Severe weather

causes flooding

in Victoria area

## State and Local

# Illiteracy rate in Brazos Valley eaches 20 percent for adults

iducation experts: Problems often start in early childhood

**By Audrey Cardenas** 

eracy is an invaluable tool for val in a world deluged with a ring array of printed material, approximately 20 percent of cos Valley adults are oblivious to barrage because they are funcally illiterate — they are unable

**Illiteracy in Texas** thes for Part one of a two-part series

ad or write well enough to surtherwe on a daily basis - and their probusually starts in high school.

survey by the Bryan Public Liplaceh ary shows that 20.3 percent of razos Valley adults are functionally erate and a Texas Education cy survey concludes that one in Texas adults is illiterate.

lany reasons contribute to illiterbut chief among these is highool dropout rates. According to Texas Education Agency's 1986 ual report, dropout rates ex-ded during the 1986 school year. report also says Texas currently t I have as 35.4 percent dropout rate and ing to a sone of the nation's 10 worst liter-

he increase in dropout rates refrom an increase in sociological, omical and cultural problems by students, as well as physical

mental handicaps. It's a complex thing," says Ches-

be

reading important. It's part of an anti-intellectual society.'

Childhood education is one major force that determines an individu-

als's literacy level, he says. "Once a child gets beyond the physiological age of about three, there are more distractions," he says. "But at an earlier age, it is a matter of interest for the child and he can then read more accurately.

It is this early education that deup with an interest in learning, Christian says.

"If a child does not become interested in learning early on, then this could create educational problems later on as a student," he says

Sociological aspects contributing to illiteracy often come from children's do-as-they-see practices, Christian says.

If they don't see other people reading at home, then they won't read either, he says. Instead, children see their parents watching television, and the satisfaction a child could receive from reading a book he gets from the television, he says.

Sondra Cooke, the Bryan Independent School District's special education director, agrees with Chris-

Furthermore, Christian says that functionally illiterate, both will fail to stances. understand the significance of their child being literate.

Cooke, who views the matter as a cycle, says teen-agers may try to help their families financially by dropping out of school and getting a job, but they become adults who can't

turn, fall into the same trap. Rowena Reed, a Texas A&M Consolidated High School senior counselor, says although many students drop out, some leave with the intent

of getting ahead.
"I had a student who couldn't wait until he was 16 because he wanted to get out of school," Cooke recalls. "He wanted to drive a gravel truck for his grandfather's gravel company, but he couldn't read a lick.

Eventually, his grandfather died and left him the business, but he still

Cooke further explains that the teen-ager had to marry someone capable of reading so that he could carry on his grandfather's business.

But not all teen-agers are this for-

ter Christian, a Texas A&M modern vision," she says. "We have made it languages professor. "All kinds of forces work against considering ad." schools have established vocational programs designed to give the students work experience and to help keep them interested in school.

if neither parent has a complete high-school education and both are beneficial, but only in some in-

"Co-op doesn't help all the time, but some students do choose this program and it usually works for them," she says.

However, Cooke says these programs can influence students to

Some kids enrolled in these cotermines whether a child will grow hold a steady job because of their op programs see that they could up with an interest in learning, poor educations. Their children, in make \$90 a week, and they think make \$90 a week, and they think that's great," she says. "But later they realize that it isn't that much, and by then it's too late to come back to

> Cathy Hackett, Travis County Adult Literacy Council's administrative assistant, describes the types of jobs open to illiterate dropouts.

> "The jobs that many illiterates receive are janitorial positions or repairing cars," Hackett says, "and they usually get fired when their boss finds out they're illiterate. Also, adult illiterates earn 42 percent less than a high-school graduate.

> But Jim Lovan, employment supervisor for the Texas Employment Commission, says most students don't quit high-school for economical reasons.

"If he does, he would have to "We depend too much on tele- increasing dropout rates, many something like that," Lovan says. tunate and in an attempt to combat work in the family grocery store or

#### toria Fire Department. Elsewhere, uprooted trees floated downstream, and car roofs were seen barely protruding above flooded streets.

floating away.

Victoria Fire Chief Henry Juenke said the river was not wide enough or deep enough to carry the huge overflow that has come down the river from its headwaters in Hill Country.

Officials said more than 100

homes were flooded near the Victoria area this weekend after the

Guadelupe River swelled to

The flooding caused several hundred residents to leave their

The river waters appeared to

crest Sunday at about 30.5 feet,

compared to an average normal

depth of 8-10 feet, according to river gauger Jim De Leon. Resident John M. Villafranca

said, "We looked out the window

when we woke up (Saturday) morning and the houses across

the street looked like they were

He and family members were helped to safety Saturday af-

ternoon by workers from the Vic-

nearly three times its usual size.

Juenke said about 125 homes in a 50-block area suffered the worst flooding. He was unable to provide an estimate of flood damage, and he added that city offi-cials had not yet met to consider

whether to apply for disaster aid. Some of the stronger storms Sunday were located near Victoria and offshore southeast of Corpus Christi, the National Weather

The forecast for today called for mostly cloudy skies in the south and west with a chance of widely scattered showers and thunderstorms. It should be partly cloudy in the north through Monday, the weather service said.

Already, farm experts say heavy rain and flooding that inundated wide areas of Texas last week may have swamped some farmers' hopes for their 1987 crops, although other producers and ranchers welcomed the moisture.

Early estimates put the potential for damage to the state's crops as high as \$500 million, said Dr. Zerle Carpenter, director of the Texas Agricultural Extension Service at Texas A&M University.

However, there were hopes that some crops might recover, and Carpenter said the soaking rain should dampen the subsoil

for future production.
Texas Department of Agriculture officials also believe many farmers and ranchers would rather be drenched than face drought conditions, as much of the Southeastern United States did last year.

'They'd rather have moisture in the ground and have it deep," TDA spokesman Andy Welch

"It's also going to do wonders for the livestock producers," he added. "Their stock tanks are going to be full. The pastures are going to be green.

The heaviest losses were expected in South Texas, where more than a foot of rain accumulated over several days and kept farmers from getting to their crops, which were ready for har-

"In the Winter Garden of the state, the San Antonio area, we've had a substantial loss in onion production, simply because farmers were unable to get into the field," Carpenter said.

Carpenter expected other crop losses in the Rolling Plains region around Wichita Falls and Vernon and some damage in the South Plains and High Plains of Texas.

### Prisons to reopen as inmate population dips

will reopen to new arrivals because the inpopulation has dropped below a state-mand limit, a spokesman said Monday.

he doors will open Tuesday at 8 a.m. and ofare expecting to take in about 225 new ins, Texas Department of Corrections spokes-David Nunnelee said.

n Friday, the prison system announced it

inmate population had surpassed a 95 percent of capacity limit. It was the 12th time this year the system had closed because of crowding.

As of midnight Sunday, the inmate population totaled 38,424, or 94.65 percent of capacity — 143 inmates under the 95-percent cap, officials

The inmate population at midnight Thursday

had totaled 38,505 inmates, or 95.18 percent -

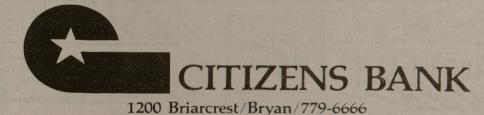
74 over the legal capacity, officials said. The prison system, generally closed on weekends, released 224 inmates on parole Saturday, but it still remained closed on Monday to new ar

The last time the prison department was forced to close its doors because the population exceeded the limit was April 13.

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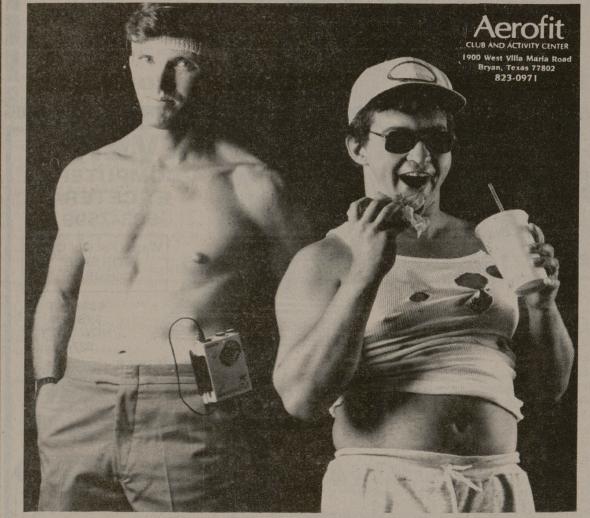
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