



ON CAMPUS

Stood-up group protests at union

By JOEY FLECHAS
Alligator Writer

The members of the Student/Farmworker Alliance who walked through the Reitz Union Food Court Wednesday didn't stop for a bite to eat. Instead, the group of about 20 students chanted to protest the treatment of the workers who pick tomatoes in Immokalee, Fla.

Aramark, UF's food provider, purchases tomatoes picked by the Immokalee workers.

The gathering was originally planned as a meeting between the alliance and Aramark representatives in the Reitz Union Amphitheatre, but the representatives cited an emergency and canceled, asking to reschedule for Tuesday at 2 p.m.

UF environmental science senior Krissy Abdullah, a member of the

Student/Farmworker Alliance, said she questions whether Aramark wants to meet with students.

"It makes me wonder if it's just a tactic of avoidance," she said.

Holding signs with slogans like "Aramark vampires - workers' lives are not a food source," they marched to the Gator Dining Services office in the basement of the Reitz Union and spoke to Melanie Poling, UF operations analyst for Aramark. She apologized and asked to come to the rescheduled meeting.

"I think we're after the same thing," she said.

Moments after the group had dispersed, University Police Department officers arrived because they received a call about a disturbance in the Reitz Union.

Officer J.A. Savona said, according to Florida law, protesters were not supposed to be inside the building or even on the colonnade.



Erica Ervin / Alligator Staff

Justin Wooten (left) and Diana Moreno (right) protest with others in the Reitz Union Food Court on Wednesday for the Student/Farm Workers Alliance against unfair treatment and wages of workers in Immokalee, Fla.

Former GPD officer on trial for abuse of infant daughter

THE BABY SUFFERED INTERNAL BLEEDING, FRACTURED RIBS AND RUPTURED ORGANS.

By MINCH MINCHIN
Alligator Writer

A trial continued Wednesday for a former Gainesville police officer charged with the neglect and abuse of his 2-month-old daughter in January 2007.

Herbert Priester, 39, allegedly squeezed her, causing internal bleeding, fractured ribs and ruptured organs, said Chief Assistant State Attorney Jeanne Singer.

According to testimony from Priester's wife, Tabitha Priester, 25, the infant was found lying naked and covered with scratches and bruises in the couple's home in southwest Gainesville shortly after her husband returned home from work.

The defense said the wounds were caused by the Priester's family dog, Bandit. The infant was released from the hospital after 10 days and is now healthy. The state charged Herbert Priester with abuse and neglect.

The pediatric radiologist at Shands who handled the case, Jonathan Williams, said during the trial that such damage would be "highly unlikely unless it was a very large dog."

In her testimony, Tabitha Priester defended her husband and dog, blaming herself. Priester once worked for the Florida Department of Children and Families, she said.

"It's not the dog's fault," she said. "It's my fault for not securing the dog."

Testimony will resume today at 9 a.m. at the Alachua County Criminal Justice Center.



Priester

V-Day sales may dip

By ALLEN HAYNES
Alligator Contributing Writer

Local merchants are concerned smaller wallets will mean fewer bouquets again this Valentine's Day.

This year, the country's total holiday spending is expected to reach \$14.1 billion, which is low in comparison to the \$17 billion spent in 2008, according to the National Retail Federation.

Americans spent about \$14.7 billion on gifts in 2009, according to the organization.

The federation predicts couples will spend about \$63.34 on nontraditional Valentine's gifts, compared to \$67.22 last year. The average person will spend \$103 on Valentine's Day merchandise like candy and flowers, similar to last year's \$102.50.

Local florists are already preparing for another decrease in sales.

Barbara Crevasse, owner of Crevasse's Florist, said total sales have slowed in the last two years, and the trend toward cheaper arrangements is increasing.

She said people are still sending flowers to loved ones; they're just smaller.

Elizabeth Cavallo, manager of Floral Expressions Florist, thinks the decrease in sales will have more to do with Val-

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UF forward Chandler Parsons didn't get another chance for a buzzer-beater against South Carolina, as Florida struggled at the free-throw line and fell 77-71 to the Gamecocks. See Story, Page 18.



Man allegedly steals ambulance with patient inside

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — Authorities say a drunken man stole an ambulance from a Wisconsin ski area with the patient and paramedics still inside.

The Dane County Sheriff's Department says emergency responders were treating a patient in the back of the ambulance at the Tyrol Basin Ski and Snowboard Area in Mount Horeb on Monday night. They say a 24-year-old Illinois man got into the vehicle and drove it around the parking lot.

The sheriff's department says deputies arrested the man. But it is unclear how he was stopped.

Fitch-Rona Medical Service Deputy Chief Dale Dow says the ambulance's emergency brake was on and paramedics were still in the back when the man got inside.

He says he doesn't know what happened after that.

No other details were immediately available.

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Partly cloudy
56/36

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