



NEWSBRIEFS

Tree opportunity

The National Arbor Day Foundation is giving free trees to those who join the Foundation before Jan. 31. As part of the Trees for America campaign, 10 flowering trees, including two each of white dogwoods, crabapples, Washington hawthorns, American redbuds, and golden rain trees, will be shipped at the right time for planting between Feb. 1 and May 31 and are guaranteed to grow or they will be replaced free of charge. The membership fee for joining the foundation is \$10, which includes a bimonthly publication and *The Tree Book*, which contains extensive information on tree planting and maintenance. To join, contact the National Arbor Day Foundation at 100 Arbor Ave. in Nebraska City, NE, 68410 by Jan. 31 or go online at arborday.org.

Additionally the El Paso County office of the Texas Cooperative Extension is having its annual windbreak tree sale. Seedlings of both evergreens and hardwood trees, suitable for the El Paso area, come in packets of 30 to 50, with a price range from \$30 to \$52. Deadline to order is Jan. 21. Call 859-7725 for ordering details.

Time to quit

There are over six million Americans using destructive tobacco products which contribute to more than 9,000 U.S. cancer deaths per year, cause oral cancer and lesions, are linked to cancers of the esophagus, larynx and stomach and are a risk factor for cardiovascular disease. No, we're not talking about cigarettes — these are so-called "smokeless" tobacco products like chewing tobacco and snuff. The National Cancer Institute has teamed with ChewFree.com to give chewers and dippers a hand in quitting. More than five percent of American men, especially young ones, use smokeless tobacco daily, which produces similar or higher levels of nicotine in their bloodstreams than pack-a-day smokers. Withdrawal from these products is as difficult — with the same symptoms and discomforts — as heavy smokers attempting to quit, yet there have been fewer sources of help to quit. ChewFree is a free, self-help quitting program offered as part of a research study by Oregon Research Institute so these users don't have to rely on willpower alone. For information, go to www.chewfree.com or call 541-484-2123.

In other news

■ Apprentice naturalists can receive in-depth training in wildlife and natural resource management during a 13-week course with training topics ranging from geology to botany, archeology to desert ecology, beginning Thursday, Feb. 10. Classes are held Thursday evenings from 6-9 p.m. at the State Building, 401 E. Franklin, downtown El Paso. Five Saturday

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One thing we learn from television today is that the country is full of people that can't sing.

— Quips & Quotes

SEISD superintendent responds to concerns over TAKS test results

By Don Woodyard
Courier Staff Writer

SAN ELIZARIO — "At this point, we do not feel there were any inappropriate actions on anyone's part," says Dr. Mike Quatrini, superintendent of the San Elizario Independent School District.

In a prepared statement this week, Quatrini responds to a page one article in the Dec. 21 issue of the *El Paso Times* "that raised concerns of impropriety" about TAKS test scores in three El Paso area elementary schools. One of the schools mentioned was Sambrano Elementary in the SEISD.

An earlier investigative report on TAKS (Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills) test scores throughout the state in the *Dallas Morning News* sparked the *Times* article. At the core of the Dallas paper's article are 200 Texas schools with reportedly "suspicious scores."

Quatrini explains, "We are aware that some students who did well on the TAKS test in the third grade did not fare as well in the fourth grade, particularly at Sambrano Elementary."

"As a district, we review each student's achievement, particularly in regards to the



FACT CHECK — San Eli's Mike Quatrini wants people to look at all the facts before they jump to conclusions about test scores in the district.

TAKS test. In this case, we reviewed each student's results when we received them from TEA (Texas Education Agency) back in the summer (of 2004).

"Although there are a variety of factors that affect each student's scores, as well as each individual campus scores, there were three that had a significant impact on this campus:

1) "Most students, who took the test in 2002-03 in the third grade at Sambrano, were in the bilingual program and took the test in their native language, Spanish, and did very well.

2) "Some of these students who took the test in Spanish in the third grade, took the fourth grade TAKS test in English for the first time. Also, there are now three tests at the fourth-grade level that they took for the first time in English.

3) "Most importantly, all students in the third grade are given three chances to pass the TAKS, where they have only one chance to pass it in the fourth grade.

"TEA is well aware of these factors as they are the governing agency for education in the state of Texas," Quatrini continues in his statement. "Although they haven't had a concern with the results, we have and will continue to monitor each student's success rate and any discrepancies that may arise."

Socorro to host school wagon train retracing gold rush history

By Lilia Ruiz
Special to the Courier

SOCORRO — This week dozens of students from Texas and California boarded horse-drawn wagons to retrace the route of gold rush adventurer William P. Huff, whose 300,000-word diary shares the most detailed account available of the less-known southern gold rush trail. Huff took a mid-1800's trip from near Houston to near Fresno, California.

"We are extremely excited about the opportunity to be the inaugural start for this unique learning experience to students from across Texas and California," Mayor Willie Gandara Jr. said. "One of the City of Socorro goals is to promote pride in the heritage of the region and to increase public awareness of local history. We have 14 7th graders from Socorro ISD that will be traveling with the wagons for three days."

The wagon train will travel a total of three-weeks, which could be the adventure of a lifetime for the students. They will share their experiences afterward by publishing a book. The educational project is a partnership venture of Madera Unified School District, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the Texas Historical Commission, various county historical societies, schools and private ranchers.

On Jan. 4, 14 California sixth graders from the San Joaquin Valley will begin their journey at the Spanish Colonial Socorro Mission

in Socorro, retracing Huff's trail back toward his point of origin. Groups of 14 students from various Texas schools will also each join the wagon train temporarily at several points.

On Jan. 23 near Enchanted Rock State Natural Area in Central Texas, they will leave horses and wagons behind and motor to the Texas Capitol building, where they will present copies of the Huff diary to government officials in a ceremony on Jan. 25. The journey will culminate Jan. 27 in Houston with a ceremony at Huff's grave in Glenwood Cemetery, where the diary will be returned to his descendants.

Each morning on the trail, the students will conduct readings from Huff's diary covering the upcoming day's travel. They will discuss diary segments in terms of content and vocabulary. But the readings will also prepare the students to closely compare what they are about to see with what Huff wrote more than 150 years ago.

The students will help harness the mules and look to the wagons, learn to drive the mules, help pitch camp every night and generally experience as much of authentic 1800's pioneer life as possible. Students will take notes along the way, and each day will record their thoughts on a tape recorder.

During the trail ride, students in California and Texas will be able to follow the journey online and will be invited to pose questions to

Pendell recognized with Ronald Reagan award

EAST EL PASO COUNTY — James R. Pendell, area businessman and public servant, has been selected to receive the 2004 Ronald Reagan Republican Gold Medal Award.

The award was announced by House Majority Leader Tom DeLay and National Republican Congressional Committee Chairman Tom Reynolds.



James Pendell

Pendell was selected due to outstanding leadership in the business community, displaying a commitment to President Ronald Reagan's vision for an entrepreneurial America, and for his support of the Republican party. Reynolds said Pendell has served as honorary chairman of the Business Advisory Council and "this award could not have gone to a more deserving candidate."

Pendell owns and operates the S&S Food Store in Fabens and serves on the school board for Clint Independent School District.

East chosen to receive prestigious Beta Sigma Phi award

EL PASO COUNTY — Linda East has been selected Beta Sigma Phi First Lady of El Paso. This prestigious annual award has been given to one outstanding woman in El Paso since 1946 by Beta Sigma Phi, a local organization dedicated to charitable and community service.

East was chosen for her outstanding community service to El Paso. She is the Administrative Director for Communications and Public Affairs at Del Sol Medical Center. She serves on numerous boards including the Sun Bowl Association, YMCA, Better Business Bureau Risk Pool Board for County of El Paso, Rotary Club of El Paso, Ronald McDonald House, and City of El Paso Convention and Visitors Bureau. She also serves on advisory committees for both the Department of Communications and the College of Business Administration at the UTEP, and for Socorro ISD.



Linda East

East is currently serving as fundraising chair for the Rotary Club of El Paso's Centennial Garden, which is part of the El Paso Desert Botanical Garden at Keystone Heritage Park.

She will be honored at the 60th Annual First Lady Luncheon Saturday, Jan. 22 at 11:30 a.m. at Vista Hills Country Club. The public is invited to attend. Cost is \$16. Contact Betty Janousek at 598-7291 to make reservations by the deadline of Wednesday, Jan. 19.

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One perspective

By Francis Shrum

How rumors get started

Back in the good old days, when every town was a small one, you could tell who was in town by the horses tied to the hitching rail at the saloon, the general store, or over at the dress shop.

Everybody knew what horses belonged to everybody else — ain't that old so-and-so's dun out yonder? — just like they knew which kid belonged to what family, who was married to who.

Later on, it became cars and trucks. The little community I grew up in was much like the old days. We all knew what pickup belonged to which family. When a new one showed up, the word got around pretty quick that either somebody actually managed to buy a new one or there were visitors in town.

There was, of course, that other alternative and it always created a good bit of confusion. Somebody in town bought a truck from somebody else in town. That truck then begin spending the evenings and nights parked at somebody else's house.

Now, after awhile word got around about the transaction and everything settled down again. It was during that brief period of confusion, when the situation was a little ambiguous and the facts a little murky, that things began to get off track.

People started talking. People do love to talk, and what they like best to talk about is other people. Whether they know what they are talking about or not doesn't seem to really enter into the picture much, just so long as they have something to say. Unfortunately, when words are spoken in haste involving misconduct by other people, 90 percent of the time they are at least par-

tially wrong, and 100 percent of the time people suffer as a result.

For instance, here in Horizon City, there are a couple of really nice young people who opened up a company called PostNet — a mail-it, ship-it, send-it, receive-it, kind of place. Their arrival here coincided well with another event that was going to affect the community — the fellow who had a contract with the U.S. Post Office to run a substation in Horizon had decided over a year ago that November of 2004 would be his last month. He had his eye on a little time off and discontinued his USPO contract.

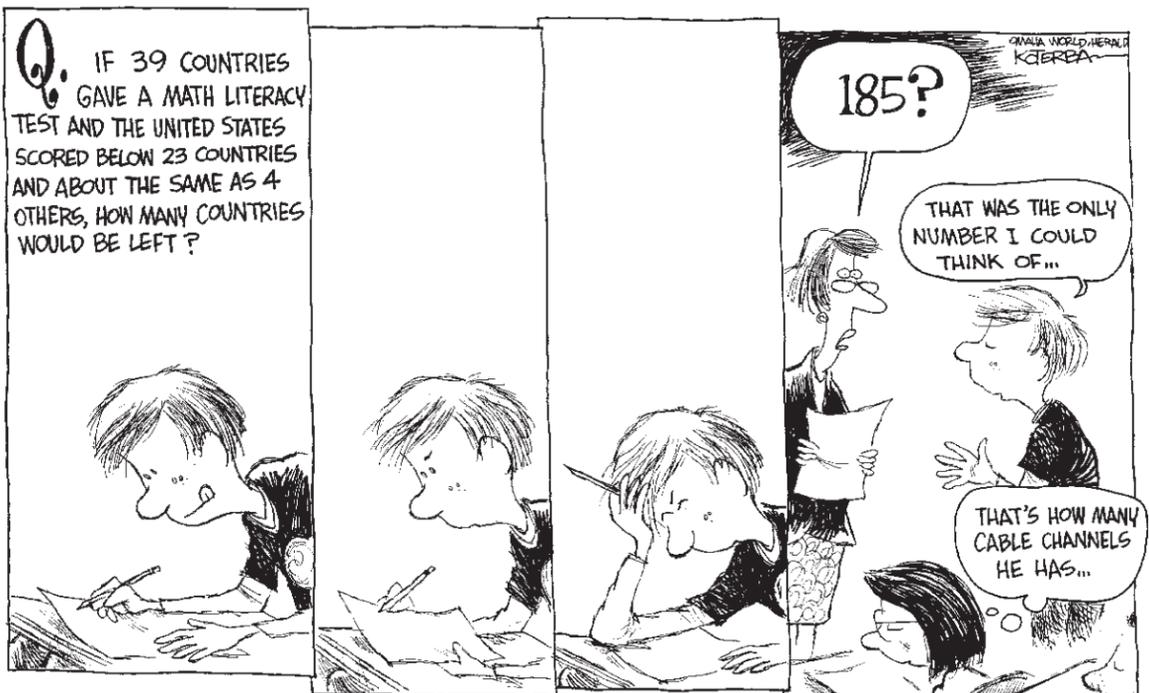
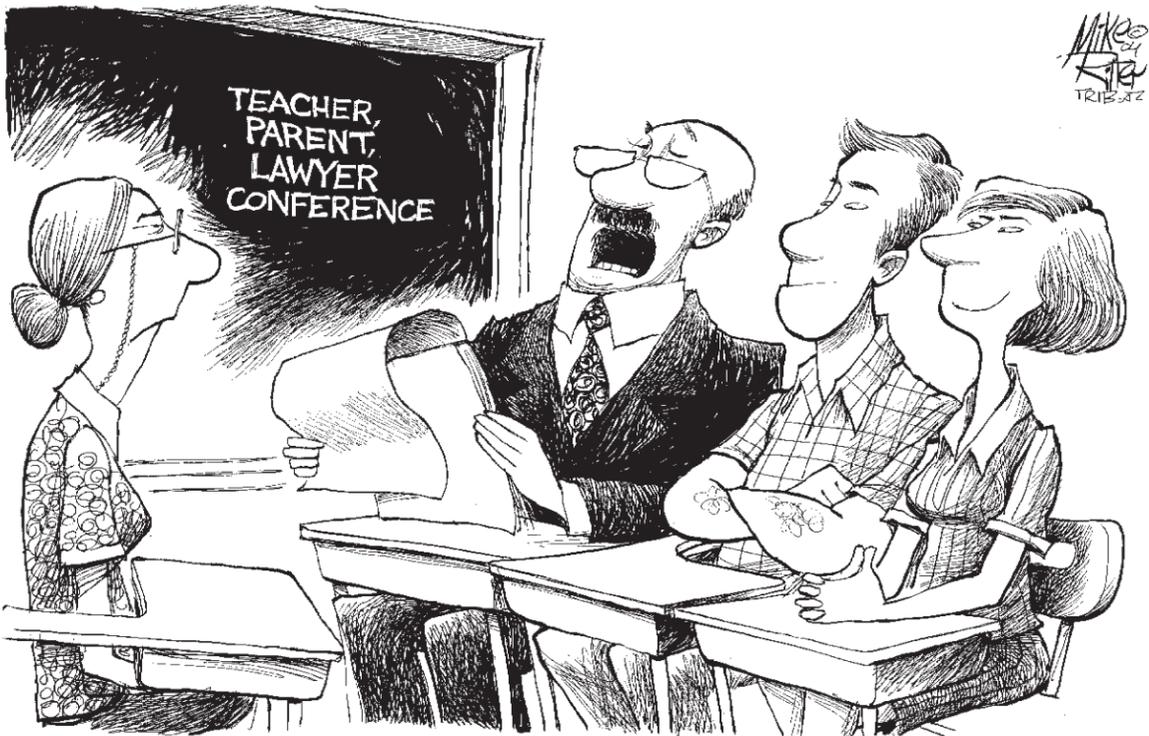
Unfortunately, word got started that the nice young folks over at PostNet had run him out of business. The information fueling the rumor was that it came from the fellow who ran the substation.

It was absolutely, totally not true. But you know how things go. Fortunately Linda, at PostNet, had the wisdom to call and find out what was going on.

Rumors are sort of like a contagious disease. Once spoken, a word cannot be retracted, like a contagious airborne germ breathed into the atmosphere, seeking the next recipient.

Not a single one of us is immune, either from spouting off about things we don't really understand, or by serving as a willing host to receive it.

There is a Book of boundless wisdom that has quite a bit to say about the human tongue and the use of it. It says our tongues are like the tiny spark that ignites a raging forest fire. The power of the spoken — or written — word is incredible, something to be handled with the caution we usually reserve for highly explosive



substances or poisonous snakes. By the power of the human tongue relationships between friends and lovers have ended in bitterness, reputations have been destroyed, children abused, brothers estranged, and even wars fought in which millions died.

Gossip and rumor-mongering is so common nowadays that it seems senseless to worry too much about what we say about other people. Af-

ter all, the printed filth lining the checkout lane at any grocery store or the high ratings for juicy talk-shows is testament to the fact that not only is gossip common, it's profitable as well. Besides, our society is becoming more cavalier about right and wrong all the time — it's all relative, anyway. If you want to have a strange truck parked in your yard overnight, it's no one's business but yours,

right? But that's not really true. Ask anybody who is on the receiving end of gossip. As kids we were taught that sticks and stones could break our bones but words could never hurt us. The reality is that words are painful, indeed. We would all do better to learn another old proverb: If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all.

WEST TEXAS COUNTY COURIER

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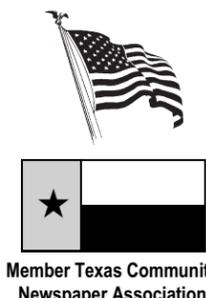
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Reyes Reports By U.S. Rep. Silvestre Reyes

Tiguas deserve justice

As the 108th Congress drew to a close, a scandal unfolded that was so appalling it shocked even the most seasoned Washington veterans — and unfortunately, this scandal hit close to home.

By now, many in El Paso know this story well. The Tiguas fell victim to the corruption of lobbyist Jack Abramoff and public relations consultant Michael Scanlon, who worked behind-the-scenes to close the Speaking Rock Casino and then subsequently deceived the Tiguas into paying them \$4.2 million to "lobby" for legislation in Congress to re-open it. These lobbyists also targeted five other Indian tribes across the country, amassing a fortune of \$66 million.

In closing this casino, Abramoff

and Scanlon did not just cut off a source of entertainment for the El Paso area. They cut off the life-blood of the Tigua community. Upon opening the wildly popular casino, the Tigua did not squander their profits. Instead, they built a community and a future, through new housing, health care services, business enterprises, a senior center and a library. Without the casino, though, they are now struggling to make ends meet.

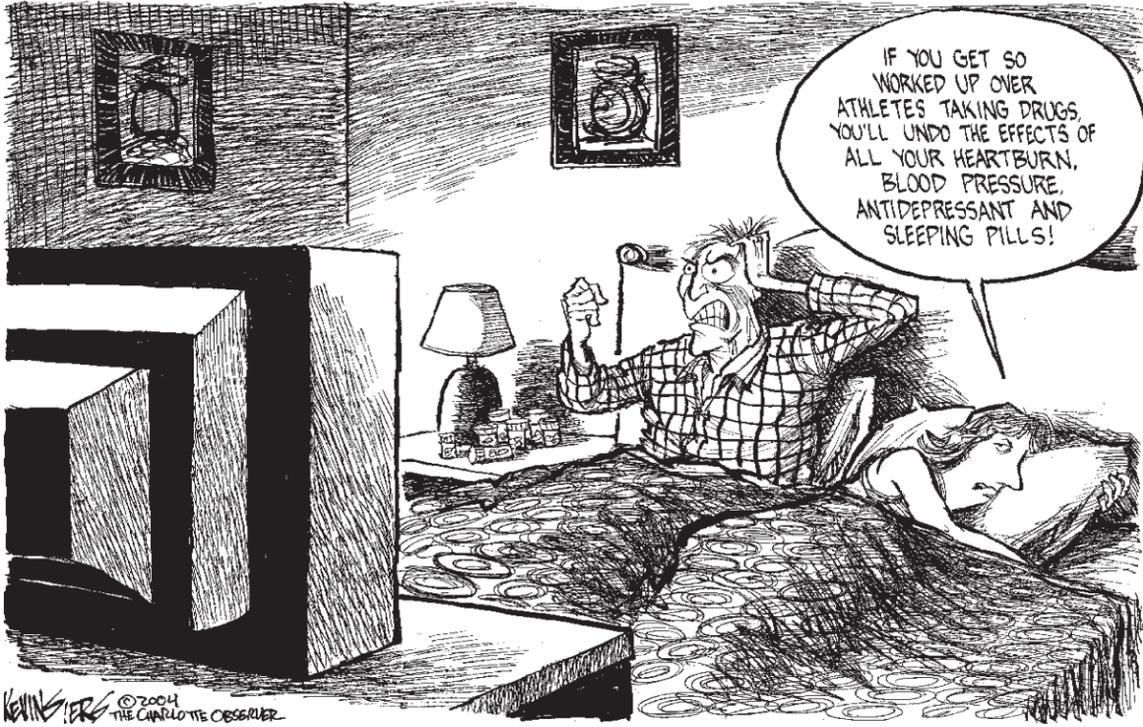
In the last days of the 108th Congress, the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs held hearings investigating the matter, which included the testimony of Tigua Lt. Gov. Carlos Hisa and I. I have worked — and will continue during the 109th Congress — to ensure that these lobbyists are swiftly brought to justice.

In Washington, I have held press conferences and have contacted Attorney General John Ashcroft and the

leaders of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs — Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell, Sen. Daniel Inouye and Sen. John McCain — urging them to continue their investigations. I have also contacted members of the House Committee on Resources calling for their committee to hold hearings investigating this flagrant display of abuse and fraud.

I fought to keep the casino open in 2001, contacting President George W. Bush and leaders in Congress for their assistance. As the 109th Congress begins, I will continue to fight these individuals who took advantage of our system of government for their own profit, while single-handedly cutting off a major revenue source for an underprivileged community.

Corruption such as this is not — and should not be — tolerated in this country. The Tiguas and the American public deserve better.



Hocus-pocus Meningococcus

By Albert M. Balesh, M.D.
Special to the Courier

Life is beautiful for young people in their prime, with everything to live for. Then, "hocus-pocus," sudden headaches, fever, malaise, confusion, eye discomfort to light, and a literal pain in the neck, and all that changes. Hearing loss, neurologic deficits, and the ultimate "disappearing act" leave no doubt that this was black magic.

From schoolyards to college campuses, masters of deception levitate in the air, infiltrate large groups of people, and finally decimate central nervous systems with sleight of hand. Bacteria, mycobacteria, fungi, spirochetes, protozoa, helminths, and viruses are their names, but on their marquees is emblazoned a simple title, "MENINGITIS." As beguiling as Houdini, they often seek instant gratification, presenting acutely to a virtually limitless audience within hours to 1-2 days after the appearance of nonspecific cold or flu symptoms. On a whim, they may prolong their tours, performing less frequently, with hiatuses of weeks to months of general symptoms. Let there be no mistake, however, what they are selling is not pure entertainment, but medical emergency.

Their youngest fans are three months old and lie in cribs. Their oldest lie in nursing homes, and no one in between is immune to their charms. With enigma as a tool of their trade, they often go undiagnosed un-

til the final act. One-third of meningitis cases, in fact, go undetected despite careful laboratory evaluation.

In order to banish our infectious friends in a "puff of smoke," we must first understand what we are up against. It is common knowledge that meningitis is an infection and inflammation of the membranes, which are called meninges, and cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) surrounding the brain and spinal cord. With the advent of current vaccines, there has been a shift in preferred "live targets," from children younger than five years old to the 15-24-year-old age group and older adults. Audiences, too, have indeed become "captive," with 700 Americans dying of meningitis each year.

Viral meningitis, also called aseptic meningitis, usually results from the spread of enteroviruses through direct contact with respiratory secretions (e.g., saliva, sputum, or nasal mucus) of an infected person. It causes signs and symptoms for 10 days, followed by resolution on its own. Supportive intervention is all that is needed, and the cause may never actually be found. Have you ever asked a magician where the rabbit he has pulled out of his hat comes from?

Bacterial meningitis, on the other hand, is the stuff of sorcerers, Wiccans, and wizards. It is much more serious than viral meningitis, and the curtain goes up when infection in another area of the body threads blood vessels and a path to

the meninges. Signs and symptoms are varied, but, with over 50,000 hospitalizations in the U.S. each year due to some form of meningitis and its nefarious bag of tricks, it pays to be vigilant. In addition to the common manifestations of the malady listed above, others include neck stiffness, vomiting, seizures, lethargy, delirium, and focal neurologic signs, the latter particularly alarming and requiring a computed tomography (CT) scan to rule out cerebral edema.

Timely diagnosis relies on the thrust of a magic wand, commonly known as a lumbar puncture needle, between lumbar vertebrae L4 and L5 for collection of cerebrospinal fluid (CSF). Analysis of the opening pressure, color, culture, number of red and white blood cells, glucose, and proteins of that ethereal nectar is confirmatory to both the diagnosis of the disease itself and its etiologic agent.

That leaves only the esoteric *pièce de résistance* to put an end to the harbingers of meningitis before they put an end to us. If meningitis is not eliminated immediately, presto chango, permanent neurologic sequelae, hearing loss among others, will inevitably result. Antibiotic therapy, for a minimum of seven days and a maximum three to four weeks, depending on the bacterial agent involved, is the name of the game. With a clear and proactive focus, there is no need for hocus-pocus.

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View from here By Michael Quinn Sullivan

It's time to bring lawmakers' voting records out into the open

Like all children, mine have gone through the inevitable stage of fearing the dark. Hard to blame them: the bumps, the obstacles, the unknown.

A child's fear of the dark is understandable. What's equally understandable is the average lawmaker's fear of the light. After all, revelations of bumps and stumbles over bad public policy can be a scary thing when pesky constituents come a'calling.

That's why darkness reigns supreme in our beloved state's legislative process.

Texas is one of only seven states that doesn't mandate at least one house record final votes on legislation, as the *Dallas Morning News* recently noted. Not exactly a chummy club we should remain in.

Regardless of ideological persuasion, the issue is easy to understand. No employer would allow her employees to hide the very measures by which she judges job performance; mine certainly doesn't.

Yet the only realistic measure Texas taxpayers have in determining the practical value of their representative or senator is hidden from view. With the current practice of allowing the great majority of bills to pass with unrecorded voice votes, lawmakers are all but unaccountable back home for their legislative work.

That should change. State Sen. John Carona and State Rep. Dan Branch have already filed legislation for the new Session that would bring much-needed light to the voting records of lawmakers.

Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst has put the concept high on his legislative agenda of mak-

ing government more accessible to the public.

While folks have howled for years at the darkness shielding lawmakers from taxpayer and voter review, the Freedom of Information Foundation of Texas — an organization composed primarily of journalists — reports 2005 could finally see sunshine in Austin. An amazing array of organizations from across the ideological spectrum, and at least 31 state lawmakers, are on record supporting more recorded legislative votes.

In an age of instant information, it is remarkable Texas lawmakers have received a free pass thus far staying out of the light.

That must change. Some might argue that recording votes will make lawmakers hesitant to take controversial positions. That's the point. Just like the employee wondering if he will get caught sleeping on the job, lawmakers should worry about Ma and Pa Voter reacting negatively to poor public policy performance.

Texans deserve to know how their lawmakers vote. By bringing light to the legislative process, we will not only reveal perpetrators of bad policy, but bring a higher level of accountability to Texas government.

When my kids awake in the night, they know dawn will come. Daybreak is long overdue for Texas taxpayers. Hopefully light will flood the Texas Capitol during the 2005 legislative session. No matter how scary it might be for politicians.

Michael Quinn Sullivan is the vice president of the Texas Public Policy Foundation, an Austin-based research institute.

TRUE TEXAS FACTS by Roger T. Moore, Oct. 5, 1895: The Governor signs a bill prohibiting prizefighting.



Honoring the dream with the MLK canned food drive

EL PASO COUNTY — On Monday, Jan. 17, people across the country will participate in Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day by serving those in their communities who are less fortunate. In 1994, congress ratified the King Holiday and Service Act bringing King's mission of public service and non-violent social change to the forefront.

In El Paso County, hundreds will participate by contributing to the 5th Annual MLK Canned Food Drive, which will be held from Jan. 5 to Jan. 17, 2005. Since its inception five years ago El Pasoans have donated over 68 tons of non-perishable

canned or dried food to organizations in our community, which serve the less fortunate.

Starting on Wednesday, Jan. 5, there will be numerous drop-off sites throughout the city where individuals can place their donations. On Jan. 17, the food will be collected and sent to a warehouse where it will be sorted by hundreds of volunteers and distributed among several beneficiaries including the Salvation Army, the Opportunity Center for the Homeless, the Center Against Family Violence, and others. The donations will help replenish much of

the food supply, which was depleted during the holiday season.

Food can be donated at Blue Sage Supermarkets, Albertson's Sav-On Supermarkets, Big 8 food stores, County Clerks Office at 500 E. San Antonio on the 1st and 3rd floors, City of El Paso at Two Civic Center Plaza, and all El Paso Public Library branch locations and bookmobile (the Main Library is closed for construction) and anywhere you see an official MLK Canned Food Drive sign and deposit bin.

For more information call 543-5468.

— Contributed by Jack Galindo

"Doc-For-A-Day"

DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE — Socorro High School senior Erica Rivera joined physicians and eight other El Paso-area students at Texas Tech University's Health Sciences Center for the university's "Doc-For-A-Day" activity. The students were trained in patient privacy, accompanied doctors on their rounds and toured the medical facility. Rivera submitted a 500-word essay to compete for the opportunity, which is co-sponsored by Texas Tech's Hispanic Center for Excellence. The Center's Associate Director Joyce Palmer says TTHUSC is looking ahead. "We're working to recruit bright and talented young people to be part of



our first medical class in 2008, and those people are high school seniors right now," she said.

A Living Trust may not be your best choice for advance planning

By Greg Abbott
Attorney General of Texas

AUSTIN — Our office has heard reports about unethical sales of living trusts. Some victims have paid as much as \$1,800 for a living trust on the advice of door-to-door sales persons. Too often, the sale is made without regard for whether a living trust really is in the client's best interests. The fact is, for a majority of seniors, a living trust is *not* preferable to a will and a durable power of attorney.

A living trust is a legal document that usually is created for the purpose of allowing another person to assist you in managing your assets while you are alive, and for distributing your assets after you are gone.

A living trust is different from a "living will" — now called a "directive to physicians and family or surrogates" — which expresses your health care wishes about being kept alive or not if you are seriously injured or terminally ill.

A living trust involves three parties: the

grantor, the trustee and the beneficiary. As grantor, you transfer ownership and control of your money, property, and other assets to the trust, which is managed by the trustee for the benefit of the beneficiary.

You can serve as the grantor, trustee and the beneficiary of the trust. You can also name another person or an institution such as your bank to serve as the trustee for you. This option is typically used when you are facing a debilitating or terminal illness that may impair your judgment.

If you are currently serving as your own trustee, the successor trustee will distribute the remainder of the trust after your death. The distribution of your assets after your death will be governed by the directions you provide in the trust document.

Some sales people often lead victims to believe that probate proceedings are overly lengthy and costly, and a living trust should be used in order to avoid probate. In fact, the probate process in Texas is one of the least expen-

sive and simplest in the United States. Also, remember that a living trust is not the only way to avoid probate.

"A living trust will reduce death taxes on your estate" is a frequently used, misleading statement. Most Texans will not face estate taxes. If your estate is subject to taxes, you can use a will to accomplish the same tax savings as a trust, usually at a much lower cost.

Living trusts are not appropriate for the majority of seniors. In fact, for some people, the expense of creating, administering, maintaining and funding a living trust can outweigh the benefit of having a living trust.

In deciding if a living trust is right for you, be sure not to succumb to high-pressure sales tactics. Be wary of phrases like "once in a lifetime," "act now," and "don't let this pass you by."

Whether a living trust is an appropriate estate planning tool depends on your personal financial situation, health condition and goals. For example, living trusts are often appropriate for someone who is facing a serious incapacity like Alzheimer's.

You should discuss the benefits and drawbacks with accountants, attorneys and financial planners who are experienced in this area and whom you trust before taking any action.

You should also be cautious about allowing a living trust salesperson to see your assets and your net worth because the salesperson may use this knowledge to sell you inappropriate investments. If you are

subsequently contacted by a salesperson offering annuity products, you should be aware that there are several types of annuities, many of which are not appropriate for seniors as a tool for financial planning.

Appropriate advance planning tools include a Medical Power of Attorney which is used to designate a person who can make decisions for someone who is incapacitated; a Directive to Physicians and Family or Surrogates which can prohibit or authorize the use of life-prolonging treatments when a person's condition is terminal or irreversible, also known as Living Will, and an Out-of-Hospital Do-Not-Resuscitate (DNR) order which instructs emergency medical personnel and other health care professionals to forego resuscitation measures.

The advance planning tools that should be handled by an attorney with expertise in advance planning are the Living Trust and the Durable Power of Attorney, which gives another person power to make decisions about you, your property and your financial affairs.

Living trusts and some annuities are *not* advisable for most seniors.

You can find more information on living trusts and other forms of advance planning on the Senior Texans Section of our Web site at www.oag.state.tx.us. Be sure also to visit the State Bar's Web Site at www.texasbar.com for information related to this subject.

If you believe you have been victimized by a living trust scam, you can file a complaint in the Consumer Protection Section of our Web site. You can also request a complaint form by calling the Consumer Protection Division at (800) 621-0508. Information on this and other topics is available on the Attorney General's Web site at www.oag.state.tx.us.



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Wintertime rabies program to resume

It may not be a typical dinner bell, but the purring sound of an airplane engine signals to hungry coyotes and gray foxes that food is arriving. And as these wild animals in South and West-Central Texas chow down this winter, health officials hope to continue tracking fewer incidence of canine and gray fox rabies.

The Oral Rabies Vaccination Program (ORVP) at the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) enters its second decade with statistics showing dramatic drops in these types of rabies.

"Surveillance indicates that the program continues to show measurable results year after year," said DSHS veterinarian Tom Sidwa, ORVP director. "No human cases of rabies in either area have occurred since the vaccine airdrop began. And there have been no animal cases of canine or gray fox rabies outside the original containment zones since the program's beginning."

In early January, about 2.7 million baits will drop from five specially-equipped airplanes flying across 44 Texas counties. The first flight takes off Jan. 7, weather permitting, from the Zapata County Airport in South Texas. The second portion of the drop begins about Jan. 15 from the Pecos County Airport in Fort Stockton, and the last leg gets under way about Jan. 22 from Junction's Kimble County Airport.

DSHS initiated the program in 1995 to create zones of vaccinated coyotes and gray foxes to stop the spread of the rabies virus and then eliminate canine and gray fox rabies in the area. Canine rabies in coyotes and domestic dogs had reached epidemic proportions in South Texas and threatened San Antonio and other major population areas. The next year, an airdrop began in West-Central Texas where an epidemic of gray fox rabies had been occurring since 1988.

The number of canine rabies cases in South Texas has declined from a high of 142 cases when the program began in 1995 to none in 2002 and 2003 and 1 reported in 2004 through November. Gray fox cases are down as well from an all-time high of 265 cases in 1994 to 22 in 2004 through November.

The specialized baits offer a dinner of fish meal to coyotes and dog food containing molasses and vanilla flavoring to gray foxes. But the important ingredient is the two milliliters of oral rabies vaccine encased in each bait.

"The vaccine inside the bait cannot cause rabies in people or animals," Sidwa said.

Because baits contain a biological agent and are less likely to be eaten by wildlife if people touch them, they should not be handled. Each brown bait is marked with a DSHS toll free number, 1-877-722-6725, that people may call for information.

"People still need to get their pets vaccinated against rabies by a veterinarian as required by law," Sidwa said. A domestic animal's rabies vaccination can be safely given even if the animal recently ate an oral rabies vaccine bait, he said.

Strokes are the leading cause of long-term disability in Texas

Every 45 seconds, someone in the United States suffers a stroke. Every three minutes, someone dies. Almost five million Americans today are stroke survivors and as many as 30 percent of survivors are permanently disabled, requiring extensive and costly care. Although stroke is the number three killer of Americans — striking an estimated 700,000 men and women each year and killing 164,000 — most people still fail to recognize stroke as an acute emergency event. Stroke claims the lives of more than 9,800 Texans every year.

A stroke occurs when a blood vessel that carries oxygen and nutrients to the brain is blocked by a clot or bursts. When that happens, part of the brain cannot get the blood and oxygen it needs, leading to disability and even death.

More than 60 percent of stroke deaths each year occur in women. Researchers have found that women have more severe first strokes at an older age than men and remain more disabled. Although most people think that stroke affects only older people, roughly 28 percent of stroke victims are younger than 65 years.

Although recent medical breakthroughs have led to new treatments, such as tPA, or Tissue Plasminogen Activator, most Americans do not recognize stroke as an emergency, and this lack of awareness can lead to brain injury and disability. For example, in order for tPA to work, it must be administered within three

hours of a stroke onset. Receiving timely emergency care is critical to both stroke survival and recovery.

Stroke is projected to cost Americans more than \$51 billion annually in direct healthcare costs and lost productivity in the workplace. Stroke can cause devastating damage including paralysis, and can lead to such serious disabilities as aphasia, which is the inability to use or comprehend words; visual impairments; dysphagia, which is difficulty chewing or swallowing; and motor and sensory deficits.

Stroke recovery depends greatly on quick recognition and treatment as well as comprehensive rehabilitation, yet more than half of the men and women who suffer a stroke will die within eight years.

Although strokes are not entirely preventable, there are several controllable risk factors that can greatly reduce the chance of stroke. Controlling high blood pressure, cholesterol levels and diabetes, not smoking, and engaging in regular physical activity can help lower an individual's risk of suffering a stroke.

By providing resources to healthcare professionals to help improve stroke treatment, educating the public on stroke's risk factors and promoting guidelines for proper care of stroke survivors, the American Stroke Association, with your help, is fighting to stop stroke.

Five signs of stroke:

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on

one side of the body;

- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding;

- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes;

- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination;

- Sudden, severe headache with no known cause.

Risk factors for stroke you can change:

- High blood pressure — High blood pressure usually has no specific symptoms and no early warning signs. That's why everybody should have his or her blood pressure checked regularly.

- Tobacco use — The nicotine and carbon monoxide in tobacco smoke reduce the amount of oxygen in your blood. They also damage the walls of blood vessels, making clots more likely to form.

- High blood cholesterol — A high level of total cholesterol in the blood is a major risk factor for heart disease, which raises your risk of stroke.

- Physical inactivity and obesity — Being inactive, obese or both can increase your risk of high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, diabetes, heart disease and stroke.

- Excessive alcohol — Drinking an average of more than one alcoholic drink a day for women or more than

two drinks a day for men can raise blood pressure and may increase risk for stroke.

- Some illegal drugs — Intravenous drug abuse carries a high risk of stroke. Cocaine use has been linked to strokes and heart attacks. Some have been fatal even in first-time users.

Risk factors for stroke you can't change:

- Increasing age — People of all ages, including children, have strokes. But the older you are, the greater your risk for stroke.

- Gender — Stroke is more common in men than in women. However, women account for more than half of all stroke deaths. Women who are pregnant have a higher stroke risk. So do women taking birth control pills who also smoke or have high blood pressure or other risk factors.

- Family history and race — Your stroke risk is greater if a family member has had a stroke. African Americans have a much higher risk of death from a stroke than Caucasians do. This is partly because blacks have higher risks of high blood pressure, diabetes and obesity.

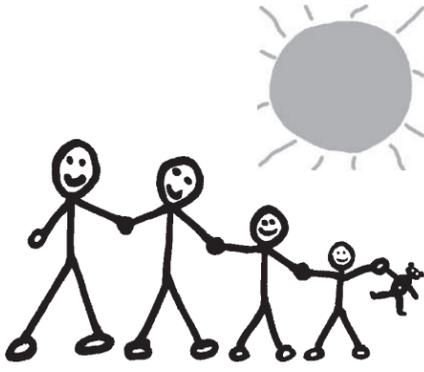
To learn more about stroke and the American Stroke Association, call 1-888-4-STROKE or visit our website at www.strokeassociation.org.

| | |
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Public Meeting Clint Independent School District

Re-configuration of Horizon area campuses

A community meeting to gather input on the re-configuration of the Horizon area campuses for the 2005 - 2006 school year will be held as follows:

Date: January 12, 2005

Time: 5:30 p.m.

Site: Clint Independent School District
Central Administration Building
14521 Horizon Blvd.
El Paso, Texas 79928

For further information, please call Mr. Ricardo Estrada, Interim Superintendent at 926-4011.

Junta Publica Distrito Escolar Independiente de Clint

Nueva Configuración de los planteles escolares de la area de Horizon

Una junta comunitaria para recabar información y datos de la posible nueva configuración de los planteles escolares del area Horizon para el año escolar de 2005 - 2006 se llevara acabo en la siguiente fecha:

Día: 12 de enero del 2005

Hora: 5:30 p.m.

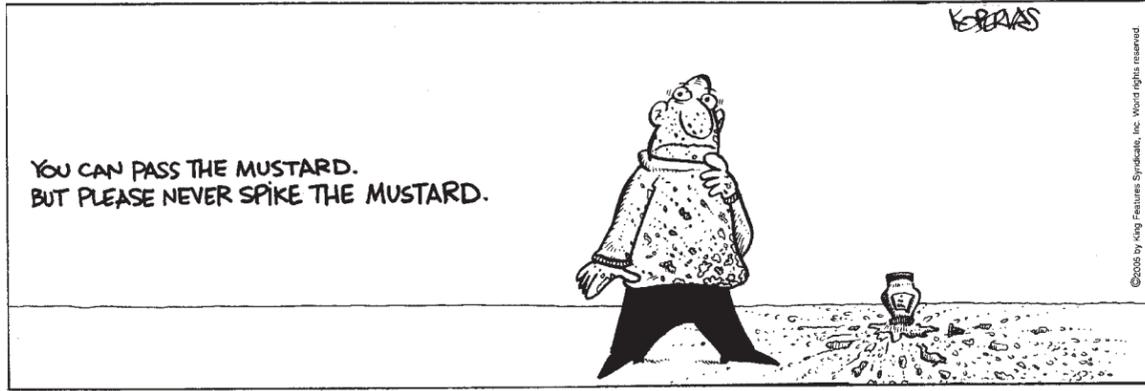
Lugar: Oficinas Administrativas
del Distrito de Clint
Salón de la Mesa Directiva
14521 Horizon Blvd.
El Paso, Texas 79928

Para mas información, favor de llamar al Sr. Ricardo Estrada, Superintendente Interino al 926-4000.

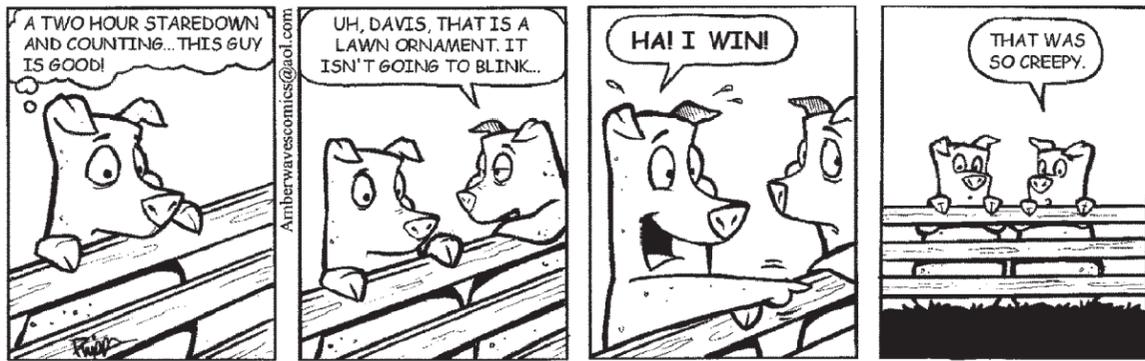
WTCC: 01-06-05

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



Show your kids who's boss

By Don Flood

A Florida couple, tired of getting no help around the house from their children, have taken action: They've gone on strike!

And to show the kids, ages 12 and 17, they mean business, Cat and Harlan Ballard have pitched a tent and are living in their front yard.

Finally, a commonsense approach to raising children!

Usage Note: Language Police will say, "You raise corn, but you rear children."

But, actually, they're wrong, because I don't raise corn. Never have. I am, however, raising a son and, so far, see no need to start rearing him as well.

According to the CNN.com story — this is verbatim — "The couple sits on their lawn chairs and roasts marshmallows over a hibachi."

All I can say is, hopefully they'll come out with a book on their theories, because it's obvious the Ballards have some important insights into raising children in the 21st century.

Years ago, parents followed Dr. Spock's advice — and yes, I am talking about the character on "Star Trek" — but his book is hopelessly outdated.

Besides, what's a Vulcan know about Earth children? On planet Vulcan, children are probably all very logical.

VULCAN PARENT (testing child): Why don't you relax and watch MTV or play a video game?

VULCAN CHILD: That wouldn't be a logical or productive use of my time. I would prefer to help the family unit by doing something constructive around the house.

Not on Earth. Here you have to fight fire with fire.

Kids refuse to clean up their rooms? Put up a tent and live out-

side! Kids won't help with dishes? Roast marshmallows on the front lawn!

And think how well their methods would work up north. If North Dakota parents pitched a tent in December, their kids would know they meant business.

Whether by accident or design, the Ballards have tapped into something extremely powerful. They are relaying to the world a strong and, to teens, horrifying message: We are these children's parents and We Are Nutballs!

Teens hate to admit they have parents. They prefer pretending they just sprung from the ground (like corn!).

And they hate it when their parents make public spectacles of themselves, unless they're something cool, like serial killers.

FRIEND: Those people in your front yard — are they your parents?

TEEN: I have no idea who they are. I suddenly sprung into being at age 14.

FRIEND: Liar! They are your parents. I always heard you had parents!

As innovative as the Ballards' approach is, I'm not positive it would work around my house:

ME: Son, if you don't clean up your room right now I'm going to pitch a tent and live in the front yard and roast marshmallows. How do you like dem apples?

SON: Apples? Uhhh, sure, go ahead.

And what if the strike doesn't work out? What if he brings in Scab Parents to break the strike?

ME: You'll be glad to know, son, I've decided to call off my job action.

SON: Sorry, Dad, but you've been laid off.

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REAL ESTATE

VALLEY RANCHITOS, Socorro, Clint, Fabens, Tornillo. Adobe Homes: four bedroom, 3/4 acre; three bedroom, 1 acre. APODACA LAND CO., 859-5472. Commercial land. 1/6

RENTALS

Fairway Townhouse, Horizon City, view 18th hole, Emerald Springs. Two bedroom, two bath, available. 755-1730, 494-3054. TFN

SELF-HELP

Persons who have a problem with alcohol are offered a free source of help locally. Alcoholics Anonymous - call 562-4081 for information.

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Back Issues:
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Briefs

From Page 1

morning field trips will be held. Application information is at 859-7725, ext. 221. Deadline to register is Jan. 21.

Students can turn litter in cash via the "Don't Mess with Texas" scholarship program. The campaign awards \$5,000 annually to students who have identified a litter problem and taken steps to deal with it. Applications are welcome from students who will graduate in the spring of 2005, who reside and attend school in Texas, plan to attend an accredited two or four-year college, and can tell about their involvement in litter abatement in a 300-350 word essay. Deadline to apply is April 1, 2005 and applications are available online at www.dontmesswithtexas.org or through a school counselor.

The Visiting Nurse Association, a not-for-profit home health and hospice care provider in El

Paso County, has served the area for more than 37 years, providing professional, rehabilitative, palliative, and support services in the home or community setting. Volunteers are welcomed to help provide "friendly visits," assist with clerical tasks, and run errands. Orientation and training sessions are ongoing. For information contact Kimberly Chapman at 543-6240

U.S. Sen. John Cornyn, a member of the Senate Subcommittee on Immigration, Border Security and Citizenship, was named the Border Texan of the Year on Tuesday. He will receive the prestigious award for his outstanding commitment to issues and concerns important to the Rio Grande Valley. Members of the Border Texan of the Year Committee, led by Hidalgo Mayor John David Franz, made the announcement. The award, given to someone who works to improve the quality of life in the Texas border region, will be officially presented this March at Border Fest, the largest and oldest Heritage Music Festival in South Texas.

Wagon

From Page 1

the kids on the trail via the TPWD Web site (www.tpwd.state.tx.us/expltx/efl).

At the end of the trail, students will return to their classes and collaborate via e-mail to compose a book about their experiences titled "Following the Steps of William P. Huff," which will be published in hardcover and online.

State parks and historic sites on the wagon train route include Fort McKavett State Historic Site, Enchanted Rock State Natural Area and Hueco Tanks State Historic Site near El Paso, where Huff lost his mules in a nighttime raid by Indians, according to his diary notes.

Several private ranches are opening their gates to the wagon train, partly through the efforts of TPWD, whose biologists and game wardens are well known by most ranchers in rural Texas.

The El Paso County Historical Commission, Crane County Historical Commission, Menard County Historical Commission and similar groups are also aiding the wagon train project, with coordinating support from the Texas Historical Commission, the state agency for historic preservation.

Social Security Q&A By Ray Vigil

Q: I recently spent two months in the hospital and my SSI benefit payment was reduced. Why was I penalized for something out of my control?

A: You are paid SSI (Supplemental Security Income) to meet your basic needs. When you are hospitalized and Medicaid is paying for your stay, your basic needs are already being taken care of. Medicaid is paying for your food, lodging and medical care. That is why your monthly SSI payment is reduced when you stay in a

hospital for a full calendar month and Medicaid pays for the stay. For more information, visit our website at www.socialsecurity.gov, call us at 1-800-772-1213, or visit your local Social Security Office.

Q: I recently heard that I will get a 2.7 percent increase in my Social Security benefits in January? How is that increase arrived at?

A: Legislation dictates how the annual cost-of-living adjustment, or

COLA, is calculated. The Social Security Act specifies that the COLA is based on the percentage increase in the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) from the third quarter of one year to the third quarter of the next. The CPI-W is determined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Q: I am getting Social Security disability benefits. If I move from Nebraska to California, will that have any impact on those benefits?

A: No. Social Security eligibility rules and benefits remain the same

throughout the United States. Of course, you should make sure you report your change of address and any possible change in direct deposit information to the Social Security Administration as soon as possible.

Q: I am about to turn age 62 and plan to file for Social Security. Can I get my own Social Security benefit AND a wife's benefit based on my husband's Social Security work record? He is 66 and already getting Social Security.

A: We always pay your own Social Security benefit first. We will supple-

ment that with any benefits you might be due on your husband's Social Security record. At age 62, you would be eligible for a spouse benefit equal to about one-third of his benefit. If that amount is more than you are due on your own work record, you will have additional spousal benefits added to your own Social Security payments.

For information visit your 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 |
|-------------------------|----------------|---|---------------------------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| | | | | | | | |
| Sunny to partly cloudy. | Partly cloudy. | Breezy with some sunshine giving way to clouds. | Periods of clouds and sunshine. | Mostly sunny. | Mostly cloudy. | Episodes of sunshine. | Times of clouds and sun. |
| ▲ 56° | ▼ 34° | ▲ 60° ▼ 40° | ▲ 62° ▼ 42° | ▲ 64° ▼ 46° | ▲ 62° ▼ 36° | ▲ 60° ▼ 33° | ▲ 54° ▼ 29° |

UV INDEX Statistics for noon.

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

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

REAL FEEL TEMP®

The exclusive AccuWeather composite index of effective temperature based on eight weather factors.

| | |
|-----------|-----|
| Thursday | 54° |
| Friday | 43° |
| Saturday | 49° |
| Sunday | 53° |
| Monday | 59° |
| Tuesday | 54° |
| Wednesday | 46° |

TEXAS WEATHER

| | | |
|--------------|----|----|
| Anthony | 54 | 32 |
| Canutillo | 54 | 33 |
| Clint | 54 | 34 |
| E. Montana | 55 | 34 |
| Fabens | 54 | 34 |
| Horizon | 56 | 34 |
| San Elizario | 52 | 31 |
| Socorro | 54 | 33 |
| Tornillo | 54 | 34 |
| Vinton | 54 | 32 |

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 | 46/26/pc | 42/28/pc | 50/28/pc | 52/34/s | 50/26/c |
| Atlanta | 64/44/sh | 57/46/sh | 64/48/sh | 64/48/r | 65/48/pc |
| Atlantic City | 50/38/r | 48/33/c | 50/39/pc | 56/42/r | 50/39/pc |
| Austin/San Antonio | 50/38/pc | 61/49/sh | 74/50/pc | 70/46/pc | 70/52/c |
| Baltimore | 52/36/r | 48/34/c | 52/38/pc | 54/40/r | 52/39/c |
| Boston | 36/34/i | 42/30/pc | 42/32/pc | 44/36/r | 43/37/c |
| Chicago | 26/16/sf | 28/22/pc | 38/28/sn | 40/30/pc | 42/28/c |
| Dallas/Ft. Worth | 40/36/pc | 57/48/pc | 68/48/pc | 63/46/s | 64/48/c |
| Denver | 40/14/pc | 36/18/pc | 42/20/pc | 48/24/pc | 48/14/pc |
| Flagstaff | 36/18/pc | 34/20/sn | 36/22/pc | 40/22/pc | 38/15/sn |
| Houston | 54/48/r | 62/54/sh | 70/56/sh | 74/54/sh | 76/60/c |
| Kansas City | 22/18/pc | 43/35/pc | 50/35/sh | 51/34/c | 46/29/c |
| Las Vegas | 48/38/pc | 52/40/r | 54/40/pc | 54/40/r | 56/38/r |
| Miami | 81/70/pc | 82/70/sh | 82/70/pc | 82/71/s | 81/70/sh |
| Minneapolis | 18/8/c | 22/14/pc | 24/16/sn | 27/10/c | 17/7/c |
| New Orleans | 68/56/r | 70/58/sh | 74/58/r | 72/56/sh | 72/57/pc |
| New York City | 38/34/i | 46/36/pc | 46/38/pc | 52/41/r | 49/41/pc |
| Philadelphia | 45/32/r | 48/34/pc | 50/38/pc | 52/42/r | 49/41/c |
| Phoenix | 60/44/pc | 58/46/r | 60/46/pc | 58/44/pc | 65/41/r |
| Portland | 42/34/sh | 38/32/sn | 38/28/sn | 42/30/c | 39/25/sh |
| San Francisco | 55/46/r | 53/44/sh | 53/46/r | 54/45/r | 52/39/sh |
| Seattle | 40/30/sn | 38/30/sn | 36/30/sn | 40/28/c | 38/25/c |
| Tucson | 58/40/pc | 60/42/r | 58/40/pc | 62/44/pc | 64/38/r |
| Washington, DC | 56/40/r | 50/38/c | 52/42/pc | 60/43/r | 53/43/c |

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

AGRICULTURE

Chilly air will filter into the area Thursday as Canadian high pressure pushes into the southern Plains and Texas. Winds mainly out of the west will keep it dry. These conditions will persist through Friday with high pressure moving east. A storm system will approach the area Saturday, but it will not bring in any precipitation.

All forecasts and maps provided by AccuWeather, Inc. ©2005

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