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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

RECREATION CENTER OPEN HOUSE:

The Midway Recreation Center will have an open house from 9 a.m. to noon Saturday at the center, 300 Midway Drive in Euless. Attendees can enjoy a free day of fitness. Instructors will answer questions and teach free 15-minute classes. Tarrant County Public Health will offer an interactive "Move and Groove" class along with public health screenings.

CHRISTMAS TREE RECYCLING EVENT:

The city of Euless will have its 18th annual Christmas tree recycling event from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Jan. 13 at Midway Park, 300 Midway Drive. The event will include a tree mulching demonstration, and bags of mulch and tree saplings will be given away to the public. The city uses the mulch to maintain city parks and medians. Residents may bring their own bag to fill with mulch for their gardens or flowers. Limit one bag per person. Residents may dispose of live Christmas trees only (with no ornaments or lights) at the designated area of Midway Park through Jan. 13. For information, call 817-685-1650.

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Cheers & Jeers

Jeers: To the Eules City Council for adopting an ordinance that permits the municipal golf course and softball facilities to be charged only 50 cents per 1,000 gallons of water used (300 million gallons the past two years). Residents are charged \$2.80 per 1,000 gallons.

George Moore, Eules

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NORTHEAST TARRANT & AREA BRIEFS

Business evacuated by firefighters

EULESS - Firefighters evacuated a business Friday afternoon after an employee discovered what authorities say looked like an artillery shell near a parking lot. No one was injured in the incident, which happened about 12:50 p.m. at Simtek Inc. in the 1500 block of Royal Parkway. An employee had discovered the object several days ago and left it near the parking lot but never reported it. Another employee found it Friday and called authorities. "There was no history at that location for a shell to be there," Eulesse fire investigator Vernon Gilmore said. At first, members of the Northeast Explosive Response Team used a robot to try to retrieve the object, but it was too heavy, authorities said. A member of the team then placed the object in a container. Authorities said they could not determine whether the object is a shell. It was to be examined by the Army, a fire official said.

- Domingo Ramirez Jr.

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A clash over ritual sacrifice

Santeria leader fights Eulesss ban on killing of animals as affront to faith

By MICHAEL GRABELL
Staff Writer

EULESS — The room was set up with benches and shrines, the herbs, dried coconuts and eggshell chalk laid out on a table. With the preparations done, 10 church members sat by the pool behind the red-brick home on the cul-de-sac and drank beer.

The next day, they would sacrifice a chicken to initiate a new member, using the energy in its blood to communicate with the spirits, known as orishas.

But then Eulesss police knocked on the door.

The officers explained to the priest, Jose Merced, that killing animals of any kind is illegal within the



CHERYL DIAZ MEYER/Staff Photographer

Santeria priest Jose Merced has filed a federal discrimination lawsuit against Eulesss, seeking to sacrifice animals in his rites.

city limits. And Mr. Merced tried unsuccessfully to explain that animal sacrifice is as essential to his religion, Santeria, as the Eucharist is to Catholicism.

Now, Mr. Merced has filed a federal discrimination lawsuit against the city, thrusting the African-

Caribbean religion and the quiet suburb into the spotlight. And Mr. Merced has a U.S. Supreme Court case supporting Santeria animal sacrifice, indicating that Eulesss might have to compromise.

"It appears that city officials are either deliberately defying the Supreme Court justices on this ruling or they're simply confused," said Ernesto Pichardo, head of the Santeria religion in the U.S. and the plaintiff in the 1993 Supreme Court case.

Eulesss officials declined to present their side of the story, saying they wouldn't comment on their dispute with Mr. Merced, the intentions of their ordinance or the Supreme Court case because of the pending lawsuit.

The city's code says the law against slaughtering animals is intended to promote "the health, safety, morals and general welfare of the city," "to protect property values" and "to enhance the quality of life of persons, pets and other animals."

The dispute has left many residents in the Dallas-Fort Worth area wondering: What is Santeria? How did it get to Eulesss? And where do you draw the line between religious tolerance and a community's right to ban the killing of animals?

Long path to U.S.

Santeria, also known as Lukumi, originated among the Yoruba people in southwestern Nigeria thousands of years ago and came to the Caribbean through the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

It arrived in South Florida during the Cuban exodus of the 1960s. High priests, or obas, like Mr. Pichardo estimate that there are 3 million to 4 million followers in the U.S.

"This is not drinking blood, and we don't sacrifice children," Mr. Pichardo said. "It is an African religion that has its own central dogma, its own bible. It is a pre-Christian religion. It has its own ceremonies. It has its own rituals."

But like other African religions that followed the slave trade, such as voodoo and macumba, the practice of Santeria takes place outside the public eye, through home worship instead of in a central temple.

"We don't do it in a church because due to the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the diaspora, they totally pulverized those kinds of religious and social structures," Mr. Pichardo said.

Believers in Santeria came to Eulesss for the same reason many others did — its proximity to Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport and higher-paying jobs with the airlines.

Mr. Merced arrived from Puerto Rico in 1990. He says at least four other Santeria families live in Eulesss, and he estimates that there could be as many as 6,000 followers in North Texas.

"There's some in Bedford and there's some in Hurst, and some are in Fort Worth," Mr. Merced said. "They're everywhere. They're just scared of getting in trouble."

The complaints started after he became the only Santeria oba in the region in 1999 and started performing rituals and holding gatherings at his house. Neighbors began complaining to police about cars blocking driveways, loud chanting, animal cries and smells.

There have been many ceremonies at the house, but Mr. Merced says he's conducted just two animal sacrifices in the area, using chickens and goats.

The offerings are an essential part of the religion, considered so sacred that Santeria would cease to exist without them. Santeria teaches that the orisha spirits, which emanated from God, can manifest themselves only through the energy contained in blood, which opens a channel of direct communication with the orishas.

The blood is also an essential part of what makes a priest a priest.

"If you were to remove animal offerings from ordination rites, [Santeria] would not have priests," Mr. Pichardo said.

"Can we remove the ritual symbolic cannibalistic act of drinking wine as Jesus Christ's blood?" he asked. "You do that, you do not have the ability of conducting a Christian Mass."

After the ritual, the animals are cleaned, cooked in a stew and eaten during a feast.

Diversity in Eulesss

Eulesss isn't some hayseed Po-dunk, ignorant of other cultures. This is a town that rallies around its high school football team's

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ANIMAL SACRIFICE IN WORLD RELIGIONS

Animal sacrifice has been used in nearly all the world's major religions at some time.

■ The Old Testament is rife with references to the sacrifice of rams. Jews abandoned the ritual after the temple where sacrifices were performed was destroyed. The Torah commands that sacrifices must be done in a place commanded by God, and no sacrifice can take place until a new one is designated.

■ Many Muslims commemorate the end of the Hajj by sacrificing a sheep in

honor of Abraham's willingness to slay his son at God's commandment and God's providing of a ram instead. The holiday, known as Eid al-Adha, was celebrated last week.

■ In Christianity, the crucifixion of Jesus replaced animal sacrifice under the belief that Jesus was the Lamb of God and his ultimate sacrifice redeemed the world of its sins. This sacrifice is commemorated in Mass with the sacrament of the wafer and wine.

dancing of the haka — a Polynesian war dance that involves chanting, chest-thumping and tongue-flailing.

The city of about 50,000 people has one of the highest concentrations of Tongans in the U.S. and a large percentage of Mexican immigrants. Almost 40 languages are spoken in its elementary schools.

"We are not narrow-minded, and we certainly are not insensitive to other cultures," said Betty Fuller, whose husband is related to the town's founders who migrated to Texas after the Civil War.

Ms. Fuller lives four houses down from the house where Mr.

Merced performs the Santeria rituals. She said she believes they're entitled to their religious beliefs but shouldn't be sacrificing animals in a neighborhood. Years ago, her husband's ancestors slaughtered pigs and chickens for food on the very same land.

"You would wring a chicken's neck and have it for Sunday dinner, and that was perfectly fine," Ms. Fuller said. "That was back in the '30s and '40s, when there were only 200 people living in Euleus.

"This is not out-in-the-country Euleus anymore."

Legal debate

After the police confronted him last May, Mr. Merced brought another Santeria priest from Puerto Rico to meet with city officials.

He said the sacrifice is done humanely with a single puncturing of the carotid artery with a 4-inch knife. After cooking, the remains are thrown in the trash.

"If you go to a store and buy a rotisserie chicken, you eat the meat, where do you put the bones?" Mr. Merced asked. "Does Kentucky Fried Chicken have a special place to put the bones?"

But city officials again told him that any killing of animals was prohibited.

Mr. Pichardo, the head priest in the U.S., has been down this road before. In 1992, he went before the Supreme Court to challenge an ordinance in Hialeah, Fla., prohibit-

ing the sacrifice of animals but making exceptions for other killings, such as fishing, hunting and the euthanasia of pets.

With all nine justices concurring, the Supreme Court ruled that the law was "gerrymandered" to target Santeria.

Mr. Pichardo said Mr. Merced's lawsuit involving Santeria animal sacrifice is the first he's aware of since the high court decision.

But that ruling may not provide a clear victory for Mr. Merced, religious law experts said. Euleus' ordinance has been on the books since 1974 and wasn't created in response to Santeria followers.

Kelly Shackelford, head of the Plano-based Liberty Legal Institute, said the suit would probably come down to whether the city enforces its ban with no exceptions.

"If in the city, you literally cannot kill animals for any reason, you can't kill them," he said. "But if they allow any other exemption for the killing of animals, then they're dead on arrival."

Euleus' ordinance does make exceptions for rodent control. It also says the city can kill any animal that has rabies or attacks another animal or person.

But the city also allows animals to be euthanized at the local shelter for other reasons.

And large gatherings around the cooking of livestock are not that uncommon in Euleus.

Since immigrating to Euleus in the early 1980s, the Tongans have celebrated holidays by roasting pigs in a tradition similar to Hawaiian luaus.

The festivals by members of the Tongan First United Methodist Church on Main Street sometimes involve as many as 15 pigs, said the Rev. Alex Latu. Because few people have freezers large enough to fit a whole hog, sometimes "they go and buy them live and kill it in the backyard," he said.

Mr. Latu said city officials have expressed concern about outdoor roasting only during severe droughts. Tongans have complied with the burn bans, he said. Pig roasting is a cultural tradition, not a religious one.

"We just learn as a minority to cope and work with the community, not to stay and hide within our own little four corners," Mr. Latu said.

He said he's never heard of Santeria. He has no problem with people with different beliefs, but he said he generally associates animal sacrifice with cults.

"It's a little bit strange," he said. "If that's what they use for their religious rituals, it's OK. I don't know if it will affect the whole community in the future. From time to time, those kinds of religions turn out to be something else. I think they might want to have the city look at it."

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Travis Eddie Kelsey

IRVING — Travis Eddie Kelsey, 65, died Saturday, Jan. 6, 2007.

Funeral: 11 a.m. Thursday in Brown's Memorial Chapel. Burial: Oak Grove Memorial Gardens. Visitation: 7 to 9 p.m. Wednesday.

He was one of the owners of North Main Barbecue in Euless. He was preceded in death by a daughter, Leslie Kelsey.

Survivors: Wife, Susan Kelsey of Irving; daughter, Carrie Patchen and husband, Paul, of Arlington; stepson, William Burke and family of Fomey; sisters, Patricia Falk of St. Louis, Mo., Sandra Teague of McAlistier, Okla., and Linda Rowe of Bland, Mo.; and grandchildren, Matt "Sam," Rachel and Hope Patchen, all of Arlington.

Brown's Memorial Funeral Home

Irving, 972-254-4242

View and sign guestbook at

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NORTHEAST & AREA BRIEFS

Trash company, Teamsters still in contract talks

Contract negotiations between Allied Waste in Fort Worth and Teamsters Union Local 767 will resume today, a union official said. Union workers plan to remain on strike until an agreement is reached, local president Wesley Jenkins said in a statement. About 100 union workers - drivers and helpers - walked off their jobs at Allied after the previous agreement expired Dec. 10. Allied serves more than 25 communities in Tarrant and southern Denton counties, and trash collection in some areas has been delayed by the strike. But Allied says it is "fully operational."

—Adrienne Nettles

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BRIEFLY

Two town meetings slated for this month

EULESS - Residents can attend two forums this month to tell city officials what's on their minds. The city will host town meetings at 7 p.m. Thursday and Jan. 25 at Euless City Hall, 201 N. Ector Drive. It's an opportunity to ask questions or make comments for the staff or council to respond, said Betsy Boyett, communications manager. City officials will also address issues from the 160 responses the city received in a mail-in survey sent in December. Staff will also make presentations about construction projects and the revamped Arbor Daze festival.

- Jessica DeLeon

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

CHRISTMAS TREE RECYCLING EVENT:

The city of Euless will have its 18th annual Christmas tree recycling event from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday at Midway Park, 300 Midway Drive. The event will include a tree mulching demonstration, and bags of mulch and tree saplings will be given away to the public. Free hot dogs and drinks will be served. The city uses the mulch to maintain city parks and medians. Residents may bring their own bag to fill with mulch for their gardens or flowers. Limit one bag per person. Residents may dispose of live Christmas trees only (with no ornaments or lights) at the designated area of Midway Park through Saturday. For information, call 817-685-1650.

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EULESS

Apartment complex fire forces out 10 families

About 10 families are in new homes after a fire Wednesday at the Westdale Hills apartment complex caused an estimated \$500,000 in damage, a fire official said. Euless Fire Department investigator Vernon Gilmore said a woman and her 5-year-old child were in an apartment in the 1300 block of Monterrey Boulevard when the fire started around 11:30 a.m. The woman suffered minor injuries and was taken to a nearby hospital. No other injuries were reported. Firefighters from Euless, Hurst, Bedford and Fort Worth responded. Mr. Gilmore said that fire officials were still trying to determine the cause of the fire but that it appeared to have been accidental.

From staff reports

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EULESS

1 injured, apartments damaged in fire

By MELISSA VARGAS
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

EULESS — Firefighters from Bedford, Eules, Hurst and Fort Worth worked for more than an hour Wednesday morning to control a fire at the Muirfield Village Apartments in the Westdale Hills section of Eules.

A 30-year-old woman with second-degree burns on her right arm was taken by ambulance to Harris Methodist H.E.B. hospital in Bedford. No other injuries were reported.

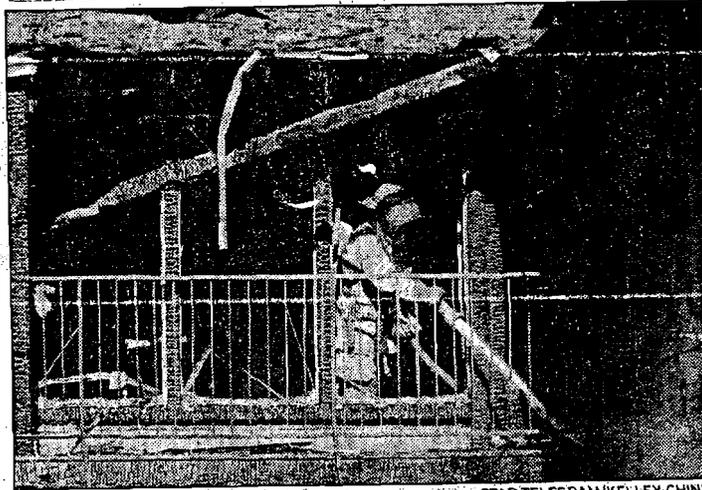
Damage was estimated at \$4,000 to \$5,000. Officials are unsure what sparked the blaze, but they don't believe it was intentionally set, Eules inspector-investigator Vernon Gilmore said.

Firefighters responded to the blaze at 11:36 a.m. at Monterey Boulevard and Pipeline Road. The woman was asleep when someone knocked on her door to tell her that the building was on fire, Gilmore said.

The woman's apartment and the one above hers were charred and covered in black soot. The blaze left a gaping hole in the south side of the building. Evacuated tenants watched firefighters hose down the carpet, couch and television in the woman's apartment.

Other tenants were eventually able to return to their homes.

Resident Ebenezer Jackson, 53, said he was sleeping when he received a phone call. As he talked, he heard a woman screaming outside his apartment. He opened the door to a



STAR-TELEGRAM/KELLEY CHINN
Firefighters from four cities worked to control the blaze. A 30-year-old woman suffered second-degree burns on her arm.

wall of smoke, grabbed his jacket and fled. He stood in the parking lot and shook his head as smoke began to billow from his apartment windows. "I have been here for over five years, and I have never seen anything like this," said Jackson, whose apartment was not damaged.

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OLD ORDNANCE

Shell found at firm dates to Civil War

■ The round will be defused by the members of the Northeast Explosive Response Team.

By DOMINGO RAMIREZ JR.

STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

EULESS — A Civil War artillery shell found near a business parking lot may have been the souvenir of a Texas Confederate soldier or a collection item that was misplaced, a state Civil War expert said Friday.

The 20-pound shell was found Jan. 5 lying flat on some dirt near a parking lot on Royal Parkway, but authorities initially were not sure whether it was an artillery round.

A military official informed local authorities this week that the 140-year-old shell was a live round from the Civil War era.

"There were several battles fought on the Texas coast, but nothing around here," said Ray Richey, the curator of the Texas Civil War Museum in White Settlement. "A few of the soldiers may have brought back some shells as souvenirs."



STAR-TELEGRAM/LAURIE L. WARD

North Richland Hills Battalion Chief Charles Goggins holds the 140-year-old shell.

Or, Richey said, Civil War collectors could have lost the shell in the area.

A Civil War shell in good condition could be worth \$400 to \$500.

The live round was scheduled to be defused in a few days by the members of the Northeast Explosive Response Team, who retrieved it from property at Simtek Inc.

Authorities believe that

the shell could still contain black powder.

"It still had a fuse cap at the end of it," said Eulesse fire investigator Vernon Gilmore.

The shell is of a type fired from Parrott cannons during the Civil War, authorities said. No weapon was found with the shell.

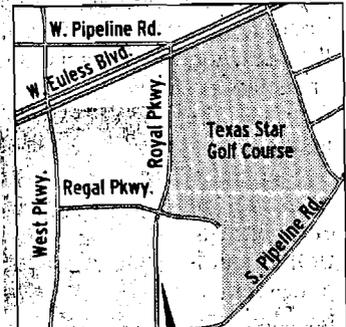
"We don't know how it got here," Gilmore said. "It could have just fallen from a wagon traveling this area."

The shell was reported about 12:50 p.m. Jan. 5 in the 1500 block of Royal Parkway.

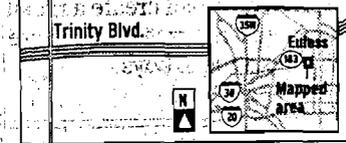
An employee had discovered the shell several days earlier while doing yard work and left it near the parking lot but never reported it. Another employee found it on the ground, and Simtek officials called authorities.

Firefighters evacuated the business as explosives experts tried to remove the 20-pound shell.

Artillery shell found



A Civil War artillery shell that authorities believe is 140 years old was found Jan. 5.



STAR-TELEGRAM

At first, a robot was sent in, but the shell was too heavy for the robot to lift, authorities said. An explosives team member then grabbed the shell and placed it in a container.

Domingo Ramirez Jr., 817-685-3822
 ramirez@star-telegram.com

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Vernice Ethel Gunter



BURLESON — Vernice Ethel Gunter, 78, went home to be with her Lord on Saturday, Jan. 13, 2007, in Burleson.

Funeral: 1:30 p.m. Monday at Mount Olivet Funeral Chapel. Interment: Mount Olivet Cemetery. Visitation: 3 to 5 p.m. Sunday at the funeral home.

Born Jan. 14, 1928, and raised in Fort Worth, she graduated as valedictorian of her class at Carter-Riverside High School:

She met and married the love of her life, George Gunter, who preceded her in death in 2002 after 56 years of marriage.

After her retirement in 1985 from the city of Euless she and George moved to Burleson for their remaining years together.

Survivors: She leaves behind son, Michael Gunter (Diane) of Bedford; daughters, Melinda Guinn (Ray) of Houston, Becky Murphy (Mike) of Stanwood, Wash, Lori Warner (John) of Burleson; 11 grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren, with two more due in March; brothers, J.W. "Buster" Underwood (Mary Kay) of Burleson and Robert "Bobby" Underwood (Pat) of Austin; special brother-in-law, Earl Miller of Cleburne; and numerous nieces, nephews and other family members and friends who dearly loved and will greatly miss her.

Mount Olivet Funeral Home
 2301 N. Sylvania Ave., 831-0511
 View and sign guestbook at
www.star-telegram.com/obituaries

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Willie Mae McCormick



EULESS — Willie Mae McCormick passed away Saturday, Jan. 13, 2007, at her home in Euless at the age of 98.

Graveside service: 3 p.m. Wednesday in Pleasant Ridge Cemetery in Centerville. Visitation: The family will receive friends 6 to 8 p.m. Tuesday at Lucas Funeral Home, 1321 Precinct Line Road in Hurst.

Memorials: In lieu of flowers, Ms. McCormick had requested contributions be made to the Euless Library or the Preservation Committee, which oversees the McCormick Barn which is on the preservation site. Donations may be sent to the city of Euless, in care of Mrs. Susan Crime, Euless city secretary, 201 N. Ector, Euless 76099.

She was born Oct. 17, 1908, the sixth of nine children born to Lucy and Bill Ward in Leon County, six miles southeast of Centerville.

Mrs. McCormick was married to Walter W. "Mac" McCormick in May 1929. Mr. McCormick preceded her in death in June 1995. To this union was born one daughter, Elizabeth.

Mrs. McCormick attended the first 10 grades of school in a one-room, two-teacher schoolhouse and graduated from Jewett High School. She entered the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor in 1926 and graduated in 1929 with a major in chemistry and a minor in math. Mrs. McCormick was a member of First Baptist Church in Euless from 1948 until her death. She worked for LTV for 20 years and retired in 1973 as an engineer.

She was elected to the city council in May 1973.

Survivors: Her daughter, Elizabeth, who still lives on the original farm; grandchildren, Wanda Whitley and husband, Tommy, Jackie Olsen and husband, Gary and Billy Mack Wilcox; five great-grandchildren; four great-great-grandchildren.

Lucas Funeral Home

Hurst, 817-284-7271

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BRIEFING

MORE CITIES IN GREATER NORTHEAST TARRANT COUNTY ARE CRACKING DOWN ON UNINSURED MOTORISTS

Is it working?

Irving police spokesman David Tull said the department will need a couple of years to know whether the plan is working. But month-to-month towing figures show no trend up or down. In June 2005, Irving became among the first cities to adopt a towing policy.

A smaller, more isolated city could see a quicker response, but the Metroplex overall may never see much of a change in vehicles towed, Tull said.

"You've got so many people coming to visit, on business, I don't know if you'll ever see a huge drop," Tull said.

What happens if a motorist is stopped and doesn't have proof of insurance?

A vehicle may not get towed if an officer can confirm that a driver has insurance even if he doesn't have insurance documents.

"We go out of the way not to tow," said Bob Freeman, interim Euless police chief.

Bedford Deputy Police Chief Roger Gibson said the department wants its officers to exercise good judgment. For example, a driver might have documents showing a history of policies, but none of them current. The officer would be encouraged to verify that the insurance is still current.

The department is also trying to speed up insurance verification, which can take 10 to 15 minutes.

"We're still tweaking our process," Gibson said. "It's an ongoing evolution for us."

Costs vary among communities if a vehicle get towed.

In Bedford, the ticket costs \$253 for a first offense and \$658 for a second offense. The wrecker fee is \$125 plus mileage, and storage costs \$21.65 a day; there's also a one-time \$21.65 preservation fee.

Irving fines motorists with no insurance \$320.

Motorists must also buy insurance to get

a vehicle out of a wrecker's lot. But some drivers have found a way around the problem.

"A lot of them, the insurance doesn't last long," said Andy Chesney, owner of B&B Wrecker Service, which tows vehicles for Bedford and Euless. "They get insurance for a couple of days."

When Bedford started its towing policy, it asked its wrecker service to make the city aware if drivers are buying very short-term policies to pick up their vehicles.

The system still needs tweaking.

Hurst resident Bill Dickson said his grandson was involved in an accident in Bedford.

The mother of the other driver showed proof of insurance, but the insurance company said she had not paid her premium for several months. The Dicksons would have

had to pay the repair bills if Bill Dickson had not won the case in small-claims court.

"Just because someone has that slip, that doesn't mean they necessarily have insurance," Dickson said.

He would like for authorities to have a database to look up proof of insurance on the spot.

Towing ordinances by city

Here is when area cities began towing vehicles and the number towed so far.

Bedford: September, 98 vehicles
Euless: May, 206 vehicles
Haltom City: June 2005, 950 vehicles
Irving: June 2005, 3,636 vehicles
North Richland Hills: January 2006, 160 vehicles

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FAST FOOD

2 Eules Whataburgers vying for title

By **ANDREA JARES**
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

Forget about the Cowboys. Sixteen Whataburger stores are headed to the Super Bowl of burger making next month — and two are from Eules.

"They're only four miles apart," said Patricia Russey, area manager for the restaurants.

Teams of 10 from the stores will test their Whataburger history, knowledge and french-fry-making expertise against others in the biennial

tory and details about food preparation. They'll also try to replicate perfectly filled orders coming in at full speed while judges monitor every move.

Those judges will be looking at the placement of every pickle, how much chocolate gets whipped into each shake and how adept the teams are at special orders.

"We have to know the answer before they finish the question," Walker said.

This will be the first time at

"We have to know the answer before they finish the question."

— Terry Walker, Whataburger store manager

Whatagames, Feb. 17-18, in Houston.

To get to this level, qualifying stores beat 548 other Whataburger teams. Stores were tested by mystery shoppers, health inspectors and random calls.

Alex Majano of Arlington, manager of the Whataburger on Glade Road, said his team has spent hours each week on

details. How many ounces of mustard per burger? How hot is a properly cooked patty?

Also honing its knowledge of the Corpus Christi company is Terry Walker's team at Main Street and Airport Freeway. His big weapon: Trinity High School student and fast-food aficionado Chad Cox.

Participants will be asked questions about company his-

the Whatagames for both managers.

At stake is a \$5,000 prize to the manager and each team member, for a total \$50,000, plus \$500 to their co-workers.

If he wins, Walker, a single father of seven children under age 19, said he plans to split his \$5,000 with his two assistant managers, both of whom will work while their team competes in Houston.

"To me, it's a team effort," Walker said.

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NORTHEAST TARRANT BRIEFS

Dog, rabbit rescued from town-home fire

EULESS - A fire scorched a town home in the 1300 block of El Camino Real about 11:30 a.m. Tuesday. No one was injured. Firefighters from Hurst and Euless arrived after numerous people called to report the fire and found smoke billowing out the front door, investigator Vernon Gilmore said. A bystander had already broken down the door to check for people inside, but firefighters checked again and rescued a dog and a rabbit.

Firefighters found the living room on fire, and the blaze spread to the kitchen and covered deck. Officials believe the unit next door suffered smoke damage, Gilmore said. Police had not established the cause of the fire or estimated the damage, he said.

- Melissa Vargas

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SENTENCE

Euless man gets year in jail
for cruelty to dog

■ The animal died less than a week after the scalding.

By **DOMINGO RAMIREZ JR.**
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

FORT WORTH — A Euless man was sentenced Tuesday to a year in jail for placing a dog in a washing machine last year and then turning the machine on.

The dog was scalded before managing to escape but was caught and locked in a closet for several days.

Eventually, the dog was taken to a

Grapevine animal shelter, where she had to be euthanized after antibiotics failed to stop the swelling from the burns.

Chad Ellis, 32, cried shortly after taking the witness stand Tuesday morning during his sentencing. He had pleaded guilty to animal cruelty in August.

"I'm sorry," Ellis said as his voice cracked. State District Judge Mike Thomas called for a short recess to allow Ellis to regain his composure.

His parents sat quietly in the courtroom of Criminal District Court No. 4 in Fort Worth.

Ellis blamed his methamphetamine addiction for torturing the year-old female black Labrador retriever mix in January 2006. The Euless man said he began using the drug in 2002, shortly after earning a degree from Texas Tech University and holding jobs with the Pepsi Co. and IBM.

But under questioning by a prosecutor, Ellis admitted that no one forced him to torture the dog, which was a stray. Ellis also conceded that he wasn't forced to steal dogs from a Euless neighborhood last year.

It was the reports of stolen dogs in February 2006 that brought the animal cruelty case to light. Euless police began checking reports of miss-



STAR-TELEGRAM/TOM PENNINGTON

Chad Ellis of Euless testifies during his sentencing hearing Tuesday. Ellis, who pleaded guilty to animal cruelty in August, was sentenced to one year in jail.

ing dogs from a neighborhood near the Euless-Grapevine border.

As investigators canvassed the neighborhood, a resident told police about a suspicious man who walked around with leashes. Investigators traced the man to the 2900 block of Kathleen Lane in Euless.

A woman invited Euless police into the home where Ellis lived, and officers found three dogs that had been reported missing, authorities said. Ellis was arrested shortly after police searched the house; the dogs were returned to their owners.

During the search, the woman told police about finding the injured Labrador in a closet.

In addition to jail, Ellis was also sentenced to five years' probation on each of three counts of burglary of a building and two counts of theft of \$1,500 to \$20,000. The crimes — which Ellis blamed on his need to buy drugs — occurred in the summer of 2005. The probation sentences will be served concurrently, the judge said.

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WILLIE MAE McCORMICK | 1908-2007

She excelled in science, education, public service

■ Willie Mae McCormick was the first woman on Euleless' City Council and stayed active after stepping down.

By **PATRICK MCGEE**
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

EULESS — Willie Mae McCormick, who in 1973 became the first woman on the City Council and remained active in the community for the rest of her life, died at her home Saturday. She was 98.

Mrs. McCormick was well-known for her handwritten letters of thanks and congratulations to city employees. The letters and her work for the city continued long after her 12 years on the council ended in 1985.

She did extensive work with the Historical Preservation Committee, the Library Board and other groups.

Friends and city officials said they were inspired by her work for the city and her determined pursuit of education, which "took her" from rural Texas to a career as a chemist and public servant.

Mrs. McCormick grew up on a farm in Pleasant Ridge, about 70 miles east of Waco, where she helped her parents and eight siblings tend to the family's cotton crop.

She moved to a friend's house in Jewett so she could attend and graduate from high school.

"You've got to remember this is in 1925, and women didn't always finish school," said Elizabeth Wilcox, Mrs. McCormick's only child.

Mrs. McCormick went on to become the first in her family to get a college education, earning a degree in math from the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor in Temple in 1929.

She earned a master's degree in chemistry from Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene in 1932, then taught school and worked at the weather bureau in Big Spring.

During World War II, she worked as a chemist for Dow Chemical in Freeport while her husband, Walter "Mack," McCormick, served in the Army; he was stationed in India.

In 1948, the couple moved to Euleless, where Walter McCormick's family had owned 120 acres since before the Civil War.

In 1953, Mrs. McCormick and her husband built another house on the property, where she lived for the rest of her life.

Mrs. McCormick worked as an engineer at Ling-Temco-Vought, an aeronautical company in Grand Prairie. She retired in 1973, the same year she was elected to the Euleless City Council.

Harold Samuels served as mayor for most of Mrs. McCormick's term on the council, including her 10 years as mayor pro tem. Samuels said she was a good public servant who often made the case for paying female employees fairly.

"In budget meetings and other times the council would get together, she always reminded us we needed to pay our female employees comparable to our male employees," Samuels said. "She was just invaluable to me as mayor. Hardworking, very smart and very dedicated to the city of Euleless."

People said she endeared herself to city employees by writing to them and attending many city events.

"I cherish the many notes and letters Mrs. McCormick has written me over the years," City Secretary Susan Crim said. "Even in recent months when she was unable to leave her home, she kept in contact with people through her correspondence. She was well-known for writing letters of congratulations to anyone she heard had received any recognition or award. She was always thinking of others and encouraging others."

Betty Fuller, chairwoman of Historical Preservation Committee, said: "You have no idea how brilliant that woman was. She would write me 12- and 13- page letters."

In 1980, a city park was named for Mrs. McCormick.

In 1998, Mrs. McCormick donated a historical barn on her property to Heritage Park.

By then, much of the land had been sold off, with only 7 acres still in Mrs. McCormick's possession.

Wilcox said some of the land was donated to the city for road construction.

Mrs. McCormick's husband died in 1995. All of her siblings are also deceased. In addition to her daughter, survivors include three grandchildren, five great-grandchildren and four great-great-grandchildren.

Burial

1 p.m. today, weather permitting, at Pleasant Ridge Cemetery in Centerville.



Willie Mae McCormick did extensive work with the Historical Preservation Committee, the Library Board and other groups. She was also known for her handwritten letters of thanks and congratulations to city employees.

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Weathering the storm



Shoveling is warm work. Who needs a coat? Or even jeans?

Dressed in shorts and a T-shirt and unbothered by the cold, Benjamin Fiefa, 10, shovels away a thin layer of snow in front of his house in Euless.

Benjamin said the work was "fun" (probably more fun than being in school).



Extreme winter sports in Texas

Snowboard rider Andrew Justus, 15, flies off a skateboard ramp at the bottom of a road embankment at Bob Eden Park in Euless. With school canceled for the day, Justus, his brother and a friend spent the morning playing in the snow.

STAR-TELEGRAM/KELLEY CHINN

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At the AutoZone on Main Street in Euless, customers could tell how messy the weather has been by how many ice scrapers and de-icing products have been sold.

The store has sold at least 350 ice scrapers since Sunday night, said Randy Russ, store manager. Also flying off the shelves in recent days are batteries and de-icers for doorsteps and locks. Also, lots of windshield



STAR-TELEGRAM ARCHIVES/M.L. GRAY

People have been filing into an AutoZone in Euless since Sunday night to buy ice scrapers, de-icers and windshield wipers.

wipers.

"We're bare," he said. "We have two pairs of windshield wipers left."

A special delivery to hungry residents

EULESS — Hungry people avoiding icy roads put in early orders to pizza restaurants.

Calls started pouring in at 10 a.m. at the Domino's center in Euless, which coordinates orders for 54 stores in the Metroplex and Austin, said a Domino's spokeswoman. Cinnamon sticks were huge sellers, too, she said.

"We've been here five years, and there was only one time that we closed down early — at 8 p.m. — because the weather was so bad," she said. "As long as the drivers don't get in wrecks, we keep taking orders" until midnight.

— Terry Lee Goodrich

