

# The Gazette

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Out There

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New Year party guide — GO!

**COLORADO WIELDS ECONOMIC EDGE**  
Business

**"He thinks he can be an ambassador for democracy around the world. It's admirable but also agony for a parent."**

SHATHA ATIYA — mother of Farris Hassan, who told his parents in mid-December that he was in the Middle East and bound for Baghdad

## Florida teen secretly travels to Iraq to experience war

By JASON STRAZIUSSO  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

**BAGHDAD, Iraq** Maybe it was the time the taxi dumped him at the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border, leaving him alone in the middle of the desert. Or when he drew a crowd at a Baghdad food stand after using an Arabic phrase book to order. Or the moment a Kuwaiti cabdriver almost punched him in the face when he balked at the \$100 fare.

But at some point, Farris Hassan, a 16-year-old from Florida, realized that

traveling to Iraq by himself was not the safest thing he could have done with his Christmas vacation.

And he didn't even tell his parents until he had arrived in the Middle East. Hassan's adventure began with a high school class on "immersion journalism" and one overly eager — or naively idealistic — Fort Lauderdale teen who's lucky to be alive after going way beyond what any teacher would ask.

As a junior this year at Pine Crest School, a Fort Lauderdale prep academy of about 700 students, Hassan studied writers such as John McPhee in the book

"The New Journalism," an introduction to immersion journalism — a writer who lives the life of his subject to better understand it.

Diving headfirst into an assignment, Hassan, whose parents were born in Iraq but have lived in the United States for about 35 years, hung out at a local mosque. The teen, who said he has no religious affiliation, spent an entire night until 6 a.m. talking politics with a group of Muslim men.

The next trimester his class was as-



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Farris Hassan, a history student, chose the Iraq war as a topic for English class and decided to practice immersion journalism, traveling solo to Iraq, known for deaths and abductions of foreigners.

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## MOBILE MENORAH



JERILEE BENNETT, THE GAZETTE

Rabbi Moshe Liberow placed a bulb signifying the fifth night of Hanukkah into a large menorah resting atop a limousine. The rabbi toured Colorado Springs with the giant menorah Thursday. Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights,

is a Jewish celebration. The menorah signifies the miracle of the oil that burned for eight days. The celebration began Dec. 25 and ends Jan. 2. Liberow represents the local chapter of Chabad Lubavitch.

## Women's Internet use is on the rise

On average, females under 65 online more than men

By YUKI NOGUCHI  
THE WASHINGTON POST

Traditionally, women have lagged behind men in adoption of Internet technologies, but a study released this week by the Pew Internet & American Life Project found that women under age 65 now outpace men in Internet usage, though only by a few percentage points. But the survey also noted that the disparity between women and men on the Web is even greater among the 18-to-29 age group and African-Americans.

The report, "How Women and Men Use the Internet," ex-

### BY THE NUMBERS

Percentage of men and women who go online:

	Men	Women
Age 18-29	80	86
30-49	76	79
50-64	63	66
65-plus	34	21

Education	Men	Women
No H.S. diploma	32	27
High school	58	56
Some college	79	79
College degree	89	89

amined use by both sexes, looking at what men and women are doing online as well as their rate of adopting new Web-based technologies.

The Washington-based organization, which has been conducting surveys on different aspects of technology and Internet usage for several years, highlighted the disparity among younger people, noting that it could set the stage for usage in years to come.

"I think the real interesting

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## Both Design Center stores shutting down

Chapel Hills location closes Saturday; other on March 29

By JIM BAINBRIDGE  
THE GAZETTE

After 11 years as one of Colorado Springs' best high-end furniture stores, The Design Center is quitting business in what company President Mike Demuth calls "a lifestyle decision."

The Chapel Hills store will close for good when its lease expires on New Year's Eve and the 32,000-square-foot flagship store at 750 Garden of the Gods Road will follow March 29.

A sale to clear out the company's \$3 million inventory began Thursday with prices reduced by 50 percent or more on its line of designer living room, dining room and bedroom furniture.

"It's been an emotional day," Demuth said. "We had 75-100 people lined up outside, and it's been busy all



CAROL LAWRENCE, THE GAZETTE FILE

The Design Center at 750 Garden of the Gods Road. This location will close on March 29.

day. People keep telling us they are so sorry we are closing. We've heard that over and over and over today.

"Customers have been hugging salespeople, and there have been some tears shed."

Demuth and David Kameron, who heads a family partnership that owns the business, moved The Design Cen-

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## Monitors to review elections

International group gave OK to Iraqi vote initially

By RICHARD OPPEL JR.  
THE NEW YORK TIMES

**BAGHDAD, Iraq** — An international election-monitoring group that gave a preliminary endorsement to Iraq's parliamentary vote two weeks ago has agreed to send observers back into Iraq to investigate allegations by Sunni Arab and secular Shiite parties that widespread vote-rigging tainted the results.

The International Mission for Iraqi Elections, a Jordan-based monitor, said it would dispatch two investigators from the League of Arab States and one each from Canada and Europe. The group previously said that based on early indications, the Dec. 15 election appeared to have "generally met international standards."

The move follows demands for new elections by two main opposition groups, the Sunni Arab Iraqi Consensus Front and the Iraqi National List slate of candidates backed by former Prime Minister Ayad Alawi. Iraqi election officials and U.N. observers have rejected those demands, saying that though fraud occurred in some places, the ballot was generally transparent and credible.

Even though a U.N. team has backed the election, Secretary-General Kofi Annan said late Thursday that sending in new monitors was important because "it is critical that those Iraqi groups who have complained about the conduct of the election are given a hearing." He said the new team "was not involved in the conduct of the elections" and could offer an "independent evaluation of these complaints."

The U.S. ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, said the observers would arrive immediately, and he applauded what he called the willingness of Iraqi election offi-

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**today**

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Breezes will replace Thursday's strong winds. **Metro 8**



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