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Museum prepares for joyful Saturday

Santa, exhibits, fund-raiser and parade watch

By **THOMAS JENKINS**
Staff Writer

Area residents looking to get into the holiday spirit need look no further than the Big Spring Heritage Museum this Saturday, as the facility's staff prepares for a day of old fashion Christmas cheer.



"We have a full day planned," said Nancy Raney, museum director. "Santa Claus will be here from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. There's no charge for the children to talk to Santa, but local photographer Bruce Schooler will be taking photos, and there is a small charge for those."

"Dimples the Clown will also be here to entertain the children with balloon animals, and we'll be opening the new model railroad exhibit, which everyone has really worked hard on."

"The Christmas Tree Forest will also be on display, and at 5 p.m. we'll be enjoying cookies and hot chocolate on the patio while we watch the *Big Spring Herald* Christmas Parade."

Raney said the museum will also be holding a fund-raiser from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m., as area children will have the chance to stuff their own plush animals, thanks to San Angelo-based Snuggle Factory Animaland.

See **MUSEUM**, Page 3A



HERALD photo/Thomas Jenkins

This Frosty the Snowman inspired Christmas tree is just one of many currently on display at the Big Spring Heritage Museum, part of the holiday-themed Christmas Tree Forest exhibit. Patrons can visit the forest, as well as participate in several other holiday-themed events at the museum Saturday.

Settles back on Moore board agenda

By **THOMAS JENKINS**
Staff Writer

Negotiations between Moore Development and the Settles Hotel Development Company will take center stage this evening, as members of Moore's board of directors prepare for yet another executive session to hammer out contract points.

Moore Development directors voted unanimously in April to provide up to \$3 million to help Brint Ryan — manager of the Dallas company and the founder and

"... there are a lot of intricacies involved in a deal like this, and we have to make sure everything is just right before we move forward."



Wegman

CEO of Ryan & Company — renovate the Settles
See **MOORE**, Page 3A

Living Tree to usher season in with music

By **STEVE REAGAN**
Staff Writer

A long-standing local Christmas tradition will be held for the 29th straight year Saturday when First United Methodist Church holds its Living Christmas Tree musical gala.

The event, featuring more than 100 local singers and a professional orchestra, has traditionally announced the beginning of the Christmas season in song, and this year is no different, organizers said.

Two Saturday performances are scheduled at the church, located at Fourth and Scurry

streets. A dress rehearsal will held at 2 p.m., with the main performance scheduled for 8 p.m.

A final performance will be staged at 8 p.m. Sunday.

All performances are free to the public, although tickets will be required for the evening events, said Nell Burgess, church secretary.

"The tickets are available at the church office, so anyone can come by and get one," Burgess said. "But we require tickets, because if you don't have a ticket, there's a good chance you won't be able to get a

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STEERS CALM TORNADOS

The basketball is finding the bottom of the net often for the Big Spring Steers who improved their season record to 3-1 Tuesday night with a 65-44 win over the Lamesa Golden Tornadoes.

Although Big Spring never trailed, the Tors were able to cut the Steers' lead to four points with just under five minutes left to play, 46-42.

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FLU SHOTS FOR VETS

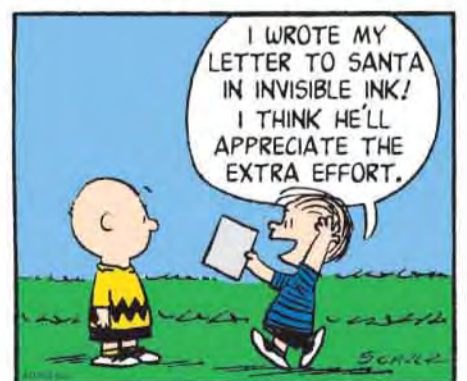
The Big Spring VA Medical Center will provide free flu shot clinic for veterans from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. Thursday, officials announced.

The vaccines will be free to all veterans. Veterans currently enrolled in VA Health Care will be required to show their VA identification cards in order to receive their shots.

"We are trying to get as many folks as possible to receive the vaccination," said Iva Jo Hanslik, community relations director for the medical center.

For more information, contact the VAMC at 263-7361.

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Sgt. Stephen Stansel having a colorful military career

Sgt. Stephen Stansel doesn't seek the easy way out. Disarming bombs isn't something I would consider fun. Spending weeks underwater in a submarine would activate my claustrophobia. Scuba diving to remove explosive mines from the floor of the Persian Gulf strikes me as a good way to get my whole day ruined.

These activities were Steve's daily diet for several periods in his military career. You may be fascinated to hear his story, as I was. One interesting aspect is that Steve spent most of his career in the Navy, but is now in the Army National Guard.

Born in Dallas, Steve moved to Big Spring with his mother and his brother Kevin when he was nine years old. (Kevin is a career Marine, and we told his story in a Troop Salute in the Herald on Oct. 24.) Steve attended Big Spring schools through Runnels Junior High, but attended high school at Elbow and Forsan before moving to El Paso when he was 16. He graduated from Andress High in 1987. Born in 1969, Steve is now 38.

Steve is still a high

achiever. At the moment he is busily completing preliminaries to attend Class 52 of the U.S. Army National Guard OCS (Officer Candidate School) in February 2008. Congratulations, Steve, on your acceptance to this program. The competition is fierce and it is an accomplishment to be accepted.

Steve now lives with his wife in Big Spring. His wife is Lissett Zapata of Colombia, whom he married March 28, 2006. The marriage brought Steve's three children into her life, plus a boy whom they are in process of adopting. The children are: Calvin (14), Lehana (9 — rhymes with Lee Anna), Elijah (7), and Eric (12 — the boy to be adopted).

Steve is an electronics technician at the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Big Spring. His electronics training began in the Navy immediately after boot camp. Central to his job is emergency room equipment, but if it is something that plugs in at the hospital, he might be asked to fix it when it breaks.

Let's review the varied aspects of his career. He was heavily into all of the sports he could find the time for in high school (and modestly says he was good at all of them). Graduating from high school just after his 18th birthday in 1987, Steve immediately joined the Navy. After basic training, then technical train-

Troop Salute



Stephen Stansel

ing (electronics), Steve volunteered for submarine duty and was assigned in 1988 to the USS Providence (SSN 688 Class submarine) home ported in Groton, Conn. Steve's uncle had been in the submarine service, and he was influenced strongly by the uncle's stories about his own submarine experiences.

After almost three years on the East Coast (and many ports in the Atlantic and Mediterranean), Steve asked for and got a transfer to the USS Indianapolis in Pearl Harbor (1990). Ports of call were now in the Pacific and Steve seemed hungry to see the whole world. During his time here he qualified as a scuba diver, which would serve him well in his next type of duty.

On sub duty, Steve oper-

ated the Early Warning System on his subs. As a non-professional, I understand that to mean if an enemy found his sub, he was the guy that took the blame. It also meant that he had to understand with proficiency all of the electronics on the sub, and that he carried a heavy weight of responsibility. While at sea, the crew was six hours on watch, six hours training to do the job of any other crew member aboard, and six hours sleeping. Twenty-four-hour days like we landlubbers think of it do not apply underwater.

When he was separated from duty on the sub, Steve was attached for a year and a half to the base at Pearl Harbor. There, he took more advanced training in diving and helped to train others in the dive locker. He influenced several of his mates in this group to go with him to his next assignment.

This challenging assignment was Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD — you know, "bomb squad"). An EOD team in the current war is usually working with IED's, which means Improvised Explosive Devices, because most Iraqis use homemade bombs.

The Navy operates on land, sea and air, so Navy EOD teams have to learn all types of explosive devices. Steve worked

with Army, Navy and Air Force groups during the eight years that he did this.

After EOD training, Keflavik, Iceland was his base for about two years (1996-1997). While away from the base (most of the time), his team was sent as needed to many places, including Iceland, Scotland, Ireland and England, among others, sometimes with U.S. forces and sometimes in joint operations with allied forces. Many things they learned dealing with the Irish Republican Army during this time caused U.S. forces to rewrite some of their instruction manuals that are still being used.

In 1997, Steve was reassigned to Mobile Unit 2 DET South Carolina based in Charleston. "Mobile" was appropriate, for they were sent to many places during the five years he was based there. These included Kuwait, Bosnia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Antarctica, South Korea, Bahrain and Greenland, among others.

After too many close calls with explosives, Steve requested a discharge from the Navy, granted in 2002. This ended almost 15 eventful years. He held various jobs in civilian life before being employed by the Veterans Hospital in Big Spring, where his skills fit the needs of the employment.

In July 2006, Steve joined the Army National

Guard. He had always wanted to have a college degree and be an officer. In the National Guard, coupled with his job at the VAMC, Steve had completed three years toward his college degree, and with the OCS course scheduled soon, it seems he will realize both goals in the next year or so. He credits his Marine brother Kevin for influencing him to join up again and pursue his goals.

Steve has expressed a further goal of reaching 25 years in the military and retiring as an O-5 (Lt. Colonel). With nine years to go, the current story may one day appear to be only prologue. Good Luck, Steve, for the rest of your life.

Note: Steve works with the National Guard recruiting. Anyone wishing answers about joining up, call him on his cell phone at (432) 599-0779, or e-mail him at sstansel1969@aol.com

Do you have a story about your own family members in the military? For submissions or more information, e-mail Lane Bond (lane@bondwebs.com), call 432-263-4033, or visit his Web site (www.bondwebs.com). Leave your phone number or include it in your e-mail or letter.

MYERS & SMITH FUNERAL HOME & CHAPEL
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Armando Anthony Franco, 22, died Friday. Funeral Mass was at 11 a.m. Wednesday at St. Thomas Catholic Church with burial at Mt. Olive Memorial Park.

Phillip Manuel Lopez, 21, died Monday. Vigil Services will be at 7 p.m. Thursday at Myers & Smith Chapel. Funeral Services will be at 2 p.m. Friday at Sacred Heart Catholic Church with burial at Mt. Olive Memorial Park.

Pauline Smith, 92, died Monday. Graveside services will be at 2 p.m. Thursday at Trinity Memorial Park. Bernarda Valencia, 75, died Wednesday. Services are pending at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

MUSIC

Continued from Page 1A
seat." No tickets are required for the dress rehearsal, she added.

The theme for this year's event is "Remember Christmas."

Jim Wright, musical director for FUMC, will direct the event for the eighth year. Host for the evening is Larry Russell, a music minister from

Greenville who has performed across the world, Burgess said.

Laurie Churchwell will handle staging, while the script for the event was written by Sue Partee.

The adult choir is expected to be 100 singers

strong and will be accompanied by an orchestra composed of musicians from throughout the West Texas area, Burgess said.

Traditional Christmas music, including standards such as "Deck the Hall," will be performed

during the two-hour event. As it has for the past three decades, the evening will conclude with a performance of "The Hallelujah Chorus." For more information, contact Burgess at 267-6394.

MOORE

Continued from Page 1A
Hotel, which he agreed to purchase for \$75,000 from the city of Big Spring.

And while SHDC has yet to take ownership of the Settles — the \$75,000 has remained in escrow for several months, according to city officials — the company has moved forward with the purchase of several other properties near the downtown landmark.

According to Terry Wegman, executive director of Moore Development, the performance contract and

escrow contract between SHDC and Moore Development has been bounced back and forth for quite some time.

"We're making progress on the contracts. It seems like we've been bouncing these things back and forth forever now," said Wegman. "But there are a lot of intricacies involved in a deal like this, and we have to make sure everything is just right before we move forward."

Since announcing the project, Ryan and SHDC have also acquired several other properties, including 313 and 315 Runnels, adjacent to the Settles Hotel, which served as a Greyhound

bus station during the hotel's heyday.

Earlier this year, SHDC also got a helpful nod from the Texas Historical Commission, which confirmed eligibility of the downtown landmark to be nominated for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places in May, making the project an "excellent candidate" for federal tax credits, according to Ryan.

While talks with SHDC will dominate the board's executive session, a local pair are expected to take the reins during the open portion of the meeting.

"When we talked about our goals and objectives for the coming year, one

of the things everyone agreed on was more local marketing," said Wegman. Cynthia Scott and Kim Howell are doing that type of marketing work with their business, Fresh Ideas.

"We wanted to have them come in and talk to the board about what they have in mind to help promote Big Spring, and basically just throw ideas back and forth. What things work? Bulk mail? The Internet? This will give them a chance to look at all the different scenarios."

The meeting will begin at 5:15 p.m. Wednesday in the Big Spring Area Chamber of Commerce

board room, located at 215 W. Third Street.

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MUSEUM

Continued from Page 1A

"They will be bringing the machine that stuffs the animals and all of the different accessories," said Raney. "It's going to be a really good time for everyone, regardless of age.

"The children will get to choose and stuff their very own creation, and the quality of these animals is equal to or better than you'll find in most malls. And for each plush creation sold, the museum will receive a portion of the proceeds. So, not only do the kids get a great stuffed animal, it

helps the museum out."

Raney said the stuffed animals, similar to the ones sold by Build-A-Bear Workshops, make great holiday gifts.

"Prices range between \$15 and \$25, so its very reasonable compared to some of the prices you'll pay at the malls," said

Raney. "There are two different packages for people to choose from, silver and gold. The silver package includes the collectible animal, a wishing star, birth certificate and carry-home box. The gold package includes the same thing, as well as an outfit."

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