

HOME REALTORS
263-1284
110 W. MARCY DR.
MLS

Thousands rally for immigration reform
See Page 5A

Elrod's
Big Spring's Oldest, Finest, Largest Furniture Store
2309 Scurry 267-8491

BIG SPRING

HERALD

WEDNESDAY

MAY 2, 2007



VOLUME 102, NUMBER 134

COPYRIGHT 2007

50 CENTS DAILY/\$1.25 SUNDAY

Finding peace with the past

Visit to the Wall helps Vietnam veteran find closure

By **THOMAS JENKINS**

Staff Writer

The Vietnam War may have ended decades ago, but for one Big Spring man it finally came to a close in April when he and members of his Army unit visited Washington, D.C.

Ralph Kennedy, who served in the Army's 509th Radio Research Communication Unit in Vietnam, said being able to place a wreath at the Vietnam Memorial helped him in ways most civilians will never understand.

"I can't begin to tell you what the experience was like. I felt like my Vietnam experience finally had closure because I got to go to the Wall."



Kennedy

"On the morning of April 21, we placed a wreath at the Vietnam Memorial Wall," said Kennedy. "We placed a wreath and a placard there. I can't begin to tell you what the experience was like. I felt like my Vietnam experience finally had closure because I got to go to the Wall. There were 32 guys in my unit who were killed, and I got the chance to make pencil rubbings of their names. I just felt like I was able to find closure with Vietnam now. Until that point, I never really did."



Left (clockwise), Retired 1st Sgt. Ray Kessler, right, and local resident and retired 1st Sgt. Ralph Kennedy lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Washington, D.C., also pictured right. The group also left this placard, bottom right, containing the badge for the Army's 509th Radio Research Communication Unit, at the Vietnam Memorial.



Courtesy photo

Kennedy said the two-day drive to the nation's capitol was well worth the experience the weekend provided.

"We got there April 19 and had an initial get-together, and passed out shirts

and hats that evening," said Kennedy. "There were 47 veterans there, plus their spouses and families. Our unit was called the Radio Research Communications Unit in Vietnam.

Every one of us there was from that unit. Our unit processed signal intelligence for the commanders, so everyone

See **KENNEDY**, Page 3A



Council OKs Moore funding

By **THOMAS JENKINS**

Staff Writer

Let the hammers swing.

That was the message delivered by the Big Spring City Council Tuesday night, as the council voted unanimously in favor of



McEwen

Kris Ryan, general manager of the Settles Hotel Development Co., looks at the dilapidated ballroom on the second floor of the structure recently. Restoration work on the building is expected to begin soon following city council's approval Tuesday of a plan by Moore Development for Big Spring to fund \$3 million in renovation work.

Moore Development for Big Spring's plan to fund \$3 million in an effort to restore and renovate the historic Settles Hotel.

The project, which was recently undertaken by Big Spring native Brint Ryan, manager of the Settles Hotel Development Company, calls for commercial and residential use of the property, with retail space available on the first and second floors.

Mayor Russ McEwen said Tuesday's approval from the council will allow the

See **CITY**, Page 3A

INDEX

- Classified 3-5B
- Features 6A
- Obituaries 2A
- Opinion 4A
- Sports 1-2B



Find us online at:
www.bigspringherald.com

To reach us:

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

TAKS scores show improvement

By **STEVE REAGAN**

Staff Writer

By and large, Howard County public school students have shown improvement in the latest round of state standardized testing.

Preliminary Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) results showed area students did well on third grade reading and fifth grade math and reading scores, officials said.

Texas students posted their highest passing rate ever on the state's fifth grade math test, with 85 percent passing the English-language version of the exam and 39 percent receiving "commended" status, the Texas Education Agency announced.

The passing rate rose from 79 percent in 2005 to 81 percent last year.

TEA has not yet released statewide figures for reading



Johnson

scores.

Forsan Independent School District fifth graders exceeded the state math scores, with 93 percent posting passing grades, Superintendent Randy Johnson said.

Those figures represent a slight drop from 2006, when 95 percent of fifth graders

passed the TAKS math test.

"We're thrilled," Johnson said. "When this group was in the fourth grade, only 80 percent passed. That's what we're most excited about — that we showed that much improvement from one year to the next."

Forsan's third graders posted a perfect 100 percent passing mark in reading scores —

See **TAKS**, Page 3A



Tommy Churchwell

Churchwell Insurance



FARMERS

2303 Goliad (432) 267-3857

Attn: BIG SPRING

No More High Deductibles On Home Insurance!

Now You Have A Choice
\$500⁰⁰ or \$1000⁰⁰

CALL FOR COMPETITIVE QUOTES

28203



HERALD photo/Steve Reagan

Big Spring police and rescue personnel tend to the scene of a two-vehicle wreck on FM 700 Tuesday afternoon. Initial reports state that two people were injured when a pickup and a Howard County Sheriff's Office patrol car collided at the intersection of FM 700 and 11th Place.

Student faces possible expulsion in wake of alleged arson at school

By THOMAS JENKINS
Staff Writer

A 14-year-old Big Spring Junior High student is in hot water this week, as local law enforcement investigate the fire he allegedly set in a restroom at the school Tuesday afternoon.

According to Big Spring Fire Chief Carl Condray, the fire was discovered at approximately 12:44 p.m. by a Big Spring Police officer who was on campus.

"BSPD Officer Thad Thomas was already on the campus doing checks with the police dog," said

Condray. "He saw the smoke and was able to extinguish the fire before it spread. We were very lucky in this case."

Condray said the fire was started in a waste basket in one of the school's restrooms, and while no damage was reported as a result of the fire, the student implicated in the incident might not make it through proceedings as lucky.

"This is being handled through the juvenile probation office," said Condray.

Whether or not criminal charges are brought against the youth, Big

Spring Independent School District Superintendent Michael Downes said the student faces stiff penalties.

"We will be scheduling a disciplinary conference in the next couple of days," said Downes. "The least severe punishment the student could face is placement in the alternative education program. The most severe, however, would be expulsion."

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

TAKS

Continued from Page 1A

compared to 96 percent in 2006 — and 95 percent of its fifth graders succeeded in the reading test, compared to 91 percent the previous year.

Big Spring ISD fifth graders also showed improvement from the

previous year, although they did not meet the state average in math scores.

Superintendent Michael Downes said 73 percent of the district's fifth graders passed the TAKS math test, compared to 69 percent the previous year.

Downes added that fifth graders had an 81 percent of the fifth graders passed the reading portion of the

test — compared to 72 percent in 2006 — as did 85 percent of the third graders.

And Downes expects scores to move even higher after the second round of test administration later this month.

"All reading scores from the six campuses met criteria for Recognized campuses, and that was before the second admin-

CITY

Continued from Page 1A

project, which is expected to cost an estimated \$12 million, to move forward.

"Obviously I'm as excited as can be," said McEwen. "This is something we've been working on for a year, and it's now come to fruition. There's no more talk about how I think it will take place. We're now at a position where it will take place. Moore Board has approved it, the city council has approved it, and now we get to watch the dust fly and the Settles Hotel can get back to the way it was when it opened its doors. This really is an exciting day for Big Spring."

The meeting comes on the heels of approval of a letter of intent from Moore Development directors last week.

After a lengthy executive session to discuss the matter, the council delivered its thumbs up, which Councilwoman Gloria McDonald called a "no-brainer."

"The \$3 million the Moore Board has authorized for use in the Settles Hotel to renovate it to a status of use is less than the cost of tearing the structure down," said McDonald. "If we didn't have Mr. Ryan and he hadn't come forth — if no one had come forth — the cost to date to implode the building would be close to \$5 million. So, to me, it was absolutely a no-brainer to spend money for hope instead of spend money for destruction."

Had Ryan — or some

other developer — not stepped in with plans to renovate the building, it's future could very well have been that of rubble, according to McEwen.

"If, in fact, we're in a position where, for whatever reason, we decide not to do this, or he decided to step out of this deal," said McEwen, "then we're in the position where we have to realistically look at what we need to do to bring the building down. At this point and time I'm so thrilled that decision was not made in the past. We have these wonderful, historic turn-of-the-century buildings downtown that are going to be used for retail and restaurants. This is a good day."

McEwen said renovations to the historic downtown hotel are expected to begin soon.

"It's in the matter of the next couple of months," said McEwen. "It could be a matter of weeks, but in the next couple of months there is going to be action taking place down there. Mr. Ryan indicated to me he's ready to go. So we're obviously ready to go as well. Everything is now in place, however, so we can get things moving."

According to Larry McLellan, Moore Board president, the agreement between the economic development corporation

and SHDC will require a two-to-one exchange in funding.

"Moore Board will pay 4A expenses that we can legally pay. As the project progresses, we will reimburse for those expenditures, up to \$3 million," said McLellan. "Keep in mind, these could come in early because of infrastructure. We will have a claw back agreement that will require Mr. Ryan to spend \$6 million or reimburse Moore Board for any funds that do not meet that two-to-one ratio. So, if this project is finished at \$6 million, Moore Board would receive money back."

The council also approved the emergency reading of resolution allowing for the final sale of the Settles to SHDC, which put the full \$75,000 tab in escrow nearly a month ago.

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

MYERS & SMITH FUNERAL HOME & CHAPEL

24th & Johnson 267-8288

Jerline Myles Wilson, 60, died Sunday. Funeral Services will be at 10:30 AM Thursday at Myers & Smith Chapel. Burial will be at Mt. Olive Memorial Park.

Robert Hansen, 47, died Monday. Private family services will be at a later date.

Leo Welch, 84, died Tuesday. Services are pending at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

CINEMARK
The Best Seat in Town
CINEMA 4
1001 East FM 700 (432) 263-2232
ADULT MATINEE BEFORE 6PM \$4.00 / ADULT \$6.00 / CHILD \$2.00
• THE REAPING (R) 4:40 7:10
• PERFECT STRANGER (R) 4:30 7:00
• NEXT (PG-13) 4:50 7:20
• ARE WE DONE YET (PG) 5:00 7:30
VALID 4/30/07 THRU 5/2/07
ADVANCE TICKET SALES • NO PASSES • NO SUPERSAVERS
Showtimes available at cinemark.com

G & M Auto Care

Locally Owned & Operated
Service 1972

263-1091

George & Mary

900 E. 3rd St. Big Spring

KENNEDY

Continued from Page 1A

in the group had to have at least a top secret clearance.

"Friday morning Congressman (Randy) Neugebauer hosted us at the Capitol," he continued, pulling out several pictures of him and his unit, along with the congressman, in front of the U.S. House of Representatives. "He actually took us down on the floor of the House of Representatives, which was just an awesome experience. He explained a little bit about how it worked and how things are run in the House. Just sitting in that chamber put cold chills all over you. It was just something else. That took most of the morning.

"That afternoon we went to the National Cryptological Museum, which is at Fort Mead. We had the chance to go in and look at some of the old spy stuff and a lot of the stuff from the Vietnam era. It brought back so many memories for us that it was just unreal. That really was an awesome museum."

Kennedy said the tour of the capitol continued, complete with a visit any military or aeronautics enthusiast couldn't resist.

"We spent that morning going around and touring all of the sites," said Kennedy. "We stopped and took some pictures in front of the Vietnam Soldiers Memorial. That afternoon we had a tour

arranged where we went out and saw the National Air and Space Museum. We got to see Apollo 11, The Spirit of St. Louis, the Wright Brothers' airplane, as well as the first capsule that orbited the earth.

"Later that night we had a big, group dinner. It was really nice because we got the chance to sit around and talk about old times. I got the chance to see some of those guys I haven't seen in 40 years. The whole experience was extremely emotional. Just to see these guys again after 40 years, I can't begin to tell you how it felt. There were a bunch of tears shed that day. A bunch."

While the group spent time at several different memorials during the trip, Kennedy said it was

the group's final duty — to lay a wreath at one of the nation's most revered military memorials — that made the entire trip complete.

"We were very honored to be able to place a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier," said Kennedy. "Dakota's Flowers was such a big help in getting the wreaths set up. They were just absolutely beautiful. The lady who helped us with them was so nice and so caring, and I think she was just as nervous about them as we were."

"I carried the wreath, along with Ray Kessler. He was my 1st Sgt. when I was in Vietnam. He's 77 years old and made the trip to D.C. for all of this. He retired in 1977, and I retired in 1991. I just can't find the words to express

how it felt to be there. It was just amazing. I'm still on a high from this. It's going to be a while before I come down from this. I spent 26 years in the military, and this was probably the highlight of anything I ever did. I never worked with a better bunch of people in my 26 years."

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

how it felt to be there. It was just amazing. I'm still on a high from this. It's going to be a while before I come down from this. I spent 26 years in the military, and this was probably the highlight of anything I ever did. I never worked with a better bunch of people in my 26 years."

The first soldier killed in the Vietnam War was a member of the 509th Radio Research Communication Unit.

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

QUICK CASH REBATES
The Quick Way to Payday
We'll cash your personal check in minutes, deposit it on your next payday, up to 14 days, give you the money you need, the long distance you want and the discount you deserve!
Requirements For Service: 1) Valid Picture ID
2) Verification Of Income
3) Most Recent Checking Account Statement
612 S. Gregg Big Spring, Texas 432-263-4400

Sun's Out!
Let's stay a while. Island Style.
Port Aransas
MUSTANG ISLAND
361-749-5919 • 800-45-COAST
www.portaransas.org

***** NOTICE *****
DR. SMITH WILL BE RELOCATING & CLOSING HIS MIDLAND PRACTICE ON JUNE 1, 2007.
AFTER OBTAINING A NEW PHYSICIAN; WE WILL FORWARD YOUR MEDICAL RECORDS WITH YOUR SIGNED CONSENT FORM.
"IT HAS BEEN A PLEASURE SERVING YOU"
SINCERELY,
J. SCOTT SMITH, M.D.