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| 'FIGHT CLUB' Arrests expected this week in Corpus state school fight case; Perry aide visits school. ■ B3



W. GARDNER SELBY

Capitol shows ongoing devotion to displays of faith

In any legislative session, you never know where a moment might lead.

So it was for me after a prayer breakfast the other day where Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst recited Scripture, House Speaker Joe Straus read from the Old Testament and Gov. Rick Perry playfully blew air kisses to the president of the Texas Association of Business.

Perry also said: "It's important for us to acknowledge our need for God every hour."

God can seem draped over the Texas Capitol. Each House and Senate floor session opens with a prayer. Two years ago, lawmakers placed "under God" into the Texas pledge of allegiance. And leaders often repeat the late Bob Bullock's "God bless Texas."

Maybe there's too much holy invoking, making leaders seem like they're bowing their heads in the same dutiful way they sort e-mail.

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AUSTIN ■ ARRESTS

Husband of murder case suspect called police in July

By Tony Plohetski

AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

A woman accused of killing 21-year-old Christy Lynne Espinosa and setting fire to her body last month was charged in July with threatening to stab her husband with a chef's knife and a pair of scissors, according to court documents.

Kenneth Hernandez, 33, who also is charged in Espinosa's death, sought a restraining order against his wife after the incident last year.

Court records obtained Wednesday said that on July 8, Martha Medina-Hernandez, 26, became angry and began breaking items in their apartment after Kenneth Hernandez accused her of cheating on him.

An arrest affidavit said Medina-Hernandez

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Read the police affidavit on aggravated assault for Martha Medina-Hernandez and an affidavit on the murder charges with this story online.



Christy Lynne Espinosa

CENTRAL TEXAS ■ COMPUTER MAKERS

Dell to cut jobs in area, world

Company may let hundreds go; no word on number in Central Texas

By Dan Zehr

AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

Dell Inc. says it plans to cut \$4 billion in annual costs in a variety of ways. But so far, most of its savings have come through one process: layoffs.

The latest cut came to light Wednesday, when the

company confirmed that it would eliminate jobs this week around the globe. The layoffs will include positions in Central Texas, Winston-Salem, N.C., and at two facilities in the Nashville, Tenn., area, the company said.

David Frink, a Dell spokesman, declined to provide numbers for specific locations, but sources within the company said the cuts would number in the hundreds.

"The layoffs are not about individual performance," Frink said. "The layoffs are about the company's need to reduce costs."

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► BUSINESS INSIDE, B5-7

Jobless rise

U.S. map shows more states rising above 10 percent threshold on unemployment rolls

AUSTIN ■ WEATHER



Laura Skelding AMERICAN-STATESMAN

Nature imitates art

Rain fell on Central Texas on Wednesday, and there were smiles all around. On the University of Texas campus, Laurel Richards, left, and Beth Andrews squeezed underneath

Richards' umbrella. There's an 80 percent chance of rain today, according to forecasters, and temperatures are expected to be in the 40s. More weather, **back page**.

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weather

Get forecast updates online.

TEXAS LEGISLATURE ■ YOUTH COMMISSION

Lawmakers eyeing Travis plan for juveniles

Proposal among many being considered to change agency

By Bob Banta and Mike Ward

AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

Legislators are studying proposals from Travis and other counties to save the state money by sending fewer young offenders to Texas Youth Commission facilities.

Although some lawmakers warn against di-

verting too much money from Youth Commission activities, Travis County's plan is part of a trend, sparked two years ago by sweeping reforms at the scandal-plagued agency that were designed to remove youths from remote state-run lockups and place them in community-based treatment programs closer to their families.

So far, Travis, Dallas and a group of 22 Southeast Texas counties have proposed pilot programs to do that — for far less than the nearly \$99,000 per year that it costs to keep a youth locked up with the agency. Others counties are consider-

ing similar plans.

Under the concept, only juveniles convicted of serious crimes would be sent to the agency. In return, the state would reimburse the counties for each juvenile who is incarcerated and rehabilitated locally.

Youths would have a stronger network of rehabilitative support closer to home than in one of the agency's remote facilities, said Jeanne Meurer, legal management director for Travis

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SAN MARCOS

Years-old forgery investigation of ACC petition dies

By Andrea Lorenz

AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

SAN MARCOS — An investigation into allegations of forgery on a 2006 petition to bring San Marcos into the Austin Community College taxing district has fizzled, even though Hays County officials at the time predicted felony charges within a couple of months.

State prosecutors in June filed a misdemeanor charge of possessing forged documents against political consultant Mark Littlefield, who was hired by the 12-member San Marcos ACC/Yes! coalition committee to organize the collection of signatures. Prosecutors dropped the charge last month.

A spokesman for the attorney general's office, which oversaw the investigation, said in an e-mailed statement that Littlefield accepted a pre-trial diversion and agreed to comply with unspecified terms. "Since then, the defendant satisfied the terms of that agreement," spokesman Jerry Strickland said. The office would not comment further, except to say the case was closed.

Hays County District Attorney Sherri Tibbe declined to comment.

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AUSTIN ■ MEMORIAL



Laura Skelding AMERICAN-STATESMAN

Saying goodbye to a fellow officer

Austin police officers paid tribute Wednesday to Sgt. Kenny Wilson, who died of esophageal cancer Friday. Wilson, a 29-year veteran of the Austin Police Department who was honored last week with the department's Distinguished Command Medal, was buried at Cook-Walden/Capital Parks Cemetery in Pflugerville.

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See more photos from the funeral.

AUSTIN ■ EDUCATION

Forgione accepts job that will focus on testing reform

By Laura Heinauer

AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

Austin school district Superintendent Pat Forgione is taking a job at Educational Testing Service, a post that will put him at the forefront of school testing reform nationally, after his retirement from the school district in June, the company announced Wednesday.

Forgione, who said he plans to stay in Austin, will be a distinguished presidential scholar at ETS. He also will serve as executive director of the Princeton, N.J.-based nonprofit organization's new Center on K-12 Assessment and Performance Management.

The center will focus on improving student testing and systems for managing education data, Forgione said. Before coming to Austin, he worked on similar programs in Washington, D.C., and Connecticut.

"I'm not impressed with the current state of K-12 testing in America," Forgione said. The ETS job is "kind of going back to a passion I had. ... I'll be popping up in seminars and in



Pat Forgione

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