



MEMBER
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THE EAGLE LAKE HEADLIGHT

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To The Editor & You

Let's put our best face forward

Dear Editor and Citizens of Eagle Lake:

As you are all aware there is going to be a festival going on this weekend. The festival committee and other volunteers have worked very hard to bring the 4th annual event to fruition.

The City is doing its part by cleaning up what they can and volunteers are busy downtown cleaning windows and getting ready.

We want to make all the visitors feel welcome by putting our best face forward because we want them to come back.

We are asking every citizen in Eagle Lake to help make our city shine!

If you live in or around Eagle

Lake, please do whatever you can to make your yards/business/nearby vacant lots look nice. With your help, this festival will grow more and more

every year.

Sincerely,
Susan Tomchesson
Festival Advisor

'Critical task goes unserved'

Dear Editor & Citizens:

Elsewhere in today's paper is an article stating the local shortage of EMS personnel.

I am writing to make sure you are aware that our local EMS is down to less than 10 people to cover 14 12-hour shifts weekly. These people also hold full time jobs.

EMS is a critical part of our com-

munity health service and when the local unit is unavailable, the wait for a response from several miles away can only increase the risk of morbidity or mortality.

I continue to be concerned.

Living in a community that seems willing to help each other and yet this critical task goes unserved.

I urge each and every one of you to consider becoming a part of our EMS. If you are interested, please contact the County EMS Director Marc Jordan at 409-732-9635.

R. Russell Thomas Jr.,
D.O., M.P.H.
Medical Director
Colorado County EMS

Consumer groups want lower automobile insurance rates

Three consumer groups charged last week that insurance companies took in more than \$1.2 billion in excess profits in 1997, and want the overcharges passed on to the policyholders through lower premiums.

"This study shows the dramatic nature of the overcharges and ought to prod Commissioner Bomer to take swift action and reduce rates," said Rob Schneider, senior staff attorney for Consumers Union, which did the study with Texas Citizen Action and the Center for Economic Justice.

Insurance Commissioner Elton Bomer, who already has challenged the 1998 auto rates of two insurers as being too high, agrees that insurers have enjoyed healthy profits since 1996. But he said two good years do not alone prove that consumers are being overcharged.

"Since these groups have not provided me with a copy of their report, it's difficult to respond," Bomer said. "But I assume the report shows the same type of information we have



By Lyndell Williams and Ed Sterling
Texas Press Association

been aware of for some time. I have been saying for six months that auto rates need to come down, and they are dropping."

Bomer said the groups are looking at only half the picture: auto liability. "The personal injury protection and physical damage coverages were very unprofitable in 1996 and that trend appears to have continued into 1997. I have to take the entire picture into consideration in reviewing rates."

"These consumer groups are saying tort reform has failed just because insurers have made profits. That is wrong and illogical. Tort reform has worked. Savings of \$624.8 million over a three-year period are being

on to drivers," Bomer said.

Bomer is precluded by law from ordering rebates for consumers when insurers make higher than anticipated profits in a single year.

Group Opposes Legal Fees

Private attorneys representing the state in its lawsuit against the tobacco industry don't deserve \$2.3 million, according to organizers of a new group formed to oppose the fees.

"No one in their right mind could say \$2.3 billion is reasonable," said John Butler, president of Texans for Reasonable Legal Fees. Butler announced a media campaign against the fees.

The group includes members of Texans for Lawsuit Reform, Texas Association of Business and Chambers of Commerce and Texas Citizens for a Sound Economy.

In approving a \$15.3 billion lawsuit settlement between the state and tobacco companies, U.S. District Judge David Folsom found that the \$2.3 billion (15%) in attorneys' fees was reasonable.

Gov. George W. Bush and seven legislators are seeking to intervene in the case and separate the matter of attorneys' fees from the main settlement.

Other Capital Highlights

• Dan Pearson, executive director of the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission since 1994, is leaving the post to join the Austin lobbying firm headed by Neal "Buddy" Jones. Pearson is one of three great administrators in state government, Lt. Gov. Bob Bullock said, along with Insurance Commissioner Bomer and Andrew Sansom, executive director of the Parks and Wildlife Department.

• Reform Party founder H. Ross Perot recently kicked off a petition drive to secure the party a place on the Nov. 3 Texas ballot. The party has 75 days to collect about 45,000 signatures from registered Texas voters who didn't take part in the March 10 primaries. The party already has access to ballots in 31 states and is working to secure spots in 10 others.

• Texas Comptroller John Sharp last week delivered a total of \$163.3 million in monthly sales tax payments to 1,090 Texas cities and 118 counties, an 8% increase over the distribution in March 1997. "Texas continues - for the fifth consecutive year - to experience strong economic growth, while consumer confidence remains the highest in the nation," Sharp said.

• U.S. Sen Kay Bailey Hutchison, the first woman to represent Texas in the Senate, will give the commencement address at the University of Texas on May 23. Hutchison, a UT Law School graduate, was named a Distinguished Alumna in 1995.

• Sales of Texas Lottery tickets are off nearly \$226 million compared to last year, according to agency figures released last week. As of Feb. 28, the lottery had sold \$1.65 billion in tickets in the last six months. During this same period between 1996 and 1997, lottery ticket sales totaled \$1.9 billion.

• More than 50 Austin-based National Guard soldiers, who spent almost nine months with the NATO peacekeeping mission in Bosnia, returned home last week. The troops, who belong to the Texas Army National Guard's 49th Finance Battalion at Camp Mabry in Austin, were responsible for paying the Army's and civilian employees. This group follows 130 soldiers who returned home a week earlier.

TWC gives grant

Friday, Feb. 27, the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) awarded a grant to Texas Engineering Extension Service in Partnership with Hill Country Memorial, Sweeny Community and Columbus Community Hospitals, Memorial Medical Center, Home Health Care Corp. of America, Houston Hospice, Richards Memorial and Wilson Memorial Hospitals.

The grant, \$259,152, will provide training for 967 existing workers and 349 new workers.

Representative Robby Cook (D-Eagle Lake) said that the Skills Development Fund is one way the TWC is working to achieve the task the Legislature gave them. "We are proud that the Columbus Hospital was part of the grant award and feel Colorado County will greatly benefit from these funds."

COMMUNITY LENTEN LUNCHEONS

Help Celebrate the Easter Holy Season

with

Eagle Lake United Methodist Church

Attend Our Lenten Luncheons

beginning

Monday, March 2

11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m.

through

Monday, April 6

Enjoy soup, sandwiches and desserts along with singing and fellowship

Non-Denominational

Everyone Is Invited!

Love offering accepted.

Half of proceeds to go to the Eagle Lake Community Food Pantry.

Come And Bring A Friend!

'Texas Tomorrow' deadline is near

State Comptroller John Sharp reminded Texas parents and grandparents of the quickly-approaching Wednesday, April 1, deadline for enrolling their children and/or grandchildren in the Texas Tomorrow Fund.

"Now that the annual enrollment period deadline is so near, we're reminding folks that it's time to mail in their applications. They should be postmarked by April 1," Sharp said.

Sharp said that over the past two years, the Texas Tomorrow Fund has received the majority of contract applications during the final weeks of

the enrollment period.

"Families who order applications from our 1-800-445-GRAD hotline should be able to mail them back by the April 1 deadline," Sharp said.

The Comptroller spent part of the day helping clerks in his State Treasury division process application forms.

Sharp said that application forms are also available on line, through the Comptroller's home page on the World Wide Web at <http://www.window.state.tx.us>.

"My office is taking extra steps to make the registration process easier for last-minute applications," Sharp said. "All Comptroller field offices have stocked up on extra applications forms, and you can drop off your sealed application forms during regular business hours between now and Wednesday April 1. They will automatically be forwarded to Austin for processing."

"In addition, our field offices will be ready, during business hours, on April 1 for those who wait until the very last moment to register," Sharp said. "You can fill out your application forms in the field office, seal them yourselves and send them to Austin in time to beat the deadline."

"In Austin, families can drop off their applications or get last-minute help out the Texas Tomorrow Fund information booth on the ground floor

of the LBJ State Office Building, located at 111 E. 17th Street," Sharp said.

The Texas Tomorrow Fund, first proposed by Sharp in 1994 and approved by state lawmakers in 1995, allows families to lock in the costs of their children's future college tuition and required fees for about what they would pay today. The constitutionally-protected fund pays tuition and required fees at any public university or college in Texas. A private school plan is also offered.

Sharp says that the prepaid tuition program was designed to be flexible, so that payment options could easily fit into a variety of family budgets.

During the first two enrollment periods, more than 65,000 contracts were purchased. The majority of contract purchasers are parents. Grandparents account for more than 10% of all contract purchases.

Sharp noted that if a student opts to attend an accredited college or university in another state, the program will transfer the benefits and pay either the average Texas tuition of the plan selected or the actual out-of-state tuition and required fees, whichever is less, to the other school.

Refunds may be provided if a child decides not to go to college, dies or becomes disabled, or receives a scholarship for tuition. There is a non-refundable application processing fee of \$50 due at the time an application is submitted along with proof of Texas residency for the beneficiary.

"Since it's human nature to wait until last minute, the Texas Tomorrow Fund staff is prepared to work long hours over the next couple of weeks. In addition, their fax machine is loaded with paper, since many purchasers fax in their applications on deadline day," Sharp said.

"Regardless of whether you mail it, fax it, or walk your application into any Comptroller office, we'll consider it a deal if you get it in by April 1," Sharp said.

Bible Verse of the Week

"We walk by faith, not by sight."

— 2 Corinthians 5:7
Submitted by Neddy Phillips

Anniversary Specials!



1 Medium Pepperoni
Pizza & 1 Regular
Calzone
\$9.99

2 Large 2-Topping Pizzas **\$14.99**

Monday & Tuesday Special...

1 Medium Pepperoni Pizza... **\$4.99**

Saturday, March 28, APC Festival Special
Pizza by the Slice... **\$1.00**

11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, March 28, only.
Specials good at the Eagle Lake location only.

Your Eagle Lake Simple Simon's
Wants to Say Thank You for Making
Our First Year So Successful!

Open: Sun.-Thurs., 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Friday, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.;
Saturday, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.

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