



ARMOIRE REWORKED

Entertainment centers retrofitted for new uses.

HOME, E1

Organist aims to lift the spirit at recital.

COMMUNITY, B1

HOT CAVS ROLL OVER PACERS

SPORTS, C1

Local fundraising for Haiti reaches beyond \$32,000

A community effort is under way to raise money for disaster relief in quake-stricken Haiti.

As of 4:30 p.m. Friday, the balance in the Haiti Relief Account: \$32,694.08.

FirstMerit Bank, the Akron Beacon Journal, the Akron Community Foundation, the American Red Cross and the city of Akron have joined to raise money

and awareness about the needs in Haiti. Donations can be made at any bank branch or by filling out the coupon in today's edition of the Akron Beacon Journal. All money raised will be donated to the American Red Cross to be spent in Haiti.

The coupon appears on Page A3.

Today's weather

Cold with times of clouds and sun

26° High 10° Low Forecast, Page B8

Dear Abby B6	Home E1
Business D1	Lottery B3
J. Cardwell B1	Movies E3
Classified F1	Soaps E3
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Deaths B4, 5	TV Listing B8

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New Horizons Band opens up a world of music, camaraderie to adult members



Pat Johnson of Akron plays her violin during practice with the New Horizons Band.

ENSEMBLE EVOLVES



PAUL TOPLE/Akron Beacon Journal photos

String instructor Teddi Swope (by window) works with members of the New Horizons Band of Summit and Stark Counties at Richardson Elementary in Cuyahoga Falls. The program teaches adults how to play in an ensemble.

By Mary Beth Breckenridge
Beacon Journal staff writer

Bill Wilkerson had longed to play the trombone since he was just a boy.

The better part of a lifetime later, he finally got his chance. Wilkerson is a member of New Horizons Band of Summit and Stark Counties, a group that gives adults a chance to learn musical instruments. It draws people from around the region who gather to learn, practice and perform for the pure joy of making music.

For Wilkerson, it's the fulfillment of a lifelong dream.

The Akron resident grew up during the Depression, when there just wasn't money to buy a trombone for a kid with a desire to learn it. "I thought about it on and off my entire life," he said, but he never had an opportunity to pursue music.

Then he learned about a group that was forming for people like him.

Wilkerson was among the six people who showed up at the first meeting six years ago, devoid of musical knowledge but eager to learn. He remembers looking at a sheet of music for the first time and seeing gibberish. "It looked like someone had stepped on ants," he



ONLINE EXTRA

See a gallery of photos and a video with this story at Ohio.com

"This group is about enjoying life through embracing music," says group President Jim Adkins.

said.

A few weeks later, his wife, Mary, joined to learn the flute. They've since come a long way musically, they said: Mary Wilkerson now plays solos in church sometimes, and both are mem-

bers of the Metro Parks Ensemble with their sons Paul, a trombone player, and John, who plays trumpet.

New Horizons Band of Summit and

Please see **Horizons, A4**

Anger, fear grows over Toyota recall

Company giving few answers to dealers, drivers

By Erin McClam and Emily Fredrix
Associated Press

Toyota executives have been virtually silent amid a

recall of millions of their cars because gas pedals can become dangerously stuck. Customers, meanwhile, have been wrestling with fear, frustration, confusion and anger.

Since Tuesday, when the Japanese automaker said it would stop making and selling some of its top-selling models, the company has had few answers for dealers and drivers - most notably about when Toyota owners could

get their cars fixed and hit the road without worrying.

"I'm stuck with this car," said Tony Raasch of Hales Corners, Wis., who said he hit another driver in his 2010 Co-

Please see **Drivers, A4**

Area gas stations try hand at slots

Spee-D-Foods installs skill-based machines to draw new customers

By Rick Armon
Beacon Journal staff writer

Mike Beda did a double take when he walked into the Spee-D-Foods gas station this week to grab a cup of coffee.

He thought he spotted three slot machines in the back. Couldn't be.

But after another glance, he confirmed, yes, those indeed were slot machines.

Spee-D-Foods Inc. has installed the machines - converted slots that are now considered skill-based amusement games - in eight of its Akron and Canton area stores as a way to attract new customers.

For some, the sight is a little jarring, considering the underground nature of many so-called skill-based gaming parlors and well-publicized raids and seizures by local authorities. But in Spee-D-Foods, the machines sit among the snacks and drinks right in the open.

"I was shocked," said Beda, 55, of Brunswick. "Those look like real slot machines."

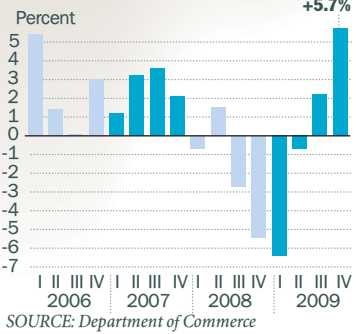
They are - sort of. Reel Vegas Slots, the Flanners, N.J., company behind the games, converted real slot machines taken from Atlantic City. But unlike true slots that rely on

Please see **Slots, A6**

Strong GDP growth

The gross domestic product measures the value of all goods and services produced within the United States.

Annualized quarterly change based on chained 2005 dollars



Economy ends '09 with gains

U.S. growth rate hits 5.7% in final quarter

By Kevin G. Hall
McClatchy Newspapers

WASHINGTON: The U.S. economy grew by a better-than-expected 5.7 percent annual rate during the final quarter of 2009, the Commerce Department reported Friday. However, economists think that pace is unlikely to continue.

The surprisingly strong number followed a 2.2 percent annualized growth rate in the third quarter of 2009. The combined half-year record strongly suggests the deep U.S. recession is over, though the economy remains hobbled.

"The worst is now officially behind," read the headline of a research report Friday by Bank of America Merrill Lynch Global Research.

However, the time for celebration isn't yet here.

"The [growth] number was very positive and is proof posi-

Please see **Economy, A4**

Obama, House Republicans trade barbs

Health-care bill, economy, federal debt stances show a deep divide on facts, figures

By William Douglas
McClatchy Newspapers

BALTIMORE: In a session that was intended to foster bipartisanship with Republicans in the House of Representatives, President Barack

Obama blasted them Friday for distorting his health-care plan to the point that "you'd think that this thing was some Bolshevik plot."

"I'm not suggesting we're going to agree on everything, whether it's

on health care or energy," Obama said. "But if the way these issues are being presented by the Republicans is that this is some wild-eyed plot to impose huge government in every aspect of our lives, what happens is

you guys then don't have a lot of room to negotiate with me."

The president's blunt remarks were part of an unusual question-and-answer session after remarks he made at the House Republicans' retreat in Baltimore.

Please see **Retreat, A6**



Obama

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