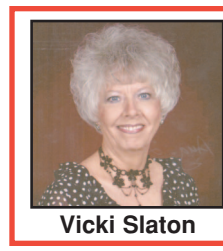


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BCS system still in need of some revamping.
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JANUARY 1, 2008



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BSISD, taxpayers face tough choices

By STEVE REAGAN
Staff Writer
To build or not to build — that will be the question facing Big Spring Independent School District officials and taxpayers in the coming year. Faced with facilities that have been described as aging at best and obsolete at worst, BSISD officials are likely to call for a construction bond sometime in 2008.

After two years of study, educators are readying for action. The first step will be a Jan. 31 public forum, at which time administrators and trustees will solicit public input on construction plans that have been developed over the past several months. Those plans call for construction of a new “mega” elementary campus, closure of Bauer and Washington elementaries, converting Moss, Marcy and Kentwood schools to house students in

kindergarten and first grade and replacing the roof at Big Spring High School while installing portable science labs at that campus. Preliminary estimates place the cost of these projects at \$34 million. Costs will be firming up within the next few months, officials said. These projects are part of a 40-year plan to give a total facelift to Big Spring schools — and with construction costs constantly rising, officials say the soon-

er the work begins, the better. “With commercial construction inflation rates at 8 percent or higher the past several years, and an anticipation of high inflation rates for the future, it’s imperative we have a solid plan in place soon to save as many of the inevitable expenses as we can,” said BSISD Superintendent Michael Downes. “We’ve spent two years of study in

See **BSISD**, Page 3A

WELCOMED HOME!



Courtesy photos
Marine Cpl. Lisa Carillo and Navy seaman Mechelle Warneke, both of Big Spring, received a big welcome at Midland International Airport from members of the Permian Basin Welcome Home Committee when they returned home for the holidays. In top photo, Warneke, who just finished basic training at Great Lakes, Ill., is welcomed by PBWHC coordinator Vickie Gomez. At left, Carillo is reunited with her mother, Debbie Ramirec, and her brothers, Adrian and Aaron Juarez. Carillo, who is stationed at the Pensacola Naval Air Station in Florida, is on a 30-day stay and is currently serving as an assistant recruiter in Midland.

Looking ahead

Bond issue projects to begin in near future on college’s campus

By STEVE REAGAN
Staff Writer

Howard College’s official motto for 2008 may very well be “Dig We Must.”

A variety of construction and renovation projects authorized by voters in 2007 are expected to begin in earnest within the next few months at the college’s Birdwell Lane campus.



SPARKS
College officials are busily meeting with engineers and architects to determine the best time to launch the myriad projects, but College President Dr. Cheryl Sparks is hopeful the first substantial work will begin late in the spring. “We’re going to try as much as we can not to impact classroom studies,” Sparks said. “Of course, that will be next to impossible, but we’re going to do the best we can.”

underground electrical service and heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems.

- “Building envelope” needs such as replacement of aging brick and mortar, windows, doors and gas and electrical services in laboratory facilities.

- Interior repairs and upgrades such as asbestos removal, and replacement of some floors, walls, furniture, fixtures and equipment.

In addition, the bond proposal was worded to allow trustees to replace buildings if renovation costs prove to be too prohibitive.

“Our goal is to maintain every structure we can,” Sparks said. “If we find the cost of rehabilitating the building is too high, we’ll look at tearing the building down ... but that’s not our first priority.”

Sparks said the college is truly taking a team approach to prioritizing and scheduling renovation projects. Officials are meeting with a variety of people — architects, college instructors and engineers, to name a few — to figure out the best way to proceed.

Portable classrooms from San Angelo will soon be on campus to be used as “swing space.”

In 2007, voters approved \$21.6 million in projects that will impact just about every building on campus. Among needs to be addressed by renovation are:

- Infrastructure concerns such as water, sewer and gas lines,

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DANGEROUS TATTOO

CHAPARRAL, N.M. (AP) — Getting a tattoo can be a painful proposition, but usually it’s just the needle you have to worry about. Two men trying to trace a loaded .357-caliber Magnum as a pattern for a tattoo accidentally shot themselves, the Otero County Sheriff’s Department said Monday. Robert Glasser and Joey Acosta, both 22, were treated at a hospital in El Paso after the shooting Thursday evening in nearby Chaparral. Authorities said Glasser was struck in the hand when the gun accidentally went off, and Acosta was hit in the left arm. Their injuries were not life-threatening.

SMUGGLING IN PIGEONS?

LEWISTON, N.Y. (AP) — Border agents pulled four live birds from the pockets of a pigeon collector and a traveling companion trying to enter the United States from Canada. The pair were stopped Sunday at the Lewiston-Queenston Bridge border crossing, where they told inspectors they were on their way to visit an uncle, Customs and Border Protection spokesman Kevin Corsaro said. Inspectors found the pigeons wrapped and taped from neck to tail in pockets of the pair’s coats after they asked the men from Uxbridge, Ontario, to remove their jackets.

PEARL OF A DINNER

LAKE WORTH, Fla. (AP) — A Florida man was about halfway through a plate of steamed clams when he chomped down on something hard — a rare, iridescent purple pearl. George Brock and his wife, Leslie, had been spending a day at the beach Friday in South Florida and stopped at Dave’s Last Resort & Raw Bar for a bite. Their find could be worth thousands. “Few are round and few are a lovely color, so this is rare,” said gemologist Antoinette Matlins. The Brocks, of Royal Palm Beach, plan to have the pearl appraised and said they may sell it if it is valuable.

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Sports

BIG SPRING HERALD

Do you have an interesting sports item or story idea? Call Jonathan Hull at 263-7331, Ext. 237. Email results to: sports@bigspringherald.com

Page 1B
Tuesday, January 1, 2008

IN BRIEF

Individuals needed to referee area basketball games

Individuals are needed to referee area varsity basketball games for the 2007-08 season.

Anyone interested should call Adam Rodriguez at 517-0300.

2007-2008 NCAA Division I-A college bowl schedule

TODAY
Outback Bowl
At Tampa, Fla.
Payout: \$3.1 million
Wisconsin (9-3) vs. Tennessee (9-4), 10 a.m. (ESPN)

Cotton Bowl
At Dallas
Payout: \$3 million
Missouri (11-2) vs. Arkansas (8-4), 10:30 a.m. (FOX)

Capital One Bowl
At Orlando, Fla.
Payout: \$4.25 million
Michigan (8-4) vs. Florida (9-3), Noon (ABC)

Gator Bowl
At Jacksonville, Fla.
Payout: \$2.25 million
Virginia (9-3) vs. Texas Tech (8-4), Noon (CBS)

Rose Bowl
At Pasadena, Calif.
Payout: \$17 million
Southern California (10-2) vs. Illinois (9-3), 3:30 p.m. (ABC)

Sugar Bowl
At New Orleans
Payout: \$17 million
Hawaii (12-0) vs. Georgia (10-2), 7:30 p.m. (FOX)

JAN. 2
Fiesta Bowl
At Glendale, Ariz.
Payout: \$17 million
West Virginia (10-2) vs. Oklahoma (11-2), 7 p.m. (FOX)

JAN. 3
Orange Bowl
At Miami
Payout: \$17 million
Kansas (11-1) vs. Virginia Tech (11-2), 7 p.m. (FOX)

JAN. 5
International Bowl
At Toronto
Payout: \$750,000
Rutgers (7-4) vs. Ball State (7-5), 11 a.m. (ESPN2)

JAN. 6
GMAC Bowl
Mobile, Ala.
Payout: \$750,000
Tulsa (9-4) vs. Bowling Green (8-4), 7 p.m. (ESPN)

JAN. 7
BCS National Championship
At New Orleans
Payout: \$17 million
Ohio State (11-1) vs. LSU (11-2), 7 p.m. (FOX)

Crossroads high school varsity sports calendar

WEDNESDAY
Big Spring boys basketball at Lubbock Cooper, 1 p.m.

FRIDAY
Big Spring girls basketball vs. Plainview, 7:30 p.m.
Coahoma boys and girls basketball vs. Haskell, 6:30 p.m.
Forsan boys and girls basketball at Midland Classical, 6:30 p.m.

BCS still needs some revamping

Four bowl games start around the lunch hour New Year's Day. That's just an appetizer, though. Save some room for the main course, beginning later in the day with the Rose Bowl and then enjoy something sweet for dessert with the Sugar Bowl.



JONATHAN HULL

If you're a bowl enthusiast like me, then those two games can only cure your appetite for so long. Fortunately with the BCS, we're treated to primetime games for two more nights. With this bowl season already proving to be one of the more exciting in recent memory, certainly the games more highly anticipated than all the others will deliver more memorable performances, right?

Right? OK, maybe not. Let's face it. Some of the BCS games are set up to be yawners.

There's the traditional New Year's Day game that is probably wound too tight in its traditions and has tainted the BCS bowl lineup.

Another squad goes into their marquee matchup without its head coach because apparently the school wasn't illustrious enough to keep him away from Michigan.

One of the at-large bids sneaked its way into a BCS game despite playing only one team with a winning record this season. Oh, and by the way, the BCS team lost that game.

The best matchup of the BCS bowls features an undefeated squad that survived a schedule filled with one quality opponent.

So this is the marquee of the bowl season? I had an easier time getting more hyped up about Navy and Utah playing in the Poinsettia Bowl.

I am a proponent of the bowl system. However, I think the selection process is all wrong. The best matchups were not generated by this system and the best teams in the country weren't necessarily included.

There will never be a long,

drawn out playoff in college football and if this is the system we're stuck with, then it's time to tweak it the right way and give better matchups.

Here's what my BCS lineup would've looked like.

- Rose Bowl: USC vs. Ohio State - The Buckeyes don't belong in the national championship. The Big 10 was weak and Illinois definitely doesn't deserve to be in a BCS bowl. However, Ohio State against USC in the most historical bowl game would be a great matchup.

- Sugar Bowl: Georgia vs. Missouri - Kansas is another unworthy team in the BCS. Missouri beat them late in the season and played a tougher schedule. Chase Daniel also has more drawing power than anyone on the Jayhawks' squad. Georgia's defense would give Mizzou an incredible challenge and the game might produce one of the favorites for next year's national title.

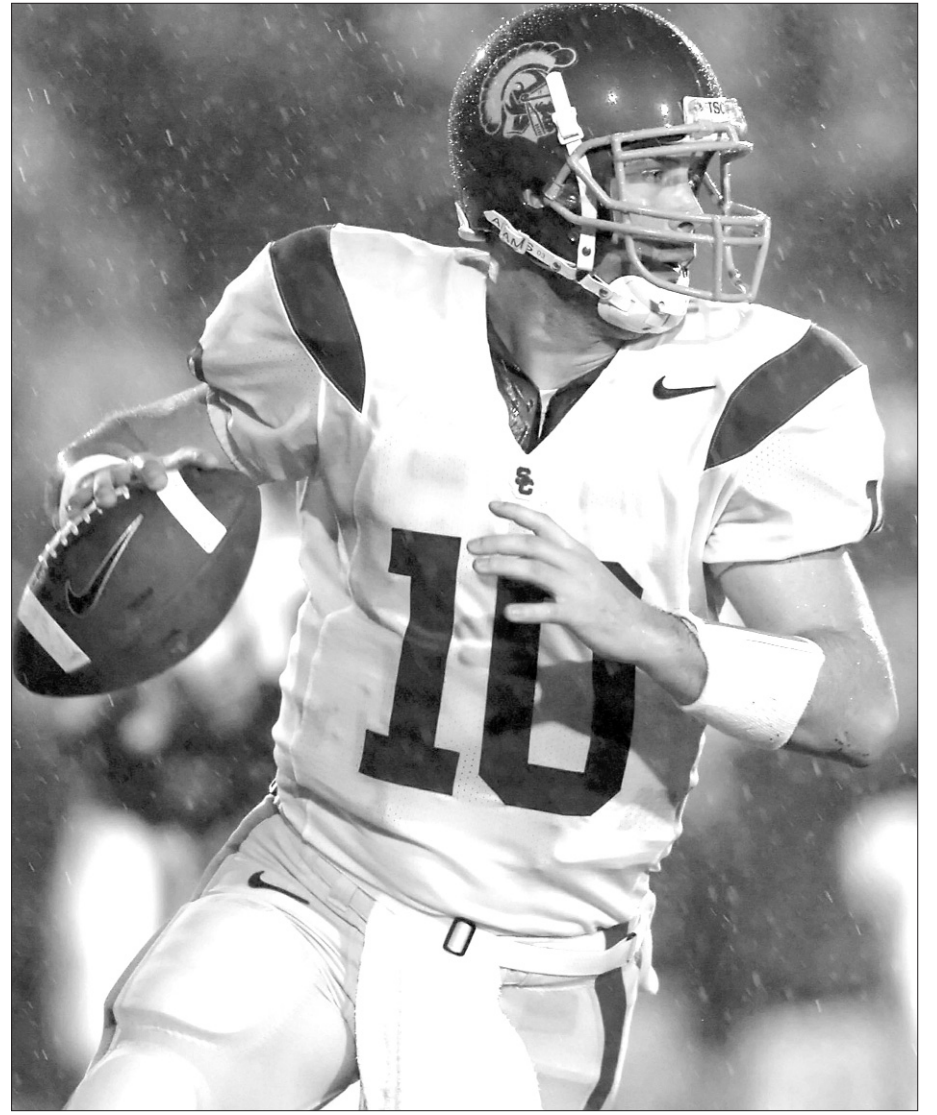
- Orange Bowl: Boston College vs. West Virginia - Florida is the most deserving team left, but can't be in the game because two SEC teams are already in the BCS. So it comes down to Arizona State, Illinois or Boston College. BC has played the tougher schedule and has a better selling point in quarterback Matt Ryan. Two former Big East rivals battle for supremacy in this game.

- BCS Championship: LSU vs. Virginia Tech - LSU pounded the Hokies earlier in the season, but this is a different Virginia Tech team. The Hokies have found their identity on offense and are playing as good of defense as anyone else in the country. Sure, both teams would have two losses, but in the current system, this is the best possible matchup at this time of year.

Regardless of what I think, the games are already laid out for us. So here's a look at all the BCS games minus the national championship.

Rose Bowl
Illinois (9-3) vs. USC (10-2)
3:30 p.m. today (ABC)

Last bowl appearances: LSU 47, Illinois 34 (2001 Sugar); USC



MCT photo

USC Trojans quarterback John David Booty drops back to throw in action from earlier this season. Booty and the Trojans take on Illinois in the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, Calif. at 3:30 p.m. today.

32, Michigan 18 (2006 Rose).

Synopsis: The "Granddaddy of Them All" has delivered the least interesting matchup of the BCS bowls and all because of the Rose Bowl's commitment to tradition.

Illinois is a good story. Head Coach Ron Zook has done a great job of turning the program around and there are two athletes on the Illini that will bring excitement to the contest. Running back Rashard Mendenhall and quarterback Isaiah "Juice" Williams are playmakers and the reason Ohio State has a blemish on its record.

Still, you're going to tell me that honoring tradition and seeing Illinois take on USC instead of Oklahoma or Georgia is better?

Defense isn't what usually

comes to mind when USC football is brought up. The Trojans have always been a dominant offensive team. Thoughts of Reggie Bush and Matt Leinart immediately begin to cloud the mind.

This isn't a typical USC squad, though. The Trojans have the best trio of linebackers in the country — juniors Brian Cushing and Rey Mauamaluga and senior Keith Rivers.

Prediction: USC 34, Illinois 14 — Some argue the Trojans are playing the best football in the country.

I don't feel that way. I like Virginia Tech, Oklahoma and LSU more, but it's hard to deny what the Trojans have done defensively.

See **BOWLS**, Page 2B

Ranking the NFL playoff teams

By Dave Goldberg

AP Football Writer

Any handicapping of the playoffs starts, of course, with the Patriots, the first team ever to finish a regular season 16-0 and only the second to go unbeaten in the modern era. Indianapolis is right behind them, and the rest of the AFC is follows.

But Terrell Owens' injury and Dallas' bad form lately makes the NFC a free-for-all, a conference where an argument might be made for any of the six playoff entries.

AFC

1. New England (16-0, top seed). There's no way to argue against the Patriots. But Bill Belichick and his players will concede they needed a little luck to finish unbeaten. There were three 3-point wins, including one against 5-11 Baltimore when they needed a couple of fortuitous late calls, one against them that wound up to their benefit.

Until anyone proves otherwise, the clear favorite to head to Arizona and win a fourth title this decade.

2. Indianapolis (13-3, second seed). Still the team with the best chance of knocking off New England, even if Marvin Harrison is iffy. Led the Patriots by 10 points with 10 minutes left at home before losing 24-20.

The Colts are better equipped than in the past for winter weather, especially because New England's wide-open offense might not be ideal for a blustery day in Massachusetts.

3. San Diego (11-5, third seed). Should get by Tennessee

and get to Indy, where the Chargers have had success before by putting pressure on Peyton Manning.

The big question is Philip Rivers, who has had a so-so season at quarterback.

4. Jacksonville (11-5, fifth seed). The Jaguars are trendy because they are a southern team with a northern offense, which they will need in Pittsburgh and again in New England if they get by the Steelers. They won 29-22 in Pittsburgh on Dec. 16, rushing for 224 yards against a team that's supposed to be solid a

The Jags won't be favored if they get to New England. But they have a chance if QB David Garrard keeps his composure. A chance is all anyone can ask for against the Patriots.

5. Pittsburgh (10-6, fourth seed). RB Willie Parker is out with a broken ankle. Aaron Smith, the unsung defensive end, is out with a torn biceps. QB Ben Roethlisberger and star safety Troy Polamalu aren't at full strength.

Yes, there's tradition and experience; this is a team that won a Super Bowl two years ago. But it just seems worn out and if it has to go to New England, it's returning to a place where it lost 34-13 three weeks ago — with Parker.

6. Tennessee (10-6, sixth seed). Jeff Fisher would never say "just glad to be here." But that's what the Titans are after getting in by beating the Colts' B Team. It's not a reflection on Tennessee, simply the fact that in the stronger conference, the Titans don't hold up. In the NFC, things might be different.

If Vince Young's leg is OK, the Titans have a slight chance in San Diego. Slight.

NFC

1. Dallas (13-3, top seed). Very shaky top seed, largely because T.O. is a question mark. The dreaded high ankle sprain often takes four to six weeks to heal, which means he might not be ready for the first game.

Without T.O., it's harder on tight end Jason Witten and WR Patrick Crayton as well as quarterback Tony Romo, whose thumb may still be hurting. In any case, the Cowboys haven't been playing very well on offense lately.

2. Washington (9-7, sixth seed). Not really a stretch. Closed with four straight wins. Todd Collins, who sat and watched for 10 years, brings stability to quarterback that the younger and more athletic Jason Campbell doesn't. Beyond that is emotion. Sean Taylor's death seems to have instilled a new purpose in the Redskins. They will have to go coast-to-coast on a short week, Sunday to Saturday, so they may not get by Seattle. But if they win there and get to Dallas ...

3. Green Bay (13-3, second seed). Maybe an indication that a team that is one of the NFL's youngest beyond its 38-year-old quarterback isn't quite ready for prime time.

First-round winners might determine the Packers' fate. They might prefer the Seahawks in the second round more than any other team because Seattle doesn't run the ball, a necessity at Lambeau Field in January.

The Packers don't run well either, although Ryan Grant has provided a lift.

4. New York Giants (10-6, fifth seed). The question is whether the supreme effort against the Patriots gives the Giants momentum. Or did it mentally exhaust them?

"You have to go into the playoffs healthy, you have to go with confidence, you have to go in there with a little bit of a swagger, and I think we have all of those things," middle linebacker Antonio Pierce said Monday, brushing off injuries that could keep three starters out in Tampa.

5. Seattle (10-6, third seed). No momentum after clinching the West on Dec. 9 and resting folks. Sometimes that works and sometimes it doesn't, especially against a hot team like Washington.

One thing the Seahawks have is experience from their Super Bowl run two years ago. They might even have made it two straight last season — they took the Bears to overtime in Chicago. As noted, their lack of a running game will hurt if they have to go to Green Bay in the second round.

6. Tampa Bay (9-7, fourth seed). Kind of a mystery team because the NFC South was so weak — not one player from the division made the Pro Bowl. Jeff Garcia has had success against the Giants because his short drops, quick release and mobility can neutralize New York's pass rush. Giants-Bucs is like Washington-Seattle: New York has momentum, the Bucs basically took off the last two weeks.

Police blotter

The Big Spring Police Department reported the following activity between 7 a.m. Monday and 7 a.m. today:

- **BILLY MANN KIRK**, 62, of 2610 Langley, was arrested Monday on 10 local warrants.
- **DOLORES V. RIVERA**, 25, of 1208 Lloyd, was arrested Monday on a charge of theft.
- **TAMMIE SUE HORN**, 39, of 2609 Wasson Road, was arrested Tuesday on two local warrants.
- **JOHN DAVID RIGDON**, 19, of 1204 Pennsylvania, was arrested Tuesday on two local warrants.
- **MICHAEL RAY LEWIS**, 46, of 1404 Wood, was arrested Tuesday on a charge of public intoxication.
- **ROBERT R. SANCHEZ**, 44, of Colorado City, was arrested Tuesday on a charge of public intoxication.
- **THEFT** was reported:
 - in the 1800 block of FM 700.
 - in the 1400 block of Scurry.
 - in the 2300 block of Wasson.
 - in the 400 block of Birdwell Lane.
- **CRIMINAL MISCHIEF** was reported in the 2600 block of Carlton.
- **BURGLARY OF A HABITATION/ASSAULT** was reported in the 2900 block of Highway 80.

Weather

Today — Sunny. Highs in the mid 40s. Light and variable winds.
 Tonight — Mostly clear. Lows around 17. Light and variable winds.
 Wednesday — Partly cloudy. Highs in the upper 40s. Southeast winds around 10 mph.
 Wednesday night — Partly cloudy. Lows in the mid to upper 20s. South winds 10 to 15 mph.
 Thursday — Partly cloudy. Highs in the lower 50s. South winds 10 to 15 mph.
 Thursday night — Partly cloudy. Lows in the lower 30s.
 Friday — Partly cloudy. Not as cool. Highs in the mid 60s.
 Friday night — Partly cloudy. Not as cool. Lows in the mid 40s.
 Saturday — Partly cloudy. Highs in the upper 60s.
 Saturday night — Partly cloudy. Lows in the mid 40s.
 Sunday — Partly cloudy. Highs in the upper 60s.
 Sunday night — Partly cloudy. Lows in the mid 40s.
 Monday — Partly cloudy. Highs in the lower 60s.

Support Groups

- MONDAY**
- Encourager's Support Group for all widows and widowers meets the first and third Monday of the month. For more information, call Nancy Hale at 398-5239.
 - Take Off Pounds Sensibly (TOPS) TX. 21, weight loss support group meets at Dora Roberts Rehabilitation Center, 306 W. Third St. at 5 p.m. TOPS provides members with information, motivation and fellowship in attaining and maintaining their physician-prescribed weight goals. For more information, call Alex at 264-6921 or 1-800 392-8677.
- TUESDAY**
- The Path, faith-based addiction recovery, meets at 6:30 p.m. at Spring Tabernacle Ministeries, 1209 Wright St.
 - Dual Recovery Anonymous meetings have been canceled. They will no longer take place at the Howard County Library. If you have questions, call Deidra F. at (432) 816-3033.
 - Life Recovery, a non-denominational Christian group of recovering alcoholics and addicts, meets at 7 p.m. at the St. Paul Lutheran Church Fellowship Hall.
 - Alcoholics Anonymous, 615 Settles, noon to 1 p.m. and closed discussion meeting 8 p.m. to 9 p.m.
 - Al-Anon, 615 Settles for family members and friends of alcoholics meets at 8 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

- RSD (Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy, a chronic pain disease), a new support and informative group meets at 213 Circle. Call Lucy at 264-1213 for more information.

THURSDAY

- Alcoholics Anonymous, 615 Settles, noon to 1 p.m.; women's meeting; 6:30 until 7:30 p.m. Non-smoking closed discussion meeting, 8 p.m. until 9 p.m.

FRIDAY

- AA open discussion meeting from noon until 1 p.m. at 605 Settles. Open Big Book study meeting, 8 p.m. until 9 p.m.

SATURDAY

- Alcoholics Anonymous open discussion meeting, 615 Settles, noon to 1 p.m. Open podium/speakers meeting 615 Settles 8 p.m. until 9 p.m. Open birthday night, no smoking meeting the last Saturday of each month at 8 p.m.

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Lottery

Results of the Texas Two Step drawing Monday night:

Winning numbers drawn: 3-9-11-12. Bonus Ball: 5.
 Number matching four of four, plus Bonus Ball: 1.
 Prize: \$325,000
 Winning ticket(s) sold in: Bastrop.
 Estimated jackpot for Thursday night drawing: \$200,000.

•••

Results of the Cash 5 drawing Monday night:

Winning numbers drawn: 5-7-19-26-31.
 Number matching five of five: None.
 Next Cash 5 drawing: Tonight.

•••

The winning Daily 4 numbers drawn Monday night, in order:

1-7-5-5. Sum It Up: 18.

•••

The winning Pick 3 numbers drawn Monday night, in order:

9-8-2. Sum It Up: 19.

Take Note

- Pediatric flu vaccinations for children ages 6 months to 35 months are now available at the Texas Department of State Health Services clinic in College Park Shopping Center. Cost is \$10, although no one will be turned away for inability to pay. For more information, call 263-9775.

- St. Mary's and friends of St. Mary's are holding a lap blanket drive to place approximately 400 lap blankets in the hands of every nursing home patient in Big Spring. Blankets can be taken to the church office, 1001 Goliad, between the hours of 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. Monday through Friday or call Connie Fowler at 267-2713.
 A beginning crochet class is being held at 6 p.m. Wednesday in the church's Parish Hall.

- Bring joy and kindness to others by becoming an Odyssey Healthcare volunteer. Help those at the end of life's journey. Make a difference in someone's life. Call 263-5999 to begin your journey.

- All creatures Sanctuary and Rescue has an account set up with Big Spring Salvage at 3608 N. Hwy. 87 for all types of metals and aluminum cans. Please tell them that your donations are for All Creatures Sanctuary and Rescue. All Creatures Sanctuary and Rescue is also still taking weight circles off of all Purina brand dog foods. Send your Purina Weight Circles, to A.C.S. & R. at P.O. 871, Coahoma 79511. All Creatures Sanctuary and Rescue is still accepting old and used cell phones and ink jet cartridges, for drop off locations in Big Spring and Coahoma, Call Melanie at 267-7387.

- Christ Community Fellowship is collecting infant car seats and carriers. These are given to new mothers who cannot afford them. To donate your old or new car seats and carriers, call Karen Allen at 263-3517 or leave a message at Christ Community Fellowship, 263-love. All donations are appreciated.

- Road to Recovery, sponsored by the American Cancer Society, seeks volunteers to drive cancer patients to treatment in Midland. This requires just a few hours commitment each month. To volunteer, or to request a ride for treatment, call Nancy Koger at 267-7809.

- New Life Ministries Church of God In Christ is holding a soup kitchen every second and fourth Tuesday from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at 204 N.W. 10th. The meal is free. Call 264-0771 for more information.

- The Pet Patrol helps locate lost pets and owners of found pets. To volunteer or for more information, call Melanie Gambrell at 267-PETS (7387).

- Legal Aid of Northwest Texas is accepting appointments from 2 p.m. until 5 p.m. the first and third Wednesday of each month. Individuals seeking legal advice for matters concerning family law, divorce, custody and child support issues, social security cases, employment and housing may contact the office to schedule an appointment. Criminal cases are not accepted. Anyone recently served with legal documents should call the office immediately at 800-926-5630 or 432-686-0647.

- Big Spring and surrounding counties are in critical need of foster families. Foster parents are the caretakers for the children in the community who have been abused or neglected. For more information on becoming foster parents or adoptive families, call the Children's Protective Services office at 263-9669.

Around the world, revelers greet 2008 with a huge party

By ANGELA DOLAND

Associated Press Writer

A million revelers cheered fireworks in Sydney. Summer Olympics organizers hosted dance and music in Beijing. And rare celebrations resounded in war-torn Baghdad.

Across the globe, people gathered for parties, shot off fireworks and held out hopes for a peaceful and prosperous 2008.

But reminders of violence were apparent as security was tightened in many nations.

Fireworks were canceled in downtown Brussels, Belgium, where police last week detained 14 people suspected of plotting to help an accused al-Qaida militant break out of jail.

Festivities in Paris centered on the famous Champs-Elysees avenue and the Eiffel Tower, where about 4,500 police and 140 rescue officials patrolled the streets.

In Thailand, an army spokesman said he believed that five bombs set off by suspected Muslim insurgents in a Thai-Malaysian border tourist town likely targeted New Year's revelers. The bombs, which wounded 27 people, exploded in the hotel and nightlife area of Sungai Kolok, spokesman Col. Akara Thiprote said.

Baghdad witnessed something Iraq had not seen since before the invasion of 2003 — people publicly partying to welcome in a new year.

The ballrooms of two landmark hotels — the Palestine and the Sheraton — were full of people for New Year's Eve celebrations. After years of car bombings, mortar fire and suicide attacks, Iraq's capital was sufficiently calm to warrant the two high-end parties.

Several European countries rang in the new year with new habits.

The smoke-filled cafe became a thing of memory in France. Following up on a ban last year on smoking in many indoor locations, cigarettes were prohibited in most locations.

Fabienne Simon, a 27-year-old smoker, said the ban was "not that bad."

"There is nothing better than to go to a night-

club, a coffee place where there are no cigarettes," she said. "You come out, it's great, you aren't smelling of cigarettes."

Two European Union newcomers, Cyprus and Malta, started using the euro at the stroke of midnight.

The Mediterranean islands, both former British colonies, were scrapping the Cyprus pound and Maltese lira to bring the number of countries using the shared currency to 15.

In France, President Nicolas Sarkozy gave the first traditional New Year's greeting of his presidency, with a "message of hope, faith in life and in the future." In Russia, Vladimir Putin delivered the last New Year's Eve address of his eight-year presidency, boasting of economic improvements and claiming to have restored a sense of unity among Russians, who are likely to see him stay in power as prime minister after he steps down in a few months.

In Moscow, thousands gathered in Red Square, watching a concert beneath the colorful onion domes of St. Basil's Cathedral, and fireworks above.

Along with the innovations, old traditions were maintained.

More than a million revelers in New York's Times Square cheered at the 100th drop of a giant ball. A century ago the tradition began with a 700-pound ball of wood and iron, lit with 100 25-watt bulbs. This year's event featured an energy-efficient sphere clad in Waterford crystals, with 9,576 light-emitting diodes that generated a kaleidoscope of colors.

In London, people gathered in Trafalgar Square and along the banks of the River Thames to watch a fireworks display and hear Big Ben welcome the New Year with 12 resounding bongs.

Berlin held a massive fete: In a stretch leading from the city's famous Brandenburg Gate along Tiergarten park to the western part of town, officials set up three stages, 13 bands, 40-yard tall Ferris wheel and over 100 beer stands and snack joints.

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BOWLS

Continued from Page 1B

**Sugar Bowl
Hawaii (12-0) vs.
Georgia (10-2)
7:30 p.m. today (FOX)**

Last bowl appearances: Hawaii 41, Arizona State 24 (2006 Hawaii); Georgia 31, Virginia Tech 24 (2006 Chick-fil-a).

Synopsis: No longer does anyone doubt a mid-major conference champion's ability to upset an elite team from a major conference. Thanks to Boise State's unlikely win over Oklahoma last season, teams like Hawaii will get more opportunities to play in the BCS.

For only the second time in school history and the first time since 1992, Hawaii will play a postseason game away from home. In '92, Hawaii defeated Illinois 27-17 in the Holiday Bowl in San Diego, meaning

the trip to New Orleans for the Sugar Bowl is the furthest inland the Warriors have been on the main land in the postseason.

Hawaii puts a dedicated effort into throwing the football. The Warriors rank second nationally in pass offense and are dependant upon the throwing arm of quarterback Colt Brennan.

Georgia's gameplan is simple. The Bulldogs want to control the clock with their two-headed monster at running back, featuring senior Thomas Brown and freshman Knowshon Moreno.

Prediction: Georgia 40, Hawaii 28 - Brown and Moreno will find plenty of running lanes against Hawaii. The question is how often can the Bulldogs' defense stop the Warriors.

Hawaii hasn't been as productive in its past three games, being held to less than 40 points in each contest and less

than 30 in one.

**Fiesta Bowl
West Virginia (10-2) vs.
Oklahoma (11-2)
7 p.m. Wednesday (FOX)**

Last bowl appearances: West Virginia 38, Georgia Tech 35 (2007 Gator); Boise State 43, Oklahoma 42 (2007 Fiesta).

Synopsis: The feeling is West Virginia's prolific offense won't be as productive without Rich Rodriguez, who left the Mountaineers to become head coach at Michigan, on the sideline. I disagree.

An offense that racks up 292 yards rushing a game doesn't just suddenly forget how to execute its offense just because of a coaching change.

Quarterback Pat White is the type of athlete that can dominate a defense. White averages 99 yards rushing and 157 yards passing a game. He's become a much more efficient passer, routinely

getting the ball to playmaking wideout Darius Reynaud.

Joining White in the backfield is tailback Steve Slaton. Slaton has had a disappointing junior campaign, averaging fewer yards a carry and not showing the toughness to run inside. Still, if he can turn the corner on a defense, Slaton has the speed to outrun everyone to paydirt.

Outrunning Oklahoma's defense won't be easy, though. Oklahoma has allowed very little production to its opponents' run games, giving up just 92 yards a game on the ground.

Offensively, the Sooners are led by the most efficient quarterback in the country - freshman Sam Bradford.

Prediction: Oklahoma 37, West Virginia 28 - If the Mountaineers want to compete with Oklahoma, they'll need White to loosen up the

Sooners' run defense with some big plays with the vertical passing game.

Oklahoma is very vulnerable in the secondary as long as West Virginia keeps the ball away from marquee cornerback Reggie Smith.

**Orange Bowl
Kansas (11-1) vs. Virginia Tech (11-2)**

7 p.m. Thursday (FOX)

Last bowl appearances: Kansas 42, Houston 13 (2005 Fort Worth); Georgia 31, Virginia Tech 24 (2006 Chick-fil-a)

Synopsis: Illinois is probably the least deserving of all the BCS teams, but Kansas isn't far behind the Illini.

The Jayhawks played one FCS team with a record above .500 and the Missouri Tigers defeated them by eight points.

The next best record of a Kansas opponent is 6-6. The Jayhawks beat three of those .500 teams by less than 10 points. Their resume simply isn't deserving of a BCS berth.

On the other hand, Virginia Tech has two losses.

One was to LSU in the first week of the season and the other was to the then No. 2-ranked Boston College Eagles.

Virginia Tech comes

into this contest playing as good of defense as anyone in the country. Since giving up 48 points to LSU in the second week of the season, the Hokies have held every opponent to 23 points or less with eight of their last 10 opponents scoring less than 17 points.

Offensively, Virginia Tech has had an explosion in the past month, scoring at least 30 points in its last four games. A two-quarterback system is generally criticized, but the Hokies are finding great success with one.

The athletic Tyrod Taylor is using his dual-threat ability to bring defenses up and then the strong-armed Sean Glennon comes in and hits a defense deep.

Kansas is very dependent upon quarterback Todd Reesing. Reesing has had a coming out party this season, racking up more than 288 yards of total offense a game.

Prediction: Virginia Tech 35, Kansas 17 - Reesing is yet to see a pass rush as relentless as Virginia Tech's. The Hokies also have a great secondary, taking advantage of any hurried mistake opposing quarterbacks might make.

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Contract Bridge

By Steve Becker

East Stages an Extravaganza

West dealer.
Both sides vulnerable.

NORTH
♠ 6 2
♥ A K Q
♦ J 3 2
♣ K 8 7 6 5

WEST **EAST**
♠ J 7 3 ♠ A 5 4
♥ — ♥ 10 9 8 7 5 4 3 2
♦ Q 4 ♦ A 5
♣ A Q J 10 9 4 3 2 —

SOUTH
♠ K Q 10 9 8
♥ J 6
♦ K 10 9 8 7 6
♣ —

The bidding:
West North East South
3 ♠ Dble Pass 3 ♦
Pass 3 ♥ Pass 3 NT
Opening lead — ace of clubs.

Dear Mr. Becker: I am taking the liberty of writing to you even though I am primarily a devotee and practitioner of the ancient and honorable game of gin rummy, a game in which I can state, with all modesty, that there is no one who can hold a candle to me.

I realize, of course, that you write only about bridge, and that you may know nothing and care even less about gin, but I had an experience on the accompanying bridge hand

which might be of interest to you. As you can see from the bidding (I was South), I am no greenhorn at the game, and my play, I may add, also leaves little to be desired. In fact, if I ever decided to put my mind to the game, there is no doubt that you would soon be out of a job.

I was merely wondering — and that is why I am writing you — whether it is possible that I had overlooked any angle in this hand where I went down at three notrump.

West led the A-Q of clubs, and I would have had a very easy time making three notrump except that the player on my right threw away the ace of diamonds and ace of spades on the first two tricks!

No matter how I figure it, I don't see how I can now make this hand. If East had discarded just one ace, I would have gotten home with nine tricks, but two of them were just too much for me. Is there anything I could have done to make the contract? Sincerely yours, Joe Blow.

Dear Mr. Blow: Not a thing. You were up against superhuman defense. Apparently East is also a gin player, so my guess is that he threw away his aces in order to retain his other combinations.

Once he did this, there was nothing you could do to alter the outcome. Cordially yours, SB

IT'S TIME TO SAY "THANKS!!"

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Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 through 9 with no repeats. That means no number is repeated in any row, column or box. Solution, tips and computer program at www.sudoku.com

9	6		4					8
	2			1	4	5		
		1	9		3			
7			8	4	9	1		
2		3	7				4	
	5	4	6	1				2
		3			2	5		
	8	5	1				9	
1			3				7	6

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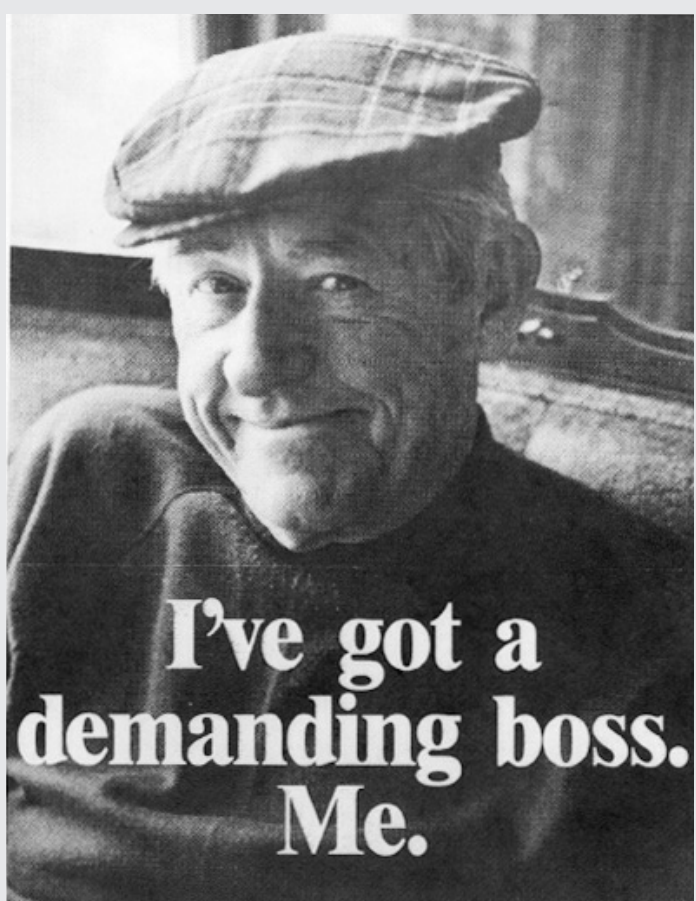


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BY HOLIDAY MATHIS

The moon's shift from Libra to Scorpio is as comfortable as bonding over coffee with a dear friend. After exchanging polite pleasantries in Libra, we lean into Scorpio — the more we get to know, the more we want to know. Our attentive enthusiasm is an easy investment for someone else's happiness. It feels good to

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ANSWERS

9	6	7	5	4	3	1	2	8
3	2	8	7	6	1	4	5	9
5	4	1	9	2	8	3	6	7
7	3	6	2	8	4	9	1	5
2	1	9	3	5	7	6	8	4
8	5	4	6	1	9	7	3	2
6	7	3	8	9	2	5	4	1
4	8	5	1	7	6	2	9	3
1	9	2	4	3	5	8	7	6

Tomorrow's Horoscope

give. **ARIES** (March 21-April 19). When you feel the muses calling you, it's time to cut out all of the extraneous noise and focus. There is a higher calling for you — you realize it and hone your energy toward what needs to be done.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). You cherish the one who usually cares for you. Repaying kindness makes your heart full. Hopefully, there are fellow geniuses at your work who can appreciate your brilliant ideas.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Whatever your age, you're part of a new generation — fresh, full of ideas and free of the cynicism that encumbers others. Tonight, friends remind you why you chose them in the first place.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Don't spend a dime until you've looked at the overall picture of your financial situation. Your bookkeeping may be off. Find a way to remedy the situation now to avoid fees and late charges.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). An idea from the past lingers. Let it go once and for all — you're stronger when you do. Mental cleanup includes consciously deciding on one course of action and letting go of the other possibilities.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). You're sensitive. If you feel something just isn't right, investigate. Figure out if you're looking at an early warning sign or making a mountain out of a

molehill. **LIBRA** (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Some people don't think about the consequences of their actions. Brave or dumb? For now, let yourself be influenced by their conviction. What seems extreme could be your best solution.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). It's all out there — and you've got to go "out there" to get it. So leave the comfort zone. Talk to new people. Shake some trees. Pick up the phone, and start dialing.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Your train of thought has definitely left the station. Now that you're on your way with this new project, your brain humming with what to do next and next and next, you are extremely attractive to romantic prospects.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). There's a corner of your world that's like an active volcano of drama. Be objective. Park your lawn chair and watch. This should be amusing. When you think it's over, it's just beginning.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). You're not like anyone else. That's the beauty of being you! Be secure about the things that make you different. There's really no reason to conform. Tonight, love feels like a game.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). It's easy to get caught up in superficiality now. It takes a view from the distance to really understand the true nature of people and things. So get away. New

surroundings help you gain perspective.

ASTROLOGICAL QUESTIONS: "I experience a great many environmental allergies that are limiting my ability to support myself. My question is: Is there any insight in my horoscope on whether these limitations are real or more of a self-defeating behavior? My birthday: Jan. 31, 1961, at 8:48 a.m., Orlando, Fla."

With the balance of planets in your sixth and 12th houses, the Virgo and Pisces sectors of the chart, my heart goes out to you. If you're drinking soda and eating candy, yes, I'd call that self-defeating behavior. If you're drowning in emotional chaos, miserably carrying the guilt that you must've caused this, if only you knew how or why, then you're suffering unnecessarily, too.

I don't use the words "fate" or "karma" lightly, but from a holistic view, your life is larger than this one, and your limitations may've been set in motion decades or lifetimes ago. The point is: What will you do about it now? Purify your emotional and physical body with Pisces and Virgo pursuits. Eat organically, and remove chemicals from your house. Saturn's entered your health sector (through August 2008), and it's vital you become your own best health authority. Create healthy lifestyle habits and routines that restore your sense of control.

Annie's Mailbox ®

Dear Readers: Happy New Year. We hope you woke up this morning safe and sound, and not filled with worry or regret about something you may have done last night. For those of you who think today would be a good time to make some resolutions, here is food for thought:

Just for Today
 Just for today I will live through the next 12 hours and not tackle my whole life's problems at

once.
 Just for today I will improve my mind. I will learn something useful. I will read something that requires effort, thought and concentration.
 Just for today I will be agreeable, I will look my best, speak in a well-modulated voice, be courteous and considerate.
 Just for today I will not find fault with friend, relative or colleague. I will not try to change or improve anyone but myself.
 Just for today I will have a program. I might not follow it exactly, but I will have it. I will save myself from two enemies — hurry and indecision.
 Just for today I will exercise my character in three ways. I will do a good turn and keep it a secret. If anyone finds out, it won't count.
 Just for today I will do two things I don't want to do, just for exercise.
 Just for today I will be unafraid. Especially will I be unafraid to enjoy what is beautiful and believe that as I give to the world, the world will give to me.

12. If it's none of your business, don't ask questions.
 Dear Annie: We lost our beautiful 17-year-old daughter a couple of years ago in an automobile accident. Upon learning there was no hope for her survival, we decided to donate her young, healthy organs through the Gift of Life Program in order to help others.
 Unfortunately, we have yet to hear from any of the recipients. The people at Gift of Life assured us that they forwarded our wish for communication to those whose prayers were answered through our tragedy. We are not looking to meet them or know their names. We just need to know something good came from our loss.
 Please let your readers know that a simple thank you would make a huge difference to those families who unselfishly donated a loved one's organs. It seems the least a donor recipient can do. Some families, like ours, need to know something positive has come from losing the person they loved. It would mean so much. — Knowing We Did the Right Thing

Dear Right Thing: Families of donor recipients are not always certain a letter is welcome or appropriate. Many are concerned that an expression of gratitude would somehow bring up unpleasant memories to the family of the deceased. But such a thank you is nearly always appreciated. A note letting the family know the organ donation has saved or improved someone's life can bring comfort and peace of mind, and make them feel their loved one lives on. We hope anyone who is hesitating to write will consider how much it means to the donor family.

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With time, clout fading, Bush eyes unfinished business

By BEN FELLER

Associated Press Writer

CRAWFORD — President Bush's final-year agenda is a stripped-down list of what he can realistically hope to get done, since the clout he once touted is fading away.

Bush will venture to four other continents, get more involved than ever in trying to forge Middle East peace, and continue to command two wars that assure his relevancy to the end. As Iraq improves, he must now deal with renewed violence in Afghanistan and upheaval in Pakistan.

At home, Bush will try to extend two domestic achievements that are dear to his legacy — the No Child Left Behind education law, and tax cuts that otherwise expire in 2010.

Long gone are the big ideas of Social Security

and immigration reform, which collapsed on Capitol Hill. His final State of the Union speech in late January is expected to reflect today's policy reality, eschewing new initiatives in favor of unfinished proposals.

As at any time, Bush has forces pushing against him. But the ones in 2008 are stronger.

A hostile Congress awaits the president as he returns from fishing, cutting brush and clearing trails at his secluded Texas ranch. Bush and the Democratic Congress clashed all year on the war, spending, health care and tactics for interrogating terror suspects.

"It's going to be a year of angst and struggle — more of '07," said James Thurber, an American University political scientist who researches relations between the two branches.

In political terms,

Bush's last year in office is really less than 12 months.

The attention of the nation and much of the world has shifted to those who want his seat in the Oval Office. The Republican nominee for president could be settled by the multistate primaries on Feb. 5, meaning someone else will be the unofficial head of the party.

The opportunity for legislation in the election-year will be short, too, as little is expected to get done after Congress adjourns for a summer break. Democrats are gunning for the White House and the bigger majorities they need to govern Congress as they want.

Bush's year begins with a nine-day trip to the Middle East, a hands-on peacemaking venture that could shape his legacy — a word that Bush and his

senior aides don't use.

Starting Jan. 8, the president is scheduled to travel to Israel, the West Bank, Kuwait, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

The trip is exactly the kind of process-driving diplomacy that Bush has avoided in the past, said Jon Alterman, a Mideast expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. It reflects how his presidency has gone, Alterman said, as Bush once talked of bold transformation but now tries to shepherd more incremental progress.

The latter approach is favored in the Middle East, but Bush's waning power will follow him, Alterman said. Some leaders don't want to give concessions to a short-term president.

"Friends and foes in the Middle East at a senior

level have almost no curiosity about what the last year of this presidency holds," Alterman said. The Mideast trip sets the tone for a busy year of foreign travel.

In February, Bush is expected to visit Africa to promote the global fight against AIDS, and highlight the United States' role in that effort.

He will also go to Romania in April for a NATO summit; to Japan's Lake Toya in July to meet with leaders of industrialized countries; to China in August for the Summer Olympics; and to Peru in November for the annual summit of leaders of Pacific Rim nations.

It is common for presidents to head abroad in their final year as the domestic consumption of their message diminishes.

But Bush's aides say most of his trips would have happened in any year, and the narrative that

Bush is escaping overseas is overstated.

Bush's State of the Union will be one of his final times in command of a prime-time audience. He is expected to use it to rally support for unfinished items, such as expanding the domestic energy supply and health care options, as opposed to last-minute policy ideas.

"We understood after immigration reform failed that this is not a Congress that's likely to pass big things," said Ed Gillespie, the president's counselor. "Once they adjourn for the Fourth of July, it's hard to imagine they'll do much beyond appropriations bills. That's a realistic assessment, and the State of the Union will likely reflect that."

Bush invoked his veto power like never before in 2007, with much effectiveness.

COLLEGE

Continued from Page 1A

Sparks said — as classrooms one month, and administrative offices the next, for example — as buildings or classrooms become temporarily unavailable because of renovation work.

In addition, Sparks said

college administrators have scheduled "field trips" to Texas Tech University, Midland College and Eastern New Mexico University to see how those schools handled recent construction projects.

These activities have one goal in mind — to smooth out the inevitable disruptions as much as possible.

"This is a very unique time for us," Sparks said. "We are trying to rethink and envision new ways of putting spaces together ... and trying to see if we can better organize things when the time arises."

Construction will also be a major issue at SouthWest Collegiate Institute for the Deaf this year, as work will begin on a new Workforce

Training Center within the next few months.

The major issue facing SWCID, however, is the ongoing search for a new provost to replace Dr. Ron Brasel, who retired in 2007 after more than 20 years at the school.

Sparks said she remains

hopeful a replacement for Brasel can be found within the next few months.

Contact Staff Writer Steve Reagan at 263-7331,

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BSISD

Continued from Page 1A

development of our current plan and we feel very comfortable that the short- and long-range goals are achievable without placing a large burden on the community," he added.

Securing community support for the project is vital, Downes said.

"Of course, the community has been a large contributor to the process already," he said. "The input we received from the Citizen's Facility Improvement Committee was outstanding ... I've received some comments from members of the community and with very few exceptions, those comments have been very positive and supportive."

Two other important issues facing BSISD in 2008 involve state financing and accountability issues.

Downes said the most recent funding formula adopted by the Texas Legislature does not take into account spiraling fuel and transportation costs, which could adversely affect instruction.

"There is no funding considerations for increased operating costs

and that will have a negative impact on instruction throughout the state," Downes said. "Without funding for increases in fuel and increases in transportation, school will have no choice but transfer instructional dollars to these areas in order to maintain the educational system."

Another state-related problem, Downes said, is an ever-increasing accountability system that has led to duplication of effort and unnecessarily increasing workloads at the local level.

"The state has gone to an incredibly large accountability system," he said. "This is forcing schools to spend countless hours verifying data already accurately sub-

mitted to the (Texas Education Agency)."

Contact Staff Writer Steve Reagan at 263-7331, ext. 234 or by e-mail at reporter@bigspringherald.com.

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-FIRST AMENDMENT

Opinions expressed on this page are those of the Editorial Board of the Big Spring Herald unless otherwise indicated.

Ron Midkiff
Publisher

John A. Moseley
Managing Editor

Bill McClellan
News Editor

OUR VIEWS

We wish you all a happy New Year now that it's 2008

As we enter a new year, it is time to take a few minutes to take stock of where we want to go both individually and collectively during the next 12 months.

If we haven't already taken personal stock, now is the time to ask ourselves what we want to change in our lives and what needs to be done to effect those changes.

Certainly, many of us seek better health and will make resolutions to change our diets and exercise routines. The important thing is to follow through — to make lifestyle changes.

And many more of us will seek to improve our spiritual lives. That is an area in each of our lives in which there is always room for improvement.

Others will more than likely seek to be more loving or caring with regard to family members and friends.

Community-wide, we believe the outlook for Big Spring remains a positive one. And for the most part, we're convinced the same holds true for both our state and the nation.

And we're very excited about the renovation of the Settles Hotel building which will soon get under way downtown.

The improvements that have continued at Comanche Trail Park are also encouraging, as is the prospect of Howard County being able to finally build a new jail and continued renovations and improvements at Howard College.

Too, we feel the city's appeal as a regional center for arts and recreation continues to grow, as evidenced by recent exhibitions at the Heritage Museum, the Big Spring Symphony's concert schedule for the current year and the United States Hang Gliding Association's vow that it will be returning here this summer following last year's FAI Hang Gliding World Championships, which were such a success.

All of those projects, events and activities translate to jobs, income from visitors and — perhaps even more important — a better quality of life.

Several announcements about the year's upcoming events will be made soon and we can't help but look forward to what's on tap in 2008.

As we delve into the new year, we do admit feeling a bit tentative about some things less under our overall control. That's simply human nature.

One thing we can say with certainty though. We continue to be blessed by the "can-do" spirit of our fellow citizens — men and women who work together to get things done. And so, its time to look ahead again and look ahead with optimism.

Happy New Year, Big Spring!

How To Contact Us

The Herald is always interested in our readers' opinions. In order that we might better serve your needs, we offer several ways in which you may contact us:

- In person at 710 Scurry St.
- By telephone at 263-7331
- By fax at 264-7205
- By e-mail Managing Editor John A. Moseley at editor@bigspringherald.com or News Editor Bill McClellan at newsdesk@bigspringherald.com.
- By mail at P.O. Box 1431, Big Spring, 79721

LETTER POLICIES

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 - Provide a daytime telephone number, as well as a street address for verification purposes.
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 - Letters should be submitted to Editor, Big Spring Herald, P.O. Box 1431, Big Spring, 79721. They can also be e-mailed to editor@bigspringherald.com

A SMALL PRAYER

by K. Rae Anderson

If we can not deal with others with logic, Lord, may we deal with them with You.

Amen

Supreme Court is up for grabs

A little more than seven years ago, the United States Supreme Court issued its 5-4 decision in Bush v. Gore. By stopping the contested vote count in Florida on Dec. 12, 2000, the conservative wing of the Supreme Court effectively gave the presidency to George W. Bush and took the decision away from the voters.

Less than one year from now, the voters will decide the future of the Supreme Court. The next appointments to the court will almost certainly be made by the president elected in November 2008, and confirmed by a Senate with new members elected in the same cycle. It's crucial that voters understand that their votes will help determine the shape of the Court for many years to come.

Bush v. Gore demonstrated all too clearly that the Supreme Court has a profound and lasting effect on the daily lives of all Americans, who look to the Supreme Court as a fair arbiter of the law and our nation's highest values.

Since that decision, President Bush's lifetime appointments of Chief Justice Roberts and Justice Alito have pushed the Court even farther to the right. The two justices are likely to serve for many decades, ensuring that President Bush's influence will extend long past the end of his term. Their nominations and confirmations underscore how significantly elec-

tions results can shape the Court.

On issues ranging from school integration to fair pay for equal work to reproductive freedom, the Roberts Court has started to reverse years of progress that most Americans accept as moderate, fair and wise. In the coming years, we can expect more and more rulings outside the mainstream.

It's no coincidence that the Supreme Court has been a major electoral issue for the far-right for the last several election cycles. In order to roll back constitutional protections on privacy rights and church-state separation, the leaders of the movement have been whipping their followers into a fury for years, demanding that candidates pledge to appoint and confirm ultraconservative justices. The result has been a decades-long push by the far right to fill the federal courts with jurists who place a narrow ideological agenda above the rule of law and the Constitution.

The current Republican candidates for president have been only too happy to oblige. John McCain, Mitt Romney, Rudy Giuliani and Mike Huckabee have all pledged to appoint justices in the mold of ultraconservative Justices Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas — even when such an appointment would conflict with their own stated positions, such as Giuliani's professed "pro-choice" stand.

Replacing another moderate justice with a hard-right conservative would be a devastating blow to the principles of fairness and equality that the vast majority of Americans embrace. Another right

wing justice added to the ultra-conservative voting bloc of Roberts, Alito, Scalia and Thomas could help reverse decades of precedents, threatening legal rights that Americans take for granted.

This isn't a case of left-versus-right, as some conservative pundits have claimed. The fight for the Supreme Court is between the values of the vast majority of Americans and a small, energetic faction attempting to turn back the clock by decades.

It's time for mainstream Americans to make the same stand at the ballot box, and demand a Supreme Court that reflects mainstream American values: Equality, regardless of race or religion. Fair pay for women and minorities in the workplace. The rights of families to make private medical decisions without government interference. And much, much more.

Mainstream Americans must demand appointments of justices to the Court who reflect their values, justices who will apply the law fairly, not ideologically. That will require a fair-minded president, and a Senate majority large enough to confirm progressive nominees.

The anniversary of Bush v. Gore is a reminder that courts matter, something that voters should bear in mind throughout the coming election season.

The future of the Supreme Court depends on it.

Judith E. Schaeffer is People For the American Way's legal director.
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The Case for the Real Jesus

It's interesting that many who dismiss the Bible and certain essential Christian claims — saying they believe there is scant evidence to support them — are able to readily embrace rival belief systems and their texts, which are far less reliable.

Former atheist Lee Strobel has used his formidable journalistic and legal background as legal editor of the Chicago Tribune to research and write a number of bestselling books in defense of the Christian faith. His recently released "The Case for the Real Jesus" goes beyond the traditional apologetic to address some of the current attacks on the identity of Jesus Christ, typified by the heretical storyline in the popular *The Da Vinci Code*.

I strongly recommend this book this Christmas season because it compellingly debunks many of the most recent mythical challenges to Christianity. It is perfect for believers whose perceived spiritual security could be threatened by the crop of fantastic notions now circulating and for nonbelievers who are open to the evidence.

Strobel correctly observes that ideas have consequences and, particularly, what we believe about Jesus will have profound consequences for us individually. Since modern theories directly attack what Christians believe about the very identity of Jesus, Strobel wanted to examine their validity to determine whether the Christian idea of Christ could survive rigorous inquiry.

Having begun as a smug nonbeliever and converting only after subjecting Christianity's historical and doctrinal claims to scrupulous

investigation, Strobel was unafraid to put his faith to the test once again. Are we, believers and nonbelievers alike, similarly unafraid?

Strobel asks, "Are you willing to set aside your preconceptions and let the evidence take you wherever it will? Or I had to honestly ask myself that question when I was an atheist and decided to investigate the identity of Jesus. And more recently, this time as a Christian, I had to face that issue squarely once again when I was confronted by six potent challenges that could undermine everything I had come to believe about him."

Strobel points out that while the heretical ideas about Jesus achieved a new level of prominence in *The Da Vinci Code*, they have been around for years and have even been circulated widely in modern times preceding that story.

In the 1990s, Christian debunkers received a boost from a group of liberal Christian scholars known as the "Jesus Seminar." These professors examined the words and deeds of Jesus and, using colored beads to cast their votes, pronounced that fewer than 20 percent of the statements attributed to Jesus in the Bible were actually uttered by him.

What made the Jesus Seminar unique, says Strobel, was not its liberal "scholarship" purporting to discredit Biblical accounts of Jesus but that it bypassed the usual academic channels to enthusiastically make its findings public. In case you haven't noticed, the recent "evangelistic" fervor against Christianity didn't begin with Christopher Hitchens, Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris. They have just built on what the Jesus Seminar proselytizing debunkers started.

Strobel says that six major chal-

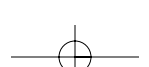
lenges are leaving many Christians scratching their heads and confusing seekers looking for the truth about Christ. He began his research on these challenges conceding to himself that if any were true, they "could change everything" about his beliefs. But, "for the sake of my own intellectual integrity, I needed answers." He then proceeded to investigate, by studying the evidence and interviewing the premiere scholars on each of these issues:

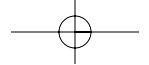
1. Scholars are uncovering a radically different Jesus in ancient documents just as credible as the Four Gospels.
2. The Bible's portrait of Jesus can't be trusted because the Church tampered with the text.
3. New explanations have refuted Jesus' resurrection.
4. Christianity's beliefs about Jesus were copied from pagan religions.
5. Jesus was an imposter who failed to fulfill the messianic prophecies.
6. People should be free to pick and choose what to believe about Jesus.

I love Lee Strobel's ministry, maybe in large part because I began my spiritual journey as quite the skeptic as well, but also because I believe he has the unique skills, intellectual curiosity and personal integrity that position him to stand on the front lines defending Christ against today's puffed-up assailants.

Will you take Strobel's challenge and read the results of his study? As he says, "In the end, we'll discover together whether the Jesus of historic Christianity manages to emerge intact from the crucible of twenty-first-century skepticism."

David Limbaugh is a writer, author and attorney. To find out more about him, visit his Web site at www.davidlimbaugh.com.
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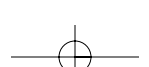
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6:30 PM	(CC)	(CC)	Latin Grammy	The Simpsons Two-Half Men	News Entertainment	Movie: El Barrendero	News Be a Millionaire	Raymond Raymond	Dr. Young John Hagee	News-Lehrer	Dirty Jobs (CC)		Vol. 1	Law & Order (CC) (DVS)		Han. Montana	Strongest Man	SportsCenter (CC)	Twilight Zone
7:30 PM	Just Laughs	Just Laughs		Foot. Pregame College	NCIS (CC)		The Biggest Loser: Couples	Family Guy	Update Israel Dr. Booker	Great Performances	Movie: Mission			Law & Order (CC) (DVS)		Han. Montana	Strongest Man	College	Twilight Zone
8:30 PM	Accord. Jim	Accord. Jim		Football: Allstate Sugar	The Unit (CC)	Movie: El Patrullero 777	(CC)	Family Guy	Light of the Southwest	(CC)	Dirty Jobs (CC)		Movie: Kill Bill: Vol. 2	Law & Order (CC) (DVS)	Movie: Jason's Lyric (CC)	Movie	Strongest Man	Gameday (CC)	Twilight Zone
9:30 PM	Boston Legal (CC)	Boston Legal (CC)		Bowl -- Georgia vs.	48 Hours Mystery (CC)		Law & Order: SVU	The Office		Music by Jerry Herman (CC)	Dirty Jobs (CC)	Movie: Ladder		Law & Order (CC) (DVS)		Life Derek	Strongest Man		ECW
10:30 PM	News (CC) Nightline	News Nightline	Primer Impacto Noticias Univ.	Hawaii (CC)	News Allstate Sugar	Noticias Titulares y Mas	News Late Show-Tonight Show	Sex and-City	Update Israel Keith Miller	Charlie Rose (CC)	Dirty Jobs (CC)	49 (CC)		Cold Case (CC)	Hell Date	Zack & Cody Han. Montana	World's Strongest Man (CC)	SportsCenter (CC)	Twilight Zone
11:30 PM	The Insider Jimmy Kimmel	Jimmy Kimmel Live (CC)	La Hora de la Risa	Postgame TBA	Letterman Late Late	Decisiones	Late Night	Movie: Saving Silverman	Ministerio Nueva Vida	Tavis Smiley Tavis Smiley	Dirty Jobs (CC)		Movie: Kung Fu Hustle	Without a Trace (CC)	Jamie Foxx Jamie Foxx	Replacements Kim Possible	2003 World's Strongest Man (CC)	SportsCenter (CC)	Twilight Zone
12:30 AM	Live (CC) News (CC)	Extra (CC) Paid Program	Salome (SS)	Reno 911! George Lopez	The Insider	Programa	Conan O'Brien News	(CC)	Update Israel J.R. Church	Sign Off	Dirty Jobs (CC)	Movie: Guarding Tess		Without a Trace (CC)	Comicview (CC)	Emperor New American Drgn	World's Strongest Man	Football Sp. NFL Live	Twilight Zone

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SNUFFY SMITH

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FROM COVER TO COVER, PARSON!!
AN' ONCE IN A WHILE, SOME OF TH' BITS IN BETWIXT !!

BETLE BAILEY

IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE THERE'S A WAR ON

This Date In History

By The Associated Press

Today is Tuesday, Jan. 1, the first day of leap year 2008. There are 365 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

Two hundred years ago, on Jan. 1, 1808, a law prohibiting the importation of slaves in 1863, President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, declaring that slaves in rebel states were free.

In 1892, the Ellis Island Immigrant Station in New Ypened.

In 1898, New York City was consolidated into five boroughs.

In 1901, the Commonwealth of Australia was proclaimed.

In 1953, country singer Hank Williams, 29, died of heart failure while en route to a concert date in Canton, Ohio.

In 1959, Fidel Castro led

Cuban revolutionaries to victory over Fulgencio Batista.

In 1984, the breakup of AT&T took place as the telecommunications giant was divested of its 22 Bell System companies under terms of an antitrust agreement.

In 1994, the North American Free Trade Agreement went into effect.

In 1997, Kofi Annan assumed the title of United Nations secretary-general.

In 1999, the euro, the new single currency of 11 European countries (later 13), officially came into existence with the start of the New Year. (The euro became legal tender on this date in 2002.)

Ten years ago: A new anti-smoking law went into effect in California, prohibiting people from lighting up in bars.

The Michigan Wolverines beat Washington State 21-16 in the Rose Bowl; Florida State downed Ohio State 31-14 in the Sugar Bowl.

Today's Birthdays: Author J.D. Salinger is 89. Former Sen. Ernest Hollings, D-S.C.,

is 86. Actor Ty Hardin is 78. Actor Frank Langella is 70. Rock singer-musician Country Joe McDonald is 66. Writer-comedian Don Novello is 65. Actor Rick Hurst is 62. Country singer Steve Ripley (The Tractors) is 58. Rapper Grandmaster Flash is 50. Actress Ren Woods is 50. Actress Dedee Pfeiffer is 44. Actress Embeth Davidtz is 42.

Thought for Today: "To most of us the future seems unsure. But then it always has been; and we who have seen great changes must have great hopes." -Al John Masefield, English poet (1878-1967).

Answer to previous puzzle

GETS	CASK	BYLAW
RARE	OREO	LEASE
ARIZ	LAMA	TACKS
SNOW	MOBILE	REST
	HER	SALTS
AMMONIA	FRACAS	
ROE	NCOS	IGAVE
GARBAGED	DISPOSAL	
UNION	SEAT	TIE
ESTATE	MUSSELS	
	TEETH	MON
USER	LEAF	BLOWER
MORAL	LABEL	RAVE
PRICE	SITE	EDEN
STEED	ETAS	SENT

Newsday Crossword

PIANO PARTS by Gail Grabowski
Edited by Stanley Newman
www.stanxwords.com

- ACROSS**
- 1 Circus routines
 - 5 ___ and proper
 - 9 Washbowl
 - 14 Barbecue rod
 - 15 Artificial bait
 - 16 Dwelling
 - 17 Female singing voice
 - 18 China's continent
 - 19 Reschedule for later
 - 20 Trick somebody
 - 23 Little bit
 - 24 Watermelon throwaways
 - 25 Catch some Z's
 - 27 V-shaped cut
 - 30 Types of chickens
 - 33 Not used
 - 36 Catches, rodeo-style
 - 38 Family auto
 - 39 Chimps and orangutans
 - 41 Painting or sculpture
 - 42 Computer input
 - 43 Harvests
 - 45 Tureen fillers
 - 48 Once around a track
 - 49 Breakfast bowlful
 - 51 Nosy one
 - 53 Ranchland measures
 - 55 Have confidence in
 - 58 Trim the lawn
 - 60 "Caps Lock" or "Print Screen"
 - 64 Pop singer Baker
 - 66 "So what ___ is new?"
 - 67 Cone-bearing tree
 - 68 Bicycle wheels

- 69 Impolite glance
 - 70 Explorer
 - 71 Locomotive power
 - 72 Scottish girl
 - 73 Makes mistakes
- DOWN**
- 1 Pronto, in a memo
 - 2 Slightly above-average grade
 - 3 Book's name
 - 4 Acquired illegally
 - 5 Expects one will
 - 6 Sneaky scheme
 - 7 Spring flower
 - 8 Lunch and dinner
 - 9 Annoys persistently
 - 10 Lincoln nickname
 - 11 Tone down, as a statement
 - 12 Creative thought
 - 13 Dweeb
 - 21 Scent
 - 22 North Pole aide
 - 26 Looked at
 - 28 IRS-form experts
 - 29 Long sandwiches
 - 31 Pro ___ (proportionally)
 - 32 Break sharply
 - 33 Drug-fighting cop
 - 34 Sporting sword
 - 35 Put on hidden recording gear
 - 37 Astonish
 - 40 Blueprint detail, briefly
 - 44 Harsh
 - 46 Ceramic artisans
 - 47 Angry
 - 50 Summer zodiac sign
 - 52 Lavender's color
 - 54 Scent
 - 56 Slalom contestant
 - 57 Male singing voice
 - 58 Wrestling surfaces
 - 59 Step ___ (hurry)
 - 61 Not guilty, for one
 - 62 Takes advantage of
 - 63 Hankerings
 - 65 Coffee alternative

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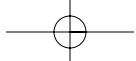
Lexie Gee

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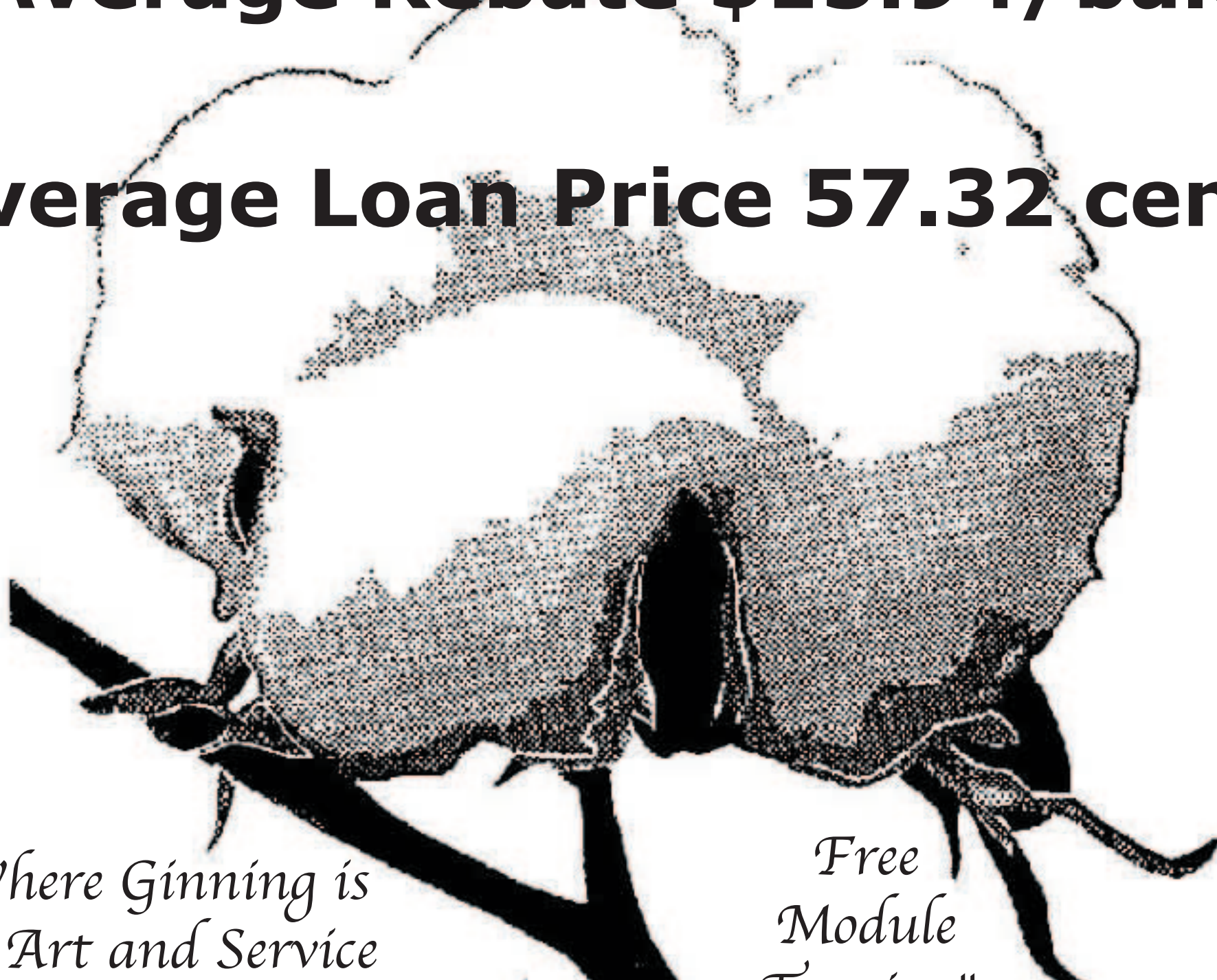
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Average Rebate \$15.94/bale

Average Loan Price 57.32 cents



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an Art and Service
is a Pleasure"*

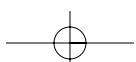
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TEXAS NEWS BRIEFS

Children found safe after Amber Alert issued

MESQUITE (AP) — Two children were found safe Monday evening, hours after an Amber Alert was issued when their mother told police that her ex-boyfriend displayed a handgun and abducted their daughters.

Investigators said Gilberto Martinez, 40, entered a Mesquite home on Sunday to visit Amerya Yzabella Martinez, 6, and Olevia Ashley Martinez, 2.

About 1:30 a.m. Monday, Martinez displayed a handgun and took the two girls, police said. They said he threatened to harm the children and to commit suicide.

Mesquite police said the children were found safe and Martinez was taken into custody.

New marijuana law not catching on

DALLAS (AP) — Many Texans busted for misdemeanor marijuana possession are still being jailed despite a new state law that allows police to issue a citation instead of making an arrest, according to a newspaper report.

Texas lawmakers hoped to ease jail crowding with the new legislation, which took effect Sept. 1, but some local prosecutors worry what message getting a mere ticket for pot might send.

"It may...lead some people to believe that drug use is no more serious than double parking," Collin County prosecutor Greg Davis said in today's editions of The Dallas Morning News.

The Travis County Sheriff's Department is the only law enforcement agency in the state known to be taking advantage of the new legislation, according to the newspaper.

Prosecutors in Dallas, Tarrant and Collin counties said they have no plans to set up a system dealing with citations for misdemeanor possession, which is less than 4 ounces of marijuana.

In addition to easing crowding, the new law would also theoretically keep officers on the street instead of making runs to jail for nonviolent offenders.

The Dallas County Jail has a history of being understaffed and crowded, which has led, in part, to repeated failed state inspections.

But Dallas County officials worry that because the misdemeanors could still result in a case for prosecution, citations raise issues like making sure suspects appear in court and that no one is misidentified.

"These are not just tickets. These are crimes that need to be appropriately dealt with," said Ron Stretcher, Dallas County's director of criminal justice. "We want to make sure we get them back to court to stand trial."

State Rep. Jerry Madden, a Plano Republican whose district includes Collin County, said it's likely that some counties are taking a wait-and-see approach, looking for someone to lead the way.

Travis County sheriff's spokesman Roger Wade said his department lobbied for the new law to help ease jail crowding and increase efficiency.

Issuing citations also helps save the department save gas by not driving suspects from the county's outlying areas to the jail in Austin, he said.

"We are still hard on crime," Wade said. "We believe if we can save resources and have the same affect on crime, then we should take advantage of this."

Fire truck strikes, kills woman in wheelchair

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — San Antonio firefighters struck and killed a woman in a wheelchair on Monday night on their way to a call, police said.

Firefighters didn't realize they had hit the woman until they noticed their brush truck was dragging a wheelchair, said Warren Gilstrap of the San Antonio police.

Firefighters had stopped at a parking lot at about 7 p.m. to ask for directions to a call and as they left, they

struck the woman, Gilstrap said. The woman was knocked off the chair into the street and was declared dead at the scene.

Gilstrap told the San Antonio Express-News for its Monday online editions there was no identification on the woman.

When firefighters saw sparks behind the truck they realized it was dragging a wheelchair and called dispatch.

After learning that a pedestrian had been hit on the street where they had come from, they immediately returned to the scene, Gilstrap said.

Dallas police chief touts drop in crime

DALLAS (AP) — Dallas Police Chief David Kunkle says violent crime here will be down 12 percent for 2007 and overall crime will be down about 4 percent.

Murder though is up about 8 percent for the year, with at least 202 dead. Dallas last saw an annual increase in murder in 2004, when slayings were up 9 percent and 244 were killed.

According to preliminary end-of-the-year statistics, which will not be finalized until next week, 2007 will end with the city nearly meeting Kunkle's 5 percent overall crime reduction goal, but falling far short of the 5 percent reduction in murders.

But at a news conference Monday, Kunkle focused on the good news, saying that 2007 was the sixth year in a row of declining violent crime.

"Looking at the crime statistics over time, violent crime is down to the lowest level since the 1960s," he said.

Kunkle on Monday said he expects to end 2007 with dramatic drops in aggravated assaults.

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Happy New Year

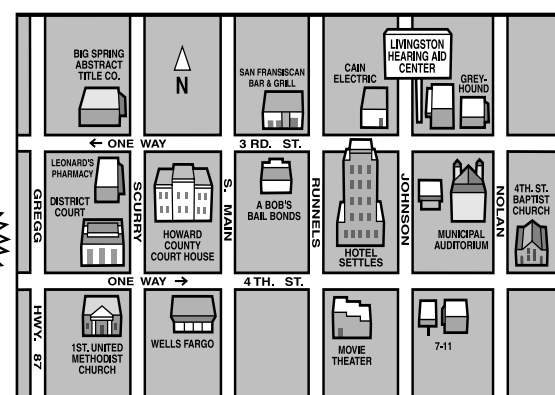
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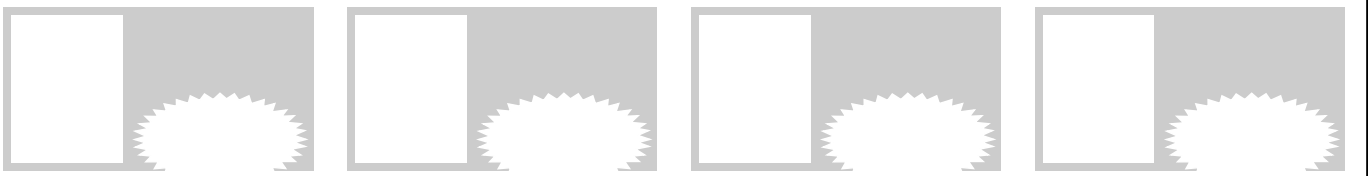
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Happy New Year

Howard College



What a great day at Howard College and in Howard County. January 1, 2008 finds us on the brink of a brand new year that is loaded with adventure and possibility!

2007 was definitely a prosperous year for Howard College as we experienced record breaking enrollment, passage of the bond election for the Howard College campus and most importantly, the successes of so many HC students. I can not begin to express my gratitude for all the efforts that have gone into making 2007 so successful. With our main purpose being to educate our students and prepare them for their future, the Howard College family of faculty and staff certainly stepped up to the plate and hit a home run! Our students have achieved success in personal, academic and extra curricular endeavors. As they succeed, Howard College succeeds. As they grow, Howard College grows.

With both Spring and Fall semesters setting enrollment records at Howard College, I know we are on the right track for success. I am proud to announce that Howard College hit the #20 spot on the 50 fastest growing community colleges in the country for the 2,500 - 4,999 category. This was recently published in a special report in the latest issue of Community College Week (www.ccweek.com). Although our records here at Howard College may not be on the "world record level", I believe they do mean that more people are seeking out higher education and that is good for our entire 13 county service area. Our SWCID campus is also seeing growth and as we received the special appropriation from the State of Texas, plans are now underway for the workforce training building on that campus. This addition will bring about even more educational opportunities for our students at SWCID in 2008.

The successful bond election in Howard County has allowed us to begin efforts to upgrade the infrastructure and renovate, rehab and possibly construct new buildings if deemed wise on the Big Spring campus. This kind of growth and support is something we do not take for granted and we pledge to be good stewards of the funds as we carry out our mission. The projects are many and they don't always move as quickly as we'd like, but we do promise to keep you up to date on our rehabilitation project throughout 2008 and the years to follow.

So, Hallelujah!...for a great year of success, growth and caring and a promising 2008 in our future. The possibilities are endless as we work together to promote our community and our college. As we say good-bye to 2007, we cherish the memories that sustain us, say thanks for the fortune that has come our way and embrace the newness of 2008 and all it promises to bring. May you receive our most heartfelt wish for a safe and happy new year!

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Cheryl J. Sparks
President, Howard College



Howard College Athletic Department

Start the new year by increasing your skills!

EXCEL CLASSES

Class: **Beginning Excel**
Date: January 22 - February 14, 2008
Day: Tuesday & Thursday
Time: 6:00 - 8:00pm
Cost: \$67.00

Class: **Microsoft Access**
Date: February 4 - 28, 2008
Day: Monday & Wednesday
Time: 6:00 - 8:00pm
Cost: \$67.00

Class: **Beginning Excel**
Date: January 26, 2008
Day: Saturday
Time: 8:00am - 5:00pm
Cost: \$35.00

Class: **Intro to Computer**
Date: January 26, 2007
Day: Saturday
Time: 8:00 - 5:00
Cost: \$35.00

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Principles of Real Estate I	Jan 21 - Feb 7	6:00pm - 10:00pm	\$215.00
Principles of Real Estate II	Feb 18 - Mar 6	6:00pm - 10:00pm	\$215.00
Law of Agency	Mar 10 - April 3	6:00pm - 10:00pm	\$215.00
Law of Contracts	April 14 - May 1	6:00pm - 10:00pm	\$215.00
Real Estate Mathematics	May 12 - 29	6:00pm - 10:00pm	\$215.00

Call 264- 5131 to sign up to take any of the classes listed above.

Hawk Basketball - Men

Home Games for January
Jan 17- New Mexico Jr. College-7:30pm
Jan 21-Clarendon College - 7:30pm
Jan 31- Midland College- 7:30pm

Home Games for February
Feb 11- Western Texas - 7:30 pm
Feb 14 - New Mexico Military Inst. - 7:00 pm
Feb 25 - South Plains College- 7:30pm

Hawk Basketball - Women

Home Games for January
Jan 17 - New Mexico Junior -5:30pm
Jan 21 - Clarendon College - 5:30pm
Jan 31 - Midland College - 5:30pm

Home Games for February
Feb 11 - Western Texas - 5:30 pm
Feb 25 - South Plains College - 5:30 pm

Register for Spring 2008 On-Line

November 12, 2007 - January 2, 2008

On Campus

November 12, 2007 - January 11, 2008

Classes Begin January 14, 2008

-Cosmetology registering now for the 2008 academic year. Classes begin January 14.



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