

NEWS

National and world news in brief

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Scientists find date-rape drug in childrens' toy

A popular children's toy called, "Aqua Dots," have been recalled by U.S. safety officials. The toys are made up of arts and crafts beads, and are aimed at children 4 years of age and older. The toys were found to contain a chemical which turns into the date-rape drug gamma-hydroxy butyrate, or GHB.

4.2 million units of the toy were recalled once reports came in that children began to vomit and become comatose after swallowing them. U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission spokeswoman Julie Vallese said in a statement that anyone who owns Aqua Dots needs to apprehend the toy and get in touch with the toy's distributor, Spin Master Ltd. to return the toy and receive replacement beads, or a different toy of equal value. Spin Master is located in Toronto, Canada has immediately ceased shipment of Aqua Dots and has requested retailers take them off the shelves.

The toy received the toy of the year award in Australia and was listed on Wal-Mart's list of top 12 Christmas toys. Wal-Mart



Source: CNN

quickly changed it's listing for the toy on their website to "out of stock" after the recall was announced.

The recall is the largest to ever happen to a Chinese-made toy. In October, a similar recall occurred when U.S. government safety officials recalled over 69,000 toys which are manufactured in China due to worries that the paint on the toys contains an excessive amount of lead-based paint, which can cause poisoning.

A similar product, Australian-made Bindeez Beads was recalled on Tuesday after there were reports of three children being hospitalized after consuming the toy. In the United States, there have been two reports claiming severe effects appearing in children after digesting the beads, according to a Washington-based safety commission. Heather Lehane, told CNN, "I was so frightened because I thought she wasn't going to make it," referring to her 10-year-old daughter Charlotte who consumed the beads.

Simpson charged with armed robbery after Vegas arrest

Former Buffalo Bills and San Francisco 49'ers runningback O.J. Simpson is at the center of another major trial, after a probable cause hearing on Nov. 8. Simpson is being accused of armed robbery after an incident at a Las Vegas hotel on Sept. 13th. In the company of five other men, Simpson was said to have stolen sports memorabilia from two collectors at gunpoint. Simpson has pleaded not guilty to charges of conspiracy, kidnapping, robbery and assault with a deadly weapon.

Judge Joe M. Bonaventure, who oversaw the hearing was quoted saying, "My function is to determine if there is probable cause. If so, the defendants will be held to answer these charges in District Court; if not, those charges will be dismissed." The judge made an order that none of the eight witnesses were to be allowed in the courtroom during the others' testimonies.

According to prosecutors, Simpson led the heist of sports memorabilia. One of the witnesses, Bruce L. Fromong, a dealer in wholesale sports memorabilia, said that another sports collector named Alfred Beardsley had contacted Fromong saying he had

someone interested in Simpson memorabilia. Fromong was to meet with the buyer on Sept 13 at Palace Station Hotel in Las Vegas.

Fromong claims he arrived at the hotel and met with Beardsley, bringing with him nearly 700 pieces of Simpson memorabilia. Beardsley told Fromong to meet the buyer, Thomas Riccio inside at the Hotel Bar. According to Fromong, Riccio asked the memorabilia be taken inside into a hotel room. Once in the room, Riccio left to bring in the "buyer."

Then, according to Fromong, a man named Clarence Stewart entered the room, followed by a second man carrying a semiautomatic weapon. Two other men entered the room and subdued Fromong, which is when Fromong claims Simpson entered the room and said, "Don't let anyone out of the room. Nobody leaves." The men then picked up all the items in the room and took them away in boxes.

Simpson is currently out on \$125,000 bail.

Despite low voter turnout, new representatives elected

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This year's election could be the lowest November turnout in Erie County's history. With Erie having 171,466 registered voters only 37,595 people, about 22 percent, cast ballots Tuesday.

The low turnout is being blamed on several reasons. First, the region's first taste of winter weather that caused icy and wet driving conditions, as well as many power outages throughout the area, is a big factor on why the turnout was so low. Many had difficulties driving or simply did not want to take the risk of driving in the bad weather.

Also, this year's election, to some people, doesn't seem as important as compared to next year's presidential election. Many citizens seem to think that local elections are not as important as national ones, even though they are probably more directly affected by the local decisions. Lastly, the races did not give many choices for citizens of Erie. For example, many high profile local races got almost no attention such as Brad Foulk running for district attorney, because he ran unopposed. Of the 129 races on the Erie County Ballot, only 35 races gave voters a choice. However, the Democrats swept the local city council with only one new face in the four-year seat, Mark Aleksandrowicz who will be replacing David Gonzalez, program officer for the Erie Community Foundation. The other winners are returning Democrats Jessica Horan-

Kunco who led with 7,701 votes, Patrick Cappabianca with 6,309 votes and Joe Schember with 6,947 votes. The lone republican, Tim Butler could not overcome the city's 3-1 Democratic voter views.

In the National Election, Kentucky Governor, Republican Ernie Fletcher lost his bid for a second term. With roughly 97 percent of the precincts reporting in Kentucky his Democratic opponent Steve Beshear who served a term as lieutenant governor in the 1980's had 59 percent of the vote, a significant amount more than Fletcher's 41 percent.

In the state of Mississippi, Republican governor Haley Barbour running against Democrat John Eaves was re-elected for a second term. Barbour was one of the few returning officials returning after the fallout of Hurricane Katrina. She plans to continue to support and help neighboring Louisiana from the damages of Katrina's devastation.

Several big cities were also voting on Mayor. In Houston, Mayor Bill White was re-elected. Philadelphia, Pittsburg, and San Francisco also voted on new mayors. Utah voters had to decide if a state program that provided taxes to be paid to families sending their children to private school should be taken into affect. New Jersey voters considered borrowing \$450 million for stem cell research, and Texan's were deciding whether to borrow \$3 billion over ten years for career research. Lastly, Denver voters considered a law making the possession of marijuana the lowest priority for police officers and prosecutors.

Only 22 percent of registered voters in Erie County voted in Nov. 6's general election. One of Erie's lowest turnouts is blamed on bad weather and lost electricity.

College students find credit cards hard to manage

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Credit cards hold many opportunities for adults and especially college students. There are so many expenses between tuition, room and board, and books that a credit card looks like a pretty good idea. Unfortunately, for all the positive opportunities that a credit card holds, there are negative side effects to owning a credit card. Phylis M. Mansfield and Mary Beth Pinto, associate professors of marketing at Penn State Erie, The Behrend College, were published in the Spring of 2007 in an issue of *Marketing Management Journal*. Their study, entitled "Marketing Credit Cards to College Students: Will Legislation Protect Them from Excessive Debt?" explores whether lawmakers are addressing the issue of credit card debt by focusing on reducing credit card solicitation on college campuses.

Over the last decade, there have been numerous states proposing the regulation of the solicitation of cards for people under the age of 21. Most of the regulations were through on-campus restrictions. Through research, Mansfield and Pinto found only a small percent, 4.8 percent of students, received their credit cards from an on-campus source. The greater majority obtained their cards from mail solicitations. Nonetheless, students attending schools that did allow on-campus marketing owned more credit cards and possessed higher card balances than those attending campuses where solicitations were banned.

Dr. Phylis Mansfield and Dr. Mary Beth Pinto are both members of The Center For Credit and Consumer Research at Penn State Behrend. The CCCR was established in 2004 and its focus includes examining issues pertaining to consumer socialization and credit card habits of consumers in the United States as



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
A student buys coffee from a Starbucks using her credit card.

When using a credit card, debt accumulates and increases due to interest and penalties when the consumer does not pay the company for the money he, or she, has spent. If a payment is late, a late payment penalty is charged and it is reported to credit rating agencies. A person can be held in "default," interest may go up because of a late payment. All of this information is included in a person's credit report which can come back to haunt a person when applying for future credit cards, loans, and so on. A bad credit report is hard to recover from and even more difficult to get rid of.

The idea of a credit card, using it to purchase items now and actually paying for them later, is very appealing. Especially to college students who have many expenses. When using a credit card, however, a person must be very careful. Credit can build up and eventually cause problems in the future. Mansfield and Pinto's study highlights the risks of debt for college students. More information about the study and credit card debt can be found at cccr.psu.edu.

Quotes on Civility

"There are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it."

— Edith Wharton
American novelist
(1862-1937)

Janet Neff Sample Center
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