



NEWSBRIEFS

Holiday dope

The U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents at Ft. Hancock intercepted a load of marijuana on Dec. 22, weighing more than 1,100 pounds, with an estimated value of more than \$900,000. Two days before Christmas, agents were alerted to activity on the border about four miles west of the Ft. Hancock Port of Entry. The activity was a 2002 Chevrolet Avalanche pickup driving up from the Rio Grande River. When approached by agents the driver abandoned the vehicle and fled on foot back across the river into Mexico. The agents found cellophane wrapped bundles of marijuana in the abandoned pickup and turned the load over to the Hudspeth County Sheriff's Officers. In 2003, agents in the El Paso Sector made over 338 seizures valued at more than \$53 million.

In other news

■ The Fabens Middle School students took a personal interest when they heard that Operation Santa Claus was having difficulty filling requests for toys for needy children. The 6th grade class, under guidance of Mrs. Lorio, began collecting toys and other donations and over a four-week period they garnered 26 toys and \$381, which they used to buy a van load of gifts they delivered to Operation Santa Claus.

■ Marine Corps Pvt. Rogelio Ochoa Jr., son of Elizabeth Ochoa and Rogelio Ochoa, recently completed 12 weeks of basic training at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego. The training designed to challenge recruits both physically and mentally in preparation for service in the Marine Corps, and included running at least three miles a day, spending hours in classroom instruction, and learning first aid, water survival, marksmanship and hand-to-hand combat. Instruction in the core values of honor, courage and commitment were also included. Ochoa is a 2003 graduate of Socorro High School.

■ Coast Guard Apprentice Sergio Torres, son of Gloria V. Torres of Clint, recently graduated from U.S. Coast Guard Recruit Training Center in Cape May, N.J. He now becomes one of the 36,000 other men and women who comprise the Coast Guard's force, prepared in safety and survival skills, seamanship, fire fighting and marksmanship. He is a 2000 graduate of Clint High School.

■ The Texas Dept. of Health reports an increase in the number of staph infections that are resistant to treatment with standard antibiotics. Most common staph infections are treated with methicillin antibiotics. There has been an increase in MRSAs, which refers to infections no longer treatable in this way. Neil Pascoe,

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Some people seem to think that crime is not crime until discovery makes it so.

— Quips & Quotes

SISD bond election seeks to answer record growth

EAST EL PASO COUNTY — Early voting started this week for the Socorro Independent School District's \$188.7 million bond. Early voting continues at Socorro, El Dorado and Americas High Schools as well as Horizon Heights Elementary School through Jan. 20. Election day is Jan. 24.

SISD board trustees unanimously approved the measure Nov. 18 that is expected to meet the explosive growth of the district for the next five years. Enrollment projections based on past growth could see as many as 50,000 students in the Socorro district by 2010.

Current development plans in East El Paso and the Eastlake area would add more than 25,000 homes in the next 10 years. A facilities advisory committee made up of community members unanimously approved taking a bond proposal to the board after evaluating the district's growth data during meetings in September and October. The committee also considered alternatives to a bond sale, including returning to multi-track scheduling, increasing class sizes, splitting sessions, making significant changes in attendance boundaries and busing students between facilities.

The \$188.7 million bond proposal includes:

- \$132,500,000 for new construction, including two new Eastside combo schools (four schools total), two pre-k-8th grade campuses, an expandable 9th grade campus, a new high school in the Eastlake area, a new firing range-multipurpose building, a school of choice/alternative school and a new education center;



MORE HOMES, MORE KIDS — Record-setting growth in East El Paso County has caused SISD to experience growth in enrollment between six and ten percent per year, making it among the fastest growing in the state. At this location in Horizon City, another housing development is well underway. Trees in the background mark the SISD campus of Horizon Heights Elementary and to the right is John O. Ensor Middle School.

- \$19,500,000 for additions and renovations to existing properties;
- \$14,380,000 for major improvements and repairs to the air conditioning, heating and air quality systems;
- \$17,900,000 for technology, furniture, equipment and a contingency fund;
- \$4,400,000 for the purchase of land for

See BONDS, Page 3

Water review subcommittee requests delay on proposed deal to sell West Texas water

WEST TEXAS — A legislative subcommittee headed by State Sen. Frank Madla has asked the Texas General Land Office (GLO) to postpone making any binding agreements with a Midland-based company that wants to pump and sell water from beneath state land in West Texas.

The subcommittee, operating as a unit of a legislative Texas water law review committee, is charged with reviewing how that law applies to water deals the GLO may have in the works.

At its first meeting in Austin on Dec. 18 the Senate Subcommittee on the Lease of State Water Rights requested that any deals between the GLO and Rio Nuevo be postponed until late 2004 to allow the subcommittee time to gather and review information pertinent to any such deal.

Madla said it will take the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) that long to produce applicable data on Far West Texas aquifers that the subcommittee needs to study.

Rio Nuevo wants to lease tracts of state land in West Texas so that it may access underground aquifers, from which water would be extracted and sold to the highest bidder, namely major water-thirsty municipalities like the city of El

Paso. Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson says he is bound by his oath of office to utilize state lands to raise funds to benefit public education.

At a public meeting on Dec. 2 in Alpine, Patterson set a 90-day public comment period to precede final negotiations with Rio Nuevo. About 450 people attended that meeting and all the public speakers were unanimously opposed.

Madla's subcommittee is expected to hold its second meeting in neighboring Hudspeth County at Dell City in late January. Subsequent meetings are expected to follow in Fort Davis, Marfa and Midland.

The GLO had previously indicated willingness to comply with requests from the subcommittee and a spokesman for that office has said there is currently no movement on the Rio Nuevo deal, at least until March 2, when the public comment period ends.

In addition to its request to the TWDB, the subcommittee has also issued requests to the Texas Department of Agriculture and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality concerning the possible effects of a Rio Nuevo deal on agriculture in local areas, and on surface water bodies,

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County implements code of ethics, first in state of Texas

El Paso County's new Code of Ethics officially went into effect Jan. 1, a year after its creation was initiated by Commissioners Court, the first code of ethics approved by any of the 254 counties in the State of Texas.

As the first of its kind, the code has to be good enough to serve as a precedent or model, said Aliana Apodaca, chairman of the County's Ethics Board. The nine-member board, which consists of five appointees by Commissioners Court and four community representatives appointed by the board itself, will be in charge of implementing the code.

"It took some time for us to get organized, first to get the board together and second to clear out the bugs in the code," Apodaca said. "The County wanted to make sure the people appointed to the board were committed to the effort, and we wanted to modify some of the language in the code to make it easy for everybody to understand."

The El Paso County's first Code of Ethics was developed by an independent committee appointed by Commissioners Court, with County Attorney Jose Rodriguez as chairman. The Court approved the code developed by the committee in late June, which included the provision to establish a nine-

member board with the power to investigate all complaints and render judgment.

Rodriguez describes the Code as a standard of conduct for members of Commissioners Court, non-elected county officials, department heads, members of committees, boards and commissions and employees. Although the Code does not cover other County elected officials, they are encouraged to voluntarily comply with it.

"This code establishes the highest ethical standards, including principles on conflicts of interest in the procurement of goods and services, in the acceptance of gifts, in employment practices and on conducting political activity," he said. "In some respects this code is more stringent than state law."

The full text of the El Paso County's Code of Ethics is available to the public on the County's web page under the County Attorney's site.

Adrian Armijo, a member of the ethics board, expressed hope that the new Code will influence politicians to do the right thing.

"I also hope that it will allow employees the psychological freedom to complain about unethical practices by their superiors, without fear of retaliation," Armijo

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One perspective

By Francis Shrum

Just like my daddy

The news media got off on the wrong track this week.

Just ask the six-year-old daughter of Steve Erwin, the Australian outback naturalist/showman/crocodile hunter.

You don't criticize a little girl's daddy and come off looking so good when she sits on his knee while being broadcast around the globe, looking up at him with adoring eyes and proclaiming that when she grows up she wants to be "Just like my daddy!"

Steve Erwin must be doing something right.

If anybody sees me attempting to feed a crocodile under any circumstance please lock me up and throw away the key for my own protection.

If you see Erwin doing it, that's a whole other issue. The man does it for a living. So when the media began its shrieks of offended righteousness because he fed a scrap of chicken to a croc while holding his baby son, I had to grin a little.

American kids are overweight, can't read, and are underachieving compared to many far less privileged nations — but we sure know how to tell other folks how to raise their kids.

Too bad we're not inspiring the kind of loving admiration in our own kids as Erwin apparently has managed to do in his. It has something to do with trust, respect and faith.

One of my earliest memories is of standing on my father's boot top while clutching the leg of his Levi's. It was the safest place in the world. I mostly did this when we were in social situations because these were the few times when his leg was not actively involved in his work.

Once, at some sort of gathering, I remember looking up at him only to

find that the blue-denim leg of Levi I was clutching wasn't his — of course, there were quite a number of other men in the crowd wearing jeans and boots.

I'll never forget the terrible sinking feeling that was shortly replaced by considerable relief when I spotted him nearby. It was a sense of complete trust that I was safe and protected — that my father was more than equal to anything that might threaten his family.

Because of that trust, I believed him later when he told me I could do something that I didn't think I could. There are so many instances I could fill a book and they didn't always involve situations that were absolutely, completely, totally without risk.

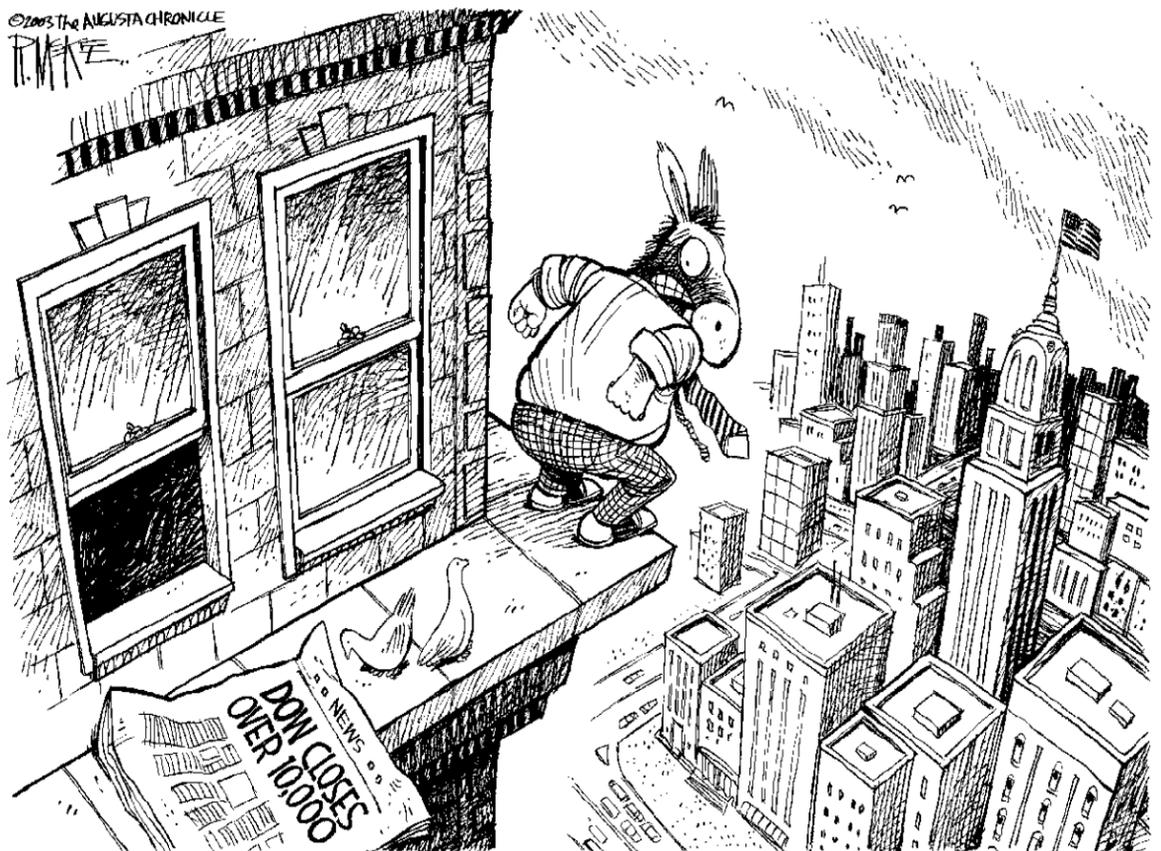
In fact, as I grew older, some of the lessons I learned required that I use my brain, my reflexes and my strength to keep from getting hurt. I did it, and am a better person for doing so.

There's a huge gulf between being negligent and being willing to challenge your kids.

People do things everyday that endanger their kids to one degree or another. Life itself is inherently dangerous, we just aren't willing to admit it. Erwin's "indiscretion" wasn't nearly so dangerous to his child as the way folks let their little kids wander unattended in the department store or ride their bikes and skate boards in the street without supervision or instruction.

In fact, we've gone to such great lengths to establish a false sense of security that we've raised a whole generation of kids who don't seem

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WEST TEXAS COUNTY COURIER

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Reyes Reports By U.S. Rep. Silvestre Reyes



New law helps soldiers with naturalization process

There are 50,000 legal immigrants currently enlisted in the United States Armed Services. These soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines, though not even citizens, are protecting our freedom through their service in the military. With the regional military presence of those stationed and working at Fort Bliss, White Sands Missile Range and Holloman Air Force Base — as well as the El Paso region's nearly 85,000 veterans — we are well aware of the dedication, sacrifice and pride of those who serve our country.

As a border community, we are also aware of the struggles legal immigrants encounter when seeking U.S. citizenship. Even when serving in the military, many service members still encounter difficulties when applying for citizenship. In Congress, I am working to ensure that non-citizens serving in the military can apply for citizenship without having to overcome as many administrative hurdles. Congress passed the National De-

fense Authorization Act of 2004, which President Bush signed into law in October. The National Defense Authorization Act removes many bureaucratic barriers to military members and their families seeking applications for U.S. citizenship. These provisions were first included in a bill introduced earlier in the year that I strongly supported. Its inclusion in the National Defense Authorization Act is a huge victory for non-citizen soldiers.

Under the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, non-citizen soldiers were required to serve three years active duty before they could begin the naturalization process. They were also subject to application and naturalization fees.

Surviving families of fallen service members could apply for posthumous citizenship for their loved ones, but were also subject to certain fees.

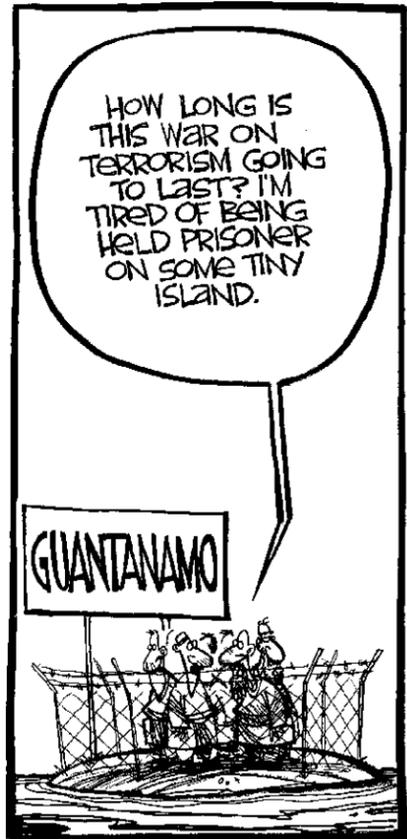
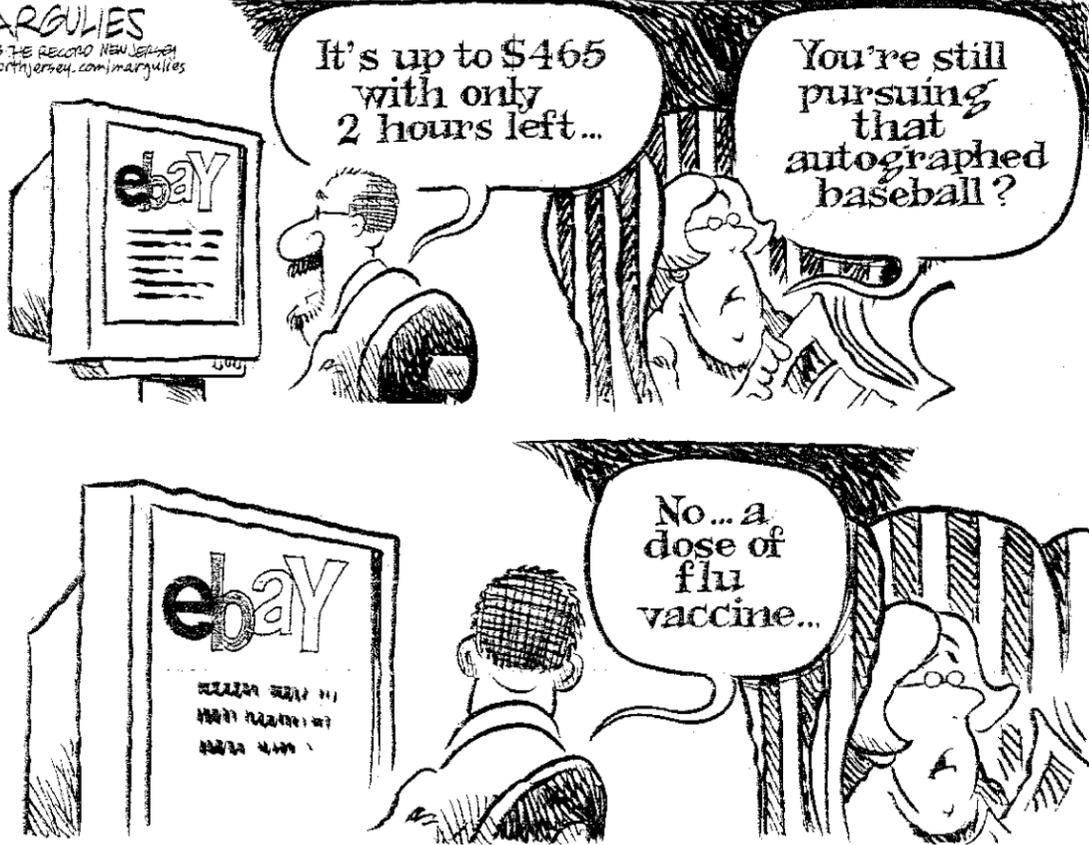
Under the new National Defense Authorization Act, the required service time has been reduced from three years to one during peace time. During a time of war, this Act has reduced the

time in service from three years to none. All naturalization fees are waived under this Act. Posthumous citizenship fees for those killed while serving in the military are also waived. In addition, spouses, children or parents of legal permanent residents granted posthumous citizenship become valid petitioners for immediate "family status" so that they can eventually become permanent residents.

The National Defense Authorization Act also expedites the naturalization process for non-citizen soldiers overseas by allowing them to conduct their interviews, oaths and citizenship ceremonies abroad at U.S. embassies, consulates and military bases. For the first time, the Select Reserve of the Ready Reserves are now eligible to receive naturalization benefits as well.

I supported the National Defense Authorization Act, and I am proud that our Congress has finally recognized the importance of the contributions non-citizen soldiers make. More importantly, I am pleased that we have committed to giving something back to them.

MARGULIES
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Write stuff

Dear Editor:

I encourage all voters to support Socorro ISD's \$188.7 million bond election on Jan. 24.

The bond election will provide for nine new schools in our fast growing district. It will also provide funding for additions, renovations and improvements to existing facilities, as well as land banking for future schools. It will reduce overcrowding in the classrooms.

Student enrollment is expected to reach 50,000 students in 10 years. The growth is due to the explosive housing development in our district. More than 25,000 homes are expected to be built in the district in the next 15 years. That includes 15,000 homes along Eastlake. This bond

election includes a high school in the Eastlake area.

The Socorro ISD Board of Trustees is establishing a Citizens' Oversight Committee to ensure that the bond monies are spent wisely. This will provide accountability for the bond election.

Socorro ISD provides a quality education for the children of our community. I encourage you to continue to support the district's building program in order to meet the needs of its growing student population. Please vote for our kids on Jan. 24 by voting YES in the Socorro ISD Bond Election.

Linda East
Chair

Pro Socorro Schools Committee

Bonds

From Page 1

future school sites, depending on growth.

Any eligible voter may cast a ballot weekdays, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. at these four locations:

- Horizon Heights Elementary School, 13601 Ryderwood
- Montwood High School, 12000 Montwood Drive
- Socorro High School, 10150 Alameda Avenue
- El Dorado High School, 12401 Edgemere Boulevard

No voting is scheduled for Jan. 19 during the Martin Luther King national holiday. Election day voting is scheduled for 7 a.m. - 7 p.m. Jan. 24, at 24 locations throughout the District.

Superintendent Dr. Robert J. Duron was to make special presentations during four community meetings, Jan. 7 and 8 at Socorro, Montwood, Americas, and El Dorado high schools, with special evening voting sessions after each of those meetings.

If the bond is approved, the cost to taxpayers would be an additional \$5.75 per month on a \$75,000 home beginning in 2005 and would rise to a maximum of \$11.17 per month for the same house in 2009 about \$134 per year. Taxes for homeowners 65 years who file to have their taxes frozen would not see their taxes rise for school bond indebtedness.

For more information about the SISD Bond Election, call the Bond election hotline, 937-BOND (2663) or go to the District's web site, www.sisd.net and click on the BOND '04 logo.

- Master Licensed Plumber #M18624
- Bonded and Insured
- Senior Citizens Discount

- Sewer and Drain Cleaning
- Faucet and Sprinkler Repair
- Appliance Installation
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Horizon Plumbing
852-1079

Eye on D.C. By U.S. Rep. Henry Bonilla



Give the gift of life

This time of year is a busy one for all of us. The holiday season has come to a close. We've made our new year's resolutions and we're getting back into the swing of things. As you dash into 2004, I urge you to consider an extra new year's resolution: donate blood. The need is great, and the few minutes it takes may mean years of life for a sick or injured patient.

The good news is that millions of Americans voluntarily donate blood every year. The bad news is that this is not enough. Did you know that 60 percent of the U.S. population is eligible to give blood, but only five percent donates each year?

The demand for blood is constantly increasing, and the nation's blood banks are having difficulty keeping up. According to the American Red Cross, the amount of blood needed by hospitals increased more than 15 percent in the past year. Maintaining an adequate amount of blood for sur-

geries, trauma victims and treatment of diseases is becoming a year-round problem.

What's worse is that donations traditionally slump during the Christmas holiday season. Colleges, schools and businesses that normally host blood drives close and families take vacations. An outbreak of the flu and bad weather can also affect donations. That means that the demand for blood is higher this time of year than in other months.

In order to avoid a critical shortage, more donors are needed. Donating blood is safe, painless and can save the lives of others. Any individual who is at least 17 years old and weighs 110 pounds or more can donate. Donating blood takes about 45 minutes to 1 hour, including 20 minutes for the actual blood collection. Type "O" blood is the most commonly used because it can be safely transfused to people of all blood

types. You can give blood every eight weeks, but remember that with just one donation you could save a life.

There are many places where donations can be made. Bloodmobiles travel to high schools, colleges, churches, and other community organizations. People can also donate at community blood centers and hospital-based donor centers. Many people donate at blood drives at their workplace. To find out where you can donate, call the national Red Cross hotline at 800-GIVE-LIFE, America's Blood Centers at 888-256-6388, or the American Association of Blood Banks at 866-376-6968.

Every few seconds, someone in the United States needs blood. In the year 2004, make a resolution to give the gift of life: donate blood.

TRUE TEXAS FACTS by Roger Moore. In 1879, Oscar Roberts spent 35¢ on his entire campaign for Governor. The 35¢ paid for a telegram accepting the nomination.



Visit Big 8 Food Stores: Big8.com

Strong Families, Strong Future initiative helps put \$4.3 million into the hands of low-income families

EL PASO COUNTY — The County of El Paso launched its Earned Income Credit (EIC) Campaign on Feb. 3, 2003, and over the course of the year, assisted El Paso County families in the collection of over \$4.3 million in tax returns.

The push to help families collect the Earned Income Credit (EIC) was begun as part of the Strong Families, Strong Future (SFSF) initiative, which seeks to develop strategies to help working families increase their income.

El Paso families face financial challenges with a median income of \$28,236 and 22 percent of all families living in poverty.

The county's SFSF has attempted

to assist these families by helping them access funds through their tax returns that could increase their household income. In 2003, the EITC credit was worth up to \$4,140 for some families.

In 2002, over 19 million low and moderate-income workers around the nation claimed EIC — to the tune of more than \$31 billion. The Strong Families, Strong Future initiative alone collected over \$4.3 million for working families in the El Paso County community.

The SFSF works by increasing availability of free tax preparation sites for working families which would otherwise cost anywhere from \$60 to \$120 dollars for tax preparation

services. National statistics indicate that 70 percent of people that claim the credit use a paid preparer and that 40 percent of credit recipients receive their refund through rapid refund system and lose 10-15 percent of their refund in fees.

The SFSF also seeks to increase the number of families applying for the Earned Income Tax Credit: Many working families are not aware that they qualify for this and other important tax credits. Single or married people who worked full-time or part-time at some point in 2002 can qualify for the EIC, depending on their income. Workers who were raising one child in their home and had family income of less than \$29,201 (or \$30,201 for married workers) in 2002 can get an EIC of up to \$2,506. Workers who were raising more than one

child in their home and had family income of less than \$33,178 (or \$34,178 for married workers) in 2002 can get an EIC of up to \$4,140. Workers who were not raising children in their home, were between ages 25 and 64 on December 31, 2002, and had income below \$11,060 (or \$12,060 for married workers) can get an EIC of up to \$376.

Only 48 percent of eligible El Paso families have collected EIC in the past three years. The EITC campaign aimed to increase the percentage of families that claimed this credit, therefore increasing the total funds collected by this community. These funds are directly injected into El Paso's economy.

Over 26 sites throughout the county were open last year, and most will be opened and manned by IRS

professionals and volunteers again this year beginning Jan. 20 through April 15.

Many of the sites last year were open to the public in the evenings and on weekends, and hours of available assistance is subject to change.

Sites in the county include the El Paso County Library in Fabens, the Sparks Community Center, Project Bravo in East Montana, and the Rio Vista Community Center in Socorro. However, organizers said it is important to call 834-8266 for specific information and for the numerous other sites also available.

The El Paso County Courthouse was one of 12 new sites last year and generated over 1,000 returns and over \$900,000 in refunds. The campaign alone increased the amount of EIC collected in the county by 14 percent.



County Judge Dolores Briones was a founding force behind the SFSF program.

New Texas law may force doctors to act as cops, physicians fear

Docs as cops?

Some see a new Texas law in that light.

While physicians believe prenatal care is critical to a baby's health, some doctors are concerned that the new Texas law intended to protect the fetus will actually scare some pregnant women away from the doctor's office, Texas Medicine magazine reports.

Senate Bill 319, passed this legislative session, makes killing or injuring an "unborn child" illegal, except in cases of physicians performing lawful medical procedures.

So here's the surprise in the new law: Physicians may be required to play police or face prosecution them-

selves, the official publication of the Texas Medical Association (TMA) reports in its January issue. Some say the law requires physicians who treat pregnant women known to be using illegal drugs to report those patients to authorities. Doctors not doing so could face prosecution.

Using illegal narcotics during pregnancy can hurt fetal development, which the law might label as a form of child abuse. Patients who use such substances would have their secret revealed while undergoing prenatal tests.

Besides being under the gun to "narc" on patients, physicians' greater fear is that the twist in the law will potentially harm more unborn babies,

because pregnant drug users will avoid the doctor out of distrust. "Our reaction has been one of dismay because it really is going to force all drug usage underground," Amarillo obstetrician-gynecologist Brian Eades, MD, tells Texas Medicine. "Patients aren't going to be willing to discuss their problem with us anymore."

Dr. Eades may be the proverbial canary in the coal mine, because a local district attorney's letter wafting through doctor's offices signals the danger.

Potter-Armstrong District Attorney Rebecca King's September letter to physicians informs them of the requirement to report the women's drug use.

Texas Medicine notes her interpretation of the bill hinges on the legislation's definition of "individual" as combined with provisions of another law, the Controlled Substances Act and the Family Code.

"Please report any abuse of children by voluntary injection of harmful narcotics by expectant mothers. Together, we will try to help both generations and...it is the law," her letter to doctors states.

Amarillo physicians have already begun reporting such patients to authorities.

However one of the two authors of the bill, Rep. Ray Allen (R-Grand Prairie), tells the magazine that this was not the intent of the law. "It was my express intent, as stated in the bill, that no action taken by the mother could form the basis of a prosecution," Representative Allen says. He adds that his intent is to allow action against "any third party who takes away from the pregnant mother her constitutionally protected choice to give birth to a child."

Not everyone in the legal profession agrees on the law's potential side effects. Some tell the magazine that taking a case to trial may be the only way to have the issue decided.

But word is spreading, and confu-

sion along with it. Moss Hampton, MD, director of the obstetrics and gynecology resident program at the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center in Amarillo, reports, "I can tell you the first couple of times we did it the police department's reaction was, 'Why are you calling us?' They haven't been real gung-ho about rushing right out and handcuffing people and taking them to jail."

Even so, TMA has learned of awareness or consideration of this interpretation of the law by legal authorities in North Texas, and in Dallas and Harris Counties, though without a "rush" across the state to prosecute.

Still, another physician leader fears the new law will frighten pregnant women from seeking prenatal care. "If you've got somebody who is using drugs then what's going to happen is we're going to keep them out of the system," John Jennings, MD, a TMA physician leader and president of the Texas Association of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, tells Texas Medicine.

"They're going to avoid being seen to avoid being reported. Then you have a worse situation than when you at least have them coming in and being managed."

New fugitive unit will target child predators

By Greg Abbott
Attorney General of Texas

As a parent, I can think of no other crimes worse than those committed against children. As a Texan, I want our communities to be safer. As your Attorney General, I am taking action. I have formed and launched a new Fugitive Unit, with a focus on child sexual predators.

Our initial mission is to locate, arrest and send back to prison convicted predators who have violated the conditions of their parole. Just weeks into the program we're already making neighborhoods safer. In recent weeks, my investigators with the Fugitive Unit have arrested 14 of these child sex offenders wanted for parole violations. Each of these men had convictions for sex crimes against children. One such felon was arrested while watching children play on a busy playground.

The AG's Office is not targeting offenders who comply with the terms of their parole and abide by the law. In order to be a target of the Fugitive

Unit, a person must be a child sex offender who has violated the terms of his or her parole.

The recent arrests continue a long string of apprehensions of child predators by the Attorney General's Office. Our Cyber Crimes Unit, formerly the Internet Bureau, was already in existence before the formation of the Fugitives Unit. My investigators in that unit target child predators who hunt for victims in Internet chat rooms. So far, the Cyber Crimes Unit has successfully facilitated the arrest and indictment of 15 men.

Each of the men used chat rooms to solicit sex with individuals whom they believed to be underage girls or boys. Unknowingly, the men were actually setting up meetings with AG investigators. They were arrested when they showed up to meet the "children" in person.

We are very pleased that our efforts to date have been successful, but we will not rest on our laurels in our quest to remove child predators from chat rooms and neighborhoods.

UTEP WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Thursday, Jan. 8th

TULSA

VS @ 7:05 PM

MINERS

"TAKE A KID TO THE GAME"—Youth
18 and Under get in
FREE!

\$1.00 Hotdog

THINK ORANGE WEAR ORANGE

Saturday, Jan. 10th

"Family Day"

1/2 PRICE TICKETS FOR
EVERYONE!!

\$1.00 Popcorn

RICE

VS @ 7:05 PM

MINERS

BASKETBALL IS BACK!!

Water

From Page 1

namely the Rio Grande.

The subcommittee was created in November by Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst to study the effects of state water leases on aquifers and water interests. It will make legislative recommendations prior to the 2005 legislative session.

Public comment has been made that the subcommittee may also begin looking into a water marketing project the GLO is currently negotiating with WaterTexas, an Austin-company which owns significant water rights in Central Texas. Sources say WaterTexas already has signed contracts with customers along the Texas 130 corridor, a planned bypass of Interstate 35.

The GLO would become a water wholesaler in the proposed deal with WaterTexas, and the School Land Board voted Dec. 16 to enter into detailed negotiations on the agreement.

Public input on the Rio Nuevo deal will be accepted by the GLO through March 2. Send comments to: Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson, 1700 N. Congress Ave., Austin, TX 78701-1495, or call 512-463-5256 or visit the website at www.glo.state.tx.us.

Board

From Page 1

said. While the board does not have the power to impose penalties against elected officials, it does have the power to censure publicly, any and all unethical behavior.

The following were appointed as members of the El Paso County Board of Ethics: Aliana Apodaca, (Chair) training consultant, appointed by County Judge Dolores Briones; Bertha A. Gallardo, (Vice-Chair) vice-president of managed care with the Las Palmas & Del Sol Regional Health Care System, by Ethics Board; Philip E. Mullin, attorney, appointed by Commissioner Charles Scruggs; Ronald "Ron" Peña, insurance agent, by Commissioner Betti Flores; Rev. Tom Tackett, Deacon, by Commissioner Dan Haggerty; Jennie Candelaria, retired elementary school teacher, by Commissioner Miguel Terán; Robert A. Mascorro, retired social worker, L.M.S.W. - ACP appointed by the Ethics Board; Harvey Wilson, retired regional director, Texas and Regulatory Services, by Ethics Board; Adrian Armijo, small business owner, by Ethics Board.

For more information on the El Paso County Board of Ethics or on how to file a complaint, call Adriana Enriquez at 546-2218, ext. 4069.

Canutillo ISD notes budding elementary scientists



By Alfredo Vasquez
Special to the Courier

CANUTILLO — The best of the best science projects from Damian, Childress, and Canutillo elementary schools were announced during Canutillo Independent School District's annual elementary schools' district science fair, held at Damian Elementary School in December.

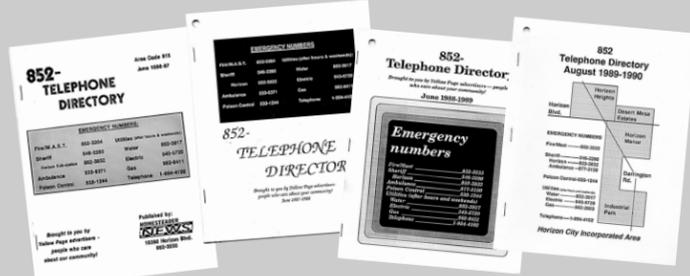
56 science projects were judged to determine top honors in five science categories during the Twelfth Annual District Science Fair. These student projects were the sweepstakes and first place winners in their respective campus science fairs.

Projects were judged in two divisions: kinder through third and fourth through sixth grades.

Facilitators for the district science fair were: Vicki Ludwig, CISD lead teacher; Elizabeth Cruz, Damian ES teacher; Grace Hadrous, Childress ES teacher; and Kathy Kelly, Canutillo ES teacher. Davenport Elementary School will hold its science fair in the spring.

FUTURE OF SCIENCE — Science Fair Sweepstakes Winners, shown in photo, front row, from left, are Araceli Valdez, Marie Collazo, Cristy Rodriguez, Belle Gonzalez; and back row, from left, Hector Rodriguez, Hiram Espinoza, Karem Vidaurri, Travis Tembrock, Anthony Lopez, Dominique Valdez.

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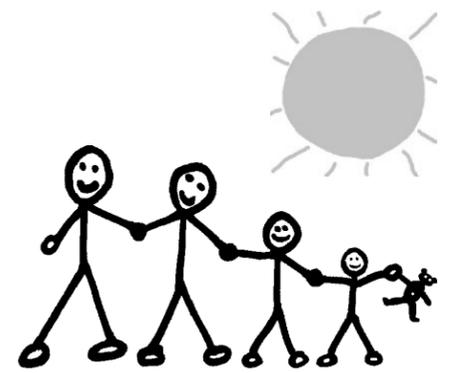


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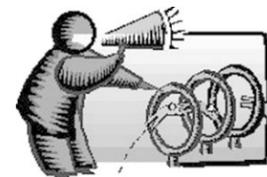
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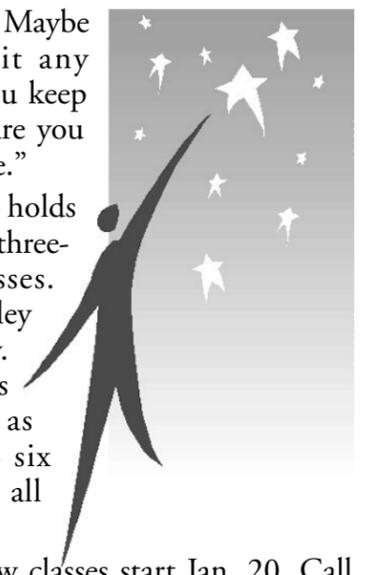


Tired of jumping through hoops? Horizon Design Studio fine art classes start in January!

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Rose's gambling confession, college bowls stir up old controversies

By Steve Escajeda
Special to the Courier

Read any good books lately? Seems there's a good read coming out this week from that world famous author Pete Rose. And though only people close to the publication have had a chance to preview it, they have hinted that Rose finally admits to what professional baseball has wanted him to admit to for almost 14 years now — that he bet on baseball.

And I've got something to say about that... of course he bet on baseball. He bet on every sport he could put some money on.

But my question is a simple one. Is it illegal to bet on baseball? Because if it is, what does finally admitting it have to do with being reinstated to the game or being eligible for the Hall of Fame?

I'm a little tired of the hypocrisy. All Major League Baseball wanted was to embarrass Rose by getting him to admit that he bet on baseball. Now that MLB has apparently got that, it seems Rose will now be allowed to be recognized by the Hall.

So it's not the act you commit, it's whether you publicly admit the act you commit.

This reminds me of those politicians that pay back the money they stole because they were caught stealing it and then they say "hey, I paid the money back." And they actually think they should be exonerated. Forget the fact that they never would have paid back a nickel had they not been caught.

Rose was caught... who cares if he admits it or not. Of course, it says a lot about a man's character if he stands up and admits his mistakes, but the baseball powers lowered the boom on the all-time hits leader for gambling — not for keeping it a secret.

Baseball should have either banned him for life or set a specific time period until Rose could be enshrined into the Hall of Fame (where he belongs). But instead, baseball has said to Pete, "if you admit your guilt, we'll give you what you want."

What is this, the Salem witch trials? Pete Rose bet on sports, he bet on baseball and he bet on his team, the Cincinnati Reds — to win, I might add. The real story would have been if he had ever bet on his team to lose.

Rose made a mistake. And the baseball gods make it sound like what Rose did was the ultimate insult to the game — "damaging the integrity of the game," they like to call it.

I'm sorry, with guys smacking their wives around, raping women, taking steroids, taking drugs, getting involved in bar fights, driving drunk and playing only for the love of the almighty dollar, I think baseball has a little more to worry about.

Pete Rose will now get what he wanted, professional baseball now gets what it wanted, and I now ask you — how was the game damaged or enhanced by any of this?

2... 2... 2 champs in one

My parents always taught me that the world would be a better place if we all learned to share. And I thought they were right.

Until last weekend, when LSU and USC were forced to share the college football national championship.

The more I think of it, the more my head hurts.

College presidents throughout the land can't seem to figure out that there's a problem here. And we're talking about college presidents. They have to be fairly well educated to have that job, don't they?

All other collegiate sports decide their championships on the field of play. Division-1 football has a ridiculous bowl system that honors 6-6 teams and relies on human voters and cold, unfeeling computers to decide the best team in the land.

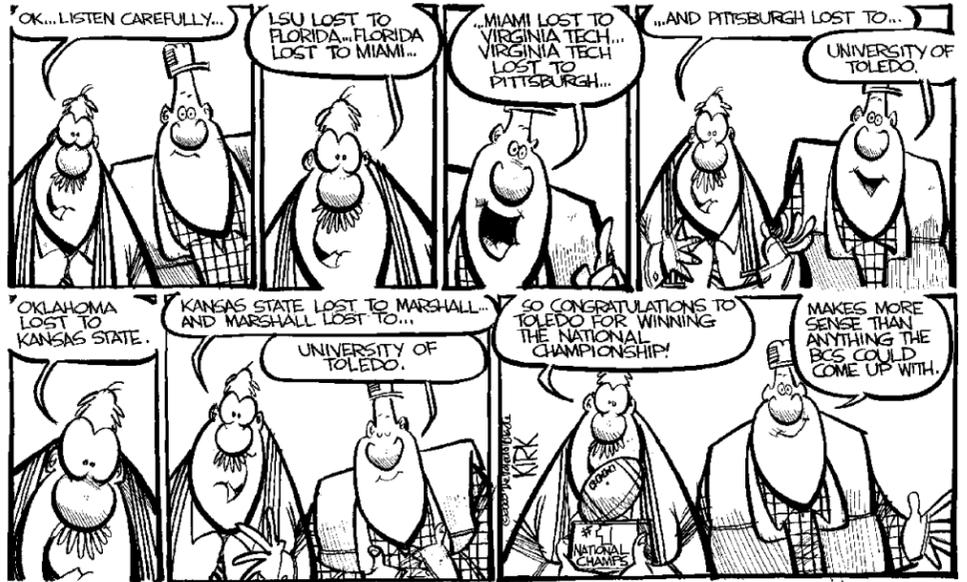
And who is the best team in the land? Is LSU (13-1) the best, or is it USC (12-1)? Because of the current system, we will never know.

Looking at the final Associated Press poll, this is how an eight-team playoff would work:

(1) Southern Cal vs. (8) Iowa, (4) Ohio St. vs. (5) Miami, (3) Oklahoma vs. (6) Michigan, and (2) LSU vs. (7) Georgia.

All you have to do is play these games at the best seven bowl sites, rotating every year, and the rest of the teams can play in the other bowls.

It's not like we don't do this already in NCAA basketball. We have March Madness and the NIT — and that has grown in popularity over the years, I think you'd agree.



Daddy

From Page 2

to recognize danger, even when it is staring them in the face.

If you don't believe me, just drive through the school zone at your local middle school when classes are dismissed and you'll get a pretty good idea about just how

savvy our kids really are. Somebody needs to teach them that when they collide with a car, the car always wins.

Crying to mom that it wasn't your fault is little comfort lying flat of your back in a hospital bed.

Maybe if daddy had taken a little more time to personally involve his kid in real life experiences, even with a few inherent dangers, they'd be a little wiser in seeking out the adven-

ture every kid naturally craves.

I watched the news clips of Erwin's act and I couldn't for the life of me understand how many news people were making the comparison between holding his kid while doing his everyday job and Michael Jackson dangling his baby off a balcony in a high rise for the amusement of the fans and media.

It worries me a little that our society can't seem to discern which daddy we hope they grow up to be just like.

Briefs

From Page 1

epidemiologist with the Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Surveillance Division of the TDH, said the increase is especially among those participating in contact sports such as football, volleyball and wrestling. Staph infections are spread when bacteria from an infected person comes in contact with another person through a break in the skin. It can be spread through common contact with clothing, sheets, towels, equipment or furniture. Treatment of MRSA infections is longer, more expensive and complicated, Pascoe said, and may progress into life-threatening blood or bone infections. He added that the best prevention is frequent hand washing and not using commonly shared towels or personal care items such as lotions or soaps. He said information on staph infections specific to day care centers and school athletic departments www.tdh.state.tx.us/ideas/antibiotics_resistance/mrsa/school_athletic_departments.asp or mrsa/daycare_administrators.asp.

■ In observance of Martin Luther King Holiday Commissioners Court Meeting will be Tuesday, Jan. 20 at 9:30 a.m.

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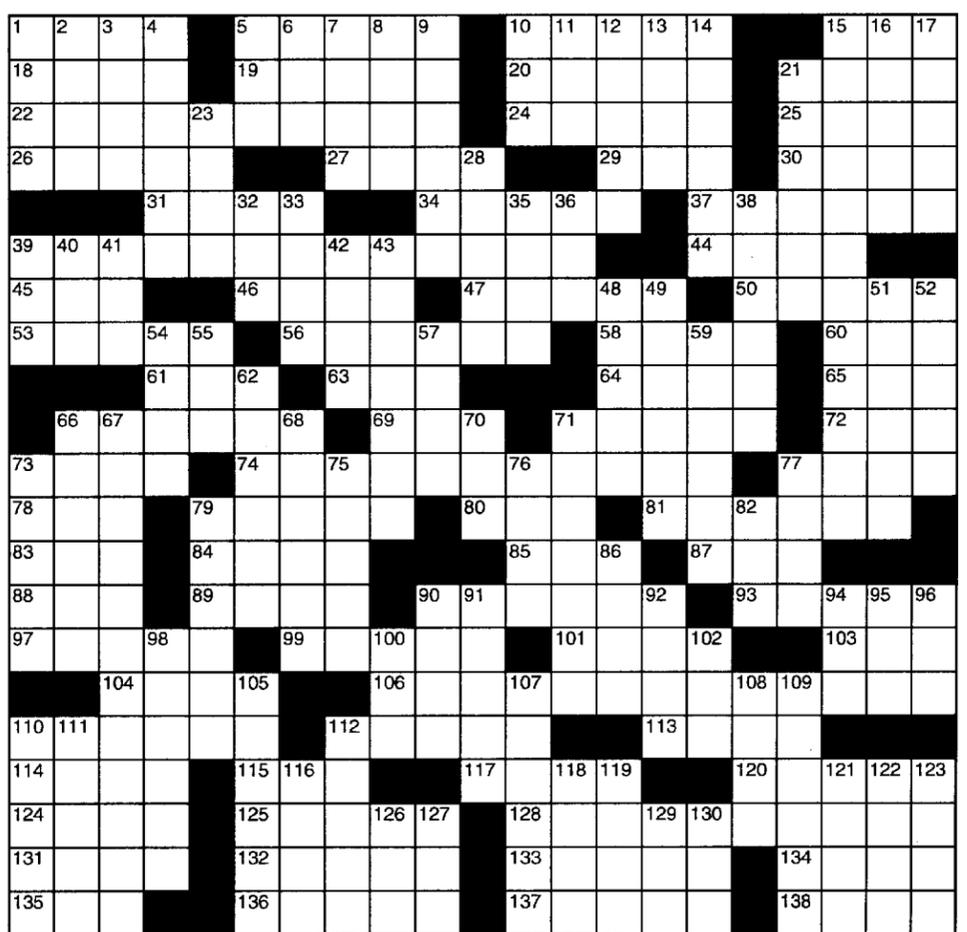
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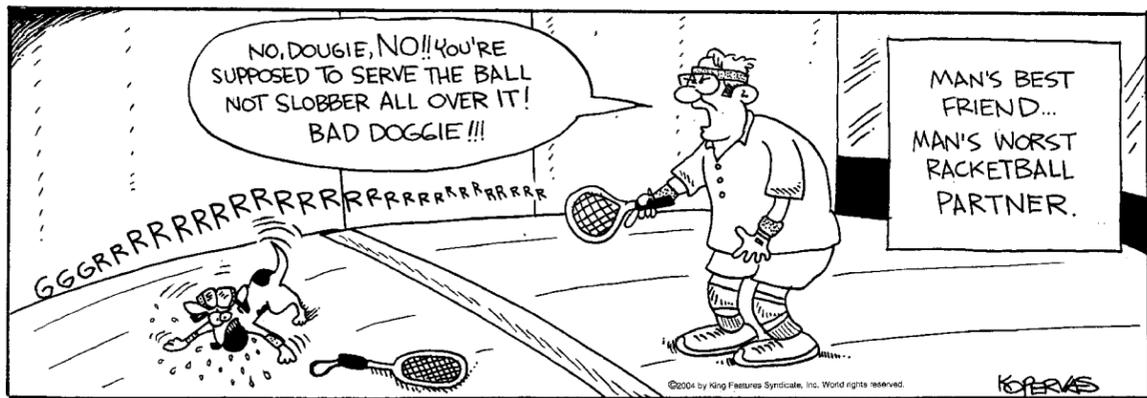
- BOVINES**
- ACROSS**
- 1 Enjoys an enchilada
 - 5 Cargo crane
 - 10 Circus employee
 - 15 Hilarious Howard
 - 18 What you used to be
 - 19 Mennonite group
 - 20 Cheer
 - 21 Planted
 - 22 Bovine jazzman?
 - 24 Famed fabulist
 - 25 Geometric figure
 - 26 Chrissie of The Pretenders
 - 27 Warts and all
 - 29 Actress Munson
 - 30 "May I interrupt?"
 - 31 Certain Semite
 - 34 Rocker Cassidy
 - 37 Pay
 - 39 Bovine auto racer?
 - 44 Fit
 - 45 Crony
 - 46 Director Ferrara
 - 47 Rock's _ Trick
 - 50 Yellowish brown
 - 53 Chasm
 - 56 Adams or Astor
 - 58 Couch
 - 60 Maris of "Nurses"
 - 61 LAX letters
 - 63 Kimono closer
 - 64 Jab
 - 65 Noisy racket
 - 66 Mystical
 - 69 German city
 - 71 Electronic device
 - 72 Say please
 - 73 "Beat it!"
 - 74 Bovine outlaw?
 - 77 Satiated
 - 78 _ Aviv
 - 79 Free_for_all
 - 80 Word with sister or story
 - 81 Costume sparkler
 - 83 Actor Kjellin
 - 84 Learn fast?
 - 85 Spare tire
 - 87 Johnny Yuma, for one
 - 88 Mythical bird
 - 89 Periodic table abbr.
 - 90 Gave someone a smack
 - 93 Writer Runyon
 - 97 Rise
 - 99 Go in
 - 101 Beholds
 - 103 Southern constellation
 - 104 Sue of "Lolita"
 - 106 Bovine actress?
 - 110 "Cat_" ('65 film)
 - 112 Exodus edible
 - 113 Prudish one
 - 114 Melville work
 - 115 "_ Day Now" ('62 hit)
 - 117 To be, to Baudelaire
 - 120 Entangle
 - 124 Puzzle direction
 - 125 Chutzpah
 - 128 Bovine publisher?
 - 131 Ages
 - 132 Church law
 - 133 Brinks
 - 134 Bananarama, e.g.
 - 135 Actress Susan
 - 136 Endangered animal
 - 137 Adjust a watch
 - 138 Time to evolve?
- DOWN**
- 1 Decorate glass
 - 2 Nautical cry
 - 3 Wilder's "Our_"
 - 4 Dairy treat
 - 5 Smidgen
 - 6 Internists' org.
 - 7 Jet-setter's need
 - 8 Egyptian deity
 - 9 Religious belief
 - 10 Bristol brew
 - 11 Bristol brew
 - 12 Jocular Jackie
 - 13 School founded in 1440
 - 14 Meal
 - 15 Bovine boxer?
 - 16 Proprietor
 - 17 "_ Mine" ('85 film)
 - 21 Justice Antonin
 - 23 St.-to-be
 - 28 Astound
 - 32 Chicken - king
 - 33 Iceberg's kin
 - 35 '68 US Open winner
 - 36 Exploit
 - 38 Small mall
 - 39 Hydrotherapy site
 - 40 Actor Hunter
 - 41 TV Tarzan
 - 42 Franco of "Camelot"
 - 43 Drop
 - 48 Salad type
 - 49 Spongelike
 - 51 Bright inventor?
 - 52 Like Lincoln
 - 54 Splinter group
 - 55 Alphabet sequence
 - 57 Ingratiating
 - 59 Silo stuff
 - 62 Victoria's husband
 - 66 It's spotted at zoos
 - 67 Bovine bandleader?
 - 68 Louisiana university
 - 70 Geographical abbr.
 - 71 "Clair de Lune" composer
 - 73 Celebrities
 - 75 Car bomb?
 - 76 Grabs all the goodies
 - 77 Neighbor of Hispaniola
 - 79 Bob of basketball
 - 82 Proof letters
 - 86 Rock hound?
 - 90 Eager
 - 91 Castle or Cara
 - 92 "How _ Is Your Love" ('77 hit)
 - 94 Deface
 - 95 Supper scrap
 - 96 Slangy denial
 - 98 Stockings
 - 100 TV listing abbr.
 - 102 Big_, CA
 - 105 Shade of meaning
 - 107 Ecclesiastical title
 - 108 Sage
 - 109 Put the match to
 - 110 Portended
 - 111 "That's_" ('53 tune)
 - 112 Loy or Blyth
 - 116 "A Face in the Crowd" actress
 - 118 Discourteous
 - 119 They're often beaten
 - 121 Curly coif
 - 122 Equine accessory
 - 123 Aphrodite's son
 - 126 "_ Ryan's Express" ('65 film)
 - 127 Remnant
 - 129 TV's "_ Haw"
 - 130 Presidential monogram



Answer Page 7

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



We've gone abs-olutely nuts

By Don Flood

This week I wanted to try something different — to cut through all the hype and misinformation about food and nutrition and provide my readers with the straight dope on healthy eating.

Who knows why. Maybe it was the buzz I got from that coffee and chocolate bar I had for breakfast.

Fortunately, though, that wore off before I got involved in way too big a project.

Besides, we all know what to do: follow the nutritional guidelines outlined in the food pyramid, which calls for 6-11 servings a day of carbo-loaded cereal, pasta and bread.

HA HA HA HA HA! Nobody follows the food pyramid anymore, which was first devised in 1250 B.C. by Ramses II.

(Ramses himself later dropped the idea of a food pyramid after the first one was eaten. Following that fiasco, his engineers, pointing out the need for long-lasting tourist attractions as well as a low-carb diet, recommended building stone pyramids instead.)

But the federal government still stands behind the food pyramid.

Well, sort of. The official in charge of the food pyramid program has gotten so big he'd have a hard time hiding his butt behind the Super Dome.

The problem is nowadays people not only want to eat right and be thin, they want their abdominal muscles to show.

A recent survey asked young men what muscle group was most important to them.

The answer: abs. We didn't even have abs when I was in high school. They seem to have been invented some time dur-

ing the '90s. Oh sure, I suppose some guys had stomach muscles that showed through their skin. We called these people "skinny."

(As for myself, I have "stealth" abs. They're there all right, but you can't see them.)

Back then guys would have said biceps. For good reason.

One, a guy can show off his biceps without undressing in public like that pervert on TV, the one who's always babbling about his abs.

Two, big biceps can help you do something useful, like lift heavy objects or play football.

Who needs stomach muscles that show?

"Hey, I could really use a guy who can hold an anvil on his stomach and it has to be someone with a well-defined six-pack. Any help out there?"

One of the great moments in the History of Abs was when a contestant got voted off "Survivor" and then tearfully told the viewing audience that the experience wasn't all bad, that he really wasn't that disappointed about losing out on a chance for a million dollars because now, at least, he had (sob, sob) fantastic abs.

So there you have it, folks. Would you choose:

(1) Killer abs that could disappear as fast as you can say, "I would like to order two large garbage pizzas, please?"

Or, (2) Enough money to pay for an extreme makeover, the kind that would include some new pecs to go along with your surgically enhanced washboard stomach?"

With option No. 2, I could eat all the chocolate bars I wanted.

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Classified Ads

LEGALS

SOCORRO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT Invitation to Bid/Respond:

Sealed bids/proposals/CSP to furnish the District with the following products and/or services will be accepted at the following times:

MATH CURRICULUM AT PASO DEL NORTE CSP NO. 199-0109-0450 ACCEPTED UNTIL JAN. 09, 2004, 3:30 P.M.

Proposals will be received at Business Services Dept., 12300

Eastlake Drive, El Paso, Texas 79928 until the specified times. Detailed specifications are available from the above office between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. Mondays through Fridays. Proposals are also available at the District's website: www.sisd.net WTCC-01/08/0-4

SOCORRO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT REQUESTS FOR PROPOSALS FOR CONSTRUCTION ADMINISTRATION SERVICES

The Socorro Independent School District is requesting the submission

of REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT RISK SERVICES via a one-step process for the administration and construction of a new PK-8 school, in the Socorro ISD, El Paso County, Texas.

REQUESTS FOR PROPOSALS MAY BE SUBMITTED UNTIL 10 A.M., WEDNESDAY, JAN. 14, 2004

Proposals forms may be obtained from and submitted to the SISD Education Services Dept., 12300 Eastlake Drive, El Paso, Texas

79928, phone (915) 937-0168. Submittals are to be clearly marked at the left lower corner of envelope:

Construction Management at Risk Services for a New PK-8 School RFP NO. 199-0114-0449

Late and faxed proposals will not be accepted. Proposals are also available at the District's website: www.sisd.net

The Socorro ISD retains the right to accept or reject any and all submittals in the best interest of the school district. WTCC-01/08/0-4

PUBLIC NOTICE

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 IFDEE14YORHB98733, 1994 Ford Mark III van, white, dealership license plates VIN IDTVII522MA200498, 1991 Dorsey van trailer, 53-foot, white, no locense VIN IG4HP53L7NH522839, 1992 Buick LeSabre, burgandy, dealership license plates.

WTCC-1/8/04

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Social Security Q&A By Ray Vigil

Q: I was born in 1942 and know that I have to be age 65 and 10 months to get my full Social Security benefits — 10 months older than my father had to be. But is the earliest age that I can get reduced retirement benefits now 62 and 10 months?

A: No. Although Congress raised the "full retirement age," it did not increase the early retirement age. It remains at 62, no matter what your full retirement age is.

Q: I was born in November 1938 and

took my Social Security retirement benefits when I was 62. I have been keeping my earnings under the earnings threshold every year. Because I took early retirement, am I stuck with the earnings limitation for the rest of my life?

A: No. The earnings limitation stops once you reach your full retirement age. In your case, this is 65 and 2 months, or January 2004. So beginning next year, you can work and earn as much money as you want with no reduction in your Social Security

benefits.

Q: I am a widow. When I took my own reduced retirement benefits at age 62, I was told that I could switch to higher widow's benefits when I reach my full retirement age. Is this still true?

A: Yes. Widows and widowers are generally the only Social Security beneficiaries who have this option of switching from reduced benefits on one record to unreduced benefits on another record.

Q: I know many women collect Social Security benefits on their

husband's earnings record. Can I get husband's Social Security benefits on my wife's earnings record?

A: Social Security benefits are gender-neutral. Therefore, you are potentially due husband's benefits. But the law that applies to both men and women says we only can pay you a spouse's benefit if it would be more than your own Social Security benefit.

Q: Can I get both Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits?

A: Yes, many people do. If the com-

bination of your Social Security benefits and any other income you have is below the SSI payment threshold in your state, you might qualify for SSI benefits. Of course, this assumes you meet all the other eligibility factors for SSI. Contact your local Social Security office to find out the SSI payment levels in your area.

For more information visit your local Security office, see 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

THURSDAY	THUR. NIGHT	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
A mixture of clouds and sunshine.	Mainly clear.	Sunshine and a few clouds.	Mostly sunny.	Plenty of sunshine, a comfortable afternoon.	Mostly sunny.	A good deal of sunshine, pleasant.	Sunshine and warm.
▲ 63°	▼ 35°	▲ 60° ▼ 34°	▲ 61° ▼ 36°	▲ 60° ▼ 32°	▲ 58° ▼ 34°	▲ 62° ▼ 40°	▲ 68° ▼ 43°

UV INDEX Statistics for noon.

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

Thursday	3	Low
Friday	3	Low
Saturday	4	Low
Sunday	4	Low
Monday	4	Low
Tuesday	4	Low
Wednesday	4	Low

REAL FEEL TEMPTM

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

Thursday	57°
Friday	52°
Saturday	52°
Sunday	51°
Monday	48°
Tuesday	53°
Wednesday	60°

AGRICULTURE

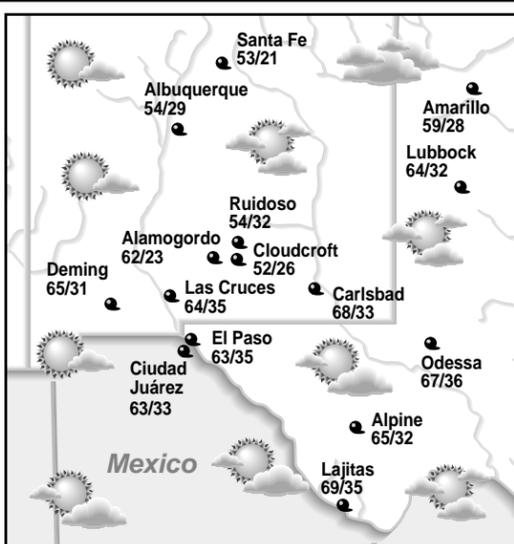
Dry and relatively mild weather will continue across the region over at least the next four to five days. Winds Thursday will shift to the north-northeast at 7-14 mph and then turn easterly Friday at 5-10 mph. Expect at least six hours of sunshine each day into the weekend.

All forecasts and maps provided by AccuWeather, Inc. ©2004

TEXAS WEATHER

Anthony	64	35
Canutillo	64	35
Clint	63	35
E. Montana	63	35
Fabens	63	35
Horizon	64	35
San Elizario	61	32
Socorro	62	34
Tornillo	63	35
Vinton	64	35

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



TRAVELERS CITIES

City	Thur. Hi/Lo/W	Fri. Hi/Lo/W	Sat. Hi/Lo/W	Sun. Hi/Lo/W	Mon. Hi/Lo/W
Albuquerque	54/29/pc	57/28/s	55/30/s	52/27/pc	50/32/s
Atlanta	38/32/c	44/32/c	50/34/pc	52/36/s	59/31/pc
Atlantic City	27/18/s	29/18/c	31/23/s	36/26/pc	45/19/c
Austin/San Antonio	57/41/c	65/41/s	64/37/s	65/41/pc	60/36/pc
Baltimore	28/18/pc	26/16/c	30/18/s	36/22/pc	45/17/c
Boston	18/8/s	16/8/c	20/12/s	26/16/pc	36/22/c
Chicago	26/18/c	28/20/pc	32/24/pc	34/24/c	27/9/c
Dallas/Ft. Worth	52/40/c	56/37/c	60/43/s	60/39/pc	54/34/pc
Denver	51/20/pc	54/24/s	50/22/pc	44/21/c	45/25/pc
Flagstaff	50/21/s	50/21/pc	50/22/s	51/20/s	47/17/s
Houston	54/42/c	64/46/pc	66/40/s	62/40/pc	62/38/pc
Kansas City	40/26/c	44/29/pc	49/32/pc	42/24/c	39/21/pc
Las Vegas	60/40/s	62/42/pc	63/41/s	63/41/s	61/39/s
Miami	74/63/c	74/58/c	73/60/pc	74/60/pc	76/58/pc
Minneapolis	23/14/c	27/17/pc	34/24/c	28/12/c	18/-1/c
New Orleans	61/44/c	58/39/pc	58/42/s	64/47/s	62/36/c
New York City	25/19/s	24/20/c	26/25/s	33/31/pc	41/23/c
Philadelphia	26/16/pc	26/16/c	28/18/s	34/24/pc	43/20/c
Phoenix	72/49/s	78/49/s	77/49/s	76/46/s	72/46/s
Portland	50/42/c	50/40/r	48/38/pc	50/37/c	49/37/c
San Francisco	60/48/c	58/48/c	58/48/pc	59/48/c	56/42/c
Seattle	52/42/r	50/40/r	48/38/pc	51/39/c	48/38/c
Tucson	72/43/s	75/43/s	75/43/s	72/43/s	74/43/s
Washington, DC	30/22/pc	28/20/c	32/22/s	38/26/pc	46/21/c

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

Come and see the complete line of the #1-selling brand of wet/dry vacs, filters and accessories.