**Elementary schools honor veterans**

The Rural Utilities Service Distance Learning and Telemedicine grants will fund 71 recipients totaling more than $27 million for educational and medical services. A complete list of 2003 recipients is available at http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/2003.htm.

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**WASHINGTON** - Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman has announced more than $75 million for economic development, energy and infrastructure projects to help spur investment and create new jobs in rural communities throughout the United States.

These grants will bring new economic opportunities and job creation for rural America,” said Veneman. “The Bush administration continues to increase investment in health care, education, value-added processing and rural infrastructure which is providing renewed growth to these important sectors of our economy.”

The Rural Business-Cooperative Service Value-Added Agricultural Product Market Development grants announced today support two of President Bush’s pillar initiatives: economic growth and energy. These 231 grants in 43 states total over $37 million and will fund a variety of agricultural ventures such as renewable energy, agri-marketing, high-value products from major crops and commodities. These 35 projects total more than $7.2 million and will foster development of alternative energy sources. Recipients are required to obtain matching funds which will double the impact of the USDA grants. Funding of individual recipients is contingent upon meeting the conditions of the grant agreement. For information on applying for 2003 value-added grants visit: http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/vad.htm.

The Rural Utilities Service Distance Learning and Telemedicine grants will fund 71 recipients totaling more than $27 million for educational and medical services. A complete list of 2003 recipients is available at http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/2003.htm.

These programs will help create jobs and economic investment in rural areas through direct investment and housing availability. Recipients are required to obtain matching funds which will double the impact of the USDA grants. Funding of individual recipients will be contingent upon meeting the conditions of the grant agreement. For information on applying for 2003 funding availability and applications please visit http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/rds/index.htm.

“This grant programs are important to

**Campestro Elementary celebrates 20 years**

SOCORRO — Socorro ISD’s Campestro Elementary School was the easternmost of the District’s campuses when it was built 20 years ago and dedicated Nov. 3, 1982. And it still is, says current Director of Administrative Services, Lorenzo Nieto, who was assistant principal of the campus in 1982.

The school celebrated the anniversary Oct. 31 with a colorful, southbound parade along Passmore Street. The procession included police and fire vehicles from the City of Socorro, toured trailers carrying hay bales and orange, and German families, and is temporarily re-located at 13889 Horizon Blvd. until other suitable office space is located. The telephone and fax numbers remain the same. Anyone having difficulty finding the location is encouraged to call for directions at 852-3235. Apologies are extended for any inconvenience this may cause. Additionally, the Courier office will be closed from Wednesday, Nov. 13-15, and will reopen on Monday, Nov. 18.

**Gas rate increase**

Southern Union Gas Co. customers can expect higher heating bills over the next few months as compared to last year, according to a Southern Union Gas Co. (SUG) spokesperson.

The 16 percent increase, short of the 19 percent predicted by the Federal Department of Energy, is due to colder weather predictions and tensions in the Middle East, said David Stevens, SUG president. For November, the price will be $4.11 to 4.17 cents per cubic foot.

Customers can sign up by logging on at www.sugas.com or calling SUG.

**Program honored**

Alfonso Borrego Sr. Elementary has been recognized by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) for successfully educating its migrant students. TEA’s Division of Migrant Education has selected Alfonso Borrego Sr. Elementary as a winner of the 2002 Recognized Campus Award given to school districts and campuses that had high TAAS passing rates among their migrant students.

**$75 million in grants available to improve economic picture for rural communities**

The USDA grants will help improve the economic picture for rural communities. TEA’s Division of Migrant Education has selected Alfonso Borrego Sr. Elementary as a winner of the 2002 Recognized Campus Award given to school districts and campuses that had high TAAS passing rates among their migrant students.

**In other news**

- The Socorro ISD board of trustees met Nov. 6, hiring Ray & Associates, Inc. to perform the search for the district’s next superintendent.
- Today’s Director of Administrative Services, Lorenzo Nieto, was assistant principal of the campus in 1982.
- The school celebrated the anniversary Oct. 31 with a colorful, southbound parade along Passmore Street. The procession included police and fire vehicles from the City of Socorro, showed off trailers carrying hay bales and orange, and German families, and is temporarily re-located at 13889 Horizon Blvd. until other suitable office space is located. The telephone and fax numbers remain the same. Anyone having difficulty finding the location is encouraged to call for directions at 852-3235. Apologies are extended for any inconvenience this may cause. Additionally, the Courier office will be closed from Wednesday, Nov. 13-15, and will reopen on Monday, Nov. 18.

**It is a grand person indeed who can laugh at himself with others and enjoy it as much as they do.** — Quips and Quotes
One perspective
By Francis Shrum

A glittering bill of goods

“Excuse me, miss, you’ve made a mistake. You charged me twice for this gallon of milk.”

“Oh, no, that’s no mistake. That’s our new policy. You see, the farmers are having a hard time with their new milking machines. Most of the time they waste the first gallon. So we’re helping them out by charging you twice so they don’t lose money.”

Boy, would the average consumer eat the roof! Who do these folks think they are? Charging me twice for a product just because they can’t get it right the first time!

Well, the above-described scenario isn’t all that far-fetched. It happens everyday in colleges and universities from sea to shining sea. We are paying twice to educate kids who don’t do their work in high school and must be given remediation classes when they get to college. In fact, some kids who can’t even read the newspaper are being accepted into universities so we can teach them how.

Somehow this does not compute.

According to John Cloud, writing in an October issue of Time magazine, 600,000 freshmen in U.S. colleges — about 29 percent of the total — need at least one remedial course before they are up to snuff.

Some high schools have recently started presenting a program called “Make High School Count.” Now I’ve not attended one of these programs so I can’t say first hand how effective they are or attest to their success, but I understand they are highly rated by counselors, and I have to say, the idea makes a lot of sense.

I don’t buy the idea that kids who slough off their high school years must be admitted into higher level universities or else they won’t pursue higher education at all. I think that’s cold baloney on a stale piece of Wonder bread. Either you want your education badly enough to do what it takes to get it, or you don’t.

One fellow quoted by Cloud in the Times article cautioned that if universities begin charging for remedial classes (horribly gasp from the audience) or sending these students to junior college for remediation (equally horrified gasp sucks all remaining oxygen from the atmosphere) that they will be “demoralized” and it will “take some of their pride.”

May I respectfully submit that too much pride is a big part of the problem in the first place? If a little of it goes by the wayside, both the students and the educational establishment will be better off.

I also don’t buy the idea that the reason some kids wind up needing remedial classes is because they aren’t as bright or motivated as their classmates or because they don’t have all kinds of support and opportunity in high school but just didn’t want to put out the effort. Ditching class to smoke in the bathroom or hanging out down by the railroad tracks is a whole lot more interesting and not half the effort.

There is also a sad truth that thousands of dollars in grant assistance is given to remedial students every year for classes which they find are still just as dull and boring as they were in high school and still aren’t going to put out the effort.

Before the 60s-born farce that giving everyone a college degree was more interesting and not half the effort.

For Sanity’s Sake
By Taprina Milburn

Advice on parenting? I’m laughing as I type that sentence.

It’s not that I don’t know anything about parenting — I’ve been one for almost 10 years. I know how to trick my kids into eating their vegetables by hiding grated carrots in muffins or spinach in casserole, and I used to know how to pace a floor, justo a colicky baby “just so” until he fell asleep.

What my friend really wants to hear is the edited, easy-as-pie version of my parenthood experience. This is her baby, after all. Remember those blissful, baby days?

She wants to know how to make this precious baby-on-the-way be a by-the-book baby — a good sleeper, content and one that seldom cries, and if it isn’t too much to ask, one that doesn’t mess up the house and who will always call her blessed. Didn’t we all order children like that?

I’d love to give her nice and tidy parenting advice, but she’ll have to solicit other friends for that. My stories are jumbled, full of detours and are anything but by-the-book.

Regardless, here’s my rough draft of the pointers I’ll share with her.

• Once the child is five, you may begin to get eight hours of sleep again. Until then, learn to power nap (a good multi-vitamin might help, too).

• The parenting books will be of use, most likely, with your first baby. They will make you feel stupid with your second child. Throw them out (not the baby, the books).

• If a well-meaning friend tells you to wake a sleeping baby every two hours for a feeding (if your baby is a healthy, nourished baby, that is), put your fingers in your ears and sing “Lalalalalalalalala.” It goes against common sense to wake a sleeping baby.

• You will find yourself applauding things you never dreamed you’d applaud — the removal of foreign objects lodged in your child’s nose or ears and the passing of such things as pennies and purple dental floss your angel has swallowed.

• Toddlers use pet doors as escape exits.

• Yes, someday your breasts and hips will belong to you again. During your childbearing years, however, think of them as “on loan” to a nursing baby or a child who hasn’t yet learned to walk.

• Yes, your love life will return. It will coincide with the time your children return your breasts and hips to you or when the child is five and you begin getting eight hours of sleep again.

• To prepare for those days, put a lock on your bedroom door.

• On days when you feel you’ve been pushed and pulsed by the demands of mothering, go into the bathroom (put a lock on that door, too) and claim “sanctuary.” Take a hot bath and try to relax as your little ones bang on the door.

• You should also call your momma or a best friend to have a good cry now and then. Sheding all those built-up tension tears gives you more room for happy tears when your 3-year-old tells you he wants to marry you or when the children do amazing things, such as making it through a church service without needing a potty break.

• Clear your shelves and walls of the things you collected before you had children. You’ll be well-supplied with plaster of Paris creations and finger-paint art crafted by your very own artists-in-residence. (P.S. Don’t ever let your child catch you throwing any of his stuff away. It’s an ugly and traumatic scene.)

I think I’ll end by telling her that although things will never be the same after she welcomes baby — sleep’s not that big of a deal, after all — her heart will never be as full, nor will her laundry basket, as it is during the years her life is anything but neat and tidy.

(c) 2002 King Features Synd., Inc.
Bonilla retains congressional seat


Bonilla was Chairman of Texas Victory 2002, the state’s GOP get out the vote effort, which broke records on several fronts. In this effort more than 420,000 Republicans were registered to vote.

Texas Victory 2002 was a multimillion-dollar project supported by the White House, the Republican National Committee, Gov. Rick Perry, senator-elect John Cornyn and David Dewhurst. In addition, Presidential adviser Karen Hughes, Commerce Secretary Don Evans and Karl Rove made appearances at fund raising events. On election eve in Texas President George W. Bush publicly recognized Bonilla for his leadership in Victory 2002.

“The Get Out The Vote effort in Texas was historic — and Henry Bonilla led the charge,” said Karl Rove, Senior Adviser to President George W. Bush. “The state of Texas and the Republican Party are lucky to have Congressman Bonilla. I know President Bush is thankful for his strong leadership and looks forward to having his close friend back in Congress.”

Bonilla also successfully overcame a tidal-wave of Tony Sanchez supporters who turned out on the South West border. He retained control of the House seat with a majority vote in 17 of his 24 counties.

“I am grateful for my strong district-wide support. More than 77,000 people took time out of their busy days to show support for my work in Congress. I thank every one of them for their dedication,” said Bonilla. “I love my job in the House of Representatives. It gives me a real opportunity to make a real difference. I’m already looking forward to serving the good people of the 23rd Congressional District for another two successful years.”

Bonilla’s congressional district is the largest in Texas. The district spans nearly 900 miles of the Texas/Mexico border, includes two time zones and three climates. Bonilla is a member of the Appropriations Committee and is Chairman of the Subcommittee on Agriculture. He was the only Texan selected by then Gov. Bush to serve on his Presidential Exploratory Committee. Bonilla also served as co-chairman of the 2000 Republican National Convention. Bonilla has represented the 23rd Congressional District since his first election to Congress in 1992.
Thanksgiving Feast
Thursday, November 28 • Noon to 10PM
Roast Turkey • Glazed Ham • Top Sirloin Steak
Meat Loaf • Fried Chicken • Mashed Potatoes
Gravy • Cornbread Dressing • Candied Yams
Corn on the Cob • Green Beans • Cranberry Sauce
Hot Bread • Soup and Salad Bar • Pumpkin Pie

Adults $8 • Children $4
Happy Thanksgiving
Open 24 hours — Full menu items plus spectacular hot and salad bar. J-10 at Horizon Blvd., 859-1906.

Study refuses insurance industry's claim of medical malpractice crisis

NEW YORK — Americans for Insurance Reform (AIR), a coalition of nearly 100 consumer and public interest groups representing more than 50 million people, announced today the release of a comprehensive study of medical malpractice.

The study refutes the insurance industry’s explanation for rising medical malpractice rates and undermines industry claims that a medical malpractice crisis “for insurers exists.

The entire study is available at http://www.insurance-reform.org, and makes two specific findings:

1. Over the last 30 years, medical malpractice payouts have increased.
2. Medical malpractice rates have not increased.

One of the study’s major findings shows that the amount of money that medical malpractice insurers have paid out, including all jury verdicts and settlements, directly reflects the rates of medical inflation. The study finds that there has been no evidence to support the claim that medical malpractice rates have increased.

METHOD OF GROSS MEDICAL MALPRACTICE PAYOUTS

A cooperative study conducted by the Government Accountability Office found that there has been no evidence to support the claim that medical malpractice rates have increased.

The study also found that medical malpractice payouts have increased:

1. In direct relationship to the rate of medical inflation.
2. Over the same period, insurance premium rates have not increased.

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San Elizario parenting program is about the nuts and bolts of helping kids with school problems.

PAINING CLOSE ATTENTION — A San Elizario father and his small child listen to a literacy presentation during the October Bilingual Parent Meeting.

By Araceli G. Lara Special to the Courier

CLINT — Author Sergio Troncoso inspired Clint High School students as the grand finale for a very successful National Teen Read Week.

Sergio Troncoso is the son of Mexican immigrants, a native El Pasoan and graduate of Ysleta High School. He attended Harvard University where he studied economics and government with a focus on Mexico. He was also a Fulbright Scholar to the University where he studied economics and government.

Troncoso captivated his audience with the personal and autobiographical stories from his book, The Last Tortilla, describing his struggles growing up. He encouraged the students to apply to different universities, asserting that limited expectations will get limited results.

When asked to comment on the presentation, Clint student, Matt Zamora, said, “He makes me feel like I was capable of doing anything. His background made it real for me.”

The library hosted numerous other activities during the week which included a hunt, fearless reader contest, and book voting, treasures in quotes program are seeing their parents come to the classroom for lessons of their own. The program has been hosting monthly parent meetings that are geared to helping parents help their children with various projects and activities throughout the school year.

According to Eliza Simental, an Intervention Officer for the Bilingual Program, the ultimate goal for these parent meetings is to build a capacity and confidence with parents in the community.

“We can do that, then everything takes care of itself,” Simental said.

The Next Bilingual parent meeting is scheduled for Nov. 21, from 8:30–10:30 a.m. at San Elizario Middle School. Because many students will be working on their science projects and needing help, the focus for this meeting will be science.

‘Last Tortilla’ author Sergio Troncoso visits, inspires Clint High School

By Aracelli G. Lara Special to the Courier

SAN ELIZARIO — There are many components to a child’s educational success, which is why the San Elizario Independent School District places great importance on home, school and community-based educational programs for students and parents in San Elizario.

That also why some of the students in the district’s Bilingual Program are seeing their parents come to the classroom for lessons of their own. The program has been hosting monthly parent meetings that are geared to helping parents help their children with various projects and activities throughout the school year.

According to Eliza Simental, an Intervention Officer for the Bilingual Program, the ultimate goal for these parent meetings is to build a capacity and confidence with parents in the community.

“If we can do that, then everything takes care of itself,” Simental said.

The reason is simple: the discovery has been impaired by the drug is costly, long, risky, and expensive process, but, once the research has been conducted, a copy can be made relatively quickly, easily, and cheaply.

Few companies would be able to make such investment necessary. Available to patients,”

Generics have a large role in the market. They now account for about 85% of all prescription drugs dispensed in the U.S. House — that would weaken patent laws. A new small molecule medicine to make a breakthrough in treating Alzheimer’s and other diseases that doesn’t cost billions of dollars — would be an innovator medicine. That’s why patients need strong intellectual property protection.

Today, there are more than 1,000 new medicines in development, including almost two dozen to better treat and hopefully one day cure, Alzheimer’s disease. The current patent system has worked well for 40 years to help create millions of other medicines. It would not work nearly as well in the future if S. 812 ever becomes law.

Holmer is president of the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA), the trade association that represents the nation’s research-based pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies. Website: www.phrma.org

City of Socorro Public Notice

Section 504 Grievance Procedure

The City of Socorro has adopted an internal grievance procedure providing for prompt and equitable resolution of complaints alleging any action prohibiting by the Office of Revenue Sharing’s (ORS) regulations (31 CFR 51.55 (d) (2) implementing Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended 929 USC 794). Section 504 states, in part that “No otherwise qualified handicapped individual shall, solely by reason of his handicap, be excluded from the participation in, denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.”

Complaints should be addressed to: Human Resource Officer, 124 S. Horizon Blvd., (915) 858-2915 who has been designated to coordinate Section 504 compliance efforts.

A complaint should be filed in writing or verbally, contain the name and address of the person filing it, and briefly describe the alleged violation of the regulation.

A complaint should be filed within ten (10) working days after the complaint becomes aware of the alleged violation. (Processing of allegations of discrimination occurring before this grievance procedure was in place will be considered on a case-by-case basis).

An investigation as appropriate, shall follow a filing of complaint. The investigation will be conducted by the Human Resource Officer. These rules contemplate informal but thorough investigations, affording all interested persons and their representatives, the opportunity to submit evidence relevant to a complaint. Under 31 CFR 51.44 (d) (92), the City of Socorro needs to process complaints from applicants for employment or from applicants for admission to post secondary educational institutions.

A written determination as to the validity of the complaint and description of resolution, if any, shall be issued by the Human Resource Officer, and a copy forwarded to the complainant no later than ten (10) working days after its filing.

The Section 504 coordinator shall maintain the files and records of the City of Socorro relating to the complaints files.

The complaint can request a reconsideration of the case in instances where he or she is dissatisfied with the resolution. The request for reconsideration should be made within ten (10) working days to the City of Socorro.

The right of a person to prompt and equitable resolution of the complaint filing hereunder shall not be impaired by the person’s pursuit of other remedies such as the filing of a Section 504 complaint with the Office of Revenue Sharing, U.S. Department of Treasury. Utilization of this grievance procedure is not prerequisite to the pursuit of other remedies.

These rules shall be construed to protect the substantive rights of interested persons, to meet appropriate due process standards and assure that the City of Socorro complies with Section 504 and ORS regulations.

Approved by City Council on January 17, 2002.

Pantens

From Page 4

medicines.

Strong patent protection is essential to promote the discovery and development of new life-saving, cost-effective medicines. Without such protection, far fewer new medicines would be developed for patients like Helen Altenburg. Nor would as many innovative new medicines be available for generic manufacturers to copy after patent expiration.

The reason is simple: the discovery has been impaired by the drug is costly, long, risky, and expensive process, but, once the research has been conducted, a copy can be made relatively quickly, easily, and cheaply.

Few companies would be able to make such investment necessary. Available to patients,”

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Holmer is president of the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA), the trade association that represents the nation’s research-based pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies. Website: www.phrma.org

City of Socorro Public Notice

Section 504 Grievance Procedure

The City of Socorro has adopted an internal grievance procedure providing for prompt and equitable resolution of complaints alleging any action prohibiting by the Office of Revenue Sharing’s (ORS) regulations (31 CFR 51.55 (d) (2) implementing Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended 929 USC 794). Section 504 states, in part that “No otherwise qualified handicapped individual shall, solely by reason of his handicap, be excluded from the participation in, denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.”

Complaints should be addressed to: Human Resource Officer, 124 S. Horizon Blvd., (915) 858-2915 who has been designated to coordinate Section 504 compliance efforts.

A complaint should be filed in writing or verbally, contain the name and address of the person filing it, and briefly describe the alleged violation of the regulation.

A complaint should be filed within ten (10) working days after the complaint becomes aware of the alleged violation. (Processing of allegations of discrimination occurring before this grievance procedure was in place will be considered on a case-by-case basis).

An investigation as appropriate, shall follow a filing of complaint. The investigation will be conducted by the Human Resource Officer. These rules contemplate informal but thorough investigations, affording all interested persons and their representatives, the opportunity to submit evidence relevant to a complaint. Under 31 CFR 51.44 (d) (92), the City of Socorro needs to process complaints from applicants for employment or from applicants for admission to post secondary educational institutions.

A written determination as to the validity of the complaint and description of resolution, if any, shall be issued by the Human Resource Officer, and a copy forwarded to the complainant no later than ten (10) working days after its filing.

The Section 504 coordinator shall maintain the files and records of the City of Socorro relating to the complaints files.

The complaint can request a reconsideration of the case in instances where he or she is dissatisfied with the resolution. The request for reconsideration should be made within ten (10) working days to the City of Socorro.

The right of a person to prompt and equitable resolution of the complaint filing hereunder shall not be impaired by the person’s pursuit of other remedies such as the filing of a Section 504 complaint with the Office of Revenue Sharing, U.S. Department of Treasury. Utilization of this grievance procedure is not prerequisite to the pursuit of other remedies.

These rules shall be construed to protect the substantive rights of interested persons, to meet appropriate due process standards and assure that the City of Socorro complies with Section 504 and ORS regulations.

Approved by City Council on January 17, 2002.
In the sports world, giving candy to babies is a dangerous thing.

EMMS shares “Just For The Kids” secrets with west Texas chambers

By Debra Dominguez Special to the Courier

EAST EL PASO COUNTY — Last year, the Clint Independent School District’s “East” El Paso High School Campus was selected as one of 13 junior high and middle schools in the state to be named to the Texas Business and Education Coalition/Just for the Kids 2001 Honor Roll. On Friday, the school will use its campus and academic excellence to cover the TBEC/JFK Honor Roll Effective Practices Committee from Washington, D.C. — an opportunity for EMMS to share its secrets to success nation-wide.

The visit went well, and we got to show the Washington School Research Center just how we became a part of the TBEC’s “The Chosen One” Honor Roll member,” Robert Mendoza, EMMS Principal, said. “I think the Effective Practices Study Team took out to tour the school, interview me, staff focus groups and conducted interviews with students.

“The TBEC/JFK Honor Roll is the most prestigious award for sustained, whole-school academic excellence in Texas. It recognizes consistent performance by schools rated exemplary or recognized for three years — schools that have excellent performance in each year of the study. It is a year-one ‘Star’ snapshot outlined in the recent Texas Monthly article and the FBEC/JFK School Program in which schools must apply for recognition. It is no lower than at the college level…well, think of it as the one on the opposite sideline.

Just when you thought that they do not promote just a high school football and basketball game for games in each week in each week. But they cover all the high school basketball games will be available on pay-per-view TV over 14 counties in Northeast Ohio.

Any suckers… I mean potential viewers can catch the phenom on pay-per-view.

Here in El Paso, Time Warner televisions a high school football and basketball game of the week. They cover all the teams in town, they don’t promote just one player’s games.

Now, I love sports as much as the next guy, but to give this high school guy so much exposure at such an early age is dangerous. It gives the hero the false sense that the people after a piece of him really care for his well-being. And there’s no doubt that they do, but only as long as he can produce on the court and thus produce for their pockets.

James was described on the Sports Illustrated cover of “The Chosen One.” And SI is right — every sleazy agent, corporation and marketing executive has painted a big red bull’s eye right on this kid’s forehead.

We all know how time flies. So years El Paso teams will try to win that elusive match-up with their more prestigious opponents.

Frizell will play at Amarillo High School. Socorro will host Lubbock-Monterey and Montwood will take on Lubbock-Coronado. Both Socorro and Montwood will play their home games at the Socorro Student Activity Complex.

At 8, Franklin is considered the best team in the city, though some fans of the Riverside Prep are that at least our kids have the chance to get by this round of the playoffs? I think Frizell has the mental toughness to get by and Socorro has been surprising people since week one. Montwood’s best days are still to come. One more thing, if these three District 5A teams faltle this weekend, the 4A schools get their chance next weekend.

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Snickers technology helps fight hunger

By Don Flood

(Editor’s note: As part of our continuing attempts to bring you the latest in column technology, this week we’ll experiment with a “news crawl,” bulletins that allow you to stay abreast of important issues — just like when you’re watching TV!) Don’t let hunger happen to you,” warns the latest anti-hunger message.

But despite Americans’ valiant attempt to starve off hunger, some concerned citizens felt we weren’t doing all we could to pack in the necessary calories. That’s why at the Colorado State Fair this summer they introduced the deep-fried Snickers bar.

Yes, you read that correctly. Snickers, all by themselves, used to be considered adequate by junk food standards. After all, they consisted of peanuts, sugar and chocolate.

(News bulletin: Doctors at the Emergency Trauma and Duct Tape Center in Houston have announced another success: this time using duct tape to reattach a man’s head. The patient, however, insists that he was attached to the wrong body.)

But candy bars by themselves don’t cut it for today’s hunger-fearing eaters, who noted that while the Snickers bars were relatively high in calories, they were lacking in fat content.

So they took a Snickers bar, put it on a stick, covered it in batter, deep-fried it and then powdered it with sugar. Basically, we’re talking about a doughnut with a candy bar inside.

(News bulletin: Madonna’s next movie, which doesn’t exist on paper much less film, is expected to be “a major flop,” according to industry sources. Said one critic, “Her character just isn’t believable, whatever it turns out to be.”)

The result was history and more than a few fat thighs. And because of this development in food technology, experts say that hunger has been pretty well eradicated from the grounds of the Colorado State Fair.

In fact, deep-fried Snickers worked so well at helping people ward off hunger that similar products began popping at state fairs across the country. In Arkansas, home of the Bill Clinton Midnight Big Mac Attack, they launched still another weapon in the fight against hunger — a deep-fried Twinkie.

Twinkies, of course, have been the quintessential junk food for more than a generation, but it took Americans to know how to make a junk food even junkier.

It’s a shame though. If they had dipped the Twinkie in chocolate, covered it in batter and then deep-fried it, they could have had a real breakthrough.

But, it’s a shame they didn’t.

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Social Security: Q & A

Q: My wife is a retired teacher and receives a California state pension. She has not worked under Social Security long enough to qualify for Social Security benefits. Will she qualify for Social Security benefits as my spouse when I retire at age 65?

A: Probably not. Although your wife would be entitled to a spouse benefit, she probably will not receive it because she is also entitled to a pension based on her state employment that is not covered under Social Security. When a person receives a federal, state or local government pension where he or she did not pay Social Security taxes, the Social Security benefit is subject to a government pension offset. Generally the reduction would be an amount equal to two-thirds of the third state pension.

Q: When I applied for Social Security benefits on my ex-husband’s Social Security record a year ago, the representative said I wasn’t eligible because I had to be 62 years old. My ex-husband passed away last month, and a friend told me that I only have to be age 60 to get benefits based on his work since he is deceased. Is this true?

A: Yes. Benefits can be paid to divorced widows or widowers who are age 60 or older (age 50 and disabled) if they meet the other eligibility requirements.

Q: I’m a 36-year-old widow and receive monthly Social Security checks because I have three pre-school children in my care. If I were to go to work, would we stop receiving Social Security benefits?

A: Your children will not lose their benefits if you go back to work. However, your own survivors benefits are subject to the annual earnings limit, so your benefits will be reduced $1 for every $2 you earn over $11,280 annually.

Q: Is it true that some people work and still collect disability benefits?

A: Yes. Social Security has special rules designed to help disability beneficiaries go back to work. Social Security can provide income and medical assistance while beneficiaries attempt to work on a regular basis.

Q: I receive Social Security disability benefits. Will my Social Security benefits change when I turn age 65?

A: No. But when you turn age 65, your benefits will be called retirement benefits instead of disability benefits.

Q: I’m thinking about getting disability protection from a private company. If I become disabled and have a private policy, would it reduce my Social Security disability benefit?

A: No. Your eligibility for Social Security disability payments is not affected by any private insurance you may have. But worker’s compensation and certain other public disability payments may affect your Social Security benefit.

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