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Parents shop the city's schools

Options: Determined to see their kids succeed, they are doing their homework, seeking out the system's bright spots.

By LIZ BOWIE
SUN STAFF

As a young mother, Chequita Lanier wasn't savvy about the workings of the struggling Baltimore school system, but she was determined to get her two girls a

good education.

She talked administrators into bending the rules so her eldest daughter could go to an elementary school she thought was better than the one in her neighborhood.

She arranged her work schedule to drive her daughters to schools across town for years and enrolled both daughters in an after-school tutoring program at the Johns Hopkins University. Finally, she just picked up and moved. But first, she identified the top scoring schools across the city and then

chose one in Hamilton, a neighborhood she could afford to move to.

She is hardly exceptional. Determined city parents are finding that even in a system with 84 failing schools, pockets of excellence can be found in certain schools and in academic programs.

"If you are a concerned parent, the teachers and administrators really recognize that," Lanier said. "I ran into very few teachers who didn't go the extra mile. They know I will always be there to back them up."

Thousands of students in the city now attend schools that aren't the neighborhood schools they would normally go to, said Stanley Holmes, director of the Office of Student Placement. More than a half-dozen selective high schools such as Polytechnic Institute take students from all over the city. Hundreds of students are attending new public schools that are run by non-profit groups, such as Midtown Academy or the Knowledge Is Power Program school in Northwest Baltimore. And students attending [See Schools, 5A]



KARL MERTON FERRON: SUN STAFF
Chequita Lanier (left) has sought out the best schools the city has to offer for daughters Maryra, 10, and Ruthdasia, 18.

Israeli planes strike in Lebanon

Attack on Hezbollah sites comes after militants kill boy, injure 4 near border

First shelling in area in 8 months

Palestinians must disarm guerrillas if statehood is to advance, Sharon says

By ULI SCHMETZER
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

JERUSALEM — The conflict between Israel and Hezbollah guerrillas in southern Lebanon flared anew yesterday after shells fired by guerrillas killed an Israeli teen-ager and wounded four in the border town of Shlomi. The shelling sparked an attack by Israeli warplanes on suspected Hezbollah positions in southern Lebanon.

Also yesterday, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon told his Cabinet that the U.S.-backed plan for Palestinian statehood would not move ahead until the Palestinians carry out their pledge to dismantle militant groups. The Israeli military chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Moshe Yaalon, said later that Palestinian security forces aren't doing enough to stop attacks.

Palestinian legislator Saeb Erekat said it was the Israelis, not the Palestinians, who were failing to live up to their commitments.

Yesterday's shelling, the third consecutive day of attacks by Hezbollah, lasted an hour along parts of the northern border.

"We have warned Syria and Iran that we hold them responsible for this escalation on our northern border," said Avi Pazner, spokesman for Sharon. He emphasized that Israel has shown "a great measure of restraint" and that the government is working through diplomatic channels to defuse the situation.

Early last night, residents of Shlomi were urged to go to air raid shelters, the first time the army has issued such an order in three years.

Hezbollah, a militant group backed by Syria and Iran, said the shelling was aimed at Israeli planes over southern Lebanon. An Israeli military official declined to comment on the flights but said Hezbollah targeted Israeli communities.

After the shelling of Shlomi and two Israeli towns in the Golan Heights, Israeli warplanes flew into southern Lebanon for the second time in three days, attacking the area from which the guerrillas had fired.

"If the situation continues and the means we currently employ do not work, then the Israeli Defense Forces will do whatever must be done to protect the residents of the [See Mideast, 7A]

Taylor accuses U.S. of rebel aid

On eve of stepping down, Liberian leader declares himself 'sacrificial lamb'

ASSOCIATED PRESS

MONROVIA, Liberia — President Charles Taylor delivered a farewell address yesterday to a nation bloodied by 14 years of war, declaring himself "the sacrificial lamb" to end what he said was a U.S.-backed rebel war against his besieged regime.

Taylor, sitting solemnly with folded hands, recorded the speech in front of a Liberian flag at his home. It was to be broadcast last evening, the night before he was to hand power to Vice President Moses Blah at 11:59 a.m. today.

"I do not stop out of fear. I do not stop out of fright. I stop out of love for you, my people," Taylor said.

"I fought for you," he said. Taylor accused the United States of arming Liberia's rebels, calling it an "American war" and suggesting that it was motivated by U.S. eagerness for Liberia's gold, diamonds and other reserves.

In Washington, a senior Bush administration official said that he was not aware of Taylor's claim but that it would be false to say the United States was arming or funding rebels in Liberia.

Speaking slowly, with a raspy voice, the Liberian leader declared: "I love this country very much. This is why I have decided to sacrifice my presidency."

"They can call off their dogs now," he said. "We can have peace."

It was a goodbye that few would hear [See Liberia, 7A]



KARL MERTON FERRON: SUN STAFF

REVERED RELIC

Cecilia Coffey of Northwest Baltimore places her hand on the case protecting a relic of St. Juan Diego's tilma after Mass at the Basilica of the Assumption. About 400 came to the Basilica yesterday to see the small piece from the cloak that the faithful believe holds the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Baltimore is the 10th of 20 stops on the seven-month Tilma of Tepeyac Tour. (Article, Page 3b)

In pest war, the bug stops here

Beltsville: An expert helps identify harmful insects, preventing their entry into the U.S. and disease outbreaks.

By DENNIS O'BRIEN
SUN STAFF

When he shows up for work, David Nickle usually finds jewelry box-size packages scattered on his office floor, shipped from all over the world.

The contents aren't particularly exotic — at least to the untrained eye.

They're dead bugs, and they are what makes up the working life of Nickle, an entomologist at

the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center.

Termites from France. Katydidids from Afghanistan. Thrips from South America.

Nickle is one of the nation's foremost experts at identifying pests, insects that can cost farmers, gardeners and homeowners billions if left unchecked. His job is to keep as many pests as possible out of the country and to spot potential plagues before they begin.

He does this by identifying whatever is sent — by federal port inspectors, university researchers, farmers and anyone else who finds an unusual bug at home or in an office.

Nickle's tools are his dozens of reference books, a microscope, a storeroom filled with dead bugs



ANDRE F. CHUNG: SUN STAFF
Research entomologist David Nickle specializes in termites, thrips and katydidids (pictured).

and the inventory he keeps in his head from 29 years of studying insects. He specializes in three types: termites, katydidids and thrips, mite-sized insects that feed on fruits, vegetables and other plants.

If you think it's easy, consider this: There are 2,500 species of termites in the world, 4,000 species of thrips and 6,377 species of katydidids, a cricket-like insect named for the sound it makes.

"Learning a fauna of insects takes time, and that's why there's so few experts able to do it," said James L. Castner, an en-

tomologist and consultant who recruited Nickle in the 1980s to help collect and identify rare katydidids in Peru's Amazon rain forest.

Nickle, a soft-spoken man, said he entered entomology because he has been fascinated since his youth by the variety of katydid colors and sizes.

A tour of Nickle's storeroom of bugs confirms this. Here, Nickle shows off a drawer filled with bright-green katydidids as big as a man's fist that he collected in the Amazon. Another drawer holds jet-black ones the size of teardrops that were shipped from Africa.

"It's amazing the variety nature can offer when you look," said Nickle, 59.

Identifying a pest helps federal inspectors determine whether the ship where the bug was found should be quarantined and fumigated. It also helps federal officials determine whether a new type of pest is making its way into a farmer's field or is slipping through on airport baggage.

At stake is [See Bugs, 4A]

Orioles hold on in 9th, defeat Red Sox, 5-3

Reliever Jorge Julio loads the bases in the ninth inning but strikes out Nomar Garciaparra to finish off the Orioles' 5-3 victory in Boston. Jack Cust drives in three runs with a homer and a double. The Orioles took three out of four games in the weekend series. [Page 1c]

World

U.S. soldiers come under grenade attack in Iraq. [Page 6A]

SunSpot

The Sun on the Internet: <http://www.sunspot.net>

The Sun's 166th Year: No. 223



INSIDE



Dancer and actor Gregory Hines dies

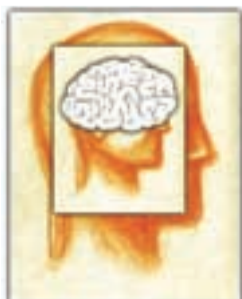
The greatest tap dancer of his generation went from the Apollo Theater at age 6 to stardom on stage, television and in movies. He was 57 and died in Los Angeles of cancer. [Page 1d]

Weather

Warm and humid. High, 83; low, 70. Yesterday's downtown high, 85; low, 72. [Page 8b]

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MEDICINE & SCIENCE



Thanks for the memory

Scientists say mental and physical exercise can slow memory loss that comes with age.

Overfishing woes

The plight of the once-ignored dogfish shows the damage that unmanaged fishing can cause.

ARTICLES, PAGES 10A-11A

Bayfront proposal roils quiet community

Doctor-turned-developer defends Balto. Co. plan

By JOE NAWROZKI
SUN STAFF

Along Holly Neck peninsula's quiet shores, Leonard P. Berger has become known as a wealthy interloper, a deal-maker with his own private jet, Porsche convertible and a small real estate empire.

Berger will, people complain, forever alter their waterfront Shangri-La, eventually building \$1 million homes and shattering

a peaceful reverie some in the eastern Baltimore County community have enjoyed for decades.

"Berger's played the game, he's a big-time developer," said Neil Schmidt, a retired Baltimore firefighter who has resided on Holly Neck for 30 years. "Now he's going to cause a major disruption here, no doubt about it."

On Aug. 4, the County Council passed legislation that will allow Berger to build 110 upscale homes on the bucolic land that sits on the Chesapeake Bay and Middle River. Most of the homes will be connected "villa" clusters

and built on the bayfront or where woodland and small farm patches now stand.

But opponents in the community warn of inadequate infrastructure such as roads and sewer system. And, they say, the rural character of Holly Neck would be drastically changed by the project.

The bill had the blessing of County Executive James T. Smith Jr. Holly Neck residents believe officials juggled zoning laws in Berger's favor because of his wealth and political connections.

Berger, 68, [See Berger, 5A]