

POLITICS

Attorney General Jeff Sessions withdraws from Russia inquiries 4A



INSIGHT

AMC retiring Carmike Cinemas: What moviegoers should know 7A



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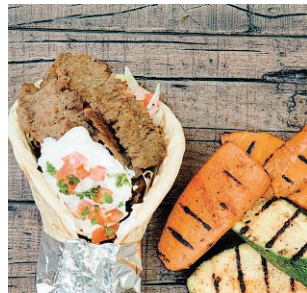
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LOCAL

A ROOSTER, A DOG AND DUCT TAPE

Big Red, the rooster taped to the neck of the dog that killed him, was a beloved family pet. 3A



BUSINESS

RESTAURANT NEARS DEBUT

Mediterranean-style food chain set to open in Columbus — its eighth location in Georgia. 4B



UPTOWN COLUMBUS

BIG EVENTS COMING TO TOWN

Top kayakers and mountain bike riders will compete here this spring. 3A



SPORTS

HARDAWAY WINS OVER COLUMBUS

Pitcher Mykel Page allowed only two hits in Hardaway's 2-0 victory over the Columbus Blue Devils. 1B

Cottonmouths to cease if no new owner found



MIKE HASKEY mhaskey@ledger-enquirer.com

The Columbus Cottonmouths practice Thursday morning at the Columbus Ice Rink.

Owner Wanda Amos confirms this could be final season for Snakes

BY CHUCK WILLIAMS chwilliams@ledger-enquirer.com



Amos



Bechard

If new ownership can't be found in the coming months, the Columbus Cottonmouths are prepared to cease operations at the end of the current season, owner Wanda Amos said Thursday.

"We have been trying to sell the team but haven't found a buyer," said Amos, who has owned the team for 17 years, including the last 13 as the primary owner.

General Manager Jerome Bechard informed season ticket holders, advertisers and those associated with the team Thurs-

day afternoon that Amos and her husband, Shelby, would be relinquishing their ownership after the season.

"I have loved it and this started with wanting to do something for the community," Amos said. "But there comes a time when this is not smart business any more."

The Cottonmouths have lost

VIDEO

General Manager Jerome Bechard talks about the Columbus Cottonmouths in a video at ledger-enquirer.com.

money nearly every year they have owned the team; most years the losses neared or exceeded six figures, she said. She can retain the Southern Professional Hockey League franchise for a couple of years, but not field a team.

"We have done everything we know to do, but in the end this has never been about making money," she said.

While the future of hockey is uncertain, Bechard believes new ownership can be secured.

"I am confident that we mean enough to this community that I can find some people with the same passion for the community, for hockey and for the people that Wanda and Shelby have," Bechard said. "I think this could be a very positive thing. There is a lot of change going on. The Civic Center has a new director and there is a lot of opportunity to do things differently and do things better."

Amos has informed the other owners and SPHL officials of her decision. She has been working with the league to see if a new owner could be located. Now, that task falls on Bechard.

SEE OWNER, 5A

How can homicide by vehicle be just a misdemeanor?

BY TIM CHITWOOD tchitwood@ledger-enquirer.com



ROBIN TRIMARCHI

Public defender Stephen Craft.

An overloaded Chevy Trailblazer crashes Saturday at Victory Drive and Interstate 185, killing two children, and the driver is charged with misdemeanors.

Some wonder: How can that be? Isn't homicide by vehicle a felony?

It is, sometimes, but not always. The severity of the charge depends on the circumstances of the wreck.

In this case driver Francisca Taperia-Santiago is charged with two counts each of second-degree vehicular homicide and reckless conduct, four counts of unsafe tires, six counts of improper child restraint, and one

GEORGIA LAW CITES WHICH TRAFFIC VIOLATIONS CONTRIBUTING TO A DEATH MAY LEAD TO A FELONY HOMICIDE BY VEHICLE CHARGE, AND THE DRIVER COMMITTED NONE OF THEM.

Public defender Stephen Craft discusses traffic laws and vehicular homicide in a video at ledger-enquirer.com.

count each of failing to maintain lane and having no state driver's license. She is free on bond.

Police said Taperia-Santiago had 10 passengers in a 2005 Chevrolet Trailblazer designed for eight when she lost control for eight when she lost control on the interstate's northbound ramp at Victory Drive around 1:30 p.m. The Trailblazer's left front

veered right, crossed the outside lane and ran onto the shoulder. The SUV rolled after hitting a guardrail, coming to rest on its roof on Victory Drive's east ramp.

The passengers were Sherika Camaja-Taperia, an infant; Priscilla Taperia, 1; Raynal Do Taperia, 2; Juliana Camaja Taperia, 6; Reyna Taperia, 6; Maria Taperia, 8; Juan Camaja, 13; Jose Manuel Taperia, 13; Alex Teletor, 15; and Amelia Taperia, 34.

The driver's daughter Juliana Camaja Taperia and nephew Jose Manuel Taperia died at 2:18 p.m. in the emergency room.

Though police allege the driver's losing control and the lack of proper passenger restraint led to those deaths, the driver still faces only misdemeanors.

Why? Because Georgia law specifically cites which traffic violations contributing to a death may lead to a felony homicide by vehicle charge, and the driver

SEE MISDEMEANOR, 6A

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