



Students from Union County schools sign a "Healing Wall" on Thursday near the entrance to Union County High School in Lake Butler, Fla. Seven family members, including five Union County schools students, died in a car crash on Wednesday.

Victims of crash part of close clan

Police investigating cause of accident

By KELLI KENNEDY
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LAKE BUTLER, Fla.

Barbara and Terry Mann were supposed to complete their adoption of a 20-month-old boy on Thursday. Instead, they were planning funerals for him and six young relatives, all killed in a fiery car wreck.

The accident Wednesday cast a pall over this town of about 2,000 people in northern Florida. After hearing of the accident, Barbara Mann's grief-stricken father suffered a heart attack and died.

"It's hard to fathom what it's like to lose five children, two nieces and a father in one shot. It seems like a burden too big to bear," said Scott Fisher, a family spokesman and pastor at the Lake Butler Church of Christ.

Friends and family came together to mourn the deaths as investigators tried to piece together how the three-vehicle accident happened on a clear day on a road free of obstructions.

A tractor-trailer rear-ended the children's car and crushed it against a school bus that had stopped to drop off students, authorities said. The car burst into flames, and everyone inside was killed, including 15-year-old Nicky Mann, who was driving illegally with just a learner's permit

and was apparently taking her adopted siblings home from school. Three children on the bus were seriously injured.

Along with Nicky, who was the Manns' biological child, and soon-to-be-adopted Anthony Lamb, the other victims were identified by authorities and friends as three children adopted by the Manns — Elizabeth, 15; Johnny, 13; and Heaven, 3 — and the couple's nieces, Ashley Keen, 13, and Miranda Finn, 8.

Charges were pending against the 31-year-old truck driver, Alvin Wilkerson of Jacksonville. He suffered minor injuries. There was no answer Thursday at telephone listings for him.

The Florida Highway Patrol initially reported that there were no brake marks on the highway to indicate the trucker tried to stop. But David Rayburn of the National Transportation Safety Board said investigators have not determined that yet.

Authorities were looking into whether the truck had a mechanical failure or the driver was tired or talking on a cell phone, among other possibilities, highway patrol spokesman Lt. Mike Burroughs said. Also, a sample of Wilkerson's blood will be tested for alcohol, he said.

The trucker was cited in 2000 for driving with a suspended license and twice, in 2000 and 2001, for operating a vehicle in unsafe condition, according to state officials.

The highway is straight and flat in the area. Four fatal crashes have occurred along that part of the road during the past five years, Burroughs said.

GM loses \$8.6 billion in 2005

Quarter loss is fifth straight for auto giant

By DEE-ANN DURBIN
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DETROIT

General Motors Corp., which is planning big job cuts and plant closings as it fights to avoid bankruptcy, said Thursday it lost \$4.8 billion in the fourth quarter and \$8.6 billion in all of 2005, dragged down by losses in its North American division.

It was the fifth-straight quarterly loss for the world's largest automaker, and the dismal results were far worse than Wall Street expected. GM's stock price, which had already fallen about 36 percent since July, dropped another \$1.26 to \$22.59 in morning trading after the news.

GM Chairman and CEO Rick Wagoner said 2005 "was one of the most difficult years in GM's history."

"It was a year in which two significant fundamental weaknesses in our North American operations

"It was a year in which two significant weaknesses in our North American operations were fully exposed ..."

Rick Wagoner
GM chairman and CEO
on lessons learned in 2005

were fully exposed, our huge legacy cost burden and our inability to adjust structural costs in line with falling revenue," Wagoner said in a statement.

GM's latest loss compares to a loss of \$99 million in the October-December period of 2004. The loss amounts to \$8.45 per share for the quarter, compared with a loss of 18 cents per share in the fourth quarter of 2004.

Revenue was \$51.2 billion for the quarter, down slightly from \$51.4 billion a year ago. Full-year revenue was \$192.6 billion, down slightly from \$193.5 billion in 2004.

Excluding special items, GM said it lost \$1.2 billion, or \$2.09 per share, in the latest quarter, compared to adjusted earnings of \$726 million, or \$1.28 per share, in the fourth quarter of 2004.

Special items included one-time restructuring costs of \$1.3 billion in North America and a \$2.3 bil-

lion charge associated with benefits at Delphi Corp., GM's former parts division, which filed for bankruptcy last fall.

GM said it expects to spend between \$3.6 billion and \$12 billion on benefits to Delphi workers, and estimates its total liability will be at the low end of that range.

Himanshu Patel, an auto analyst with JPMorgan Chase, said the amount set aside for Delphi indicates GM might be close to an agreement with Delphi and the United Auto Workers on its liabilities.

Excluding items for the entire year, the company reported a loss of \$3.4 billion, or \$5.99 per share, compared with an adjusted 2004 profit of \$3.6 billion, or \$6.37 per share.

Wall Street analysts were expecting a loss of 16 cents per share on revenue of \$41.7 billion in the fourth quarter, according to a

survey by Thomson Financial. Analysts had forecast a loss of \$4.19 per share on revenues of \$158 billion for the year.

Wagoner said the company is moving forward with its turnaround plans, including a restructuring that will cut 30,000 jobs and shutter 12 facilities by 2008 and a plan to cut structural costs by \$4 billion this year, largely through a health-care agreement with the UAW and manufacturing improvements.

The company got little encouragement from President Bush. In an interview with The Wall Street Journal published Thursday, Bush said he hadn't been approached about a bailout for GM or Ford Motor Co. but might not support one if he were.

"I think it's very important for the market to function," Bush said. He said companies need to manufacture a product that's relevant and that his administration has discussed new fuel technologies with the nation's top two automakers.

GM's results come three days after Ford announced a profit of \$2 billion for 2005. But Ford also struggled in its home market, losing \$1.6 billion in North America, and announced a plan to cut 30,000 jobs and close 14 facilities by 2012.

Eli Lilly swings to fourth-quarter profit

By ASHLEY HEHER
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

INDIANAPOLIS

Drug maker Eli Lilly and Co. on Thursday reported a fourth-quarter profit compared with loss a year ago that reflected restructuring charges and tax expense from repatriated overseas earnings.

Quarterly earnings at the Indianapolis-based company totaled \$700.6 million, or 64 cents per share, up from a loss of \$2.4 million, or break-even on a per-share basis a year earlier.

Sales increased 6 percent to \$3.88 billion from \$3.64 billion. Lilly officials said nine newer products contributed \$791.2 million to its sales and accounted for 20 percent of the total, versus 14 percent a year earlier.

But sales of the company's top drug Zyprexa continued to sag.

U.S. sales for the popular antipsychotic decreased 15 percent because of waning demand for the medication. Worldwide, Zyprexa sales were down 5 percent, bring-



The Eli Lilly and Co. in Indianapolis reported a fourth-quarter profit compared with loss a year ago. Quarterly earnings totaled \$700.6 million.

ing in \$1.03 billion compared to \$1.09 billion in the fourth quarter last year.

"There's still lingering issues with Zyprexa that appear to be challenging the company, and we hope that the company can stabilize that franchise in 2006," said Robert Hazlett, an analyst with SunTrust Robinson Humphrey.

"But Zyprexa is a good drug, and

we're starting to see some positive signs."

Among them was word from Lilly officials that the drug's Japanese sales were up 25 percent during the fourth quarter. But growth was slower in Western Europe and the United Kingdom.

Other products fared better. Sales of osteoporosis medication Forteo increased 59 percent to

\$118 million, erectile dysfunction drug Cialis, which Lilly markets with ICOS Corp., increased 38 percent, and four diabetes drugs climbed 11 percent to a combined \$750 million.

"Lilly is determined to be a leader in diabetes care," said Jim Ward, Lilly's executive director of investor relations.

The company is bulking up its marketing and manufacturing for the insulin medication Humalog.

Excluding certain charges in 2004 and 2005, as well as stock-option expensing in 2004, Lilly's earnings for the latest quarter would have risen to 80 cents per share, compared with 69 cents per share in the prior year.

Analysts polled by Thomson Financial expected earnings of 78 cents per share on \$3.9 billion in sales.

For the full year, the company earned \$1.98 billion, or \$1.81 per share, versus \$1.81 billion, or \$1.66 a share, a year ago. Sales rose to \$14.65 billion from \$13.86 billion.

BRIEFS STATE/NATION

NASHVILLE Brown County inn pays fine for outdoor music

The owner of a rural inn agreed to pay a \$2,500 fine to end a years-long feud with county officials over outdoor music and gatherings at the bed-and-breakfast.

Owner Rick Hofstetter also must create and follow a development plan that includes earlier restrictions that require him to end outdoor music on the property at midnight on weekends and limit the number of large festivals.

Troubles between Hofstetter and neighbors have simmered since Hofstetter bought the place in 1999 and expanded some of its events.

Neighbors have complained, saying thousands of people gathered at the site in the town of Story, 20 miles east of Bloomington. People living a quarter-mile away claimed the noise sometimes impeded conversations on the decks of their homes.

Hofstetter has said neighbors were unfairly trying to limit his business.

CHARLESTON, W.Va. Governor signs new mine safety legislation

West Virginia Gov. Joe Manchin signed new mine safety rules into law Thursday, saying the new requirements for better communications, underground oxygen supplies and faster emergency responses would help prevent future tragedies like the two that killed 14 miners this month.

State lawmakers passed the legislation unanimously just days after a Jan. 19 mine fire killed two men, and about three weeks after an explosion at the Sago Mine across the state resulted in the deaths of 12 miners.

The state's new mine safety law mandates that miners be provided with emergency communicators and tracking devices. It also requires mine operators to store extra air supplies underground, and sets up a new Mine and Industrial Accident Rapid Response System and statewide all-hours hot line to trigger rescue efforts more quickly.



MANCHIN

ATLANTA FTC fines ChoicePoint over data breach

The Federal Trade Commission said Thursday that data warehouse ChoicePoint Inc. will pay \$15 million to settle charges that its security and record-handling procedures violated consumers' privacy rights and federal laws.

The FTC said it had fined the Alpharetta, Ga., -based company \$10 million — the biggest the agency has ever imposed — and that Choicepoint would pay an additional \$5 million that will be used to compensate consumers.

Company shares sank more than 6 percent on a day it also reported a more than 29 percent decline in its fourth-quarter profit.

ChoicePoint had revealed last year that its massive database of consumer information was accessed by thieves.

WASHINGTON Senate GOP to try to force vote on Alito

Die-hard Democratic critics of Supreme Court nominee Samuel Alito threatened to block a vote on his confirmation Thursday, and Republicans countered with a move designed to ensure his approval by early next week.

"It is time to establish an end point" in the debate over President Bush's selection to replace Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, said Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, R-Tenn. Senate Democratic Leader Harry Reid offered no support for Sens. John Kerry, Edward M. Kennedy and other members of the rank-and-file who are threatening a filibuster in an attempt to keep Alito off the high court.

"There's been adequate time for people to debate," Reid said.

Alito, 55 and a 15-year veteran of the federal appeals court, has well over 50 votes for confirmation. He gained the support of Democrats Tim Johnson of South Dakota and Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia during the day, and has the backing of at least 52 of the Senate's 55 Republicans.

The Senate will vote Monday on

cutting off debate. If Alito's supporters get 60 votes in the 100-member body, the confirmation vote will follow on Tuesday.

WASHINGTON Congressional estimators project \$337B deficit

The budget deficit will rise to at least \$337 billion this year and could approach or exceed \$400 billion because of tax cuts, new spending for hurricane relief and the war in Iraq, congressional budget analysts said Thursday.



BUSH

The latest Congressional Budget Office data also suggest President Bush is unlikely to be able to keep his promise to cut the federal deficit in half by the end of his term.

Even assuming a phasing down of the war in Iraq and the costs of hurricane relief, implementing tax cuts sought by Bush and Congress would produce deficits exceeding \$300 billion through the end of the decade, the nonpartisan CBO says.

The report and Bush's annual budget submission kick off a predictably partisan election-year debate over the budget, which will play out against the backdrop of rising deficits, record spending and concern about lawmakers' penchant for homestate pet projects.

WASHINGTON Fixed-rate mortgages edge up slightly

Rates on 30-year mortgages, after falling for six straight weeks, edged up slightly this week as investors anticipated another rate hike from the Federal Reserve, according to a national survey released Thursday.

Mortgage giant Freddie Mac said its survey showed that rates on 30-year, fixed-rate mortgages rose to 6.12 percent, up from 6.10 percent last week.

The Fed is widely expected at its meeting on Tuesday to boost a key interest rate for the 14th consecutive time. Many economists believe the central bank's credit-tightening campaign to keep inflation under control is drawing to an end with perhaps just one more rate hike after next week.

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