

Parents turning to foster homes

Economy breaking up families

United Press International
DALLAS — More and more financially strapped parents, unable to care for their children, are turning to foster care to provide for the youngsters until the family's economic situation improves.

"It's getting to be a real problem," said Cynthia Nitsche, director of the Dallas outreach office of Methodist Home of Waco, a children's residence.

"In the past eight to 10

months, we've gotten 40 to 50 percent more calls from parents — especially single women — looking for temporary foster care because they can't make it financially," she said.

She said many of the parents said they had been laid off and were forced to seek shelter for their children while seeking employment.

Foster care facilities report that they are near capacity with children whose parents cannot

afford to care for them, but the number of families willing to take in foster children has been decreasing.

A spokesman at Hope Cottage Children's Bureau, which places about 17 children a month in foster homes, estimated half of the youngsters were relinquished by parents experiencing financial hardships.

"We get so many calls from parents who don't want to give

up their children," said Hope program director Nyla Steward. "But prices for things have just gotten out of sight."

"If a parent is only making \$8,000 or \$10,000 a year and trying to provide a place for the kids, it's just hard. Some just start thinking foster care is the only thing they can do."

Officials at Christian Services of the Southwest in Dallas said all 69 children placed in foster care in the past 12 months were

from families undergoing economic hardships.

How many hot checks can a slick sheik slip? Florida merchants learn

United Press International
MIAMI — Sheik Mohamed al-Fassi, 27, promised to pay off all the rubber checks Monday — except one for \$1.5 million — he has been bouncing around south Florida for more than two months.

The line of creditors formed at the Hollywood office of Thomas E. Thomas, one of the Saudi Arabian sheik's lawyers.

There's a \$156,000 taxicab company bill, numerous contractors seeking thousands of dollars and various bills of merchants and service personnel ranging down to \$2,500 for shoe repair and \$1,000 owed a nurse.

Thomas said the sheik has managed to free some of his reported \$6 billion fortune and deposit it in a bank to pay off his debts. Before that a Swiss bank had been bouncing his checks.

"The sheik is very concerned about these people getting paid," Thomas said.

He said anyone owed money by the sheik need only show up at his Hollywood office with the original bad checks and they will be reimbursed.

Thomas said he isn't sure how many people are owed money or how many dollars he will have to pay out, but "we have sufficient

funds in a local account to pay them."

The one account that won't be settled soon is the nearly \$1.5 million that the luxury Diplomat Hotel claims the sheik owes for two months rental of two floors and services to him and his entourage of 40 who were evicted last week.

It probably will take a court decision to settle that bill.

Hotel officials had al-Fassi arrested by Hollywood police on a charge of defrauding an innkeeper. He was released under a \$1,000 bond. The Diplomat impounded most of the sheik's belongings at the hotel, including jewels and other valuables held in 25 hotel safe deposit boxes, and four luxury autos. They let him remove his prayer rugs, beds, linens, clothing and health items.

The hotel is filing suit to collect the bill and the sheik is threatening a counter suit, claiming the hotel overcharged him as much as \$11,000 a day. The hotel denies the claim.

Fort Lauderdale's Yellow Cab Co. has sued him for about \$156,000. Several south Florida contractors and architects claim he owes them tens of thousands of dollars.

On the lower end of the scale are such merchants as Carl and Darlene McDaniel, owners of a

Hollywood luggage shop. They said the sheik's checks for \$1,125 have bounced.

Chesapeake 'monster' filmed in Maryland

United Press International
LOVE POINT, Md. — A woman whose husband videotaped something resembling the Loch Ness monster swimming in Chesapeake Bay says the experience was like seeing a UFO: Without the film, nobody would believe them.

Robert Frew, his wife, Karen, and some Memorial Day guests watched the creature swim by the Frews' home in Love Point on the bay's Eastern Shore. Frew first watched it through binoculars, then used his videotape camera to film it for three minutes.

"The first time we saw it was about 7 feet long and had a round head about 10 inches in diameter," Mrs. Frew said Sunday. "It dived down and when it came back up we saw it was about 20 feet long. We were staring at each other saying, 'What the hell is this?'"

"It was like seeing a UFO. If there hadn't been a lot of people with us and we didn't have it on tape, we probably would have thought no one would believe we saw this thing," she said.

Mrs. Frew suspects the crea-

ture was Chessie, a seldom-seen fixture of Maryland legend that inhabits the Chesapeake.

"Chessie is part of the Maryland folklore," she said. "It probably was first sighted about 50 years ago."

"What we saw is not a run of the mill animal. I'd say it's similar to the Loch Ness Monster."

Researchers with the Enigma Project, a group of investigators who study natural phenomena, viewed Frew's film. They could not identify the creature, which they said was 30 feet long, black or dark brown in color and a good swimmer.

Enigma co-founders Mike Frizzell and Bob Lazzara said other scientists were waiting to view the film.

"Whatever it is on the tape is alive. There's not someone under the water pulling it along," Lazzara said.

The Frews feared for the safety of a group of swimmers splashing near the beast.

"It came really close (to the swimmers). But the serpent dove when it got near them," Mrs. Frew said.

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