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THE BIG SPRING HERALD

THURSDAY

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HERALD Photo/Thomas Jenkins

Five local youths were arrested early Wednesday morning after breaking in at the Settles Hotel. Officials with the Settles Hotel Development Company say vandalism and break-ins at the downtown landmark — currently undergoing massive renovations — have already cost thousands of dollars.

Cracking down on vandalism

Settles officials use silent alarm to catch 5 suspects

By **THOMAS JENKINS**

Staff Writer

Area teens looking for cheap thrills by breaking into the historic Settles Hotel may want to think twice. Five area residents were arrested during the early morning hours Wednesday, thanks to a newly installed silent alarm, according to officials involved in the restoration of the downtown landmark.

Arrested were 19-year-old Spencer Briggs; Calvin Austin Garvin, 19; Ky Hofacket, 20; Carlton Thomas Johnston, 18; and Joseph Andrew Mackey, 19. All five were charged with criminal trespass

and consumption of alcohol by a minor.

According to Settles Hotel Development Company General Manager Kristopher Ryan, area youth looking to use the Settles Hotel as a hang-out or place to drink had might as well go ahead and book themselves a room at another local landmark: The Howard County Jail.

"I'm sure the Settles has been a popular place for kids to do these kinds of things for many years, maybe even a rite of passage for some," said Ryan. "However, if they are going to

"I'm sure the Settles has been a popular place for kids to do these kinds of things for many years, maybe even a rite of passage for some. However, if they are going to break in these days they might as well plan on being arrested."

—Kristopher Ryan

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United Way targets lofty goal but officials remain confident

By **STEVE REAGAN**

Staff Writer

Lean economic times are forcing local United Way campaign officials to "think outside the box" to find ways to meet their goal.

As the local UW campaign draws to an official close, workers remain confident they will eventually achieve their goal of \$300,000, but



Coor

added they would have to be creative in order to reach that mark.

Jeannie Coor, executive director of the United Way of Big Spring and Howard County, said this year's campaign has raised approximately \$175,000 to date, but said

some special projects on the drawing board should help workers reach their goal.

"I think it's going well," Coor said. "We started off slow ... but with everything that's coming in now, I feel like we'll reach our goal."

This year's campaign will

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Nation/World briefly

Obama wraps first Asian tour with tough talk on North Korea, possible new sanctions against Iran

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Showing impatience with Iranian foot-dragging, President Barack Obama said Thursday that the U.S. and its allies are discussing possible new penalties to bring fresh pressure on Iran for defying international attempts to halt its contested nuclear program.

Obama's warning came after Iran rejected a compromise proposal to ship its low-enriched uranium abroad so that it could not be further enriched to make weapons. Talk of fresh sanctions also showed that Obama is preparing for the next phase should Iran fail to meet his year-end deadline for progress in negotiations.

"They have been unable to get to 'yes', and so as a consequence, we have begun discussions with our international partners about the importance of having consequences," Obama said at a news conference with South Korean President Lee Myung-bak.

"Our expectation is, is that over the next several weeks we will be developing a package of potential steps that we could take that will indicate our seriousness to Iran."

The tough talk came as Obama wrapped an eight-day, four-nation tour of Asia in which global issues — nuclear disarmament, climate change, economic recovery — dominated and goodwill abounded. There also were few new agreements on pending issues.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai sworn in to second 5-year term during inauguration ceremony

KABUL (AP) — Afghan President Hamid Karzai promised Thursday to prosecute corrupt officials and end a culture of impunity in an inauguration speech made under intense international pressure that he shed the cronyism and graft that marked his first term.

Karzai, who has often bristled at the criticism leveled at him from Western powers, said his government was doing whatever it could to implement reforms, and pledged that Afghan forces would be able to take control of the country's security in the next five years.

He said he believed the "problem of international terrorism" in Afghanistan would be overcome.

"We are trying our best to implement social, judicial and administrative reforms in our country," Karzai said. "Being a president is a heavy task and we will try our best to honestly fulfill this task in the future."

Karzai was sworn in to a second five-year term by the head of the Supreme Court during a ceremony attended by about 800 Afghan and foreign dignitaries from more than 40 countries. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari and British Foreign Minister David Miliband were among them.

Historic debate on health care overhaul awaits Senate as Reid unveils \$849 billion bill

WASHINGTON (AP) — After months of maneuvering, the Senate stands at the brink of a historic battle over health care with President Barack Obama and his allies on one side and Republicans, outnumbered but unflinching, on the other.

"Now it's America's turn, and this will not be a short debate," Sen. Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the Republican leader, warned after Majority Leader Harry Reid unveiled long-awaited legislation Wednesday night to extend coverage to 30 million more Americans and force insurance companies to take all comers.

"Higher premiums, tax increases and Medicare cuts to pay for more government. The American people know that is not reform," McConnell said.

Obama and Democrats hailed the 10-year, \$849 billion measure that would remake the nation's health care system, relying on cuts in future Medicare spending to cover costs, as well as on higher payroll taxes for the well-off and a new levy on patients undergoing elective cosmetic surgery.

Reid, D-Nev., wrote the legislation with White House aides during weeks of secretive negotiations, selecting elements from two committee-passed bills with the aim of securing the necessary 60 votes in a Senate debate that will be decisive for Obama's health care agenda.

Aides said the mammoth, 2,074-page bill would reduce deficits by \$127 billion over a decade, citing estimates by the Congressional Budget Office. For the first time most Americans would be required to

carry health insurance, and the bill would provide hundreds of billions of dollars in subsidies to help those with lower incomes afford coverage.

Behind missed deadline for closing Gitmo: U.S. struggles to get countries to take its prisoners

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — President Barack Obama is now confirming what many have long suspected: He will miss his January deadline to close the Guantanamo prison — partly because he cannot persuade other nations to take the detainees.

Prisoners like Walid Abu Hijazi. The 29-year-old is nearing his eighth year at Guantanamo even though the U.S. approved his release in February 2008. No one else has been willing to allow him, or dozens of others, into their territory.

This dilemma is one of the chief obstacles to closing the jail, according to lawyers and human rights groups who monitor U.S. detention policy. Most say Washington bears the main blame because it also refuses to accept prisoners on American soil.

"It's very difficult to persuade third countries to accept the political or security risks involved, especially when the United States has been unwilling to accept that risk itself," said Matthew Waxman, a professor at Columbia Law School.

U.S. officials decline to disclose the details of efforts to relocate Guantanamo prisoners, though in the past they acknowledged the difficulty in resettling ethnic Uighurs from China.

FBI says Chicago terror suspects had contact with terrorist group

CHICAGO (AP) — Two Chicago men accused of developing what federal prosecutors call a blueprint for a terrorist assault on a Danish newspaper also are being investigated for possible involvement in planning the November 2008 terrorist attacks in Mumbai, India, according to authorities in that country.

David Coleman Headley, 49, and Tahawwur Husain Rana, 48, are accused of plotting to kill one of the editors and a cartoonist at Danish paper Jyllands-Posten for publishing 12 cartoons in 2005 depicting the Prophet Muhammad, which ignited outrage in much of the Muslim world.

VANDALS

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break in these days they might as well plan on being arrested."

Ryan said the youths were arrested shortly after 3 a.m., but Wednesday's break-in wasn't the first time he and his staff have had to clean up after wayward teens.

"We had two break-ins during the Halloween weekend," said Ryan. "We don't know that the kids who were arrested are the same ones, but it's certainly possible.

During that break-in, the vandals broke out some windows, even tossing bags of cement off the 15th floor. There was also a small air conditioning unit that was tossed from the same floor."

Ryan said vandalism has already generated several thousands of dollars in damages at the work site, but he hopes the recent installation of an alarm system in the building will help stave off would-be trespassers.

"The building is now equipped with a silent alarm, so if they want to

come back they are going to jail," said Ryan. "There are just too many ways to get hurt in there. When they were hiding from the police, one of the officers said they were using the old elevator shaft, which is a recipe for disaster. They also ran up toward the top of the building to try to elude the police, and there are just so many different ways you can get hurt in there, especially running around in the dark."

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.

Brint Ryan, a Big Spring native, announced plans for the multi-million dollar renovation project in December 2006. According to SHDC officials, the project 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 mil-

lion to \$20 million since its inception.

Abatement of the property — as well as structural repairs — was completed in July, according to SHDC officials. Since that time, progress in rehabilitating the structure has gone smoothly, according to Kristopher Ryan.

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UW

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officially end Friday, but that doesn't mean fund-raising will come to a halt.

Coor said special events, like today's Empty Bowls luncheon, will continue to pad the campaign figures after its official close.

"We're planning a golf ball drop for sometime in the spring and we're also looking into a benefit golf tournament," she said. "We'll announce

the details when they're more firmed up."

With the area's economy still feeling the effects of recession, campaign officials said special events such as the golf tournament may become the norm for future United Way drives.

"We're definitely going to have to think outside the box," UW board member Eve Nieto said. "It's definitely tougher this year than in the past. At the same time, our agencies are stretched ... so we're go-

ing to have to do some special things to get to our goal."

Nieto said officials will meet Dec. 7 to announce initial allocations to the agencies which receive funds from United Way.

"With all these special events, I believe we'll reach our goals," Nieto said.

For more information how to donate, contact the United Way office at 267-5201.

Contact Staff Writer Steve Reagan at 263-7331

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By Eddy Pitchford

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