



# Bubble bursts

Illinois misses out on NCAA tournament, heads to NIT with ISU instead. **SPORTS, D1, D5**

See the 65-team NCAA bracket and make predictions. **D5, A6**



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## SEEING GREEN

Local students share St. Patrick's Day art.

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# Journal Star

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# HUMBLE HEROES



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Bringing a little levity to the room, Chancellor Booth, 7, squirms with embarrassment as his father, Manual Rams coach Derrick Booth, introduces him and the rest of the ballboys during a welcome home rally for the team at Manual High on Sunday. The Rams took second place in the Illinois High School Association's Class 2A tournament Saturday with a championship game loss to Robinson.

## Rams celebrate Class 2A second-place finish with humility — and a big parade

**PEORIA** It didn't matter that they didn't win the nail biter overtime state championship game Saturday night at Carver Arena. Manual High School's proud — but humble — basketball team came home to a heroes' welcome Sunday morning.

With lights flashing, sirens blaring and horns honking, the team, cheerleaders and fans paraded through town atop firetrucks and in dozens of cars en route to a celebratory pep rally in the Manual gym. "They're coming!" yelled Mary Lou Jaeger, a freshmen English teacher at Manual, as the proces-

sion turned the corner onto Griswold Street, within view of the waiting crowd of family and fans in front of the school.

About 500 community members attended the rally, which offered some closure to a great season for the Rams. The team, for the second time in three years, placed second in the Illinois High School Association Class 2A state tournament.

"We are proud of you, now say,

Please see **MANUAL**, Page A9



Manual High School sophomore Isaiah Duncan greets fans after riding a firetruck through town Sunday with his fellow Rams during the parade.

Story by **RUTH LONGORIA KINGSLAND** ♦ Photographs by **LESLIE RENKEN** ♦ of the Journal Star

## Fire damages Childers Banquet and Event Center

Owner says half of dining room should be operable by Thursday

**BY LAUREN REES**  
OF THE JOURNAL STAR

**PEORIA** — A fire at Childers Banquet and Event Center late Saturday caused an estimated \$70,000 damage. Firefighters were dispatched to the banquet center, 3113 N. Dries Lane, about 11 p.m. and found flames on the building's roof, the Fire Department said. Crews found the fire in the attic of the building and had the blaze under

control within 15 minutes.

The banquet center has been open less than a year. Owner Ed Childers said he wasn't sure whether the Fire Department's \$70,000 damage estimate is accurate.

"We just don't know the number yet," he said. Damage was mainly to the roof and some ceilings, but Childers said the biggest issue is smoke damage.

At least half the dining room should be repaired and ready by Thursday, when the banquet center will host a

Please see **FIRE**, Page A9

**AT RIGHT: A fire occurred late Saturday at Childers Banquet and Event Center, causing an estimated \$70,000 damage, mainly to the roof and ceilings. The cause is under investigation.**



**PATRICK TRAYLOR/JOURNAL STAR**

## Killer commits suicide

Tony Smith kills himself in prison two days into life sentence for murder

**BY GARY L. SMITH**  
OF THE JOURNAL STAR

**LACON** — Convicted murderer Tony Smith of Lacon committed suicide Saturday in a state prison cell to which he had been transferred just two days earlier to begin serving a life sentence.

Smith's death comes after an unsuccessful attempt to hang himself in the Marshall County Jail on Thursday, just before his transfer to Stateville Correctional Facility.

His passing will give the soul of victim Judith Berchtold "a chance to rest in peace," a family member said Sunday.

Although details remained unclear, Marshall County State's Attorney Paul Bauer confirmed Sunday afternoon he had been notified late Saturday that Smith, 40, had apparently killed himself.

"I hope to find out more details from (the Department of Corrections) Monday morning," Bauer said. Smith, 40, was found guilty of first-degree murder last month in the brutal shotgun slaying of estranged girlfriend Judith Berchtold, 49, in Sparland last April. Circuit Judge Stephen Kouri sentenced him March 4 to natural life in prison without parole.

Smith was saved by Marshall County Jail personnel during his suicide attempt Thursday. He was taken by ambulance to a Princeton hospital and then released for transport to Stateville, Sheriff Rob Russell said Thursday.

Russell could not be reached Sunday, and a dispatcher said there would be no further comment from his office until further information is received from the DOC.

DOC spokeswoman Januaria Smith deferred questions to Will County Coroner Patrick O'Neil, who did not return calls Sunday.

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**TONY SMITH**



## ACTOR PASSES

"Mission: Impossible" star Peter Graves dies of apparent heart attack at age 83.

**PEOPLE, C4**

## SHORT ON VOTES

House Democrats confident they will pass health bill but admit they lack the votes.

**NATION, PAGE A2**



## CLASSIC TUNES

Willie Nelson and family rock the Peoria Civic Center. Read a review inside.

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## HEART HEALTH

Many Americans with leaky heart valves soon might be able to get them fixed without open-heart surgery.

**NATION, PAGE A10**

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