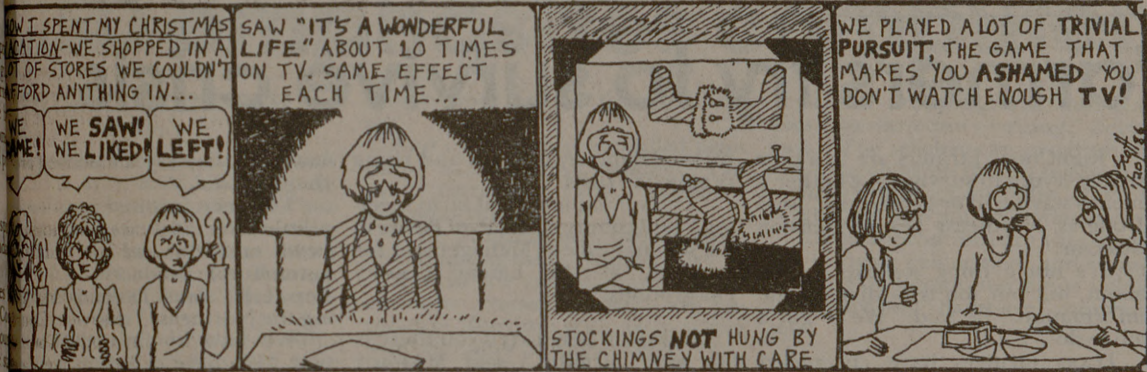


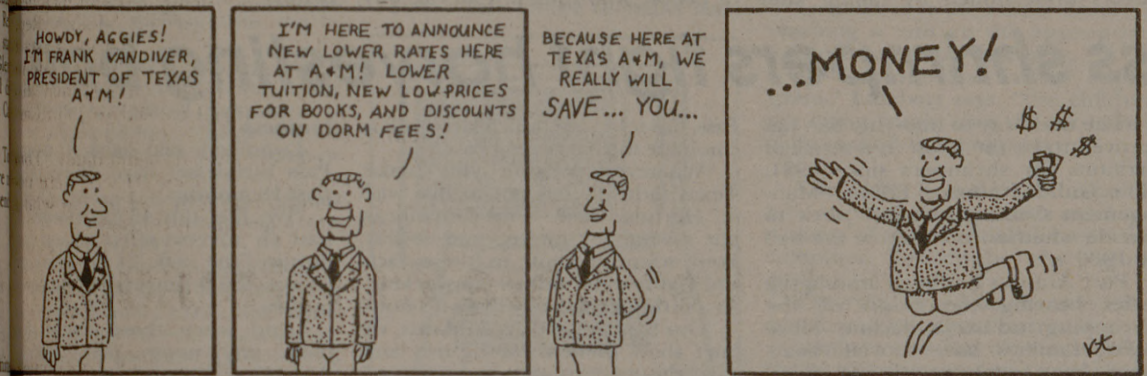
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Legal center helps victims of child abuse

Associated Press
SAN ANTONIO — A legal center to handle family abuse cases has brought lawyers from the Bexar County district attorney's office together with staff members of the Texas Department of Human Resources to help victims, officials say.

The unit was designed to make dealing with the legal system easier for victims of child abuse, prosecutors say. The common office will be ready for occupancy by 32 workers in late February. Officials say its spouse-abuse component, which has operated since January 1984, has helped more than 3,600 victims.

"When a case comes over from the Police Department or (human services department), it will be assigned to one lawyer and one advocate who will see it through all the way to court," says attorney Karen Amos, legal chief of the unit. "The child will not be shuffled around or have to tell his story constantly," she says. "This is called vertical prosecution; the continuity helps make the child more comfortable."

Three child abuse advocates in the office become the lifeline between the victim and the legal system, officials say. They provide a reassuring hug, a concerned voice on the phone and patient explanation.

"Most district attorney's offices don't have advocates, but they are needed because the attorneys can't devote that much time to victims," Joy Hollingsworth, advocate supervisor, says.

She says advocates also track cases in the legal system for TDHR caseworkers and provide followup services.

The idea for the family violence unit emerged from reports published by the district attorney's task forces on spouse and child abuse.

"We visited Seattle's unit for sexual assault victims as well as four or five other big projects around the country," says Joyce Dorrycott, chairwoman of both task forces.

"What we're doing is a step forward; it's unique in the country. We are on the cutting edge. We are one of six model programs in the country; people are coming to us for information," she says.

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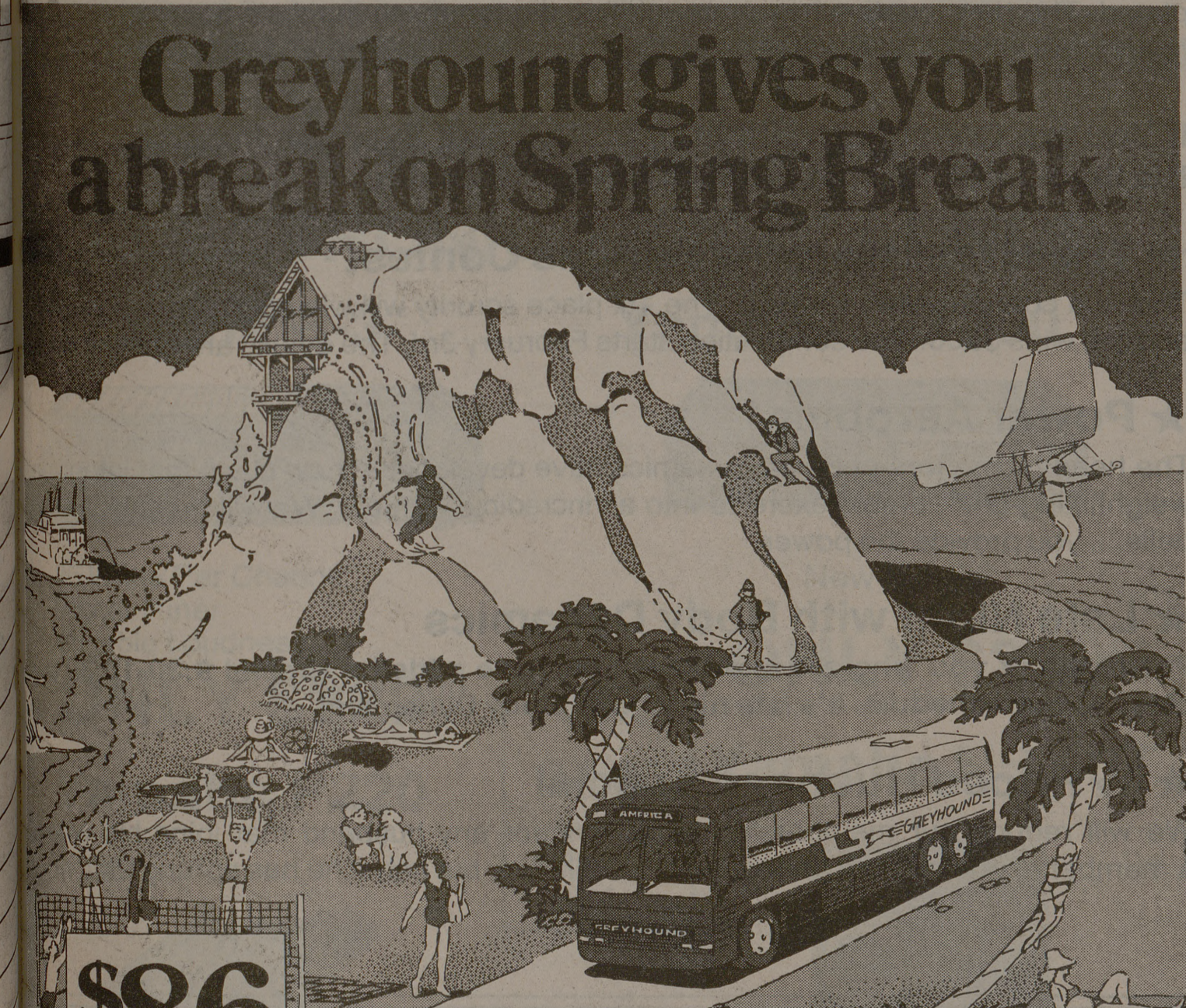
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Ex-principal's trial starts today

Associated Press
LIVINGSTON — Attorneys presenting opening arguments today in the murder trial of a former junior high school principal accused of killing a football coach over the love of the school secretary. Prosecutors and defense attorneys expect the trial of Hurley Fontenot, former principal at Hulsassa Woodson Junior High School, to take about two weeks. A jury of 10 women and two men met Friday. State District Judge

John Martin last week rejected a defense request to move the trial because of extensive publicity. Fontenot, 48, is charged in the shooting death of Billy Mac Fleming, 38, who coached football and taught math at the Liberty County school. Fontenot is free on \$50,000 bond and has pleaded innocent to the killing. Fleming was last seen alive April 12. Ten days later, a berry picker found his body in a densely forested area near Segno in Polk County. He had been shot twice in the back of

the head, authorities said. Prosecutors say they believe Fleming was killed in Liberty County and the body was moved. Authorities allege Fontenot became jealous when he learned Fleming was seeing the school secretary, Laura Nugent, whom both men dated and hoped to marry. Polk County District Attorney Peter Speers said prosecutors will use circumstantial evidence to prove Fontenot killed Fleming.



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