

THE EAGLE LAKE HEADLIGHT (USPS 153-760) P.O. Box 67 — 220 East Main (409) 234-5521 CITY OF EAGLE LAKE, TEXAS 77434-0067 Published Weekly Every Thursday

ADVERTISING AND NEWS DEADLINE: 5 P.M. MONDAY Subscription Rates: Colorado County (including Lissie and Egypt) \$12.00 Fayette, Lavaca, Wharton, Austin counties \$13.50 Other Texas Residents \$15.00 Outside of Texas \$16.50 Single Copy Price: 35-Cents Second class postage paid at Eagle Lake, Texas Address Corrections should be sent to P.O. Box 67, Eagle Lake, Texas 77434-0067

Education reform still top priority of Legislature

House and Senate negotiators gave the final approval last week to a bill that would increase local control of schools, offer parents new school choices and require more days of class for most students.



State Capitol Highlights By Lyndell Williams and Ed Sterling Texas Press Association

charged by the other five most populous states. That would mean an increase from \$171 per semester hour to an estimated \$222.

One provision of the bill, however, would allow out-of-state athletes to attend Texas universities at the much-lower in-state rate.

It puts Texas schools on a parity with other states in recruiting star athletes." Sen. Ken Armbrister, D-Victoria said.

It was at Armbrister's suggestion that the provision was added to the tuition bill during debate in the Senate.

Sharp, Mayor-elect Ron Kirk and other Dallas officials formally launched the new Lone Star card system at a grocery store in Lakewood, near Dallas.

The Lone Star card works like a charge card, allowing welfare recipients to purchase food without stamps and to receive monthly cash benefits

without waiting for a check from Aid to Families with Dependent Children. Officials believe all Dallas welfare recipients will have received their cards by June 1, when more than 200,000 families in the Dallas area will switch to the cards.

Other Highlights "The Senate has sent Gov. Bush a bill that would deregulate the state trucking industry to conform with federal law and transfer regulatory authority over registration and safety from the Texas Railroad Commission to the state Departments of Transportation and Public Safety.

"The House gave final approval to a major anti-crime bill, but an amendment by Rep. Clyde Alexander, D-Athens, to legalize police checkpoints to catch drunken drivers, failed, 84-57, 10 votes short of passage.

A package of Medicaid overhaul bills were unanimously approved by the Senate and sent to Gov. Bush's desk. Sen. Judith Zaffirini, D-Laredo, told lawmakers the measure will save the state \$6 billion in the next five years.

Roger Stienke, son of Mr. & Mrs. E.H. Stienke of Garwood, made his first solo flight in a Cessna 150 on his 16th birthday Saturday, Sept. 19. Roger received instruction from Ron Morgan at the Eagle Lake Aircraft

Inc. And with the completion of his first solo flight got his shirt tail clipped.

The Stapleton Family held their 30th reunion on Sept. 20 at the home of Mr. & Mrs. H.H. Rowe Jr. of Eagle Lake.

Mr. & Mrs. Ike Etheridge are the parents of a son born Sept. 14 at 5:10 a.m. At birth, the little man weighed six pounds, 12 ounces; his name is Arthur Leyendecker.

Mr. & Mrs. Joe Anderson are maternal grandparents and Mrs. Nona Etheridge of Columbus and Kirby Etheridge of Houston are paternal grandparents. The Etheridges have another son, Michael, age 20 months.

Feb. 14, 1947 Dr. A.J. Tjaden last week purchased the Heiney Hotel from Mr. & Mrs. Lee Elliott of Memphis, Texas.

In an advertisement in this issue of the Eagle Lake Headlight (See 24 & 48, Page 4)

Let's Look Back... 24 & 48 YEARS AGO

Sept. 24, 1970 Mr. & Mrs. M.M. (Mac) Jones, owners of Mac's Food Market in Eagle Lake, announced this week that effective Oct. 1, they have sold their business located at 304 Post Office in Eagle Lake to Mr. & Mrs. C.E. Farthing...

Anderson Crop Care and Wayne Feeds announced that they will open a new wholesale feed distribution plant in Chesterville on Tuesday, Sept. 29.

Miss Charlotte Kallina and Louis Cranek exchanged vows on Sept. 5 at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Nada. Rev. Father Harvey Rolf performed the ceremony. Parents of the couple are Mrs. & Mrs. Charles Kallina Jr. of Garwood and Mr. & Mrs. Lester Cranek of Nada.

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No more food stamps in Colorado County

"On June 1, the most sweeping attack on bureaucratic bloat and welfare fraud ever in Colorado County will be launched, as the Lone Star card makes its debut in grocery stores throughout the county," State Comptroller John Sharp said recently, announcing the area start-up date of the Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) program that represents a centerpiece of his wide-ranging welfare reform plan now before the Texas Legislature.

In Colorado County alone, there are 2,509 participants in the food stamp program which adds up to 1,906,729 in dollar value. This information was taken on background information formed from Fiscal Year 1994.

"This debit-type security card will hold both bureaucrats and the people who depend on temporary public assistance accountable," Sharp said. "Not only will it save tax dollars and cut down on fraud, but it may also boost food sales for area grocers."

"In the Houston area, where the card has been in use since Feb. 1, retailers reported an immediate increase in food sales after the Lone Star card's implementation," Sharp said. "From Feb. to March, food sales rose by \$4.5 million, because the benefits can be spent on food and food alone, not on crack cocaine or other illegal activities in the food stamp black market."

The Lone Star card, first proposed by Sharp in his 1991 Breaking the Mold report, is expected to dramatically reduce food stamp fraud in Colorado County and throughout the Gulf Coast region.

"In Houston, just six weeks into the system, \$1 million was taken off the black market. These were taxpayer-funded benefits that previously had disappeared into the black hole of the black market," Sharp said. "That's exactly the kind of efficiency we had in mind when we proposed this program and what taxpayers in Colorado County can expect beginning next month," Sharp stated.

Human services clients and grocery retailers being trained on the use of the Lone Star card in early May. Clients will use the card to pay for grocery-only food stamp purchases. Also, families who qualify for the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) benefits program will use the card to receive monthly payments.

In Colorado County there are 620 recipients with cash disbursements of \$423,888. This information was taken from the Fiscal Year 1994.

Sharp said that about 75% of the grocers in the expansion areas have signed agreements to provide food stamps and AFDC benefits with the Lone Star card as the historic program moves into its second phase.

"In three weeks, almost all of the food stamps that Colorado County clients now use to pay for their groceries will no longer be in circulation. So retailers who haven't signed their agreements yet, still have time to prepare because on June 1 their food stamp customers will be walking into

the store with the Lone Star card in their hands," stated Sharp.

"AFDC grants and food stamp benefits represent a \$500 million investment in the economy of this area, Texas Commissioner of Human Services Burt Ralston said. "We want to support of the retail community to make sure Texas has the nation's most efficient system of helping needy citizens, and we join our partners in urging qualified retailers to join the EBT team."

The Texas Department of Human Services (DHS) administers the food stamp and AFDC programs, while Transactive Corporation, an Austin-based high-tech firm, is the private operator of the cutting-edge, electronic delivery system.

The Lone Star card is the largest electronic benefits transfer program in the country.

The expansion of it into Colorado County, along with ten other Gulf Coast counties, and throughout North Texas, including the Metroplex, will double from 200,000 households in Harris and Chambers counties to 400,000 households statewide, making it twice as big as any other program in the country.

The Lone Star card is scheduled to go statewide by 1996, with 16,000 Texas retail outlets serving 2.7 million food stamp recipients in 1.3 million Texas households.

"This card will trim the national costs of the old food stamp system by \$45.4 million for printing, \$4.5 million for shipping and storing, and \$23.1 million for the final processing and destruction of the paper coupons at the Federal Reserve," Sharp said.

Sharp stated that the Lone Star card will ease the burden on area bankers, too, who spend millions of dollars each year in the time-consuming process of reconciling food stamp accounts and packaging them before sending them to the Federal Reserve.

"Some banks have reported that their highest turnover rates are among the employees who do these time-consuming, bureaucratic jobs," Sharp said.

The Lone Star card will also cut the cost of printing and mailing AFDC checks.

There are 50,000 AFDC cases in the Gulf Coast region, along with North Texas and the Metroplex. The Department of Human Services spent \$15,000 printing and mailing checks to clients in the expansion area in March.

There are also nearly 50,000 AFDC cases in Harris and Chambers counties.

"By the end of this year we plan to abolish food stamps in Texas and return the program to feeding poor kids instead of feeding a bureaucracy and a black market of fraud," Sharp said.

Thank you, Keith H. Webb Chief of Police Eagle Lake

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dentists in low-performing schools to transfer to another school in their district or a neighboring district using "public education grants" from the state.

Bush Likes Welfare Bill Meaningful, Gov. Bush, who had been critical of a welfare bill that emerged from conference committee, said he is pleased that lawmakers changed the bill to require a five-year wait before reapplying for welfare benefits.

The bill was voted out of conference committee with a three-year wait, but Rep. Harvey Hilderbran, R-Kerrville, persuaded some lawmakers to change the wait to five years.

"I am very pleased that happened," Bush said. "Texas must stay to the able-bodied. You can be on welfare for a limited period of time, and then you're off." The five-year time limit recognizes some may need to recycle on for legitimate needs."

Bill Increases Tuition A measure negotiated by a House-Senate conference committee to raise tuition at Texas public universities was approved by the House and Senate last week.

The bill, sponsored by Sen. Teel Bivins, R-Amarillo, would continue \$2 per semester hour annual increases in undergraduate tuition until fiscal year 2001, when it would reach \$40 per hour.

The measure would boost out-of-state student tuition to the level

of the Lone Star card, first proposed by Sharp in his 1991 Breaking the Mold report, is expected to dramatically reduce food stamp fraud in Colorado County and throughout the Gulf Coast region.

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