

Ozarks

NEWS-LEADER

Wednesday
June 16, 2004
News-Leader.com

1B



BUSINESS:

Remember argyle and plaid?

After a few seasons of belly-baring everything, clothesmakers are hoping a return to the preppy look will help cover last year's losses. **BB**

NEWS-LEADER.com Online Poll

Hon: Should the city of field pay to install traf-
feras near school zones
e can monitor and
ally ticket motorists for
ng?
e yes or no, go online
s-Leader.com. Vote by 8
d see results in Thurs-
ewspaper.

WEDSDAY RESULTS
u agree with the
e Court action that, in
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under God" in the
of Allegiance?

86.1 percent
13.9 percent
AL VOTES: 821

KI COUNTY

man dies en car rturns

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Monday evening in a
n Pulaski County.
ey Therkelsen, 49,
bout 7:15 p.m. on
Lane just west of
i County H, the Mis-
ghway Patrol said.
kelsen was east-

Amusement park removes games

Celebration City yanks 3 devices police
say may be illegal; no charges planned.

By Kathryn Buckstaff
KBUCKSTAFF@NEWS-LEADER.COM

BRANSON — Operators
of Celebration City
amusement park have re-
moved three arcade games
that authorities say may
have been illegal gambling
devices, calling their in-
stallation at the park "an
honest mistake."

On Friday, following an
anonymous complaint,
Branson police inspected
the park's games and

warned management that
three machines called
"sliders" were "just on the
edge" of violating state
gaming statutes, said Capt.
Kevin Powell of the Bran-
son Police Department.

Powell said the ma-
chines were among those
leased to the park by Mon-
duce, a New-Jersey-based
vending company.

"As soon as we told man-
agement, they removed the
games," Powell said.

"We have no intentions of
filing any charges."

Officials at Herschend
Family Entertainment
Corp., which owns Cele-
bration City as well as Sil-
ver Dollar City and other
properties in Branson,
apologized for the situa-
tion.

"If there's been any con-
fusion, any question, any
concern, we apologize as
we had no ill intent," said
HFEC spokeswoman Lisa
Rau. "As soon as we were
told, the machines were
gone within an hour. We
honestly were not trying

to do anything to put our
family values in question."

Other owners of arcade
games say they think Cele-
bration City may have
been targeted because
HFEC vice president Peter
Herschend is a vocal op-
ponent of a proposed
casino in
nearby
Rockaway
Beach.

Herschend
supported a lawsuit to halt
the initiative from appear-
ing on a statewide ballot in

August. That lawsuit was
dismissed Monday by a
Cole County circuit judge.

"It seems awfully
strange that it came
out of nowhere,"
said Jim Langham,
co-owner of Thun-
der Road go-kart
track, named last week as
2004 Small Business of the
Year by the Branson/
Lakes Area Chamber of
Commerce.

Langham and arcade
manager Shawn Wingert
said they have no con-
cerns that any of their 80
games from skeeball to

shooting galleries cross
the line.

"We've stayed well with-
in the bounds of
the law," Wingert
said.

Machines simi-
lar to the ones at
Celebration City
are featured at Incredible
Pizza in Springfield. Man-
ager Mark Barsness said
their slide machines con-
tain tokens, but players are
rewarded with tickets re-
deemable for prizes.

Such games are not un-
common. See **Arcade games**, Page 5B

Short by about \$1.3 million, state considered limits on A+ program

Holden to stop tuition-aid cap



Diep Tran, a
Vietnamese
student who at-
tends OTC on
the A+ Program,
takes as many
as 17 credits a
semester and
hopes to teach



Dick Cheney
Makes his way
to Springfield
after canceling
a visit scheduled
for June 11

Cheney to visit Ozarks Monday

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Machines contained tokens, could be called slot machines

ARCADE GAMES, from Page 1B

common in Missouri, Powell said. A player drops in a quarter or token and a rotating bar may then release coins as a pay-off. Chapter 572 of the Missouri Revised Statutes defines a slot machine as a device that "as a result of insertion of a coin or other object operates either automatically or by some act of the player in such a manner that, depending on elements of chance, may eject something of value."

Celebration City opened last August and features 47 arcade games. The machines that were removed contained tokens that could be redeemed for merchandise such as plastic bracelets, noisemakers and stuffed animals, Rau said.

This is not the city's first run-in with possible gaming infractions. In 1997, 11 coin-containing slot machines were found in Branson businesses, Powell said. The vendor who provided the machines was warned to remove them. He did — but brought the machines back three weeks later. Those machines were confiscated and destroyed, Powell said.

Celebration City's machines were not confiscated.

Regulation of local gaming is left to local authorities, said Mike Bushman, general council of the Missouri Gaming Commission, which regulates licensed casinos in the state. Under Missouri law, anyone who has lost money or property on illegal gambling may file a civil lawsuit against the owner of the games within three months of the losses, Bushman said.

Celebration City's games are not akin to casino gambling, Herschend said.

"No one who throws a ball at a moving target thinks they're going to get millions back or even anything back," Herschend said.

Herschend said he doesn't expect everyone to agree with his opposition to the Rockaway Beach attempt to get a casino. The Riverboat at Rockaway Beach is projected to provide 1,000 jobs in a town struggling to survive, supporters say. The Missouri Gaming Commission estimates state and local tax revenue of more than \$60 million a year from the casino.

But, Herschend said, a casino 15 miles to the east could open

the door to more gambling and damage Branson's family-friendly image.

"There are more than a few people in the state and the region who, if they had their way, would get rid of the lottery and all other legalized gambling," Herschend said. "I'm not fussing with what is legal today. If you have cancer, the doctor says, 'We're going to contain that cancer. We're going to keep it from spreading.'"

Southwest Casino and Hotel Corp. is the company selected by the Rockaway Board of Aldermen to build a casino in town should voters approve the initiative. Jim Druck, president of Minneapolis-based company, said he believes voters statewide will support the issue because of the jobs and money for education the casino will provide.

The casino also will feature an arcade for families, Druck said.

"I don't equate playing video games to gambling," Druck said. "I think that's a teenage and sub-teenage diversion. An arcade game you can control by skill. The vast majority of casino games are not controlled by skill or if they are, it is by a tight margin."

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