

A LOOK BACK

In Healdsburg, county's first woman police chief reflects on career, retirement
Empire Sunday



EARTH DAY AT 40

The evolution of an environmental movement **Green Living**

PAYBACK AS GIANTS BEAT L.A., 9-0 **Sports**

With devoted girlfriend by his side, Healdsburg High grad left quadriplegic by river diving accident begins building new life

A journey together



Photos by CHRISTOPHER CHUNG / The Press Democrat

THERAPY SESSION: Brianna Angell and Honza Ripa talk with physical therapist Susan Wiegman about Honza's progress at the neurological rehabilitation clinic at Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital last week. Since being injured in June, Ripa has progressed from having no function below his neck to regaining some movement in his arms and legs.

By GUY KOVNER

THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

They were together on a sun-splashed Russian River beach the day Honza Ripa's life took a traumatic turn.

He dove into the green water and found he could not move. His neck was broken and he nearly drowned.

Brianna Angell was there as Healdsburg teens hauled Honza from the river, bringing their post-graduation idyll to a grim end and sending him by helicopter to the Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital emergency room.

Throughout his long recovery and rehabilitation at hospitals in Santa Rosa and San Jose, Brianna, 17, stood by Honza and helped raise thousands of dollars for the 6-foot-3 former star golfer who was paralyzed from the neck down in the diving accident 10 months ago. Honza, 18, a gregarious athlete

now adjusting to life in a body that will barely do his bidding, still has Brianna to lean on, literally and figuratively.

The young couple, a lanky blond quadriplegic and a petite brunette, plan to move in together this summer in Santa Rosa and attend classes at Santa Rosa Junior College.

They are in love, they said, and intended to live together eventually. The decision was made about two months ago.

"We figured why not now?" said Honza, who turns 19 on Thursday.

"I was getting older and not wanting to live with my parents anymore," Brianna said.

They met at Healdsburg High in September 2008 and have been together ever since. Honza graduated in May; Brianna graduates June 4, three weeks after she turns 18.

Honza's mother, Katka Ripova, understands their motivation. "Everybody else wants to start their

TURN TO **JOURNEY**, PAGE A9



BACK ON THE LINKS: Honza Ripa, left, critiques Healdsburg High golfer Joshua Sumpter's swing at the driving range of the Healdsburg Golf Club at Tayman Park last week. Ripa, who was a star golfer at the high school, is serving as assistant coach, handling the junior varsity squad.



For a photo gallery on Honza Ripa, go to **pressdemocrat.com**

AIR TRAVEL CRISIS DEEPENS IN EUROPE

Obama, other leaders cancel trip to Polish president's funeral; volcano ash plume continues to force flight bans

By ANTHONY FAIOLA and KARLA ADAM
WASHINGTON POST

LONDON — An air-travel crisis caused by a volcanic cloud from Iceland escalated sharply Saturday, with President Barack Obama and other world leaders forced to cancel plans to attend the Polish president's funeral and millions of passengers from Washington to New Delhi left stranded by a bottleneck that could last for weeks.

Across Europe, commercial flight bans were in force in 24 countries, with some closing airports through Monday. But as majestic Eyjafjallajokull volcano continued an eruption that began Wednesday, the reality was dawning that air access to much of the region could be cut off for far longer, with potentially severe consequences for aviation-related industries and businesses dependent on air freight, such as those dealing in perishable goods.

Concerns have also been raised that a long period of closures and delays could affect the pace of European economic recovery when it already is lagging behind that of the United States.

On Saturday, no end seemed in sight. Even when the eruption does stop, experts said, the high-altitude plumes of grit, which can cause jet engines to fail, could take at least two days to disperse.

"We're at the mercy of when the volcano dies down," said Graeme Leitch, of Britain's national weather agency. "It's up to the gods how long

TURN TO **ASH**, PAGE A10

"It's up to the gods how long this goes on for."

GRAEME LEITCH, Britain's national weather agency

INSIDE

Flight cancellations stranding musicians, celebrities **A2**



Sen. Barbara Boxer and Attorney General Jerry Brown spoke Saturday at the state Democratic convention in Los Angeles.

Defiant Democrats seek momentum at state convention

By MICHAEL R. BLOOD
ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES — Democrats facing a tough election year dared Republicans on Saturday to challenge them on issues from Wall Street regulations to health care overhaul, testing what they hope will be a winning message with most voters in the fall.

Democrats at the state party's annual convention had a brash message at a time when polls show President Barack Obama's popularity slipping and party candidates in tight races across the country: Bring it on.

"Democrats are for protecting the peoples' interest; Republicans are protecting the special interests. Democrats are protecting consumers and small businesses on Main Street; Republicans are protecting big banks on Wall Street," House Speaker Nancy Pelosi told more than 1,000 cheering delegates inside the Los Angeles Convention Center.

"That is our fight," Pelosi said.

TURN TO **DEMOCRATS**, PAGE A8

Despite funding boost, nursing homes cut back

Probe finds money meant for patient care used to improve state facilities' bottom line

By CHRISTINA JEWETT and AGUSTIN ARMENDARIZ
CALIFORNIA WATCH

California's nursing homes have received \$880 million in additional funding from a 2004 state law designed to help hire more caregivers and boost wages.

But 232 homes, including one in

Cloverdale, did just the opposite. They either cut staff, paid lower wages or let caregiver levels slip below a state-mandated minimum, a California Watch investigation has found.

The homes that made these cuts collected about \$236 million through 2008, the last year of available data. That's more than a quarter of the total Medi-Cal funding increase shared by the state's nursing homes. But the law that made the extra money possible included few safeguards to ensure that pa-

tient care improved.

Many nursing homes appeared to use the cash infusion to help bolster their bottom lines, according to a California Watch analysis of state nursing home data. Among the 131 homes that cut staff by 2008, the median profit was 35 percent more than other homes in the analysis.

At the same time, the analysis shows, about two dozen homes that made the deepest caregiver cuts had about one-third more deficiencies than other state facilities. State inspectors noted a litany of

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violations that included neglecting bedsores and giving patients the wrong drugs.

The revenue increases to nursing homes were not renewed last year because of opposition from patient advocates, but nursing home executives have been pushing to restore the funding. State Sen.

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SANTA ROSA
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THE WEATHER, **B12**



GOLDMAN SUIT COULD BOOST INVESTOR SUSPICIONS
SEC legal action could prompt more claims against Wall Street giant, others in financial industry / **A6**

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