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Final Edition

93rd Year — No. 35 • Hampton Roads' Morning Newspaper • Newport News-Hampton, Va. TWENTY-FIVE CENTS



Linda Porter, a volunteer at the shelter for four years, is concerned about the number of dogs sent to veterinarians for euthanasia.

Homeless but healthy dogs killed

Shelter workers seek court action
By DAVID RISSER
Staff Writer

HAMPTON — Twelve Animal Aid Society volunteers, who say the shelter's leaders regularly put healthy dogs to sleep without attempting to place them in homes, have filed a petition in court against the shelter in an attempt to gain control of the organization.

The volunteers' petition, filed Wednesday in Newport News Circuit Court, asks the court to force a meeting of the society members to elect a board of directors. An annual meeting is required by the non-profit group's corporate bylaws.

"We have not had an annual meeting for at least the last six years for the purpose of electing a board of directors," said Helen Baker, a volunteer at the shelter on Butler Farms Road. The volunteers hope a new board of directors would change the leadership of the society.

Irene Smith, the society president for the last 15 years, acknowledged the society has not met during the past year, and said she would resign if the volunteers held a meeting. "We are all volunteers, so I didn't know a meeting was necessary ... If they want to have a meeting and they have a petition out, I will resign."

Volunteers became alarmed when they saw enthusiastic bills sent to the shelter from Hampton veterinarians. Alexander Wiatt, a March 1984 bill documents the killing of 84 dogs, including puppies, in one month. The society volunteers say many of the dogs were never put up for adoption.

"I'm horrified people, so immediately they stopped sending the bill," Baker said. Wiatt's bills average more than \$2,000 per month, but the society pays less than half that amount without losing his services, said Mary Lewis, society treasurer. The bills cover boarding and euthanasia, but usually, no medical treatment, she said.

The society usually sends dogs for neutering and other medical attention to Dr. Herbert Kelly of Newport News, who has also put some to sleep. "I don't know how long they've had them ... To my knowledge they've had a conscientious effort to adopt them," he said. "We've put healthy dogs to sleep."

"There are times when you have to put healthy dogs to sleep because there are no homes for them," Wiatt said.

■ Please see Shelter, A8

House votes to cut off Contra aid

WASHINGTON (AP) — A bitterly divided House voted Wednesday to cut off U.S. military support for Nicaragua's Contra rebels, rejecting President Reagan's aid request in the hope of spurring peace prospects in Central America.

The 219-211 vote, culminating six years of overt and covert military support for the rebels fighting the leftist Sandinista government, killed Reagan's request for \$36.2 million in new aid to keep the Contras alive as a fighting force through June.

It was a serious defeat for the president, who had lobbied hard on the issue for two weeks and has put the Contras among the top foreign policy priorities for his final year in office. Only a day earlier, Reagan had argued that failure to extend aid would strengthen communist influence in the hemisphere.

The White House issued a statement saying, "We are disappointed that the House of Representatives did not vote to keep pressure on the Sandinistas during the peace process."

"I think we made a serious mistake," said Herbert Bateman, R-Ist, who voted for continued aid to the Contras. "If the Contras do not remain effective as a fighting force, the Sandinistas will just string them out and continue to consolidate their power," he said.

Bateman said he would support the humanitarian aid package some congressional Democrats say will be coming in the next few weeks.

Keeping the Contras alive "is the best possibility for peace," Bateman said.

Dwain Pickett, D-2nd, also voted for continued funding and was disappointed by the loss. "With the modifications that the president had made, I think it was going to do the right thing for our country."

But Pickett also said he would support humanitarian aid if it kept the Contras alive.

Current aid to the rebels expires Feb. 29, and Democrats pledged to hold another vote before the month is out on an alternative package of purely humanitarian aid to help the future of Central America.

But Republicans bitterly warned that the action would reduce part of the pressure on Nicaraguan President Daniel

Body found in river identified as missing man's

By BETHANNE GRIFFIN and DAVID CHERNICKY
Staff Writers

SUFFOLK — A body bound by rope and discovered in a marshy area of the James River here Monday has been identified as a 25-year-old Newport News maintenance worker who had been missing for two months.

Brian Craig Pettinger of the first block of Woodhaves Road was identified Tuesday through fingerprints.

His wife, Jackie, reported him missing to Newport News police. He was last seen Dec. 4 at a Hampton dance club where he was training to be a ballroom dance instructor. His wife found his abandoned truck Dec. 6 in the Newmarket North Mall parking lot. Fearing for his life, she appealed for help in finding him in an article in the Dec. 15 Daily Press.

■ Please see Missing, A4



Kennedy gets OK
The Senate on Wednesday unanimously confirmed Anthony M. Kennedy to the Supreme Court. Please see the story on A3.

Sale of motherhood tossed out by court

By ROBERT HANLEY
N.Y. Times News Service

TRIDENTON, N.J. — The New Jersey Supreme Court ruled Wednesday that commercial surrogate-motherhood contracts were illegal but it allowed custody of Melissa Elizabeth Stern, the child at the center of the Baby M case, to remain with her father, William Stern, and his wife, Elizabeth.

Except for upholding the custody decision, the 7-0 opinion overturned all aspects of the ruling in the case last March by Judge Harvey R. Sorkow of State Superior Court.

The ruling restored the parental rights of the baby's mother, Mary Beth Whitehead-Gould, meaning that she can seek a new custody hearing. The justices also threw out Sorkow's order almost a year ago allowing Elizabeth Stern to adopt the baby, who is now 22 months old.

And, having restored Whitehead-Gould's parental rights, they also ordered a new court hearing to set rules for her visits with Melissa. She is now permitted to see the girl two hours a week in a Bergen County youth shelter in Hackensack.

"We thus restore the surrogate contract," the court said. "She is not only the natural mother, but also the legal mother, and is not to be penalized one iota because of the surrogate contract."

The decision is legally binding only in New Jersey, but experts say it is likely to impel the commercial practice of surrogate motherhood. Because it is that practice that has caused this country's only surrogate water for



... now 22 months old

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Today's weather: Chance of rain. High in the 50s. See details on A2.

For more information, call 737-1000.

Plutonium plant reportedly to stay shut

By MATTHEW I. WALD
N.Y. Times News Service

The largest government plant that makes plutonium for nuclear bombs, closed and under intense scrutiny in recent months because of its resemblance to the Soviet Union's Chernobyl reactor, will not be reopened, the Department of Energy has told some legislators on Capitol Hill.

But those who favor reopening the plant, the N Reactor on the Hanford Nuclear Reservation in Washington state, say that the Reagan administration is divided on the issue and that no final decision has been made.

The reactor is at the heart of a nuclear fuel production chain that employs 4,800 workers on the Hanford reservation, nearly all of whom would presumably lose their jobs within months after a permanent shutdown.

The plant has been that since December 1986 for what was initially intended to be six months of safety improvements. The supposedly temporary shutdown came eight months after the explosion at Chernobyl, which, like the Hanford N Reactor, used graphite to help control the flow of neutrons that sustain the chain reaction, the standard commercial design in this country employs water for that purpose.

The N Reactor was opened in 1963 with a dedication ceremony, presided over by President Kennedy, that featured a mock atomic explosion. It was designed for 20 years of operation and now, according to several government studies, shows dangerous signs of aging.

Among the plant's problems is that radiation has caused the

■ Please see Plant, A8