

THURSDAY
June 21, 2001
Volume 107 - Issue 159
6 pages

News in Brief
State

Officials add Grimes Co. to disaster list

Tropical Storm Allison cut a swath through Texas in recent weeks, but central Texas and the Brazos Valley were largely damaged.

However, the extensive storm damage sustained by Grimes County resulted in its recently being added to the list of communities eligible for federal disaster assistance.

Federal emergency management agency officials say Grimes County was added to the list based on their review of information on the damage gathered by federal disaster recovery officials.

The government aid will come in the form of temporary housing, low interest loans for individuals and businesses to make property repairs, unemployment assistance and grants for expenses caused by the storm but not met by other programs.

Residents who wish to seek disaster assistance can apply by calling 1-800-462-9029.

Applicants should have their address at the time of the disaster, current address, social security number, a list of damages and their current phone number on hand when calling.

Storage facility gets burglarized Sunday

The Bryan Police Department is seeking the public's help in the investigation of a burglary at a self-storage facility.

The crime occurred between Sunday night and Monday morning, when someone broke into AA Self Storage in the 1000 block of Stewart Street in Bryan.

Some of the stolen property was recovered near the facility, but it is not yet clear how much property was taken.

Exact figures will not be available until the completion of an inventory of the facility. Anyone with information on the burglary can contact the Bryan Police Department at 979-5301.

Former investigator indicted for theft

The Texas coastline is eroding at an astounding rate, but there is hope that a solution to the problem will be found in the near future, according to a Texas A&M researcher.

Tom Ravens, a researcher at Texas A&M-Galveston is studying the results of dredging along the rollover bay near the barrier peninsula.

Some Texas beaches are eroding at the rate of 10 feet a year, Ravens says, which has led to the destruction of beach front property.

Ravens is studying the effect of the dredging, and trying to find out if depositing sand on beaches can create a more efficient barrier to erosion.

Cooking class



Chef Mike Chonyak, chef at the Faculty Club, instructs at-risk youths from the Academy Rehabilitation Motivation for Youth (A.R.M.Y.) boot camp. Chef Mike has been running the program for four years every summer.

JP BEATO/THE BATTALION

Police suspect woman of drowning her five children

HOUSTON (AP) — A woman who was said to be on medication for depression was arrested Wednesday on suspicion of drowning her five children, ages 6 months to 7 years, in the bathtub.

The 36-year-old woman, whose name was not immediately released, had called police to her home and was wet when she answered the door, police said.

"When our responding officer arrived, he was met at the door by the woman, who was breathing heavily, and you could tell she was disturbed," police spokesman John Cannon said.

"At that time she said to the officer, 'I killed my children,'" Cannon said the officer asked where the children were and was led on a grisly tour. Found under a sheet on a bed were Mary Yates, 6 months, and three of her brothers, Luke, 2; Paul, 3; and John, 5.

The fifth child, Noah, 7, was in the bathtub.

"It is just rather unimaginable," Cannon said. "It's difficult to deal with when you are talking about five little kids who were killed, probably systematically."

Authorities believe the children died from being drowned one by one, though the cause of death would not formally be known until after autopsies were conducted.

Police gave no motive for the slayings, but the woman's husband told police she had been on medication to treat postpartum depression for the past two years, since the birth of their fourth child, Luke.

Judy Hay, a spokeswoman for Children's Protective Services, said records indicate the woman attempted suicide two years ago, on June 18, 1999. Five days later, CPS was called.

See DROWNING on Page 2.

Energy is not a concern in Texas

Officials say state can meet demand

AUSTIN (AP) — With demand for electricity rising like the temperature in the hot summer months, Texas should have plenty of energy to cool off, state officials said Wednesday.

Rising electric bills, however, could make residents a little hot under the collar.

With summer's official start on Thursday, Public Utility Commission officials said Texas should have plenty of electricity to meet the demand for air conditioning.

The summer peak demand is expected to hit about 67,000 megawatts, well below the statewide capacity of 83,000 megawatts.

Public Utility Commissioner Brett Perlman pointed to the 50 new plants built or under construction since 1995 as a major factor in meeting demand.

"We're in good shape because we have plenty of supply," Perlman said.

Texans will likely pay higher electric bills this summer, however.

Electricity bills are expected to increase because of the higher cost of natural gas, which makes up 45 percent of the fuel used to generate electricity in Texas.

State law allows utilities to pass along higher fuel costs to customers as long as the utility does not make an additional profit.

Utilities surveyed by the PUC predict a typical household electric bill will increase by about 18 percent.

See ENERGY on Page 2.

Mother of 8-year-old gives up her rights

DALLAS (AP) — The mother of an 8-year-old girl locked in a closet and starved near death has agreed to relinquish her parental rights so that the girl can be placed with the East Texas couple that tried to adopt her at birth.

Barbara Atkinson's attorney issued a statement Wednesday that Atkinson would voluntarily give up her parental rights for daughter Lauren in favor of Bill and Sabrina Kavanaugh of Canton, if approved by Judge Cheryl Lee Shannon and Child Protective Services.

Authorities said the girl was imprisoned in a urine- and feces-contaminated closet for at least four months in Atkinson's home, located south of Dallas in Hutchins. Police also are investigating evidence that the girl — who weighed only 25 pounds — was sexually abused.

The Kavanaughs had custody of the girl but had lost a chance to adopt her after Atkinson changed her mind and wanted the baby back after birth. They have planned to attend Tuesday's hearing and ask for custody of the girl.

Barbara Atkinson and the girl's stepfather, Kenneth Ray Atkinson, were arrested last week on charges of injury to a child, a felony that carries a prison term from five to 99 years.

The Kavanaughs could not be reached for comment Wednesday but their attorney said they were "ecstatic."

"It's the right move," David Cole told Dallas-Fort Worth television station KDFW. "I'm hopeful that she (Atkinson) has had the time for reflection."

Cole said the Kavanaughs can provide the

See CLOSET on Page 2.

'Aggie Angels' reach out

Elizabeth Raines
The Battalion

Minnie Olivarez is a night shift custodian in the Langford Architecture Building, where she cleans the hallways and the bathrooms for Aggies who usually come and go without taking much notice of her.

But one night that changed when a student she calls her "Aggie Angel" chose to care.

"I have had a very strenuous and troubling last three years and I was working at the Langford Architecture Building when Amy Schepens, a student here at A&M, could tell I needed someone to talk to," Olivarez said.

"She talked to me, said a prayer with me and gave me a very sincere hug and her phone number. It was just what I needed to get me through the night, and every time I saw her after that we would hug and say a prayer together."

Olivarez, a single mother with four children, began to rely on her meetings with Schepens, a junior interdisciplinary major, to help her through tough days.

"One night after my car broke down and I had no where else to turn, I called Amy for someone to talk to," Schepens said. "She asked me where I lived and showed up at my house an hour later with a bag of groceries and a Bible with an envelope in the back with a \$100."

Olivarez said that \$100 Amy and her roommate gave her fixed her car and gave her hope.

"I read the Bible they gave me everyday and I tell people my car is held together by a prayer-aid," Olivarez said. "They were very sincere ladies and they gave me a light when it was very dark."

Olivarez, who is in a Twin Cities

Night custodian gets help, faith from students

Mission program, said she was thankful for the support the two girls gave her and could not believe how much they helped her even though they had not known for very long.

Olivarez's "Aggie Angels" are not the only Aggies who support the Twin Cities Mission. In fact, Ron Crozier,

director of community relations for Twin Cities Mission, said the Mission would not survive without help from A&M students and faculty.

"The biggest eye opener I have had since I have been here is the amount of support we get from the Aggies," Crozier said. "Most of the students who volunteer for us live out of town — yet while they are here, they make a difference in lives of the people that live here."

Crozier said Twin Cities Missions

See ANGELS on Page 2.

To my angels with wings:

Late one night,
I was all alone, lost spiritually
But yet in the auditorium I cleaned,
There was a bright light that came to me
From the Lord,
Guided, from the Lord's guided hand,
She sat, she listened, she prayed,
And soon there was another bright light
That made it two,
Two Aggies with my Lord, my God
Leading them to hold my hand
And brighten my path,
To rekindle my faith, and restrengthen
my strength,
In the short time I have known these two
Aggies,
They have been there for me and my four
children,
So with a lot of love, from all my heart,
Amy and Summer, my two angels with
wings:
God bless you and keep you,
Just a small prayer for you, day to day,
Lord hear our prayers,
Love my Aggies with wings.

Minnie Olivarez

INSIDE

Aggielife
• Teachers leave families, home to earn doctorates in education

Opinion
• Sex and the rural college town: Is casual sex too casual

Battalion News Radio:
57 p.m. KAMU 90.9
www.thebatt.com

ay, June 20, 2001
TV
they will get
conducted
71 percent
they favored
ads on TV
ose people
an at any
should be
t night
ound that
espondents
ds on TV
er advertising
h indicates
as at some
mpact of
be outdated
ed 1,142
telephone
22. The man
cent.
vsuit
sent
to grant
licit exemp
minors, he
er conditions
states were
ed because
es to grant
erwise failed
according to
Center for
ck Policy, w
ic.
ge Terry C.
ring whether
tutional and
k. He must
from defen
whether the
proper venue
can sue on
S
CLU
S
S
8 PM
TIL
CLOSE
AYS
S
ST
AY
ECKS
ABGE
694-0011