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Local

x 9, 1981 Assistance programs help low-income pay their bills lous

By CAROL THOMAS

t hardly sat Agencies in the Bryan-College ation area have developed vaead in the negrious programs to help lessen the his first major well as the anguish of poverty, for the heads of slow-income families.

Three of these programs are: will be the firthe Women, Infants and Children en Reagan and (WIC) program, the Energy t will be on hassistance program and Out-Vest tensions, reach.

has taken a WIC, a program within the lussians. Mud Agency, is designed to supply the nt of the Cold nutritional needs of women and n Foster Duletheir infants and children. Based when the considered nutritional need, ce was usheren economic and nutritional need, and Nikita Iw nen are issued food vouchers cards that can be exchanged at an is still placertain grocery stores for nutri-wn ranks. Witous foods such as eggs, milk, given free reacreal, cheese and juice.

But the program supplies more nt, there is a han nutritional foods; it supplies hite House a nutritional education.

We teach them about vitamins om national and minerals, and spending d Allen, who money wisely," said Sally Hudtly. The pression, WIC director. "We feel if use counsely they do have knowledge they'll be n policy, alth healthier."

been in the liven a dietary care antering the program in order to himself show letermine which foods are policy, Americaeeded. The foods are supa confused molemental, she said, and do not ply the total need. "We might problems like inadequate diet growth, a history of health lems or iron deficiency,"

The food cards are issued nthly and are accompanied by a on in nutritional education inng a film on pre-natal nutri-. The film also stresses the imtance of spending money wise-n nutritional foods.

one young mother, whose husis a food science major at as A&M University, said she already learned much about rition from him and was more rested in the food.

I needed food for my daugh-who is 16 months," she said. The woman said WIC had not ered her food costs significant-But it is a good help, Another mother said she was rested in the nutritional eduon as well as the food cards. "I ted to see the films and " she said. "My little boy is

The woman said the program ad definitely made a difference in er son's life. "I try to give him the nt kinds of foods now, and he's a

Although the foods supplied by IC are only supplemental, Hud-n said the overall results have n good. "We do an assessmen y six months," she said. "And ost of them do improve.

But there have been problems, said. One problem is misuse of cards. For example ple try to redeem the food ards for something not allowed in program.

Hudson said the grocery stores Hudson said the grocery stores, well as the individual particiants, have a duty to make sure nly the nutritional foods speciay two smalled are purchased with the food ards. "We're not sure where the chers, school ault lies," she said.

applies, but Another major problem is lack o live off education from the WIC program is re words for unded by the United States De-High, Long ime they were able to serve ,400. But because of a cut in chool importunds, the case load has been cut o 1,200.

is, it may not a major problem in the lives of a of anything he low income is paying their useless. A sills, especially electricity. The ion of inquistrepy Assistance program at ellious mind 3VCAA is designed to help people the their electricity wills the most significant to the significant si rim their electricity bills through

loss to exp weatherizing" homes mencement Cherry Assistance, said the main rever." soal of the weatherization progam is to help the low income conerve energy. Three times a week, ew works on homes in Brazos County: the rest of time is spent

n six surrounding counties. Barnard said crew members do veather stripping, caulking and lazing windows, window replacenent and insulation. All are done help conserve energy and cut not exceed 300 lown on high bills.

cut if they are less. Barnard said they are able to to edit letters for pend \$450 on each house. Four rt to maintain the signed, show the signed, show the Department of Energy, and the est is money they have raised on are also welcome heir own. Because of this small th constraints mount, she said, they are not alspondence to E mount, she said, they are not alspondence to E mount able to repair the house as Texas Akm vays able to repair the house as nuch as it needs. And many

ouses desperately need repair. Some people in the rural areas Fuesday, Wedness're living in ... shacks," Barnard summer senses aid. "It's amazing to go to the mester, \$33.55 ousses and they'll have windows artising rates for more out or they'll have early a contract of the state of the s

roken out, or they'll have only a 16 Reed McDondingle wall.

If houses are irreparable, or in eed of more repair than the entitled exclusive reacherization program can dispatches cree ford, Barnard said they refer the tter herein ome owners to the local Housing nd Urban Development offices, which can spend up to \$10,000 on ach home. They also refer them

which provides low-interest loans and grants to low-income people who need to remodel or rebuild.

In many cases, elderly people's health is so poor they are not able to perform small housekeeping tasks, like answering mail or get-

Outreach is designed to help such people. By visiting the people in their homes, staff members can take care of these possibly dif-

Food cards are issued monthly and are accompanied by a lesson in nutritional education including a film on pre-natal nutrition.

ficult tasks, refer the individuals to other agencies if their need is very great and give them emotional

LaVerne Skinner, Outreach director, said she often reads people's mail for them. "Some people visit are totally blind or legally blind and they cannot read their mail, or sometimes they get mail they do not understand."

Skinner said she often picks up food stamps, prescriptions and other necessities. During one day, Skinner helped a woman who was ill find someone to clean her home. She also visited a woman she had helped in the past, just to see how she was doing.

Skinner said one thing most of the people she visits have in common is poverty. 'Most of the elderly are simply

living on well below a poverty income," she said. "Some make as low as \$175 to \$200 per month."

Furthermore Skinner said

many of the low-income people she visits are black. "They (blacks)

to Farmers Home Administration, have worked hard all their lives, usually keeping someone else's kids, and many of their employers didn't withhold social security."

One women Skinner visits, Pearl Bell, is 81 years old. Besides keeping her tiny, weathered old house clean, and growing a garden of roses, verbenas and amaralys, she takes care of her nephew, Earl Brown, who is an out-patient at Brazos Valley Mental Health-Mental Retardation Center.

Bell first met Skinner when she was trying to get financial aid for Brown. With Skinner's help, Brown is now receiving \$390 per month, which may be used only for his medical expenses. Bell receives \$226.70 per month from social security payments. Her late husband was a janitor at Texas A&M 15 years ago.

Pearl said she tries not to go to the grocery store too often, be-cause of the distance and the trou-ble it takes to get there. "When you go to get food, it's way up yonder," she said.

By sticking to foods like chicken, beans, rice, grits and coffee,

A major problem in the lives of the low income is paying their bills, especially electricity.

Bell is able to keep her food bill down to about \$70 per month (for the two of them). Much of her monthly income is used on her electricity bill. She said her light bill was as high as \$85 during last

Bell says she has learned to survive on what she has and doesn't complain. "I do very she said. "The things I don't need I leave alone



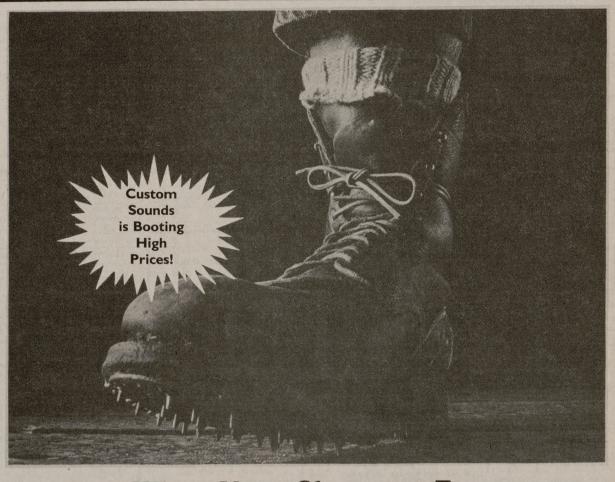
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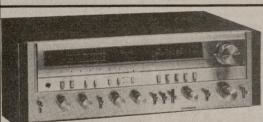
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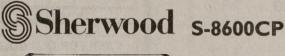
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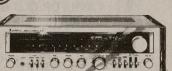
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