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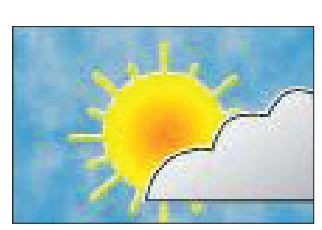
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THURSDAY
FEBRUARY 5, 2009



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College 'ready'

ISDs endorse dual-enrollment college courses

By **STEVE REAGAN**
 Staff Writer

Area schools have joined a statewide push to prepare high school students for college.

Big Spring, Coahoma and Forsan high schools all have significant numbers of students participating in dual-enrollment college courses and other advanced classes, statistics show.



Ritchey

The three Howard County schools are part of a Texas-wide push to get students ready for post-high school academics.

Texas exceeded the national average in the percentage of students who took at least one Advanced Placement exam during high school, the Texas Education Agency announced.

Information released by the College Board, which administers the AP program, found that 27.5 percent of Texas public school students in the Class of 2008 took at least one AP exam while in high school, compared to 25 percent for the nation.

Universities often award course credit to students who earn a score of 3, 4 or 5 on an AP test so a strong performance on these exams can

See **COLLEGE**, Page 3



HERALD Photo/Thomas Jenkins

The rumble of construction materials making their way down this large chute attached to the Settles Hotel have become commonplace in downtown Big Spring, along with the large dust clouds produced by the renovations. Officials with the city of Big Spring say the dust is a nuisance, but poses no immediate health risks.

CITY OFFICIALS:

Settles dust not harmful

By **THOMAS JENKINS**
 Staff Writer

City officials say the dust created by the renovations at the historic Settles Hotel poses no immediate health concerns for downtown businesses or motorists, but acknowledge the clouds have been a nuisance.

Assistant City Manager Todd Darden said his office has received only a few complaints as to the large clouds of dust that have been coming from the worksite — including complaints forwarded to him from state and federal agencies — but said the clouds pose no obvious health risks to motorists or downtown-goers.

"It's certainly a nuisance, but it's not an immediate health hazard."



—Todd Darden, assistant city manager

"It's certainly a nuisance, but it's not an immediate health hazard," said Darden. "The material is mainly plaster and mortar dust. The workers are using water

See **DUST**, Page 3

AARP Tax Aide program going well, local administrative director reports

By **THOMAS JENKINS**
 Staff Writer

When Gloria Hopkins and her team of tax-savvy volunteers opened their doors for this year's AARP Tax Aide program two weeks ago, it looked like this year's season might be slow-moving.

Wrong. The program, which only drew a few area residents in need of tax filing assistance when it opened Monday, Jan. 26, took off with a bang this week, accord-



Hopkins

ing to Hopkins, program director and local AARP spokesperson.

"We were a little disappointed with the turnout the week we opened. However, Monday more than made up for it," said Hopkins with a laugh. "We were so busy, the volunteers and I stayed more than an hour after we normally do to try to keep up. We processed about 40

tax returns that day, and in the past, doing approximately 20 or 30 returns was a busy day."

The program, which aims to help low-to-moderate income taxpayers who might not otherwise be able to file a tax return, has been a huge success in the past, according to Hopkins, who expects this year to be no different.

"So far everything is going very

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Tylenol deaths case rekindled

Advances in forensic technology prompt review of 1982 murders

By **RUSSELL CONTRERAS**
 Associated Press Writer

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — Federal agents taking a second look at the murders of seven people who swallowed tainted Tylenol capsules in 1982 have searched the home of a one-time leading suspect in the still-unsolved case.

FBI agents from Boston and Chicago were seen Wednesday removing boxes and a computer from the condominium owned by James W. Lewis, who served

more than 12 years in prison for trying to extort \$1 million from the painkiller's manufacturers.

No one was ever charged with the deaths of the seven people who took cyanide-laced drugs in the Chicago area 26 years ago, leading to dramatic changes in the way food and medical products are packaged.

The FBI's Chicago office cited "advances in forensic technology" in a statement Wednesday announcing that

it, along with Illinois State Police and local departments, was conducting a "complete review of all evidence developed in connection with the 1982 Tylenol murders."

The review began in part because of publicity and tips that arrived after the 25th anniversary of the deaths in 2007, according to the FBI. It has not resulted in any criminal charges.

See **MURDERS**, Page 3

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COLLEGE

Continued from Page 1

save Texas students thousands of dollars in college tuition costs.

Big Spring High School Principal Mike Ritchey said more than 50 AP tests were administered to BSHS students in the 2007-2008 school year. AP tests taken included history, chemistry, Spanish and calculus. Also, a large number of juniors and seniors are

enrolled in dual-credit college courses at Howard College, he added.

College preparatory work is something BSHS officials take very seriously, Ritchey said.

"This is something we definitely hang our hat on," he said.

"We have former students doing very well in universities now who took the AP exam when they were here.

"We challenge the students to participate in this (advanced) curriculum,"

Ritchey added. "I think those numbers are a testament to the rigors of the curriculum we offer."

Few if any Coahoma and Forsan students, meanwhile, took the AP exams, but many are enrolled in dual-credit college courses.

Forsan ISD Superintendent Randy Johnson said no FHS students took the AP exam last school year. The reason, he said, was that school officials believe students can benefit more from actual classroom work.

"The advantage with concurrent courses is that it is a classroom setting; you know whether you're passing or failing," Johnson said. "We just felt it was better for our students to know where they stand in the process."

Forsan High School has 28 students enrolled in dual-credit courses at Howard College and another six taking online courses for college credit, according to information released by FHS counselor Angie Huckabee. In addition, 60 Forsan students

are participating in technical college courses like computer technology and welding.

Only 1 percent of Coahoma High School students took an AP exam last school year, but more than 50 students are currently enrolled in dual-credit courses at HC, said Donna Bibb of the high school.

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

DUST

Continued from Page 1

hoses to wet down the material before it goes into the chute, but the wet material dries on the inside of the chute and eventually falls off. The materials identified as containing asbestos have already been removed in sealed containers, and the state has given the building a clean bill of health as far as asbestos is concerned.

"I've received a few complaints related to the dust cloud it's creating and the dust that's settling nearby. I've also been contacted by OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) and the Texas Com-

mission on Environmental Quality because complaints have been made to them, as well. However, both agencies turned it over to us because this falls within our jurisdiction."

A large, black chute — leading from the upper floors of the hotel to large refuse containers below — can be seen at the hotel, as contractors continue demolition work aimed at renovating the structure.

While breathing in large amounts of plaster and cement dust certainly isn't advisable, Darden said the risk it poses to motorists and downtown businesses is minimal.

"Of course you don't want to stand in the middle of a cloud like that and breath the dust for several hours," said Darden. "However, the real dan-

ger of this material is to the contractors and workers that are working with it for hours on end, day in and day out.

"We certainly realize the dust is a nuisance in the downtown area. However, short of putting hoses in the chute itself, there's really no way to prevent it. As far as we've been informed, the chute will be a part of the renovations during the whole of the project, which is expected to be 14 months."

G. Brint Ryan, manager of the Settles Hotel Development Company and Big Spring native, announced plans for a multi-million dollar renovation of the downtown landmark in December 2006.

According to SHDC officials, the proj-

ect includes plans for commercial and residential use of the property, with retail space available on the first and second floors. The project's budget has ballooned from \$12 million to \$20 million since its inception, according to Ryan.

The building, erected for \$500,000 in 1930, was a destination of choice for travelers for many years — as well a center of activity for the community — but has been vacant and in an advanced state of dilapidation for more than two decades.

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

TAX AIDE

Continued from Page 1

smoothly," said Hopkins. "Last year, due to construction at the Senior Citizen Center, we worked out of the county library. However, this year we're back out at the Senior Center, so there has been a little confusion regarding the location. The people at the library have been really good about directing folks out here, howev-

er." Hopkins said area residents planning to use the service should be sure to gather up their financial information before heading to the Senior Center.

"People need to be sure to bring all of the pertinent information with them, including a tax booklet if one was received through the mail, W-2 forms and 1099 forms," said Hopkins. "They also need to bring any forms that show their 2008 earn-

ings and their 2007 tax returns. We also need a social security card for every person named on the return and a photo ID for the person filing."

And while this year's tax code seems to be unfolding without any major hitches, Hopkins said filers do seem to be running into a problem concerning last year's tax rebate.

"They need to know how much their stimulus payment was last year," said Hopkins.

"The Internal Revenue Service is supposed to be sending out statements with this information, and there's a number you can call to get it, but the wait is considerable to get through to someone.

"I'd strongly suggest people contact their bank or go through their records from last year to get the exact amount. If you provide the wrong amount when you e-file, the Internal Revenue Service won't accept the return. So it's very, very

important people have that information before they come see us."

Hopkins said people who didn't receive a stimulus payment last year may qualify for one this tax season.

"For individuals who didn't receive a stimulus payment last year, there's a chance they may be eligible to receive it now," she said. "That's something we just have to look at and see if they qualify."

Participants in the program will be able to

e-file their tax returns at no charge, according to Hopkins.

The program will continue each Monday until April 13 at the Senior Center — located at 1901 Simler Dr. in the McMahon-Wrinkle Airpark — from 8 a.m. until noon. For more information, contact Hopkins at 267-6733.

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

MURDERS

Continued from Page 1

"All of these tips have been or will be thoroughly investigated in an effort to solve this crime and bring some measure of closure to the families of the victims," the statement said.

The FBI would not confirm that searches at both Lewis' apartment and at a storage facility in Cambridge were related to the Tylenol case, only that it was part of an ongoing investigation.

In a space of three days beginning Sept. 29, 1982, seven people who took cyanide-laced Tylenol in Chicago and four suburbs died. That triggered a national scare, prompting an untold number of people to throw medicine away and stores nationwide to pull Tylenol from their shelves.

Lewis served more than 12 years in prison

for sending an extortion note to Johnson & Johnson demanding \$1 million to "stop the killing."

Lewis was arrested in December 1982 after a nationwide manhunt. At the time, he gave investigators a detailed account of how the killer might have operated and described how someone could buy medicine, use a special method to add cyanide to the capsules and return them to store shelves.

Lewis later admitted sending the extortion letter but said he never intended to collect it. He said he wanted to embarrass his wife's former employer by having the money sent to the employer's bank account.

In a 1992 interview with The Associated Press, Lewis explained that the account he gave authorities was simply his way of explaining the killer's actions.

"I was doing like I would have done for a

corporate client, making a list of possible scenarios," said Lewis, who maintained his innocence. He called the killer "a heinous, cold-blooded killer, a cruel monster."

Lewis also served two years of a 10-year sentence for tax fraud. In 1978, he was charged in Kansas City with the dismemberment murder of Raymond West, 72, who had hired Lewis as an accountant. The charges were dismissed because West's cause of death was not determined and some evidence had been illegally obtained.

In 2004, Lewis was charged with rape, kid-

napping and other offenses for an alleged attack on a woman in Cambridge. He was jailed for three years while awaiting trial, but prosecutors dismissed the charges on the day his trial was scheduled to begin after the victim refused to testify, according to the office of Middlesex District Attorney Gerry Leone.

In 2007, Lewis was interviewed on a local-access television show, "The Cambridge Rag," by host Roger Nicholson. In segments available online, Lewis asserted his innocence in the Tylenol and West cases.

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AN ENCOURAGING WORD



By Eddy Pitchford

Many people admire Kurt Warner for his athletic and leadership ability. After all, he came within one minute of leading the Arizona Cardinals to a surprising Super Bowl victory over the Pittsburgh Steelers. That being said, his greater influence is what happens off the gridiron.

When the Warners eat out, another family in the restaurant is treated to a free meal. In Tampa Bay last week, the random act of kindness resulted in twenty Pittsburgh Steelers fans eating for free. What an example! Kurt Warner teaches his children by example to practice the Golden Rule. His illustrates grace by sharing with others.

Of course, you and I know the blessing of someone graciously paying our tab. "... while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8).

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