

Advocates rally for mental health funds

AUSTIN (AP) — Theresa Wolfe was diagnosed with severe depression when she was eight, after an early childhood scarred by physical and sexual abuse.

"If I could have gotten help back then, I could have become a college graduate instead of doing five-and-dime sorts of work," said Wolfe, 54, who makes and sells ceramics in San Angelo.

Wolfe was one of some 200 health-care advocates, many of whom suffer from mental illness, who rallied at the Capitol Wednesday for increased state funding for a new generation of drugs to treat schizophrenia and depression.

Waving banners and signs that said "New Dollars, New Medications, and New Beginnings," the advocates called on the Texas Legislature to provide \$150 million over the next two years to fund

new medications and community support services.

According to the Mental Health Association in Texas, some 2.8 million people

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— Theresa Wolfe
Health care advocate

ple suffer statewide from a mental illness, including 200,000 who have schizophrenia, also known as multiple personality disorder.

Joe Lovelace, president of the Texas

chapter of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, said that at least 34,000 people could benefit from breakthrough antipsychotic drugs, which have already helped more than 11,700 Texans — including his own son, who has schizophrenia.

"Persons diagnosed with schizophrenia have been banished to the back wards of state hospitals or left to overburdened community facilities," Lovelace said. "It is time to close the gap and at the same time reduce demands on inpatient services, hospitals, law enforcement services and the welfare system."

Lovelace added that after taking some of the new drugs, his son was able to hold a part-time job, rent an apartment and maintain a relationship with his girlfriend.

Judge questions prisoner health care

AUSTIN (AP) — A federal judge has expressed dismay about the medical care that inmates are receiving in prisons across Texas.

Senior U.S. District Judge William Wayne Justice, halfway through a monthlong hearing on prison conditions, acknowledged that inmates seem to be getting good care at prison hospitals and other medical institutions.

But he suggested that follow-up care at prison units is lacking.

The state's system of inmate health care relies heavily upon the services of medical schools based in Galveston and Lubbock.

Echoing the complaints of inmates and their expert witnesses, Justice raised questions about whether prison guards routinely ignore work restrictions for injured convicts.

He also asked why so many inmates turn up with broken jaws, and he wondered whether the system was using older, less effective drugs just to save money.

"A number of (inmate) complaints indicate a large number of facial injuries as a result of prisoners falling with their hands handcuffed behind their backs, sometimes in disturbances with security guards," Justice said.

The judge aired the concerns during his interrogation of Dr. David R. Smith, president of the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center in Lubbock, who also serves as chairman of the State Criminal Justice Managed Health Care Advisory Committee.

"They complain about what happens back at the units," Justice told Smith, adding that "medical orders are not complied with and ignored by officers."

UT pledges more contracts to minority businesses

AUSTIN (AP) — The University of Texas and two state government agencies are pledging to offer more contracting to minority and women-owned businesses.

UT, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice and the Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation have signed a memorandum of co-

operation with two minority business groups.

The memo, signed Tuesday, is with the Texas Mexican-American Chambers of Commerce and the Texas Association of African-American Chambers of Commerce.

Joe Morin, chairman of the Mexican-American chamber, said other agencies have

signed such agreements in the past and that more could be announced this year.

In the agreement, the agencies promised to help make it easier for the businesses to be aware of contracts being put out for bids.

They also agreed to break up large contracts when possible so smaller companies have a

better chance of competing for the work.

Under state law, government agencies are required to make good-faith efforts at contracting with "historically underutilized businesses," or HUBs. Those are defined as businesses owned by ethnic or racial minorities and women.

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FOLEY'S

THIS IS WHERE IT GETS GOOD

Tech patients find methods to cope with pain

LUBBOCK (AP) — That of people is inescapable and unbearable," Bush House, 62, said part of his muscles would cramp so tightly that blood would burst. But for years, as treatments failed, doctors' port is a boost her imagination.

Now, House and others are finding relief at a state university's research center, the Pain Center at Tech Health Sciences Center. Students is as

No drugs. No pain medication, breathing and stretching. House others say the Eastern treatment has succeeded. ditional science failed.

"I still have some pain, much less than I've had several years," House now sure that one day up and the pain will be er. I believe that with and soul."

Pat Randolph, director of Psychological Services, has a day of work ment at the Pain Center.

Randolph's most published in the fall Digest, found that who use meditation, reported improvement 80 percent said their adle stress increased.

No one knows why develop chronic pain say that for many it is safety, which people were DPS office 30.4 percent

Year. Nelson po extra incent ion.

This time said, but mo If new fe both repeat container la Texas would ion in high

poor San Antonio schools. That am 80 million day against starting program.

"Vouchers are not said Dolores Munoz, sident of schools for the Independent School District wood led the landmark over public school financing

Last year, the district by the private, non-pro Foundation for a 10-year lion plan to provide post money to attend private

Munoz said so far, 700 have left taking with the lion in state funding.

"That \$4 million gone to teacher training, supplies," she said.

Under a pilot program considered by lawmakers 20,000 Texas public students who are low-income have failed the state skills test could get taxped vouchers to attend school.

"After 50 years of deal the public school system ing to do something about the Legislature," said Ang spokeswoman of the San Parents for School Choice

Gov. George W. Bush vouchers one of his top this session and has support lot program that would students in low-performing transfer to private ones.

Elsewhere:

MOVING QUICKLY

A bill to give a \$45 million porary tax break to smaducers won the endorsement Senate Finance Committee proved without opposition heads to the full Senate quick action also is expected

LOWER SALES

Lottery officials did vince Sen. Bill Ratliff and ate Finance Committee of to undo a reduction in prouts approved in 1997. Officials said Texas will less than \$5 billion in ticket sales next five years unless law pump up prizes on slot games. Responded Ratliff. Pleasant: "If they sell less there are fewer people who made a bad investment."

Sen. Jane

Sen. Richard

Sen. Richard

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