



# Aiming for excellence

## Teacher secures grant to help students read

By **STEVE REAGAN**  
Staff Writer

A local teacher's efforts have secured a grant to help improve reading abilities of local elementary students. Sandy Shelhamer, a first-grade teacher at Bauer Magnet School, applied for the grant through the Mars Foundation of Washington, D.C. last summer to help enhance the school's Leveled Library. Leveled reading programs allow students to improve their reading skills as fast as their individual talent allows. It also concentrates on instruction of small groups, instead of entire

classrooms. "Not everyone reads at the same level," Shelhamer said. "This way, the students find that reading is not too much of a challenge, nor is it too easy." "(Leveled reading) gives students reading lessons they can understand at the grade level they're at and allows them to proceed at an accelerated rate," said Darrell Ryan, director of curriculum for the school district. "It has been a very successful program." Thanks to Shelhamer's efforts, the school received a \$500 grant from the foundation that See **GRANT**, Page 3A



**Bauer Magnet School first-grade teacher Sandy Shelhamer helps one of her students with his reading Wednesday afternoon. Shelhamer recently helped secure a \$500 grant for the school to expand its accelerated reading program.**

## On tap tonight

**Howard College**  
5:45 p.m., Howard College Luminaria and holiday activities. Begins with a Frito pie supper. Santa arrives at 6 p.m. Other activities include the Coahoma Kids Choir at 6 p.m., New Dimensions at 7 p.m. and SouthWest Collegiate Institute for the Deaf students performing "My Little Angel" at 7:30 p.m. The public is invited at no charge.

**Hangar 25**  
6 p.m., Reception for William R. Banks Jr., Hangar 25 Air Museum Veteran of the Month, officer's briefing room, 1911 Apron Drive. No charge. Public invited.

**Municipal Auditorium**  
7 p.m., "A Winter Fantasy," concert presented by choirs from all five local elementary and Goliad Intermediate. Big Spring Municipal Auditorium. Free to the public.

# City taking its time in replacing attorney

By **STEVE REAGAN**  
Staff Writer

City of Big Spring officials are taking a slow-and-steady approach in the search for a new city attorney. The city attorney post, which is a part-time position, will become vacant at the end of the year when Jean Shotts steps down after six years at



the job. Shotts, who also represents about 25 other Texas municipalities in the same capacity, recently submitted his letter of resignation to city officials. "It was a combination of factors, mostly economic," Shotts said in giving

the reason for his resignation. Shotts served two stints as city attorney for Big Spring. He first assumed the post Jan. 1, 1998 and served until March 1990. He then returned to the city payroll in April 2000. In addition to serving Big Spring as city attorney, he also represents various other communities, including

Brownfield, Wolfforth, Crosbyton and Paducah. Despite his wide-ranging duties, Big Spring remains special, he said. "Big Spring was the first town I became city attorney at," he said. "This is where I basically started learning the job." Mayor Russ McEwen expressed regret at Shott's decision. "I'm disappointed,"

McEwen said, "because Jean has done a good job for us and I hate to see him go." Shotts' resignation came two days after Big Spring City Council approved a motion to seek bids for a full-time city attorney. In that Nov. 16 meeting, McEwen said he was not dissatisfied with Shotts' performance, but said the council should

explore all opportunities. Councilwoman Jo Ann Staulcup said she was opposed to going out for bids because she believed Big Spring did not need a full-time attorney, which would require a secretary and office space. After discussion, the council voted down a Staulcup motion not to go out for

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## Settles back on slate for Moore Board

By **STEVE REAGAN**  
Staff Writer

Moore Development for Big Spring directors will give further consideration to a \$3 million question when they hold a special board meeting at noon Friday in the Chamber of Commerce board room. The Settles Hotel Development Co., a Dallas-based firm that recently signed an agreement to purchase the Settles Hotel building in downtown Big Spring, recently asked the Moore board for a \$3 million grant to help finance renovations of the building, which has been vacant



**Ethel Pringle holds a toy baby, one of thousands of toys Spring Tabernacle will be giving away during its Toys for Children ministry Friday.**

## Spring Tabernacle faithful excited as toy project nears

By **BILL MCCLELLAN**  
News Editor

Ethel Pringle holds the baby close and smiles. "See his little cheeks?" she says of the life-size doll. "He looks so real, just like a little baby." "Except you don't have to have to diaper it," she adds, with a wink in her eye. This is not Ethel's first Toys for Children giveaway at Spring Tabernacle Church. Nor it is the first for Dewey Byers, Karla Chavarria,

John Arista, Terry Miller or Ingrid Miller — all volunteers — and certainly not for Mona Lue Tonn. "We're really excited about Friday. We're looking forward to it," says Mona Lue, who has continued the ministry at Spring Tabernacle since her husband, Arnold, passed away earlier this year. The Toys for Children project began in 1995 and it's obvious by the piles and piles of neatly stacked toys and clothing that it is still going strong. See **TOYS**, Page 3A

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Please call 263-7331. Office hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. If you miss your paper, please call (432) 263-7335 before 7 p.m. weekdays and noon Sunday.

## DRIVE THROUGH NATIVITY

First Church of the Nazarene will hold its 20th edition of the Live Drive-Through Nativity Friday, Saturday and Sunday on the church grounds. The event will be held nightly from 6:30 p.m. until 9:30 p.m. There is no admission fee; donations are accepted, however. The 17-scene production involves more than 130 costumed participants and depicts the life of Christ from birth through his ascension to heaven. Those who go will be presented with a audio cassette or compact disk providing commentary about each of the scenes as they drive through. For more information, call the church at 267-7015.

## HOWARD COLLEGE PLAY

Howard College will present "A Christmas Carol ... More or Less," starring Stefano LoVerso and Mary Irey, this weekend at Hall Center for the Arts on campus. The play is about a divorcing couple who are forced to produce a two-person version of "A Christmas Carol." In the end, the story of reconciliation affects even them. There are four performances: Friday at 8 p.m., Saturday at 2:30 p.m. and 8 p.m., and Sunday at 2:30 p.m. This holiday comedy is free to the public and presented by the Howard College Drama Department.

## 18 Shopping Days Til Christmas



Inside The Big Spring Mall  
**267-6335**

## World briefs

### Iraq study group leaders to testify on report that offers no major course changes

WASHINGTON (AP) — Praised by some and panned by others, the report of a high-level commission on ways to wind down the war in Iraq offered no startlingly new ideas but said a U.S. defeat still could be averted.

The co-chairmen of the bipartisan Iraq Study Group, former secretary of state James A. Baker III and former Rep. Lee Hamilton, D-Ind., were taking their 96-page report before a Senate committee Thursday to face questions on their assessment of conditions inside Iraq as well as their recipe for stabilizing the country and beginning the withdrawal of American forces.

Describing the situation as "grave and deteriorating," the panel said Wednesday the Bush administration's approach was not working. It called for new diplomatic efforts in Iraq and the region, and recommended that the U.S. military accelerate a change in its main mission so that most combat troops can be withdrawn by spring 2008.

### Senate votes overwhelmingly to confirm Robert Gates as new secretary of defense in 95-2 vote

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate voted overwhelmingly to confirm Robert Gates as defense secretary, with Democrats and Republicans portraying him as the man who will help overhaul President Bush's Iraq policies.

The 95-2 vote Wednesday was a victory of sorts for Bush, who named Gates to replace Donald H. Rumsfeld at the Pentagon on Nov. 8, a day after voters gave Democrats control of Congress for next year.

Even so, much of Gates' support stemmed from his pledges to consider new options in Iraq. Overshadowing the vote was the release of an independent study lambasting Bush's approach to the war, increasing pressure on the White House to change course.

"I am confident that his leadership and capabilities will help our country meet its current military challenges and prepare for emerging threats of the 21st century," Bush said in a statement after the Senate vote.

He said Gates had shown during his confirmation hearing this week before the Senate Armed Services Committee that he is "an experienced, qualified, and thoughtful man who is well respected by members of both parties and is committed to winning the war on terror."

### Missing San Francisco man found dead in Oregon mountains after lengthy search

MERLIN, Ore. (AP) — A San Francisco man who struck out alone to find help for his family after their car got stuck on a snowy, remote road was found dead Wednesday, bringing an end to what authorities called an extraordinary effort to stay alive.

Authorities planned to announce the results of an autopsy on Thursday.

Searchers had been following James Kim's footprints in the snow and searching by helicopter since his wife and two young daughters were rescued Monday. They also found pieces of his clothing, which they believed he left and arranged to give searchers clues to his whereabouts in Oregon's Coast Range.

Before rescue crews could drop packages with clothing, emergency gear and provisions, a search helicopter spotted Kim's body at the foot of the Big Windy Creek drainage, a half-mile from the Rogue River, where ground crews and helicopters had been searching for days.

### 10 U.S. troops killed in Iraq; 8 Iraqis killed, dozens wounded in mortar attack

BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP) — Ten U.S. troops were killed in Iraq on Wednesday, a major blow on the same day a high-level panel in Washington recommended gradually shifting U.S. forces from a combat to a training role.

The bipartisan Iraq Study Group released recommendations for changing course in the country, saying President Bush's policy in Iraq "is not working." The Iraqi government said the U.S. report did "not come as a surprise," and it agreed that Iraq must take the lead in its own security.

"The situation is grave, very grave in fact, and cannot be tolerated," Deputy Prime Minister Barham Saleh said on the pan-Arab satellite TV channel Al-Arabiya. "Absolute dependence on foreign troops is not possible. The focus must be on boosting the Iraqi security forces."

The U.S. military said in a statement that 10 Americans had died in four separate incidents but gave no further details, pending notification of relatives. In addition to the 10 casualties, the U.S. command said two U.S. soldiers were

killed Sunday in Baghdad and a Navy sailor were killed in Anbar province on Monday.

The latest deaths raised to at least 30 the number of U.S. troops who have died this month.

### Elections to restore Fiji to democracy may be 2 years away, interim prime minister says

SUVA, Fiji (AP) — The leader of this nation's fourth coup in 20 years grew increasingly isolated Thursday, as his hand-picked prime minister said the move was illegal, the nation's traditional leaders refused to back him and the international community expressed disdain.

The prime minister — military medic Dr. Jona Senilagakali — said Thursday it was unclear when democratic elections will be held in the South Pacific nation.

"That could be tomorrow, that could be next week, it could be in the next two years or more," he told Australian Broadcasting Corp. radio. "Hopefully in 12 months, two years, we'll be able to have a general election."

Military commander Frank Bainimarama insisted that he had acted to save Fiji's democracy, which he said had been used as cover for the corruption of the officials he deposed. He has promised to return the nation to democracy.

Disputing Bainimarama's claims that the coup was working within the constitution, Senilagakali said: "There's no doubt about it, it's an illegal takeover."

The country's powerful council of tribal chiefs also refused to back the coup, throwing its support instead behind the nation's president, whom it appoints.

Australian Prime Minister John Howard attacked Bainimarama's efforts to justify his act.

"For all its flaws and the fact that it was struggling in many ways, Fiji had re-embraced democracy and what's happened is wrong, it's brutal and it's an unlawful military takeover," Howard said.

### Bush to meet with Blair to chart new directions in Iraq

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Bush faces urgent pressure to find a fresh strategy in Iraq as a new defense secretary heads to the Pentagon and a scathing bipartisan commission report says his war policies have failed and that "time is running out."

The Iraq Study Group's report said the situation in Iraq was "grave and deteriorating" after nearly four years of bloodshed and more than 2,900 American deaths. The report gave weight to the president's talks on Thursday with British Prime Minister Tony Blair, his closest ally in the unpopular war.

Bush, possibly with counsel from Blair, could embrace some or all 79 of the Iraq Study Group's recommendations. The president also could ignore them and chart his own new course based on internal reviews being done at the Pentagon, State Department and the White House.

"It's clear that the present situation is not one that could be sustained or accepted," White House press secretary Tony Snow said Wednesday.

The panel's recommendations ranged from gradually withdrawing U.S. combat forces during the next year to ramping up the training of Iraqi security forces to enlisting diplomatic help from Iraq's neighbors — not only to resolve problems in Iraq but to find an end to the long-running conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.

### NASA makes final preparations toward Thursday shuttle launch

CAPE CANAVERAL (AP) — NASA began moving the scaffolding that protects the space shuttle for bad weather early Thursday, despite lingering clouds and other weather woes that cast doubt on whether Discovery will blast off this week.

Discovery was scheduled to blast off Thursday evening and streak by a nearly full moon, taking seven astronauts on a mission to rewire the International Space Station.

As NASA resolved technical concerns Wednesday, two lurking weather problems gave NASA less than an even chance of launching Thursday. The official likelihood of good weather Thursday is only 40 percent and that drops to 30 percent Friday and nudges back up to 40 percent Saturday.

The biggest problem is a bank of low clouds that are sticking around because of a cold front coming through. NASA rules prohibit launching in low clouds because engineers need clear skies to observe the shuttle during ascent and in case of emergency, the shuttle commander needs to be able to see clearly enough to guide Discovery on a difficult back-flip maneuver to land back at Kennedy Space Center.

## TOYS

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"We've really been blessed this year," says Ethel. "Just look at all of this stuff."

Sunday school room after Sunday school room is full of potential gifts — stuffed animals in one, dolls in another.

Cars, trucks and airplanes line shelves in another room. Down the hall, there is a large room filled with clothes and shoes, sorted by age group, some for boys, some for girls. There is a room with toys and clothing for babies.

One of the items is a baby swing that operates off batteries.

"I've put lots and lots of batteries in things," said Dewey Byers, who has also done a lot of electrical work on the toys to get them running well and "kid ready."

In between the rooms are bags filled with stocking stuffers. And lots and lots of oranges.

All of the toys and clothing are clean and bright — a testament to the hard work volunteers have spent getting ready for Toys for Children Day, which is Friday.

Last year, Spring Tabernacle handed 262

children five presents each. That's in excess of 1,300 gifts to young boys and girls who might not otherwise had presents during the holidays.

Actually, they don't give the gifts directly to the children — that would result in a mele even Santa wouldn't want to imagine. Rather, the gifts are picked out by the parent, parents or guardian of the children.

"We ask that they don't bring their children unless they have to," says Mona Lue. "We just don't have enough volunteers to watch the children while someone takes the parent around to pick out toys. So if they must bring children, they need to bring someone to supervise them as well."

The toy giveaway starts at 10 a.m. at the church, located at 1209 Wright St. Any family that has a need is eligible. There is no registration, no need for proof of income. The program operates on faith.

"If they have a need, that is all we need to know," explains Mona Lue.

Those wanting to learn more about the Spring Tabernacle ministry can call Mona Lue at 263-0544. Leave a message if necessary.

## MOORE

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for several years. While supportive of the project, Moore officials expressed the need for caution before granting the firm's request.

"It's important that we do this right," board member Frank Parker said at the director's November meeting. "We have to make sure we follow all of the steps on this, and the first one is to get a letter of opinion from our attorney saying what we can and can't do."

The board decided at that meeting to first get a letter of opinion from its attorney on the legality of the action, then prepare a letter of intent to provide the needed funds.

Total cost to renovate the landmark has been estimated at between \$10 million and \$12 million. Moore Development would provide \$3 million, with the rest coming from SHDC, officials said.

In November, SHDC agreed to purchase the Settles from the city of Big Spring for \$75,000.

Preliminary plans for the historic downtown building include commercial and residential use of the property, with retail space available on the first and second floors.

## GRANT

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was immediately used to purchase books for the Leveled Library.

It was money that could not have come too soon to the school.

"Our leveled library has a very small selection of leveled books available," Shelhamer stated in her grant application. "Many teachers face the problem of exhausting the resources that are available ... The goal of adding more books to the leveled library is to provide more materials that are appropriate for students' reading levels for small group instruction."

How well the leveled reading program works will be assessed this school year through teacher observation, as well as progress on report cards and student performance on TAKS and other standardized tests.

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



Shelhamer

## CITY

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bids, 4-3, and by the same margin accepted a motion to seek bids.

Shotts will remain on the job until the start of the new year. After that, city officials will begin the process of finding a replacement, McEwen said Wednesday.

"Obviously, we will advertise for people who are interested in interviewing for the position," he said. "But we haven't published the post yet."

McEwen added that there was no time frame in place for finding Shott's replacement.

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

• THE MOBILE MEALS PROGRAM that delivers meals to the elderly and homebound needs volunteers. If you can spare one hour per week to deliver eight or 10 meals, you are needed. About 85 to 90 meals are prepared, packaged and delivered to recipients within the city limits of Big Spring. If you can volunteer, call 263-4016 before 3 p.m.

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