

Perfect pitch

UConn coach Peter Looney has become the area's softball pitching guru. **C1**



Boss returns

Bruce Springsteen pays debt to a folk pioneer on his new album. **B1**



The Standard-Times

S E R V I N G T H E S O U T H C O A S T C O M M U N I T Y

TUESDAY, April 25, 2006

New Bedford, Mass.



SouthCoastToday.com

Newsstand: 50 cents

"We don't have to be out on the street. We don't have to be going from friend to friend or shelter to shelter. But that's what we're looking at."

RANA STROMANS, victim of last week's Purchase Street fire

Searching for a new life



PETER PEREIRA/The Standard-Times

Jacob Lefrancois gives his neighbor, Rana Stromans, a hug and a kiss while his mother, Kasaundra Lefrancois, makes some calls to charities from their hotel room provided to them by the Red Cross. Without charitable and insurance aid, Ms. Stromans and Ms. Lefrancois face homelessness after their apartment building burned down last week.

Residents of burned apartments face homelessness

By **ROB MARGETTA**

Standard-Times staff writer

NEW BEDFORD — When flames gutted their apartments, Kasaundra Lefrancois and Rana Stromans lost all but a few of their possessions.

Both watched as firefighters doused their burning building, located at 90 Purchase St., last Thursday. And both accepted the Red Cross' offer of money for clothes, food and lodging at the Holiday Inn Express in Fairhaven.

But, after the fire engines cleared out Thursday and the hotel money dried up yesterday, both found themselves facing an unappealing prospect: virtual homelessness.

The two women didn't have renters' insurance and lost their belongings in the fire, but they say they could move into new apartments immediately. There's one problem, though: They're not getting the money that should be helping them secure new housing.

They say their landlord, Jeremy

Ramos of New Bedford, isn't turning over their security deposits or last month's rent checks. He also claims to lack the insurance that would keep them in a hotel.

And, although they've turned to the city, United Way, Salvation Army, Catholic Charities and other organizations, no one can seem to help.

"We don't have to be out on the street," Ms. Stromans said. "We don't have to be going from friend to friend or shelter to shelter. But

that's what we're looking at."

She said she was planning to spend last night with her son or some friends. Ms. Lefrancois, 27, who works for a Web site, said she can afford one more evening at the Holiday Inn, which charges \$99 per night.

"But I only have room for one more night. That's it," she said.

In a phone interview yesterday, Mr. Ramos admitted that the building wasn't insured and he can't yet

See **FIRE A5**

Lobster scheme nets Dartmouth man jail term

By **ROB MARGETTA**

Standard-Times staff writer

BOSTON — A Dartmouth man who owned and captained two New Bedford-based fishing boats will serve 18 months in prison for masterminding a four-year conspiracy to illegally "scrub" the eggs off female lobsters so they could be sold at port.

Jose Silva, 51, former owner of the Lutador I and Lutador II, received the prison sentence and an additional three years of super-

vised release during a federal court hearing yesterday.

Federal and state laws require fishermen to release all "berried" female lobsters — those bearing clusters of eggs under their tails — as a way of sustaining the crustaceans' population.

Customarily, lobstermen cut V-shaped notches in the tail flippers of egg-bearing lobsters, and even some females without eggs. Keeping a V-notched lobster violates state and federal law.

Despite these laws, Mr. Silva told his crew to keep V-notched lobsters and to wash or scrub the eggs off egg-bearing lobsters with a hose. He then told the crew members to keep the practices a secret.

"It's a serious crime," Assistant U.S. Attorney John Mitchell said. "It's the kind of offense that not only presents a great risk to the environment, but hurts other fishermen. By retaining the egg-bearing females, you're stealing from future generations."

Mr. Silva was caught when the Coast Guard boarded Lutador II March 7, 2004, as the vessel was returning to New Bedford. Although the captain told them there were no lobsters on board, the officers found 594 scrubbed female lobsters hidden in secret compartments.

Mr. Silva later told his crew to tell the Coast Guard they had removed the eggs without his knowledge.

Eventually, an investigation

See **LOBSTER A5**



PETER PEREIRA/The Standard-Times

Attorney General Tom Reilly meets with New Bedford Mayor Scott W. Lang at City Hall to promise commuter rail for the area if elected governor.

Reilly vows rail for region

By **AARON NICODEMUS**

Standard-Times staff writer

NEW BEDFORD — Attorney General and candidate for governor Tom Reilly promised yesterday that, if elected, he will bring commuter rail to New Bedford in his first term.

"Commuter rail is coming to Fall River and New Bedford, and during my administration it will be done," he said. In his comments, Mr. Reilly made it clear he believes commuter rail will provide an economic boost to the SouthCoast, a boost he said the state government is obligated to provide.

"The SouthCoast region needs a lot of help from state government, and I want to be sure that it gets it," he said.

Mr. Reilly has previously said commuter rail will be a "high priority" should he be elected, but he has consistently declined to name a timetable for bringing it to the region. "We will put a specific timeline on it and we will get it done," he said recently.

Now, he is committing to bringing commuter rail to the region before 2011, by the end of what, if elected, would be his first term.

Even though previous Republican governors said commuter rail to New Bedford was a top priority of their administrations, Gov. Mitt Romney has placed commuter rail to the SouthCoast behind a host of other transportation projects. As recently as last year, he placed the start of construction of rail to the city at 2010 or 2011.

See **REILLY A6**

INSIDE TODAY

WEATHER Cloudy and breezy, high 64, low 35 **C5**

LOTTERY Daily Number: **8989**; more lottery, **A2**.

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Kerry fights LNG at Fall River rally

By **STEVE URBON**

Standard-Times senior correspondent

FALL RIVER — Massachusetts' junior senator joined the fight against an LNG terminal in this city yesterday, telling a noisy rally of about 200 people that "we're here to fight for common sense and safety."

Under a cold, spitting rain, Sen. John Kerry, the 2004 Democratic nominee for president, questioned why a project such as the Hess/Weaver's Cove terminal is being left in the hands of one agency, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, which last year issued a permit now being challenged in court.

"Why should the FERC be deciding this when they don't know how many LNG sites we're going to have and when they don't even know where the LNG sites in America are going to be sited?" Sen. Kerry asked to

See **LNG A5**



PETER PEREIRA/The Standard-Times

Opponents of the LNG terminal chant anti-LNG slogans in front of the Weaver's Cove facility in Fall River.

Rochester votes \$1M for school work

By **NANCY COOK**

Standard-Times staff writer

ROCHESTER — With no opposition and little fanfare, Rochester voters agreed last night to give the elementary school \$1 million to repair its roof and windows.

The \$1 million price tag rose from the warrant's original cost of \$800,000 because the project went out to bid after the warrant was published, said Michael Costa, Finance Committee chairman.

The town will fund the \$1 million

See **TOWN MEETING A5**



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