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FOCUS: For Belleville native Sandra Magnus, nothing can match the sights and sounds of a space shuttle launch. Not even the Columbia tragedy that killed its seven-member crew can squelch her desire to return to outer space.

MAGNUS

BY ROGER SCHLUETER
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Sandra Magnus cannot wait to fly again — to experience again the exhilaration she felt Oct. 7 as she prepared to enter the space shuttle Atlantis for liftoff.

"It's funny — we train extensively for these missions and we even do a practice launch like a dress rehearsal a couple weeks before the real launch," she said in her first major interview since the flight. "But somehow you know this is the real day — this is the day you're going into space. I just had this grin on my face that wouldn't quit. It was pretty neat."

Magnus, a Belleville native and NASA flight engineer, blasted off in October aboard Atlantis for a destination 250 miles above the Earth. One of Magnus' duties was to attach a 14-ton girder to the International Space Station using an immense construction crane.

As the frigidly cold cryo tanks hissed around her in the warm Florida air, she even got in a last-second phone call to her parents, Rose and Dick Hall of Belleville, while she waited for her five crewmates to climb aboard.

"Guess where I am?" she teased them as they awaited the launch on the Kennedy Space Center bleachers. Then, it was back to business as Magnus entered Atlantis for two hours of prelaunch checks.

Just before liftoff, the huge main engines are gimbaled, and "the whole stack sways." Then comes a small jolt when the engines are tested six seconds before launch. Finally, all hell breaks loose when the solid rocket boosters ignite with their 6 million pounds of thrust, and the shuttle begins its fiery ascent.

"It's so loud," Magnus said. "And the vibration — it was very intense. My little checklist was shaking around trying to read it so I could do my job. You sort of have a momentary sensory overload."

Two minutes later, the boosters fall away, and the shut-

Please see **MAGNUS, 7A**



Despite the tragedy, NASA's show must go on

BY ROGER SCHLUETER
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Last October, Sandra Magnus was having a hard time getting her feet back on the ground — literally and figuratively — after a triumphant mission to the international space station.

But less than four months later, the 38-year-old Belleville native joined the rest of the world in shock and disbelief when the space shuttle Columbia disintegrated on re-entry

Feb. 1, killing its crew of seven.

If anyone could have been overcome by a sea of emotions after that tragedy, it would have been Magnus, who began dreaming of becoming an astronaut when she was a seventh-grader at Central Junior High School. But through all the pain of the past month and a half, one thought has never wavered, she says: NASA will fly again,

INSIDE:
NASA gets back into its routine.
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and she has no qualms about flying along.

"None at all — and you'd probably get the same response out of everybody in NASA," said Magnus, who will be in town to show a film of her recent mission during a free program at 7 p.m. Monday in the Southwestern Illinois College theater in Belleville.

"I mean, exploration is risky. Think of all the people who tried to

Please see **TRAGEDY, 7A**

Candidate miffed about absentee votes

Incumbent collected ballots

BY SCOTT WUERZ
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BELLEVILLE — Accusations of "machine" politics were hurled in the city's only ward with a contested race in the April 1 election after 23 absentee ballots were gathered at a downtown retirement apartment building.

Challenger Lester Byrd, who is running against long-time incumbent Ward 6 Alderman Paul Seibert, said Seibert and his family came to the St. Clair County Housing Authority apartment complex at 114 S. Church St. with an armload of absentee ballots. They stood by as residents filled out their choices, then collected the ballots and returned them to the county.

"It's not right to stand there and watch over these people as they fill in their ballots," Byrd, an independent candidate, said. "And they aren't supposed to (turn) them in for people,



Byrd



Seibert

Please see **VOTES, 2A**

Haine gains much support for meth bill

Bill would double penalties

BY JAYNE MATTHEWS
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Support from back home is rolling in for a Madison County state senator in his fight against making illegal methamphetamine in the presence of children.

State Sen. Bill Haine, D-Alton, recently introduced a bill in Springfield that would double the prison time for meth-makers who allow children around their illegal activities.

"We should protect Madison County's most precious resource: our children," said County Board member Helen Hawkins, D-Granite City.

Hawkins is leading a movement to get as many resolutions of support from as many towns and townships as possible.

Fumes from cooking meth are toxic, and the danger of explosion from volatile chemicals is great.

The trustees of two townships in Madison



Haine



Hawkins

Please see **METH, 2A**

More people commuting to the metro-east for work

Traffic into three counties is up 5 percent

BY PATRICK J. POWERS
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In an effort to save money and help the environment at the same time, Loretta Jones organized a car pool to Scott Air Force Base from her home in O'Fallon, Mo.

"It's a one-hour commute, but we're saving wear and tear on our cars and gas money," Jones said.

And with the rising cost of gasoline these days, "We're talking some serious money."

Jones is among a growing group of people who commute to work in Illinois. She said that as long as she can save money, she'll continue the 124-mile round trip she started making when she got hired at the base three years ago.

According to county-to-county work flow figures from the

U.S. Census Bureau, the percentage of residents leaving the metro-east to work remains about the same since 1990, but the percentage of people traveling to a metro-east destination to work from another county or state has risen about 5 percent in Madison, St. Clair and Monroe counties.

That not only includes people coming to Illinois from St. Louis and other parts of Missouri, but also those who drive from one

Illinois county to another to work.

In Madison County, 75,494 of the county's 102,971 workers live within county limits, while 27,477 travel to the county from other locations. Of the 96,181 workers in St. Clair County, 70,379 live and work here. The remaining 25,802 live elsewhere and travel to get to their jobs.

"The broad theme is that the

Please see **COMMUTING, 2A**



TIM VIZER/News-Democrat

Loretta Jones and 12 other commuters saved wear and tear on their own vehicles by riding in a 15-passenger van to work.

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- Pick Three-Midday: **5-8-8**
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- Pick Four-Evening: **6-1-8-8**
- Lotto: **12-29-40-42-45-51**
- Jackpot: **\$3.5 million**

FOR MISSOURI

- Daily Pick 3: **5-8-4**
- Daily Pick 4: **4-9-2-0**
- Show Me 5: **1-4-5-20-29**
- Lotto: **5-7-14-18-32-43**

E REAL ESTATE
F CLASSIFIED

POWERBALL: 12-30-41-45-52 Powerball: **3** Jackpot: **\$38 million** Power Play: **5**

