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## KIDS' SAFETY



Firefighter Cardell Thompson reads 'No Dragons for Tea' to a large group of children, their parents and caretakers Oct. 10 at the Columbia Library. October is fire prevention month, so the Seattle Fire Department is talking to children and families about fire safety at the city's public libraries. Check the Seattle Public Libraries' web page: /www.spl.org to find out which library is hosting the next "Firefighter Story time".

## Vigorous Debate on Pot

### Leslie Braxton, Steve Sarich square off with illuminating results

By Sarah Elson  
Special to *The Skanner News*

Marijuana legalization is on the Washington state ballot this year, and a debate over Initiative 502 drew a large crowd at the University of Washington on Wednesday, Oct. 10.

The event turned out to be highly engaging thanks to the banter between two of the debaters. Rev. Leslie Braxton is the senior pastor at New Beginnings Christian Fellowship in Renton, which he helped organize in 2005. The anti-drug pastor also lectures about police accountability, anti-drug advocacy and racial conflicts.

His opponent, Steve Sarich, is a medical marijuana activist and dispensary owner who currently lives in Kent. The two men represented the extreme sides of the issue. At one point Sarich even pulled out a marijuana plant and plopped it on the desk in front of him.

Sarich supports legalization but argued that I-502, which would legalize and tax sales of up to 1 ounce of marijuana, isn't really legalization because marijuana will still be classified as a schedule one drug. He also noted the flaws of the new DUI provision for cannabis impairment that is included in I-502.

Braxton is vehemently opposed to drug use, but he believes the war on drugs is a form of institutionalized racism and that decriminalizing marijuana will create a more just society.

The DUI provision and its per se limit of 5 nanograms of active THC per liter of blood was the topic discussed most. Seattle City Attorney Pete Holmes, who supports legalizing marijuana, said the per se limit was set because research suggests users will be impaired once they reach that level and it is important that users do not drive when they are impaired.

"Over a certain amount of time the active THC will dissipate in your bloodstream,"

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## County Begins to Bury Indigents

### After years of no funding, Yakima plans a mass grave for unclaimed

By Dan Catchpole  
Yakima Herald-Republic

YAKIMA, Wash. (AP) — The ashes of 85 people sit in cardboard boxes, five urns to a box, in a walk-in cooler at the Yakima County Coroner's office

The urns — simple, brown plastic containers — are cheap and utilitarian. Each is labeled with the most basic information: name, gender, dates of birth and death, and the funeral home that handled the body.

One of the oldest is Harry Brockwell. Born in 1911 in Tennessee, he worked as a farm laborer in the Yakima Valley before he died at 90. There are a brother and sister born nearly two years apart. Both died shortly after their meth-addicted mother gave birth. One man was a fisherman, another a chef and one woman was a beautician.

With varied lives and deaths spanning more than a century, they share this: They had no money for burial, and no one came forward to claim their

remains.

Now, the county will bury them in a mass grave in Tahoma Cemetery sometime later this month or in early November.

The dead deserve a respectful resting place, but for more than a decade the county hasn't had money for a burial, Yakima County Coroner Jack Hawkins said.

Thanks to help from the city of Yakima, which owns and operates Tahoma Cemetery, and local funeral homes, especially Shaw and Sons Funeral Direc-

tors, the county is burying its uncollected dead. They will be buried together under a communal marker. But the county and cemetery will catalog the location of each person.

Hawkins hopes family members or friends come forward to claim remains. But if not, burying them together is better than nothing, he said.

"Before, they were kept in a drawer here or on a rack at a funeral home. It's a way to give them a final resting place. It's

## Longview Soldier Committed Suicide

### Report shows Mikayla Bragg had tried to kill herself in the past

LONGVIEW, Wash. (AP) — A 20-year-old soldier from Longview killed herself in Afghanistan last December as she served alone in a guard tower, where she was stationed despite a long history of mental-health issues that was not communicated to her supervisors, according to a new report.

An Army investigation determined that Spc. Mikayla Bragg's commanding officers were never told she had made an apparent

previous suicide attempt while serving stateside in Fort Knox, even though officials at the Kentucky base knew of it, The Daily News of Longview reported. The newspaper obtained the investigation report through a Freedom of Information Act request.

"I found out after her death she had been seen (at Fort Knox) for issues like this. Of course the information was never provided

to her commander (in Afghanistan)," wrote one frustrated Army captain, whose name was redacted. "Real effective policy they have in place."

Among the findings were that her superiors weren't told she had spent 45 days in an Army hospital at Fort Knox for mental-health treatment just months before she

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