

Scammer faces 40 years

A 22-year-old Chesterfield man pled guilty in federal court earlier this month to cheating around 350 victims out of more than \$8 million.

James E. Brown Jr. faces up to 40 years in prison for mail fraud and money laundering and could be ordered to pay as much as \$16 million in fines for

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each of the two charges. According to a statement in his recent plea agreement, Brown said he told victims he was an expert in trading on the Foreign Currency Exchange Market FOREX and promised to double their money every 30 days. His victims included individuals, churches and small businesses. But, instead of investing the money in FOREX, Brown bought a fleet of luxury cars and other extravagancies. He admitted to taking in about \$8 million from November 2005 until last September.

Brown is scheduled to be sentenced on Mar. 14.

Teen gang member sentenced

A Chesterfield teen will serve six months in jail for burning a gang symbol into the arm of another teenager.

Chesterfield Circuit Court Judge Michael C. Allen sentenced Devonda F. Davis, 19, to 10 years in prison, but suspended nine years and six months of the sentence due to her age and her admission of the crime. Davis has already served five months in jail, so she should be released next month.

Davis is the first adult gang member convicted in the county under Virginia's crime-street-gang statute.

What is art?

A Monacan High School art teacher was recently placed on paid administrative leave after school officials learned of a video showing the unusual way he creates artwork in his spare time. According to an ACLU source, the suspension took place after officials viewed a video clip on www.YouTube.com that shows Stephen Murmer painting with his buttocks and genitals. Murmer is disguised in the clip and uses an alias.

The school system won't discuss specifics of the investigation because it's a personnel matter.

Brandermill blaze still under investigation

The cause of an early morning fire that destroyed a Brandermill home on Dec. 9 is still unknown. But, firefighters have determined why it was harder than usual to put out the fire.

According to county officials, firefighters encountered low water pressure when they arrived at 14311 Huntgate Woods Road to extinguish a fire that had engulfed the home's attached garage.

After an investigation, it was learned that a

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Historically, the county administrator has been paid more than the superintendent.

During a recent interview regarding Ramsey and Newsome's salaries, Public Affairs Director Don Kappel said the board has not decided firmly on Ramsey's compensation.

School Board Chairman Marshall Trammell was unhappy when he was asked about the salaries of Newsome, Cannaday and Ramsey. Referring to the executive session in which county board members recently discussed Ramsey's pay, he said, "I think someone may have violated the law [by leaking the information] so you can put that in your article."

The agenda for last week's board meeting listed "a closed session pursuant to Section 2.2-3711(A)(1), Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, relating to the performance of a specific employee of the county."

Trammell pointed out that while Newsome slightly out earns Ramsey when comparing

16-inch valve had been installed in 1983 in a partially open position, allowing enough water pressure for residential use but not enough for fire fighting. The utilities department says it hasn't received any complaints from the 42 homes being served by the water line with the valve.

The family reported the fire shortly after 2 a.m. when they were awakened by a smoke detector. Firefighters had the blaze under control around 5:40 a.m.

No injuries were reported, but the house sustained extensive damage. The greater Richmond chapter of the American Red Cross assisted the five-member family following the fire.

Local gun shop targeted

New York City is suing the Bob Moates Sports Shop on Hull Street Road, alleging the store sells guns illegally.

The shop is one of three Virginia gun shops named in a federal lawsuit recently filed by the city. Shops in Georgia, Ohio, Pennsylvania and South Carolina are also listed as defendants.

The lawsuit alleges the shops are allowing criminals to purchase guns, which are later used to commit crimes in New York City. City officials say over 300 guns recovered from crime scenes between January 1994 and 2002 can be traced back to the 12 defendants named in the suit.

Teacher pleads guilty to sex charges

A former North Carolina teacher recently pled guilty to Internet sex charges in Chesterfield Circuit Court.

Police say Randy Scott Jennings, of Mount Holly, N.C., e-mailed pornography to a Chesterfield detective who was posing as a 13-year-old girl on the Internet.

Jennings was indicted last month on three counts of producing and distributing child pornography, one count of soliciting a minor and one count of attempted indecent liberties with a child.

He was arrested in July at East Gaston High School where he taught business education and coached tennis and girls' basketball. Gaston County Public Schools fired Jennings one day after his arrest.

Jennings is expected to be sentenced on Feb. 20.

Teen sentenced for home invasion

A 19-year-old Chesterfield teen will serve 38 years in prison for killing a man during a home invasion last December.

Cavell D. West shot Gary W. Wooten Jr. in the head on Dec. 6 last year after he and an accomplice kicked in Wooten's front door at his home on Telstar Drive.

West was convicted of murder, burglary and firearms charges last September.

West's co-defendant, Rockney Molinar, was sentenced to 33 years on Nov. 29.

salary, deferred salary and vehicle expense, the county administrator actually earns more when Ramsey's Bull & Bear membership and bonus are factored in. Newsome's contract does not allow him to earn a bonus.

"We advertised nationwide to get the best after Billy [Cannaday] left," Trammell explained. "You can't get the best cheaper. In government service, people are not rewarded for longevity. The only way to make more is to move from one [school] system to another. When [Ramsey] retires, unless the county hires from within, they'll have to compete, and that will cost more."

Ramsey has held his job since 1987.

Newsome has two PhDs. Earlier this year, Frank Barham, executive director of the Virginia School Board Association, who aided in Chesterfield's search for superintendent, said there were few candidates who met the qualifications the county school board was seeking.

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