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# Officials allow boy to miss Friday class for Moslem sabbath

ARLINGTON (AP) — A father's request for his son to attend Moslem prayer services every Friday has been granted by public school officials who said the decision could affect hundreds of non-Christian students.

Arlington school officials said Shawn Ryan, a Carter Junior High School eighth-grader, will miss physical education classes each Friday, the Moslem sabbath, to attend 1 p.m. prayer services at a local mosque. Other Moslem students who applied for time off may also qualify, officials said.

"We want to do what's right," Jerry McCullough, associate superintendent for administration, said. "And this is a tenet of their faith."

Mohamed Salem, the 14-year-old boy's father, said he was relieved about the decision.

"Now, even Texans are accepting the fact that there are other kinds of people besides Texans," Salem said.

The decision was announced after top school administrators' regular staff meeting Monday morning. School officials said they would con-

sider other Moslem students' requests individually.

Salem began asking for the excused absences three months ago, but Friday was the first time school officials granted his request.

"Certainly, this is the kind of decision that gladdens the heart of a civil libertarian," said Jim Baerwaldt, spokesman for the Texas Civil Liberties Union's greater Fort Worth Chapter.

"And this is the kind of problem that will be faced in a variety of forms as Arlington becomes more culturally diverse. I'm very pleased that the schools have begun talking about this."

Boys who have reached puberty must attend prayers on the sabbath under Islamic law. The Texas Education Code recognizes students' right to miss school for religious reasons.

"In terms of what the law says about religious observances, if it is a tenet of that person's faith that he be absent that day, then that is to be an excused absence," Joey Lozano, Texas Education Agency spokesman, said.

# Committee offers poor property of failed S&Ls

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House Banking Committee voted Tuesday to offer poor people and non-profit groups the first chance to buy houses and apartment buildings owned by failed savings institutions.

As it pushed to finish four days of debate on President Bush's proposed S&L bailout, the panel adopted, 33-18, an amendment offered by Rep. Barney Frank, D-Mass.

The amendment requires the Resolution Trust Corp., the new government agency that will liquidate failed S&Ls, to offer poor people and non-profit groups at least a three-month option to buy low-priced residential properties.

Two Republicans joined the 31 Democrats on the panel in passing the amendment. The eighteen Republicans, opposing it argued that

Frank's proposal would dangerously restrict the government's ability to sell property from failed S&Ls, open the government to lawsuits and eventually add to the taxpayer cost of the bailout.

"Anybody who knows anything about rights of first refusal knows they are incredible impediments," Rep. Jim Leach, R-Iowa, said.

Frank, however, said his plan affected only \$2 billion to \$3 billion of the \$200 billion to \$300 billion in real estate the government will inherit from sick institutions and argued that it was a modest way to channel a few of the benefits of the massive S&L bill to the public.

Bush is proposing to spend \$157 billion over the next decade, the bulk of it from taxpayers, to close or sell more than 500 S&Ls.

# Court verdict opens door to suits against MHMR

AUSTIN (AP) — A jury's award of \$505,000 to a 70-year-old woman who was improperly kept in public mental hospitals for 51 years could open the door to other suits.

The award to Opal Petty followed 16 days of deliberations by a Travis County jury.

Officials said the verdict was significant, not so much because the monetary settlement is large — roughly the equivalent of \$10,000 per year — but because the finding of negligence against the Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation clears the way for similar legal action.

Dennis Garza, an assistant attorney general who defended the state agency, said he will ask the court to set the verdict aside because the judge wouldn't allow testimony that Petty has received state funds to help her resettle.

Although Petty was not available for comment after Monday's verdict, family members expressed delight at the verdict, which came after five weeks of testimony and 16 days of deliberation.

"We're pleased, we're excited," said Petty's niece, Linda Kauffman of San Angelo, who has been in Austin for the trial. "Petty's future is now something we can talk about."

The jury award is "an opportunity for Opal to spend the rest of her life not only meeting her needs but enjoying her life for the first time," Kauffman said.

Petty, committed to Austin State Hospital when she was 16, claimed her liberty was improperly denied because she was held in the hospital, and later at a state school in San Angelo, against her will. She was released in 1985 to a foster home.

Named as defendants were the MHMR department and four agency employees, including former commissioner Dr. Dennis Miller. Miller resigned in March 1988.

The jury in Judge Harley Clark's state District Court ruled that the individual employees were not liable for the damages and named the MHMR staff as the party that treated Petty negligently. It was the first case of its type filed in Texas, according to MHMR officials.

## What's Up

**Wednesday**

**MUSIC PROGRAM/ DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY & HUMANITIES:** will meet at noon in 402 Academic Building for a brown bag concert. Contact Charlotte at 845-3355 for more information.

**EPISCOPAL STUDENT CENTER:** will meet at 6:15 p.m. for Holy Eucharist followed by dinner at the Episcopal Student Center.

**UNITED CAMPUS MINISTRY:** will meet at 6 p.m. for a supper honoring graduating seniors at A&M Presbyterian Church.

**TRIATHLON CLUB:** will meet at 6 p.m. for an end of semester gathering and officer elections at Parkway Circle Apartments Swimming Pool, 401 Southwest Parkway.

**ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS:** will meet at noon. For more information call the C.D.P.E. at 845-0280.

**S.O.T.A. (STUDENTS OVER TRADITIONAL AGE):** will meet at 8 p.m. in 440 Keep Complex. For more information contact Nancy at 845-1741.

**Thursday**

**ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS:** will meet at noon. Call the C.D.P.E. at 845-0280 for more information.

**NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS:** will meet at 8:30 p.m. Call the C.D.P.E. at 845-0280 for more information.

Items for What's Up should be submitted to The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald, no later than three business days before the desired run date. We only publish the name and phone number of the contact if you ask us to do so. What's Up is a Battalion service that lists non-profit events and activities. Submissions are run on a first-come, first-served basis. There is no guarantee an entry will run. If you have questions, call the newsroom at 845-3315.

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\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200
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