

# METRO

In Brief

## THE REGION

### Metro to Stay Open for U-Md. Football

Metro will stay open two hours later than usual tonight, closing at 2 a.m. to accommodate the University of Maryland's home football game against the University of Virginia at Byrd Stadium in College Park.

The nationally televised game, which begins at 7:45 p.m., is Maryland's last home game of the season. Traffic near the campus is expected to be heavy, and the university is encouraging football fans to take Metro. The closest stop is the College Park-University of Maryland Station on the Green Line.

Metro passengers can log onto [www.metroopensdoors.com](http://www.metroopensdoors.com) or call 202-637-7000 or 202-638-3780 (TDD).

### Youth Detention Center Evacuated

The medical unit at Oak Hill Youth Center, the District's juvenile detention facility in Laurel, was evacuated yesterday after two teenagers broke a mercury-filled blood-pressure device, authorities said. The youths, 18 and 16, were taken to Children's Hospital for a medical evaluation. They were still there as of late yesterday, authorities said.

The youths, who have been committed to the custody of the D.C. Department of Human Services, broke the medical device shortly after 9 a.m. while a nurse's back was turned, department spokeswoman Debra A. Daniels said.

After trying to sweep up the mercury with a broom, Oak Hill staff members called a hazardous materials team, which decontaminated the area, an official with the Anne Arundel County Fire Department said. The hazmat team was dispatched to the Oak Hill campus at 12:07 p.m. and was there for about 2½ hours.

The medical unit is in a separate building from the facility's school, administrative and housing units.

### Bridge Project Bid Under Budget

The lowest bid for rebuilding the Route 1 interchange—the most expensive element in Virginia's share of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge project—was 7.8 percent under budget, a spokesman for the bridge reconstruction project said yesterday.

The bid of \$146.6 million, submitted yesterday by Virginia Beach-based Tidewater Skanska Inc., would be one of the largest contracts awarded by the Virginia Department of Transportation, said John Undeland, spokesman for the bridge project.

The company's bid was \$12.4 million below budget estimates of \$159 million, Undeland said. The state's Commonwealth Transportation Board, a panel of gubernatorial appointees, must approve the bid before a contract is awarded. Work on the Route 1 interchange is scheduled to begin in January.

## MARYLAND

### Ehrlich Reaffirms Slots Compromise

Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich Jr. yesterday reaffirmed his willingness to compromise on slot machines, saying that negotiations appear to be headed toward putting slots at two racetracks and also possibly at two off-track locations.

"Hopefully, there will be real progress made in the next several weeks," Ehrlich (R) said at a news briefing.

The governor's plan at the 2002 legislative session called for putting 3,500 slot machines at each of three racetracks—Pimlico, Laurel and Rosecroft—and up to 1,000 machines at a possible future racetrack in Allegany County. The plan, opposed by Speaker Michael E. Busch (D-Anne Arundel), was killed in the House of Delegates.

Ehrlich noted that Busch opposes giving control of 7,000 machines to one company, Magna Entertainment, which owns Pimlico and Laurel. He said the solution may be to allow slot machines at only one track.

### Mentally Disabled Teenager Missing

A mentally disabled 19-year-old student disappeared Tuesday after leaving Walter Johnson High School in Bethesda at the end of the school day, Montgomery County police said yesterday.

Franz Cunanan, also known as "Jojo" and "Panjo," was last seen at 3:45 p.m. on a Metrobus headed toward downtown Bethesda. He had waited for a ride and normally would not ride public transportation by himself, police said.

Cunanan is a 5-foot-6 or 5-foot-7 man weighing 200 to 220 pounds with bushy, black-and-gray hair and olive skin, according to a notice sent by Walter Johnson Principal Kevin Maxwell. Cunanan was last seen wearing tan pants, light brown shoes, a red jersey with white writing and a black-and-red jacket.

Anyone with information should call Lisa Kennedy, security leader at Walter Johnson, at 301-571-6900 or the Montgomery County police at 301-657-0112 or 301-279-8000.

## VIRGINIA

### Soldier Electrocuted, Another Hurt

A soldier was electrocuted yesterday at Fort A.P. Hill and a second soldier was injured when the radio antenna they were installing touched an overhead electrical line.

The dead soldier, who was not immediately identified, and the injured soldier, Spec. Michael Artis, were members of the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment. They were training at Fort A.P. Hill in Caroline County, north of Richmond.

Members of the 3rd Infantry, based at Fort Myer, do exercises almost weekly at A.P. Hill, a regional training center for all branches of the military, said center spokesman Ken Perrotte.

Artis, whose age and hometown were not immediately available, was transported to Medical College of Virginia Hospital in Richmond and was listed in stable condition last night. The matter was being treated as an accident, Perrotte said.

### 2 Drivers Die in Fairfax Crashes

Two women were killed this week in car crashes on Fairfax County roads.

A 65-year-old Fairfax woman died yesterday after her car was hit about 7 a.m. by a vehicle driven by a 16-year-old, pushing the woman's car into oncoming traffic on Olley Lane, authorities said. The woman's car collided head-on with another vehicle.

Tsulin Jen was taken to Inova Fairfax Hospital, where she died, authorities said. The teenager was treated for minor injuries; the driver of the third car was not hurt.

On Monday, Kathy Varney, 39, of Ashburn was killed after her car was struck by a dump truck at Route 28 and Westfields Boulevard. Both drivers were wearing seat belts.

### QUOTE OF THE DAY

*"I think a fair inference can be drawn that they [John Allen Muhammad and Lee Boyd Malvo] perfected their ability to shoot people and perfected their ability to shoot them and escape."*

— Prince William Circuit Court Judge LeRoy F. Millette Jr., stating his opinion that jurors can convict Muhammad for capital murder even if he didn't pull the trigger. — Page A1

Compiled from reports by staff writers Michelle Boorstein, Sewell Chan, Lyndsey Layton, Linda Perlstein and Katherine Shaver and the Associated Press.

# For Lego Enthusiasts, A Shot at the Big Time

Would-Be Master Model Builders Compete



A finished creation from Lego's Master Model Builder Search.



PHOTOS BY DAVNA SMITH—THE WASHINGTON POST

Ford Vogel of Laurel, in foreground, and Byron Clark of Woodstock, Va., refine their projects during the design contest at the Art Institute in Arlington.

By REILLY CAPPS  
Washington Post Staff Writer

John Balash had 45 minutes yesterday to build himself a job. He put on a nice white shirt and a striped sweater and combed his hair. He told the sisters at his old high school in Ohio to pray for him. He did not want to screw this up.

This was the job interview of a lifetime, perhaps his only chance to get paid for playing with Legos.

Balash was one of more than 60 hopefuls who went to the Art Institute in Arlington County yesterday for Lego's first-ever Master Model Builder Search. Most of them were college-age art students who grew up playing with Legos. They were all hoping to become the eighth member of a California-based team that works with Legos for a living.

"Of course, it's every kid's dream to work with Legos," Balash said.

Balash, 20, is from Cleveland, but he skipped class yesterday at Notre Dame College of Ohio and flew here, to the closest of the nine cities the Lego search will visit.

Legos are the only toy his parents ever bought him—the only toy he ever wanted. Now that he's on his own, he buys Legos in bulk, 400 at a time, and estimates that he has 1.5 million bricks. He carries them in a sheet on his back, like Santa.

Yesterday, he would be judged on what he did with only 2,000 bricks provided by contest organizers. He wanted to build a penguin.

If he gets the job, he said, he will drop out of college. "I'd skip off to California in a heartbeat."

Reached at her home in South Euclid, Ohio, his mom, Kay, tried to be supportive: "I know this is his dream job. . . . But, I don't know."

"I'm sorry, but this is a dream," Balash said.

Besides, his parents have no one to blame but themselves. There was no television in the house. No computer. They never bought him a Nintendo, GI Joe, He-Man, Ninja Turtles or any other toys of modern civilization. Only Legos, by the ton. "We wanted them to do inventive things with their minds and not play with a lot of violent things," Kay Balash said of her four children.

John Balash never felt deprived. "I can make Ninja Turtles out of Legos," he said. "It's one toy, but the possibilities are endless."

Among his amazing creations: a Red Baron-style warplane with flaps and rudder that can be controlled from the cockpit; a working foosball table with electronic scoreboards; a Lego Battle of Waterloo, which he re-enacted and recorded in stop-motion animation.

This traveling tryout will visit New York tomorrow, Charlotte on Monday and six cities after that. Pat DeMaria, one of the company's master builders, said the company was inundated with résumés and decided to hold the contest to locate the nation's best Lego talent.

"It's a lot of people's dream to be a Lego builder," DeMaria said. "You have to be able to think in 3-D. You have to be a kid at heart."

The top model builders from each city will be invited to Legoland California in Carlsbad for a chance to become the eighth Lego master model builder and build and maintain the huge Lego sculptures in the park. The winner will be paid \$13 to \$15 an hour.

It's not the salary—it's the benefits.

"Legos are the coolest toy ever," said Justin Goultrey, 20. "It's like every toy you could ever want. You want a car, just start looking for the wheels."

Goultrey built a green flying drag-on yesterday that was well done. But

it the tryout didn't go so well for everybody. Amanda Hardee, 20, a student of 3-D animation at the Art Institute, was building a cartoon bird that was beautiful—but which, in the end, collapsed.

"I'm mad at myself," she said. She'll stay mad until Thanksgiving. "I'll make a turkey out of Legos—and then destroy it, right along with my hopes and dreams."

Balash maintained his concentration even as he was watched by the next generation of Lego engineers: Sam Lally, 4, and his brother Will, 2, whose dad, Steve, saw the giant Lego dinosaur outside and stopped in to see. When Sam heard about Lego jobs, his eyes went as wide as Frisbees. Will is a Lego fan, too.

"I eat the Legos!" he said. "I eat the Legos! I eat the Legos! I eat the Legos! They taste good."

Time was collapsing in on Balash. He had five minutes left, and he



A Lego model of basketball star Shaquille O'Neal adorns a waiting room.

hadn't done everything he had wanted: to give his little bird a martini glass, to fix the bow tie, to give him a sort of smarmy George Burns look. But then time was up. He had to live with what he had.

It wasn't a penguin, exactly, because there weren't enough black and

white bricks. But it was some sort of bird, and it was good enough to qualify Balash for the finals in California in January, along with Daniel Krahn of Richmond and Aaron Sneary of Laurel.

When he heard the news, Balash said, "I'm going to Legoland!"

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