



NEWSBRIEFS

Butler moves on

The Anthony Independent School District (AISD) Board of Trustees has formally accepted the resignation of Vern Butler, Superintendent.



Vern Butler

He has been the AISD Superintendent for the past 3 years. Butler's career in education has spanned 36 years, all in El Paso County. He plans to relocate to the Fort Worth area in Crowley, Texas to be closer to family. Butler commented, "I have greatly enjoyed my years in education and I have not given up on the idea of continuing to work in some capacity in the field of education. I am keeping my options open."

The Anthony Board of Trustees has approved using the services of Region 19 Educational Service Center to conduct the search for a new superintendent.

Sanchez signing

Author and journalist Ray Sanchez will be signing copies of his newest book, *Latina Mistress*, at the Main Library, 501 N. Oregon, on Sunday, April 1 at 2 p.m. Sanchez is perhaps best known for the many years of sports writing that he did for the *El Paso Times* and *Herald Post*. He has written six books on sports and has written for numerous national publications. He is also a charter member of the El Paso Sports Hall of Fame and a consultant on the movie *Glory Road*. His latest work, which is a departure from sports, takes a sobering look at the lives of two undocumented immigrant women and the lives, loves and conflicts they experience in their journey to El Paso. The novel is based on the first hand accounts of women from the El Paso area that the author has interviewed. Their stories date back to the start of the 1900s. These fascinating accounts become a composite of the lives of the two protagonists in the book. For more information call 543-5468.

CORRECTION:

The original news release for the First Thanksgiving Conference in San Elizario hosted by the San Elizario Genealogy Society gave the wrong date for the conference. The correct date is April 28.

In other news:

■ The Don't Mess with Texas Trash-Off is part of the partnership between Keep Texas Beautiful and the Texas Department of Transportation. Every year, for one day, in the month of April, thousands of volunteers help Keep Texas Beautiful. It is the single largest one day cleanup event in the state. On April 14 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. the Village of Vinton will be hosting

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— Photo courtesy San Elizario ISD

ON A ROLL — Marching to state after Regional UIL competitions are these San Elizario band members. Shown from left on the back row are Iris Carrasco, Jose Collazo, Edgar Beltran, and Bernie Torres. Front row, from left, is Mireya Arredondo, Ashley Carrillo, Frankie Carrasco, Elizabeth Morales, Anali Martinez, Erika Aguirre.

San Elizario High band members qualify for state

By Cynthia P. Marentes
Special to the Courier

SAN ELIZARIO — Members of the San Elizario High School Band are not only skillful musicians, they are also solid competitors. After rehearsing regularly for months and refining their musical selections to the best of their ability, 12 San Elizario High School students qualified for state competition by earning a score of 1 or a superior rating at the Regional UIL Band Solo and Ensemble Contest held at Americas High School on Feb. 24.

All the students have been diligently practicing and polishing their selections since at least November, according to Sharon Hittle, San Elizario High School Band Director. Although the students had the opportunity to practice their competitive pieces in class, the majority also had to devote time before and after-school to perfect the numbers they had chosen to perform for competition.

The musicians that advanced to the state

competition will travel to Austin over the Memorial Day weekend to perform their material one last time before different judges at the Texas State Solo and Ensemble Contest. "The competition at the state level will be a lot harder because the judges are more difficult and they are competing against everybody from around the state," Carl Ortega, Assistant Band Director, said.

He added that performing out of town in the state's final competition is an experience for the students they should embrace. "Once they have competed locally they can move on to hear the best from all over Texas. It's just a great experience for them," Ortega added.

There are approximately 80 students participating in the band program at San Elizario High School including flags. The twelve students that will compete in Austin from May 25-28 are: Edgar Beltran, Jose Collazo, Iris Carrasco, Mireya Arredondo, Erika Aguirre, Elizabeth Morales, Amelia Peralta, Ashley Carrillo, Anali Martinez, Bernie Torres, Frankie Carrasco, and Kristina Delatorre.

Linda East named president of Sun Bowl Association

EL PASO COUNTY — Linda East officially became the 72nd president of the Sun Bowl Association last week during the organization's Celebration 2007 at the Camino Real Hotel. East takes over for departing president John Folmer.

The event featured the college football analyst Charles Davis as the keynote speaker. Davis played in the 1984 Sun Bowl for Tennessee and is currently the lead analyst for the Fox Network's coverage of the Bowl Championship Series.

East, who was a duchess in the 1973 Sun Court, is one of only four women to hold the title of president in Association history.

East joined the Sun Bowl Association board of directors in 1998 and served as the Association's vice president of marketing from 2000-04. She headed the development and implementation of a ticket sales campaign that led to a sellout at the Vitalis Sun Bowl in 2004.

Inducted into the Sun Bowl Ring of Honor in 2005, East has held several positions at the Sun

Bowl Association, including secretary, vice president, executive vice president and president elect.

She has also been a member of the football committee for the two years.

East's efforts as a volunteer led to her earning the inaugural Gary Del Palacio President's Award in 2001.

An El Paso native and graduate of Burges High School, East graduated from the University of Texas at El Paso with a Bachelor of Arts degree in journalism and a Master of Arts degree in communications. She is the owner of East Communications and prior to that, she worked for 10 years at Del Sol Medical Center and 18 years with the Socorro Independent School District.

An active member in the community, East has served on several boards including the Rotary Club of El Paso, Better Business Bureau, El Paso ProMusica, United Way, Ronald McDonald House, the YMCA and the YWCA.

She is married to Roger East and has two sons, Bryan, Adam. Her daughter, Jessika, was a 2001 Sun Princess.



Linda East

Fabens water district looks to improve collection percentage

Policy rankles some customers

Courier Staff Reports

FABENS — Providing community water in Fabens has become a touchy subject since several customers contacted the media over billing policies in the El Paso County Water Control and Improvement District #4 (EPCWCID#4).

The EPCWCID#4 is a political subdivision created for the sole purpose of managing water and wastewater services in the unincorporated community of Fabens. While they are a taxing entity, the district currently does not assess any property taxes.

Within the last few weeks complaints have surfaced over termination of water service due to nonpayment of bills.

In an effort to bring the water district into stricter financial compliance, the board of directors set a firm policy of zero tolerance for late payments beginning January, 2007. People in violation simply have their water turned off. To regain service the account must be brought current and a \$30 reconnection fee must be paid.

Lala Garcia, the district's office manager, said the fee covers only the average time it takes to both shut off and turn back on a customer's service.

Garcia said the district passed the new policy at a Nov. 14, 2006 meeting. Every customer in the district received written notification of the policy — in English and Spanish — and a calendar showing the due and cutoff dates for 2007 with their December 2006 bill.

Garcia said the district's billing is mailed out on the last day of the month for the month's usage. The bill is due by 4:30 p.m. 20 days later, on the 20th of the following month. For example, on Jan. 31, 2007 the district mailed out 2,176 bills for water used in January 2007. The bills were due Feb. 20, 2007. Any customers that did not pay had their water turned off on Feb. 21, 2007.

During that billing cycle 2,028 customers paid on time while 148 missed the deadline and had their water turned off. EPCWCID#4 may be the last water district in the county to go to the monthly standard.

While district bills have always been considered due upon receipt, the prior policy enacted in April of 2004 allowed people to be as much as three months delinquent before their water was turned off. This may be where some of the current contention over disconnects comes from.

In 2000, the district policy was to take a deposit of \$150 per new customer. If the client was not late-paying and the account was current after one year, the money was returned, according to Garcia.

However, this policy was subject to abuse after the deposit had been returned. Customers could run up a three-month debt and then move without paying. As a result, the district wrote off approximately \$10,000 in bad debt for the four years 2000-2003.

Garcia said by enacting and enforcing the

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For every minute you're mad, you lose sixty seconds of happiness.

— Quips & Quotes



One perspective

By Francis Shrum

Laws of the heart

On Monday, March 27, the governor of Texas signed his first bill into law for the 2007 Texas legislative session. It was SB 378, a “castle doctrine” law which removes the penalty for self-defense, up to and including deadly force, in the event that someone intrudes with supposed criminal intent into your home, occupied vehicle, place of business or employment.

The bill was heavily backed by the National Rifle Association, and the group heralded the law for doing away with “duty to retreat” laws, which stated that someone may not use deadly force if a reasonable person in the same situation would have retreated.

In doing so, it protects people from being sued by the criminals or relatives of criminals they injure or kill and from criminal prosecution.

According to the *Dallas Morning News*, about 14 states — including Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Michigan — have passed “enter at your own risk” laws since Florida became the first state to do so in 2006.

So-called “castle doctrine” laws are a derivative of English common law and, generally, people who have acted within the spirit of these laws are not prosecuted. However, Sen. Jeff Wentworth, sponsor of Texas’ bill, said specifics are not on the Texas books.

“I’ve run into no opposition (to the bill),” Sen. Wentworth told the *DMN*. “Half of the people are surprised to find we don’t already have that right. I think it will decrease the incentive some people have now to break into some people’s houses.”

The cartoon in the *El Paso Times* the day after the law passed showed

a grandmother with her white hair a-flutter, in granny shoes and dress, blazing away with her pistol from her front porch. On the ground beside her is a bag of garbage. In the background, a family member calls out: “I’m sure you like the new law, Gran’ma, but must you squeeze off a few warning rounds every time you take out the trash?”

While the idea of a granny shooting into the bushes is a little funny, the reality is far from it. The taking of a human life — any human life — isn’t funny.

Bottom line, there are simply some issues that can never truly be regulated by law. They are issues that can only be governed by laws of the heart.

I watched a western movie once in which a veteran lawman was hot on the trail of a convicted murderer. He happened to be accompanied by a city dude. Upon spotting his man from a distance with his back exposed, he simply drew and shot the man down.

Aghast, the dude cried, “Why did you shoot him in the back?”

The lawman replied, “His back was to me.”

There are times and places where the rules of “civilization” are of little use — men are sent to do dirty jobs which include making on-the-spot, life-and-death decisions. Soldiers, police officers, and all those who stand between America and anarchy are called to make horrendous judgments in situations where the scrutiny of so-called justice will never intrude.

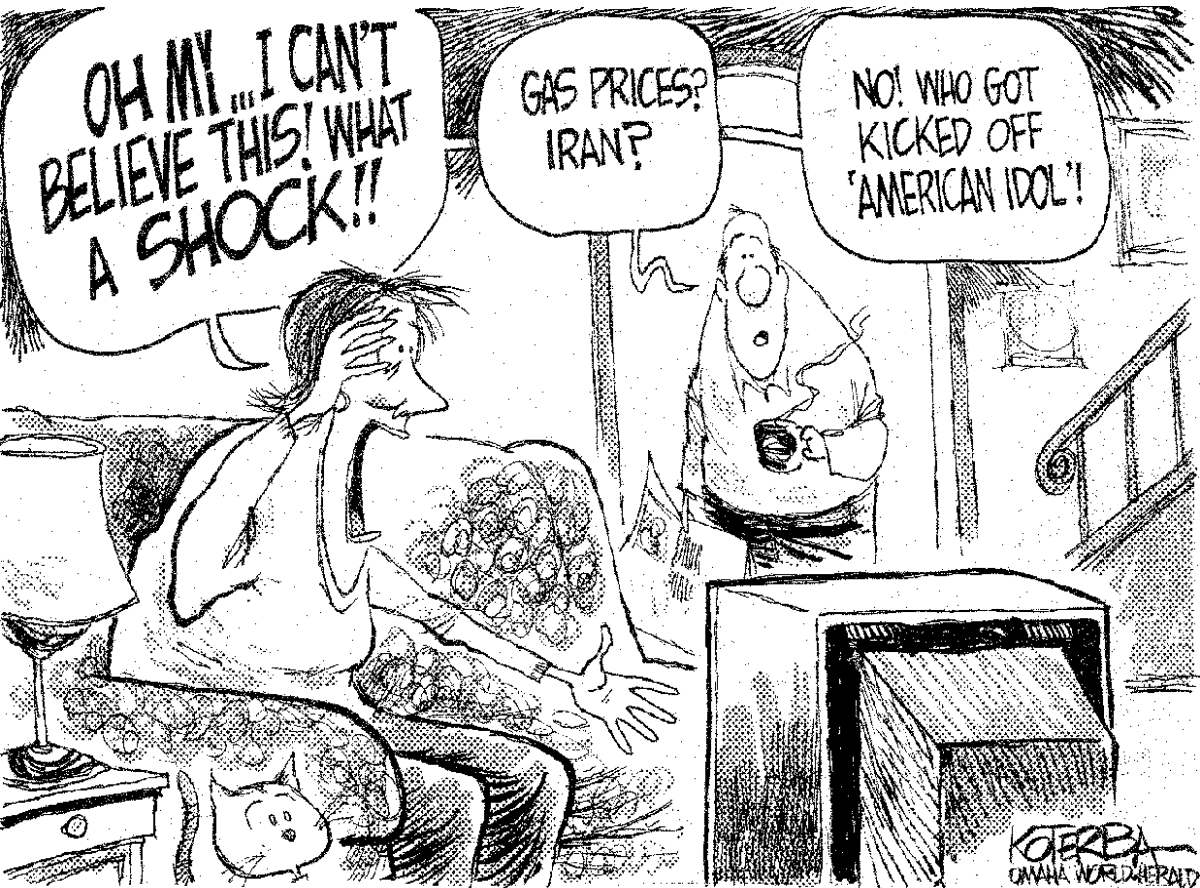
However, each man must face himself, and I can promise you that no man of conscience ever took a life for which he did not pay a personal penalty.

That is why the life and death choices allowed by this law should

See HEART, Page 3



“The NON-STOP CELEBRITY COVERAGE FINALLY CAUSED HIM TO SNAP...”



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34
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Reyes Reports By U.S. Rep. Silvestre Reyes

The vote did not come without a statement

Last week, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 1591, the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans’ Health, and Iraq Accountability Act, which provides emergency funding for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. I voted in favor of this bill, and provided the following statement upon this vote in the House:

“This week we lost another four soldiers from Fort Bliss to an IED attack in Iraq. That makes a total of 35 troops from El Paso who went to Iraq and didn’t come home.

“Remember, 35 is not just a number. It’s not an abstract concept. Thirty-five is the number of families suffering — aunts and uncles, grandparents, mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, children. There are friends, classmates, teachers, coaches, fellow soldiers, colleagues, and so many others who are connected to the lives of our lost heroes.

“The cost of this war has been too

high not just in terms of lives lost and warriors wounded. We have poured taxpayers’ money into Iraq. We have spent \$500 billion — half a trillion! — dollars to that country. And as we have increased our investment in Iraq, we have less and less to show for it. Rather than progress, our billions of dollars have produced civil war.

“Madame Speaker, when it comes to the Iraq War, my colleagues know two things about me. One, I opposed this war from the beginning. It was a mistake. Two, since the Iraq War began, I have been committed to our troops and to supporting the best possible outcome.

“As a Vietnam veteran I know what combat is about. I have visited Iraq seven times. I have been to Afghanistan many times. I know what our troops require. I have worked out of the spotlight behind the closed doors of the Intelligence Committee and in the Armed Services Committee. My focus has been providing our

soldiers with the tools they need to complete their mission and return home safely — body and vehicle armor, IED jammers, and timely, accurate intelligence.

“And I’m proud of that work. I’m saddened that our troops didn’t have the protection they needed right off the bat, and I’m ashamed we went to war with bad intelligence, but I’m proud of the work we’ve done in committee to set things right when we could.

“But today we send a strong message, that it is long overdue for the Iraqis to stand up for their country, for the Iraqis to assume responsibility for their security and for their political decisions.

“If Iraq is to become a democracy — and we’re willing to stay and help them with training, other support functions — after four years it’s time that they accept responsibility for their own future. And that’s what this

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View from here

By Michael Quinn Sullivan

Tax relief, by any name, should be pursued

For the sake of taxpayers, Texas’ conservative lawmakers must vote to bust the state’s spending cap. That’s the only way Texans can be assured of receiving meaningful property tax relief.

Confused? You should be.

The current spending limit, which was called the Texas Tax Relief Act, has not actually limited spending. Ironically, the only thing it has limited has been property tax relief last spring; more about that in a moment.

Adopted in 1978, the cap theoretically restricts the growth of government to growth in the state’s economy. But it doesn’t. Since its inception, state government has grown 500 percent, while the state’s gross product has increased 366 percent.

The amendment left it to lawmakers to determine the definition of growth in the economy. Legislators opted to define it, very peculiarly, as growth in personal income.

Personal income is a very vague concept; that makes the “limit” bad for taxpayers, but good for tax spenders. For example, the current budget, adopted two years ago, grew 18.7

percent over the budget adopted in 2003. Did your take-home pay go up 18.7 percent? Very doubtful.

The current spending cap also lobs off from consideration large portions of true spending. Yet, of course, property tax relief is counted as part of the spending cap.

In the crazy world of state constitutional language, it does make sense to consider property tax relief as spending. Here’s why.

Property taxes are collected locally, by local government entities. So for legislators to “cut” your property taxes, what they essentially do is give money to the school districts (or other taxing entities) with the condition that upon cashing the legislature’s check, the taxing entity will lower your property tax rates.

So while the state had a record budget surplus last spring, lawmakers in the special session felt constrained — by the spending limit — from using most of it for property tax relief.

That was then, this is now. The surplus has grown even larger, and the little tax relief offered last year wasn’t

enough to be felt by most Texans.

It is imperative for lawmakers now to bust a meaningless spending cap for the purpose of providing meaningful property tax relief.

Permissible, but with one important caveat: The tax relief must begin on the low side of the cap, and then continue beyond it.

Tax relief, by any name, should begin well before, and continue past, the cap.

What isn’t allowable, for those claiming the mantle of fiscal responsibility, is to spend every penny up to the cap on new, expanded or extended government programs, and then “bust” it for tax relief.

It is mildly reassuring some legislators are worried about the idea of busting the cap; they have clearly understood that voters are fed up with fiscal irresponsibility. But those same voters will be very worried about fretting legislators who stand in the way of property tax relief.

Indeed, their opposition not only

Water

From Page 1

new policy the district is simply being a good manager of its resources. She said as growth continues and new needs arise the district’s finances and books must be in good order. To be considered for financial help the district’s collection rates need to be 95 percent or better. She also said that any political subdivision that does not run its business properly is subject to having the state step in and take over.

Martin Madrid, district field engineer, said that over the last six years major projects in the district have included:

- Resurfacing three water tanks (\$56,000);
 - Replacing 5.68 miles of one- and two-inch lines to new six-inch water lines (figure not available); and
 - Installing a new one-mile long 16-inch sewer line to take pressure off existing gravity fed lines (\$1.4 million).
- The next big concern for EPCWCID#4 is a new wastewater treatment facility.
- All of the projects have been paid for by district revenues plus one loan for the 16-inch sewer line.
- The average EPCWCID#4 bill is \$40 to \$50 a month. The minimum bill is \$34.14. Currently, the cost to obtain new service at a metered location is \$295 — \$150 for the deposit and \$145 for water/sewer access and the application process.

Heart

From Page 2

be treated with extreme caution — the way we hope that each citizen behaves when he or she decides to own or carry a firearm.

True, it is now allowable for a Texan to exercise deadly force as a first resort in defense of home and hearth without fear that he or she will be second-guessed by a court of law.

My question is, are we sure we want to?

I grew up in a house full of guns. I understood what they were for and there was not a moment that I held one in my hand or sat next to one that I was not deeply aware of its power and the potential for destruction. Guns are tools, designed for the express purpose of killing a living creature. As such, they contain the power to wreck havoc that may not be intended.

I had a good friend that lived on

the Mescalero Indian Reservation. She had two brothers who loved to go hunting together. One day they got separated in the forest and one of them wound up in a place the other did not expect. He shot and killed him.

The annals of news reporting are replete with terrible, heart-breaking stories about people who killed friends, family members or innocent strangers by mistake. Like harmful words, once a bullet is let fly there is no calling it back.

Well do I understand that there is a criminal element in every segment of society. But I also believe that not every person who enters a dwelling unannounced is a evil persona hell-bent on death and destruction to those who lie within. The consequence of shooting first and asking questions later may be more horrific than we realize.

Violating the laws of the heart carries a high price indeed — especially since it is our hearts that will have to pay it.

Vote

From Page 2

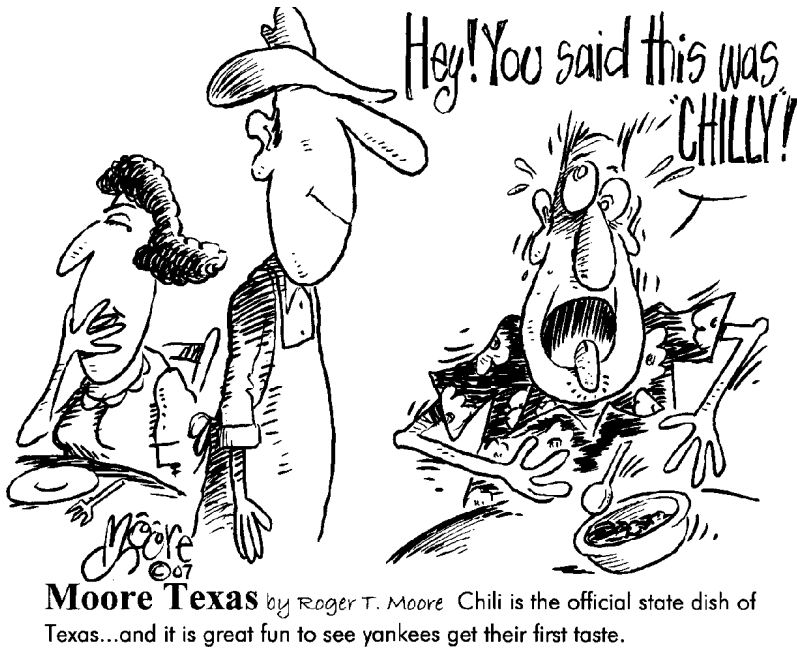
legislation is about.

“More importantly, this bill takes care of our troops. It brings them home. And once our troops are home, this bill commits our government to caring for our troops and veterans in a fashion that reflects the sacrifices they have made for our country.

“Madame Speaker, I’ve been listening to the arguments of my col-

leagues on the other side. One thing I’m struck by is how similar the arguments I’m hearing today are to what they’ve been saying for the past four years. Every step of the way, my colleagues on the other side have been wrong on our policy in Iraq. Yet they pony up the same rhetoric, the same rationale for the same policies that have gotten us nowhere but into the middle of a civil war.

“For four long years, our troops have made immeasurable sacrifices in Iraq, and now it is time for the Iraqis to step up and take responsibility for their own security.”



Moore Texas by Roger T. Moore Chili is the official state dish of Texas...and it is great fun to see yankees get their first taste.

Upper Valley school district plans drill to prepare for bio-terrorism

By Don Woodyard
Courier Staff Writer

ANTHONY — Last August the Upper Valley dealt with an enemy it could see — devastating floods which ravaged Vinton, Canutillo and Anthony.

The danger was real, potent and clearly identified.

On Wednesday, April 25, Anthony will learn, through staged scenario, to cope with a virtually unseen but deadly biological enemy, one that may look like an innocent white powder in an envelope or easily dispensed in aerosol containers.

The danger is spelled out in “Survive Bio-Terrorism: A Basic Handbook.” The publication begins chillingly,

“Bio-terrorism, once the stuff of science fiction, is now the stuff of everyone’s nightmares. Recent anthrax cases may just be the beginning. There are a number of biological agents out there — everything from ricin toxin to smallpox — that can kill.

“Some of these agents are easy to create, easy to transport and easy to spread ...”

Enter the Anthony Independent School District and the El Paso City-County Health and Environmental District. The two entities are working together to heed both the Biblical entreaty as well as the bio-terrorist warnings in the handbook.

Rosalinda Garcia, SNS (Strategic National Stockpile) planner with the El Paso City-County Health and Environmental District, is coordinating

and working with John Carrillo, AISD’s director of technology and communication. He is also volunteer coordinator.

Community presentations have been made and volunteer training conducted in preparation for the April 25 mock exercise scheduled from 8 to 11 a.m. in the gym of the Anthony Middle School. The drill focuses on volunteers quickly setting up and operating a self-sufficient, functional POD, a Point of Dispensing critical medicines and other support based on the specific nature of the emergency. All medicines are free.

“Things have been going fine,” Carrillo says. The first training was held last week. He says approximately 30 people have been trained to operate the PODs so far, but many more are needed. Twenty-seven are needed for each of two shifts. “The big thing is getting volunteers. We

need people from all walks of life.

“It falls on the community to support it; it depends on the community to make it successful,” he points out.

According to a pamphlet, the Division of Strategic National Stockpile comes under the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and is a national repository of antibiotics, chemical antidotes, antitoxins, vaccines and other life-saving medicines.”

These medications are stored in 12 strategically located warehouses around the country in “12-Hour Push Packages.” This means they can be flown to threat areas within a 12-hour period.

“It’s good to have these things in place,” says AISD superintendent Vern Butler. He feels it’s important for the school district to work together with the community in preparation for such an emergency. “We need to be prepared.”

Carrillo notes El Paso is especially vulnerable to bi-terrorist threat. “(The threat) is very real. Disease recognizes no border. It is very easy to transmit disease from one country to another.”

As a certified SNS planner, Garcia works with state and local agencies to coordinate efforts in responding to a possible threat. She said long-range plans call for 20 PODs at El Paso area high schools.

The Anthony exercise is not the first in the El Paso area. One was held March 8, 2006 at Mountain View High School in the Clint Independent School District.

“We learned a lot,” says Laura Cade, community relations coordinator for the Clint ISD. “The agencies worked together. It was a great experience.”

For more information about the POD drill, call Carrillo at 886-6539 or Garcia at 532-3406.



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Top ten mistakes taxpayers make on returns

By Al Rickard
Special to the Courier

Ever make a mistake on your tax return? If so, you’re not alone.

Mistakes can cost you money — taxpayers often miss deductions or tax credits. They can also draw unwanted attention to your return from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and could result in penalty fees. The National Society of Accountants (NSA) identified these “Top Ten Mistakes” that taxpayers make:

1. Using the wrong column in the tax table. For each level of income, tax rates listed in the tax table are usually different for taxpayers who are single, married filing jointly, married filing separately, and heads of households. It can be easy to pull a number from the wrong column.
2. Not claiming the right number of exemptions. Children count as exemptions up to age 23 — make sure they are claimed on the return

as exemptions with the current exemption amount, which often increases year-to-year.

3. Not adding state income tax refunds as taxable income. It’s easy to forget the state tax return refund you got last year. Remember that this counts as taxable income on your federal return if you itemized last year.
4. Not being aware of tax credits. The federal government offers many tax credits, including earned income, energy, education, fuel, elderly, child care, child tax, and foreign tax credits. Many states offer renters’ credits. Take advantage of these if they apply to you.
5. Not calculating and comparing the Alternative Minimum Tax. Every taxpayer must calculate this alternative tax to see if it applies to their situation. Failure to do so could result in additional taxes and penalties.
6. Not claiming a refund of excess FICA (Social Security) tax. If you changed employers in 2006 and earned more than \$94,200 (the 2006

income limit that applies to FICA tax) the employers together may have withheld more FICA than you owe. Make sure you calculate this and claim a refund if appropriate.

7. Not attaching W-2 forms and other forms. This common mistake is easy to make, so double check to make sure they are included.
8. Not entering Social Security numbers on all tax documents. In addition to the main return, documents such as Schedule A and other tax schedules should all have complete information, including Social Security numbers.
9. Not signing the return. After all the calculations, don’t forget this important step!
10. Not enclosing the check for any payment owed. Yes, you must write a check if you owe money. Don’t forget to include it!

NSA represents accountants who specialize in serving individuals and small-to-mid-size businesses.

Briefs

From Page 1

its first ever Trash-Off. Volunteers from the community of Vinton and surrounding areas will be contributing to the clean-up efforts. Help us teach Texans about the importance of keeping our state beautiful. Contact Ivana Renteria or Ruby Rodriguez at (915) 886-5104 to find out how to participate. For more information on the Don’t Mess with Texas Trash-Off, visit the web at www.ktb.org.

■ Socorro ISD is one of 50 school districts nationwide and the only one in Texas to receive an ID system from the Department of Justice. The Raptor Visitor ID Check In System provides an ID swiping system that searches national databases for sex offenders and others that should not be allowed near the schools. The system will read driver licenses, recognized state IDs, green cards and active military ID cards.

■ Kids can listen to a Zoo volunteer read stories about animals and see a real animal up close, right there in the bookstore when the El Paso Zoo volunteer readers visit the Westside location of the Barnes & Noble, 705 Sunland Park, every month on the second Saturday at 10 a.m. From tails — pun intended — of daring zebras to tricky tigers to lovely lions, these stories are sure to excite and intrigue your little ones. For more information or to volunteer at the Zoo call: 351-5340. Volunteers must be 18 or older.

■ Scleroderma is a group of diseases that involve the abnormal and often painful growth of connective tissue (tendons and cartilage) under the skin and around internal organs. Although scleroderma is more common in women, this chronic disorder also occurs in men and children and affects people of all races and ethnic groups. Learn more, including the different types, symptoms, diagnosis, and treatments, with *Handout on Health: Scleroderma* from the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Dis-

eases. For your free copy, send your name and address to the Federal Citizen Information Center, Dept. 604P, Pueblo, CO 81009. Or call toll-free 1 (888) 878-3256, and ask for Item 604P. And visit www.pueblo.gsa.gov to read or print this and hundreds of other FCIC publications for free.

■ From Aesop’s Fables to The Great Gatsby, themes of friendship, happiness, and self-discovery are present in many of our most-beloved books. That’s why the National Endowment for the Humanities has put together the “Pursuit of Happiness” poster. This poster of the Endowment’s *We the People Bookshelf* lists 15 classic books all related to the “Pursuit of Happiness” theme. Divided into four grade groups, it has books for children of all ages. For your free copy, send your name and address to the Federal Citizen Information Center, Dept. 506P, Pueblo, CO 81009. Or call toll-free 1 (888) 878-3256, and ask for Item 506P. And visit www.pueblo.gsa.gov to read or print this and hundreds of other FCIC publications for free.

Americas senior among 40 top science students in the nation

By Irma Flores
Special to the Courier

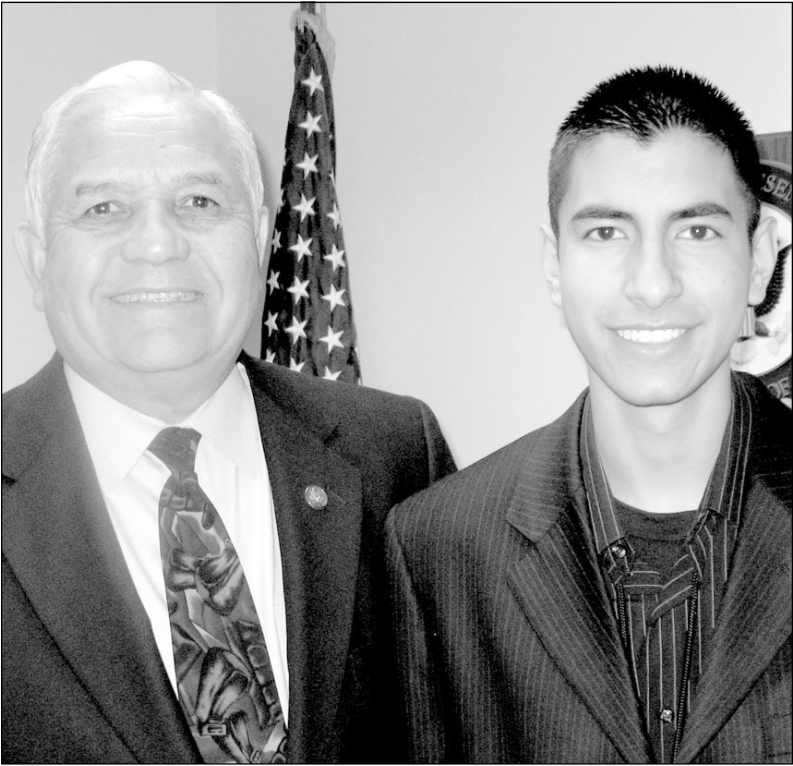
EAST EL PASO COUNTY — From Washington D.C. to Albuquerque to San Antonio and back to Albuquerque, Americas High School student Gabriel Mendoza is having a busy spring. The senior recently returned home from the Intel Science Talent Search held in Washington where he met with national leaders and legislators such as Vice President Dick Cheney, and U.S. Representative Silvestre Reyes.

Mendoza’s project on the effects and dynamics of the transovarial transmission of West Nile Virus (from female parent to offspring) earned him a spot among 40 students nationwide in what is considered America’s oldest and most prestigious high school science competition.

The project, which he started with his sister Priscilla, also impressed directors with the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health. Both siblings have been asked to apply for summer internships within the organizations for the mosquito research they started at Americas High School and which Priscilla is continuing at Notre Dame.

The Intel Science Search finalists met at the Science Talent Institute in Washington, D.C., March 9-14 where they interacted with top scientists and participated in rigorous judging sessions. Gabriel was one of two Texas finalists in the competition and received a \$6,000 scholarship, an Intel Centrino TM mobile technology-based notebook computer and \$1,000 for his school.

Mendoza is not unpacking his suitcase yet. He is heading to the Re-



— Photo courtesy Socorro ISD

MAKING THE ROUNDS — Congressman Silvestre Reyes met with and congratulated Gabriel Mendoza. Mendoza received a \$6,000 scholarship, an Intel Centrino TM mobile technology-based notebook computer and \$1,000 for his school based on his science project in the Intel Science Search competition.

gional Junior Science and Humanities Symposium being held in Albuquerque before returning to school on March 26.

In April, the Americas senior will be at the Texas International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF) being held in San Antonio and at the ISEF in Albuquerque in May where he will be presenting his project which won him the Gold Sweepstakes Award in the Physical Science Category at the Sun Country Regional Science Fair.

“I conducted a different research project for the ISEF fairs,” says Mendoza. “This project involves creating efficient quantum algorithms to

solve classically unsolvable math problems.”

Gabriel plans to attend MIT or Cal Tech for quantum computing and hopes to contribute to the next computer revolution.

“This summer I will be preparing for college at MIT, Stanford, or Caltech if I get accepted,” says Mendoza who is also a National Merit Scholarship finalist. “In college I hope to double major in physics and computer science, so I can study quantum computing and quantum physics in graduate school. Eventually, I hope to help engineer the computers of the future.”

Gonzalez to lead Canutillo’s newest elementary school

By Alfredo Vasquez
Special to the Courier

UPPER VALLEY — Sylvia Gonzalez has been named principal of the new elementary school that is now under construction in the Canutillo Independent School District. Gonzalez is currently principal of Deanna Davenport Elementary School.

Gonzalez brings to her new position over 30 years of experience in the education field. She was the assistant principal at Davenport Elementary School for four years before becoming its principal in 1994. She joined CISD in 1990 as a Bilingual Education Resource Specialist. Prior to that, she was a teacher with Gadsden ISD for 12 years.

“It is an exciting challenge for me. I am looking forward to creating a new school environment where all students will have the opportunity to reach their highest potential,” said Gonzalez.

The new elementary school, which was recently named by the

CISD School Board in honor of Gonzalo and Sofia Garcia, is scheduled to open next January. The new school is located near the intersection of Borderland Road and Westside Drive.

“Sylvia has all of the qualities that are necessary to open a new campus. She is a leader, very knowledgeable in curriculum development, and is familiar with the District resources available to her,” said Dr. Pam Padilla, CISD superintendent.

Search for a new principal at Davenport ES is underway. Gonzalez said that she leaves behind a strong team of educators who will be able to continue to provide a high quality educational program at the Westway neighborhood campus.

Gonzalez will begin her new job in May with staffing and budgeting duties. The new school will open with a full staff including teachers and support personnel in August at Damian Elementary School campus. In January 2008, administrators, teachers, support staff and students will move as a family to the new campus.



Sylvia Gonzalez

To Advertise

Call 852-3235

Relief

From Page 3

denies immediate tax relief, but ensures higher taxes in the future. Make no mistake about it; if the cap is not busted for the sake of the taxpayer, lawmakers will find creative ways to spend those surplus revenues outside the cap and thus grow the size of government (and our tax burden) for years to come.

Fiscal conservatives committed to

tax relief must encourage lawmakers to bust the spending cap. Granted, busting the cap may not feel good, but our state’s economy — and our taxpayers — will greatly appreciate the significant property tax relief that results.

Make no mistake: the state’s spending cap is already broken. Busting it for tax relief is good policy for Texas’ taxpayers.

Michael Quinn Sullivan is president of Texans for Fiscal Responsibility, a non-profit organization based in Austin (www.EmpowerTexans.com).

Eagles

From Page 6

recruitment of potential players. “A lot of people have supported our team building effort,” Coach Miller said.

This is the second year in a row that the team has made it to the bi-district playoffs. Coach Miller, however, has his eyes on another bigger goal — having more girls go on to play collegiate soccer. Last year, former Lady Eagle Susana Chavarria made history by becoming the first student from San Elizario High School to sign on to play soccer at Howard Payne University. This year’s team includes two senior co-captains Angie Ramirez and Crystal Martinez whom Coach Miller believes have the ability to play at the collegiate level.

“A winning team is a reflection of

the attitude of the school and the district as a whole, everything from the educational side to the athletic side. Good news is like bad news — it’s contagious but it gets people excited about things,” Coach Miller said. The Lady Eagles’ triumph in soccer bi-district playoffs against the more experienced team from Jefferson is a bit of good news that will no doubt spread quickly in San Elizario ISD.



ONE TEAM - ONE GOAL

Springtime Track Invitational

First 250 receive a FREE UTEP Spirit Pack

Saturday, March 31st

Kidd Field

Field Events - 10 a.m. Running Events - 3 p.m.

UTEP, UNM, Alabama, Portland State, Abilene Christian

TENNIS @ ELPASO TENNIS CLUB

Eastern Washington vs. UTEP 9:00 a.m.

UCF vs. UTEP 10:00 a.m.

Admission is FREE

Kobe’s ‘performances’ come against struggling teams

By Steve Escajeda
Special to the Courier

What the heck is going on with Kobe Bryant? The Los Angeles Lakers star has lifted his game a bit lately in an attempt to either help his team win games, or help lift his personal status.

Kobe, who tends to look at the game as a personal reflection on himself, has ditched his “I’m going to be more of a team player” attitude with his more comfortable “I’m the star and what are you going to do about it?” style of play.

Bryant scored 225 points in a four-game span last week, to join Wilt Chamberlain as the only two players in NBA history to score at least 50 points in four straight games.

But Kobe’s feat, though quite impressive, loses its luster when put under the microscope.

Let’s take a look at the teams the Lakers faced during Kobe’s scoring explosion. First, Kobe scored 65 on the Portland Trailblazers, who were 26-40. Then he followed with 50 against the 29-39 Minnesota T-Wolves and then put 60 on the Memphis Grizzlies and their pathetic 17-52 record.

The best team the Lakers have faced is New Orleans. Kobe scored 50 on the 31-38 Hornets. That means Kobe has done his damage against four teams with a combined 103-169 record.

How long can Kobe keep this going? We should ask his teammates, who are beginning to spend more and more of their time standing and watching Bryant play his one-on-five game.

In the four games, all very close wins against inferior teams, Kobe has taken 140 shots. That averages out to a whopping 35 a game. In that same span, Los Angeles’ second leading shooter has fired up almost 100 less attempts (Lamar Odom 47 shots).

Kobe was taking nearly 43 percent of his team’s shots during the streak. That might work against teams with little talent, but once the Lakers play teams with winning records they’ll suffer greatly.

The Suns, Pistons, Spurs, Mavericks, Rockets, Cavaliers, Jazz and Heat will clamp down on Kobe, and the rest of the team will be unable to respond because they haven’t had much practice shooting lately.

So enjoy the limelight Kobe. Like always,

your achievements will get you on SportsCenter, but will do very little to help your team win.

Final Four Fiasco

For the first time in my memory the NCAA Tournament has gone exactly the way the experts said it should, and I’m not enjoying it much.

Oh, I guess it was fun watching UCLA take on Kansas and watching North Carolina meet Georgetown was intriguing, and seeing Ohio State and Memphis was good, but I must admit that I was missing Cinderella.

No, not the Disney chick with the missing shoe, but the double-digit seeded team from wherever USA, that defied the odds by upsetting one of the big boys.

There was no Cinderella at this year’s tournament. Remember how much fun it was last year when everybody was talking about George Mason and whether they could win it all?

Something is missing this year. The passion is missing. All the team’s that were supposed to win — have. Where’s the fun in that?

Where are the Gonzaga’s and the Princeton’s and the George Mason’s?

Every great movie needs a villain and an underdog. We don’t want to watch two good guys go at one another, we don’t want to watch two bad guys go to war. We want good versus evil, big versus small, rich versus poor.

It’s the kind of battle we can all relate to — and it’s missing this season.

La Russa on the rocks

With the Major League Baseball season less than a week away, every team would like to get the year off on the right foot, especially the defending World Series champions.

But that’s not exactly what is happening with the defending champion St. Louis Cardinals, at least not for their manager.

Tony La Russa was arrested last week for driving drunk after police found him asleep in his vehicle at a stop light.

Boy, I’ve heard of falling sleeping in front of the TV on the couch, but in your SUV at a stop light? Exactly how drunk was this guy?

As it turns out, La Russa was very lucky. His SUV was in drive, but his foot was on the brake while he was sound asleep.

C’mon, Tony, it’s been five months since you won the World Series. It’s time to stop celebrating!

Lady Eagles triumph in bi-district playoffs

By Cynthia P. Marentes
Special to the Courier

SAN ELIZARIO — The San

**Indian Cliffs Ranch, Inc.**

SECURITY GUARD

Steady job for mature, older person. From 5 p.m. to 7 a.m. with overtime. Very good pay and very good working conditions. Must live in lower valley or Horizon. Ideal candidate will be bilingual and will be able to ride a horse. Our last security guard was with us for over 12 years, when he retired. Must pass thorough background check. We can furnish a trailer home for right person. Fax resume to 764-4168 or call Jose Vega at Indian Cliffs Ranch, 544-3200.

Elizario varsity girls soccer team faced a strong opponent and biting gusts of wind on a cold Friday night at Jefferson High School but they still managed to walk off the field with a trophy in their hands and a chance to move on to the next level of competition.

On March 23, as spectators in the stands and sidelines hunkered down from the sudden onslaught of chilly weather, the Lady Eagles remained steadfast and focused on the game. It was that perseverance — instilled by their coach, George Miller — that carried them to a 1-0 victory over Jefferson with a goal scored late in the second half by sophomore Alicia Martinez.

The girls’ team earned their place in the bi-district game after a solid

season of soccer playing under the direction of Coach Miller. After taking over the San Elizario High School girls’ soccer program in 2001, Coach Miller has worked tirelessly at building a tradition of consistency, discipline, and competitiveness. With the assistance of junior varsity coach Jesus Gamez, Coach Miller has developed and trained the smallest team in District 2-4A into a group of respectable and proficient athletes.

It has taken coach Miller years of effort to make soccer take root in San Elizario, a task that could not have been possible without the support of the community. He relies on the work of club coaches and the middle school to begin laying the groundwork for the



— Photo courtesy San Elizario ISD

See EAGLES, Page 5

PLAYING BIG — The Lady Eagles huddle up with their hard won trophy.

Classified Ads

LEGAL

SOCORRO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Invitation to Bid/Respond:

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

TUESDAY, APRIL 10, 2007

AUTOMOTIVE PARTS - OEM Part II CSP NO. 199-0410-7061 ACCEPTED UNTIL 1:00 P.M.

MINI BLINDS CSP NO. 199-0410-7081 ACCEPTED UNTIL 1:30 P.M.

ELECTRICAL PARTS AND SUPPLIES CSP NO. 199-0410-7082

ACCEPTED UNTIL 2:00 P.M.

Proposals will be received at Business Services Dept., 12300 Eastlake Drive, El Paso, Texas 79928 until the specified times. Detailed specifications are available from the above office between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. Mondays through Fridays and on the Socorro ISD website: www.sisd.net. WTCC-03/29/07

Border Fair Housing & Economic Justice Center

Invitation for Bids

The Border Fair Housing & Economic Justice Center (BFHC) is a recipient of a TDHCA Contract for Deed Conversion with Rehab grant contract number 1000561. The BFHC will receive sealed bids for resi-

dential rehabilitation for seven (7) residences until 4:00 p.m. (local time) on the April 17, 2007 at the BFHC, 1444 Montana Ave., Ste 100, El Paso, Texas 79902. Bid packets are available at the BFHC starting March 30, 2007 from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Bidders will be required to leave a \$25.00 refundable deposit. All submittals must be sealed and received by 4:00 p.m. April 17, 2007. Submitted envelopes must be marked “CONTRACT FOR DEED/ REHAB Bid” on the lower left hand side of the envelope.

A pre-bid conference is scheduled on April 3, 2007 at 2:00 p.m. at 1444 Montana Ave., Ste 100, El Paso, Texas 79902. Bids will be opened on April 3, 2007 at 3:30 p.m. at 1444 Montana Ave., Ste 100, El Paso, Texas 79902.

The Contractor must ensure that employees and applicants for employ are not discriminated against because of their race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. The Border Fair Housing & Economic Justice Center reserves the right to reject any or all Bids or to waive any informalities in the bidding. Border Fair Housing & Economic Justice Center is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.

**Anibal Olague**
Executive Director
WTCC: 03-29-07

HELP WANTED

Part-time bartender needed at the Horizon City American Legion. Call 852-4823 after 3 p.m. 3/29

REAL ESTATE

For Sale, 291 Langford St., Clint. 2,700 sq. ft., beautiful condition, 1/4 acre. 3 bedroom, 2 bath, open kitchen, Great Room w/fireplace, bonus room and laundry room, refrigerated air/central heat, storage shed, sprinkler system, many extras. (817) 657-7818, (915) 525-4790 or (915) 241-3869.

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20X45' SPACE FOR LEASE HORIZON SELF STORAGE 418 S. Kenazo 852-9371

SELF-HELP

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

Tiene problemas con el alcohol? Hay

una solución. Info: 838-6264.

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32	33	34	35

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Comix

OUT ON A LIMB By Gary Kopervas



AMBER WAVES By Dave T. Phipps



THE SPATS By Jeff Pickering



R.F.D. By Mike Marland



Do you want to know a secret?

By Don Flood

Actually, I'm not talking *a* secret. I'm talking "The Secret." "The Secret," a book by Rhonda Byrne that has become a publishing phenomenon, details the Law of Attraction. Here's the explanation, for the scientifically minded out there. "When you think of the things you want, and you focus on them with all your intention, then the Law of Attraction will give you exactly what you want, every time."

(Note to guys checking out the cover of the Sports Illustrated swimsuit issue: I'm not sure why Beyoncé isn't with you just now — but don't give up!) That's it. ADVD, which you can also buy, dramatizes how it works. A woman admires a necklace. Suddenly, it's hers. A boy imagines a bike. Suddenly, he has one. It's that simple. Ask. Believe. Receive. And not just dumb things like Peace of Mind, but real live *stuff*. You don't even have to go online.

Here's how the book says to begin: "Starting with something small, like a cup of coffee or parking spaces, is an easy way to experience the Law of Attraction in action." I don't know why she says "small." These are HUGE. If I could just imagine and come up with a double latte, I think that would be really cool — plus everybody would want to be my friend. ("Hey, Don, how about a decaf with extra cream?" "Coming right up, old pal!") I admit, my first thought was, that's the dumbest thing I ever heard. By simply visualizing an empty parking spot, for example, your brain is somehow sending out

a signal to all those who are currently parked and causing one of them to leave. And here's the tricky part. The timing must be such that this wonderful parking spot — which you visualized yourself — will not be taken by another person, who for all you know could be visualizing somebody naked. But I've come to embrace The Secret. It works — even when it doesn't. Here's how. I hate searching for parking spaces. In a city, I prefer going to a parking garage and paying rates equal to college tuition rather than driving around aimlessly looking for a spot that I know has not existed since the Age of the Dinosaurs. But The Secret solves my problem. Since I'm driving and must focus all my brainpower on not getting lost, it's up to my wife to visualize the empty parking space. This is a simple, logical division of labor and a win-win situation for me. If Helen's brain waves are sufficient to procure a parking spot right in front of where we're going, more power to her. If not — and we're late — then it's her fault. I wish I had known about The Secret years ago. Here's another advantage. I used to think that to write an amusing column, I had to be funny. No, *you* have to imagine me being amusing. If you just trouble yourself to imagine a funny column, you'll get one. If not, that's your problem. So, by all means, go buy the book now. Well, come to think of it, just *imagine* wanting the book. It should arrive shortly.

(c) 2007 King Features Synd., Inc.

King Super Crossword

- GREAT SCOTTS! ACROSS**

1 Piglet's papa

5 It's up your sleeve

8 Waugh's "The Loved _"

11 Vapor

14 _ check

18 Eban of Israel

19 Geometric figure

21 Hibiscus garland

22 Commedia dell'_

23 Scott Hamilton's rival

25 Chemical ending

26 Obtains

27 New Hampshire campus

28 _ ex machina

29 Jury members

31 "Ready! _! Go!"

32 Ordered

34 Gilpin of "Frasier"

37 21st President

39 Chews the scenery

41 Annual award

42 Bewitching

location

43 Dealt with a dragon

44 _ Japanese War

46 Harvest

48 Hurler Hershiser

50 Rock's _ Supply

51 Scott Wolf series

55 With 89 Across, "Batman" star
- 57 Al of "Insomnia"

60 Bond rating

61 High-flying agcy.

63 Claire or Balin

64 Component

65 Nab a gnat

68 Adjusted an ascot

69 Mil. base

70 Show indifference

72 Scott Baio co-star

75 Column style

77 Flicka's food

78 Lohengrin's love

80 Actress Mia

81 Reject

82 Periodontists' org.

83 Wander

84 With 120 Down, Bowzer's group

86 Uproar

89 See 55 Across

91 Scott Glenn film

96 Liechtenstein's cont.

97 Command at a corner

99 Iridescent stone

100 Atmosphere

101 Hotels

102 Shortstop Pee Wee

105 Vatican virtue

107 99 and 007

109 "The Producers" star

110 _ vera

111 "Fantasia" frames

112 Prohibit
- 113 On _ (doing great)

115 Vittle statistics?

118 "April Love" singer

122 Riyadh resident

124 By means of

125 Scott Joplin composition

128 Hint

129 Sixth sense

130 Varnish

131 Pavlova or Paquin

132 Table d'_

133 Dem.'s opponent

134 Predatory fish

135 Theater sign

136 "_ my lips!"
- DOWN**

1 Conifer covering

2 Bassoon relative

3 Singer Lane

4 Heavenly sight

5 4 Down's shape

6 Zimbabwe, formerly

7 Grimace

8 San Luis _ CA

9 TV's "The Flying _"

10 Slalom curve

11 Merriment

12 Vergil's vagabond

13 _ Leone

14 Give in to gravity

15 Scott Turow novel

16 Furry fisherman

17 Try out

20 East Lansing coll.
- 24 Tidy

29 Damascus dish

30 Normandy site

33 Tyrant

35 Spanish river

36 Shorten a sail

38 Olympic first lady

39 Director Kazan

40 Scott Carpenter's profession

41 "... say _ do"

43 Fool

45 New Deal agcy.

47 1492 vessel

49 Hawaiian island

52 Applauds a bore?

53 Self-smitten

54 Language suffix

56 Not fem.

58 Shiba _ (Japanese dog)

59 Neighbor of Mali

62 "Farewell!"

66 "I _ Rock" ('66 hit)

67 Museum piece

70 Clarinetist Artie

71 Hot spot?

72 "Comic Dictionary" author

73 Dack of "Dallas"

74 New Jersey city

76 Baseball's "Master Melvin"

79 Bud's buddy

81 Sail with Sinbad

85 _ Simbel

87 Kennel features

88 Cen. segments
- 90 Stocking stuffers?

92 Horrify

93 Brad, for one

94 Role for Liz

95 Prophetic

98 Wilson of "La Femme Nikita"

101 To such an extent

103 Restaurant employee

104 Plaza Hotel kid

106 Tone down

108 Isle near Corsica

109 Mrs. Phil Donahue

112 Baroque composer

114 Certain Finn

116 Pipe connection

117 "I Remember Mama" character

119 Sarah _ Jewett

120 See 84 Across

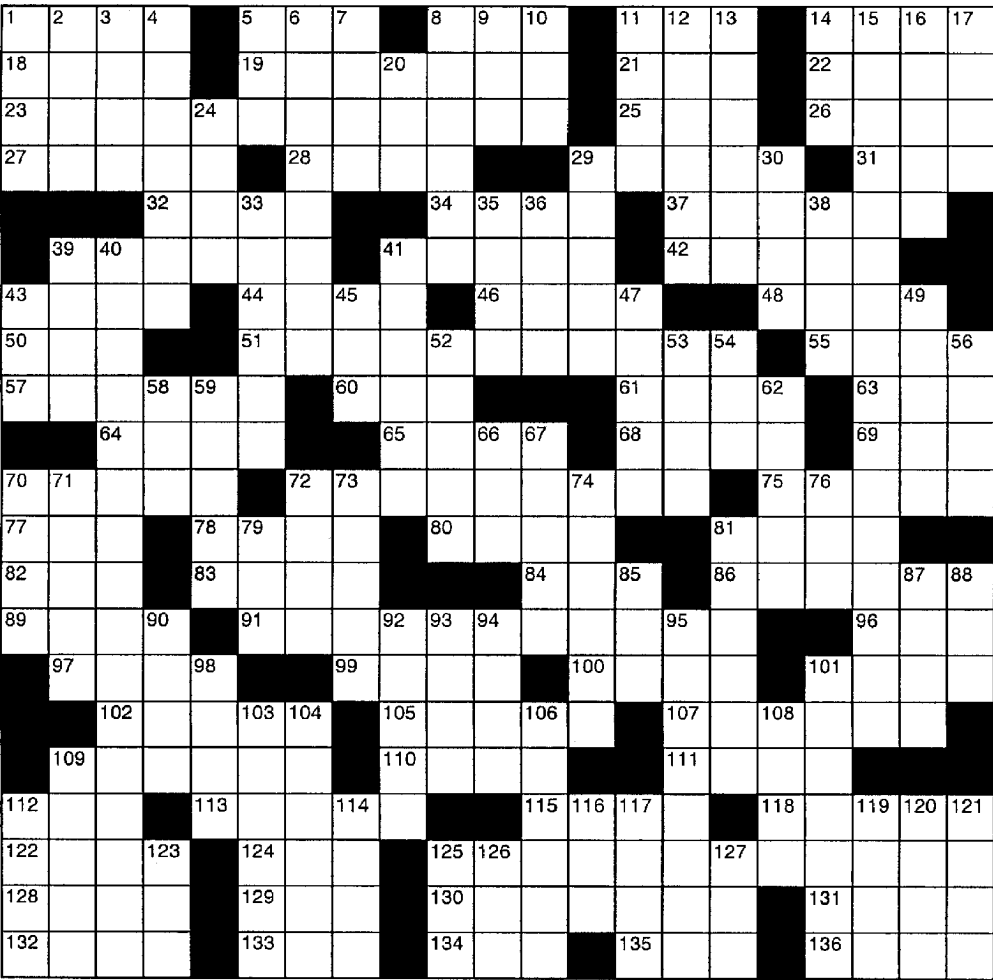
121 "My word!"

123 Hum bug?

125 Flavor enhancer: Abbr.

126 "Gotcha!"

127 System starter



Social Security Q&A

By Ray Vigil

Social Security receives new look on the internet

Social Security has introduced a new home page design — at www.socialsecurity.gov — and it is even easier to use than its highly-acclaimed predecessor.

Because more and more people are doing business on the Internet, Social Security is committed to making it easy for you to conduct your Social Security business online. The redesigned home page will help you find what you are looking for faster and more efficiently.

Some of the more noticeable

changes to the new home page include:

- easier access to Frequently Asked Questions, one of our most popular features;
- more drop-down menus instead of long lists of links;
- a search box located directly on the home page;
- a more visible login button for people who already receive benefits and have a password; and
- a quick reference list of links to our most popular online services.

Our most frequently used online services include applying for benefits online, replacing a lost, stolen or damaged Medicare card, requesting a proof of Social Security income letter, changing your address or phone number, and finding the nearest Social Security office.

Another popular feature is our list of Frequently Asked Questions. This service alone gets 27 million visitors each year. The questions and answers are easy to find and can be searched by specific subject matter.

In 2006, more than 50 million people visited the Social Security website — [http://](http://www.socialsecurity.gov)

www.socialsecurity.gov. In 2007, we expect that number to grow, and visitors to the site will find it easier to navigate and more responsive to their searches for specific subjects.

For more information on the article above, visit our website at www.socialsecurity.gov or call us at 1-800-772-1213. If you have any questions that you would like to have answered, please mail them to the Social Security Office, 1111 Gateway West, Attn: Ray Vigil, El Paso, Texas 79935.

Protect yourself from surprise medical bills, advise physicians

By Brent Annear
Special to the Courier

Physicians have new advice for patients: Protect yourself against unexpected bills for medical care in spite of having health insurance.

Too often a patient receives medical care in a hospital covered by his or her health insur-

ance plan but is later shocked to receive an additional bill for care.

Patients who receive medical care in a hospital often discover many of the physician specialists who work in hospitals, such as emergency medicine physicians, anesthesiologists, or pathologists, are not included in their health plan. Unfortunately, most patients do not find out until they receive a bill.

“They’re appalled,” said Michael Speer, MD, member of the Texas Medical Association (TMA) Board of Trustees. “Quite properly; I would be appalled, too. How many people can you think of who can just reach in their pocket and pay thousands of dollars?”

How can this happen?

Employers and patients pay health insurance premiums expecting a large list of all types of physician specialties to be accessible to care for them. This list is called an “adequate network” and should consist of primary care physicians, surgical and medical specialists, hospitals, and hospital-based physicians such as radiologists, pathologists, and emergency room physicians. When health plans do not provide adequate networks, patients are stuck with expensive insurance premiums and unexpected medical expenses if they receive care from a physician who is not a member of the network.

Hospitals and physicians each must decide whether to join a health plan’s network. Just because a hospital is included in a patient’s health plan does not mean every physician working in the hospital is in the network. Unfortunately, most people are under the mistaken impression that if a hospital is covered by their health insurance, so are the physicians.

For example, a woman having a baby enters a hospital covered by her health plan. In the course of her hospital stay, her obstetrician-gynecologist treats her, and depending upon the delivery, she might receive anesthesia from an anesthesiologist, a blood test examined by a pathologist, and an x-ray analysis by a radiologist, all of whom may or may not be in her health plan network.

“Those patients who are in the hospital often don’t feel well. They expect to be cared for, and they expect they’ve paid their money to provide that insurance coverage so that they don’t have a lot of out-of-pocket expenses,” reasoned Dr. Speer.

What can patients do?

Dr. Speer suggests patients educate themselves ahead of time. “They need to ask questions of their health insurer and their employer’s human resource department. Learn what the patient will and will not be responsible for,” Dr. Speer advised. “Is there a high deductible? Does it cover the physicians within the hospital? Does it cover accidents? Does it cover newborn care?”

TMA physicians suggest patients do the homework now so they can make informed decisions in the event of an unexpected emergency.

Dr. Speer, a Houston neonatologist, sees many tiny patients transferred to the hospital where he works. He cares for premature newborn babies who need intensive care. If the

hospital has space for the patient, it must accept the baby without prior discussion of payment. Fragile babies born as many as 12 weeks early often require a 10- to 12-week hospital stay. Often several weeks into the baby’s stay, the insurer announces the hospital is outside of the plan’s network and demands action.


“The insurer wants that baby transferred as soon as possible to an in-network hospital,” Dr. Speer said. “The insurer will put pressure on the family, saying, ‘You now are responsible for all the costs if the baby stays in this out-of-network hospital.’” In addition to being jarring to the parents, the situation can be more difficult if the baby is not healthy enough for transfer.

“That is a bit of a shock for the parents,” described Dr. Speer. “They paid for insurance, they thought their baby was covered, but they may be responsible for all of the costs of that baby’s care from that point forward.”

Physicians would like insurers to inform patients about which hospitals and physicians are in or out of the network of coverage. Meanwhile, they advise patients to be diligent in asking questions.


“They should hold their insurer’s feet to the fire,” said Dr. Speer. He adds that TMA is working with legislators to require health insurers to disclose accurate, current, and honest information to employers and employees on health plan networks, as well as copays and deductibles. TMA believes patients must have that information available when they need it, at the time of medical services.

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U.S. General Services Administration

OUR APOLOGIES!

Regular readers of the Courier are used to seeing the next week’s weather on this page along with a sponsoring ad. This week, without notice to the Courier and other papers around the country, the two parties that provide the copy for this space terminated their relationship.

A representative for AccuWeather®, the company that provides the weather graphics, said that the notification duties belonged to the company placing the ads accompanying their graphics. They declined to provide any gap coverage despite the lack of notification to newspapers.

GWA, a national advertising company responsible for the weather page contract, could not be reached last evening. They were supposed to provide a minimum of 90 days notice if there were changes or problems with the content provided to the Courier.

The Courier will replace both suppliers as soon as reliable providers can be found. Any business that would like to sponsor the Courier’s weather page should call 852-3235. This page is only available for long-term advertisers.

Again, our apologies to our readers.