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Texas receives \$33 million to prepare for bioterrorism

By Shawn Millender
THE BATTALION

As a part of a \$498 million grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to hospitals nationwide, Texas hospitals will receive over \$33 million to better prepare for the threat of bioterror attacks.

"These grants are an important addition to national security because hospitals play such a critical role in identifying and responding to a terrorist attack," said HHS secretary Tommy G. Thompson.

Thompson said that the grant money will be used to improve emergency care throughout the nation. "States and communities can use these funds to improve emergency care in any health crisis, whether the source is a bioterror attack or other infectious disease outbreaks like SARS or West Nile Virus, or any natural disaster like a flood or a hurricane," Thompson said.

Texas will receive \$33,338,368, about 7 percent of the grant money. The amount is second only to California, who will receive \$38,773,727.

Don Stewart, communications director for Texas senator John Cornyn, said the money is going to be used for several things.

"It will be distributed through the state to our hospitals to purchase equipment and in some cases pharmaceuticals to prepare for bioterror attacks, outbreaks, national disasters, anything that causes a high number of casualties," said Stewart. "It's very wide-ranging."

Texas had four areas recognized by the Department of Homeland Security as possible targets in a separate urban threat initiative in 2003, Stewart said. These areas were San Antonio, Dallas, Houston and Houston's METRORail system.

"Biological weapons are useless in isolated areas, so highly concentrated areas are most at risk for attack," Stewart said.

Rabbi Peter Tarlow, Ph. D., executive director of the Texas A&M Hillel Foundation, is an authority on the impacts of terrorism on tourism. He has served as security adviser to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation since 1998.

STATES RECEIVE MONEY TO PREPARE FOR BIOTERRORISM

States and some major metropolitan areas were awarded \$498 million to help hospitals around the nation to better prepare for bioterrorism.

| State | Grant Money |
|------------------|--------------|
| California | \$38,773,727 |
| Texas | \$33,338,368 |
| Pennsylvania | \$19,616,500 |
| New York | \$18,019,800 |
| Washington, D.C. | \$2,868,300 |

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SOURCE: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

"Any place that has economic value, high value, military value or mass gatherings of people is open for attack," said Tarlow.

Tarlow said there isn't enough money to effectively combat terrorism alone and money is only help to creative thinkers who can find an effective solution to a problem.

"Money can only go so far without good thinking and this money will provide us a way to buy what money is a means to an end," Tarlow said.

Stewart said that the United States can never be fully prepared for an attack.

"We've increased funding by hundreds of millions of dollars and staff by hundreds of thousands, and right now we are far better prepared than we were for 9/11," Stewart said.

He said that the United States will gain experience and knowledge of the terrorist issue with time.

"We're going to be better prepared next year and better the year after that now that we know it is an asymmetrical war, not just an army marching up the coast," Stewart said. "We know an attack could come from any direction, at any time."

'Avenue Q' wins Tony for best musical

By Michael Kuchwara
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — "Avenue Q," a cheeky little musical that uses puppets, four-letter words and catchy, jinglelike tunes, was the upset winner Sunday at the Tonys where history was made as Phylicia Rashad became the first black actress to win for a leading dramatic role.

"I Am My Own Wife," Doug Wright's gender-bending tale of survival, was named best play.

"Avenue Q" also received Tonys for the best book and score in beating out "Wicked," the lavish "Wizard of Oz" prequel for the top musical prize.

"It certainly doesn't suck to be us tonight," enthused Robyn Goodman, one of the musical's surprised, yet overjoyed producers.

Rashad's acceptance speech was more composed.

"Often I've wondered what does it take for this to happen," said the actress, who received

the prize for her portrayal of Lena Younger, the tough-minded matriarch in a revival of "A Raisin in the Sun."

"And now I know. It takes effort and grace ... And in my life that grace has taken numerous forms. The first was the family into which I was born, parents who loved and wanted me, and a mother who fought fearlessly, courageously, consistently so that her children above all else could realize their full potential as human beings."

Jefferson Mays bested the much better known competition to take the top acting prize for his portrayal of a German transvestite — and some 40 other characters — in Wright's "I Am My Own Wife," a role he called "a labor of love."

"Our entire cast just won Tony Awards," joked Wright in accepting the best-play honor.

"When we started writing 'Avenue Q,' Jeff was an intern and I was a temp," said one of the songwriters, Robert Lopez. "Our lives kinda sucked so we

came up with an idea for a show about people like us whose lives all kinda suck."

"But we're here to tell you as living proof that things get better. L and Carol just gave us the Tony Award," said an exuberant Jeff Marx after Carol Channing and LL Cool J gave them the prize.

Just before announcing the award, the Broadway legend and rapper did a duet that had the audience roaring.

Hugh Jackman, besides serving as host of awards program, won the actor-musical prize for portraying flamboyant entertainer in "The Boy From Oz."

"Peter, it's an honor to play

said, "The only thing I've ever wanted to do was be Broadway." She thanked her cast, her family and said, "It belongs to Lorraine Hansberry, the play's author."

Anika Noni Rose won the featured-actress prize for her role as the defiant daughter "Caroline, or Change."

"Wicked," a lavish look at the "Wizard of Oz" witches, was celebrated for its spectacle, picked up two design prizes: Eugene Lee for his gargantuan sets for the \$10 million musical, and Susan Hilferty for the ornate costumes. And Idina Menzel won for being acting actress in a musical.

Jack O'Brien received the director/playwright award, Lincoln Center Theater's limited engagement Shakespeare "Henry IV" which also won for best revival.

"I was convinced," talked myself out of this repeating mantra, "We're classic and we closed," said O'Brien, who directed the year's Tony-winning musical "Hairspray."

The regional theater award was presented to the Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park. James Nederlander, patriarch of the family which operates many Broadway theaters, was awarded a lifetime achievement prize.

It was a busy year with productions opening on Broadway during the 2003-2004 season, compared to 36 shows the previous 12 months. Gross were up, too, from \$721 million to \$771 million, but so were ticket prices. Attendance reached 11.61 million, an increase from 11.42 million year ago, but still not as high as the 11.89 million during the season before the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

If there was no universally acclaimed, megamusical such as "The Producers" or "Hairspray," there were several high-profile successes. Besides "Wicked," audiences flocked to the revival of "A Raisin in the Sun," with hip-hop mogul Jay-Z and Combs the main box-office draw.

58TH ANNUAL TONY AWARDS

"I Am My Own Wife" wins best play

Phylicia Rashad became the first black actress to win the Tony award for a leading dramatic role.

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|---|---|
| Best Play "I Am My Own Wife" | Best Musical "Avenue Q" |
| Best Revival of a Play "Henry IV" | Best Revival of a Musical "Assassins" |
| Best Actor in a Play Jefferson Mays, "I Am My Own Wife" | Best Actor in a Musical Hugh Jackman, "The Boy from Oz" |
| Best Actress in a Play Phylicia Rashad, "A Raisin in the Sun" | Best Actress in a Musical Idina Menzel, "Wicked" |

SOURCE: League of American Theatres and Producers and the American Theatre Wing



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