

'Operation Sign Off' volunteers to clean streets of Columbia

Project plans to remove illegally posted signs

BY JESSICA CLANTON
THE GAMECOCK

"Operation Sign Off" will be held this Saturday to sweep the streets of Columbia and remove all illegally posted signs.

Keep the Midlands Beautiful and Columbia's Planning and Development

Services Department planned the event.

"It is a fun way to clean up the community and be legal about taking down all the illegal signs that have bothered you in the past," said Vance

Kornegay, participant in the event and associate professor in the School of Journalism and Mass Communications.

The event comes days after Student Government election results were delayed because candidates refused to move their signs.

"I think the USC elections rule is really cool, even if students don't care for it. For us, though, the signs around Columbia are illegal, ugly, and they can become litter and even traffic hazards," said Mary Pat Baldauf, executive director of Keep the Midlands Beautiful.

Illegal signs are considered to be signs posted within the public right-of-way, especially those posted on utility poles.

"I don't see a problem with illegal signs on campus. Most are just paper that can be easily policed; in the community, howev-

er, the signs are larger, harder to remove and everywhere," Kornegay said.

This is the second "Operation Sign Off." During the first, held in November 2002 immediately after city elections, volunteers picked up more than 400 signs. "Even after that, crews still found many signs that we hadn't noticed," said Marc Mylott, zoning administrator for Columbia. "This just goes to show how the signs are so common that they become part of the background

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of the city, and that is a shame."

The kick-off rally will be held at the Capital City Bombers' Stadium. Volunteers will meet at 9 a.m. and choose an area of the city to cover.

"We really target the intersections because they could block driver's views and cause accidents. We also try to remove the signs from utility poles such as 'Lose Ten Pounds in One Day' or 'Make \$5,000 in a Week,'" Baldauf said.

Mylott stresses that although this is an organized event, citizens can remove any illegally placed signs at any time, as long as they are in the public right-of-way.

"We want to encourage people to do this year round because the signs pop up so quickly," Mylott said. "Only three weeks after the event, I cleaned up one of the already cleaned sites because there were around 50 album-release posters all over the utility poles."

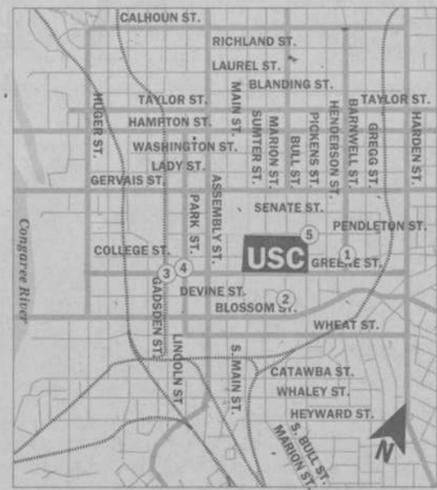
Comments on this story? E-mail gamecockudesk@hotmail.com



PHOTO BY TRISHA SHADWELL/THE GAMECOCK

"Operation Sign Off" will begin at 9 a.m. Saturday at the Capital City Bombers Stadium. Zoning administrator Marc Mylott encourages citizens to remove illegally posted signs any time, as long as they are in the public right-of-way.

POLICE REPORT



Each number on the map stands for a crime corresponding with numbered descriptions in the list below.

DAY CRIMES
(6 a.m.-6 p.m.)

□ Violent
○ Nonviolent

NIGHT CRIMES
(6 p.m.-6 a.m.)

■ Violent
● Nonviolent

CRIMES AT UNKNOWN HOURS

□ Violent
○ Nonviolent

These reports are taken directly from the USC Police Department. Compiled by Adam Beam.

Tuesday, April 1

① LARCENY OF CREDIT CARDS, 819 BARNWELL ST.
The victim said someone took her Visa card and Mastercard from her bag under her desk. The victim said that once she noticed the cards were missing, she called the card companies to cancel them. Estimated value: \$1. Reporting officer: J.B. Coaxum.

Friday, April 4

② LARCENY OF PARKING METER, 1500 DEVINE ST.
The complainant said someone took a parking meter and the post it was mounted on. It was unknown whether the meter contained any money. Reporting officer: G. Kerwin.

Sunday, April 6

③ MALICIOUS INJURY TO PERSONAL PROPERTY, S-10 LOT, CAROLINA COLISEUM
The victim said someone broke off her driver's-side rearview mirror, causing minimal damage. Reporting officer: J.A. Clarke.

Monday, April 7

④ MALICIOUS INJURY TO

PERSONAL PROPERTY, LOT 1, CAROLINA COLISEUM

The victim said someone broke the driver's-side rearview mirror of her car. The damage was minimal. Reporting officer: J.A. Clarke.

Tuesday, April 8

⑤ INFORMATION, NATIONAL ADVOCACY CENTER, 1620 PENDLETON ST.

Reporting officer J.A. Clarke responded to a call about a man running with a rifle past the National Advocacy Center. All available USC units, as well as six Columbia Police Department units, moved toward the area. Several pedestrians pointed out the man's path and progress, and the man was found at Lee Street in Columbia. He was identified as a current USC ROTC student. He was on a training run, carrying an inert, mock-up M-16 rifle. The weapon was used for training purposes only and posed no threat to civilians. The USC Police Department took him back to his ROTC unit. Clarke met with an active-duty ROTC instructor and informed him of the incident.

STATE

Educators lose jobs in budget crunch

COLUMBIA — Thousands of South Carolina teachers are getting word that they won't have jobs next year as school administrators deal with state budget cuts.

Sumter District 2 says 47 teachers, guidance counselors and assistant principals won't have jobs. In Orangeburg District 4, more than two dozen educators won't be offered new contracts.

Fewer teachers mean bigger classes and "parents need to know that the children will suffer," said Stacey Wilson, a fifth-grade social studies teacher losing her job at Edisto Elementary in Orangeburg 4.

Up to 6,600 teachers are projected to lose their jobs, said Richard Miller, executive director of the South Carolina Education Association. He's been getting calls all week from teachers and administrators losing contracts.

Bill would prevent hospital mistakes

COLUMBIA — When Helen Haskell's son, Lewis Blackman, died of complications from a relatively routine surgery at the Medical University of South Carolina, she knew she had to work for better patient safety.

The bill, called the Lewis Blackman Hospital Patient Protection Act, attempts to open communication between hospitals and patients. It would ensure patients are informed about who is providing their medical care and give them timely access to qualified, experienced physicians.

NATION

Professor indicted in bacteria scare

LUBBOCK, TEXAS — A professor was indicted Thursday on federal charges accusing him of smuggling plague bacteria and lying when he said vials of the dangerous germ had disappeared from a Texas Tech University lab last January.

Thomas C. Butler, 61, triggered a terrorism-alert plan when he said 30 vials of the bacteria were missing. The FBI rushed dozens of agents to Lubbock.

The professor later told the FBI he made a "misjudgment" by telling school authorities the vials were missing when he had actually destroyed them, according to court document.

Butler, chief of the infectious diseases division at Tech's medical school, has been placed on paid leave.

Study finds rise in occasional smokers

ATLANTA — Statistics released Thursday show a growing number of U.S. smokers aren't lighting up as often, but federal officials say cutting back without quitting is as dangerous as not quitting.

A comparison of annual state surveys conducted from 1996 to 2001 shows that while the percentage of smokers remained steady, the number who said they smoked only occasionally rose in 38 states and the District of Columbia.

Analysts with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention point to increased cigarette prices, higher taxes and smoking bans in public areas as likely reasons people are lighting up less.

WORLD

N. Korea: Avoid war by deterring military

SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA — North Korea said the Iraq war proved the need for it to maintain a strong military deterrent against the United States, as the communist nation's withdrawal from the global nuclear arms control treaty officially took effect Thursday.

The North's comments came a day after U.N. Security Council members said they were worried by North Korea's standoff with Washington, but refused to condemn it for pulling out of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. China and Russia had opposed condemning Pyongyang.

Drawing parallels to the U.S. showdown with Iraq, North Korea said that bowing to demands to abandon its suspected nuclear weapons development would lead to inspections and disarmament, setting the stage for a U.S. invasion.

28 deaf students die in Russian school fire

MAKHACHKALA, RUSSIA — A fire at a Russian boarding school for deaf children Thursday killed 28 students.

A total of 106 students from the Republican School for Deaf Children remained hospitalized.

The blaze came on the heels of a fire that killed 22 students whose wooden schoolhouse burned to the ground in Siberia on Monday. In Moscow, Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov ordered an immediate fire safety survey of all Russian schools, particularly in rural areas, in an attempt to prevent any new tragedies.

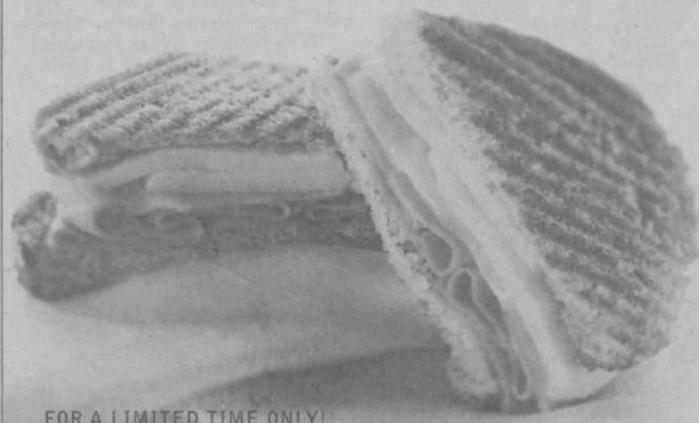
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