

# Laws

•The minimum fine or illegally parking in a handicap space will increase from \$100 to \$250.

### Miscellaneous

•The fee for a marriage license will increase from \$25 to \$30. County clerks will be required to give a premarital education handbook to applicants for a marriage license.

•Local governments cannot sue gun makers and sellers for damages arising from the lawful manufacture or sales of firearms unless the Legislature approves such a lawsuit.

•Counties can apply for state grants to save historic courthouses. Lawmakers set aside \$50 million for such grants over the next two years.

•Vendors at flea markets can no longer sell infant formula, baby food or contact lenses. Doing so will be a misdemeanor.

•Consumers will get new legal protection against cramming and slamming by telecommunications firms. Cramming-charges customers for service not requested-would be illegal for the first time. Rules against slamming-unauthorized switching of a person's long distance carrier-would be strengthened.

Here's some of the lesser-known laws that took effect Sept. 1. Bill numbers and sponsors are

included to help you track down more detailed information on the web at [www.capitol.state.tx.us](http://www.capitol.state.tx.us) or from the Texas Reference Library at 512-463-1252.

•**Lottery tickets:** You still can't use food stamps or credit cards, but you may use your debit card to buy lottery tickets. House Bill 703 by Rep. Ron Wilson, D-Houston, is aimed at making it easier to play the game in Texas.

•**Parking:** Think it should be a crime when parking lot owners quadruple their prices during special events? So did the Legislature. Senate Bill 155 by Sen. Jon Lindsay, R-Houston, makes its misdemeanor for parking lot owners to more than double their prices during special events, including sporting events, conventions, exhibits, parades or political rallies.

•**Safety belts:** In 1985, Texas made safety belts use mandatory for front-seat occupants in a passenger vehicle. But rear-seat passengers were not required to wear safety belts, and some sport-utility trucks were not included in the law's definition of passenger vehicle. Senate Bill 60 by Mike Montcrief, D-Fort Worth, requires all passenger vehicle to wear a safety belt and expands the definition

of "passenger vehicle" to include pickups.

•**Work-off tax bills:** Authorizes a taxing entity to allow people who are 65 or older to perform community service instead of paying property taxes on their home. House Bill 51 by Rep. Henry Cuellar, D-Laredo.

•**Medical bills:** Requires hospitals to respond within 30 days to request for itemized bill with an easy-to-read statement. The statement must include the date services and supplies were provided, say whether the claim has been submitted to a third party and give a telephone number where patients can get explanations for acronyms, abbreviations and numbers used to describe the services provided. Senate Bill 830 by Sen. Frank Madla, D-San Antonio.

•**Insurance explanations:** Requires insurers to fully explain the reason or reasons for canceling, declining to provide or not renewing an insurance policy. Written statements already are required. They now must include the incident, circumstance or risk factor that led to the action. Senate Bill 984 by Sen. Frank Madla, D-San Antonio.

•**Prescription drug coverage:** Requires health insurance plans such as HMOs, to continue to pay for pre-

scribed drugs until the policy comes up for renewal. Under current law, insurance plans must give policyholders 90 days' notice before ending coverage of a drug. Senate Bill 1030 Sen. Frank Madla, D-San Antonio.

•**Subdividing land:** Prodded by growing reports of substandard development, lawmakers gave counties a bit more power to regulate growth. Under Senate Bill 710, filed Sen. Jeff Wentworth, R-San Antonio, landowners must file a plat-a blueprint or map showing streets and other features-when subdividing into parcels smaller than 10 acres.

•**Habitat conservation plans:** Requires local governments to work with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and affected landowners when crafting plans to protect wildland habitat under the federal Endangered Species Act. Under Senate Bill 1272, filed by Sen. Jeff Wentworth, R-San Antonio, local governments will have to move quickly to acquire land and will have to pay higher prices for it.

•**Poaching:** Texas lawmakers stiffened the penalties for illegal hunting. House Bill 2526 by Rep. Henry Cuellar, D-Laredo, would enhance violations for poaching, making some offenses felonies punishable by 180 days to two years in jail.



## Could keep you warm

With Autumn beginning Sept. 23, it sure would be nice to own this reversible, homemade, kingsize, burgundy and dark green quilt. The quilt was donated to the Study Club Auction by Ethel and Joe Lee McCreary who are in the photo above.

Headlight Photo by Carol Nelson

# Cat Spring antique show is Sept. 11, 12

The 14th Annual Cat Spring Antiques Show at historic Agricultural Hall is just around the corner.

Some of the best country dealers from the south and mid-west will be represented again this year. Fifty-five booths of antiques and collectibles plus the Farmer's Market attract collectors from the Dallas, Austin, San Antonio and Houston areas to this tiny

community every fall.

The charm of rural Texas along with a good antiques show makes for a great "get-out-of-town" weekend for big city dwellers. Treasures to be found include all styles of antique furniture, vintage china, glassware, estate silver, jewelry, heirloom textiles, quilts, old clocks, antique toys, tools, architectural and well weath-

ered garden furnishings.

A covered arbor of dried wildflowers, attractive bundles of native weeds and huge wooden tubs of freshly made potpourri is always one of the favorite booths at the show. Live plants and hanging baskets fill another old shed along with colorful jars of homemade pickles and preserves to enrich anyone's pantry.

So, for those who love antiques and old fashioned building in a grove of trees, this is the place to come for a weekend of fun and relaxation. And

come hungry. The Agricultural Society cooks put on one of the best feeds in the county! Meals will be available both days inside the air conditioned hall.

Show hours are from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 11 and from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday, Sept. 12. Admission is \$3.50 and is good for both days. Collectors 12 and under can browse free of charge.

\*Take 1-10 east to FM 949 north (8 miles past Columbus) and follow FM 949 to Cat Spring.

# The Forgotten One

By Riney Jordan

Reprinted with permission from the July/August 1999 edition of *Texas School Business*.

I'm going to tell you before I begin, that the names have been changed. The setting, the ages, the details, are not important. But you've all known this kid.

She came from what has become, in too many cases, a typical home. Dad worked. Mom worked. Money was scarce. When she and her brothers and sisters were very young, they stayed after school with anyone who was available. Usually there weren't any references.

"Poor people sometimes have poor ways," my Mom always said.

No one really paid a great deal of attention to her as she began to grow up.

She'd wait alone after school until someone came to pick her up.

She loved school. She loved to read. At first, she was so excited about going to school. And she always had a smile, and with that golden, naturally curly hair, she was a knockout.

Such possibilities.

At the school play in second grade, she arrived at the last minute. Her hair wasn't combed, so just moments before the curtain went up, her teacher pulled her aside and lovingly made futile attempts to improve an impossible situation.

No parent joined in the applause after her brief solo. Mom and Dad were out "doing their thing."

The assistant principal and I sat with her in the foyer of the school that evening and poured out compliments on her performance until a car pulled up in front and a horn sounded.

We walked her into the night air, and as we opened up the back seat, she brushed aside fast food wrappings and trash into the back floorboard. It joined beer cans, cigarette wrappers, and unpaid bills.

"Why the hell weren't you waiting out here like I told you too," he growled.

As they drove away, we both stood silently and watched until the smoke from the exhaust had long since dissipated.

What a beautiful little girl. What potential. But so much to overcome.

As she grew older, she gradually began to lose her smile. Her grades began to drop. She didn't have the right clothes, because her wardrobe was purchased piece by piece at garage sales around town. Nothing matched, and on most days, there were snickers behind her back.

While other students enrolled in dance, and soccer, and cheerleading mini-camps, she could only imagine.

In middle school, she started to receive some attention. Older boys with ideas of their own started passing the compliments, the half-cocked smiles, and the cheap thrills.

To be accepted by this new set of "friends," she started smoking. The natural brunette returned to being a blonde. The clothes that had always been so small and too short, had now become, in her mind, an asset.

She added tattoos and body piercing. Her time walking the streets began to increase; her time in school

began to decrease.

In high school, she quit coming altogether, because it's difficult to go to school and care for a baby at the same time.

After I wrote the above scenario, I asked various acquaintances to identify the young girl I had described.

"I know exactly who it is," one said. "It's Stacy. Stacy Hetzel."

Another said, "No doubt about it. It's that little Johnson girl, Wendy Johnson."

Still another, "I've thought about her a lot over the years. What ever happened to Jennifer?"

To be perfectly honest with you, it's none of the above, yet all of the above. The young lady I described is in every school in America. This fall, she'll start school in your kindergarten. She'll attempt to fit in with the other students in your intermediate grades. She starts getting noticed in your middle schools. She'll be seen less and less in your high schools as her grades drop and her interests outside of school increases.

But if you're at the right place at the right time, you'll meet her again.

She'll come walking in the front door of your elementary school and she'll tell you that they just moved into town, and she needs to get her little girl enrolled in school.

"Got one of those free lunch applications?" she'll reluctantly ask. "I could sure use it."

And she'll introduce you to her little blonde-headed girl who is all smiles and eager to learn.

"Honey, Momma will be out front after school. I may be a bit late, but you stay right here until I pick you up."

And out the door she goes.

And the forgotten child starts the cycle all over again.

Oh, how easy it would be to stop right now. But it doesn't have to end there. The cycle doesn't have to continue. Unquestionably, we have all seen the other side of the story as well.

We've seen a similar little boy or girl who broke the cycle because a teacher took the time to encourage.

We've witnessed the results of a principal who took difficult steps in order to pull a child from deplorable conditions.

We've seen grades improve because a student experienced success due to a teacher who developed a relationship first and a reading assignment later.

We've seen changes that appeared hopeless, yet happened because an educator instilled hope.

So as we prepare to begin another year, may our focus truly be on the "basics".

In addition to instruction, let's give them encouragement. In addition to homework, let's give them a hope. In addition to remediation, let's give them a role model. In addition to lessons, let's give them love.

And then, perhaps only then, will the forgotten child become the one we most remember.

# Deadline for Farm Bureau award is Sept. 17

The deadline to apply for the Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) 1999 Outstanding Young Farmer & Rancher award is Sept. 17, according to Colorado County FB President Charles Harbich.

"The purpose of the award is to surface, identify and reward exceptional young people in agriculture," Harbich said.

The winner of the competition will receive a 2000 Dodge 3/4-ton Quad Cab 4x4 truck with a Cummins diesel engine, \$500 cash, 150 hours of use of Case IH tractor and an all-expense paid trip to the TFB state convention in Corpus Christi. The winner also represents the state's largest farm organization in the American FB Achievement Competition.

Runners-up in the contest also receive great prizes, including transportation, two-nights lodging and meals to the annual meeting, and complimentary use of a 2000 Quad Cab pickup from Dec. 1999 to Nov. 2000. Both winner and runners-up will be presented a plaque and a belt

buckle representative of the award.

The contest is open to producers who are age 35 or younger by Jan. 31, 2000. For more information contact the CCFB at 409-732-2383.

# Head Start seeking area representative

If you're pleased with the services Head Start offers to parents and children in Eagle Lake, maybe you should consider volunteering to be a community representative on the Head Start policy council. You needn't have a child who is eligible for Head Start in order to do so.

As a policy council member, you'll come to a monthly meeting to discuss the administration of all nine of the Cen-Tex Family Service Head Start Centers. You'll have an opportunity to share your expertise with parents who are just beginning to exercise their executive skills.

You'll also meet representatives from other communities. Together, you'll consider budget, expenditure of funds, proposed hirings and more.

Meetings take place on the second Thursday of each month and are usually held in La Grange. The first meeting will be Sept. 9 at 6 p.m.

There are seven slots available. Call Windy Hill or Sandy Scott at 512-303-7737, ext. 24 for information or to submit your name for consideration.

# Pagel wins Photogenic

April Marie Pagel of Eagle Lake, daughter of Dwayne and Monica Pagel, won Miss Photogenic at the Little Miss Woff Pageant held in Wallis on Sunday, July 31.

Sponsoring April was Lynn Ellis, owner of Lynn's Grooming Corner.

# IRS to hold Problem Solving Days in Columbus

The IRS will hold two special Problem Solving Days in Columbus to help individuals and small-business owners who have long-standing tax problems with the IRS.

The Problem Solving Days will be held Tuesday, Sept. 14, from 3 to 6 p.m. and Wednesday, Sept. 15, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Veteran's Memorial Center, 1439 Walnut (Hwy. 90) in Columbus.

The IRS Problem Solving Day offers taxpayers with long-standing tax problems a unique opportunity to meet face-to-face with IRS agents, managers or the Taxpayer Advocate to find a solution.

Many problems are resolved at the initial meeting and all problems receive expedited attention from the IRS.

For example, taxpayers owing money can enter into installment agreements with the agency to pay the tax over time.

Taxpayers can ask to have audits reconsidered. Some taxpayers may qualify to make an offer-in-compromise, which is an offer to pay less than the taxes owed, depending on the circumstances.

IRS experts will also help explain notices and procedures for filing past-due tax returns. In some cases, certain penalties may be abated in order to help the taxpayer resolve an outstanding balance.

Since the inception of Problem Solving Days in Nov. 1997, the IRS Problem Solving Days have helped more than 50,000 taxpayers seeking help at these special events nationwide.

To make an appointment for the Problem Solving Day, call 409-732-2800.

An appointment is not necessary, but the IRS does recommend taxpayers call ahead so that the problem can be researched in advance.

**HOW TO STOP YOUR TEENAGE SON FROM GETTING A HEROIN ADDICTION, LONG BEFORE HE'S A TEENAGER.**

Without a father in his life, he'll be 37% more likely to abuse drugs. Give your kids a better chance. Even if they don't live with you, they need your emotional and financial support. They're your kids. Be their dad.

Ad Council