Sales tax holiday

Comptroller Susan Combs is reminding Texas that state’s annual ENERGY STAR Sales Tax Holiday is this weekend, from Saturday, May 25, through Monday, May 27. The sales tax break applies to ENERGY STAR-qualified air conditioners priced at $6,000 or less; refrigerators priced at $2,000 or less; ceiling fans; fluorescent light bulbs; dishwashers; dehumidifiers; and clothes washers. Clothes dryers are not ENERGY STAR certified. There is more information at: http://energy. Comptroller.state.tx.us/taxinfo/ taxpubs/tx96_1331/.

— R.J. DeSilva

Fair Housing forum

A Fair Housing forum will be held on Friday, June 28, 2013 at 6 p.m. at the Women’s Intercultural Center located at 303 Lincoln Street in Anthony NM. Come learn about the preliminary findings from Doña Ana County’s Fair Housing Study, and offer your perspectives, commentary, and experiences with fair housing in the County. For more information about the forum contact Jessica Gardener via email at jessicaga@donaanacounty.org.

— Mary Carter

Appointment

Gov. Rick Perry appointed Lee Chayes of El Paso as one of three appointees to the Assistive and Rehabilitative Services Council for terms to expire Feb. 1, 2019. The council assists the commissioner of the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services in developing rules and policies for the agency. Chayes is CEO of Innovative Education Solutions LLC and the International Business College. She is also a member of the American and Texas Bar Associations, and a member of the United Way of El Paso Community and El Paso Better Business Bureau. She is also a member of the Visiting Nurses Association, member of the University of Texas at El Paso and a past board member of the Paso Del Norte Health Foundation and El Paso Youth Advisory Board. Chayes received her bachelor’s degree from the University of Texas at El Paso and a master’s degree in counseling from Webster University. She is reappointed and will continue to serve as chair of the council for a term to expire at the pleasure of the governor.

— Josh Havens

Wanted

This week’s Manhunt Monday fugitive is Daniel Gordillo Jr., 21. He is 5’8” tall and weighs 160 pounds. He has black hair and brown eyes. Law enforcement officials are asking the community for assistance in locating Gordillo. In May 2012, he stole a 2002 Ford F-250 and was arrested for this.

See BRIEFS, Page 5

A college doesn’t give you knowledge, it just shows you where it is.

— Quips & Quotes

Coalition seeks to reduce drug abuse

By Robert Grijalva

Special to the Courier

EL PASO COUNTY — Substance abuse by minors has long been a major concern. A recently formed organization is seeking to reduce the incidence of juvenile drug usage.

The Montana Vista Coalition was formed 15 months ago under the auspices of the Texas A&M Prevention Resource Center (PRC). The Coalition consists of the PRC, the West Texas High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area, the El Paso County Sheriff’s Department, Valley Ridge Community Church, Clint Independent School District, Region XIX Education Center, University Medical Center, Project VIDA and the office of Justice of the Peace Rosie Dominguez.

Susan Hernandez Hurt is the program director of the A&M Prevention Resource Center. She has been with the Center since its inception 16 years ago.

Hurt stated that the PRC is a clearinghouse for substance abuse and related materials that are provided free of cost. The principal recipient of the materials is law enforcement agencies. “The material is provided free to individuals or groups who are interested in reducing drug abuse by minors,” said Hurt.

“In addition to law enforcement, we make our resources available to schools, drug abuse treatment providers and parents.”

According to Hurt, the Prevention Resource Center covers a wide area outside El Paso along the Rio Grande. The PRC also coordinates activities by agencies throughout the area. There are 11 similar centers throughout the state of Texas.

Melissa Garcia is also with the A&M PRC. She is the administrative assistant to Hurt but is also the administrator of the coalition.

There have been several accidents recently involving underage drivers under the influence of alcohol or other substances. The purpose of the coalition is the prevention and reduction of substance abuse by minors,” said Garcia.

“We have been receiving a lot of support from schools in addressing this problem.”

According to Garcia, the coalition initiated a program recently targeting surplus drugs in the home. The “Take Back Initiative” provides a means by which households may legally dispose of old or expired drugs thereby eliminating their availability to minors. The drugs are taken by the Drug Enforcement Agency and disposed.

The future goals of the coalition as outlined by Garcia is to obtain future funding to bring more resources to the area and to educate students and parents about the harmful consequences of substance abuse by minors and also adults.

Deanne Rankins is the Deputy Director of the West Texas High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA). HIDTA is a federally funded grant program intended to supplement law enforcement in reducing illegal drug consumption and trafficking. The West Texas HIDTA covers El Paso County as well as 11 other counties.

HIDTA is overseen by the Office of National Drug Control Policy and provides funding to law enforcement for task forces and prevention programs. Past studies showed some success in reducing underage use of cocaine and marijuana.

“However, we see the trend as stagnant or even reversing especially with the use of marijuana. The national dialogue on legalizing marijuana has undone years of law enforcement education efforts,” said Rankins.

“Legalizing marijuana has sent the wrong message to our youth.”

The coalition meets regularly at the Project Vida Clinic, 14900 Gregg in Montana Vista. For information on participating with or making monetary or in kind contributions to the coalition, contact Melissa Garcia at 860-9528.

SERIOUS BUSINESS – From left are Deanne Rankin, Susan Hernandez Hurt and Rachel Quintanilla, counselor for Project Vida, discuss upcoming projects for the Montana Vista Coalition.

Vinton officials urge participation in EPA workshops

By Alfredo Vasquez

Special to the Courier

VINTON — A new vision for healthier and sustainable growth is taking root in the Village of Vinton with the help of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). And, village officials are encouraging residents, professionals, businesses, and school personnel to participate in this important endeavor.

Vinton was recently awarded a grant from EPA to receive technical assistance for green and sustainable growth, according to Jessica Garza, Village of Vinton clerk. “Our goal is to become a more economically and environmentally sustainable community for residents of all ages living in Vinton,” Garza stated.

Through these workshops, Vinton’s planning and zoning committee, other city staff and volunteers will have the opportunity to receive training, consultation, and a list of steps the community of Vinton could take to improve the quality of life of its residents, stated Garza.

GETTING INVOLVED – The Village of Vinton and the federal government’s Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are teaming up for a series of meetings to assist residents improve their health and quality of life.

The grant project, which started in February 2013, is expected to continue until May 2014. For more information about the workshops, please visit the Village of Vinton website at www.vinton-tx.gov or call 532-8026.

See VINTON, Page 4
Veterans’ claims still backlogged

Six months ago, we looked at the startling processing times for a number of small and large locations across the country. Given the Department of Veterans Affairs’ efforts to reduce the time to process a claim to less than 125 days, let’s check in with a few of the same locations and see how they’re doing.

In November, White River Junction, Vt., had 969 veterans awaiting claims, with 510 waiting an average 239 days. Now they have 834 veterans waiting an average of 239 days. However, average wait time for first claims is now at 559 days.

Lincoln, Neb., had 4,476 veterans waiting, 1,678 of them over 125 days, with an average wait of 2,560 veterans, with 695 over 125 days. Average wait time is 143 days. Clearly there’s been some progress made.

Let’s look at some of the more populated areas.

Last November, St. Petersburg, Fla., had 46,366 veterans awaiting an average 207 days. Of those, 30,321 were past the 125-day mark. Now there are 54,492 veterans waiting, an average of 319 days. Of those, 34,860 are over 125 days. As usual, the devil is in the details. The office receives 4,293 claims per month and only completes 3,687.

Baltimore, Md., had 19,662 claims waiting last November, with 16,472 past the 125-day mark. Average claim time was 343 days. Now it has 18,421 veterans with 15,326 waiting over 125 days with an average claim time of 417 days. Here, too, the incoming exceeds the outgoing: 1,023 claims coming in each month, and only 880 completed.

To see how your local claims office is doing, go online to http://circoline.org/ and click on Returning Home to Battle, then click on the backlog map.

Freddy Groves regrets that he cannot personally answer reader questions, but will incorporate them into his column whenever possible. Send email to coloanrep@2@gmail.com. (c) 2013 King Features Synd., Inc.

Avoiding hidden flight, hotel fees

The last few years have been tough economically for many people. Unemployment fears combined with plunging home, stock and retirement account values through the 2008 recession and stressful times are what we most need to recharge our batteries.

But with the economy turning around, many families are cautiously dipping their toes in the travel pool once again. Hotel occupancy rates have risen in many areas and airports are as crowded as ever. The airlines are taking advantage of the recent travel trends for tacking extra charges onto their bills. Here are a few to watch out for:

• A few airlines allow one free checked bag (Southwest still allows two), but most charge up to $25 for the first checked bag each way, and even more for additional pieces. Plus, most now tack on hefty fees for overweight and over-sized checked and carry-on luggage, so measure and weigh your luggage carefully.

• Expect to pay extra for things like changing flights, extra leg room, priority boarding, unaccompanied minors, pets, Wi-Fi access and food. Some airlines will charge extra to speak to a live person or to buy your ticket at the airport counter or by phone.

• Always check the offer fee comparison charts for various airlines; but always double-check the airline’s own posted rules before booking your flight.

• Check to see if there’s a fee if you check in before a certain time. Ask whether they’ll store your luggage for free until check-in so you can begin sightseeing unencumbered.

• Never charge a hefty penalty if you don’t cancel a reservation 24 to 72 hours beforehand and some also charge an early-departure fee – sometimes the equivalent of one night’s lodging. Read the hotel’s cancellation policy before booking, especially if you’re looking at a discounted, non-refundable rate.

• Minibars often have electronic sensors that trigger a charge if you simply move the items. Also, water coolers are commonly found in hotels, which may appear to be complimentary, but double-check before consuming.

• Hotel parking in major cities can cost up to $50 a day, and many hotels charge an additional $20 which means adding a tip on top of that. Research nearby municipal parking lots beforehand, or check the city’s tourism bureau for hotels offering parking promotions.

• Be very careful with personal luggage and taxis is cheaper overall than paying for parking.

• Some hotels and resorts automatically add housekeeping or spa gratuities to your bill, so ask first before leaving your own tip – unless of course the service was terrific.

• Most hotels charge exorbitant amounts for local and long-distance calls made from room phones, so use your cellphone.

• Resorts often charge extra for services they offer – such as gym access or daily newspaper delivery – even if you don’t use them. Find out the policy ahead of time and arrange for your bill card for unused services.

• Ask to see your bill the night before you check out, so you can review it carefully for overcharges.

• Be sure to use your hotel’s number when calling your cellphone as using your own may result in charges.

• Identify thieves are prepared to answer questions about the senior’s personal information.

• Always use a credit card to pay for services; identity thieves are prepared to answer questions about the senior’s personal information.

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According to a recent federal report, Texas is among the top states for identity theft. In the Federal Trade Commission’s most recent Consumer Sentinel Network report, Texas ranks seventh in the nation for most reported cases of identity theft per 100,000 residents. The FTC’s report indicates that in 2012, there were more than 28,000 reported cases of identity theft in Texas.

According to the FTC, Texans lost a staggering $77 million to identity theft in 2012 – the second-highest reported cases of identity theft per 100,000 residents. The FTC’s report indicates that in 2012, there were more than 28,000 reported cases of identity theft in Texas.

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The events that have unfolded over the past week are showing big government at its worst. First we learned more details about the Obama administration’s coordinated attempt to misrepresent the September 2012 terrorist attack in Benghazi, which claimed four American lives. Then a senior IRS official acknowledged that her agency had deliberately targeted conservative groups for harassment. Meanwhile, the administration was forced to admit that its top health regulator has been soliciting industry funds to help implement Obamacare. Finally, we discovered that the Justice Department has cast an extraordinarily wide net to capture the phone records of several journalists who work for the Associated Press.

All of these events highlight the Obama administration’s massive credibility gap. As someone who has spent a career in public service, I want government to work. As a conservative, I want government to be as small and efficient as possible. As an American, I cannot tolerate a government that actively deceives the people it is meant to serve, whether through negligence, incompetence, or malfeasance.

In 2011, my office began receiving complaints of unfair treatment by the IRS from various conservative groups in Texas – groups such as the King Street Patriots, True the Vote, the San Antonio Tea Party, and the Waco Tea Party. They cited excessive, unreasonable, and improper inquiries from the IRS and feared that they were being targeted for their political beliefs. I sent multiple letters to then-IRS commissioner Douglas Shulman expressing my concerns and asking for an investigation. He categorically denied that the IRS was targeting specific groups.

Two years later, we learned that he was wrong and the conservative groups were right: The IRS was systematically targeting people of a certain ideology – one that happens to be at odds with the current administration. Furthermore, we have learned that senior IRS officials were aware of these accusations as early as June 2011. That is outrageous, but sadly not surprising from an administration that has chosen time and again to deceive the American people.

Indeed, whether the issue is a terrorist attack in Libya, partisan abuses by IRS agents, a potentially illegal effort to shake down health-care providers, or a questionably broad investigation by the nation’s top law-enforcement agency, this self-styled “most transparent administration in history” has consistently put politics ahead of truth, justice, and the rule of law.

Perhaps even more alarming is the total lack of responsibility assumed by the president. Americans have caught their government in multiple lies, and President Obama’s response has been a symphony of obfuscation, misdirection, and denial. At every turn, the president and his deputies have chosen not to be straightforward with the American people, and as a result they have seriously undermined both their credibility and their trustworthiness.

To review: Four American patriots are dead; U.S. citizens are being deliberately targeted and harassed by their government; journalists are understandably concerned about an intrusive Justice Department investigation; and a cabinet secretary is strong-arming the health industry to “voluntarily” fund a partisan, highly unpopular policy. Is this America or China? Any one of these issues is a “scandal.” Together they reflect an administration that is deeply flawed and has lost the faith of the public it is sworn to protect.
The new curator has been an academic researcher as well as participant in many cultural resource management projects, the most recent being the Diquís Hydroelectric Project, which is currently the largest dam project in Central America. He has also been employed by museums in both Arizona and Costa Rica. His professional interests include Southwestern, Mesoamerican and Lower Central American archaeology, geoarchaeology and the application of remote sensing and Geographic Information Systems use in an archaeological context. Maloof stated that he is looking forward to having his wife and children join him in El Paso in about two months.

On Saturday, May 25, at 2 p.m., Maloof will be presenting his PowerPoint illustrated talk, titled From Hunter Gatherers to Complex Chiefdoms, the Archaeology of Prehistoric Costa Rica. The public is invited to attend this free program and meet the museum’s newest addition.

For more information contact Julia Bussinger, director of the El Paso Museum of Archaeology and El Paso Museum of History, at 351-3588 or send email to bussingerjh@elpasotexas.gov.

**FRESH FACE – George Maloof, III is the El Paso Museum of Archaeology’s new curator.**
The free tour, which is open to small groups and individuals, will be held from 3 to 4 p.m., Thursday, May 30, at the Archeology museum, 4301 Transmountain Road.

Guida said that participants will learn about the prehistoric people of El Paso and Mexico, as they take a journey through 14,000 years of El Paso’s Indian heritage including the Paleolithic, Archaic hunter-gatherers, Pit Dweller- Horticulturalists, Pueblo, Manso, Piro, Suma, Tiguan and Mescalero Apache. The museum’s galleries also include Casas Grandes culture and the ancient city of Paquimé in Chihuahua, and the major regions of ancient Mexico – West, Central, North and Maya, according to the curator.

For information about the tour, call Guida at 915-755-4332 or send email to guidam@elpaso.gov.
**By Steve Escayda**

**Special to the Courier**

Well, we’re about to hit the dog days of summer pretty soon. The days when not much is going on in sports except for the boring regular-season Major League Baseball games that seem to blur into each other.

I know it’s still May, but before you know it — June and then July will make their appearances.

Around that something wonderful will start to happen. The NFL will start considering visions of Tom Brady and Peyton Manning and Adrian Peterson and Tony Romo and Drew Brees and Calvin Johnson and Aaron Rodgers and J.J. Watt and Joe Flacco and Ben Roethlisberger and dozens of other big time players will start getting ready for the 2013 season.

It’s hard to know which guys are already working hard and getting ready for their time on the field but there are some guys who are acting as if they are right in the middle of the season — by being bad off the field.

Let’s start with the guy we formerly knew as Ocho Cinco. Although the guy isn’t wanted anymore by any NFL teams, Chad Johnson is wanted by the State of Florida after failing to report with his probation officer.

The warrant issued for the arrest of the former NFL wide receiver stems from the domestic violence charge against his former wife. Being the tough guy that he is, Johnson head-butted her during an argument.

She promptly filed for divorce.

He better have a good excuse or he’ll have to change his name to Ocho Cinco once again.

Now, Giuliani has picked up another mantle — Mickey Mantle’s, to be precise — and once again, another historic figure and hero to many, another person who figures large in the record books and looms large in our minds, is being subjected to the firing line.

Almost two months after his death and half a century after he hobbled off the field at Yankee Stadium for the last time, a two-hit auction house is claiming to sell an authentic bat of his. That would not be spectacular in and of itself, but this item is different, the auctioneers proclaim.

For the bat in question has been X-rayed, and it has been deemed to be tampered with… corked.

Corking a bat is a tactic many sluggers have employed, in much the same way that pitchers use sweat and rosin to manipulate the movement of the ball. Essentially, the top part of a bat is filled with cork, drilled out, replaced by cork sprig and capped with the same piece of wood to disguise the play.

Corking a bat gives a higher maximum surface, but shaves off a few ounces in weight, allowing for a faster swing.

The Mantle family is not amused. They have decided that they are not going to let Mickey Mantle — a man who wasn’t allowed inside his house at night until he hit 10 straight balls off his surly father who had spent all day mining coal in Oklahoma — be rewritten as a loser or a cheater. And the guy they hired to make sure of that? Rudy Giuliani.

For the record, Truman never made the trip to Japan. One assumes there was too much downside for the ex-president and no need to assist his detractors in their attempts to rewrite history. Longtime Yankee fan Giuliani, however, is going to be swinging away in court within weeks.

Let the games begin.

Mark Vasto is a veteran sportswriter who lives in Kansas City. (c) 2013 King Features Synd., Inc.
Your good health
By Paul G. Donohue, M.D.

DEAR DR. DONOHUE: My doctor gave me some very unsettling news. He says I have cataracts in both eyes. I haven’t been able to sleep since he told me. My count was blinded later in life. I don’t know the cause, but I do know that life was very tough for him. I haven’t contacted the ophthalmologist my doctor referred me to. I’m too scared. How are cataracts treated? How long is recuperation? – S.M.

If a doctor examined the eyes of most people over 60, the doctor would tell them they have the beginning of a cataract. Do you know what a cataract is? Right behind the pupil is the eye’s lens, a small, oval-shaped, perfectly clear structure. The lens focuses light on the retina in the back of the eye, so we get a clear picture of what we see.

A cataract is a smudge in the lens. Proteins in the lens have stuck to each other to produce a stain in the lens like a fingerprint on the lens of glasses. Your cataract must not be large. You have no complaints of it interfering with your vision. Most cataracts result from aging. Smoking, alcohol excess, constant exposure to sunlight and long-term use of high doses of cortisone drugs also contribute to cataract formation.

The evolution of your cataract to one that blurs vision is unpredictable. The process is painless. Difficulty seeing at night and difficulty reading fine print are early symptoms of cataracts affecting vision.

Treatment is close to miraculous. When the lens smudge greatly affects vision, the eye doctor removes the lens and replaces it with a lens made of plastic or silicone. Cataract removal is done as an outpatient. You can be up and about by the evening. You’ll be astounded at the minimum inconvenience of the procedure and with the vision that results from it.

DEAR DR. DONOHUE: What’s the best time to take a multivitamin? I take one in the morning. That way I don’t forget to take it. – L.M.

I believe this is the most frequently asked question I get. Vitamins A, D, E and K are fat-soluble vitamins. They’re better absorbed if they’re taken after a meal that has some fat or oils in it. Vitamins B and C are water-soluble and can be taken at any time.

I’m not convinced that the timing of vitamin-taking is all that important. Take your multivitamin when it’s most convenient.

DEAR DR. DONOHUE: I lift weights seven days a week. I see that I am making progress. My arms are much bigger than they were. I’ve been told I’m overdoing it by lifting every day. Am I? – R.S.

It’s not a good idea to perform the same weightlifting exercises on consecutive days. Muscles need a full 48 hours to recover, rebuild and grow after an intense exercise session.

A day of lifting and then a day of rest is a good schedule. You can lift weights daily if you want to. Just don’t work the same muscles on consecutive days.

Dr. Donohue regrets that he is unable to answer individual letters, but he will incorporate them in his column whenever possible. Readers may write him or request an order form of available health newsletters at P.O. Box 356475, Orlando, FL 32853-6475, (c) 2013 North America Syndic, Inc. All Rights Reserved.
Social Security Q&A

**Q:** Is there a time limit on how long I can receive Social Security disability benefits?

**A:** Your disability benefits will continue as long as your medical condition has not improved and you cannot work. Social Security will periodically review your case to determine whether you continue to be eligible. If you are still receiving disability benefits when you reach your full retirement age, your disability benefits will automatically be converted to retirement benefits. Learn more about disability benefits at www.socialsecurity.gov/disability.

**Q:** How long must I work to become eligible for retirement benefits?

**A:** Most people need 40 Social Security “credits” to be eligible. You can earn up to four credits per year. In most cases, you need at least 10 years to be eligible for retirement. During your working years, you earn credits based on earnings. The amount of earnings needed to earn one credit rises as average earnings levels rise. In 2012 and 2013, you receive one credit for each $1,160 of earnings, up to the maximum of four credits per year. If you become disabled or die before age 62, the number of credits you need depends on your age at the time you become disabled or die. You must have a minimum of six credits, regardless of your age. Retire online at www.socialsecurity.gov.