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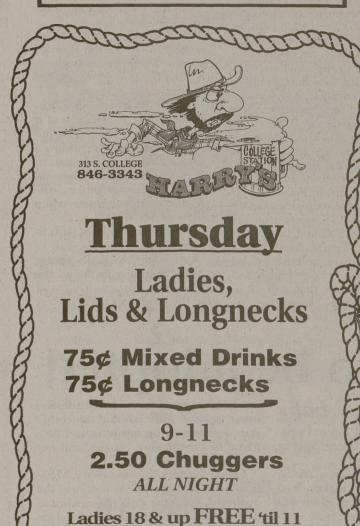
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GIRL

Continued from Page 1

\$100,000 bond on a charge of injury to a child. The stepfather, Kenneth Ray Atkinson, 33, is being held without bond because of an outstanding warrant for probation violation and theft from Ellis County. He also is charged with injury to a child.

'The child abuse charges carry a penalty of up to life in prison, police said. Lauren was locked in a mobile home closet for at least four months, but the years, they said.

The child's siblings told investigators that Lauren was often locked in the closet for "eating too much and running

The girl has the communication skills of a 3-year-old, according to court documents filed Tuesday seeking to remove the children from the home in Hutchins, a suburb southeast of Dallas. Police said Lauren thinks she is 2 years old and did not know what a sun and a television were.

The five other children in the home are in two foster homes under temporary CPS custody.

Police said Kenneth Atkinson told a neighbor at the Pebble Creek Mobile Home Park about the girl Monday evening. The neighbor, a volunteer firefighter, went to the fire station and contacted police.

When police arrived, Atkin-

son was feeding Lauren spaghetti and was arrested. The girl's mother was arrested when she returned home around 2 a.m. Tuesday.

Meisner said the family had been reported to Child Protective Services at least twice before, in 1995 while they were living in Jasper County, and in 1996 while living in Wood County. In both cases, the family moved before CPS could investigate and remained undetected until this week, she said.

"We had very little information as to who these parents were ner said. In one of those cases, an unidentified child was reportedly being kept tied to a bed.

Police said they did not know if Lauren, or the other children, had ever attended school. Police had been called to the Hutchins home several days earlier to investigate an unrelated child welfare case involving a neighbor family, but saw no signs of her. Both parents expressed re-

morse to police.

"They were very upset. They knew what they were doing was wrong," said Hutchins Police Chief Gregory Griffin. "The mother wanted something done but didn't take the opportunity to do so. His (stepfather's) conscience got the best of him."

The stepfather told authorities he had feared that the mother would take the children away from him.

The five other children are boys ages 23 months and 3 years; and girls ages 5, 6 and 10.

At least the two youngest children were fathered by Atkinson, police said.

CPS investigators were trying Wednesday to locate Lauren's biological father. Lauren and the other children eventually could be placed in the custody of relatives, Meisner said. CPS has received hundreds of phone calls from concerned citizens asking to help the children.

She said the other children were doing well, although the two youngest were especially distraught about being away from their mother.

"Whether they were or not, they have been traumatized and will be traumatized for years to come," she said.

CPS investigators will videotape interviews with the children and talk more with Lauren when her medical condition improves, Meisner said.

A doctor at Children's Medical Center said that if Lauren has some communications skills, the abuse likely did not start at infancy and the girl has a better chance at a fuller recovery

Children abused during their first three years, when 90 percent of the brain develops, often face irreversible cognitive damage and below average intelligence, said Janet Squires, a doctor specializing in abuse cases.

Lauren also faces social ineptitude, difficulty feeling sympathy and being able to trust.

"These kids are probably never going to be as functional and bright as they could have been," Squires said.

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BUSES

Continued from Page

With hopes of helping the of bus traffic and avoiding of gestion at the construction and Bus Operations has reopened passage way from A.P. Ber Health Center to Sbisa Dini next to Fish Pond for the bus

Besides the mall shuttle this fall, we will also be providing a van shuttle service to take students to various places from the mall, movie theater, stores and restaurants."

> Gary Jackson Bus Operation

this summer and next year. Ja son hopes that they will be able install a type of gate systemath passageway in order to keep a from going in and out, prevent possible accidents.

In addition to the new route a new bus will be running fall from campus to Post (Mall. Three buses will be all ted for this particular route.

"Besides the mall shuttlet fall, we will also be providing and shuttle service to take students various places from the ma movie theater, stores and rest rants." Jackson said. "This sem will be available Thursday, Frid and Saturday from 6:30 to 2 am



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THE BATTALION

Jeff Kempf, Editor in Chief

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