

BIG SPRING

# HERALD

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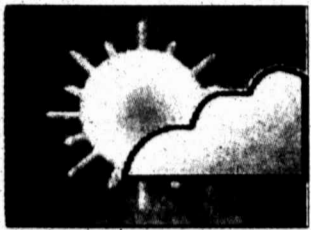
Big Sky — Big Heart — Big Spring

50 CENTS DAILY/\$1.25 WEEKEND

WEEKEND EDITION

January, 29-30, 2005

WEATHER



SUNDAY 47°-49° SUNDAY NIGHT 32°-33°

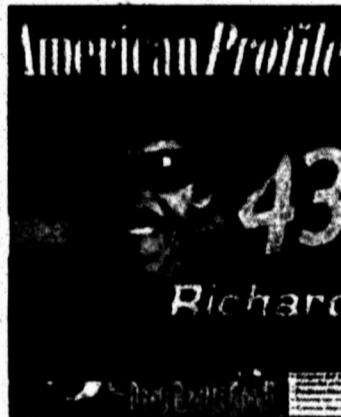
INSIDE



Workforce Network sets up Job-a-Thon

Telethons help all sorts of people with all sorts of needs. The Big Spring Workforce Network has decided to see if they'll work for the unemployed.

Page 5C



Richard "The King" Petty has seen the sport of stock car racing from every vantage.

BRIEFLY

Should the city help the Settles?

The Herald has started another online poll. The question this week is "Do you think the city should support efforts to renovate the Settles Hotel?" To participate, go to www.bigspringherald.com. You do not need to be a subscriber to vote.

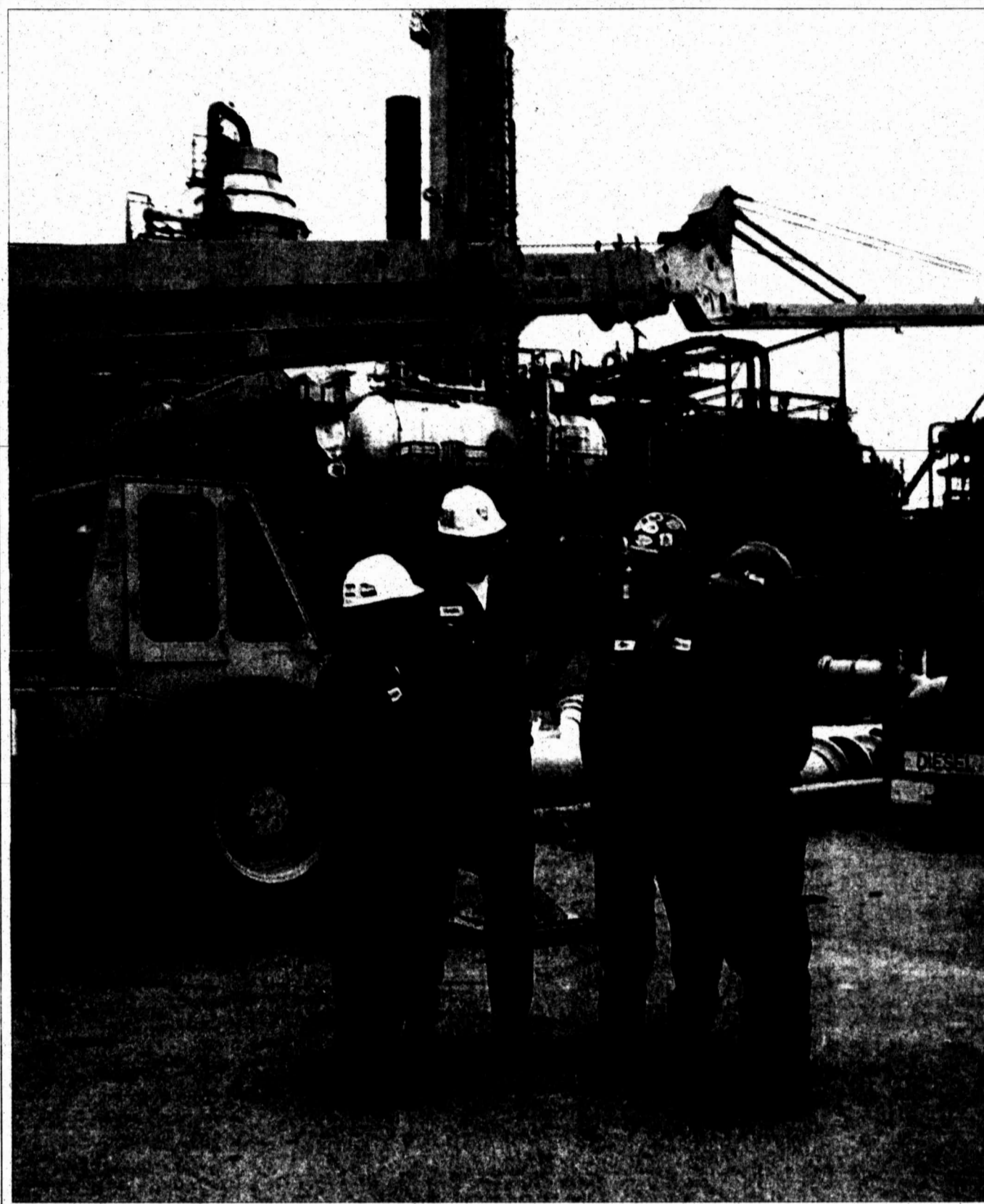
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To reach us, please call 263-7331. Office hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. If you miss your paper, please call 263-7335 before 7 p.m. weekdays and noon Sunday.



From left, Roddy Caffey, refinery maintenance manager; Terry Stanley, special projects turnaround planner; Brian Day, construction coordinator; and Ray Nix, supervisor for Nix Construction, discuss the turnaround in progress at the Big Spring Refinery. The project is scheduled for completion March 1.

## CLEANING HOUSE

Turnaround gets under way at local refinery

By BILL MCCLELLAN  
News Editor

Equipment is on site, piled everywhere. The planning has been completed down to the minute. Safety training classes are held on a daily and sometimes hourly basis. Nothing has been left to chance.

Still, one can tell that Big Spring Refinery Manager Joe Concienne will

have a knot in his stomach until this is all over — hopefully March 1.

"We can plan which units we want to shut

down and when. We can schedule when and where we'll need personnel. We can plan all sorts of things, but what we cannot plan for is the weather or unforeseen repairs," said Concienne. "If those don't hamper us, I think we'll do fine."

The Big Spring Refinery is in the process of a "turnaround" — an oper-

See REFINERY, Page 7A

"We can plan all sorts of things, but what we cannot plan for is the weather or unforeseen repairs."



Joe Concienne

## Tax help? Aide program begins Monday

AT A GLANCE

What: AARP Tax Aide program.

For: Anyone who needs help filling out their federal tax forms.

When: Each Monday through April 11.

Where: The Senior Center, 1901 Simler Drive.



Gloria Hopkins

By THOMAS JENKINS  
Staff Writer

AARP will begin its annual Tax-Aide program Monday in an effort to help area residents make sense of the tax laws and forms that seem to get more complicated each year.

Gloria Hopkins, coordinator for the annual effort, said the volunteer-based program is designed to help people that might not otherwise be able to file a tax return.

"The AARP program provides free federal tax preparation assistance to people who cannot afford professional tax help, such as seniors, people with disabilities, those that don't speak English and people with low-to-moderate income," said Hopkins.

"People need to be sure to bring all of the pertinent information with them, including a tax booklet if one was received through the mail, W-2 forms and 1099 forms. They also need to bring any forms that show their 2004

earnings and their 2003 tax returns. We also need a social security card for every person named on the return and a photo ID for the person filing."

Hopkins said the program is a necessity for many area residents who can't afford to have their taxes prepared by a professional, and the heart and soul of the operation is its volunteers.

"AARP volunteers explain many special tax credits and

See TAX AIDE, Page 7A

## Unemployment rates dip for Howard County

By THOMAS JENKINS  
Staff Writer

Unemployment rates in Howard County dipped slightly in December with the civilian labor force taking a near-100 worker hit, a departure from the expected fluctuations during the holiday season.

According to Virginia Belew, director of the Big Spring Workforce Network, Howard County saw a 92 worker drop in December compared to the same numbers posted in December 2003, coming out with a 3.8 percent unemployment rate.

"The civilian labor force decreased November to December, which is unusual because the trend is for more seasonal workers to enter the workforce for those months," said Belew. "Also significant is the 92 less workers in the civilian labor force since the

See JOBLESS, Page 7A

## Threatened, targeted, election workers on frontline of Iraq's democratic transition

By MARIAM FAM  
Associated Press Writer

BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP) — When Karim Khodeir thinks of Sunday's historic elections, two images pop into his head: One is a bloodied portrait of car bombers ramming into lines of voters. The other is brighter, one of hopeful Iraqis freely casting ballots for the first time in decades.

"This is our chance to show the world that Iraqis care about their country."

—Karim Khodeir, election employee

It's that second image that keeps him going.

"We all have to sacrifice for our country," he said. "This is our chance to show the world that Iraqis care about their country."

On Sunday, Khodeir will be among about 200,000 election



KRT photo/Debbie Vanstony, ABACA Press  
Gilbert Narsa, an Iraqi, gathers and cheers with others after placing his vote at the polling location in Irvine, Calif. Iraqi expatriates are voting throughout the United States in suburbs of Chicago, Detroit, Washington, D.C., Nashville and Los Angeles.

employees checking voter IDs, handing out ballots and later counting them. In the war of intimidation that has marred the election process, election workers have been on the front line, facing threats from

insurgents and, in some cases, death.

"We're so used to receiving threats, they've become as common as smoking ciga-

See IRAQ, Page 5A



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### Big Spring man receives 20-year prison sentence

By THOMAS JENKINS  
Staff Writer

A Big Spring man received a 20-year sentence on a burglary charge in 118th District Court this week. Ben Garza, 50, currently in county jail, was indicted for burglary of a building on Nov. 1, with the charge enhanced to a second-degree felony because of prior felony convictions. Garza, who was represented by local attorney Don Richard, received 20

years in prison for the July 16 burglary. According to District Attorney Hardy Wilkerson, it took the jury less than 30 minutes to deliver the guilty verdict. The prosecution was lead by Howard County Assistant District Attorney Robin Orr.

Contact Staff Writer Thomas Jenkins at 263-7331 ext. 232 or by e-mail at citydesk@bigspringher-

### Man suspected in slaying of Texas clerk waives extradition, headed back to Tyler

BISBEE, Ariz. (AP) — The man suspected in the kidnapping and slaying of a Texas college student waived extradition Friday, authorities said.



Williams

That clears the way for Johnny Lee Williams, 24, to return to Tyler, where he faces kidnapping and first-degree homicide charges in the death of Megan Leann Holden, 19.

Holden was kidnapped on Jan. 19 in the parking lot of the Wal-Mart store in Tyler where she had worked the night shift, according to authorities.

Videotape from a surveillance camera showed a man forcing

Holden into her pickup.

Her body was found Friday in a ditch near Stanton, some 380 miles west of Tyler. Authorities said Holden had been shot.

Williams was arrested on Jan. 21 at a Willcox, Ariz., hospital where authorities said he sought treatment after being shot during an attempted robbery at an

RV park store in Bowie.

On Tuesday, Williams appeared in Cochise County Superior Court on a fugitive warrant seeking his return to Texas, to face charges in the case but refused extradition.

But on Friday, Williams told a judge that he wanted to waive the formal extradition process and return to Texas.

After signing the waiver, Williams invoked his right to remain silent.

Judge Tom Collins dismissed the attempted armed robbery charge and ordered that Williams return to the county jail to await transfer to Texas authorities.

## Texas rural superintendents cite concerns in school finance debate

By APRIL CASTRO

Associated Press Writer

HARPER (AP) — The cost of transporting students to class every day from farming or ranching homes is often a fraction of the money small school districts get from the state to cover those expenses.

Texas' formula for funding school transportation hasn't been updated since gasoline was under a dollar per gallon in 1983.

It's one of the worries rural superintendents have as the Legislature attempts to restructure public school funding. Many challenges Texas schools face are universal, such as finding building money and meeting federal requirements. But some rural districts have to deal with tiny populations, isolation and waning economies often in Texas' most remote counties.

"You can't, in Texas, pass a law that's one size fits all," said Bill Grusendorf, a lobbyist with the Texas Rural Schools Coalition. "That's been part of the problem over the years, trying to legislate with Texas schools, for such a large state that's so diverse with different economies. Each area has to be looked at on its own."

The Legislature is under a court order to

funnel more money into public schools, which are now largely dependent on local property taxes. A group of property wealthy and poor school districts sued the state, saying they don't get enough money to provide an adequate education to Texas children.

Meanwhile, many lawmakers want to give homeowners relief from escalating property taxes.

In Harper, a school district that is 386 square miles in the Hill Country near Kerrville, bus drivers rack up 300,000 miles per year on regular bus routes. The school district spends \$211,368 a year on transportation costs — including bus purchases, fuel, maintenance, driver salaries and insurance — and last year received \$196,074 from the state for transportation.

"We've got to have safe transportation," said Harper Superintendent Pari Whitten, whose district recently spent \$62,000 for a new bus in its 16-bus fleet. "It's difficult and we spend a lot more than we get, but we've got to do it."

Farther west, near the sparsely populated Davis Mountains in Balmorhea, funding daily bus routes isn't quite as costly as carting sports teams to competitions that are sometimes hundreds of

miles away. "The transportation to athletic events is not funded at all for us out here," Balmorhea Superintendent Mary Lou Carrasco said. The district received about 20

*"That's been part of the problem over the years, trying to legislate with Texas schools, for such a large state that's so diverse with different economies."*

Bill Grusendorf, lobbyist

percent, or \$35,678, of its \$175,233 in transportation costs from the state last year.

Recruiting and retaining teachers in rural districts can be difficult as well, said Sen. Frank Madla, a Democrat who represents a swath of rural Texas from San Antonio to El Paso.

"I don't know how we can adjust the salary schedule to compensate those individuals that agree to go (to rural Texas) ... and stay there when you look around and there are no malls, there are no theaters,

there's no hospitals," Madla said. "You may not even have any medical care and so these districts are faced with unique circumstances."

In the Wink-Loving district, a property wealthy district in West Texas built on oil riches, school officials offer to sell a plot of land for \$15 to anyone who will build a house on the land. Many longtime teachers in the school are nearing retirement age, and Superintendent John Benham said he expects an exodus during the next few years.

The district boasts racquetball courts, an Olympic-size swimming pool and jacuzzis, all built during the oil boom of the 1980s — before the Robin Hood share-the-wealth system of school funding — but today it is struggling.

Even though Benham's district enrolls just 308 students, it still must pay teacher salaries, utility, building costs and other overhead that larger schools can better absorb with larger enrollments because schools get money from the state based on attendance.

This year, the tiny district expects to give about 30 percent of its local property taxes to the state for redistribution under the share-the-wealth system. Last year, the dis-

trict gave back \$1.6 million.

"We're not really against it," Benham said of the current funding system. "We just feel like the percentage of recapture is too high. We don't mind helping those people that need it. We just don't want to be shut down in the process."

One of the options emerging in the Legislature as an alternative to the current system is a statewide property tax. The state would collect the taxes and then distribute them to school districts. Now, school districts collect the taxes themselves. A portion is sent to the state for distribution, based on a complex formula.

Republican House Speaker Tom Craddick has said legislators who represent rural areas would oppose the statewide tax.

Some rural school officials, like Benham, worry that a statewide property tax would mean even less local control.

"We're definitely against a statewide prop-

erty tax; we like to have control over our property values," he said. "We feel like it would turn everybody into dependent school districts instead of independent school districts. We'd like to be able to make the best decisions we can for our students."

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### Seliger named vice-chairman of Criminal Justice Committee

Special to the Herald

District 31 State Sen. Kel Seliger (R-Amarillo) has been appointed to serve as vice-chair of the Criminal Justice Committee.

In addition, Seliger was appointed to the Natural Resources, International Relations and Trade, and Veterans Affairs and Military Installations Committees. Making the announcement was Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst.



Seliger

"I am honored by the lieutenant governor's confidence in my ability to do what is a very important job," said Seliger.

The appointment as vice-chair of Criminal Justice is especially noteworthy due to the relative short

period of time he has served in the Texas Senate, said Seliger.

"We have some critical issues coming before the Criminal Justice Committee including correctional population growth and the credibility of DNA testing. I am looking forward to working with my colleagues on the committee to ensure that Texas has the best criminal justice system in the world," Seliger said.

Seliger is the newest member of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources. "I believe that this committee encompasses the largest number of issues important to the citizens of District 31, including agriculture, water and oil and gas. I hope that the thoughts and ideas I bring from my constituents will be a meaningful contribution to the committee," said Seliger.

### Blood drives set through February

There are several upcoming United Blood Services drives scheduled in Big Spring.

From 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. Thursday a blood drive will take place in the Rip Griffin Truck and Travel Center.

From 8 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. Feb. 17 a blood drive is set at the VA Medical Center. The last opportunity to donate blood in February is from 11 a.m. until 4 p.m. at Wal-Mart Feb. 21.

To donate blood an individual must be at least 18 years old or 17 years old with parent's permission and weigh more than 100 pounds. Bring a list of all medications currently being taken to the site.

For more information, contact Peggy Hards at 432-569-5531.

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# Helicopter contract a boost for Amarillo and Fort Worth

By DAVID KOENIG  
AP Business Writer

(AP) — It's a long way from Amarillo to Washington, but local folks were closely following Friday's announcement about a new presidential helicopter.

The Navy's decision to pick Lockheed Martin Corp. and subcontractor Bell Helicopter Textron figures to be an economic and confidence boost for Fort Worth and Amarillo, where Bell plans to build the aircraft's frame.

"We're excited and happy," said John Teague, vice president of business development for the Amarillo Chamber of Commerce. "We think it's going to bring a lot of people here, and it's pretty prestigious to be build-

ing the helicopter for the president."

Gov. Rick Perry called the announcement "great news for Texas."

The contract will create about 150 jobs in Amarillo and another 150 in the Fort Worth area, said Bell spokesman Bob Leder. The company has about 7,200 workers in Texas.

"We are absolutely thrilled and honored to be selected to be part of this program," Leder said. He said some Fort Worth workers watched the announcement in Washington on cable television.

The Navy picked Lockheed over Sikorsky Aircraft Corp. to build 23 copies of Marine One. The first machine is

expected to be finished in 2009, with all 23 built by late 2014.

The work is small by defense-contracting standards. The initial contract for development and demonstration was valued at \$1.8 billion, a pittance compared to the \$200 billion-plus deal that Lockheed won a few years ago to build the next generation of fighter jets for the U.S. military. Those planes will be built in Fort Worth.

The number of new jobs is also relatively small. Just this month, Lockheed sent layoff notices to Fort Worth 220 workers and said it could cut up to 1,000 jobs because of reductions in its F-16 fighter jet program.

# Judge: Michael Jackson's accuser will have to testify in open court

By ROBERT JABLON  
Associated Press Writer

SANTA MARIA, Calif. (AP) — The judge in the Michael Jackson molestation case on Friday rejected a prosecution request to close the courtroom when the teenage accuser takes the stand at the pop star's trial.

The defense and a coalition of media covering the case, including The Associated Press, had argued that the testimony should be open. Prosecutors wanted it closed to protect the child from the intense media coverage in the case, proposing that reporters be allowed to hear the testimony through an audio feed.

Judge Rodney Melville also ruled that dozens of adult-oriented books, magazines and DVDs

seized at Jackson's Neverland ranch — one with the fingerprints of Jackson and the accuser — can be used as evidence in the trial. Jury selection begins Monday.

The judge permitted most of the proposed evidence to be used at trial but said the prosecution could not refer to the material as pornography, obscenity or erotic. Instead, the words "adult" or "sexually explicit" can be used, he said.

Prosecutor Ron Zonen said the 50 print and video items that were seized in 2003 included graphic sexual material that was both heterosexual and homosexual in nature. The material also included nude photos of models who may have been 18 but looked much younger, he said.

The items will show Jackson had a "prurient interest" in boys or was intended for use as "grooming material" to make children more accommodating to sexual advances, Zonen said.

Defense attorney Thomas Mesereau Jr. countered that all the materials seized were legal. In the case of the magazine with the prints, he said evidence will show Jackson took it away from his accuser and locked it up.

Melville ruled that several items could not be used as evidence, including three books seized in 1993 that allegedly show pictures of nude adolescents.

Jackson, 46, has pleaded not guilty to charges of molesting a 13-year-old boy.

# School finance bill would add sales tax to newspapers, magazines

By BRANDI GRISSOM  
Associated Press Writer

AUSTIN (AP) — A morning stop at the coffee shop for a cup of joe and the local paper could get a little more expensive under an initial public school finance plan that would reinstate a state sales tax on newspapers and magazines.

The proposed legislation, filed Thursday by Rep. Jim Keffer, a Republican from Eastland, is a "shell bill" meant to start debate about fixing the state's \$30-billion public education system. It calls for slashing local property taxes by a third,

increasing the cigarette tax by \$1 per pack and eliminating the state's current franchise tax, which most businesses avoid paying.

Overhauling public school finance is the top priority for legislators. Republican Gov. Rick Perry has declared the item an emergency issue. The state is under court pressure to change the system that many school districts claim doesn't provide enough money to adequately educate all students.

Expanding the sales tax base is just one measure suggested to recoup an estimated \$5.5 bil-

lion for education the state would lose if school property taxes are reduced from \$1.50 to \$1 per \$100 property valuation.

According to a report by the State Comptroller's office, state sales taxes on newspapers and magazines would generate about \$30 million.

The bill would repeal a 1981 law that made newspapers exempt from sales tax and a similar 1987 law exempting magazines.

Sales taxes on newspapers were collected in 1980, but the Texas Comptroller's office asked the Legislature to create

the exemption because it created an "administrative nightmare" for the industry, said Billy Hamilton, deputy comptroller.

Because newspapers use individual distributors, vending machines and a variety of other methods to dispense newspapers, Hamilton said, the collecting the tax is difficult.

Newspapers oppose the sales tax because it is hard to collect and unfair to customers, said Donniss Baggett, Texas Daily Newspaper Association executive committee chair and publisher of the Bryan-College

Station Eagle.

"It's an unwieldy and difficult tax to administer," Baggett said. "Another element is you don't get taxed for getting information from the television or the Internet. It hardly seems fair to tax readers of newspapers and magazines."

At the current state sales tax rate of 6.25 percent, a 50-cent newspaper like the Houston Chronicle or The Dallas Morning News would cost at least 3 cents more during the week. Sales tax on more expensive Sunday papers would cost about 10 cents.

# IRAQ

Continued from Page 1A

rettes," said Amer Latif al-Yahia, director of the electoral commission's office in eastern Diyala province.

He said some employees have received letters warning them to quit their jobs or be "slaughtered." Others have been told their children will be kidnapped.

Al-Yahia hasn't received any written warnings. But attackers have lobbed hand grenades at his house and peppered it with machine-gun fire twice. The windows were shattered and the walls pockmarked. He escaped unhurt.

Al-Yahia said that in some areas of his religiously mixed province many people had been willing to work for the commission. In others, mostly those dominated by Sunni Arabs, recruiting had been more difficult and workers had to be brought in from elsewhere.

The Sunni Arabs have been the least enthusiastic about the vote — an

election expected to confirm their loss of power with the downfall of Saddam Hussein. Some will boycott it either out of fear of attacks from the mostly Sunni Arab insurgency or out of conviction that a vote held in the presence of foreign troops is illegitimate.

By contrast, Shiites and Kurds, eager to affirm their power in the new Iraq, are keen to make the process work.

The chief U.N. electoral official here, Carlos Valenzuela, has described intimidation of election workers as "high and very serious." Commission spokesman, Farid Ayar, said 10 election workers have been killed so far.

Earlier this month, Brig. Gen. Carter Ham, the U.S. general responsible for security in northern Iraq, said that virtually every election worker in Nineveh province, which includes predominantly Arab Sunni Mosul, quit because of security fears. On Friday, commission member Adel al-Lami said all the employees had been replaced, but 90 percent had to be

brought in from outside the province.

In ethnically mixed Kirkuk, several commission employees resigned about four days ago, but the vacancies had been filled, al-Lami said.

Even in heavily Shiite areas of south-central Iraq, a region far more stable than Mosul or Baghdad, several election workers were threatened and have resigned, a senior U.S. Embassy official has said.

Perhaps the most brazen of the assaults on election employees was a daylight attack in the heart of Baghdad last month,

when three pistol-wielding gunmen dragged five election employees from a car and executed three of them. The two others escaped.

That attack left Noor Qais, a 24-year-old election employee in Baghdad, rethinking her job, albeit briefly. "I stopped for a minute, but then I thought: 'The election is a goal. We have to continue this path to the end.'"

Despite the setbacks, election officials said they were sure there would be no shortage of workers on election day. For some, the work is seen as a

national duty. But in a country plagued with unemployment, others say it's a way to put food on the table.

The commission pays \$200 for those willing to work the election and the few following days, a generous amount by Iraqi standards.

Employees know the risks, and many try to play it safe.

Since he started working with the commission, al-Yahia, a lawyer, had to hire guards. During one of the attacks on his house, the guards traded fire with the militants.

"I had no relations with

political parties or anything, but since I joined the commission, I started having enemies," he said.

Khodeir, who will be working in a Baghdad voting center on election day, doesn't volunteer information about his job to neighbors; they think he works for a company.

Some family members and friends have pleaded with him to quit out of fear for his life. But he says the stakes are too high to bail out.

"It's our chance to express our opinions so that our country can progress."

**Benny Boyd**  
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**REFINERY**

Continued from Page 1A

ation which basically means a real good house cleaning with repairs and renovations. The first phases began a week ago. Before the entire process is complete, crews will go from unit to unit, inspecting and repairing. The refinery's two primary units — the cat cracker, or fluid catalytic cracking unit, and the crude unit — will be shut down for 15 days.

There's a tight schedule, and a precise one because the units are basically "in-line." Some equipment statistics:

224 heat exchangers — 45,000 individual tubes to clean, 68 horizontal drums, 158 valves to replace, 16 towers, 7 process heaters, 153 pipe spools to replace, 125 pressure relief valves to test and reinstall, 800,000 pounds of catalyst.

It's a major operation involving all of the refinery's 160-plus employees plus hundreds of outside contractors. Each step is checked and double checked. "Any step poorly done means failure. Every step is critical," added Maintenance Manager Roddy Caffey, who has been with the refinery for 31 years.

Time is money. The turnaround itself will cost ALON USA between \$8 and \$10 mil-

lion. Other refinery improvements implemented in association with the turnaround will be another \$15 to \$20 million.

But there's no question the turnaround is necessary.

"If you don't do this periodically — about every five years is the industry standard — you lose efficiency. And that costs money," said Caffey. "After awhile, things begin to wear out. It's a lot more productive to plan a turnaround than to try and repair things whenever they go down. There's a lot of preventative maintenance we do, too."

There are some improvements that will be attended to, as well. For instance,

Concienne hopes to gain more than just a smoother running refinery. The work includes changing the capacity of the crude unit. The unit averages 62,000 barrels per day currently, and the changes should allow that capacity to increase to 66,000 — a considerable additional output over a year's time.

"It's a good thing," Concienne said of the turnaround. "You just want to get it done and get it done right, of course."

If everything goes as planned, it will get done around March 1. One other note...

While the turnaround is positive for the refinery, it's also undeniably good for the community. Many of the contrac-

tors are from Big Spring, Howard County and the Permian Basin. Others are brought in from the Gulf Coast, where operations such as this are a way of life.

"It's a big boost for the economy of Big Spring. These contractors eat in our restaurants, shop in our stores, stay in our motels," explained Caffey.

Figure in an average of 350 employees a day times a per-diem of \$50, and it doesn't take long to determine that the turnaround means big business for Howard County. The extra inflow amounts to more than \$17,500 a day, and that only takes in the per-diem, not paychecks.

**TAX AIDE**

Continued from Page 1A

deductions and how people may claim them on their tax returns," she said.

"These volunteers help people complete their returns, right down to any refunds that may be due them."

Hopkins said Tax-Aide will continue throughout the tax season.

"We'll begin doing taxes at the Senior Center from 8 a.m. until noon Monday,

and continuing each Monday at those same times through April 11," said Hopkins. "For those that are home-bound and can't get to the center with their tax information, if they will call us, we'll be happy to pick up the information and get the taxes ready."

The Senior Center is located at 1901 Simler Drive on the McMahan-Wrinkle Airpark.

For more information on the program and volunteering, contact Hopkins at 267-6733.

**JOBLESS**

Continued from Page 1A

same reporting period last year."

The civilian labor force, which was reported as 13,758 for December dropped from 13,776 the previous month. In December 2003 the civilian workforce was 13,850.

Dropping less than a point from the 3.9 percent posted in both November 2004 and December 2003, the unemployment rate is a stark comparison to the number of jobs the local Workforce Network is try-

ing to fill.

"At present we have 74 job openings that we're trying to fill for Howard County employers," said Belew. "Our office continues to get some very good job listings, offering good opportunities for training and advancement. Unemployed workers and those that are employed but looking for other options are encouraged to register for services in our office or at www.workintexas.com."

"It is vital that we give a true picture of our available labor force. Job creation and business expansion is very dependent on

the number of people registered as job seekers."

The number of people employed in Howard County remained steady, dropping from 13,238 in November to 13,235 in

December. In December 2003 there were 13,308 jobs filled.

Surrounding counties posted similarly low unemployment percentages, with Andrews

County posting 3.3 percent; Borden County, 2.8 percent; Dawson County, 4.9 percent; Ector County, 4.6 percent; Glasscock County, 2.4 percent; Martin County, 3.5 per-

cent; and Midland County with 3.1 percent.

The unemployment rate for the state of Texas was reported as 5.4 percent, with the national percentage listed at 5.1 percent.

**Menu**

**SENIOR CITIZENS CENTER**

MONDAY - Spaghetti/meat sauce, salad, garlic bread, milk, fruit.

TUESDAY - Cheeseburgers, French fries, beans, lettuce and tomatoes, milk, buns apple crisp.

WEDNESDAY - Hamburger steak, potatoes, broccoli and cheese, salad, milk, rolls, fruited gelatin.

THURSDAY - Chicken enchiladas, Spanish rice, beans, salad, milk, cornbread, pie.

FRIDAY - Catfish, French fries, beans, coleslaw, milk, rolls, fruit.

**WESTBROOK ISD**

BREAKFAST MONDAY - French toast sticks, Little Smokies, cereal, juice, milk.

TUESDAY - Cinnamon rolls, cereal, juice, milk.

WEDNESDAY - Sausage, bacon, biscuits, cereal, juice, milk.

THURSDAY - Blueberry muffins, cereal juice, milk.

FRIDAY - Assorted cereal, toast, jelly, juice, milk.

LUNCH

MONDAY - Steak, gravy, mashed potatoes, glazed carrots hot rolls, honey, milk.

TUESDAY - Chicken fajitas w/tortillas, cheese and salsa, tossed salad, pinto beans, cornbread, Teddy Grahams, milk.

WEDNESDAY - Barbecue on bun, nacho cheese chips, corn, fruit cups, milk.

THURSDAY - Nachos w/meat, cheese and peppers, tossed salad, corn, pear halves, milk.

FRIDAY - Cheeseburgers, French fries, salad fixings, goodie bar, milk.

**STANTON ISD**

BREAKFAST MONDAY - Cinnamon roll, cereal, buttered toast, juice, milk.

LUNCH MONDAY - Barbeque riblet on bun or chicken patty on bun, French fries, sandwich salad, orange slices.

**BIG SPRING ISD**

BREAKFAST MONDAY - Cereal, cinnamon roll, juice, milk.

TUESDAY - Breakfast sausage roll, peaches, milk.

WEDNESDAY - Cereal, cheese bite, juice, milk.

THURSDAY - Grilled cheese, sliced apples, milk.

FRIDAY - Cereal, waffle stick, syrup, juice, milk.

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**BirthPlace Tour: Monday, February 7 at 7:00pm**

For over fifty years, little Midlanders and their families have counted on Midland Memorial Hospital... for life.

Meet us at the first floor lobby to take part in our special BirthPlace Tour. Visit our Postpartum, Labor, Delivery, Nursery, and our new Breast Feeding Shoppe, *Beautiful Beginnings*. Meet our outstanding staff and find out what to expect when your special time arrives.

The smallest details matter most to us. Labor, Delivery, Recovery, and *Beautiful Beginnings* in The BirthPlace at Midland Memorial Hospital West Campus.



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**1st Annual Glasscock County FFA Varmint Calling Contest**

Start: Friday, February 4  
Meet at Garden City Wyn-Lor between 3 pm and 5 pm

Check In: Saturday, February 5  
Garden City Wyn-Lor at 9:00 am

Entry: \$100 per team  
75% payout

Everyone is welcome, must hunt in Glasscock County or any county bordering Glasscock.

For more information, call Rusty Hollingsworth @ 354-2244 or 354-2250

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### IN BRIEF

#### Howard rodeo team sets fund-raiser

The Howard College rodeo team has set up a third-annual fund-raiser for Thursday and Friday.

The event will start at 1 p.m. and take place on the campus of Howard College and throughout the community. The fund-raiser involves sending and removing goats.

For more information, call Howard coach Greg Kernick at 816-9477.

#### CGA announces second meeting

The Chicano Golf Association will be holding another organizational meeting Monday.

The meeting will take place at 7 p.m. in the meeting room at Bowl-A-Rama Lanes.

For more information, contact Billy Pineda at 264-7116.

#### Sportsman Club sets M1 Garand match

The Western Sportsman Club has announced an M1 Garand match will take place Sunday, Feb. 6, at the Western Sportsman Club range, beginning at 1:30 p.m.

It will be a 30 round match at 200 yards. The cost is \$6 and eligible rifles include: the M1 Garand, M1 Carbine and 1903 A3.

There will also have loaner rifles and ammo for people that want to shoot.

For more information, contact Vic Coots at 263-1345.

#### Serena records win in Australian final

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — Serena Williams fended off six break points in the fifth game of the second set, then willed herself to overcome an aching back in a 2-6, 6-3, 6-0 victory over Lindsay Davenport in the Australian Open final Saturday.

Williams stretched her winning streak at Melbourne Park to 14 matches and captured her seventh Grand Slam singles title, ending an 18-month drought without one.

After a shaky start, the end was lopsided. Williams reeled off nine straight games.

It was a stirring comeback after Williams hurt her back chasing a backhand in the opening game and needed treatment after the fifth, when she was down 4-1.

Later, Zimbabwe's Wayne Black and Kevin Ullyett beat American brothers Bob and Mike Bryan 6-4, 6-4 in the men's doubles final.

#### Webber's 3-pointer helps Kings in win

HOUSTON (AP) — Chris Webber scored 30 points, including a 3-pointer to force overtime, for Sacramento as the Kings defeated Houston, 117-111 in overtime.

Mike Bibby added 28 points and 14 assists.

## Tubb's fourth quarter leads Grady past Bearkats

By TROY HYDE

Sports Editor  
LENORAH — The Grady boy's basketball team captured sole possession of first place in District 7-A Friday after pulling off a convincing 14-point win over rival Garden City in Lenorah.

Grady (17-8, 6-1) jumped out to a 21-0 lead after the first quarter and weathered a late Garden City (11-14, 5-2) rally to win, 51-37.

Garden City had 21 turnovers, including nine

in its scoreless first quarter.

The Bearkats battled back in quarters two and three and outscored Grady 27-16. They cut the lead to four points midway through the fourth quarter, but that is as close as they would get. Grady freshman Justin

Tubb was too strong down the stretch. He scored 10 of his 17 points in the final frame and connected on eight-of-12 free throws while pulling down 10 rebounds.

Grady senior Andrew Villa scored 10 of his 13 points in the Wildcats' 21 point first quarter. Ben Hirth added six points in the first quarter and finished with 11 points before fouling out.

Garden City was led by senior Chais Goodwin's 12 points and eight



TUBB

rebounds. All 12 points came in the second half, as well.

The Grady win avenges a loss to the Bearkats back in early January. That game took place in

Garden City and the Bearkat win ended Grady's 21-game district winning streak.

The Wildcats have not lost a district game since and the win Friday moves them into first place in the district. After starting 5-0 in District 7-A for the first time under head coach Cory Richardson, the Bearkats dropped their second straight.

Garden City will host Sands Tuesday, while Grady will travel to Klondike.

## Opportunity lost

• Steers miss 11 FTs in fourth quarter, lose by two

By TROY HYDE

Sports Editor  
Missed free throws and missed opportunities doomed the Big Spring boy's basketball team Friday as the Steers dropped a heartbreaker to rival Andrews at home, 52-50, in front of a large wild and crazy crowd.

The Steers missed 11 straight free throws down the stretch in the fourth quarter and had several opportunities to tie the game in the closing minute, but Big Spring (6-21, 0-5) couldn't take advantage.

"We were hoping it would be a close game," said Big Spring coach Jim Kinnear. "Give our kids credit for fighting until the end though. The only negative tonight was that we were 0-for-11 on free throws down the stretch."

The Steers trailed 17-9 after the first quarter and 36-24 at halftime, but a strong third quarter got them back in the game. Sophomore Ryan Tannehill took over in the period as his six straight points cut the Mustang lead to six.

Andrews pushed the lead back to 10, but a Kyle Piercefield basket, a Tannehill 3-pointer and a Matt Hilario basket plus the foul trimmed the deficit to three points

heading into the final quarter. Big Spring outscored Andrews 15-7 in the third period. Andrews got five offensive rebounds on its final possession of the period, but they were unable to turn any extra shots into points.

"We battled back in the third and made it a game," said Kinnear.

Bad news struck the Steers early in the fourth quarter as Piercefield, a junior, fouled out 30 seconds into the final frame.

Piercefield's replacement — senior Bobby Newton — provided the Steers with much needed energy and a big spark, however.

"Bobby has accepted his role well," said Kinnear. "He is a good athlete and he showed it tonight."

Newton immediately came into the game and sank two free throws, cutting the Mustang lead to five. Then, a Tannehill layup off a nice pass from freshman Jordan Kinnear and a Hilario layup off a Nathan Teeters steal cut the Andrews advantage to one.

After Andrews pushed its lead back to three, another unfortunate event happened for Big Spring. Jordan Kinnear fell to the ground and

See STEERS, Page 2B



Big Spring senior Bobby Newton puts up a shot in the lane just out of the reach of an Andrews defender during second half action Friday night at the Steer Gym. Newton provided a spark off the bench as he pulled down four rebounds. The Steers missed 11 straight free throws in the fourth quarter and lost to the rival Mustangs, 52-50.

## Hirt, Niehues lead G.C. to needed 7-A victory

By TROY HYDE

Sports Editor  
LENORAH — A strong second quarter and clutch free throw shooting down the stretch was enough for the Garden City girls Friday as they traveled to Grady and defeated the Wildcats in a matchup of two 20-win teams.

The Lady Kats outscored Grady (20-7, 5-2) 13-9 in the second quarter and held off the Lady Wildcats late to earn a 36-29 road victory.

The game was tied at 21-21 three minutes into the third quarter, but Grady went cold from the field after that. Garden City scored the final six points of the quarter and took a 27-21 lead heading into the final frame.

After tying the game at 21 early in the third quarter, the Lady Wildcats went on a scoring drought in which they didn't connect from the field until less than five minutes remained in the fourth quarter.

Garden City senior Erin Hirt connected on one of her two 3-pointers with 5:00 to play in the game, putting the Lady Kats up 31-23.

Grady cut the lead to

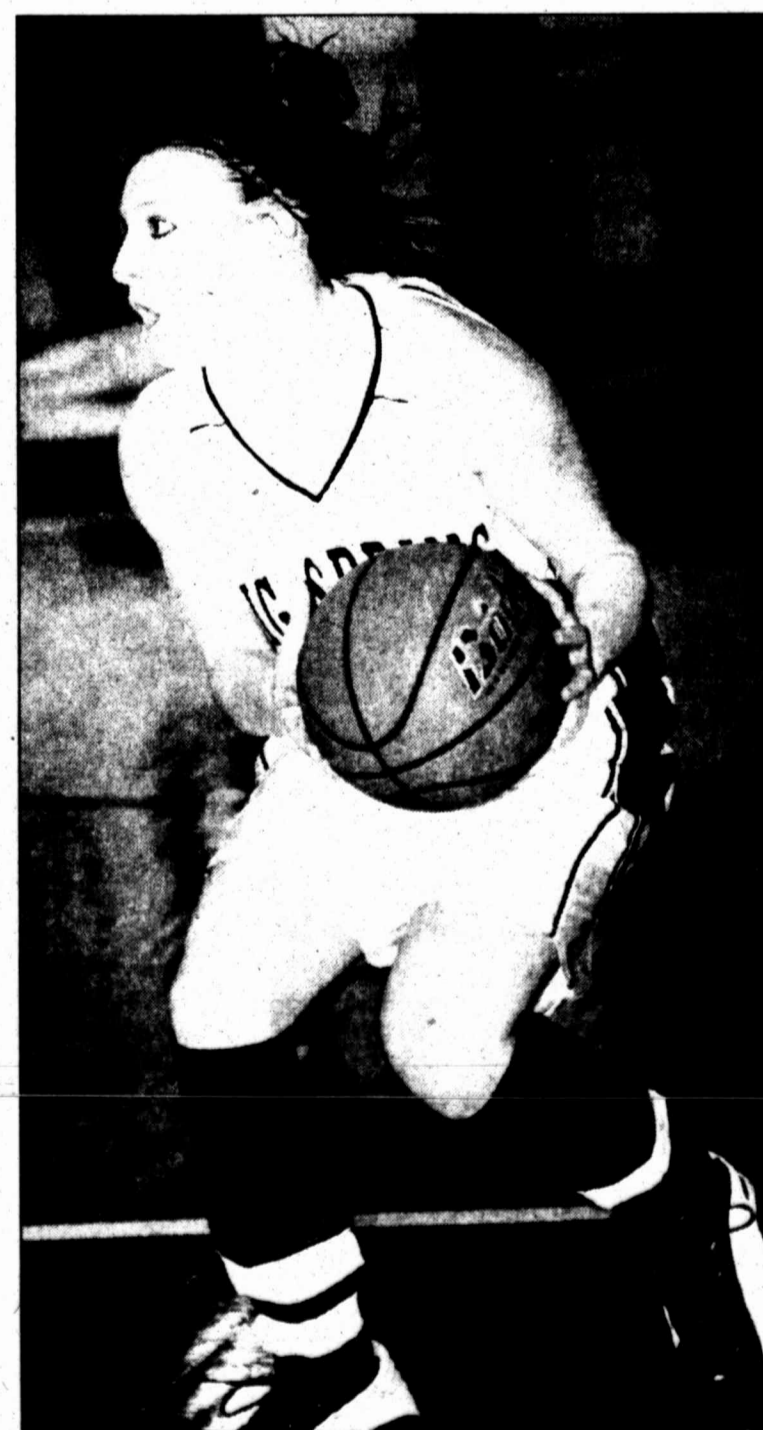
five with 32 seconds left in the game, but Garden City (24-4, 5-2) capped off the win from the foul line.

The Lady Kats shot 50 percent from the field and were led by Hirt's 18 points. The other two members of the senior trio also played big roles as Megan Niehues scored 12 points and Lauren Plagens pulled down a team-high seven rebounds.

Taylor Woolfork led Grady with nine points, while senior Kelsey Tubb, who scored in double figures the first time these two teams met, was held to just five. Freshman Kenzie Madison pulled down five rebounds. Grady went 12-for-35 from the field.

The Lady Wildcats defeated Garden City earlier this month in Garden City. The Lady Kats' win Friday moved them into a second place tie with Grady in District 7-A. The top two teams in each district advance to the playoffs in February.

Garden City hosts Sands Tuesday, while Grady travels to league-leading Klondike. Both games begin at 6 p.m.



Big Spring sophomore Katy Abner looks for an opening to the basket Friday against arch rival Andrews. The Lady Steers lost and remained winless in District 4-4A action.

## Big Spring falls apart, drops one in district

By TROY HYDE

Sports Editor  
The inability to make shots and 23 turnovers plagued the Lady Steers against rival Andrews Friday as the Big Spring girl's basketball team lost at the Steer Gym, 61-28, in front of a large crowd which included Houston Astros pitcher Andy Pettitte.

Big Spring went eight-for-47 from the field and made just 10-of-18 free throws in the game.

"It was the poorest coached team I have ever seen," said Big Spring coach Tim Van Hecke, who didn't have much to say after his team dropped to 0-7 in district play.

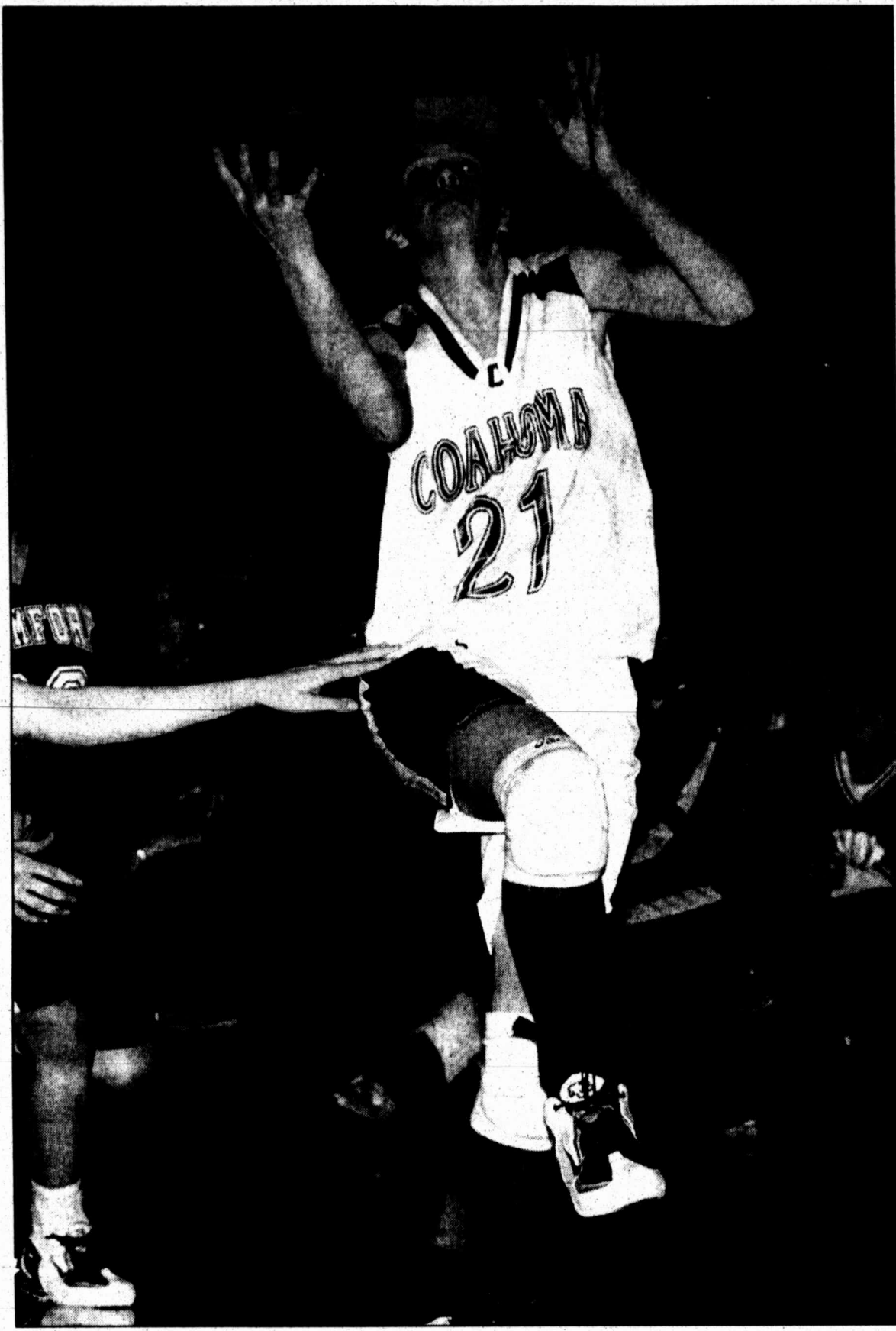
The second and third quarters plagued Big Spring as Andrews outscored the Lady Steers 41-13.

Big Spring trailed 9-6 after the first quarter before things got out of hand in a hurry.

"We were able to stay in

See LADY STEERS, Page 2B

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HERALD photo/Bruce Schooler  
Coahoma senior Mendy Morgan puts in two of her team-high 10 points Friday during the Bulldogettes' 41-34 loss to rival Stamford. Morgan also pulled down a game-high 14 rebounds.

## Morgan's effort not enough to create win

By TROY HYDE

Sports Editor  
Mendy Morgan's double-double effort was not enough for the Coahoma's girls Friday at home as the Bulldogettes fell to rival Stamford, 41-34.

The fourth quarter was the difference in the seven point game as Coahoma (9-19, 4-3) was outscored 12-5.

The Bulldogettes trailed by three after the first quarter, but battled back to tie the score at 21-21 at halftime.

The two teams remained tied heading into the final quarter, but Stamford's fourth quarter advantage was enough to capture the District 4-2A win.

Morgan, a senior, finished with 10 points, 14 rebounds and three assists, while junior Sterling Gee contributed six points and four rebounds. Senior Sarah Collom added six points and three rebounds, while Drew Wells pitched in with two points, four rebounds and three steals.

The Bulldogettes made eight-of-12 shots from the foul line, while Stamford hit 11-of-22.



HERALD photo/Troy Hyde  
Big Spring fans in the student section enjoy first half action Friday at the Steer Gym. The Steers lost to Andrews 52-50.

## STEERS

Continued from Page 1B

apparently got kicked in the head by an Andrews player.

"It was a pretty physical game," said Coach Kinnear. "Jordan lost his balance on a rebound attempt and fell to the floor. Then he got kicked in the head. I am not sure if it was on purpose or not, but plays like that are uncalled for."

No foul was called on the play and Kinnear was forced to bench for treatment from Big Spring Athletic Trainer Andy Rankin.

"I thought he was out for the rest of the game, but Andy told me he was just a little woozy and then said he was ready to go," said Coach Kinnear.

Kinnear returned to the game with 1:52 to play, just in time for a spectacular final two minutes.

Andrews pushed the lead to five before Kinnear's putback got the game back to one possession.

After a stop on defense, Big Spring got the ball back with 30 seconds left and plenty of time to set up a play.

"I wanted to spread things out and let our guards penetrate to the basket and dish off to our 3-point shooters," said Coach Kinnear.

Mission accomplished. Tannehill did just that and found Teeters, a senior, wide open in the corner for a long range shot that hit nothing but the bottom of the net.

"It was a set play and the kids executed it well," said Coach Kinnear. "Nathan hit the shot like a senior should. It was definitely a big-time shot."

However, five seconds later Big Spring was called for a questionable foul with 17 seconds to play. Andrews converted from the line and grabbed back its two-point lead.

Big Spring had several chances on its last pos-

session to win or tie. Tannehill's drive to the basket saw the ball roll off the rim and then Newton had a wide-open look under the basket off the rebound, but missed it. Tannehill got the rebound and was fouled with 3.8 seconds left with a chance to tie. Unfortunately, his first free throw didn't go down. That forced him to miss the second attempt on purpose to set up an offensive rebound attempt.

Tannehill's miss was tipped out to him by Newton and Kinnear, but the sophomore's last second 3-pointer, which drew plenty of contact, failed to hit the rim as time expired.

"The kids have been down on themselves because of our recent schedule and losses," said Coach Kinnear. "We proved tonight that we are not a bad basketball team when we're on the same page. They now know they can play."

Tannehill was not the only Big Spring player to miss free throws down the stretch. Kinnear went 0-for-2 in the final period and Newton missed eight straight after connecting on his first two.

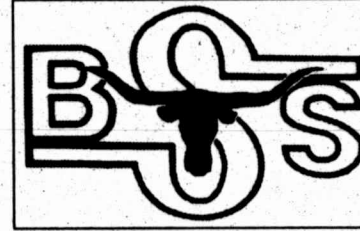
Big Spring as a team went 12-for-32 from the charity stripe on the night. The Steers shot just 33 percent from the field, but outrebounded the Mustangs, 31-24.

Tannehill led the Steers with 14 points, five rebounds and three steals, while Kinnear added a game-high 13 rebounds, three points, three blocks, three assists and two steals.

Piercefield scored nine points and grabbed four rebounds before fouling out, while Teeters hit two 3-pointers and finished with eight points.

Andrews didn't shoot well either, making just 20-of-34 from the foul line. The Mustangs were led offensively by Ryan Roberts and Brett Bailey, who each scored 10 points.

The Steers host Frenship Tuesday, beginning at 7:30 p.m.



## LADY STEERS

Continued from Page 1B

the game in the first quarter because we took care of the ball against their press and played great defense," said Van Hecke. "And then we didn't do that stuff the rest of the way."

The Lady Steers struggled to score in the second period as a three-

quarter deficit turned to a 23-7 Andrews advantage early in the second period. They then pushed that margin to 30-10 with 50 seconds to play in the quarter and eventually led 30-13 at halftime. The Lady Steers trailed 50-19 after three quarters.



LEWIS

Junior Carmen Lewis led Big Spring with 10 points and four rebounds, while junior Codye Burt added six.

Junior Raegan Ritchey and Chalesa Johnson pulled down seven and five rebounds, respectively, and sophomore Katy Abner came away with two steals.

Sophomore Diandra Marquez led Andrews with 14 points and made six of her eight shots from

the line. Sophomore Erica Rawls added 10 points.

Big Spring's point guards were responsible for 12 of the team's 23 turnovers.

Big Spring, which dropped to 4-18 with the loss, returns home Tuesday as the Lady Steers take on rival Frenship at the Steer Gym beginning at 6 p.m. The school will honor the team's seniors before the game, as well.



HERALD photo/Bruce Schooler  
Forsan's Cynthia Becerra applies pressure against McCamey in a previous game. The Lady Buffaloes lost to Wink Friday in Forsan.

## Forsan drops two at home to rival Wink

By TROY HYDE

Sports Editor

Both Forsan teams were in action at home against rival Wink Friday and neither team was able to come away with wins. The Lady Buffaloes lost a close one, 56-50, while the Buffaloes pushed the district's only undefeated team to overtime, but still lost 53-50.

### GIRLS

Forsan, which is now 0-6 in District 8-A play, led 11-10 after the first quarter, but Wink's five-point second quarter advantage

sent the Lady Buffaloes into the locker room at halftime down 31-27.

Wink outscored Forsan 8-6 in the third quarter before both teams scored 17 points in the final eight minutes.

Haylea Belew led Forsan with 12 points, while Tessa Montgomery and Cynthia Becerra added nine and eight points, respectively.

### BOYS

Wink improved to 6-0 in District 8-A play Friday after pulling out a narrow victory in Forsan Friday.

The Buffaloes jumped out to a 14-10 lead after the first quarter, but Wink took the second quarter 13-9 as both teams entered halftime tied at 23-23.

Wink led by two entering the fourth quarter, but Forsan's 13-11 advantage in the final frame forced overtime. Forsan, however, was outscored 9-6 in the overtime period.

Josh Paredes led Forsan with 16, including four 3-pointers, while Adam Bailey turned in 14.

Both teams will travel to McCamey Tuesday.



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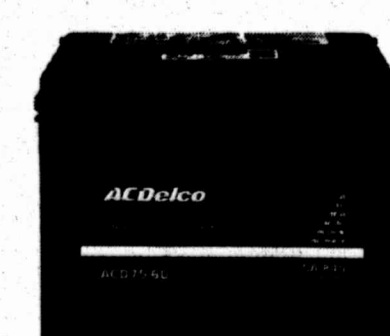
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## Coahoma takes of Dis 4-2A

By TROY HYDE

Sports Editor  
Coahoma's boy's basket come another deficit Friday on to claim a victory over rival Stamford.



SHIFFLETT  
the Bulldogs win.

Coahoma trailed 14-6 a quarter before Stamford 15-4 on the second period.

Stamford closed the third quarter with a 10-0 run, but had enough to claim the fourth.

Isaac B. Coahoma with eight of the final quarter.

Darrick S. Coahoma with three and finished with five points, while Posey added two.

Coahoma's rival Stamford. The girl's game is scheduled for 6:30 p.m., while the boys' game is at 7 p.m.



## Cubs

By RONALD

AP Sports Writer  
NEW YORK  
Chicago Cubs' agreement to send unhampered Sammy S. Baltimore Orioles high-ranking officials.

Associated Press  
Medical approval for sioner Bud players' remain unapproved officials' night, speculation of another.

The Cubs' substantial \$17 million season, the said. Sosa void his salary for 2006, the.

In exchange would receive baseman J. Jr. and prospects.

Sosa's contract option in 2006 million but contract was traded, he would become a 200 million buyout.

The play previously agent, Adair, voiding the.

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## Coahoma takes care of District 4-2A rival

By TROY HYDE

Sports Editor  
Coahoma's cardiac boy's basketball overcome another second half deficit Friday and went on to claim a four-point victory over District 4-2A rival Stamford (12-12, 2-3).



**SHIFFLETT**  
The Bulldogs trailed by four heading into the final quarter, but a 19-11 fourth quarter advantage propelled the Bulldogs to a 50-46 win.

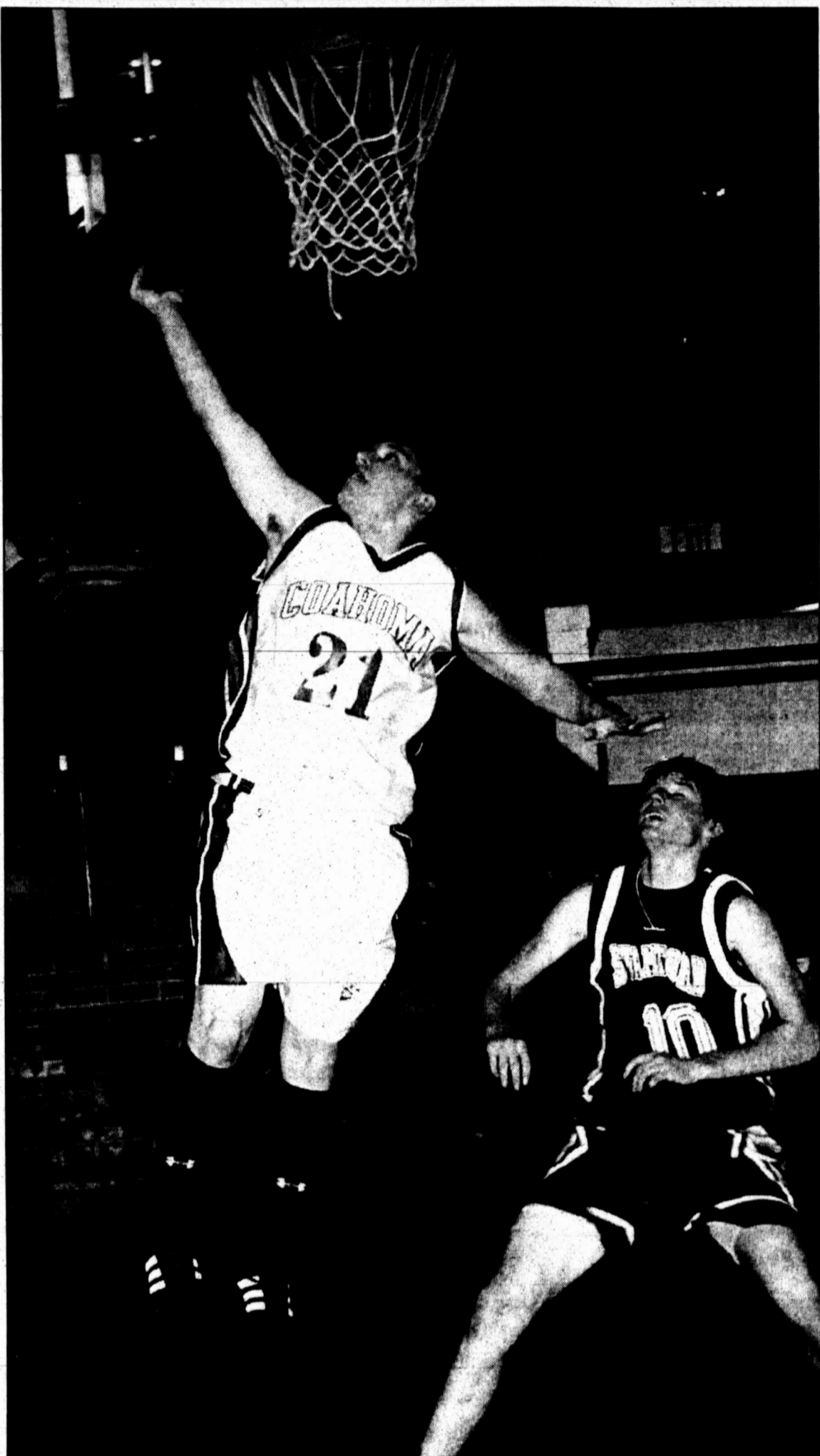
Coahoma (17-8, 4-1) trailed 14-6 after the first quarter before outscoring Stamford 15-9 in the second period.

Stamford controlled the third quarter with a 12-10 advantage, but Coahoma had enough gas in the tank to claim the win in the fourth.

Isaac Brewer led Coahoma with 12 points, with eight coming in the final quarter.

Darrick Shifflett connected on three 3-pointers and finished with 11 points, while Daniel Posey added eight points.

Coahoma travels to rival Stanton Tuesday. The girl's game begins at 6:30 p.m., while the boy's should tip-off around 8 p.m.



HERALD photo/Bruce Schooler  
Coahoma's Clint Walker goes up for an easy two during action in Coahoma Friday night as the Bulldogs came from behind to defeat rival Stamford, 50-46. The Bulldogs outscored their rivals 19-11 in the fourth quarter.

## Texas native will transfer following rape allegations

PROVO, Utah (AP) — Wide receiver Antwaun Harris, accused of lying to police investigating rape allegations against other Brigham Young football players, will transfer from BYU, the school announced.

The Garland native had 17 receptions for 149 yards last season.

He and defensive back Billy Skinner, 19, were suspended last month after lesser charges were lodged against them related to the rape investigation. Four other players were accused of rape and were suspended by BYU for one year.

The charge against Harris of providing false information to police is a second-degree felony.

"In response to the new direction this program is taking," Antwaun has decided to pursue his

football career at another university," coach Bronco Mendenhall said.

BYU said Harris is expected to transfer to a Division I-A program, while Skinner plans to play at Sam Houston State University, a I-AA school in Huntsville.

Skinner, 19, is charged with third-degree felony dealing in harmful material to a minor but will plead no contest Feb. 18 to a misdemeanor charge, attorneys said Tuesday. The action clears the way for him possibly to be called to testify in the trial of his ex-teammates.

Prosecutors contend that, four players gave vodka to a 17-year-old girl. They showed the girl a pornographic movie, then raped her after she passed out, the prosecutors allege.

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## Cubs ship slugging Sosa to Baltimore

By RONALD BLUM

AP Sports Writer  
NEW YORK (AP) — The Chicago Cubs were close to agreement on a trade to send unhappy slugger Sammy Sosa to the Baltimore Orioles, several high-ranking baseball officials told The Associated Press.

Medical tests and approval from commissioner Bud Selig and the players' association remain unresolved, the officials said Friday night, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The Cubs would pay a substantial part of Sosa's \$17 million salary this season, the executives said. Sosa would agree to void his salary scheduled for 2006, they also said.

In exchange, Chicago would receive second baseman Jerry Hairston Jr. and at least two prospects.

Sosa's contract gives the Cubs an \$18 million option in 2006 with a \$4.5 million buyout. But the contract says that if he is traded, his 2006 salary would become guaranteed and a 2007 club option would be added at \$19 million with a \$4.5 million buyout.

The players' association previously told Sosa's agent, Adam Katz, that voiding the 2006 salary

and 2007 option would not be a problem if Sosa is traded.

"I haven't spoken with anybody about the particulars, but from what I understand in all conversations what was being discussed was cleared a while back," said Gene Orza, the union's chief operating officer.

The teams had not finalized a deal, all the executives said. Selig's approval is necessary because the trade would involve the transfer of \$1 million or more. Sosa also must waive his no-trade clause.

Orioles executive vice president Jim Beattie and vice president Mike Flanagan could not be reached for comment. The Cubs spokeswoman Sharon Pannoza could

not be reached for comment and Katz declined to comment.

As late as Friday afternoon, the Cubs also were talking to the Washington Nationals about a deal to send Sosa to the new team in the nation's capital.

The Cubs have been looking for a taker for Sosa since the end of the season, when he skipped out on the finale at Wrigley Field.

Sosa initially claimed he didn't leave until the seventh inning, but the Cubs produced videotapes showing him leaving shortly after the game began and fined him \$87,500 — one day's salary.

Baltimore's interest intensified after the Orioles lost out on Carlos Delgado earlier this week.

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### When losing is everything

# One woman's story

By Karen Uhlenhuth

**(KRT)**  
KANSAS CITY, Mo. — For the first 14 years of their marriage, Michele and Ed Hopkins celebrated their anniversary with a weekend in Kansas City. There were picnics with cheese and wine. They shopped for after-Christmas bargains at Williams-Sonoma, taking home boxes of chocolate-peppermint bark. And they ate Krispy Kreme doughnuts. "We'd get 'em when they're hot," Michele said. "They take them straight out of the oil and plopp them in your box, and they melt in your mouth."

Their 15th anniversary that January would be different.

Michele, now 43, was about to say goodbye. Goodbye to the old Michele, goodbye to the food she loved — the Krispy Kremes, the chocolate-covered cherries, the wonderful Hollandaise sauce.

For a woman who was passionate about food, this breakup promised to be the most wrenching one of her life. She prayed that it would stick. Michele was tired of living as a fat lady.

Since her late teens, it's what she'd known. About a year ago, the 5-foot-5-inch Topeka, Kan., woman had weighed 274 pounds, and she wasn't enjoying life like she should. She skipped the second part of "The Lord of the Rings" because it hurt too much to squeeze in between the theater-seat armrests. If she didn't ice down her swollen knees and lie down for 10 or 12 hours after exercise, she couldn't walk the next day.

She'd tried to slim down. "I went to the Weight Loss Center," Michele said.

"I went to Jenny Craig. I went to my doctor numerous times. He always said, 'Eat less, exercise more.'"

"I did the Cambridge diet. I did five or six herbal things, multilevel things that my friends were involved in. I did Richard Simmons, Suzanne Somers, the Pritikin diet. I did the Weigh Down Diet through my church. I did 'Free to Be Thin' through my church. I went to Overeaters Anonymous. I did Atkins, Scarsdale, I did Dr. Whitaker's diet. The grapefruit diet. The cabbage soup diet. I tried Dexatrim.

"I tried a thing called AYDS gum. That was for your appetite. I tried Metabolife. I did fen-phen. Mixed berry fruit drink. I did Medifast and NutriMed. Seven hundred calories a day. And that was besides any diet I found in Family Circle or Woman's Day. I would do it for an extended time and do a lot of exercise."

After all that, she asked her husband, Ed, "Are you sure I tried hard enough?"

Hard enough to chuck the pills and diets and meal replacements? To try one last, drastic measure? To walk away from one of the great loves of her life and have her insides rearranged?

Gastric bypass surgery — arguably a complicated, risky procedure — was what she had in mind. If that didn't help her, she said, "There isn't anything else."

Treating the problem surgically was far from risk-free. Both Ed's and Michele's parents opposed the procedure at first, having heard and read about complications and deaths. Ed, now 59, feared he might be left to raise three young boys alone.

The boys worried that even if she survived, she'd be a different person, maybe too busy at the gym to spend time playing with them.

Michele prayed for wisdom and eventually arrived at "a real peace that this was the right thing to do."

In 2003, she began to plan for gastric bypass surgery, one of several surgical treatments for obesity. She went to three support groups for obesity-surgery patients. At Truman Medical Center in a room full of people weighing 400, 600, 800 pounds, she felt almost trim.

Seeing so many people on down the road that she herself was traveling was chilling.

She settled on the Bariatric Center of Kansas City, in Overland Park. Physicians Stanley Hoehn and Thomas Hitchcock did their first bariatric surgery in 2002 and their 240th procedure just recently. Demand has grown steadily here, as across the country. An estimated 40,000 bariatric surgeries will be performed in the United States this year, double that of five years ago.

Women who exceed ideal body weight by 20 percent double their risk of breast cancer. Attempts to lose weight using diet and drugs fail in 95 percent of cases. One in 200 gastric bypass surgery patients across the nation die from the operation. On average, people lose 75

percent of their excess body weight after gastric bypass. After the procedure, in which about 90 percent of the stomach and a section of the small intestine are removed, the tiny "pouch" that remains in place of the stomach can accommodate only a couple tablespoons of food.

"But you can stretch it if you try," Hitchcock told the group.

Michele knew she'd have to change her mindset. In fact, she already knew what she'd do and had even begun tinkering with recipes to tailor them specifically for people who've had gastric bypass surgery.

Thirteen days before the surgery, getting psyched for "the big game" was what Michele was doing during lunch at a Chinese restaurant.

"This rice, I'm not going to eat rice two weeks from now because it will swell up. And crab rangoon, I won't be eating that," Michele said. Ditto for Baskin Robbins ice-cream cake. Soda of any kind. And chocolate. "I'm having a hard time saying goodbye to chocolate."

Gastric bypass surgery is far from risk-free. Estimates of the death rate vary from the widely accepted one in 200 to several times that. It depends on the surgeon and hospital. Gastric bypass patients are at relatively high risk of death and major complications because they are, almost by definition, unhealthy.

Hoehn, Michele's surgeon, said none of his office's 250 weight-loss surgery patients has died. Although Michele and Ed were confident during surgery preparations that all would go well, tension built up in the days before.

Three days before surgery, Aaron, then 5, had said to his mother, "Good morning. I don't think you're going to die from surgery, but Matthew does."

Michele, too, had had her doubts.

"Three days ago she was real nervous about it and second-guessing herself," Ed said moments before Michele would be wheeled into the operating room. "But you have to ask yourself, 'If not this, then what?'" Ed kissed Michele three times, and she was taken away.

Michele swallowed her first mouthful of food 24 hours after surgery. A couple of spoonfuls of broth and sugar-free gelatin were all she could handle. The menu was repeated the next day, and the next, and the next.

A week after surgery she had a poached egg. No salt, just the egg.

"The best egg I ever had in my life," Michele said. Halfway through it, she was stuffed, couldn't eat another bite.

Nine days into her new life, Michele went in for her first check-up with Hoehn. It was weigh-in time, always the first item on the agenda for the office's bariatric patients. A small crowd gathered around for the first week's results, usually a dramatic point in this months-long process.

"Moment of truth," Michele mumbled as the red digital numbers flashed into triple digits, into the 200s, 250s, 255...256.

"Who's ever lost 17 pounds in a week?" a voice piped up.

Sitting on the examining table, Michele shared her fear with Hoehn, her surgeon.

"I'm afraid it will stop."

"It'll slow down," he assured her. Extremely rapid weight loss generally means losing water and sometimes muscle in addition to fat. It can lead to imbalances in electrolytes such as sodium and potassium.

IT'S GO, GO, GO

If Michele Hopkins never sees Winnie the Pooh again, it'll be too soon.

The same for Mickey Mouse. For decades, she'd worn cartoon characters emblazoned across her chest. Big women seem to be sentenced to a term of public humiliation wearing what Michele calls "the most God-awful clothes in the world."

But at long last, she has been sprung from the prison of cartoon attire, and everything that went with it, like the debilitating knee pain, the insulin-resistance problems and the derisive looks



KRT Photo/Tammy Ljungblad  
After losing 100 pounds, Michele Hopkins displays her size 26 jeans that once were a staple in her wardrobe.



KRT Photo/Tammy Ljungblad  
After losing nearly 100 pounds, Michele Hopkins is happy to sit for a new family portrait. Michele sits with husband Ed Hopkins, and sons Aaron, center back, Michael, right and Matthew, lower, front.



KRT Photo/Tammy Ljungblad  
Michael Hopkins, 11, gives mom Michele a big, all encompassing hug the day after her gastric bypass surgery while Matthew smiles.

from teen-age girls.

Everything about her life had been in a state of mostly marvelous upheaval. Today, a year since 90 percent of her stomach and 40 inches of her intestine were cut away, hers is a new life. She's 172 pounds and her sons have noticed.

Michael, 12: "She's a lot more energetic."

Matthew, 9: "She plays with me more. People treat her nicer, friends and people she meets."

Aaron, 6: "She looks nicer."

And Ed, her husband: "She's happier now. Even when there is stress, she has more joy and more peace."

The word "energy" has new meaning in Michele's post-surgery vocabulary. By 5:30 or 6 in the morning, she's out of bed and "ready to do something." At first light she's usually out for her four-mile hike. Bedtime isn't until 11 p.m. or so, two hours later than before her operation.

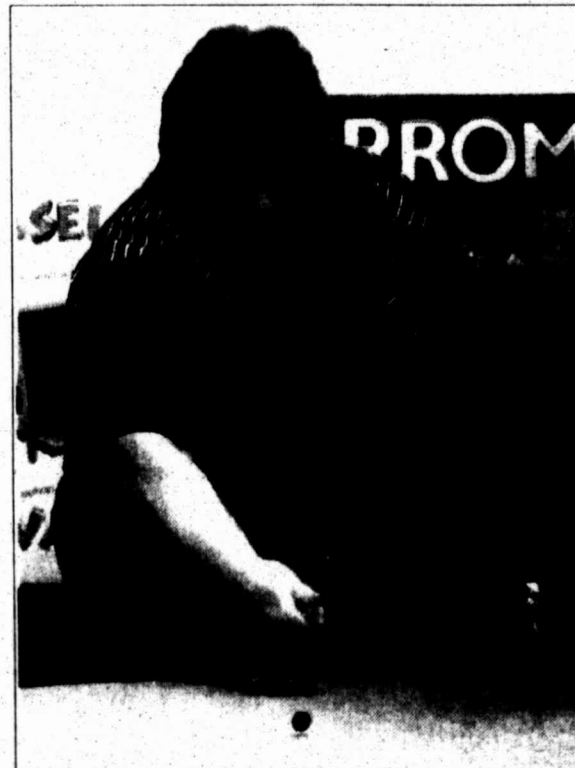
With a 102-pound weight loss behind her, Michele has begun to let go of the image of the old Michele, and started to imagine someone new, possibly even dressed in something sexy. She gave Ed a picture of herself standing in a park with her hands in her pockets. It doesn't sound remarkable, but it was.

"It's the only time I've given him a picture of just me," Michele said. "I wasn't embarrassed. And that's the first time."

Michele also appreciates being able "to get up and down like normal," to jump during a basketball game and to lay down on the floor for marbles.

"My boys say, 'We're so glad you got that surgery.' Michael said, 'I can tell you've lost weight. I can put my arms all the way around you and hold my wrists.'"

Gastric bypass patients on average shed 75 percent of their excess weight. Michele passed that point in early October when she weighed about 181 pounds. Somewhere between 12 and 18 months after surgery, two trend lines converge and the weight loss stops. As people get smaller, they burn fewer calories. At the same time, their new gas-



KRT Photo/Tammy Ljungblad  
On a visit to the Moon Marble Company in Bonner Springs, Kansas, Michele Hopkins gets down on the floor and shoots a marble as best she can despite her obesity.

trointestinal systems stabilize and they learn to eat more. Eventually they're eating as much as their bodies use, but it's hoped no more.

Michele keeps a rough tally in her head of what she has eaten so she doesn't exceed her self-imposed limit of 700 calories a day. Michele understands the impulse to cheat.

"I was eating carbs for a while," she said. "Chips and salsa when we went out. Then I'd eat the taco shell. I was eating cheese and I got tired of it, so I ate some crackers. I thought, 'I'd better quit that.'"

Even weighing a respectable 172 pounds, even though she's developed a healthier way of eating and a happier way of living, Michele fears the weight she's lost will find her again.

The fat woman of her dreams is never going away.

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**Births**



**Koby John Nichols**

**K**oby John Nichols, a boy, was born Jan. 5, 2005, at 5:01 a.m. weighing 7 pounds, 3 ounces and was 19 1/2 inches long. His parents are John Paul and Kristen Nichols. His grandparents are Wesley and Betty Thixton and Bob and Pam Nichols.

and Ila Sullivan and Tanya Beck.



**Nolan Tate Park**

**N**olan Tate Park, a boy, was born Jan. 8, 2005, at 11:26 a.m. weighing 7 pounds, 1 ounce and was 20 inches long. His parents are Dave and Stacey Park of Forsan.

His grandparents are Pat and Jennifer Carnahan of Coahoma and Steve and Judy Park of Forsan.

His great-grandparents are Theda Carnahan of Coahoma, the late W.C. and Ruby Clanton and the late Henry and Estill Park. He was welcomed home by his sister, Alex and brothers, Ian and Walker.

**A**licia Faith Arriaga, a girl, was born Jan. 19, 2005, at 2:23 p.m. weigh-

ing 7 pounds, 5 ounces and was 20 inches long. Her parents are Sonia Leos and Manuel Arriaga. Her grandparents are Eva Leos, Carlos Leos, Alicia Morales and Fernando Arriaga, all of Big Spring. She was welcomed home by Isaiah Manuel Leos.

**M**ikaela Lea Estrella, a girl, was born Jan. 23, 2005, at 10:27 p.m. weighing 6 pounds, 1/2 ounce. Her parents are Esequiel Estrella and Christina Kistler. Her grandparents are Paul and Carla Kistler of Big Spring and Joel and Carmen Estrella of Coahoma.



**Ryan Seth Payne**

**R**yan Seth Payne, a boy, was born Dec. 29, 2005, at 3:04 a.m. weighing 7 pounds, 9 ounces and was 20 inches long.

His parents are Jennifer Jane Payne and Jason Wayne Carey.

His grandparents are the late Regina Ann Payne, Yvonne Qualls and the late Billy Payne.

**A**lexis Chere Smith, a girl, was born Jan. 18, 2005, at 6:27 a.m. weighing 8 pounds, 10 ounces and was 21 inches long. Her parents are Lauren and Zach Smith. Her grandparents are Kim Carroll of Cleveland and Gail Smith of Colorado City. Her great-grandmother is Susan Lawhon-Kraynik and her great-great grandmother is Margaret Lawhon.

**B**arbara Irene Wittrein, a girl, was born Jan. 16, 2005, at 1:45 p.m. weighing 6 pounds, 7 ounces and was 21 inches long. Her parents are Patricia Sullivan of Garden City and David Wittrein of Riverside, Calif. Her grandparents are Robert

**T**ed Tony Diaz, a boy, was born Jan. 13, 2005, at 6:47 p.m. weighing 7 pounds, 14 ounces and was 21 inches long. His parents are Brittany Escanuela and Ted Martinez. His grandparents are Linda Gonaes and Alex Franco, Alex Escanuela Jr., Abram and Barbara Zuniga and Thelolo Diaz.



**Ted Tony Diaz**

*Paid announcement*

**Club News**

Continued From Page 2C

the upcoming 106th annual state conference. Mary Schuelke, Sara Tipton, Carole Lawson and Sue Ann Damron were elected alternates.

The members voted for Librarian Lora Mae Pollard to purchase books for the genealogical section of the Howard County Library in memory of members Doris Lanham and Kathaleen Elliott and member Lola Kelley's husband, Altus Kelley.

Janie Harrison was admitted as our newest member.

The chapter was invited to attend the Armed Service Award Ceremony at Goodfellow Air Force Base in San Angelo Jan. 25th.

Members were asked to bring anyone who is interested in becoming a member to our February meeting.

Julia Cauble Smith will be giving a program about the past uses of cloth sacks titled, "Use It Up, Wear It Out, Make It Do or Do Without."

The meeting will be at 11:30 a.m. in the Big Spring Country Club Feb. 12.

**Big Spring Shrine Club**  
The Big Spring Shrine

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Club met Jan. 14 with about 60 Nobles, Ladies and guests.

Club president James Hughes opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m. Treasurer Jack Taylor posted the financial report on the board.

Potestate-elect Dave Smelser talked about the upcoming Potestates Ball Feb. 12 at the Holiday Inn in Midland. The theme is Mardi Gras.

Smelser presented Noble Howard Smith with his 50 year pin.

The Signal Peak Shrine Golf Classic is July 15-16 at the Big Spring Country Club.

The next meeting for the club is Feb. 19.

**Texas Retired Teachers Association**

The Texas Retired Teachers Association, District XVII will host a Pre-Retirement Seminar for all teachers and school personnel in the TRS system Feb. 5 at the Abell Junior High School in Midland. This seminar is designed for those planning to retire within the next five years. Resource speakers include TRS representatives, a Social Security representative, investment, legal assistance and insurance speakers.

For additional information, contact Janice Bond, 432-263-4033.

**Who's Who**

**Raney, Griffin**

Brittney Raney from Big Spring and Daniel Griffin from Coahoma have been named to the Dean's Honor Lists for the fall 2004 semester at South Plains College.

Students named to the Dean's Honor List must maintain a minimum 3.25 GPA while carrying at least 12 semester hours of college-level work with no failing grades.



**Steven Daniel Barraza**

Steven Barraza, 2004 graduate of Sands High School, has been named to the Dean's List for the fall semester at Angelo State University in San Angelo.

Steven maintained a 4.0 grade point average for the fall term. He ran Cross Country last fall for ASU and will run track this spring semester.

Steven is the son of Robin and Debbie Barraza of Ackerly and

the grandson of Joaquin and Mary Barraza of Ackerly and Irene J. Perez of San Angelo.

**Brandon Tant**

Brandon Tant of Big Spring has been named a finalist for the 2005 Texas Christian University Youth Entrepreneur of the Year Award. Presented by the Neeley Entrepreneurship Program at TCU, the award recognizes high school entrepreneurs for their successes in business.

Tant is part of the three-member Christian rock band Crimson Soul. The band anticipates the release of a new album in the summer of 2005, with plans to showcase the release to major record labels.

**Lucciola Gonzalez**

Luccila Gonzalez of Garden City was awarded a bachelor's degree in business administration from Sam Houston State University in December 2004. Sam Houston State University is located in Huntsville. For information about the university, please visit [www.shsu.edu](http://www.shsu.edu).

**Cassandra Joy Willis**

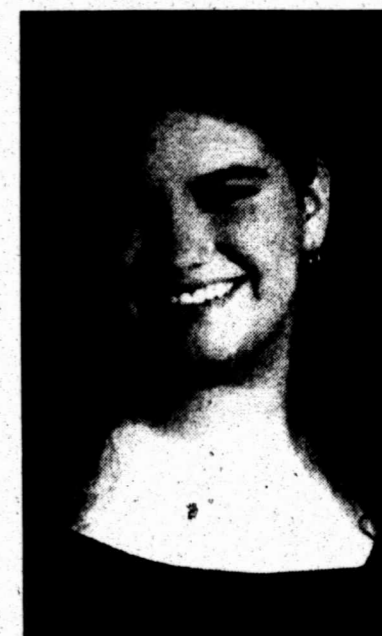
Cassandra Joy Willis of Big Spring has been selected as a scholarship recipient at McMurry University. She is the

daughter of Joyce and Scott Willis of Big Spring.

Founded in 1923 by the United Methodist Church and offering bachelor's degrees in the fine arts, humanities, social and natural sciences, business, education and nursing. A senior at Big Spring High School, she was recently featured in Who's Who Among American High School Students for the third time. She will study elementary education.

**Matthew Andrews**

Matthew Andrews of Big Spring was named to the Fall 2004 Honor Roll at Oklahoma State University. A total of 4,240 students were named to the Fall 2004 honor rolls.



**Cassandra Joy Willis**

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**JAN 29 2005**



## Wedding location, invitation should reflect bride and groom

Three of the most important words for a soon-to-be bride and groom are location, location, and location. And then it's time to move on to invitation, invitation, and invitation. A poorly chosen location can turn the wedding of your dreams into a nightmare: One episode of "Wedding Disasters" will confirm this. Careful planning and lots of help from reliable friends and relatives are probably the best ways to avoid ending up with a very exciting wedding video, but some equally traumatic memories of that special day. In an around Big Spring, our wonderful weather leads many people outdoors when it comes time for nuptial ceremonies. And some of the local parks are obvious choices for both a beautiful - and affordable - setting.

"Whatever makes people happy," said Terry Telchik, of the city of Big Spring parks department. The city keeps a rose trellis in Comanche Trail Park just for special occasions, and couples should call the parks department to let them know if you want to use it. There is no charge. Similarly, there is no fee for the very popular historic spring site that has lent local flavor to countless weddings. But call and let the city know your plans to avoid double-booking and ensure maintenance work or trash won't mar your ceremony. Got a larger event in mind? The Comanche Trail Park Amphitheater will hold a crowd. It should be reserved in advance, and it costs \$200 plus a \$200 deposit. Book the nearby Old Settlers Pavilion for only \$25, a location suitable for the wedding and reception afterwards. The new Heart of the City Park in downtown Big Spring, which has a covered area in case of rain, is free, as are all the neighborhood parks such as Jefferson Park, Dr. Morgan, ABC and Birdwell parks.

Telchik said she has heard of weddings being held in many other locations throughout the city, including the Railroad Plaza and green areas or totem poles inside the park. Few if any have chosen the golf course, but who knows - for a couple who met on the greens, what more perfect spot to marry? "Each person chooses their own place, and that's how it should be," Telchik said. Ron Alton wishes more people would consider Big Spring State Park as a potential wedding location. "We've got an incredible view and all the facilities they need," he said. The view from the top of the bluff is spectacular and unique - and the price is right: Rental of the pavilion at the top is only \$25 for all day. Of course guests without park entrance passes would need to pay an entry fee, but estimate your guest list and Alton will arrange to let you pay as a group in advance. Once you've got the location nailed down, and reserved, then its on to other important things, such as how to let people know your plans. How you announce the event sets the tone for the entire

wedding, a local expert said. "From casual to formal, not anymore." Current wedding invitations might include a picture of the bride and groom. They might contain embellishments such as ribbons, metallic accents or even feathers. And the most formal might be edged with rich velvet. The most avant-garde couple today might send out DVDs instead of the traditional paper. Whatever method you use, you should have it chosen about six months ahead of the wedding date, Barr said. Planning a wedding in Vegas, Aruba or even a Colorado ski resort? Whatever your destination, let people know in plenty of time by send-

ing out "Save the Date" notices three or four months ahead. The wording might read as simply as "Save the Date. We're planning our wedding in Jamaica. Invitation to follow." Barr said the idea is to let people know what's coming so they can make plans. Then the wedding invitation will follow about six weeks before the wedding. Weddings are not just one event, and Barr doesn't stock just one type of invitation, either. There are a myriad of gatherings, from showers to rehearsal dinners to bachelor parties to barbecues that might go along. And each event has its own unique guest list, and needs its own invitation. Perhaps you need a casual western-themed invitation for the barbecue, but your mother wants a more formal notice for the bridal luncheon. Let each invitation speak for the event it announces. And above all, remember, the invitation should say something about the couple and their wedding. "It is their wedding, and they should have what they want," Barr said, "not what anyone else thinks is right for them." For a look at dozens of invitation styles, contact Barr at Elrod's, 267-8491.

(This article was contributed by Debbie Jensen, former Herald Staff Writer)



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Workforce 'on the

By STEVE REA  
Staff Writer

Telethons he of people with needs. The J Workforce Ne decided to se work for the u also. The local wo work and oth of the Perr Workforce D Board will p: KWES-TV (ch Thursday eve first-ever Job- The event, run from 3 p. is an attem regional agency to c seekers with

Texas youth seeki

Texas call fo this y "Our core c camps stress and conserva resources," s Rollins, Extel specialist anc of the camps. these skills i interesting a focus on a pa species at ea game animal nucleus of th which typica youth ages 13 old."

This year's — The "Ba: June 5-9 at, 1 Bastrop; — "South 7 June 12-16 at Carrizo Spri — "Rolling June 18-22 at Lueders; — "South 7 June 26-30 at — "North 7 July 17-21 at Albany; and — "Feathe 24-28 at Pine Center, Lufk "This mar: Brigades car siasm and c ous camp co impress me, "There's a contemplati agement. Th a great intr in such a ca duce them t fessionals w on down th "While we that include our core me today's you with height natural res

See BRIGAD



# Job a Thon

Workforce Network to go 'on the air' for unemployed

By STEVE REAGAN  
Staff Writer

Telethons help all sorts of people with all sorts of needs. The Big Spring Workforce Network has decided to see if they'll work for the unemployed, also.

The local workforce network and other members of the Permian Basin Workforce Development Board will partner with KWES-TV (channel 9) on Thursday evening for the first-ever Job-A-Thon.

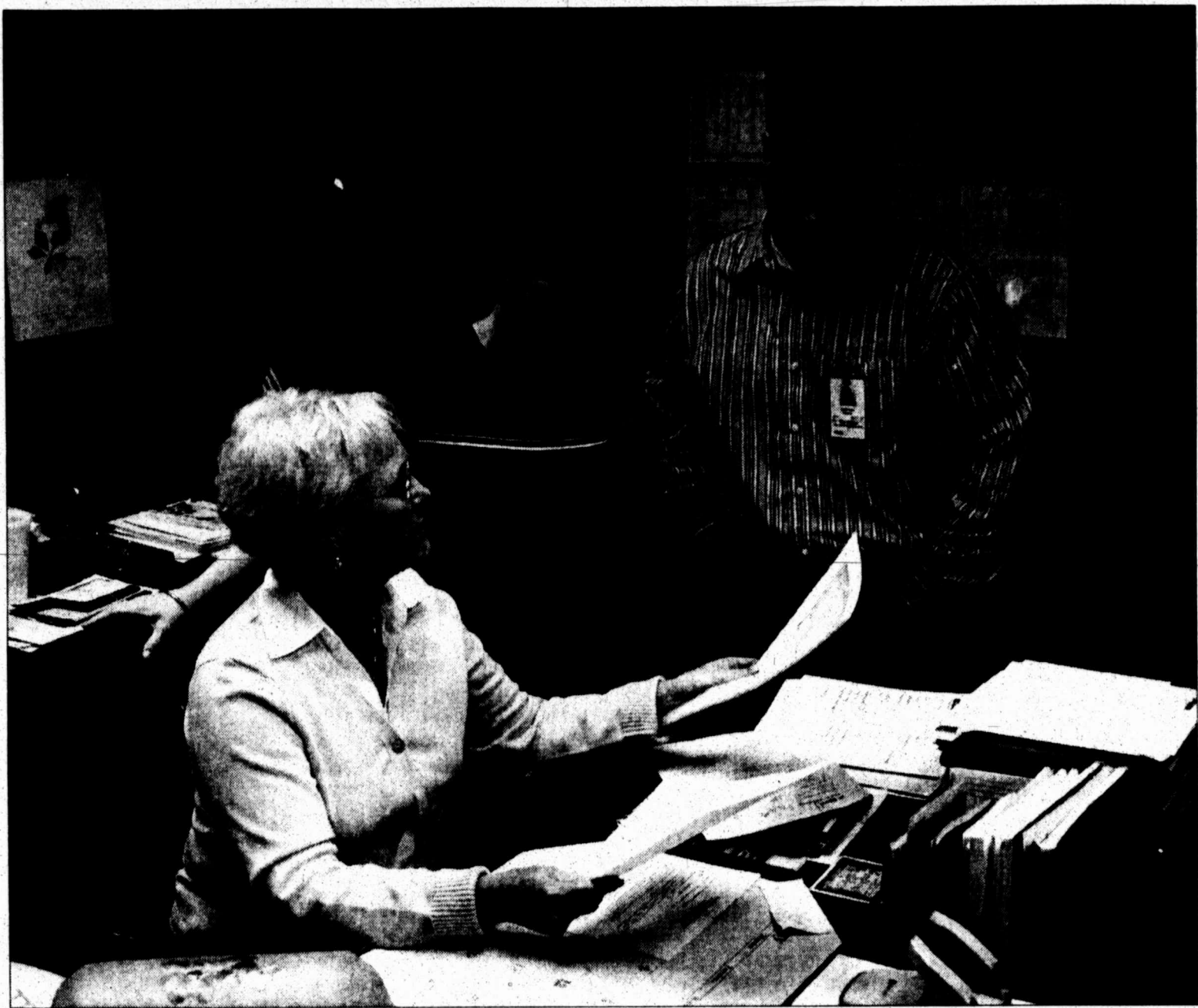
The event, which will run from 3 p.m. to 10:30, is an attempt by the regional workforce agency to connect job-seekers with prospective

employers, said Mary Gregg, assistant area manager for the local workforce office.

"We're trying to reach job-seekers, but we're also trying to reach employers, as well," Gregg said. "We're really encouraging employers to list their openings with us so we can get that information out there for them."

More than 70 job listings are available in the Big Spring area alone, said Carla Gross, business service representative for the local office.

During the telethon, job-seekers can call, seeking information on specific jobs in specific areas.



HERALD photo/Thomas Jenkins  
Mary Gregg, assistant area manager for Big Spring Workforce Network, left, goes over a list of job postings with Business Service Representatives Adrian Calvio and Carla Gross. The Big Spring branch of the Texas Workforce Commission will advertise the openings during its first-ever Job-A-Thon, slated for Thursday from 3 p.m. until 10:30 p.m. on KWES-TV Channel 9.

"You tell them what area you're looking in — whether it's Big Spring or Stanton or wherever — and what type of work you're looking for," Gregg said. "And we'll be able to tell you if we have any jobs available in that

area." Before calling, job-seekers need to register on the workforce's website (www.workintexas.com). That can be done either at home, or at the local workforce office at 310 Owens St., Gregg said.

If representatives have an available listing, they will refer the job-seeker to the specific center which has posted the opening. No confidential information will be released over the phone, Gregg said. For more information

on the Job-A-Thon, contact the local workforce office at 263-8373.

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

## Texas Brigades youth camps seeking recruits

Texas Cooperative Extension's Texas Brigades is sounding the call for cadets to participate in this year's summer camps.

"Our core curriculum for all the camps stresses leadership development and conservation of our natural resources," said Dr. Dale Rollins, Extension wildlife specialist and originator of the camps. "We fashion these skills into fun and interesting activities that focus on a particular game species at each camp. The game animals form the nucleus of the camps, which typically involve 30 youth ages 13-17 years old."



TOMMY YEATER

- This year's camps are:
- The "Bass Brigade," June 5-9 at McKinney Roughs near Bastrop;
  - "South Texas Buckskin Brigade," June 12-16 at La Bandera Ranch near Carrizo Springs;
  - "Rolling Plains Bobwhite Brigade," June 18-22 at Krooked River Ranch near Lueders;
  - "South Texas Bobwhite Brigade," June 26-30 at 74 Ranch at Pleasanton;
  - "North Texas Buckskin Brigade," July 17-21 at Stasney's Cook Ranch near Albany; and
  - "Feathered Forces Brigade," July 24-28 at Pineywoods Conservation Center, Lufkin.

"This marks our 13th year of the Brigades camps, and the level of enthusiasm and commitment among our various camp committees continues to impress me," said Rollins.

"There's a lot of kids out there today contemplating a career in wildlife management. These camps offer such youth a great introduction to what's involved in such a career. The camps also introduce them to a network of wildlife professionals who can be helpful to them on down the road."

"While we involve hands-on activities that include hunting and fishing skills, our core message is one of getting today's youth to appreciate and judge with heightened awareness our state's natural resources," Rollins said.

See BRIGADE, Page 6C



KRT photo/Mark Bialek, Detroit Free Press  
Bert and Theresa Sherman pose in their East Grand Rapids, Mich., home. The couple quit their jobs four years ago and spent 16 months crisscrossing North America.

## Sabbatical proved what they needed: each other

By JOE GUY COLLIER

Knight Ridder Newspapers

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — Bert and Theresa Sherman sit at the kitchen table in their Grand Rapids home — Domino's pizza spread across the counter; their dog Shadow, a Lab mix, sprawled out on the linoleum floor.

"He goes everywhere with me," Theresa says. "If I'm in the car, he's in the car."

A few years ago, the Shermans, now both in their 30s, were too busy to take care of a dog. Bert was running his own engineering company. As a manager at Ford Motor Co., Theresa was gone most weeks visiting car dealerships.

With the stresses of daily life mounting, the Shermans decided to take a break. They quit their jobs, sold their house and hit the road, with no set agenda, in a Ford pickup truck and 19-foot camper. They created a sabbatical from work and real life.

"I wanted to get my priorities

straight," Theresa says. "I wasn't really happy. I loved Bert. I loved success. I loved doing well. But I was never with my husband. I thought, 'I don't want to do this for the rest of my life.'"

The Shermans aren't the only ones who needed a break. Formal sabbaticals are rare outside the academic sector, but experts say more people in the business world are seeking time to reassess their lives.

They're working longer hours, moving up in their careers and not feeling satisfied, says Mary Lou Quinlan, author of "Time Off for Good Behavior" (Broadway Books, \$23.95). The book tells the stories of 37 women who took time off from work.

"In this modern world, what we're talking about is a remedy so you can get your mojo back," Quinlan says.

When the Shermans decided to take their sabbatical, friends and family told them they were

See SABBATICAL, Page 6C

## Protecting Texas businesses from unfair regulations

by JOSEPH SHEPARD

West Texas small businesses and related associations will have an opportunity Monday to comment on unfair or excessive enforcement actions taken by federal regulators at a Regulatory Fairness Board Hearing in Lubbock.

The U.S. Small Business Administration's (SBA) Regulatory Fairness Board and National Ombudsman will receive comments at Texas Tech University. The public hearing will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. in the Animal and Food Sciences Building, Room 101.

Small businesses are invited to express their concerns and experiences about the

costs and frustrations of complying with federal regulations. Comments from previous hearings have included examples of oppressive inspections, excessive fines, unwarranted penalties, retaliatory behavior, redundant audits and unfair actions taken by federal agencies. After receiving testimony and comments at the hearing, the Ombudsman's Office will perform a high-level review of all substantiated claims. An annual report will also be sent to Congress grading, from A to F, each federal agency's responsiveness to the comments received from the Ombudsman's Office. Congress uses the report to help it monitor the relationship between small businesses and the federal agencies

that regulate them.

The Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act (SBREFA) of 1996 created the independent Board and Ombudsman. Through this legislation, the President and the United States Congress have authorized the Board and Ombudsman to oversee federal regulatory enforcement activities on small businesses. Congress passed SBREFA because of the vital role small businesses play in creating jobs and growing the American economy.

Improving the regulatory environment in which small businesses operate is heavily dependent on small businesses providing comments about their encounters with federal agencies. To achieve a fair

balance between necessary and excessive regulatory enforcement, small business owners must share their experiences, concerns and ideas. If necessary, Congress can then use its lawmaking authority to change excessive enforcement practices that may threaten jobs and growth.

To register for the hearing, contact Kay Lewis at the SBA Lubbock District Office by telephone at (806) 472-7462 or by e-mail at Phyllis.Lewis@sba.gov.

This is the only hearing scheduled in Texas during 2005.

For more information about Board hearings or the SBA Ombudsman's Office, visit www.sba.gov/ombudsman or call 888-REG-FAIR.

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**License/Certification:** Must have ARRT certification and registered DMS.  
**Title:** Director Emergency Department - Full-Time  
**Description:** The Director shall be responsible for planning and management of the patient care services of the Emergency Department. To provide leadership in the practice of nursing, emphasizing quality patient care, education, and research. To assist in coordination between administration and patient care activities consistent with Big Bend Regional Medical Center and Community Health Systems' mission and goal statements.  
**Qualifications:**  
**Education:** Graduate of an approved school of nursing. Bachelors Degree preferred or equivalent experience and/or appropriate certification.  
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- Business related travel and lodging paid by Loram

Along with having a mechanical aptitude, all applicants must take and pass a pre-employment physical/drug and alcohol screen. A high school diploma/GED and a current/valid driver's license is preferred, but not required. Interested applicants should contact the Texas Workforce Center, located at 310 Owens St., in Big Spring.

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West Texas Centers for MHMR  
Clerk: High School Diploma or GED required. Duties include maintaining files of confidential materials and avoiding reference of confidential information, tact in receiving visitors, and judgment in assembling information. Benefits. Salary \$7.28-\$7.71 hr. \$15,132.00-\$16,044.00 annually. Salary dependent on experience. Applications may be obtained at 409 Rannels or by calling Job line at 1-800-687-2769 or [www.wtcmhmr.org](http://www.wtcmhmr.org). EOE

**ALON USA**  
Operations Trainee  
The Alon USA Refinery in Big Spring, Texas has an Operations Trainee position available. Applicants should possess one of the following: (1) 60 hours of college credit (2) completion of a Chemical Process Technician or similar program or (3) five years of relevant work experience. All new hires will be required to progress through a level certification program and achieve a minimum Level III certification proficiency within two years.  
Qualified applicants should mail or fax a resume to:  
**Alon USA**  
Human Resources Department  
P.O. Box 1311  
Big Spring, Texas 79721  
Fax # 432-263-9366  
Equal Employment Opportunity - M/F

**NURSING PROFESSIONALS NEEDED**  
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• Certified Medication Aides  
• Certified Nurses Aides  
We offer an excellent salary and benefits are available. If you are a person dedicated to providing quality care please send a current resume or contact:  
**Stanton Nursing and Rehabilitation, L.P.**  
1100 West Broadway, Stanton, TX. 79782  
PH: (432) 756-2841 FX: (432) 756-2190  
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or 505-397-2411  
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**Automation Technician - Andrews, Texas**  
Lead Field Tech responsible for all aspects of design, installation and maintenance of field automation equipment. Strong knowledge of PLC programming, installation and troubleshooting end devices, radios, pneumatic instrumentation, and installation and maintenance of production equipment required. Please send resume to:  
[atech@umcautomation.com](mailto:atech@umcautomation.com)  
**Applications Engineer - Andrews, Texas**  
Prepare quotations, estimate material and labor cost, and delivery time for Vapor Recovery Units and Compressor Packages. Calculate compressor and horsepower requirements for each project based on customer specifications. Supervise drafting department and oversee design of mechanical, electrical, and structural design of various types of compressor packages. Prepare Bills of materials for purchasing and fabrication. Work with customers and engineers to insure proper design and fabrication of equipment. Please send resume to: [appeng@umcautomation.com](mailto:appeng@umcautomation.com)  
**Electronics Assembler - Andrews, Texas**  
Responsible for board level assembly of electronic devices. Requires detailed soldering, handling and identification of electronic components. Please send resume to: [eleca@umcautomation.com](mailto:eleca@umcautomation.com)  
Looking for motivated team players. Great benefits including 401(k), paid vacation & holidays, and medical/dental/life insurance.  
Email preferred, but may FAX resumes to: 432-897-4203 or  
MAIL: PO Box 113 • Andrews, Texas 79714

**PRODUCTION FOREMAN**  
Samson, a large, aggressive, independent energy company with both domestic and international operations, is seeking a Production Foreman for its Midland operations.  
Job responsibilities include supervision of construction projects and performance of facilities maintenance, as well as responsibilities for production operations in the District.  
Qualifications include:  
• 5+ years general field production experience  
• Field supervision experience  
• Surface production and equipment experience  
• Workover rig and hydraulic fracturing experience a plus  
• Good math and mechanical aptitude  
• Good driving and safety record  
Samson offers an attractive compensation and benefits package. Qualified candidates are invited to apply online at [www.samson.com](http://www.samson.com) or send their resume to:  
**SAMSON**  
Dept. HR - GP 1/05  
Two West Second Street  
Tulsa, Oklahoma 74103-3103  
Fax: (918) 591-1704  
Email: [samsonhr@samson.com](mailto:samsonhr@samson.com)  
Web Site: [www.samson.com](http://www.samson.com)  
Samson is an equal opportunity employer and promotes a drug free environment. Due to ever increasing record-keeping and reporting requirements, our policy is not to accept unsolicited applications or resumes or applications or resumes that do not meet minimum qualifications. Unsolicited applications and resumes and applications and resumes that do not meet minimum qualifications are not retained and will not be considered when making employment decisions.  
EOE/M/F/D/V  
For information about other employment opportunities, please call Samson's Job Line at 918-591-7500.  
No Agencies Please.

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