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as Wake skipper, B1

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NATION

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Details/Page B6



MAKAYLA BROWN Kindergarten
Clover Garden Elementary School

5 MINUTE
TIMES

► NATION

You wouldn't know it by the Tax Day rhetoric, but Americans are paying lower taxes this year, even with increases passed by many states to balance their budgets. Don't expect it to last. **A6**

Gov. Joe Manchin on Wednesday ordered the immediate inspection of all underground coal mines in West Virginia after an explosion last week killed 29 miners and injured two. **A6**

► WORLD

Iraqi security forces disrupted a 9/11-style plot by al-Qaida in Iraq to fly hijacked planes into Shiite religious shrines, Iraqi and U.S. officials said Wednesday. **A7**



Soldiers and civilians used shovels and their bare hands to dig through collapsed buildings in search of survivors after strong earthquakes struck a mountainous Tibetan region of China on Wednesday, killing at least 589 people and injuring more than 10,000. **A7**

► STATE

Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer let a packed room at Duke Law School on Wednesday in on the secret to make it through Senate confirmation to the nation's highest court. **C2**

► PEOPLE

Nas says he's focusing on music and his children after striking a deal to dismiss a civil contempt charge against him. **A2**



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THINGS TO DO
Wine tastings, VolksFolks and more.

ELECTION 2010

The primary is upon us. Follow the latest election news with our special section.



Students treated to Q&A with orbiting astronauts



Gibsonville Elementary School students wave to the crew of Mission STS-131 aboard the orbiting International Space Station on Wednesday via satellite at Eastern Guilford High School. The school was one of two in the United States chosen to have a Q&A with the astronauts.

Photos by Sam Roberts / Times-News

A conversation in the COSMOS

By Roselee Papandrea
Times-News

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GIBSONVILLE — Four astronauts dressed in bright blue shirts and khaki pants popped up on a large screen in Eastern Guilford High's auditorium Wednesday afternoon, and the room filled with more than 700 students fell silent.

"How do you hear me?" asked Eastern Guilford Principal Gregory Slate.

"We hear you loud and clear and welcome aboard the International Space Station," said NASA astronaut Alan Poindexter, 48, commander of space shuttle STS-1,

as three other astronauts aboard the space station orbiting 220 miles above the Earth waved to the students.

The simple gesture was met



Eastern Guilford junior Brandon Fowler, left, waits to ask the space station astronauts a question Wednesday via satellite.

with laughs.

It was an historic moment for teachers and students at Guilford County Schools, especially for the 20 students, who ranged from third grade to 12th grade, that were selected to ask the astronauts questions.

"You are about to talk to astronauts on one of the last four shuttle missions ever," Slate told the students moments before the program started. "... This is

See COSMOS
CONVERSATION / Page A2

Obama space plan rankles some NASA legends

By Seth Borenstein
The Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — Call it NASA: The Next Generation. The president is pointing America toward a new direction in space, and some heroes from NASA's long-ago glory days don't like it.

New rockets to the moon have been canceled. And the space shuttles are about to be mothballed.

Instead, the Obama administration wants to rely more on private companies to fly into space over the next few years, while also working to develop a big, new government rocket ship.

But the plan lacks details, and neither a specific initial destination nor a spacecraft has been settled on.

The old space hands aren't buying it. From Neil Armstrong, the first

man on the moon, to the last astronaut to leave his footprints there, many Apollo-era space veterans are upset. They especially don't like President Barack Obama's cancellation of former President George W. Bush's return-to-the-moon mission. They accuse Obama of abandoning American leadership in space to the

See RANKLES LEGENDS / Page A2

Arizona weighs tough immigration law

By Jonathan J. Cooper
The Associated Press

PHOENIX — Civil rights activists on Wednesday warned that Arizona is inviting rampant racial profiling and police-state tactics if it enacts what would be the toughest law in the nation against illegal immigrants.

The measure — on the verge of approval in the Legislature — would make it a crime under state law to be in the country illegally. It would also require local police officers to question people about their immigration status if there is reason to suspect they are illegal.

Immigrants unable to produce documents showing they are allowed to be in the U.S. could be arrested, jailed for up to six months

See IMMIGRANT LAW / Page A2



The Associated Press

Protesters march in front of the Arizona House building Tuesday in Phoenix, where legislators were meeting to take up the issue of a tough new immigration enforcement bill.

Jury awards nearly \$2 million

2008 crash killed
one woman, severely
injured another

By Keren Rivas
Times-News

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GRAHAM — An Alamance County jury awarded a 71-year-old woman an \$1,975,000 in compensation for injuries she sustained during a 2008 car accident in Burlington that killed her mother-in-law.

Ann Propst Stoffel was severely injured May 21, 2008, when a FedEx truck driven by Christopher Adam

West collided head-on with her 1996 Chrysler mini van on N.C. 62

as West was attempting to turn left onto Old Glencoe Road. Stoffel's mother-in-law, 88-year-old Virginia Stoffel, who was a passenger in the minivan, died from injuries suffered in the accident.

Raleigh attorney Hoyt Tessener filed a lawsuit in Alamance County Superior Civil Court five months after the accident on behalf of Ann Stoffel and against West and FedEx. Though the complaint asked for a minimum of \$10,000 in damages, Senior Resident Superior Court Judge J.B. Allen Jr. said Tessener asked for over \$3 million during his argument to the jury.

Allen said the defendants' attorneys, Mat Skidmore and Bryan Simpson, also of Raleigh, admitted

See JURY AWARDS / Page A2

Man dies while trimming tree

Times-News

A man who owned a tree service company was killed shortly after noon Wednesday after he was electrocuted while trimming branches of a tree at a house in Burlington.

William Ricky Phillips Jr., 35, who owned Woodworx Tree Service out of Thomasville, was in a pine tree at the time of the incident. He and at least one other man were at the job at 303 N. Gurney St. at 12:05 p.m., according to a Burlington Police Department news release.

"Some of the limbs he was working on came in contact with primary power lines," said Burlington Fire Chief Michael Willets. "When he was in contact with the limb, he was electrocuted."

When the call came over the police scanner, it was thought Phillips was just knocked unconscious after the chainsaw hit the branch. When authorities arrived, Phillips was still harnessed to the tree and hanging upside down. The chainsaw was still running.

A Burlington firefighter climbed a ladder to get to Phillips. He checked his wrist for a pulse and shook his head to indicate that Phillips had been killed. The firefighter also turned off the chainsaw.

Firefighters used a ladder truck with a bucket to get Phillips down.

"We were able to secure him and disconnect him from his safety lines and bring him to the ground," Willets said. "That was all we were able to do."