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**26 years for UW student in Italy slaying, B3**

**The to-do list**

**See the lights**

The Warm Beach Camp's light display in Stanwood shines brightly from 5 to 10 p.m. today and Sunday at 20800 Marine Drive. Admission is \$8 to \$14. For more holiday sights, see Page F1.



**Have the best of times**

Hear carols and see classics performed at the Dickens Fair from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. today at Cavelero Mid High School, 8220 24th St. SE, Everett. Donate a can of food for admission.

**Check out lacrosse**

Everett's new professional team, the Stealth, holds open practices today. They're at 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. at Comcast Arena. It's free.

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**Paine Field fears dismissed**

Noise, traffic and pollution wouldn't be much worse, key study says

By BILL SHEETS  
 Herald Writer

EVERETT — Commercial air-line service at Paine Field would not significantly increase noise in

surrounding neighborhoods, nor would jet exhaust noticeably pollute the air or traffic clog the roads around the airport, according to a study released Friday.

The 86-page study was con-

ducted by consultants hired by Snohomish County in response to requests from two airlines last year to operate passenger flights from Paine Field. The airport, which primarily serves Boeing opera-

tions and smaller, private aircraft, is owned and operated by the county. Public hearings on the report are planned for early January. Horizon Airlines of Seattle has

said it wants to fly four times a day to Portland, Ore., and twice per day to Spokane, using 75-seat Bombardier Q400 turboprop airplanes on both routes. Allegiant Air of Las Vegas has said it plans to fly twice a week to Las Vegas, using 150-seat MD83 jet aircraft.

See PAINE, Page A4

**Donated safe gives museum a mystery**

Marysville's first mayor once owned the 19th-century safe. Now historians just need someone to crack it.

By GALE FIEGE  
 Herald Writer

MARYSVILLE — Nobody knows the combination anymore or even has a clue what's inside. A safe from the 1880s owned by Marysville's first mayor was donated recently to the Marysville Historical Society.

"I wonder if Everett Community College offers Safe-Cracking 101?" society president Ken Cage said, as he fiddled with the safe's combination lock.

Being able to discover what's inside the 2,500-pound safe would be great, said Autrey Steilling, Cage's historical society colleague. "We should sell \$5 tickets and let people guess," Steilling said. "I would say it's probably full of Confederate money."

Steilling continued his joking by offering to throw a news media party, something like TV reporter Geraldo Rivera's infamous live

See SAFE, Page A4

**See the safe**

The Mark Swinerton safe can be seen at the Marysville Historical Society, 1508-B Third St., from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Saturday. More info: 360-659-3090.

**Charity is in demand**



After standing in line for 12 hours, Nicole Brulet (left), Emily Parsaoran (center) and Sheila Amos eagerly await tickets to Christmas House, a gift distribution for families in need, at the Boys & Girls Club in Everett on Friday.

By ANDY RATHBURN  
 Herald Writer

EVERETT — Emily Parsaoran wasn't sure if she would make it through the door.

She had been sitting outside in a long line for 11 hours, hoping to get into Christmas House.

She knew the charity would serve only 195 families on Friday, its first day open. She was near the sign that reminded her of that.

She also knew dozens of people were in front of her — maybe even 195. She had to take her chances, though. Her husband works at an AM/PM conve-

nience store. She cares for their six children. They needed help this Christmas.

The temperature dropped to 30 degrees overnight. She was cold and surrounded by anxious strangers. She had every reason to be upset. She wasn't.

"It's kind of exciting," she said. "You get to meet new people and stuff, and know they're going through the same thing you're going through."

Christmas House expects to have a record-setting

See CHARITY, Page A4

**Christmas House details**

The charity only offers new toys. For details on donations or on receiving gifts, visit www.christmas-house.org or call 425-338-2273.

**the buzz Crack that safe**

A safe belonging to Marysville's first mayor more than a century ago has been donated to the city's historical society (above). Historical society officials haven't yet opened the vault, as they're waiting for a callback from Geraldo Rivera.

They did, however, knock

down rumors that Colton Harris-Moore is hiding inside the safe.

**And don't puke over the transom:** If you're younger than 30, you need a boater education card in order to skipper your own vessel. A class first thing this morning at West Marine in Everett will get you qualified (Page F1).

The class teaches valuable skills, but The Buzz has always maintained the No. 1 way to boat safely is to leave the beer and

booze on the dock.

**No bad ideas, almost:**

Seeking to overhaul the company's hidebound bureaucracy, the new CEO of General Motors told workers they can feel free to take risks on new ideas without fear of being fired (Page D2).

However, he did say that the guy who came up with Pontiac Aztek has 30 minutes to clean out his desk.

— Mark Carlson, Herald staff

**5 things to know**

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- ▶ Snohomish ditches security cams / B1
- ▶ Cold snap expected next week / B1
- ▶ M's reportedly sign Chone Figgins / C1
- ▶ Surprising jobs data raise hopes / D1

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# Paine: Study downplays noise

From Page A1

The study was prepared based on the number of flights proposed by the airlines, said Peter Camp, who handles land-use issues for Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon.

The county was required to conduct an environmental assessment before the airport's certification can be changed to allow for commercial flights.

Some Snohomish County elected officials have said they oppose commercial air service at Paine Field. Still, federal law obligates any airport operator that receives federal funds to negotiate in good faith to provide space to any airline that expresses an interest in using the airport.

The \$450,000 environmental study was funded by a grant from the Federal Aviation Administration.

For noise, the study uses an average 24-hour decibel level as the gauge. The federal government considers the 65-decibel level the threshold for effects that could require remedies, such as noise insulation programs.

The study concludes that the area where noise would reach an average 65-decibel level would expand by four acres in 2010. That would not extend into nearby neighborhoods.

By 2016, the 65-decibel footprint would grow to 17 acres larger than

today, but still would not "encompass any residences, persons or other noise sensitive land uses or areas," according to the study.

Opponents of commercial air service at the airport say it would damage the quality of life in nearby neighborhoods with noise and pollution. The cities of Mukilteo, Edmonds, Lynnwood, Mountlake Terrace and Woodway have approved resolutions opposing passenger flights at the airport.

Some of those opponents have said they would mount their defense against commercial flights during the public comment period on the study.

Greg Hauth, president of Save Our Communities, the leading opposition group, said the group would save its observations for the comment period.

"We highly encourage people to actively participate in the process and to get out for the public hearings when those are held in January," Hauth said Friday.

Others have pushed for commercial flights at Paine Field, citing convenience and potential economic benefit.

Greg Tisdell, spokesman for the group Fly Paine Field, said Friday they would also hold off on commenting on the study.

"We'll have something to say later," he said.

# Marine offensive targets Taliban

ASSOCIATED PRESS

KABUL — U.S. Marines swooped down behind Taliban lines in helicopters and Osprey aircraft Friday in the first offensive since President Barack Obama announced an American troop surge.

About 1,000 Marines and 150 Afghan troops were taking part in "Operation Cobra's Anger" in a bid to disrupt Taliban supply and communications lines in the New Zad Valley of Helmand province in southern Afghanistan, the scene of heavy fighting last summer, according to Marine spokesman Maj. William Pelletier.

Hundreds of troops from the 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines and the Marine reconnaissance unit Task Force Raider dropped by helicopter and MV-22 Osprey aircraft in the northern end of the valley while a second, larger Marine force pushed northward from the main Marine base in the town of Now Zad, Pelletier said.

A U.S. military official in Washington said it was the first use of Ospreys, aircraft that

combine features of helicopters and fixed wing aircraft, in an offensive involving units larger than platoons.

The official said that Ospreys have previously been used for intelligence and patrol operations.

Combat engineers used armored steamrollers and explosives to force a corridor through Taliban minefields — known as "IED Alley" because of the huge number of roadside bombs, known as improvised explosive devices, and land mines, Pelletier said.

Roadside bombs and mines have become the biggest killer of American troops in Afghanistan.

There were no reports of U.S. or Afghan government casualties. The spokesman for the Afghan governor of Helmand province, Daoud Ahmadi, said at least four Taliban fighters had been killed and their bodies recovered.

He said more than 300 mines and roadside bombs had been located in the first day of the operation.

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# Charity: Need is greater than ever

From Page A1

year as it celebrates its 29th anniversary.

The nonprofit organization will spend 15 days this month giving away tens of thousands of gifts to low-income Snohomish County families.

Rick Kvangnes, president of Christmas House, said the charity is prepared to serve 3,900 families, 600 more than last year.

The charity works only with county residents in households at or below 150 percent of the poverty level. That's an annual income of \$33,075 for a family of four.

The recession has pushed many people into that range, something apparent this year.

Usually, people start lining up for Christmas House's Friday opening at 5 p.m. Thursday. This year, the first family got in line at 10 p.m. Wednesday, setting up a tent for the long wait.

DJ Morgan, 16, was keeping his sister Nikia White company at the front of the line. Both were shivering.

White, 18, just had her first child, a girl, now 6 months. She and the baby's father are unemployed, living in a home with seven other people. Money is tight.

She got in line at 7 a.m. Thursday.

"There's not enough to give her the Christmas I want to give her," White said.

White and her brother talked to pass the time. Sonja Stark, 30, brought the game Yatzee.

The mother of three has come to Christmas House for the past 10 years. While it can be difficult sitting in the cold for hours, it's worth the effort.

"Every Christmas, when someone says, 'Thank you Santa, thank you Santa,' I know I did something good," Stark said.

Christmas House was founded out of a garage in 1981. About 100 children received presents that first year.



Serjig Bistritskiy (right) shops for his three children with volunteer Dolores Blueford at Christmas House at the Boys & Girls Club in Everett on Friday.

Every year, it has grown, Kvangnes said. It now fills the gymnasium at the Boys & Girls Club in Everett.

The charity runs with military-like precision. Board members consult charts in neat binders and answer questions from volunteers — an army of 650 people last year.

Families arrive at an assigned shopping time and sit with a volunteer, who verifies their income level, place of residence and that they have custody of their children.

The family member then walks through the gym with another volunteer, who helps them choose a

sack-load of gifts. The charity gives away new items only: skateboards and Wilson basketballs, Hannah Montana dolls and make-up kits.

The volunteers enjoy the work, returning year after year. Most are quick to share that one story of the mom or dad whose gratitude warmed their own hearts.

Take Bill Houghton, who has volunteered for five years. His first year, he helped carry gifts out to a car for a father of four shortly before Christmas.

"He gave me a big hug and shook my hand, the tears were going down his face," Houghton

said. "I had a lump as big as a softball in my throat, and I'm not an emotional person."

The work can be humbling, something Kvangnes was reminded of Friday morning, as he gave out tickets to assign shopping times.

He ran out halfway down the line, near the sign noting that 195 families would be served. He told the hundred or so still waiting they needed to come back another day, reminding them the charity pledges to serve everyone by Dec.

21, his last day of operation.

Still, people were upset. Some complained of line-cutters. They had been awake for hours. They were cold, tired and not quite sure when to get back in line for Saturday's tickets.

But not Emily Parsaaran, 29. The mother of six held a yellow ticket. It may as well have been gold. She kissed it, again and again. She would shop for her six children at 11:24 a.m.

"Oh my God," she said. "We did it."

Andy Rathbun: 425-339-3455, arathbun@heraldnet.com.



Marysville Historical Society's Ken Cage admits he isn't very good at safe cracking. On Friday, he shows off a safe from the 1880s that has been locked for decades.

# Safe: Marysville has puzzle

From Page A1

1986 broadcast of the excavation of gangster Al Capone's secret vault beneath a Chicago hotel. Instead of treasures, Rivera found only empty bottles.

The contents of the old safe in Marysville could remain a mystery forever.

Adam Benson, manager of Everett Safe and Lock, is learning what he can about the safe, which was made about 130 years ago by the Hall Co. of Cincinnati and San Francisco.

"Chances are it's empty," Benson said. "This hand-painted safe is more valuable left as-is. It's in phenomenal shape."

If Benson can't crack the safe, the only option would be to drill it open, and the mayor's descendants don't want that.

Elected the town's first town official in 1891, Mayor Mark Swinnerton bought the safe for his mercantile on Front Street.

Swinnerton left his home on the Isle of Man in the middle of the north Irish Sea and traveled as a teenager to Australia. From there he spent time in San Francisco and eventually landed in Marysville in about 1883.

Swinnerton and his wife Sarah had seven children. When Mayor Swinnerton died, the safe was given to his daughter Mary and her husband Steve Saunders. They willed it to their son Donald Saunders. When Donald died, the safe passed to the mayor's great-grandson, Don Saunders Jr., now retired, of Marysville.

Saunders wanted to pass it on to younger family members, but the cost to ship the safe was prohibitive. It was difficult enough just to move it down the street to the historical society, but well worth it, he said.

"It's part of Marysville's history," Saunders said. "The safe hasn't been opened for more than 50 years. If the gym from Everett can't crack it, they might be able to find somebody in a California prison with experience on old safes."

All joking aside, Cage said, the society is grateful for the donation.

"It's a really wonderful addition to the museum from a great family of Marysville," Cage said.

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