

Monkey invasion on the horizon?

Whitley: Orlando unlikely to have a 'Planet of the Apes' situation. **B1**



Disney celebrates 50th Earth Day

Animal Kingdom to host five days of activities to mark anniversary. **A2**



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Dems face test from minority voters

Election calendar shifts to nonwhite citizens in Nevada, South Carolina

BY BILL BARROW AND TOM FOREMAN JR.
Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. — For I.S. Leevy Johnson, the Democrats' search for a challenger to take on President Donald Trump is personal.

"There is what I call an 'ABT

mood' in the black community: Anybody but Trump," said Johnson, 77, and the first black graduate of the University of South Carolina's law school. "It has people of color very motivated and excited about voting this time because they know how his administration has adversely affected them."

Now, as the election calendar turns to Nevada and South Carolina, states with substantial minority populations, that "anybody" moves closer to being iden-

tified. But the next stage in the nominating fight will test candidates such as Sens. Bernie Sanders of Vermont and Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota, and Pete Buttigieg, the former mayor of South Bend, Indiana. Their success thus far has come in front of overwhelmingly white electorates in Iowa and New Hampshire.

It's also a potential last comeback opportunity for former Vice President Joe Biden. He finished poorly in those first two contests but argues he has durable support

among the minority voters who will soon make their choices.

Nevada's caucuses are Saturday and will feature a growing population of Latinos, African Americans, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. Yet no single place in the early going is as important as South Carolina. Up to two-thirds of voters in the Feb. 29 primary could be African American. Biden, more than any other candidate, must show he can win their allegiance.

One candidate who will not be

tested in Nevada or South Carolina is Mike Bloomberg, the billionaire and former New York mayor. Bloomberg has spent heavily from his personal fortune in states with sizable minority populations that will vote in the March 3 primaries. The Super Tuesday contests are the first where his name will appear on the ballot.

It adds up to a muddled field that lacks clarity even after Iowa

Please turn to **VOTERS, A5**

Preschool in Orlando enrolls kids with cancer

BY KATE SANTICH

When 3-year-old Lorna Abdulfattah was able to go to preschool last fall, it was "like a bird being let out of a cage," her father said.

"She was so excited," said Valencia physics professor Ali Abdulfattah. "For more than a year, she hadn't been able to go anywhere outside the hospital."

Diagnosed at age 2 with leukemia, Lorna, like many toddlers with cancer, had to avoid public parks, shopping malls, restaurants, festivals or day care centers — anywhere her suppressed immune system might be exposed to other kids' germs.

But a new preschool in Orlando, The Morgan Center, has opened especially for such children. Free to any young cancer patient referred by his or her doctor, the facility has strict hygiene protocols — including the use of sanitary wipes and hand sanitizer, rigorous daily cleaning of the classrooms and playrooms, individual toys and crayons that are not shared among children, and ensuring that no one with symptoms of a cold or flu virus is permitted to enter.

And because every child there is battling cancer, everyone understands the threat.

"When children on chemotherapy are exposed to other children, a simple cold or flu bug can become life threatening," said Rod Zuch, a marketing and advertising executive who founded The Morgan Center with his wife, Nancy. "While their peers are learning to laugh, play and make friends in a preschool setting, they cannot. It adds insult to injury."

The Zuchs, from Long Island, New York, know this as well as anyone.

In fall 2000, their 2-year-old daughter, Morgan, was diagnosed with cancer. She spent the next 2 1/2 years in and out of chemotherapy, undergoing treatment at least once and often twice a week, and periodically hospitalized for weeks or months on end.

During those years, her only "friends" were the doctors, nurses, social workers, other young cancer patients at the hospital and her older brother.

"When we were at the hospital, Morgan would sometimes be allowed in a playroom with another child, and I realized, 'Well, this is OK, because they live in the same world of limited exposure,'" Nancy Zuch said. "That's when I told Rod: I want to start a preschool."

It wouldn't happen until Morgan had finished treatment and was off, healthy, to kindergarten.

Please turn to **PRESCHOOL, A10**



MIKE EHRMANN/GETTY

RAINED OUT

The United States Air Force Thunderbirds perform a flyover during the NASCAR Cup Series 62nd annual Daytona 500 at Daytona International Speedway on Sunday in Daytona Beach. The race was later postponed due to inclement weather. **For additional coverage, see Sports C1.**

City airport interchange to undergo overhaul

Major reconstruction to address congestion at Beachline, SR 436

BY KEVIN SPEAR

The always-busy interchange at the north entrance of Orlando International Airport is poised for major, fast-track reconstruction that will render State Road 436 ramps more accommodating and the Beachline wider.

With only two lanes in each direction and carrying as many as 78,000 vehicles a day, the Beachline at S.R. 436 suffers chronic backups at rush hours. The interchange overhaul will ease that congestion by adding a lane in each direction.



JOE BURBANK/ORLANDO SENTINEL

A United flight taxis to the gate at Orlando International Airport on Thursday. An airport interchange is slated for major reconstruction.

Some of the ramps connecting S.R. 436 and the Beachline handle more than 10,000 vehicles daily. Ramps will be widened and will be transformed from tight curves within the interchange to longer runs with more gentle turns.

Overall, the interchange is more constantly busy than many other major crossroads in the region as it serves as the main entrance to Orlando's airport, which is the nation's 10th busiest

Please turn to **AIRPORT, A5**

Shadix enters Seminole contest

Possible land swap prompts challenge to Commissioner Dallari

BY MARTIN E. COMAS

Wildlife activist Katrina Shadix, who lost a Seminole County Commission race by a razor-thin margin in 2018, said she was spurred to run again after commissioners agreed to consider a land swap with developer Chris Dorworth over



Shadix



Dorworth



Dallari

his controversial River Cross development project in Seminole's rural boundary.

In what likely will be a barn burner of a political contest, Shadix, a Democrat, has filed to challenge incumbent Republican Bob Dallari in the Nov. 3 election.

"I had a ton of people come out and say: 'Please, please run for County Commission,'" said Shadix, 52. "I want developers to make money — to make a ton of money. But I want smart development, in areas where we don't have to tear down trees."

Dallari, who was first elected in 2004 and is seeking a fifth term, said he has always supported protecting Seminole's rural area, which covers nearly a third of the county and where development is limited to one home on at least 3 acres. In 2018, he said he wanted to get bumper stickers that say: "Keep the rural area rural."

"I can tell you, I've always been very transparent with the citizens," said Dallari, 60. "And I plan on running on the same principles that I've always have: Quality development ... And support of the rural

Please turn to **SHADIX, A8**

YOUR NATION, YOUR WORLD

Accounts of terror rise in Haiti

Gangs and crime are rampant as the president's powers weaken amid the parliament's indefinite shutdown. **A3**

Rockets hit near Baghdad embassy

Officials report zero casualties in the latest attack in a series of strikes on Iraqi bases housing U.S. troops. **A4**

Stop-and-frisk faces fresh scrutiny

Presidential candidate Bloomberg's take on controversial policing method brings it back to the forefront. **A8**



THE MORGAN CENTER/COURTESY PHOTOS

Program coordinator Tracy Benizzi, left, reads to preschooler Maximus Yuson at The Morgan Center in Orlando.

PRESCHOOL
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But in 2003, the Zuchs opened The Morgan Center, a nonprofit organization, in New York — the nation's first preschool for children with cancer. Nancy was its director and lone full-time employee, but eventually the Zuchs began fielding inquiries from other communities interested in duplicating their model.

The most persistent of those inquiries came from Arnold Palmer Hospital for Children in Orlando.

"It really provides children with cancer the same opportunity that other kids who aren't battling something have," said the hospital's president, Cary D'Ortona. "I think it's also critically important for those parents — because they're going through something that they never planned for — and they need that opportunity to connect with other families in similar situations."

The center opened last October and by January had 10 children enrolled. They come three times a week, from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

The center could accept more children — perhaps 30 or 40 in all — but the Zuchs say word has spread slowly. Until now, they have relied mostly on doctors and nurses from local pediatric hospitals to inform eligible families, and preschool is not the health care providers' top priority.

Yet according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, preschool-aged children experience "profound biological brain development" — achieving 90% of their adult brain volume by age 6. Although young patients are notably resilient in cancer recovery, cognitive challenges can persist even after kids have finished treatment.

The Zuchs are working to



Morgan Zuch, now 21, leads a graduation procession at The Morgan Center in New York in 2019. Behind her is her mom and center co-founder Nancy Zuch.

raise the final \$70,000 of their \$330,000 opening-year budget for the Orlando center, but they have been impressed with the support from local hospitals, they said.

"The parents don't pay a dime, and that's important," Nancy said. "One parent often has to stop working when a child is going through cancer. And there are out-of-pocket expenses."

Tracy Benizzi, The Morgan Center's Orlando program coordinator, watched her own son blossom in the New York program — an experience that prompted her to return to school, earn a master's in special education and apply for a job with the organization.

"You don't go through that and then just go back to doing what you used to do," she said. "It changes you. It was amazing to see him do things with other children. He made his first friend at The Morgan Center, and he still keeps in touch with some of the kids he met there" — although he's now in his late teens.

She, too, made lasting

friendships at the center, bonding with other parents who understood their kindred journey. Because the center requires a parent or other caregiver to stay on campus while the child attends — a condition imposed by the center's insurance carrier for liability reasons — the Zuchs said parents end up forming unofficial support groups.

Meanwhile, the girl who inspired it all — the Zuchs' daughter, Morgan — is now 21, a senior at private Marist College in Poughkeepsie, New York, an honor student in psychology and special education, and a scholarship athlete in rowing. She has been cancer free for 11 years and counting.

"When your child gets sick, you sit there and go, 'Why did this happen?'" Rod Zuch said. "For us, the answer is right here. You see the kids here, and they're smiling and laughing and just being kids. It's like we're giving them back a part of their childhood."

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