 1, which is considered to be the end of pupping season.

Activity

Find out more about harbour seals by answering the following questions.

1. What do harbour seals look like? How much do they weigh? What do they eat?
2. What is unique about their gestation period? How is it similar to that of a human? When are the pups usually born?
3. Where can you see harbour seals? What advice do officials give for watching them? What should you do if you find an "abandoned" pup?

2006-05-05

CELEBRITY BIOGRAPHER

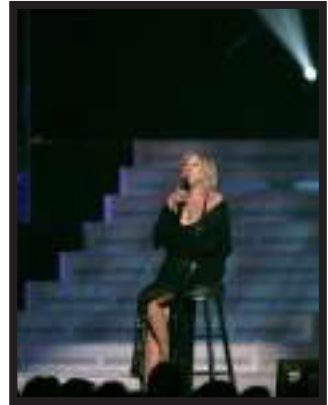
Takes aim at Barbra Streisand

Christopher Anderson, a famed celebrity biography writer has written his latest book titled, „Barbra“.

Anderson has written books on other famous people including, Jack and Jackie, Charles and Diana, Bill and Hillary, Hepburn and Tracy and even George and Laura.

His biography on Streisand includes stories from her school days, old newspaper clips and many juicy tidbits on her personal relationships with Britain's Prince Charles, Dodi al Fayed, Warren Beatty and Richard Gere. It even hints at a relationship with former US president Bill Clinton.

Streisand has not commented directly to the press about the book, but has expressed her anger on her website. „This stereotypic image bears little resemblance to me or anything about me. Maybe it's finally time for an authorized biography,“ she declared.



Barbra Streisand performs during the Andre Agassi Grand Slam

Activity

Read the article and complete the activities.

1. Write a short biography on someone famous that you admire. Include the person's background, achievements, personal hardships, a creative title and a note from the author (you) explaining why this person has made an impact on your life. Share your work with the class and answer any questions about your subject.

2006-05-08

FEMALE ASTRONAUT LEAVES NASA

First woman shuttle commander

Astronaut Eileen Collins, the first woman to command a US space ship, is leaving NASA, the US space agency announced.

Collins, a veteran of four space shuttle missions, said she wants to pursue other interests and spend more time with her family. „I leave the astronaut job with great memories but also great expectations for our country’s future in space,“ Collins said in a written statement.



Astronaut

Collins, 49, was an Air Force test pilot before joining NASA as an astronaut in 1991. She became the first woman shuttle pilot in 1995 and four years later became the first female to command a US space ship.

She has logged over 872 hours in space. Her last mission was as commander of the July 2005 flight of Discovery, the first shuttle mission since the Columbia disaster in 2003. „Eileen is a gifted leader who knows what it takes to get a team through the most difficult of times,“ said astronaut Ken Bowersox, head of NASA’s Flight Crew Operations office.

Collins led the mission last July that NASA hoped would put the manned spaceflight program back on track after the Columbia accident. The agency had planned to resume construction of the International Space Station after that flight, but new fuel tank problems forced managers to ground the fleet.

Foam insulation that fell off the tank during launch of Columbia caused heat shield damage that led to the shuttle’s destruction and the deaths of seven astronauts on February 1, 2003.

Activity

Read the article and answer the following questions.

1. Find out more details about the Columbia disaster. What happened? Describe the situation. What was the problem? Who were the astronauts? How did the world respond?
2. How do think Collins and the other astronauts felt about being the first space shuttle mission after the Columbia mission? What do you imagine they were thinking during take off?
3. What kind of an educational background does it take to become an astronaut? Is a person's physical condition important?

2006-05-09

VENUS WILLIAMS WINS

First victory of 2006

Venus Williams earned her first victory of 2006 when she defeated Urszula Radwanska 6-3 6-3 to reach the second round of the Warsaw Cup.

The seventh-seeded American, who was beaten in the first round of the Australian Open in her only other match this year, had managed just one win since reaching the quarter-finals of the 2005 US Open after suffering elbow and arm injuries.



Venus Williams

The Wimbledon champion could not have asked for a gentler return to the tour, facing a 15-year-old Polish wild card playing her first WTA event. However, she faces a sterner test in the next round against Switzerland's Martina Hingis.

I was really eager and ready to go. It was exciting," Williams told reporters. "All in all I'm happy. You can't ask for too much more.

Basically I strained a ligament in my elbow," Williams said of her injury. "It was a really hard place to heal and it just took time. I really didn't want any more Australian Opens where I wasn't playing at 100 percent with preparation or health."

Williams' greatest challenge came from her lack of match play, and she only occasionally showed glimpses of her best level. Her greater power, though, always gave her the advantage, even though she sometimes lacked accuracy.

Activity

Read the article and complete the following activities.

1. How did Venus and Serena Williams become interested in tennis? How did they learn? Who was their coach?
2. What business enterprises is she involved in?
3. What are some of her greatest accomplishments?
4. Find out five interesting facts about Venus and share them with the class. Check out her website to get some ideas.

2006-05-10

MOUSSAOUI VERDICT IS IN

Life imprisonment

Zacarias Moussaoui, the only person convicted in a US court for the September 11 attacks, should go to prison for life rather than be executed for his role in the hijacking plot, a jury decided.

Federal prosecutors had argued Moussaoui's failure to warn law enforcement officers who detained him about the upcoming attacks made him as guilty as if he had carried them out himself. Not all members of the jury of nine men and three women, who last month found Moussaoui eligible for execution, agreed.

The law requires a unanimous verdict for a sentence of death.



Jury orders life in prison for Moussaoui

The 37-year-old French citizen of Moroccan descent, who was in jail on September 11, 2001, after raising suspicions at a flight school, will soon be formally sentenced. „America you lost!“ Moussaoui shouted as he left the courtroom. He clapped his hands and shouted, „I won!“

The verdict in the complicated case marked a defeat for government prosecutors, who had asked jurors to return the death penalty against Moussaoui, an admitted al Qaeda member who expressed no remorse at trial for the September 11 victims.

The decision was reached after seven days of deliberations and was read by US District Judge Leonie Brinkema at the courthouse in Alexandria, not far from the Pentagon, the site of one of the 2001 attacks.

Last year, Moussaoui pleaded guilty to six counts of conspiracy, three of which could have carried a sentence of death.

Activity

Read the article and answer the following questions.

1. What do you think about the Moussaoui verdict? Do you agree or disagree with it? How would you have voted? Explain.
2. How do you think the American people feel about the ruling? Do you think Moussaoui's imprisonment will give the Sept 11 victims' families some relief? Why or why not?
3. What did Moussaoui mean when he said, "America you lost! I won!"?

2006-05-11

WTC MEMORIAL

NY, NJ to spend millions

New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg said he and the governors of New York and New Jersey had agreed to spend no more than \$500 million on the World Trade Center memorial, called Reflecting Absence.



NY, NJ to spend up to \$500 mln on WTC memorial

The amount is \$300 million less than some projections. The struggle to raise money for the memorial for the nearly 3,000 who died in the September 11 air attacks is just one of the problems that have plagued this effort.

Arguments over its design, security and how much of the 16-acre (6.5-hectare) site where the World Trade Center stood should be preserved have also caused delays. Various relatives of the victims have also clashed over the project.

We have to look at the cost of the memorial in the same „context that we need new police stations, more schools, we need all the other things to make sure that those who died in this tragedy, and their descendants, have a life and an economy going forward,“ Bloomberg told a news conference.

The mayor said other memorials have been built for much less, citing several examples including Washington, D.C.'s new World War II memorial and the Oklahoma City memorial.

The winning memorial design includes reflecting pools and stands of trees, but its cost has risen sharply, partly due to outside factors, including soaring construction costs. So far, about \$450 million has been raised or donated.

Activity

Read the article and complete the activities.

1. Why do you think people want a WTC memorial? What purpose will it serve?
2. If you were in charge of designing the memorial, how would it look? Describe it in detail. What makes your memorial stand out from the rest? What is it called?
3. Share your ideas for the WTC memorial with the class. Take a vote to see whose design is the most popular.

2006-05-12

NEW US MILITARY RECRUITS

Drawn by duty and tuition

The Iraq war has made it tougher to sign up young men and women for the all-volunteer US military, but a group of new recruits said they were drawn by a sense of duty and college tuition benefits.

Coast Guard recruit Joshua Gonzalez, a Miami native nearing his 18th birthday, said he joined the military in part because his career options seemed limited. „Jobs are hard to find in Miami, I can't pay for college.“

Gonzalez was one of 144 recruits sworn into the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force or Coast Guard during a ceremony in a sweltering hangar at the Opa-locka Airport near Miami. Gonzalez said he chose the Coast Guard in part because he wanted to defend his homeland, from its own shores.

His mother, Linda Murray, watched the ceremony and tried not to dwell on the chance that her son could be assigned to a ship on Iraq war duty in the Middle East.

One recruiter said the newest members of the military were aware of the possible dangers. „They know what they're getting into. They watch the news all the time,“ said Navy recruiter Mack Pierce.

While the other branches of the military exceeded their recruiting goals last year, the Army, which provides the bulk of US ground forces in the Iraq war, missed its target by about 9 percent, and lagged slightly behind last year's numbers during the first half of fiscal 2006.



US soldiers search for weapons caches in Baghdad

Activity

Read the article and answer the questions.

1. What are the drawbacks for joining the military? What are the advantages?
2. What is patriotism? Do you consider yourself to be patriotic? Explain.
3. Would you ever consider joining the military? Under what conditions? What specific benefits would you like to receive if you joined the armed forces?
4. Is the military voluntary or mandatory in your country? As a class talk about the pros and cons of both types of militaries.

2006-05-15

NEW TEACHERS

Half quit within 5 years

Jessica Jentis fit the profile of a typical American teacher: she was white, held a masters degree and quit two and a half years after starting her career.

According to a new study from teachers' union the National Education Association, half of new US teachers are likely to quit within the first five years because of poor working conditions and low salaries.



A teacher leads her class in a math lesson

Jentis, now a stay-at-home mother of three, says that she couldn't make enough money teaching in Manhattan to pay for her student loans, and that dealing with school bureaucracy was too difficult.

The kids were wonderful to be with, but the stress „of everything that went with it and the low pay did not make it hard to leave,“ she said.

Only 6 percent of teachers are African-American and 5 percent are Hispanic, Asian or come from other ethnic groups. Men represent barely a quarter of teachers, which the association says is the lowest level in four decades.

Thanks to the high dropout rate of younger teachers, there will be plenty of job openings for teachers over the next 10 years, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Activity

Read the article and complete the following activities.

1. What traits does an exceptional teacher have?
What traits do you admire in your teacher?

2. What is “school bureaucracy” and why is it complicated?

3. What kind of “poor working conditions” do you think teachers have to deal with?

4. As a class, talk about what could be done or changed to convince new teachers to stay in their positions?

2006-05-16

NEW YORK AT RISK

Prepares for hurricanes

A hurricane with only moderate intensity could wreak havoc in New York City because it has been years since the nation's financial center faced severe weather, government forecasters warned.

The first time we get hit here with a „Category 2, it's going to be disastrous,“ said meteorologist Michael Wyllie of the National Weather Service, referring to the scale used to rate hurricane strength. Wyllie said powerful storms have missed New York in recent years, unlike parts of the Gulf Coast, where periodic storms „thin out trees and the buildings.“



Subway train pulls into station in Brooklyn

Gloria, the last big storm to hit the New York area, caused about \$900 million in economic losses along the East Coast in 1985. „It's not like we can all run down to Home Depot and pick up these two-by-fours to board up windows,“ said John Koch, lead forecaster at the NWS forecast office in New York. „What we want people to do is know what they are going to do with their family and their pets.“

Koch urged residents to familiarize themselves with the location of evacuation zones and make plans to have extra dry clothes, medicines, batteries, water and copies of valuable documents.

Wyllie said he expects the hurricane season, which starts June 1 and lasts until November 30, to be similar to last year, which saw an unprecedented 28 storms including Katrina.

Activity

Read the article and complete the following activities.

1. What do you think other cities in the US have learned from the Hurricane Katrina disaster?
2. Work in small groups or pairs. A Category 2 hurricane is forecasted to hit the New York City area and residents have two days to prepare themselves for it. You are in charge of issuing the hurricane warning and the emergency steps to take. What will you advise? Make a list of 10 things people need to do to stay safe. Discuss your list with the rest of the class.

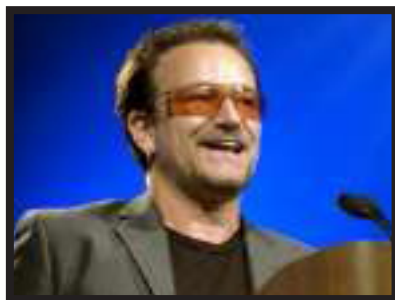
2006-05-17

BONO RETURNS TO AFRICA

Following up on debt relief

Rocker and activist Bono is taking his crusade for Africa on the road.

U2's lead singer will tour Lesotho, Rwanda, Tanzania, Nigeria, Mali and Ghana on a 10-day trip to examine how his successful campaign for debt relief can now help combat poverty and disease, his advocacy group DATA said.



Bono

The tour comes four years after Bono focused the world's attention on Africa's plight when he and then U.S. Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill traveled around the continent to highlight the need for Western governments to increase aid and erase poor countries' debt burdens.

Bono is credited with spearheading the successful campaign to erase the debts of poor countries, with world leaders praising his effort to be a constructive participant in policymaking.

In June the Group of Eight industrialized countries agreed to cancel the debts of 18 low-income countries, most of them in Africa, to free up resources to tackle poverty. The G-8 powers also pledged to double aid to Africa by 2010 to about \$47 billion (25 billion pounds).

Thanks to Bono and O'Neill's campaign, the continent is enjoying its best growth rates in more than 30 years.

Activity

Read the article and complete the activities.

1. What has Bono accomplished in his crusade for Africa? Why does he make a good advocate for the impoverished?
2. Choose one of the countries below and find out more about it. Why is it so poor? What kind of natural resources does it have? What is the government like? Is there presently a war going on?
3. How do you think your chosen country has benefitted from Bono's work?

2006-05-18

JERRY LEWIS RETURNS

Performs in Vegas

Comedian Jerry Lewis is set to return this summer to the Orleans Hotel and Casino for his first live Las Vegas performance since his health took a turn for the worse six years ago, his publicist announced.



Jerry Lewis

Lewis, 80, is booked for a four-night comeback engagement from July 13 to 16 at the Orleans Showroom, where he was a regular fixture before various medical problems sidelined the veteran entertainer, spokeswoman Candi Cazau said in a statement.

His old, 2 1/2-hour stage act featured a combination of singing, comedy, dancing and pratfalls, but Cazau said his new show would likely be somewhat less physically demanding.

Lewis returned home in January 2004 from a three-month hospital stay where he had been admitted to undergo a managed withdrawal from the steroid prednisone, which he had been taking for a chronic lung ailment, pulmonary fibrosis.

Lewis also plans to bring his annual Labor Day telethon for muscular dystrophy back to Las Vegas, hosting this year's show September 3-4 at the South Coast Hotel and Casino, Cazau said.

He also recently taped two episodes as a guest star on „Law and Order: Special Victims Unit“, and in March celebrated his birthday in Paris by receiving his second French Legion of Honor medal.

Activity

Find out more about Jerry Lewis by looking up the following information:

- How did he get started in show business?
- Who did he team up with and what movies did they make together?
- What does Jerry really love?
- What awards has he won?
- Does Jerry have a family?
- What is Jerry's motto?

2006-05-19

BAD POLLS

Laura Bush doesn't believe them

US First lady Laura Bush said she does not believe opinion polls showing her husband's approval ratings at record low levels.

Interviewed on Fox News, Laura Bush said she did not think people were losing confidence in President George W. Bush, despite a series of polls showing support for him at its lowest point in his five-year presidency and among the lowest for any president in the past 50 years.



First lady Laura Bush speaks

I don't really believe those polls. I travel around the country. I see people; I see their responses to my husband. I see their responses to me," she said.

Many recent polls have put Bush's job approval rating below 35 percent. One, the Harris poll, measured his approval at 29 percent, the first time any survey has put his support below the 30 percent mark. Two other polls published last week put his job approval at 31 percent.

In a separate interview on ABC's „This Week,“ Laura Bush said her husband's popularity was suffering because the country had been through a difficult year.

We've had a very, very difficult year, starting with the hurricane last September, but already because of the terrorist attack in 2001 and then the war on terror since then," she said. „He's the one that has to make the hard decisions. And, of course, they don't please everyone.“

Activity

Read the article and answer the following questions.

1. What do people think about President George W. Bush in your country? Is he considered to be a great leader? Do people support his decisions concerning war, the environment and other international relations? Discuss these questions as a class.
2. In your opinion what are the specific reasons for Bush's falling popularity?
3. What could Bush do to raise his popularity? Explain.