



## NEWSBRIEFS

### Officers arrested

Officers from the El Paso County Sheriff's Office, Criminal Investigation Division, arrested two uniformed officers from the Anthony, Texas Police Department in the late evening hours of Dec. 17, according to a statement from Sheriff's Dept. Public Information Officer Rick Glancey. The officers arrested were Eduardo Casillas, a resident of La Mesa, New Mexico, and Lorenzo Lozoya, a resident of Chaparral, New Mexico. Both were charged with the violation of the civil rights of and improper sexual activity with a person in custody. Bond for both Casillas and Lozoya was set at \$5,000, and both were released before 2:30 a.m. on Dec. 18. The alleged incident occurred on April 15, 2002 and the victim reported it on July 10, 2003. The Sheriff's Office is requesting that anyone with information regarding a similar incident before or after the date of the alleged incident contact officials at 546-2219. Glancey said the Sheriff's officers have received the full cooperation of the Anthony Police Department.

### Volunteer honored

Cheryl Fineron, a parent volunteer at Helen Ball Elementary School was honored by the Socorro ISD last week following an incident in which a driver was illegally passing another vehicle in a school zone where Fineron was helping control morning traffic. Two small girls were beginning to cross in a cross-walk, witnesses said, and a van making an illegal pass could not see them. The car and the children were on a collision course until Fineron intervened by hurrying into the crosswalk and stopping the van. She was struck on the knee but stopped the vehicle before the girls reached it. "It was just a bump to me, but if it had been the two small children, that bump could have been tragic," Fineron said. "I ran out there, and I had my orange vest on and I took a big step in front of his van. 'Don't you know you're not supposed to pass in a school zone?' I asked him. He was mortified."

### Border protection

The U.S. Customs and Border Protection will be expanding in the West Texas and Eastern New Mexico area following groundbreaking on Dec. 17 of a new 10,000 square-foot, state-of-the-art, \$7.5 million Border Patrol Station in Carlsbad, New Mexico, east of El Paso. Officials said opening of the new station will allow for the current staff of eight agents in Carlsbad to expand to about 25 agents, and will enhance operations throughout the region.

### In other news

■ The public comment period is continuing as designated by Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson prior to making a decision whether to contract with Rio Nuevo Ltd. — a company formed by a

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*Freedom is like the air we breathe; we don't miss it until we're deprived of it.*

— Quips & Quotes



**GETTING AROUND** — This propane-propelled custom coach is on a national tour to promote such buses as a clean air alternative to their gasoline-fueled counterparts.

## SISD gets a look at what may be bus of the future

EAST EL PASO COUNTY — What may be the school bus of the future visited Socorro ISD's Transportation Department recently. The Corbeil-bodied, Chevrolet-powered, propane-propelled custom coach is on a national tour to promote such buses as a clean air alternative to gasoline-fueled vehicles.

SISD's Director of Transportation, Hector Silva, says he's glad to see the technology is becoming practical and available. Although the District has no immediate plans to buy the propane bus, they are looking at all options.

"The main benefit of this dedicated propane bus," Silva says, "is that the fuel is cheaper than conventional fuel and it's supposed to have the same range as a conventional bus."

Silva says the District's size — 136 square miles — can mean long trips between stops. "We wouldn't want something that you have to fill more than once a day." Socorro ISD is also in a 'non-attainment' area, according to the Environmental Protection Administration, Silva says, "and we certainly want to do everything we can to reduce polluted air."

The Paso del Norte Clean Cities Coalition was also on hand to see the bus. The Coalition helps buyers find funding from a variety of sources to purchase clean-fuel vehicles. Troy



**CHANGES** — The power plants on these buses are modified to run on propane fuel which is cheaper and cleaner.

Hicks of the Coalition says the propane bus will "run 3-1/2 times cleaner than a comparable gasoline bus. And propane is a non-toxic fuel — you don't have to have a special cleanup crew. It just disperses." Hicks says some users have installed propane dispensers on their properties.

Federal and state governments offer rebates on the purchase of propane vehicles. Silva says the propane bus is priced at \$60,000, depending on equipment and without grants or rebates — adding that's about \$5,000 less than a comparable gasoline or diesel bus.

## SEISD special education team helps out family in need

By Phillip Cortez  
Special to the Courier

SAN ELIZARIO — There's an angel with golden wings that sits atop the Christmas tree in the Special Education office at San Elizario Independent School District.

It's more than just some ornament you might see adoring other Christmas trees this time of year, though. Sure, the branches below this angel are decorated in usual fashion. There's a variety of ornaments dangling from limbs, a flowing ribbon of burgundy carefully woven through pre-lit branches. But the angel represents not what is on the tree each year but what's underneath it.

Stacks of colorfully wrapped presents in all sizes circled the tree recently, creating a mountain of happiness for a San Elizario family that nobody in the department knew, except for one person, Maria Elena Gonzalez.

"During the year I make my rounds and visit homes," Gonzalez, a Special Education caseworker, said. "I usually wait until the end of the year so that I can determine which family is in the most need."

Once Gonzalez determines the family, the Special Education department then adopts that family for the holidays, making sure that children get toys and clothing and adults are given food. It's a practice that has been in full force for the last four years, Garcia said.

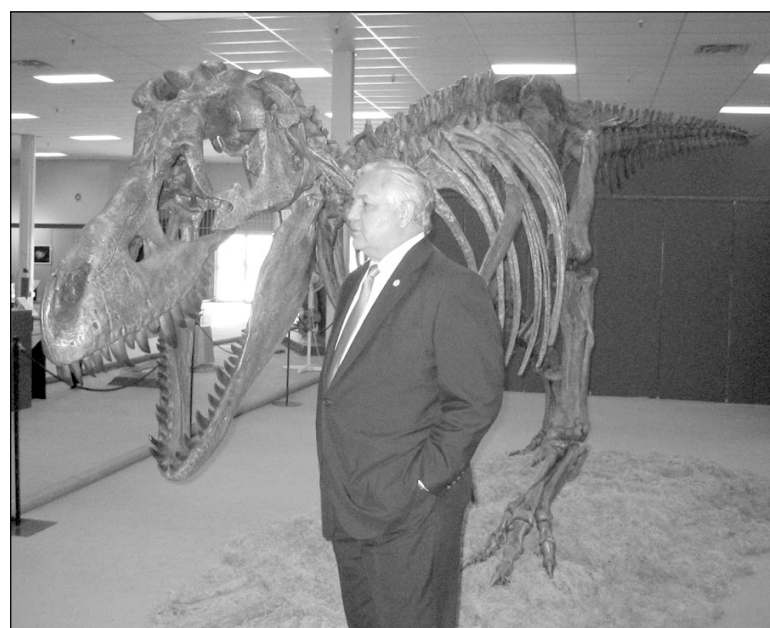
It's a feeling of happiness, being able to see the mother so happy that her children will be getting something for Christmas," Garcia said.

Lorenzo Raygoza is a Special Ed. clerk. During a recent lunchtime, even though he was manning the phones in the empty department, he couldn't seem to take his eyes off the impressive collection of gifts destined for this year's family, known in the department simply as "the Riveras." The pile consisted of blankets, sweaters, toys, stuffed animals, jackets and even a box of food filled

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## Reception highlights attributes of museum

EL PASO COUNTY — The El Paso Museum of Natural History is in need of improved facilities for its multi-million dollar collection. Congressman Silvestre Reyes, D-El Paso, hosted a reception and open house at the museum recently for El Paso community leaders to draw attention to the museum's impact on our community and highlight the need for modernized storage facilities. "The El Paso Natural History Museum is a true El Paso treasure. El Pasoans founded the museum, having traveled the world to acquire the extensive collection that is now on display in our community," said Reyes. "This museum improves El Paso's quality of life and is an important resource for area students and educators. It also improves our ability to attract visitors to our city. Through this open house, El Paso area leaders will gain a better understanding of the museum's importance and possibilities for its long-term care and exhibit in our community."





# One perspective

By Francis Shrum

## Light up the night

I'm glad all that London has to worry about is looking dingy in December. But is it really? I wonder.

The fact that we waste huge amounts of time, energy and resources in our so-called "developed" world is so common place we mostly don't even notice when it is happening. Sometimes, however, it's so glaring you can't help but notice.

Like the folks in London are being forced to do during this holiday season, this season of so-called giving and goodwill, even if they are struggling to make ends meet, maybe out of a job, unable to get their teeth fixed or new tires for their car.

But they are going to be cheered up, whether they like it or not.

And how is this massive cheering up going to happen?

Well, Irish rock musician Bob Geldof — a self-anointed, anti-poverty crusader — is using all his influence to motivate some folks with lots of money to celebrate this year by investing billions to uplift London's down-trodden. Like all sensible anti-poverty folks would do, they are going to invest in low-cost medical treatment centers, right?

Wrong.

Oh, then they must be going to send anonymous cash donations to people who have recently been laid off from work and are looking for jobs.

Well, no.

Then they must be going to finance educational programs or playgrounds for children living in underprivileged neighborhoods — or maybe provide visitation and entertainment programs or financial assistance for folks

living in nursing homes?

Well, no... not those either.

No, these folks are *really* creative, far too creative for any of those mundane suggestions. These folks are going to give London's down-trodden the gift of making the city appear less dingy on Christmas Eve.

Wow! I would never have thought of this! They want to create a series of vast light shows at nine of the capital's most famous buildings and monuments that will make them appear as if they are *giant wrapped Christmas packages!*

Artists, rock musicians, designers, sports stars and other folks with a little extra dough are joining together this holiday season to spend millions to give their neighbors these "gifts."

I'm simply overwhelmed by the generosity, the neighborly concern, reflected in this massive, expensive project.

"London is so dark and dingy in December and I just thought, we could light it up," Geldof is quoted in the Evening Standard newspaper, one of the event's sponsors. "I thought we could do stuff with all the great buildings... and companies would compete to make their buildings the best in London," he added in a selfless, anti-poverty sort of tone.

Of course, most of the lighting does not depict beautiful designs or illustrated creations of winter. No, indeed. After all, we must be practical, right? London's Wellington Arch is illuminated with the cover of Geldof's latest CD which he created along with his band, artfully named Band Aid.

Notice, he got those corporate

sponsors in the mix right away to "make their buildings the best in London." You can bet what they light up will be plain old corporate advertising.

Therefore, instead of London looking simply dingy, she'll look more like a giant, gaudy, tasteless billboard.

Now there's an improvement!

I've sometimes wondered what it

is about flickering colored lights that is supposed to create cheer — which they evidently do for lots of folks, based on the number of houses that light up this time of year. People will spend hundreds of hours and thousands of dollars stringing lights in unnatural places like on the roof and through the brush.

Apparently, other folks enjoy them so much they are willing to risk ar-

rest by stealing the decorations out of one another's yards during this season of good cheer.

But if I were down and out in London about right now and watched these massive fixtures light up in my honor, I don't think I'd be all that cheerful — in fact, I'd probably feel a little resentful.

After all, you can't eat colored air for dinner.

FRED SURVIVED TERRORIST ALERTS, THE WAR IN IRAQ, A MONSTER RECESSION, GETTING LAID OFF, LOSING HIS 401(K), NORTH KOREAN NUKES, BLACKOUTS AND THE WEST NILE VIRUS....

...BUT THE THREAT OF FEWER GAMES ON TV WAS SIMPLY TOO MUCH TO BEAR.



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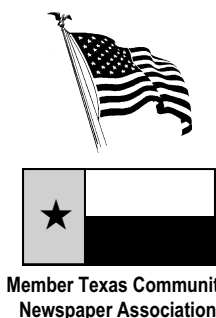
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**View from here** By Michael Quinn Sullivan

**The standard is set: Gov. Perry rules out personal income tax**

Rarely do the words of a politician offer solace, let alone encouragement, to beleaguered taxpayers. But Texas' governor did just that at his year-end press conference.

Across the nation, governor after governor has caved to the shrill calls of big-government apologists by proposing tax hike after tax hike to shore up deficits brought on by years of over-the-top spending. Fiscal responsibility is singularly unpopular in all too many state capitols, even when demanded by those who pay the bills.

Alabama's governor tried to tie a massive tax increase to heavenly rewards. Alabamans suggested he go back to Sunday school. California's Gray Davis implemented so many tax hikes and spending boondoggles that a voter backlash removed him from office.

But Texas overcame a \$10 billion, two-year budget shortfall — modest, compared to other states, such as California's \$35 billion one-year problem — without a tax increase. But it wasn't by accident. It was a series of conscious decisions to promote the health of Texas' economy over the bloat of big-government.

That no city, state or nation has ever taxed its way into prosperity is without question. One trips over the mounds of evidence; a thousand people a day moved from high tax states to low tax states in the 1990s. High taxes reduce employment opportunities and stifle entrepreneurial endeavors.

Undeterred by reality, advocates for increasingly intrusive government have set their sights on the spring of 2004 as an opportunity to bring more money into the state coffers.

Texas' system of school finance has been under attack for several years as unwieldy and inequitable — for taxpayers and students. Any

strides made in reforming Texas schools have been dwarfed by outrage over the "Robin Hood" scheme that unjustly redistributes local property taxes around the state. Sky-rocketing tax bills, legal challenges and political denunciations have brought us to the eve of a special session to address the way Texas funds education... And what is being funded in the first place.

In the coming months Texans will be subjected to words like "adequacy" in describing ways to "reform" the state's system of school finance. After all, who can be against giving every child an adequate education? Be wary: "adequacy" and similar buzzwords are very often double-speak used by those looking to increase funding for a bloated system that has yet to demonstrate it can wisely or appropriately spend the money it is already being given.

Texas' voters were polled this summer and almost 60 percent said public school bureaucrats waste money. When combining local, state and federal monies, somewhere close to — or beyond — \$10,000 per child per year is spent on public education in Texas, far exceeding the cost of nearly any private school. Sadly, though, barely half of those dollars reach the classroom. Money thrown at educational problems rarely solves them, and very often makes them worse.

At his recent press conference, Governor Rick Perry told reporters that when a special session is called, legislators must organize a new system of school finance without increasing the tax burden on Texans. Perhaps the method of taxation will change, he said, but the tax burden will not go up. The spending system must be fixed, not propped up.

That's a head-on assault against the

creative bait-and-switch proposals under consideration in Austin. Most would give property owners a massive reduction in ad valorem taxes — only to levy an even greater burden on them through various taxes on business activity and personal income.

The governor explicitly ruled out an income tax as an option. And with good reason: states with income taxes all have higher total tax burdens than Texas, and less economic growth. As one economist likes to say, Texans should sell the Alamo before destroying our economy with an income tax.

But does the state's tax system need to be reformed? Very likely, but it must be done in ways that enhance Texas' economic advantages. We must remember that our current tax system has been an integral part of what has given our state one of the most robust economies in the nation — tinkering with it is done only at great peril.

Does the system of education need to be fixed? Without a doubt. The legislature must ensure education dollars are spent on education. Kids should receive an excellent — not simply adequate — education. But that excellence is bought not with a blank check, but with greater levels of accountability, efficiency, effectiveness and even — as in the marketplace — competition.

By clearly drawing a line in the sand against the advocates of government bloat, Governor Perry has sided with taxpayers.

Finally one politician gets it: economically sound policies benefit everyone, especially our children. Now it is up to the legislature to do it.

*(Michael Quinn Sullivan is vice president of the Texas Public Policy Foundation, a non-partisan research institution.)*



**Reyes Reports** By U.S. Rep. Silvestre Reyes

*A word of thanks for a job well done*

The holiday season is a time for remembering our family, friends and loved ones. However, it is also a time to remember those less fortunate and those who could use a little extra holiday cheer in their lives. There are a number of organizations in El Paso that provide assistance and support to many El Pasoans for many different reasons all year round. Especially at the holidays, their services are needed by many and appreciated by our entire region. I applaud all of them for their hard work and — although this list is by no complete — I would like to offer my thanks on behalf of a grateful community.

**• Candlelighters of El Paso**  
The El Paso chapter of this national organization is a support group and information network for families of children with cancer, survivors of childhood cancer, and the professionals who care for them. A diagnosis of childhood cancer can be devastating and scary for families and children. Families suddenly have huge medical bills, perhaps have to give

up a job to care for their child and are shouldered with the emotional impact of guiding their child and themselves through this illness. Candlelighters provides the support and assistance families so dearly need at this point in their lives. I'm sure many of you are familiar with the children of Candlelighters who helped light the Christmas tree this year in San Jacinto Plaza.

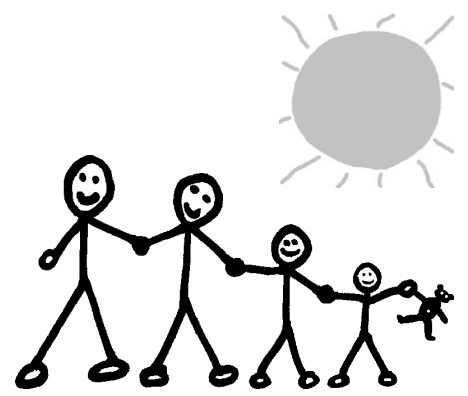
**• El Paso Center On Family Violence**  
Incorporated in 1977, this organization offers direct emergency residential assistance, individual counseling, and general advocacy in the courts and community to victims of domestic violence. Their services are confidential, free of charge and promote safety, responsibility, and self-reliance. Victims can contact them through their 24-hour hotline and services are offered in English and Spanish. To people whose lives are filled with fear, this center helps them regain confidence, strength and a sense of safety and belonging. Overall, the Center on Family Violence helps victims live their lives again.

**• Child Crisis Center of El Paso**  
This center works to prevent and end child abuse and neglect in El

Paso and the surrounding area. It serves as a crisis nursery and shelter for infants through children age 12 years old who are victims or are at very high risk of abuse or neglect. Children need stability and love in their lives. When their home situation does not provide the emotional support they need — or even worse, is abusive and violent — the Child Crisis Center provides a safe haven for them for as long as the need it. The Child Crisis Center's services are free of charge and also include workshops for parents regarding financial management and children's health and safety. Their holistic services help keep families together and provide the support and assistance parents need to raise happy, healthy children.

These non-profit organizations, along with many others in our area, provide a number of necessary services aimed at improving the lives of those who are sick, needy, at-risk, or neglected. This holiday season and throughout the entire year, please keep El Paso's nonprofit organizations in mind if making charitable contributions or volunteering your time. Your support can make a world of difference.

**Carlisle Navidomskis**  
M.Ed., LPC  
Family Counselor



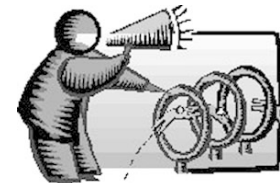
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**Fine Art Classes**

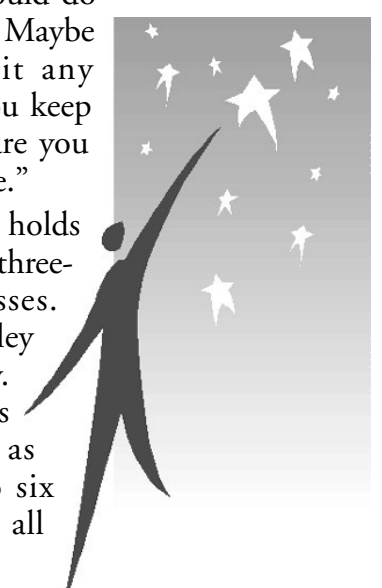


Tired of jumping through hoops? Horizon Design Studio fine art classes start in January!

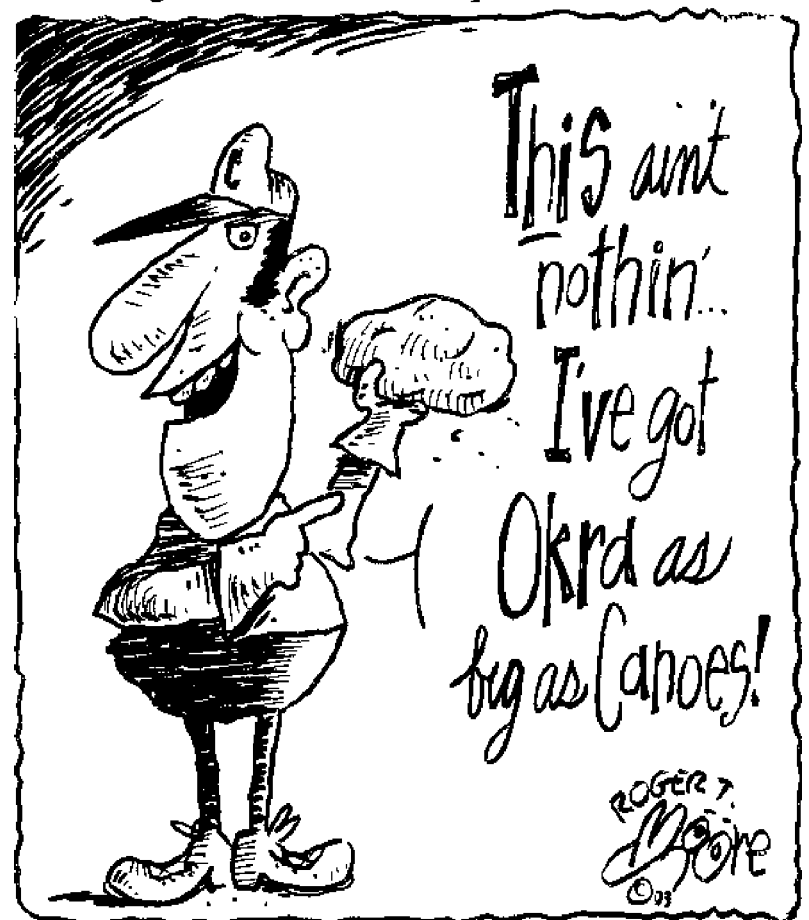
Have you ever looked at a work of art or at just an image you liked and said to yourself, "I wish I could do something like that," or worse still, "I know I could do that if I just had the time. Maybe next year." Don't wait any longer! Do it now. If you keep putting it off, chances are you will never "have the time."

Horizon Design Studio holds affordable, once-a-week, three-hour, Studio Art Classes. They meet at 414 Hadley Place in Horizon City. Every student receives lots of personal attention as class size is limited to six students. Classes cover all media and design.

Reach for your star! New classes start Jan. 20. Call 852-4817 now to reserve your place. Don't put it off another day!



**THE TEXAS FACTS** by Roger Moore. In 1975, Herb Vinson of Coleman grew a 10 lb. 2 oz. sweet potato.



### Briefs

From Page 1

group of wealthy businessmen with oil, gas and mass communications backgrounds — which wants to acquire lease of 355,386 state-owned acres of land for the purpose of pumping and selling water from underground aquifers beneath that land to the highest bidder. On Dec. 2 a hearing was held in Alpine to hear public comment. Of the 450 or so who attended, more than 70 made verbal presentations, including ranchers, local elected officials, and environmentalists. All were unanimously opposed to the proposal. The public comment period will end in early March. Comments may be made to: Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson, 1700 N. Congress Ave., Austin, TX 78701-1495. Call 512-

463-5256 or visit the website at [www.glo.state.tx.us](http://www.glo.state.tx.us).

■ Seedlings of both evergreens and hardwood trees are now available from the El Paso County Office of Texas Cooperative Extension in cooperation with the Texas Forest Service in the annual windbreak tree sale. Trees offered are especially suited for the El Paso County climate and are sold in packets of 30 to 50 trees, ranging from \$28 to \$52. Deadline to order is Jan. 20 and trees will be available for pickup during the first week in February. Information: 859-7725.

■ There will be no trash pickup in El Paso County areas served by the Solid Waste Management and by the Horizon Regional Municipal Utility District on Dec. 25. The Clint and McCombs landfills will close on that day and reopen on Dec. 26.

■ The month of December is Texas Runaway and Homeless Awareness Month and the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services reminds the public of the Texas Runaway Hotline to assist runaways and troubled youth. Persons who call the 24-hour crisis hotline at 1-888-580-HELP (4357) are offered confidential crisis intervention, telephone counseling, and information and referral services. The hotline can also serve as a message service between runaways and their worried parents.

■ The U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents in New Mexico, near Lordsburg and Alamogordo, seized more than one-and-one-half tons of marijuana and 32 pounds of cocaine on Dec. 16-17. The confiscated drugs were estimated to be worth \$3.4 million on the street.

■ People in the West Texas area are more used to heat indexes than chill factors, however, the Texas Department of Health urges everyone to be aware that hypothermia, or the dropping of a person's body temperature below 95 degrees, is a real and present danger, especially for the elderly, the ill, and for very young children, even in what may seem to be mild weather conditions. Last year, exposure to excessive cold resulted in 28 Texas deaths. Some hypothermia victims die because they simply are unaware of gradual temperature changes, such as those drinking alcohol or taking certain prescription drugs. A strong wind, even in moderately cool weather, can cause a wind chill far below freezing, especially if a person is exposed to moisture. Those planning outdoor activities should be mindful of the weather and take a coat.

## FTC charges company with deceptive marketing to small businesses

WASHINGTON — The Federal Trade Commission has charged a purported Web cramming operation with billing small business owners for “free” Internet services, failing to disclose terms of the sales agreements and billing some companies that had turned down the offer. Objections by the U.S. Small Business Administration to the use of its trademark by the company and complaints from consumers prompted the FTC investigation.

The FTC alleged that Epixtar Corporation and its subsidiaries — including one named SBA Online Inc. — violated federal law by deceptively marketing a free trial of Internet services, and then unfairly billing consumers' telephone accounts without their express informed consent, and without their knowledge. The FTC complaint names Epixtar Corp., Liberty Online Services Inc., National Online Services Inc., B2B Advantage Inc. (formerly known as SBA Online Inc.), and William Douglas Rhodes, president of the companies. The companies are based in Miami, Fla.

Cramming refers to the practice of billing businesses for services that were never authorized and have little value. The bogus charges usually appear on businesses' telephone bills.

The SBA had warned small businesses across the country in March about a company calling itself “SBA Online” after receiving a number of complaints from members of the public advising that representatives of the company were contacting their businesses seeking to interest them in purchasing certain commercial services allegedly offered by their organization, or in paying to become members of “SBA.” The complaints said callers frequently sought confidential financial or personal data, and solicited fees for services or membership.

The Web site operated by the company is unrelated in any way to the Web site operated by the SBA at [www.sbaonline.sba.gov](http://www.sbaonline.sba.gov). The public should also note that the SBA neither solicits membership fees nor contacts businesses to obtain sensitive information about small businesses or individuals unless it is part of a particular matter pending before the agency, such as a loan application.

At the FTC's request, the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York has entered a temporary restraining order prohibiting the defendants from making any further misrepresentations and freezing their assets.

For information about the FTC case, visit <http://www.ftc.gov/opa/2003/11/epixtar.htm>. For information from the FTC about avoiding Web services scams, visit the FTC Web site at <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/pubs/alerts/webalrt.htm>.

# A Holiday Greeting from Congressman Henry Bonilla



Dear Friends,  
I hope that this holiday season brings you and yours all the joy on earth.

It has been my honor to represent you for the last eleven years and I look forward to another successful year for the people of the 23<sup>rd</sup> district.

All the best,

*Hy Bonilla*



Paid for and authorized by Texans for Henry Bonilla, Jill DeYoung treasurer

Researching?  
[www.wtccourier.com](http://www.wtccourier.com)  
Check the archives.

## El Paso County organizations get \$3.6 million in housing funds

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) awarded a total of \$3,599,478 to five El Paso organizations in the form of Homeless Assistance Awards.

This assistance is awarded through HUD's Supportive Housing Program. This program provides funding for community organizations to acquire, build, renovate and operate facilities that serve homeless families and individuals.

- El Paso's Opportunity Center for the Homeless received a total of \$2,226,048 through five grants. Two grants, worth a total of \$744,003, are renewed funding for existing Supporting Housing Programs. Three grants, worth a total of \$1,582,045 will provide funding for three new projects.

- The El Paso Community MH/MR Center received a \$530,283 renewal grant.

- YMCA El Paso del Norte Region received a \$529,970 renewal grant.

- The El Paso Center on Family Violence received a \$172,788 grant for a new project.

- The Rescue Mission of El Paso received a \$140,389 grant for a new project.

"Homelessness is a serious problem and our community is lucky to have many organizations at work helping those less fortunate among us," said Reyes. "HUD's investment in El Paso demonstrates the federal government's commitment to helping those in need and will hopefully place those less fortunate on the path towards independence."

## AG suit alleges deceptive practices by 'non-profit' Ameridebt

AUSTIN — Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott has filed suit against the nonprofit consumer credit counseling and debt management service AmeriDebt Inc. and its affiliated for-profit enterprises, alleging multiple violations of the Texas Deceptive Trade Practices Act.

The Attorney General notes that AmeriDebt has advertised itself as an IRS-approved nonprofit counseling service for consumers strapped with heavy debt. In fact, he said, the company uses those claims as a deception and cover to solicit "voluntary donations" from consumers for services, while setting in motion lucrative transactions of its high-profit businesses.

"This appears to be yet another shrewd tactic of gaining consumers' confidence by hiding behind the word 'nonprofit,' all the while gouging and taking advantage of those who are attempting to responsibly manage personal debt and regain their creditworthiness," said Abbott. Today's lawsuit seeks temporary and permanent injunctions to stop the numerous misrepresentations being made by AmeriDebt and its for-profit affiliates. The suit also asks the court to order restitution for consumers who paid what they thought were "voluntary donations" to this nonprofit, among other unwarranted expenses.

Named in the suit along with AmeriDebt are Debtworks Inc., which negotiates with the consumers' creditors and processes payments, and Infinity Resources Group Inc., which supposedly offers and finalizes consolidation loans. The suit says an individual defendant, Andris

Pukke controls interactions with consumers among the three entities. All are based in Maryland. The Federal Trade Commission and the State of Minnesota are also expected to file similar actions today.

Of 19,000 Texas consumers enrolled in the AmeriDebt program, only 50 have actually obtained a debt consolidation loan, the suit alleges. AmeriDebt promotes these loans as one of its overall goals, but Infinity, the actual lender, rarely approves them.

Ameridebt advertises in radio, television and print media as a nonprofit counseling organization that offers to negotiate payment terms with consumers' creditors, as well as lend assistance in obtaining debt consolidation loans.

Consumers initially sign contracts with AmeriDebt and, at the company's urging, pay a nonrefundable donation because they are led to believe the "nonprofit" services as represented cannot be maintained without public contributions, the suit says. Consumers also assume throughout the process they are dealing only with the nonprofit AmeriDebt, which purports to disburse a consumer's monthly installment payments among creditors.

However, once a consumer signs a contract with AmeriDebt, that person's file is transferred to the for-profit Debtworks, which negotiates with creditors, maintains a debt management plan and provides all customer service. Infinity Resources was established to execute debt consolidation loans, though very few consumers were able to qualify for these.

Ameridebt calculates the

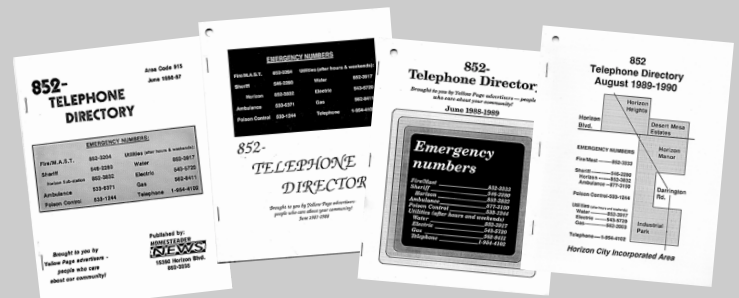
consumer's "contribution" as an amount equal to what that person will pay for debt services. The suit says most consumers are deceived into thinking that their first payment goes to pay off creditors, when AmeriDebt actually keeps the whole amount. Over time, creditors begin assessing penalties and late fees against consumers for nonpayment. When consumers attempt to contact the company to find out about these late fees, they find themselves in a "negotiation process" that further delays payment, putting them deeper in arrears with creditors.

Ameridebt claims it can reduce the amount of consumer debt by up to 50 percent; scale back the amount of time to pay off debt to three to five years; and put a halt to harassing debt collectors. The Attorney General's lawsuit disputes these claims.

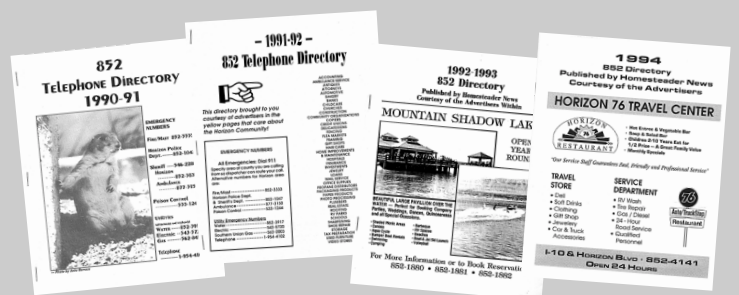
Through the deceptive use of its for-profit enterprises, Ameridebt generated more than \$70 million in revenue in 2002 and \$50 million in 2001, spending \$10 million each year in advertising, Abbott said.

www.wtccourier.com

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VS

MINERS

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Tuesday, Dec. 30th

Northern Illinois

VS

MINERS

\*\$1.00 Pretzels

THINK ORANGE  
WEAR ORANGE

# Brain monitors should be standard issue in sports world

By Steve Escajeda  
Special to the Courier

After years of covering sports, especially recently, I've come to the very sobering conclusion that athletes, coaches and even front-office personnel should not be allowed to open their mouths without a quick kind of mini brain-scanning tool.

You know, a miniature brain-activity devise used to see if anything registers.

I've got a feeling that you might see a little quivering in the thought-sensitive red needle in some sports personalities, but most would register absolutely nothing, the kind of inactivity that would cause the tester in the white lab coat to check to see if the darn thing was even plugged in.

Some of the dumbest comments I've ever heard were uttered this week in the ever-underachieving world of sports figures, and Mike Tyson wasn't even among them.

First, let's go to Portland where the Trailblazers' Rasheed Wallace opened his mouth... again. Wallace, who must have just ingested some kind of mind-altering baby food, was barely understandable when he went on a tirade against the NBA.

"I'm not like a whole bunch of these young

boys out here who get caught up and captivated into the league," Wallace said in an interview. Another gem was "I see behind the lines. I see behind the false screens. I know what this business is all about. I know the commissioner of this league makes more than three-quarters of the players in this league."

I'm checking closely and that little red needle still hasn't moved.

Wallace — who was obviously upset that the league has had the audacity to fine and suspend him every time he does something to deserve it — went on to attack the NBA's hiring practices: "Teams are drafting high school players because they want athletes who are 'dumb and dumber.'"

Now there I agree. I mean, if anyone in the league were qualified to make that statement it would be Rasheed Wallace.

He also said, "That's why they're drafting all these high school cats, because they come into the league and they don't know no better. They don't know no better, and they don't know the real business, and they don't see behind the charade."

Wallace said that he believes half the people in Portland love him and the other half hate him... at least he does know his math. He added, "I can't worry about that. If you're not part of my inner circle of fam-

ily, it don't matter."

Rasheed, what's the matter? You don't have a regular job. You get away with more (drug arrests) than the average person does and you will make \$17 million this year.

I'll bet most of the fans who pay money to watch you play won't see \$17 million in 10 lifetimes. So please, Rasheed, I'm begging you, be thankful for what you've got, but do it silently.

Another guy who opened his mouth was New York Giants linebacker Michael Barrow, who actually compared losing a football game to being raped.

After last week's 45-7 trouncing at the hands of the New Orleans Saints, Barrow said "I don't know what it is to be raped, not to be insensitive to people who have, but to me, this is my experience to feel like they just held us down and did whatever they want to us."

Let me check the meter — no — still no movement.

What possesses a guy to say something like that? I can understand being upset after a humiliating loss but why choose those particular words? How about the standard lines like "we stunk," or "they were just better than us today," or even "they kicked our butts."

But no, all Barrow could come up with was "rape."

Barrow later apologized, but unlike an actual rape victim, it'll just take a couple of victories for his losses to be quickly forgotten.

And now we come to the front office, to a former football player who recently became an administrator. Of course, I'm talking about Detroit Lions general manager Matt Millen.

I've always liked Matt Millen, but sometimes he still thinks he's wearing shoulder pads instead of expensive suits. And sometimes he speaks like he's still playing — only without a helmet.

After last week's loss to Kansas City, Millen approached his former wide receiver Johnnie Morton after the game. Morton ignored Millen and went as far as telling Millen to kiss his (butt). Millen reacted angrily by calling Morton a faggott.

Seems like neither Morton or Millen can be accused of acting like adults.

Matt Millen, Rasheed Wallace and Michael Barrow spent a lot of their time saying they were sorry last week.

More sports personalities would save themselves the embarrassment of having to say they were sorry if they simply said nothing in the first place?

Let me take one last check for any brain activity... still checking... is this thing even plugged in?

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## Help From Page 1

with beans, rice, syrup, and canned goods.

"There's still two more bags of clothes coming, too," Raygoza said.

Gonzalez and Raygoza and the rest of the members of Special Ed. team — Emi Gonzalez, Edna Lopez, Dee Perez, Amalia Saenz, George Saenz, Margarita Sevier, Nancy Salas, Sylvia Aguilar, Araceli Iglesias, Gerald Gamez, Terry Martinez — take a lot of pride in the teamwork they show in order to help someone less fortunate. Each was given a list of things to donate for the family. Some got help from family members of their own.

"My sister had clothes and towels and stuff ready to go to Goodwill before I convinced her to help me out

with this family," Raygoza said. "It's great that we team up together and help people going through a hard time."

The Riveras have experienced hard times; they've been without a father for the last three years, according to Gonzalez, due to a serious fall that took his life.

"They hadn't been in the country too long when he passed away," Gonzalez said. "They have six children, some are legal and some are not."

Emi Gonzalez, Special Education Director for San

Elizario, is proud of his staff. "We've got a good staff, what can I say?" Gonzalez said. "Special education people are exactly what they



**A SPECIAL (ED) GIFT — A gift is given to one of the Rivera children courtesy of the Special Education team at San Elizario ISD.**

are — special." They might be special, but to the Rivera family, Gonzalez and his staff might as well be sitting atop Christmas trees — with golden wings.

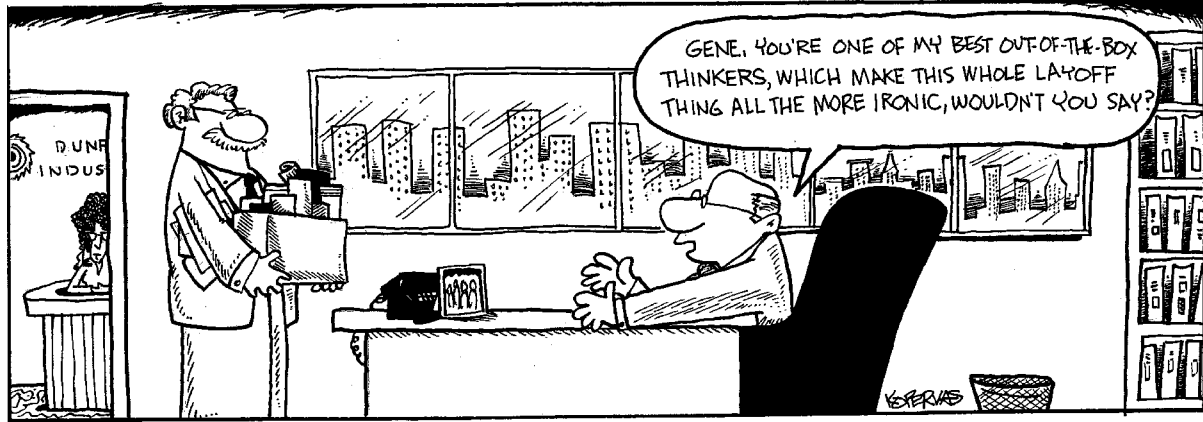
## King Super Crossword

- SAVED BY THE SLEIGH BELL**
- ACROSS**
- 1 Young pigeon
  - 6 Old hat
  - 11 Have bills
  - 14 Bilko's rank: abbr.
  - 17 Cleanse
  - 18 '37 Nelson Eddy movie
  - 20 Yank opponent
  - 21 "... man \_ mouse?"
  - 22 Impatient
  - 23 Start of a remark by Roz Richards
  - 26 Tint
  - 27 Long and slender
  - 29 Spiral
  - 30 "\_ We Got Fun" ('21 song)
  - 31 Big-hearted
  - 32 Show off
  - 35 Move around
  - 37 Meager
  - 39 Clark's co-worker
  - 40 Stick one's neck out
  - 42 Sailor's shout
  - 43 Firewood measure
  - 44 Unpretentious
  - 48 "Glengarry Glen Ross" playwright
  - 50 Hint
  - 51 Heartbeat sound
  - 53 Presidential nickname
  - 54 Dadaism founder
  - 55 Leading man?
  - 57 Okefenokee, for
- DOWN**
- 1 Floored it
  - 2 Wharf
  - 3 Press
  - 4 Make cheddar better
  - 5 "Cabaret" setting
  - 6 Pare down a paycheck
  - 7 \_ blond
  - 8 Pitch
  - 9 Ivy Leaguer
  - 10 Olympic event
  - 11 Spoken
  - 12 Director Craven
  - 13 Dwindle
  - 14 Poet Sanchez
  - 15 Sty sound
  - 16 Discernment
  - 18 Newman or Quaid
  - 19 Short jacket
  - 24 "Cape Fear" actor
  - 25 "Bellefleur" author
  - 28 Pantry pest
  - 31 Actress Ballard
  - 32 Roux ingredient
  - 33 Folk tail?
  - 34 Assist
  - 35 Highway exit
  - 36 Waugh's "The
  - 118 Rubbed the wrong way
  - 119 Car bomb?
  - 120 Carrie or Louis
  - 121 TV chef Martin
  - 122 Astronomer Carl
  - 123 Symbol
  - 37 Zhivago's portrayer
  - 38 Rival
  - 41 Frolic
  - 42 Novelist Jorge
  - 43 Weather word
  - 45 Like some suits
  - 46 Godfrey's instrument
  - 47 Contemporary
  - 49 Janine of "Northern Exposure"
  - 50 Chastity's mom
  - 51 Checker move?
  - 52 Muslim pilgrimage
  - 56 Mock
  - 57 Whiff
  - 58 Surrounded by
  - 59 Bar supply
  - 62 Ward off
  - 63 Perched on
  - 65 Soissons season
  - 66 Fateful 15th
  - 67 Novelist Sinclair
  - 68 Job opening
  - 69 Dissent
  - 70 Wield
  - 75 Address abbr.
  - 76 Winter woe
  - 77 Landed
  - 78 Pithy
  - 79 Warning device
  - 82 Wild child
  - 83 Sitarist Shankar
  - 85 One of the Brontes
  - 87 Cantaloupe or cacha
  - 88 Literary preposition
  - 89 "What's up, \_?"
  - 92 \_ ladder
  - 93 Run in the wash
  - 94 Caviar
  - 95 Sock for sis
  - 96 Fiery felony
  - 97 Substantial
  - 98 Marry
  - 100 "\_ Dinka Doo" ('33 song)
  - 103 Utah National Park
  - 104 Feds
  - 105 Boot out
  - 106 Pro bono
  - 107 Thin layer
  - 109 Attempt
  - 110 Peeples or Long
  - 111 Monk's title
  - 112 Playground game
  - 113 Journalist Tarbell
  - 115 Bustle

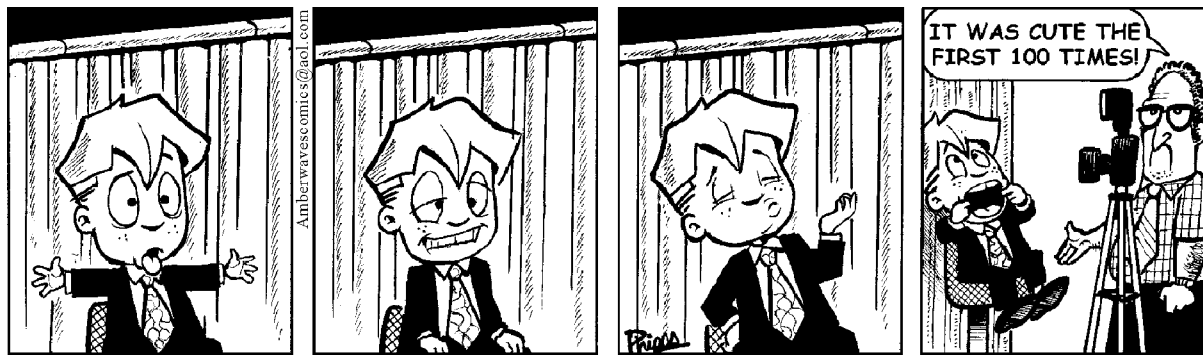
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108																			
116																			
120																			

Comix

OUT ON A LIMB By Gary Kopervas



AMBER WAVES By Dave T. Phipps



THE SPATS By Jeff Pickering



R.F.D. By Mike Marland



Presidential campaign heats up... sort of

By Don Flood

While the nine Democratic candidates battle for the nomination, political observers continue to wonder: will she or won't she enter the race?

I'm referring, of course, to Oprah Winfrey.

One businessman in Kansas City was so intent on getting Oprah in the race he offered a free car wash to anyone who would sign a petition in support of her candidacy.

For a free car wash, I'd sign a petition supporting Anna Nicole Smith. (Who, by the way, is not running this year.)

But there are problems. First of all, why would Oprah accept a demotion and a cut in pay?

But even without Oprah in the race, we're likely to see some of the lesser-known candidates, such as Dennis Kucinich, begin to drop out.

Dennis who? Exactly my point.

But despite his virtually nonexistent standing in the polls, Dennis Kucinich still has the phrase "presidential candidate" appear before his name and that has done wonders for his love life.

At a recent debate, candidates were asked what their spouses' role would be if they were elected.

According to a CNN.com story, "Kucinich (who is divorced) took the opportunity to 'fantasize' about his ideal first lady, saying he wants a dynamic, outspoken woman who wants world peace, health care for all and a full-employment economy."

(This is basically what all guys fantasize about. Check out any Stuff or Maxim magazine you'll be sure to see some female academic or economist on the cover with a sultry quote like: "Just thinking about a full-employment economy gets me hot!")

Soon after, Kucinich received responses from 80 women who wanted to go out with him.

So that's his game! His "presidential campaign" has actually been a stealth version of "The Bachelor."

I mean, he's so unlikely to become president the other candidates don't even attack him.

Here's a verbatim transcript I just made up to prove my point:

KUCINICH: Every other candidate except me is a no-good, lily-livered liar!

MODERATOR: Would any other candidate care to respond?

HOWARD DEAN: I just wanted to say that you are one fine hunk of man and that if I were a woman I would marry you!

RICHARD GEPHARDT: I'd like to second that, but I also wanted to add that there are many beautiful women from my home state of Missouri who would give anything for chance with a studly guy like you, Dennis.

JOHN KERRY: You better stay away from my wife, you old hound dog you!

For his part, Kerry is determined to prove he's a real contender. Dressed in a black leather jacket, he recently rode his motorcycle onto "The Jay Leno Show."

Explained Kerry, "People want to know what your character is, they want to know your guts, your heart, your soul." (These last two sentences are certified to be true.)

So that pretty well clears things up. If we elect Kerry president, we can expect him and his biker Presidential Cabinet buddies to ride around on motorcycles, terrorizing small towns like Marlon Brando in "The Wild One."

And Kerry's flashy campaign tactics appear to be working. His poll numbers haven't improved, but he's now considered the front-runner to replace Bob Dole as Viagra pitchman.

OK, that last line isn't certifiably true, but in this country, it could be.

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ACCEPTED UNTIL JAN. 9, 2004, at 1:30 P.M.

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**COMMUNICATION EQUIPMENT REPAIR SERVICES**  
CSP NO. 199-0109-0446

ACCEPTED UNTIL JAN. 9, 2004, at 2:00 P.M.

**EMPLOYEE UNIFORMS**  
CSP NO. 199-0109-0447

ACCEPTED UNTIL JAN. 9, 2004, at 2:30 P.M.

**KEYS ACADEMY SOFTWARE**  
CSP NO. 199-0109-0448

ACCEPTED UNTIL JAN. 9, 2004, at 3:30 P.M.

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NOTE: The District Offices will be closed during Dec. 22, 2003 to Jan. 02, 2004. Voicemail, inquiries, faxes, etc. will not be checked as regularly. The District will attempt to be as responsive as possible during this time.

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As per Article V, Sec. 5.05(a), all owners and

lienholders have ten (10) days from this date to reclaim their vehicles at Southwest Wrecker, 1401 Darrington Rd., 855-1900, 851-2091-fax, or it will be sold at public auction for charges: VIN - IGJJC1440R7314680, 1994 Chevy Cavalier, green, New Mexico license CZJ-970 WTCC-12/25/03

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Application: An application may be obtained from Ms. Hilda Delgado, Per-

sonnel, Anthony ISD, 886-6500, 610 Sixth Street, Anthony, Texas 79821-1279.

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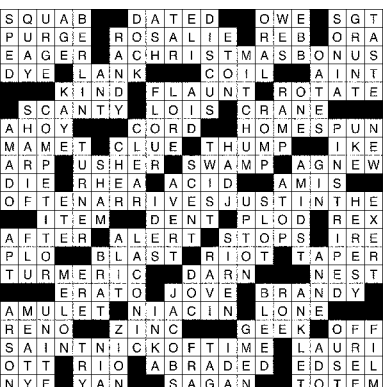
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# Social Security Q&A By Ray Vigil

**Q:** I am on SSI. When I die, will SSI or Medicaid take my home?

**A:** The SSI program will not take your home after you die. But you will have to ask your local welfare or social services office (which runs Medicaid) if it can put a lien on your home.

**Q:** I plan to take my Social Security in a couple of years when I turn 65 and 6 months (the age when I can get my full benefit). My wife is not a

U.S. citizen. She is 45 years old. We have a 5-year-old daughter. Will they get any of my Social Security? If so, how much?

**A:** Your daughter definitely will be due benefits. She'll get a rate equal to 50 percent of your benefit until she is 18 years old. If you die before then, it goes up to a 75 percent rate. Your wife will probably also be due the same 50/75 percent rate. As long as she is living in the United States legally, the fact that she's not a U.S. citizen has no bearing

on her eligibility. But like any other beneficiary, your wife will be subject to an earnings rule that says if she's working and making more than \$11,520, we've got to take \$1 from her benefits for every \$2 she makes over that threshold.

**Q:** I have a severe case of high blood pressure. It keeps me from working. I want to apply for disability benefits, but a friend told me that high blood pressure alone may not qualify me. Is this true?

**A:** You could qualify for Social Security disability benefits if you are "in-

sured" (meaning you've worked and paid Social Security taxes for a long enough period of time) and if your high blood pressure is so severe (and can't be controlled by medication) that it is expected to keep you from doing your current job, or any work you're suited for, for at least a year.

**Q:** I am about to turn 62 and plan to take my Social Security. I have a 58-year-old wife. She has never worked outside the home, and she has multiple sclerosis. Can she get disability benefits on my record?

**A:** Your wife will be eligible for

spouse's benefits on your record when she turns 62. We pay benefits to dependent spouses under age 62 only if they are caring for minor children. If you should pass away before your wife does, she may be able to receive disabled widows benefits, which may be paid as early as age 50.

For more information visit your local Social Security office, see [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov) or call us at 1-800-772-1213. If you have any questions that you would like to have answered, please mail them to the Social Security Office, 1111 Gateway West, Attn: Ray Vigil, El Paso, Texas 79935.

# WEATHER

AccuWeather.com

## SEVEN-DAY FORECAST FOR EL PASO

WEDNESDAY	WED. NIGHT	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
▲ 56°	▼ 31°	▲ 61° ▼ 39°	▲ 63° ▼ 39°	▲ 58° ▼ 31°	▲ 54° ▼ 28°	▲ 54° ▼ 30°	▲ 58° ▼ 30°

### UV INDEX Statistics for noon.

The higher the UV Index, the greater the need for eye and skin protection.

Wednesday	4	Low
Thursday	4	Low
Friday	4	Low
Saturday	4	Low
Sunday	4	Low
Monday	4	Low
Tuesday	4	Low

### REAL FEEL TEMP™

The exclusive AccuWeather composite of the effects of temperature, wind, humidity, sunshine, precipitation, and elevation on the human body.

Wednesday	57°
Thursday	46°
Friday	49°
Saturday	44°
Sunday	47°
Monday	58°
Tuesday	54°

### AGRICULTURE

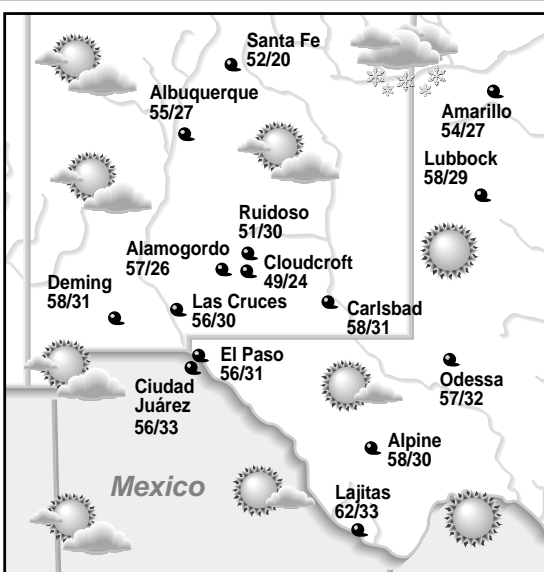
There will be six to eight hours of sunshine Wednesday. Winds will be from south at 6-12 mph. Relative humidity will average 25 to 35 percent. Drying conditions will be good. Another dry day on Thursday with several hours of sunshine. Winds will be from the south-southwest at 8-16 mph.

All forecasts and maps provided by AccuWeather, Inc. ©2003

### TEXAS WEATHER

Anthony	56	34
Canutillo	57	35
Clint	57	35
E. Montana	56	31
Fabens	57	35
Horizon	57	35
San Elizario	54	32
Socorro	55	31
Tornillo	56	35
Vinton	57	35

Shown is Wednesday's weather. Temperatures are Wednesday's highs and Wednesday night's lows.



### TRAVELERS CITIES

City	Wed. Hi/Lo/W	Thur. Hi/Lo/W	Fri. Hi/Lo/W	Sat. Hi/Lo/W	Sun. Hi/Lo/W
Albuquerque	55/27/pc	55/30/pc	53/32/pc	47/23/pc	41/17/pc
Atlanta	52/32/c	54/36/pc	56/38/s	60/44/s	59/41/pc
Atlantic City	56/40/r	45/32/pc	45/32/pc	48/31/s	47/31/pc
Austin/San Antonio	66/35/s	57/41/pc	64/44/pc	70/49/pc	62/38/pc
Baltimore	54/36/r	44/30/pc	44/30/pc	48/32/s	48/31/c
Boston	50/37/c	46/32/pc	40/32/pc	40/34/pc	43/33/pc
Chicago	28/18/sf	30/22/c	38/28/pc	44/30/pc	39/19/c
Dallas/Ft. Worth	60/36/s	58/41/pc	61/45/pc	65/44/pc	54/29/pc
Denver	52/27/pc	54/30/pc	56/28/c	45/17/pc	37/7/c
Flagstaff	50/20/pc	48/25/pc	35/16/c	35/8/c	35/8/pc
Houston	60/37/s	64/42/s	64/44/pc	68/46/pc	67/42/c
Kansas City	40/22/s	47/31/s	50/35/pc	52/31/c	40/17/pc
Las Vegas	62/42/pc	58/44/c	54/40/c	52/37/pc	52/37/pc
Miami	81/65/c	78/66/pc	79/66/pc	77/65/pc	78/63/s
Minneapolis	24/8/pc	28/16/pc	38/26/pc	38/23/c	32/6/c
New Orleans	57/40/s	61/46/pc	65/49/pc	69/53/pc	69/47/c
New York City	54/42/r	43/33/pc	41/37/pc	43/36/pc	45/36/pc
Philadelphia	54/38/r	42/32/pc	42/32/pc	44/34/s	47/36/pc
Phoenix	72/44/pc	70/48/pc	65/42/pc	58/40/pc	60/40/s
Portland	51/39/c	46/36/c	44/35/c	45/37/r	46/36/c
San Francisco	58/46/r	54/42/c	52/42/pc	53/44/c	54/42/c
Seattle	48/38/c	44/36/c	40/34/c	43/35/c	45/32/c
Tucson	71/38/pc	66/40/pc	64/38/pc	56/32/pc	58/32/pc
Washington, DC	56/40/r	44/34/pc	44/34/pc	48/36/s	50/38/c

Weather (W): s-sunny, pc-partly cloudy, c-cloudy, sh-showers, t-thunderstorms, r-rain, sf-snow flurries, sn-snow, i-ice.

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