

THE ISLAND PACKET

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SERVING THE L 50c



82° 58°

A sun-filled October still going strong. **6B**

Hilton Head teacher shares breast cancer survivor story **1C**



Area golfers get ready for PGA Tour's qualifying school **1B**

County lays off 8 employees to trim costs

Cuts to engineering department first step; others to follow

By JOSH McCANN
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Beaufort County has laid off eight employees in its engineering department in the first step of planned cost

cuts, county administrator Gary Kubic said Monday.

The county wants to trim its \$104 million general operations budget by 10 percent, Kubic said. All department heads have been asked to devise

ways to reduce spending. Such cost-cutting is necessary because neither the economy nor tax revenues are expected to rebound soon, and county officials want to avoid tax increases, Kubic said.

The layoffs began Friday. More cost cutting will continue through June 30, the end of the fiscal year, but it's not certain when more layoffs might be made, Kubic said.

"We are really trying to align our level of operations with our resources," Kubic said. "We're looking at every department, every function."

The county will give priority to preserving essential services, such as law enforcement and EMS, he said.

Kubic expects the cuts to the engineering department to save more than \$400,000 annually.

The department, which had 19

Please see **EMPLOYEES** on 11A

County considers regional approach

Economic development plan would bring together Beaufort, Jasper counties

By JOSH McCANN
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Economic development advocates in Beaufort and Jasper counties hope a regional plan will prevent local communities from fighting over businesses and instead focus on recruiting new investment.

A Beaufort County Council committee endorsed a resolution Monday to support a regional economic plan that would cover both counties. It next will go to the full council.

Local governments, schools, utilities, telecommunications providers and the Lowcountry Council of Governments will be invited to sign on, according to Kim Statler, executive director of the Lowcountry Economic Network, a public-private partnership that recruits business to the area.

Jasper County Council is expected to consider a similar resolution, according to Statler.

Although many local governments have plans for economic development in their communities, the region lacks a single "road map" for how to diversify its economy, said Statler, who presented the resolution to the Public Safety Committee.

"There is no document out there that connects us," she said.

A regional plan would help officials evaluate the challenges the Lowcountry faces in economic development and collaborate in determining which properties to focus on and

Please see **APPROACH** on 11A

INTO THE WILD



DREW MARTIN • The Island Packet

H.E. McCracken Middle School teacher Susan Dee, left, looks for a snake spotted by her students Monday, while Amikar Chavelas takes a picture and Angel Lopez points to the rotted tree where the reptile sought refuge. The students were taking a nature walk on their way to Trask Landing in greater Bluffton for an educational outing on Port Royal Sound aboard the S.C. Department of Natural Resources' Education Vessel Discovery. To read the full story about the outing, please see **5A**.

HOME FORECLOSURES

Freeze starts to thaw

Bank of America said Monday it would resume seizing homes in 23 states next week — including South Carolina.

By ALAN ZIBEL
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The pace of U.S. home foreclosures might not slow much after all.

Bank of America said Monday that it plans to resume seizing more than 100,000 homes in 23 states next week. It said it has a legal right to foreclose despite accusations that documents used in the process were flawed.

Other major lenders have yet to say whether they will follow suit and resume foreclosures in the 23 states that require a judge's approval. But analysts said they expect the move by the nation's biggest bank will mean other lenders will proceed with a wave of foreclosures that have depressed the housing market.

Banking analyst Nancy Bush of NAB Research said other lenders are likely to follow because foreclosure practices were similar from bank to bank.

"We'll be back to square one by the end of the year," she said.

The bank's move could mean that the costs of the foreclosure-document mess will wind up being less than some investors had feared just days ago. Bank shares sank last week after JPMorgan Chase said it set aside \$1.3 billion in the third quarter to cover legal expenses that include the foreclosure document problems.

Shares of Charlotte-based Bank of America had been flat earlier Monday but jumped on the news. They rose 36 cents, or 3 percent, to close at \$12.34.

Please see **FREEZE** on 11A

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES RACE 2nd District

Miller questions Wilson's 'mortar attack' ads

By JIM DAVENPORT
The Associated Press

COLUMBIA — Democrats question U.S. Rep. Joe Wilson's description of "dodging mortar attacks" in a new campaign ad.

The ad that began airing throughout Wilson's 2nd District this weekend is a third attempt by Wilson to defend international travel that his Democratic opponent Rob Miller

calls junkets.

"Rob Miller has been dishonest about me from day one," Wilson said in a prepared statement. "It is disappointing that out of desperation, he would stoop so low to say visits to the troops are junkets."

It's a new episode as the South



Miller



Wilson

Carolina congressman who made himself famous by shouting "You lie!" at President Obama during an address to Congress defends his seat.

Wilson's outburst sent cash pouring into his and Miller's campaign. Wilson has raised \$4.5 million for the race and Miller

\$2.8 million through the end of September. They've set spending records, particularly on television, in a district anchored on one end by U.S. Marine Corps installations.

Wilson's newest ad shows part of a story in the Washington newspaper The Hill that describes congressional travel this summer.

Please see **ADS** on 11A

WHY 23 STATES?

In some states, lenders can foreclose quickly on delinquent mortgage borrowers. By contrast, the 23 states in which Bank of America is restarting foreclosures use a lengthy court process. They require documents to verify information on the mortgage, including who owns it.

MARKET OPTIMISM

Homebuilders' confidence edges up for the first time in five months as foot traffic increases slightly **12A**



QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Laughter and tears are both responses to frustration and exhaustion. I myself prefer to laugh, since there is less cleaning up to do afterward." **Kurt Vonnegut**



INSIDE TODAY'S PACKET

The Pentagon prepares for the release of as many as 400,000 reports on operations in Iraq and is asking the media not to publish them, even if WikiLeaks posts them online. **7A**