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To THE EDITOR & You

RMC volunteers say 'thanks'

On behalf of the Rice Medical Center (RMC) Employee Volunteers, I would like to thank everyone who helped make the 2nd Annual Harvest Ball a success. Nearly 300 people were on hand to

honor Dr. Raymond Thomas as "1997 Texas Family Physician of the Year". State Representative Robby Cook did a wonderful job as Master of Ceremonies and the speakers, Dr. Russell Thomas, Jane Blaha Nelson and long time friend Dr. Harold High, enlightened the crowd with their own personal stories about Dr. Raymond.

Even though Dr. Ronald Mahoney couldn't be present, he wrote a speech accounting his involvements with Dr. Raymond over the years, which was read by RMC's Director of Nurses Mrs. Susan Hernandez.

All the speakers did a great job and we all learned a little bit more about Dr. Raymond in the process.

Dr. Raymond was touched by all the people who came to the Ball and, to me, that was the true testament of its success.

I want to thank all the employees for their hard work, the Harvest Ball Sponsors and the Rice District Communities for their continued support. Without everyone's contribution, the event would not have been possible. (More information on sponsor, auction prize winners and the silent auction will be forthcoming.)

A special thank you is extended to Ms. Dorothy Hyek who helped coordinate the decorations for the event.

The evening raised over \$9,000 and these monies will be used to purchase patient supplies and medical equipment. All these things will enable the hospital to continue to be the top-notch facility that it is.

Our Family Caring for Yours

Beverly Wunderlich
President, RMC
Employee Volunteers

Here goes my annual letter to the editor. I was extremely disappointed and unhappy with last week's front page.

Eagle Lake has been in a sort of negative slump lately and we finally get some very positive recognition and it rates a small picture at the bottom of the front page and then you

Collection program brings in over \$700 million

Child support payments by delinquent parents in Texas rose to \$700 million last fiscal year, an increase of 13% over the previous year, the attorney general's office announced last week.

The attorney general's Child Support Program collected \$427 million through wage withholding, \$78 million through IRS refund receipts and \$55 million through its license suspension program. Another \$140 million was collected through direct payments, lien collections and lottery winnings interceptions.

Attorney General Dan Morales credited his staff with the increase in child support payments, and said that each year the collections program increases and improves its services to children and families despite an ever-growing case load.

He added, however, that "Texans shouldn't lose sight of the fundamental absurdity of expecting government to force parents to take care of their own children. No technological innovation, indeed no government program can insure that children will get the support that they are due."

Since state fiscal year 1990, cases with court orders have increased by 145%; paying cases have increased by 233%; and the number of children for whom paternity was established increased by 269%.

Despite the improvements, however, collections overall have reached just 22% of the 915,064 cases being handled by the attorney general's office.

Water Zone Map Released

The Texas Water Development Board has released a draft of a map dividing the state's 4,959 square miles of inland water into 14 regional water zones.

Last week, the water board sched-

State Capitol Highlights

By Lyndell Williams
and Ed Sterling
Texas Press Association

uled public hearings to be held around the state in Oct. to receive comments on the draft.

Senate Bill 1, the comprehensive water bill passed during the legislative session that ended in June, requires the water board to transfer the responsibility for managing water resources to 14 regional water planning areas.

Water resource management had been shouldered by the state and a loose network of more than 7,000 river authorities, water conservation districts, utility companies and others.

Sen. J.E. "Buster" Brown, R-Lake Jackson, co-author of the legislation, knows that disputes are likely.

"The nice thing about the process is that those concerns get to get aired before the lines are drawn," Brown was quoted in the *Wall Street Journal*.

SB 1 requires cities, counties, water districts and local entities to map out how they will conserve water supplies and respond to future droughts in their planning areas. The legislation also requires the regional water planning areas to submit plans to the water board for approval every five years, beginning Sept. 1, 2000.

Judge Defends Prof's Right

In an interview with the *Austin American-Statesman*, Judge Fortunato "Pete" Benavides of the 5th U.S. Court of Appeals said University of Texas law professor Lino Graglia has the right to speak his mind, even if his ideas are offensive to some.

Graglia's comments sparked na-

tional attention in Sept. when he said most black and Mexican-American students can't compete with white students because those groups don't look upon failure as a disgrace.

He made the comments at a news conference in support of the New Orleans-based 5th Circuit's "Hopwood" decision which barred the University of Texas School of law from using race as a factor in student admissions.

Benavides said it is "wrong to call for (Graglia's) resignation. We all say things that are wrong."

And he defended the "freedom of professors, above all, to speak out even when they're wrong or when they're perceived to be wrong or whatever by the community, whether they are or not."

"To me," Benavides said, "a college campus is supposed to be for ideas that are spoken about freely and checked out to see whether they're true or not."

Other Capital Highlights

Teachers would have to be recertified every five years under a proposed state requirement. The Texas Federation of Teachers says teachers should be allowed to vote on the proposal. Currently, 97% of teachers in Texas are certified but at least half teach subjects outside their field of certification.

Democrats are airing television ads in District Office of Sen. Drew Nixon, R-Carthage, and demand his resignation. Nixon said he would not resign after a Travis County jury sentenced him to six months in jail on gun and prostitution charges.

The U.S. House voted 309-106 last week to approve an agreement allowing Maine and Vermont ship their radioactive waste to a disposal site near Sierra Blanca in West Texas.

I'm on the 'soap box'

I have to turn to page three or four or whatever to get the rest of the story and then to another page to find the recognition and honor bestowed on our local clinic.

It makes me feel very safe to know that my health care providers are receiving this kind of recognition. How about you?

The previous weekend we spent

three days paying tribute to our most notable citizen and then bury the story of his statewide fame on the inside of the paper.

I realize that sports news is important to the players, parents and coaches, but shouldn't the big story be in the sports section?

Then we have a third to half a page of the police report. I think there are more important issues for most of us than how many family disturbances, car accidents and general wrong doings occurred during the week.

All the reports end with "under investigation". So, we don't know what's happening anyway. Instead of a list of wrong doings under investigation, tell us how many crimes were solved, goods recovered and charges filed.

I know I'm going to catch a lot of flack about my comments on these issues but remember, I don't do this very often, so blast away.

As usual, I'm guessing this idiot you won't have to guess who the idiot is who composed it.

Thanks for listening.

Peggy J. Byrn
Eagle Lake

Peggy,

You're welcome. And, I'd gladly accept your help laying out the paper anytime you have nothing to do all night on a Tuesday.

"Deep-seated preferences cannot be argued about — you cannot argue a man into liking a glass of beer."

— Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr.

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