



COLLEGE QUARTERBACKS
MAKE THEIR TEAMS GO
SPORTS, 1C



E. IOWA DRAG QUEEN
SHOWS DRAW A CROWD
WEEKEND!, 8-9W



THURSDAY
Sept. 28, 2006
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The Gazette

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50 CENTS

And the winner is ...

Rain forest expected to pick either Pella or Riverside today

By Gregg Hennigan
The Gazette

The site of an indoor rain forest is expected to be named today, and the mayor of Riverside, which, along with Pella, is a finalist, said that does not bode well for his town.

"If they make a decision, I don't think that would be in Riverside's favor," Mayor Bill Poch said Wednesday.

He said that's because the city still has questions regarding what public money would go toward the \$25 million in local funds required to land the \$155 million project, known as Earthpark.

By contrast, Erik Woolson, spokesman for Des Moines developers wanting the project in Pella, said he was planning a news conference in Pella in case that site is chosen. He said he hoped representatives from Pella, Earthpark and the developers would be present.

Earthpark's board of directors is to meet in Grinnell this morning to decide about the project, which would include a 4-acre indoor rain forest, a 600,000-gallon aquarium, exterior prairie and wetland exhibits, and environmental galleries. A news conference in Grinnell was scheduled for about 12:30 p.m.

Construction is to begin in 2007, and the attraction would open in 2010, according to an Earthpark press release. Earthpark Executive Director David Oman declined comment Wednesday.

Leah Schomburg, of the Trilix Marketing Group in Urbandale, which works with Earthpark, said the board intends to announce a site today.

But after years of controversy and uncertainty surrounding the project — which has been linked to Des Moines, Cedar Rapids and Corvallis — Riverside City Council member Mariellen Bower was dubious.

"I'll believe it when I see it," she said of a decision being made. "They don't have a great track record."

A majority of Riverside's five-member council said as recently as one week ago it is unsure whether it wants the

► RAIN FOREST, PAGE 8A

► ACCENT / 1D

MAKE YOUR OWN ROBOT, LEGO STYLE

HIGH ART

Waterloo man takes graffiti art to new level by mixing Michelangelo and spray paint



Liz Martz/The Gazette

Paco Rosic works on his half-size spray-painted replica of the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in the soon-to-open Galeria de Paco and CoffeeShop in downtown Waterloo on Tuesday. Rosic, 26, has used more than 2,000 cans of paint.

On the Net

■ See more work by Waterloo aerosol artist Paco Rosic at his Web site: www.paco-rosic.com



Paco Rosic
Waterloo artist

By Adam Belz
The Gazette

WATERLOO — Paco Rosic wears a gas mask and stands on yellow scaffolding surrounded by cans of spray paint, high in the air in an open room at 622 Commercial St.

He arches his back to face the ceiling, raises a can above his head and swipes at the space around a naked figure, adding red highlights to the black background.

He drops to a crouch, stares up for 10 seconds at what he's done, then reaches for another can, pops back up and uses brown to bring out the figure's hands and legs.

One short burst from a can of spray paint at a time, aerosol artist Rosic is finishing his 81-by-31-foot replica of one of the world's masterpieces — Michelangelo's fresco on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican.

"This is not graffiti. This is fine art," Rosic said. "I call it the next level of graffiti art."

► PAINTING, PAGE 9A



Gazette graphic

CRIME

Murder rate falls in Iowa

Davenport: Posts highest big-city rate
C.R., I.C.: Show largest drops since 1970s

By Christoph Trappe
The Gazette

Fewer people are being murdered in Iowa and in the state's two largest cities, a Gazette analysis of data going back to the 1970s has found.

Des Moines, Cedar Rapids and Iowa City also have seen the largest percentage decrease in murder rates from the mid-1970s to 2005.

The decline reflects what is happening nationally, where the murder rate fell from 6.6 murders per 100,000 in 1986 to 3.8 last year, according to the FBI.

Davenport, however, had

Why the drop in Iowa?

Law enforcement and medical officials cite these reasons:
■ More dangerous criminals are in prison.
■ Firmer violence in the drug trade has decreased.
■ Improvements in medical care are saving lives.

cities.

Davenport's murder rate is three times higher than that of Cedar Rapids in recent years and slightly higher than the rate in the larger city of Des Moines.

By Adam Belz
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► SHOOTING, PAGE 8A

► ACCENT / 1D

MAKE YOUR OWN ROBOT, LEGO STYLE



► SPORTS / 1C

ISU'S MILAN MOSES IS HAPPY, HEALTHY, BACK ON THE FIELD



► TOMORROW / ACCENT

BEST TO STEER CLEAR OF LIFE'S MEANIES



Partly sunny and cool
TODAY 88-99
FRIDAY 88-99
SATURDAY 80-93

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TODAY'S WEATHER

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Pain

►FROM PAGE 1A

A short Bosnian immigrant who spent two years studying art at Hawkeye Community College in Waterloo, Rosic learned how to paint with aerosol as a teenager in Germany.

He and his family moved there from Bosnia in 1992, then from Germany to Iowa in September 1997, when Rosic was 18.

His mom comes from a Catholic and Orthodox Christian family, and his father is Muslim, he said. They work for Hy-Vee food stores.

He was a little boy when his mother showed him a picture of Michelangelo's masterpiece, but he didn't begin planning it until the end of 2005, when he began sketching, studying the work, taking a trip to Rome to look at the original.

In January, his family bought an old, red-brick antiques store for \$67,000 in downtown Waterloo. Workers tore out the drop ceiling and plastered the corners to curve the ceiling.

Rosic started working behind them, sketching an outline, trying to get it as fast as he could. Like Michelangelo, he at first lay on his back on the scaffolding. Once workers had tiled the floor, he used rolling scaffolding, in order not to break the tiles, and worked while standing.

Each change was physically taxing.

"In the beginning, it wasn't easy. I was suffering. Sometimes at night I couldn't even eat" when he couldn't raise his arms, he said. "My girlfriend had to feed me."

Because Rosic is using spray paint, the replica is not as detailed as Michelangelo's masterpiece. But at half-scale, it follows the plan of the original meticulously. The prophets and sibyls recline on the sides in brightly colored robes, Noah makes a sacrifice to God after the flood, and God and Adam reach for each other in the center.

Rosic is counting the spray paint at \$7,000. A major manufacturer of spray paint, signed on as a sponsor, at is free.

The story of Rosic and his work has been picked up by news outlets around the country and even in Europe and Asia. Media in Mexico, Peru and Brazil have sent inquiries.

His Web site received more than 2 million hits Monday when he was featured on Yahoo.com

A short, wiry, 27-year-old Bosnian immigrant who spent two years studying art at Hawkeye Community College in Waterloo, Rosic learned how to paint with aerosol as a teenager in Germany.

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Traffic

Traffic chart



Mr. Eko on the drama series, was

Rosic said he stopped counting the cost of the spray paint once it reached \$7,000. A month ago, Krylon, a major manufacturer of spray paint, signed on as a sponsor, and now the paint is free.

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Work brings attention to artist, Waterloo



A half-size replica of the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel is seen in what soon will be a coffee shop in downtown Waterloo. This section, one of his favorites, he says. Rosic traveled to Rome to study and sketch the Sistine Chapel's ceiling before beginning his replica.



Detail of Paco Rosic's rendering of the Sistine Chapel's ceiling.

Rosic's work and the publicity it's getting are encouraging artists and business owners downtown.

Callers, she said, "want to know when they can come in and see it. I've had folks from Toronto and from all over."

The mural can be sneak previewed on an Oct. 5 walking tour of the city called Tour de'Lo.

"This is only the beginning," Rosic said. The artist next wants to paint his own version of Michelangelo's fresco, still

using religious characters and scenes, but three times bigger, with about three times as many figures, all wearing contemporary clothing.

"This is my goal," he said. "A lot of people think I'm crazy."

But then, that's what they thought when he said he was going to reproduce the Sistine Chapel ceiling in spray paint.

Contact the columnist: (319) 398-8240 or adam.betz@gazettecommunications.com



A cafe and a jazz and blues club soon will open at 622 Commercial St. in Waterloo, where Paco Rosic is spray-painting his replica of the Sistine Chapel's ceiling.



A half-size replica of the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel is almost complete after months of work by the artist, Paco Rosic. Rosic and his family, who emigrated from Bosnia, sought out the building and had curves added to the ceiling.

PEOPLE

Win thought he would die young



Steve Irwin

Associated Press
The "Crocodile Hunter" Steve Irwin always felt he would die young, but that he would be killed in a car wreck and not by an animal, his widow says.

He said he plans to finish this week. By November, he and his family will open a coffee shop under the mural, with a jazz and blues club downstairs and a studio for Rosic upstairs. He plans to set up 12 recliners under the mural so people can sit back and look up as they drink coffee or eat a sandwich.

"My goal is to bring culture here, to Waterloo, Iowa," he said. "I painted this for myself, but now it's part of the city."

Terry Poe Buschkamp, of Main Street Waterloo, said

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Deaths in the news

Associated Press
Norman Lewis, 93, of Los Angeles, who wrote or edited more than 60 books on language and grammar, including the best-selling "90 Days to a More Powerful Vocabulary" and "Word Power Made Easy" died Sept. 8 of age-related causes.
Ralph Story, 80, of Rockville, Md., a

using religious characters and scenes, but three times bigger, with about three times as many figures, all wearing contemporary clothing.

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