

TALLAHASSEE DEMOCRAT

Sunday, February 21, 2010

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TODAY

LIVING & THE ARTS



Margaret Atwood shares her take on apocalyptic fiction at FSU on Monday night.

Page 1D

Hinson's column: So, what did you bring for me?



Page 1D

LOCAL

More than 200 attend 25th Annual Alzheimer's Disease Education and Training Conference for a day of education and sharing.

Page 3A

The 49th annual ADDY Awards Gala honors Tallahassee's best advertising agencies.

Page 5A

NEWS ON THE GO

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INDEX


Business.....4B Lottery.....2A

Classifieds.....9D Nation.....13A

Crossword.....3D Obituaries.....8A

Editorials.....2B Television.....4D

Horoscope.....11D Zing!.....1B

 Today: Low 60s
Tonight: Mid-50s
Rain: 30%
Weather: 8C

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Shortage of havens a challenge for abuse victims

“Sometimes the unknown scary is better than the known scary”



Tere Craig-Garren is a survivor who has lived in the Refuge House emergency shelter, transitional housing and is now in permanent housing.

GLENN BEIL/Democrat

By David Sáez
DEMOCRAT STAFF WRITER

As she drove from her home in Jacksonville, Tere Craig-Garren was too relieved to think about where she and her four children would sleep the day she broke free from an abusive marriage.

As she found herself singing aloud to the radio in a 20-year-old Crown Victoria filled with her kids and several garbage bags of clothes and toys, the future felt distant.

All she knew was that her sister, a Tallahassee resident, had made arrangements for them to stay with Refuge House, the nonprofit organization that provides emergency shelter for domestic violence victims. She couldn't take her family to the Jacksonville shelter because her husband's job had involved

working on that building, so she felt compelled to leave the area where she'd lived for 20 years.

Moving in with her sister was not an option; there, her husband was sure to find them. Craig-Garren had no idea she'd find herself living in an emergency shelter for about 11 months and then two-and-a-half years in transitional housing before finally getting to more permanent housing in June 2008.

“Sometimes the unknown scary (of uncertain housing) is better than the known scary (of domestic violence),” Craig-Garren said.

Her progression from emergency shelter to transitional housing to permanent home represents how the system is supposed to work for domestic violence victims.

The lack of housing that currently exists in the Big Bend — at all levels — is a threat to survivors seeking to be as successful. While the

Please see UNKNOWN, 10A

 SUNDAY PRINTEXCLUSIVE

NEXT SUNDAY

Reporter TaMarny Waters, who spent nights at The Shelter and HOPE Community, examines Tallahassee's homeless issue and shares her first-hand account of what's being done to help.

A Democrat editor talks about her experience with domestic abuse

The verbal abuse started before we were married, in high school in fact, and I made excuses for him from the beginning.



Rebecca Cantley

Content Editor

I was standing in the kitchen talking on the phone, my life's pursuit at that time. I don't remember what I did or what I said, but he yelled “I can't stand you” and hung up.

My mom was beside me, and she heard him. Through the phone and 3 feet away, she heard him. She stared at me. We were both shocked. I was embarrassed.

“Becky, that's not right. He shouldn't talk to you that way,” she said.

No one up until that point had ever spoken to me in pure rage.

“I ... I know, but I'm sure he didn't mean it.” I stammered.

The cordless phone, still in my hand, rang. It was him. He was sorry.

That was the first time I covered for him, but it certainly wouldn't be the last. I was 16 years old.

‘I keep up a good face’

Fast forward to 2006, and I am in Tallahassee, starting a new job in a town where I know only three people: my then-husband, my boss and a friend with whom I worked at a previous newspaper.

I am 28 years old, but I feel 80. I have been married about six years, and I am no longer the outgoing, exuberant girl I used to be. I keep up a good face at work, but at home, I am mostly silent. I feel defeated, tormented and

Please see ABUSE, 10A

Sen. Thrasher new chair of Florida Republican Party

By Bill Cotterell
FLORIDA CAPITAL BUREAU

ORLANDO — State Sen. John Thrasher, a veteran Tallahassee insider, won the Florida Republican Party chairmanship Saturday with a promise to put \$1 million in the depleted GOP treasury and unite the party for an aggressive campaign against “the liberal media and Democrats” in a tough election year.

His description of “enemies” drew a swift rebuke from state Senate minority leader Al Lawson, D-Tallahassee, who declined to congratulate his legislative colleague. Lawson, who chairs the 14-member Democratic caucus in the Senate, said he would demand Thrasher's removal as chairman of the Senate Ethics and Elections Committee — which the Jacksonville-area lawmaker said he's already decided to give up.

“The dark saga of the Republican Party of Florida is over,” said Dan Abel, the Leon County GOP chairman. “Now we can get back to the job we do best — electing Republicans.”

Many of the 224 state committee members attending a specially called meeting echoed such sentiments about the departure of ex-Chairman Jim Greer, who convened the meeting and impassively worked through parliamentary steps, then left as soon as Thrasher was elected. Greer drew polite applause when he said, “We're proud of what we've accomplished the past three years.”

He was driven out by a drumbeat of financial scandals, many involving lavish spending on chartered jets, trips to spas and resorts, party spending on gifts and expensive dinners and a secret contract Greer entered into with Delmar Johnson, the former party executive

Please see THRASHER, 2A

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