

# THE TENNESSEAN

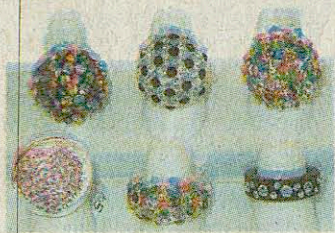
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2008

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## Survey finds religious faith is fickle, fluid in U.S.

Diversity brings choices, conversions; denominational labels lose importance

By **CATHY LYNN GROSSMAN**  
USA Today  
and **ANGELA PATTERSON**  
Staff Writer

A new map of faith in the United States shows a nation

constantly shifting amid religious choices, unaware or unconcerned with doctrinal distinctions. Unbelief is on the rise. And immigration is introducing new faces in the pews,

new cultural concerns, new forces in the public square.

The U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, in which more than 35,000 Americans were interviewed via phone, reports that 44 percent of people are no longer tied to the religious or secular upbringing of their childhood.

While some Nashvillians

have chosen to make a denominational switch, churchgoers say there's hardly a mass exodus — churches are growing as people seek out a place of worship that fits their needs and concept of spirituality.

The survey released today by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life shows so much diversity and dynamism that a

co-author sums it up simply: "Churn. Churn. Churn. The biggest news here is change," Pew Forum research fellow Gregory Smith said.

"It's not that religion won't matter in the future, but that it will matter in new and less predictable ways," said co-

► Please see **RELIGION, 5A**

## Metro drivers hold keys to declining vehicle thefts



BILLY KINGSLEY / THE TENNESSEAN

Metro auto theft detectives Billy Sharer, left, and Reggie Miller stress the importance of not leaving keys in unattended vehicles. About half of the cars stolen in Nashville last year had keys left inside.

## Police say 8% drop in '07 came despite careless motorists

By **KATE HOWARD**  
Staff Writer

Car thefts dropped more than 8 percent in Nashville last year to the lowest rate in the city's history.

About 2,800 cars were reported stolen in 2007, the lowest raw number since 1989. Police credit the drop to more bait car operations, the closing of some notorious chop shops and more manpower. Slowing their progress, though, is a combination of volunteer victims and opportunist criminals.

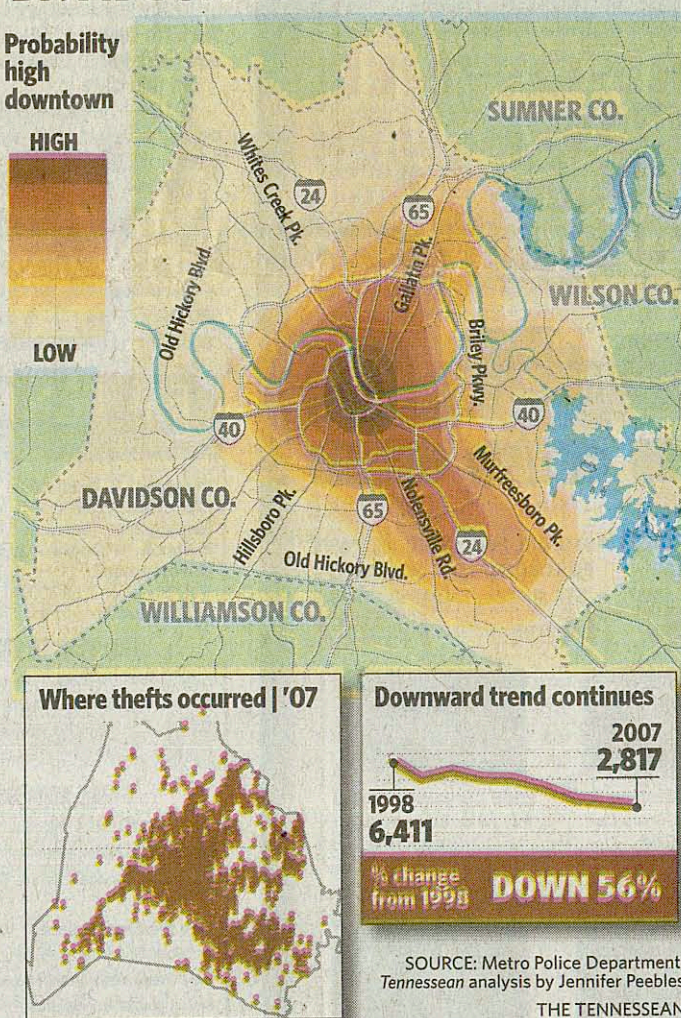
It took little effort to make off with roughly half of all the cars stolen last year. The keys were inside.

"After the fact is a bad time for shoulda-coulda-wouldas," said Sgt. Billy Smith, who supervises Metro's auto theft unit. "Some people are thieves all their lives, and still some wouldn't be if the opportunity wasn't there."

When Metro launched its "Park Smart!" program in 2000 to educate the public about taking their keys with them, about

► Please see **THEFTS, 5A**

## DAVIDSON COUNTY CAR THEFTS



## Historical references lost on today's teens

Study says back-to-basics has neglected humanities

By **GREG TOPPO**  
USA Today

Big Brother. McCarthyism. The patience of Job.

Don't count on your typical teenager to nod knowingly when

you drop a reference to any of these. A study out today finds that about half of 17-year-olds can't identify the books or historical events associated with them.

Twenty-five years after the federal "A Nation at Risk" report challenged U.S. public schools to raise the quality of education kids receive, the study finds that high

schoolers still lack important historical and cultural underpinnings of "a complete education." And, its authors fear, the nation's current focus on improving children's basic reading and math skills in elementary school may only make matters worse, giving

► Please see **KNOWLEDGE, 5A**

## Clinton, Obama benefited donors

I used ArcGIS to produce this analysis to go with my colleague Kate Howard's story on car thefts in Nashville.

helped enact companies

WASHINGTON — Both Democratic presidential candidates, who promise to curb the influence of corporate lobbyists in Washington, helped enact narrowly tailored tax breaks sought by major campaign contributors.

Sen. Barack Obama's presidential campaign has accepted \$54,350 from members of a law firm that in 2006 lobbied him to introduce a tax provision for a Japanese drug company with operations in Illinois, according to public records and interviews. The government estimates the provision, which became law in December 2006, will cost the treasury \$800,000.

In 2002, Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton introduced legislation at the request of Rienzi & Sons, a Queens, N.Y., food importer, said company President Michael Rienzi. The provision, which became law in December 2004, required the government to refund tens of thousands of dollars in duty charged on imported tomato products,

► Please see **BREAKS, 5A**

## No. 1 for first time, UT looks to Vandy

By **BRYAN MULLEN**  
Staff Writer

The team from Rocky Top is looking down at everyone else.

The Tennessee men's basketball team grabbed the No. 1 ranking in both major polls Monday after winning a widely hyped weekend game over previous No. 1 Memphis.

The Vols, ranked No. 2 previously, became a unanimous No. 1 selection in the ESPN/USA Today poll. The team received 69 of a possible 72 first-place votes in the AP poll.

It is the first time in program history that UT (25-2, 11-1 in the Southeastern Conference) has earned the top ranking. Entering the season, the Vols' highest ranking was No. 4.

After the Vols' victory at Memphis on Saturday, UT Coach Bruce Pearl and his players said they knew they would be the nation's new top-ranked team, but they were more concerned with the game tonight at Vanderbilt.

The Tigers' top ranking "was a big factor for us in our preparation for Memphis," Pearl said. "There was almost an air of everything to gain and nothing to lose. But as far as how we go down to Vanderbilt and play, the ranking won't affect us."

Vanderbilt (23-4, 8-4) jumped to No. 14 in the ESPN/USA Today poll and No. 18 in the AP. Memphis fell to No. 2 in the AP poll. North Carolina, UCLA and Texas rounded out the top five.

Reach Bryan Mullen at 865-712-4090 or bmullen@tennessean.com.



**In Sports**  
Vols, Vandy each have things to prove tonight. **On 1C**

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FROM PAGE ONE

## Breaks: Campaign donors benefited

FROM PAGE 1A

Rienzi told *USA Today*.

Rienzi gave \$110,000 to committees set up to support Clinton's 2000 Senate race, records show. Rienzi family members contributed an additional \$52,800 to her campaigns since 2000. Michael Rienzi also said he donated to Bill Clinton's presidential foundation, but he declined to say how much.

### Import taxes suspended

At issue is a little-known congressional practice of suspending import taxes on specific products at the request of companies. Typically, Congress passes a tariff bill every two years that includes a variety of such measures.

Steve Ellis, vice president of the watchdog group Taxpayers for Common Sense, says the provisions are part of a corporate favor factory that rewards lobbyists and fuels fundraising. "It's a make-work moneymaking cycle for all involved," Ellis said.

It's legal and common for members of Congress to accept campaign money from people who have benefited from their actions.

Nonetheless, both Democrats have promised to reduce the influence of corporate interests in Washington, even as each has raised more than \$130 million.

Clinton accepts money from lobbyists, but she recently has stepped up her criticism of what she called, in a Feb. 14 speech, "a government of, by and for the special interests."

Obama touts his refusal to take donations from Washington lobbyists, though he accepts money from their co-workers who are not registered to lobby.

After the Feb. 12 primary, he decried a "Washington game" in which "lobbyists write check after check and Exxon makes record profits."

Obama declined to be interviewed for this story.

His campaign said in a statement that Obama "introduced these bills to help Illinois companies get products they need that aren't available in the U.S. so they can lower costs for customers and create jobs."

Clinton's campaign also declined to make her available. "This type of routine legislation was introduced jointly by New York's senators to help companies throughout their state," Clinton spokesman Philippe Reines said by e-mail. Of the contributions, he said, "One thing had nothing to do with the other."

### McCain policy differs

John McCain, the likely Republican nominee, does not introduce tariff suspension bills under "a longstanding policy — no private relief bills or any bills for one person," spokeswoman Jill Hazelbaker said in an e-mail.

In May 2006, after the finance committee invited senators to put forward tariff suspension proposals, Obama introduced a bill requested by Astellas Pharma, which sought a break on an ingredient it imports from Switzerland.

Astellas employed two lobbyists with the Chicago firm of Katten Muchin Rosenman, Senate records show. Another Katten lawyer had helped the senator set up a blind trust in 2005, campaign spokesman Tommy Vietor said.

The two lobbyists have not contributed to Obama, but their law partners and associates at Katten gave \$77,000 to his campaigns since 1999, according to the nonpartisan CQMoneyline.

Mark Zolno, a Katten partner who represents Astellas, said in a statement that the tariff suspension was a routine matter that arose long before Obama decided to run for president.

Clinton's 2002 tomato legislation stemmed from a court decision that sided with food importers who successfully sued the government, arguing their products had been improperly taxed, Michael Rienzi said.

He said his contributions were not related to the tariff bill.

# Thefts: Careless drivers' insurance can be canceled

FROM PAGE 1A

25 percent of cars were easy targets. That percentage has since doubled.

Smith said police see most of the thefts at convenience stores or grocery stores, where people run in for one quick purchase. In very hot or cold weather, those who leave their cars running also are targets.

To add insult to injury, drivers whose cars are snatched may face further penalties from their insurance companies. Leaving keys in the car is the easiest way to pull off an insurance fraud, said Julie Pulliam of the American Insurance Association. So if nothing else, the filling of claims may be delayed while insurance companies investigate.

And when it comes time to renew a policy, insurance companies may opt out.

"Even if it's not fraud, and the claim is paid, the insurance company is going to probably think twice about renewing your coverage because of your apparent carelessness or forgetfulness," Pulliam said.

As for the other half of last year's car thefts, Smith said,



Search **CRIME** for a map detailing all the car thefts in Davidson County in 2007 and a video with tips on how to prevent car theft.

older cars, which are more common on the road, are popular targets of thieves because of their parts.

The 37211 ZIP code in south Nashville topped the list with 304 cars reported stolen last year. Also high on the list were the Brick Church Pike area, Antioch, Madison and downtown Nashville.

### Bait cars abound

The auto theft unit has plenty of flashy cars, loaded with GPS equipment, to use as bait when a rash of car thefts breaks out.

They also keep a bait fleet that includes golf carts, boats and riding lawnmowers to use wherever problem thefts are occurring. Smith said they sometimes put up a sign in the lot announcing their sting operation. He's not surprised when attempts are still made.

"Many of them see the sign and say, 'Nah. The police don't do that,'" Smith said.

The bait cars and detectives' undercover vehicles are provided by the National Insurance Crime Bureau, a non-profit organization that gives assistance and funding for car theft prevention programs.

Jimmy Carl Ball Sr., senior special agent with the bureau, said he communicates daily with Metro detectives to discuss emerging trends. "In that area, we try to provide the police with cars similar to the ones that they're stealing in the streets," Ball said.

Once the cars have been stolen, they're quickly retrieved by officers waiting nearby. For regular street cars, the process can be much more complicated, since plundered vehicles can end up abandoned, stripped for parts by chop shops or at the bottom of the Cumberland River.

Jim Stiles has lived more than 35 years along Bill Creek, where Metro's auto theft detectives and a diver spent an afternoon this month search-



BILLY KINGSLEY / THE TENNESSEAN  
**Fingerprints remain on a car that had a stereo and three wheels stolen from it. Cars often are stolen for expensive wheels and other parts in demand on the black market.**

ing for the remnants of stolen cars.

Walking his dogs along the railroad tracks that pass over the creek, Stiles pointed to the vacant yard of his neighbor on

Lisa Lane, where Metro detectives found the remnants of a chop shop. Six stolen vehicles were found on the property after police arrested a friend of the property owner's grandson for stripping cars to sell parts. Another man used other parts to enhance cars for illegal street racing, police said.

The end of the lot is not far from an opening on the creek's bank, where detectives expected to find shells of dumped cars.

"People come in here all hours, day and night," Stiles said. "I try to pay no attention, but I know what they're doing."

Smith and his unit never did find the Hondas they expected to find from the chop shop, but they came upon another vehicle that day in the Cumberland River off Pennington Bend. The Chevy Cavalier was beaten up but did not seem to have been stripped for parts. They pulled it from the river and discovered it had been reported stolen in North Carolina.

The keys were inside.

Contact Kate Howard at 726-8968 or kahoward@tennessean.com.

## Religion: Protestants fade; immigrants boost Catholics

FROM PAGE 1A

author John Green, a political scientist and Pew Forum senior fellow.

Key findings from the survey:

■ Faith is fluid: 44 percent say they no longer are tied to the religious or secular upbringing of their childhood. They have changed religions or denominations, adopted a faith for the first time or abandoned any affiliation altogether.

■ "Nothing" matters: 12.1 percent say their religious identity is "nothing in particular," outranking every denomination and tradition except Catholics (23.9 percent) and all groups of Baptists (17.2 percent).

■ Protestants are fading: 51.3 percent still call them-

selves Protestant, but roughly one third of this group were "unable or unwilling" to describe their denomination.

■ Immigrants sustain Catholic numbers: 46 percent of foreign-born U.S. adults are Catholics, compared with only 21 percent of native-born adults. Latinos now account for 45 percent of all U.S. Catholics ages 18-29.

### Converting is common

Eric Jans moved from the Lutheran tradition to start attending a Presbyterian church three years ago.

"There were not many Lutheran churches around here, and my wife wasn't Lutheran," said Jans, an Iowa native who attends City Church of East Nashville. "We

attended other churches, but we didn't feel connected to them. We chose our church because it was community-based and had a strong neighborhood focus."

Like Jans, Vanderbilt divinity professor Robin Jensen grew up Lutheran but converted to Catholicism two years ago to attend the same church as her husband.

"A lot of us find ourselves in a place where we weren't raised and bred, and we bring a lot to those congregations," Jensen said. "But because we didn't grow up there, we don't always understand things. It's a wonderful, but challenging, set of circumstances."

The study reports a particular challenge for the Catholic Church. Findings show that the faith is experiencing

the greatest net loss of people switching to a different church, but that immigrants are making up for the loss.

Rick Musacchio, communications director for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Nashville, said area churches had seen steady growth, especially with Hispanic populations.

"A vast majority of our immigrant population are migrants, which have a certain set of issues, and we try to reach out to them," Musacchio said. "And then we have immigrants who are settling in this area, buying houses, joining the parishes. And they're serving the parishes in a different way."

But the main thrust of the study is that the religious landscape is changing, and Nashville is no exception. Jensen said she had observed that

there's much more of a "marketplace quality" to religion: People are interested in finding a church that matches their value systems and that has programs that fit their family's needs.

The Rev. Gail Seavey of First Unitarian Universalist Church, said people leave religion for a variety of reasons — questioning belief systems, disagreement with dogma, women's roles in the church, and so on.

In her experience, people are coming back not necessarily for organized religion, but because they want spirituality.

"There's definitely a growing segment who come to church having no religious background," Seavey said. "But they're fascinated to learn about spirituality."

## Knowledge: Basics crowd out humanities in U.S. schools

FROM PAGE 1A

short shrift to the humanities — even if kids can read and do math.

"If you think that it matters whether or not kids have common historical touchstones and whether, at some level, we feel like members of a common culture, then familiarity with this knowledge matters a lot," said American Enterprise Institute researcher Rick Hess, who wrote the study.

Among 1,200 students surveyed:

■ 43 percent knew the Civil War was fought between 1850 and 1900.

■ 52 percent could identify the theme of 1984.

■ 51 percent knew that the controversy surrounding Sen. Joseph McCarthy focused on communism.

In all, students earned a C in history and an F in literature, though the survey suggests that students do well on topics that schools cover.

For instance, 88 percent knew that the bombing of Pearl Harbor led the United

States into World War II, and 97 percent could identify Martin Luther King Jr. as the author of the 1963 "I Have a Dream" speech.

Fewer (77 percent) knew that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* helped end slavery a century earlier.

"School has emphasized Martin Luther King and everybody teaches it and people are therefore learning it," said Chester Finn of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, an education think tank. "What a better thing it would be if people also had the Civil

War part" and "the civil rights part, and the Harriet Tubman part and the *Uncle Tom's Cabin* part."

### 'Not all is woe'

The findings probably won't sit well with educators, who note that record numbers of students are taking college-level Advanced Placement history, literature and other courses in high school.

"Not all is woe in American education," said Trevor Packer of The College Board,

which oversees Advanced Placement.

The study's release today in Washington also serves as a sort of coming out for its sponsor, Common Core, a new nonpartisan group pushing for the liberal arts in public school curricula.

Its leadership includes a fifth-grade teacher, an author of history and science textbooks, a teachers union leader and a former top official in the George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton administrations.



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