



## HUMAN INTEREST

Tuesday, April 6, 2010

### Tiny 8-year-old crashes family van moments after stealing it



Bethel, Ohio - An 8-year-old boy had a run-in with the law Friday morning after he took his parents' minivan for a ride. Jordan Winters took the 2003 Dodge Caravan from their home in Bethel, Ohio just before 9 a.m. and crashed it about 100 yards away, according to a traffic report. The minivan missed hitting a telephone pole by about a yard. Jordan said his parents were asleep and he thought it would be a good idea to put gas in the vehicle, so he said he grabbed his mom's purse and keys, started the minivan, pulled out of the driveway and drove onto state Route 133. Jordan said he never drove faster than 10 mph and was only going about 5 mph when he crashed. "I kept on headed toward the ditch, so

I had to turn and then I crashed. I almost crashed into the telephone pole," Jordan said as he sat in the front seat of the minivan. James Crouch, Winters' father, said he didn't even know his son was gone until officers came knocking at his door. He said his son has never done anything like this before and that he was only trying to do his parents a favor. "He wanted to get gas in the van for us, be nice," said Crouch. "He was still in his jammies." Crouch said police did not cite his son because it was only his first moving violation. As for Jordan, he said he's learned his lesson. "Never to drive unless you're 16," he said. ([Video](#))

### No fries with that: fast food axed at Afghan bases

Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan— Fast food joints where soldiers wolf down burgers and pizza will soon be a thing of the past at bases in Afghanistan, as the U.S. military reminds soldiers they are at war and not in "an amusement park." In the sprawling military base at Kandahar, the fast food outlets facing the axe include Burger King, Pizza Hut, and the U.S. chain restaurant T.G.I. Friday's that features a bar with alcohol-free margaritas and other drinks -- all set along the bustling "Boardwalk" area of the base. On any given day, the giant square-shaped walkway features the surreal sight of soldiers sipping gourmet coffee and eating chocolate pastries with guns slung across their shoulders, while Canadians play ice hockey at a nearby rink and fighter jets thunder overhead. The U.S. military says its beef with the burger joints is that they take up valuable resources like water, power, flight and convoy space and that cutting back



on non-essentials is key to running an efficient military operation. "This is a war zone -- not an amusement park," Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Hall wrote in a blog earlier this year. "Supplying nonessential luxuries to big bases like Bagram and Kandahar makes it harder to get essential items to combat outposts and forward operating bases, where troops who are in the fight each day need resupply with ammunition, food and water." Warning that concessions like Orange Julius, Dairy Queen and Military Car Sales were also on the exit list, Hall said less-obvious changes were coming too -- including fewer canned and bottled goods coming into the country as well as fewer first-run movie showings and some entertainment programs. For now, fast food joints like Burger King which operate out of little shacks along the Kandahar boardwalk are still doing brisk business, with lines snaking outside their counters, but their contracts are not expected to be renewed when they expire. A motley crew of other stores selling Afghan books, jewelry and phone cards and the busy Canadian Tim Horton's outlet that sells coffee and doughnuts will stay on. Some U.S. soldiers privately grumble about the cutbacks, but others said they were not bothered by the new edict. Those desperate for comfort food always have the option of the "Chef's short order" section at the dining halls, where fried calamari rings, fish fingers and burgers are free for soldiers and available in abundance.

### California 13-year-old to attempt to climb Everest

Los Angeles, California - A 13-year-old California boy plans to try to climb Mount Everest in a quest to reach the summits of the highest peaks on all seven continents. If Jordan Romero succeeds, he'll become the youngest person to conquer the world's highest mountain. Jordan will attempt the ascent to 29,035 feet with his father and his father's girlfriend, both experienced outdoors people who have helped train the teenager for top-level mountaineering. When Jordan was only 9, a school mural of the seven summits inspired his ambitious goal. "I told my dad about it and he didn't say no. He just explained the difficulties and what I'd have to do. We started training right away," said Jordan, who



was scheduled to depart for Nepal Monday night. At age 10, he became the youngest American to summit Mount Kilimanjaro, Africa's highest peak. He's steadily checked off four of the tallest peaks since then, including Alaska's Mount McKinley, which many climbers consider to be a more technical climb than Everest. Despite his penchant for tall mountains and thin air, friends and family describe Jordan as unusually grounded for a 13-year-old. He said he understands the risks of climbing Everest, which kills climbers almost every year. "Mountain climbing requires a lot of mental training and making smart decisions. It's a metaphor for life," he said, sounding wiser than his years. The teenager's planned Everest ascent is making the mountaineering community think hard about how young is too young to climb such a dangerous mountain. Jordan's father, Paul Romero, said he wants nothing more than to make his son's dreams come true. "It's his quest and we're just along for the ride," said Romero, a helicopter paramedic who lives in the San Bernardino Mountains ski town of Big Bear Lake. "We may or may not reach the summit this time. It might be a dress rehearsal."

### 'Oriental yeti' discovered in China

Sichuan Province, China - This bizarre creature dubbed the oriental yeti has baffled scientists after emerging from ancient woodlands in remote central China. The hairless beast was trapped by hunters in Sichuan province after locals reported spotting what they thought was a bear. Hunter Lu Chin explained: "It looks a bit like a bear but it doesn't have any fur and it has a tail like a kangaroo." "It also does not sound like a bear - it



has a voice more like a cat and it is calling all the time - perhaps it is looking for the rest of its kind or maybe it's the last one? "There are local legends of a bear that used to be a man and some people think that's what we caught," he added. Local animal experts now plan to shipped the mystery beast to scientists in Beijing who will perform DNA tests on the beast.

### Free Tacos for Life, in Exchange for a Tattoo

San Francisco, California - In 1999, San Francisco Mexican restaurant Casa Sanchez launched an



outlandish promotion: get a tattoo of its logo and receive free lunches for life. The promotion whipped up a swirl of media coverage. Some outlets called the offer an ingenious marketing idea. Others focused on the Mission District restaurant's estimate that it stood to lose \$5.8 million if the deal's takers—capped at 50 people—ate there daily for 50 years. A decade and thousands of free meals later, Casa Sanchez is still standing. Some of its tattooed customers moved away, and many just got sick of a daily burrito. Perhaps a dozen of the original tattooed customers were still coming in. Hoping to give a boost to the community and attract new

business to the restaurant, Casa Sanchez revived the tattoo promotion in January. "It's called the 'stimulus special,' " says Martha Sanchez, one of the dozen family members who run the business. She says the restaurant, which has been in the family since the 1920s, has always viewed itself as a neighborhood cornerstone and wants to help needy locals in the weak economy. Ms. Sanchez says three new people have gotten the tattoo since January. The 46-year-old Ms. Sanchez originally thought of the tattoo promotion in 1999 while testing how a color printer would render the company logo. When she hung up a sign advertising the promotion in the restaurant window, she didn't think there would be any takers. Who would get a tattoo of Jimmy the Cornman—a sombrero-wearing kid riding a giant ear of corn like a rocket—even if it meant free food for life? It turns out scores of people were willing to ink the contract. Ms. Sanchez thanks the city's stock of characters for that. "If it wasn't in San Francisco, we wouldn't have been able to pull it off," she says with a laugh. The promotion was so popular in 1999 that after a few dozen takers, the family decided to cap the offer at 50 and to interview the remaining prospects. If the potential customer didn't understand the spirit of the tattoo—becoming an unofficial member of the Sanchez family—and asked too many questions about the meals or the restaurant's solvency, Ms. Sanchez gently told them, "I don't think this is going to work out." Some of the original tattooed customers come in more often now partly because of the sagging economy. One is Makena Echeverria, an unemployed construction worker who makes the 80-minute bus ride from San Mateo to eat here twice a week. The 37-year-old is proud of the tattoo. When asked to show it off, he jumps up and, without warning, pulls down his trousers to reveal the ink on his right hip. "I wanted to be different," he says, after finishing his usual meal of a steak burrito and a Diet Coke. "Anybody can get it on their arm or chest."