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INSIDE THE POLICE SCANNER

Is pet being held by a cat-napper?

EULESS — This was a purrrrrfect crime — or was it?

Someone took a cat and its carrier out of an apartment Monday while the resident was away for several hours, police said.

The theft happened in the 300 block of Park Drive.

The resident told police that someone entered his apartment through an unlocked window and took the feline, named Oreo.

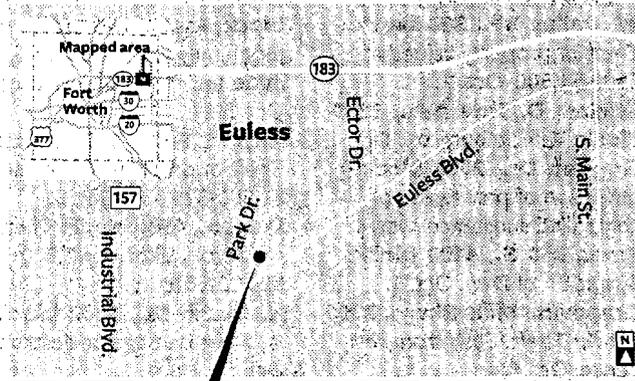
According to police reports, the resident had been taking care of Oreo for a friend.

The man told police that the friend may have entered his apartment through the window to retrieve the cat.

The resident hadn't been able to contact the friend and made the report just in case a real bad guy broke in, the police report states.

You know, a cat burglar.

Cat stolen



A cat and its carrier were taken out of a Euleless apartment on Oct. 6 in the 300 block of Park Drive.

STAR-TELEGRAM

— Domingo Ramirez Jr.

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BRIEFS

Gas lease bounty is going to be shared with charities

In August, more than 3,400 property owners in Grapevine and Euless began receiving checks from Chesapeake Energy for mineral leases. Today, many of those owners are expected to share their good fortune with area charities at a fundraising event from 6 to 9 p.m. at Delaney Vineyards and Winery in Grapevine. The event is sponsored by 360 Northwest Coalition, a group of residential and commercial property owners who worked together during mineral lease negotiations with Chesapeake, which has said it would throw in a \$10,000 match in proceeds. The charities that will benefit are GRACE and FBC Euless Freestone Housing Revitalization Project, which is a collaboration of the city of Euless, First Baptist Church of Euless, Restoration Church and Life Connection Church. "Since the majority of GRACE clients are not property owners, they have no way of receiving any direct benefit from the money that is coming from the Barnett Shale," GRACE Executive Director Shonda Schaefer said in a release. "It is humbling to know that the folks who will benefit are willing to take up the obligation of providing assistance to those who are less fortunate in this community."

— Kevin Lyons

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TEXAS HOUSE DISTRICT 92

Neophyte takes on veteran H-E-B lawmaker

Rep. Todd Smith has a big cash advantage in the race.

By CHRIS VAUGHN
 cvaughn@star-telegram.com

BEDFORD — Todd Smith, a state legislator the last dozen years, does not usually draw a Democratic opponent for his seat in the heavily Republican neighborhoods of Hurst-Euless-Bedford.

But 2008 has proved not to be any old year in Democratic



Smith Wheeler

politics.

A first-time political campaigner, Kalandra Wheeler, is seeking to unseat Smith, a veteran of state and city leadership roles for 17 years.

"It's going to be tough, no doubt about it," Wheeler said. "I want to let people know that I don't believe the government is simply for the wealthy. I believe everyday people should be able to take part in the government. I have the same concerns the voters have."

Smith said he welcomes a challenge but believes he has done his best for residents the

last 12 years. "There are people in politics who don't advance the interests of their constituents but who advance the interests of special interests and the wealthy," Smith said. "It gives me a great deal of satisfaction with the small amount of power I have as a state representative to influence that activity and promote the interests of my constituents."

Smith, 45, who has lived in the H-E-B area for 34 years, has ties that run deep in the schools, neighborhoods and elected offices. Wheeler, 29, is a Longview native who has lived in the H-E-B area for less than two years.

Both are attorneys — Smith is a personal-injury lawyer with a law degree from the University of Texas, and Wheeler is a criminal defense attorney with a law degree from the University of Arkansas.

In the latest filings to the Texas Ethics Commission, Smith reported raising \$3,900 and spending \$7,219, including \$5,500 for campaign signs. Wheeler reported raising \$2,523 in contributions and spending \$1,501, including \$1,300 for campaign signs. Smith, however, has a significant edge in the bank — \$67,000 to \$1,500.

Smith serves as the chairman of the Tarrant County delegation and vice chairman of the House Insurance Committee and was among a group of unhappy Republicans who attempted to unseat Speaker of the House Tom Craddick in the last session, an effort that failed.

Among his chief concerns for the next session is how the state will prioritize and pay for new highway projects, which are underfunded

by billions of dollars. He said the state will eventually have to raise its gas tax because he believes relying exclusively on toll roads is unfair to his district.

"I will completely support my constituents bearing their share of the burden, but whatever the solution, it cannot involve soaking my constituents with exorbitant tolls when they drive north, south, east or west while 80 percent of the state pays what they paid in 1990," he said, referring to the gas tax.

He also expects to file legislation again to grant police the authority to establish sobriety checkpoints, and he believes insurance reform is needed so that homeowners in North Texas are not subsidizing homeowners on the coast who build in hurricane-vulnerable areas.

For her part, Wheeler would like to expand health-care coverage for the uninsured, especially children, and she believes the government guidelines for poverty are "archaic" and don't reflect the cost of living in 2008. She also said H-E-B badly needs new freeways and not just toll roads.

She also said that changes need to be made in the accountability testing for students in public schools.

"My mom was a public school teacher, so I'm partial toward teachers," she said. "I don't believe they are paid enough. Additionally, our schools are moving toward teaching the TAKS test. I would be more in favor of tests administered throughout the year, as opposed to one test determining your future."

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CHEERS AND JEERS

Cheers: To Andy of Euless B&B Wrecker Services for once again supporting the community by providing trucks and trailers for the L.D. Bell High School homecoming parade. Your rigs were awesome, and the kids had a ball.

— Karen Killian, Bedford

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PARKER COUNTY

Slowdown forces Acme Brick to shut original plant

By MARSHA BROWN Special to the Star-Telegram

MILLSAP — Acme Brick Co. has ceased operations at one of its two Parker County facilities — the company's original plant.

Acme Brick has laid off 20 of the plant's 35 workers and will reassign others because of a slowdown in residential construction, said Ed Watson, senior vice president of production.

"We actually saw this coming in 2006," Watson said. "We started closing plants early in 2007."

Closing the company's original plant wasn't easy. Acme has produced bricks at the site in southwest Parker County since 1891.

"We're able to move most of the operations from the [Millsap] Bennett Plant to the newer plant" nearby, said Bill Seidel, Acme's vice president of marketing.

The Acme brick plant is just outside Millsap, which has a population of 332.

"It will make some difference to our town," Millsap Mayor Jamie French said. "I really don't think it will have a huge impact. A lot of people out here are in the ranching business."

The plant is at the center of the ghost town of Bennett, named in honor of Acme Brick's founder, George E. Bennett.

The community was once made up of a company store, public school, church and about 100 homes made from Acme Brick that housed the families of the workers.

J.A. Brogdon was born in one of those houses. His father worked for Acme; he followed his dad into the company in the early 1950s and retired six years ago.

"When I went to work for them, it was a real family-oriented company," Brogdon said.

"I worked at a couple of other places, but I always came back to Acme Brick."

Brogdon was still working at Acme when billionaire investor Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway holding company bought it.

"It didn't change anything at first," Brogdon said. "Buffett said he wasn't planning to change anything, and as far as I could tell, he didn't. But since they have a new plant next door that was cheaper to operate, closing the old one was a business decision."

"I hate to see it close. But now things are operated differently. It's all business with companies now. Workers are different now too. They aren't as devoted as they used to be."

Although the plant in Millsap may have been Acme Brick's first to open, it wasn't the first to close, Watson said. "We closed four plants before we closed this one beginning in early 2007," he said.

The Millsap plant also won't be the last in the company's round of closures. "We're closing another in Kanopolis, Kan., at the end of this month, and another in Clarksville, Ark., in February of '09," Watson said.

The company expects the plant closings to be temporary. "We'll be ready to start back up when the new-housing market heats back up," Watson said.

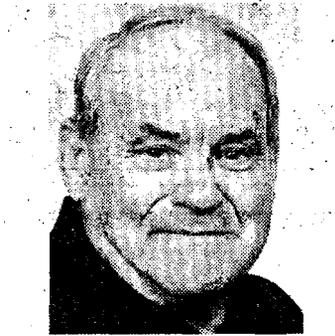
“We'll be ready to start back up when the new-housing market heats back up.”

Ed Watson, senior vice president of production at Acme Brick

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David W. "Dub" Mims Jr.



EULESS — David W. "Dub" Mims Jr. passed away Sunday, Oct. 19, 2008, in Euless.

FUNERAL: Noon Friday in Sparkman/Hillcrest Northwest Highway Chapel, the Rev. Carol West officiating. Interment: Hillcrest Memorial Park.

Dub was born Nov. 13, 1928, in Hughes Springs. He proudly served his country in the U.S. Army and the Marines. Dub worked as a skilled laborer as a welder from 1952 to 1997, retiring at the age of 69. At 72 years of age, he was still active choosing to work as a school crossing guard for the Euless Police Department. He continued in this position until the time of his death. He took his job very serious. Dub looked out for the safety and well-being of these children, as he did for his own children throughout their lives.

He instilled in each of his children a love of the outdoors with picnics, camping, fishing and boating. He was a true family man with wife and children being his top priority. He treasured family vacations and visits and, most of all, his grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by a son, James Mims.

SURVIVORS: The love of his life for 57 years, his wife, Geneva; sons, Mike Mims and wife, Lisa, of Sanger, Greg Mims and wife, Minnie, of Euless and Steve Mims and wife, Gloria, of Grove, Okla.; and daughters, Beverly Freeman and husband, Frank, of Linden and Patti Mims of Euless. He was the loving grandfather of David Mims, Justin Mims, Aaron Mims, Jacob Mims and Whitney Mims. He is also survived by his brothers, Phillip Mims of Dangerfield and Farris Mims of Lone Oak; and many nieces, nephews and cousins.

Sparkman/Hillcrest Funeral Home
 Dallas, 214-363-5401

View and sign guestbook at
www.star-telegram.com/obituaries

David Mims was a school crossing guard for the City and his daughter-in-law, Minnie works in the Library.

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FINANCIAL CRISIS

Investment pool for local governments is largely OK

The state's two funds for municipalities and school districts report an average rate of return of 2.4 percent as of Sept. 30.

By **YAMIL BERARD**
yberard@star-telegram.com

TexPool, unlike many other state investment funds, hasn't lost a dime in the stock market. But even with its safe, high-quality debt investments, it hasn't gotten by the credit crunch scot-free, either.

Assets of TexPool and the related TexPool Prime, which are investment pools for thousands of Texas municipalities and public school districts, have fallen by about \$2.7 million since January, records show. The bite has come from drops in interest rates on U.S. Treasury bonds, which are TexPool's bread and butter.

In addition, a small portion of the \$19 billion fund's investments — about \$640 million — is in commercial paper, a sector caught up in the credit squeeze that has required emergency action by the federal government.

"Investors aren't buying short-term corporate debt for fear they won't get their money back," said Mac McLain, former chief investment officer at Texas Wesleyan University. "And they have become so leery of lending to corporations that they are willing to accept the lower rates of U.S. Treasury bonds."

In part, that should be a relief to the state comptroller's office, which is responsible for TexPool and TexPool Prime. The two funds report an average rate of return of 2.4 percent as of Sept. 30, down from 4.24 per-

cent in January, records show. In contrast, U.S. domestic stocks have fallen by 45 percent; international stocks by more.

"The mantra is safety, liquidity and yield, in that order. Those are our marching orders," said Paul Ballard, CEO and chief investment officer for the Texas Treasury Safekeeping Trust Co., which manages TexPool and TexPool Prime for the comptroller.

TexPool's assets of \$17.99 billion are mostly U.S. bonds and triple-A, no-load money market mutual funds, the highest rated by bond agencies.

The funds can be called "cash equivalents" because they can convert fast to cash; maturity dates cannot exceed 13 months, by state policy.

And that's a good thing, especially these days, experts said.

Experts voiced only a small concern with TexPool Prime, the smaller of the two TexPools, and its \$641 million in commercial paper. By Oct. 8, the U.S. commercial-paper market fell by \$56.4 billion, or 3.5 percent, to a seasonally adjusted \$1.55 trillion, Bloomberg reports showed.

Companies sell commercial paper as a form of short-term borrowing to support day-to-day operating costs. But as companies drew back from issuing new paper for fear that they couldn't pay it back and lenders stopped lending, its market froze. The Federal Reserve Bank tried to ease the situation this month by buying commercial paper in a "back-stop" effort. That was intended to make more commercial paper available to companies and investors.

"We've got to make sure they can come back to commercial paper," said McLain, also a portfolio manager at Holt Capital Partners, an investment management company in Fort Worth.

TexPool Prime's bundles of commercial paper are evaluated and "stress-tested" to make sure that the state gets its money back even under "terrible economic conditions," Ballard said. That's because officials have made sure enough collateral is there to support it.

"Regardless of what happens out there, if the system stops working and commercial paper stops trading, we're going to make sure things will pay," Ballard said.

Online: www.texpool.com

YAMIL BERARD, 817-685-3818

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EULESS

Joshua woman, 22, killed in Airport Freeway crash

By **DOMINGO RAMIREZ JR.**
ramirez@star-telegram.com

EULESS — A 22-year-old Joshua woman was killed early Tuesday after she was ejected from a car that slammed into a concrete median on Airport Freeway and burst into flames, police said.

The Tarrant County medical examiner's office identified the woman as Kandice Hutchison, who was pronounced dead at the scene.

The accident happened about 2:30 a.m. in the 500 block of Airport Freeway.

Hutchison was driving at a high speed, police said.

Hutchison's car bumped

another car before slamming into the barrier, police said.

"A car in front of her saw her coming and attempted to move over, but her car bumped that vehicle," Eules police Lt. John Williams said Tuesday. "That sent her into the median."

No other injuries were reported.

Police closed Airport Freeway between Industrial Boulevard and Main Street for about eight hours as authorities investigated.

DOMINGO RAMIREZ JR.,
817-685-3822

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SHLACHTER, PEROTIN, FUQUAY & CO.

CHARITIES GET BONUS FROM BARNETT SHALE

A benefit grows out of a lease signing with owners in Euless and Grapevine.

Last week saw an end to the frenzy of mineral-rights leasing that enthralled Tarrant County during the past year but maybe not to charitable contributions tied to the Barnett Shale boom.

On Oct. 16, more than 300 people attended 360Northwest Gives Back at Delaney Vineyards and Winery in Grapevine. A raffle and silent



SHLACHTER & CO.

auction, boosted by a \$10,000 grant from Chesapeake Energy, resulted in \$25,000 in contributions that will be split between GRACE and FBC Euless

Freestone Housing Revitalization Project.

GRACE provides food, clothing and other assistance to residents facing financial challenges. FBC Euless Freestone is a collaboration of the city of Euless, First Baptist Church of Euless, Restoration Church and Life Connection Church that repairs and updates homes for needy residents.

Dan Delph, lead organizer of the charity event, said the turnout "exceeded our greatest expectations." Chesapeake's Leah King said it was the first time the company is aware of that a neighborhood leasing group came together to share part of lease bonuses with a not-for-profit organization.

360Northwest Coalition, representing more than 3,400 property owners and 1,500 acres in Euless and Grapevine, endorsed a mineral-rights lease from Chesapeake in July that paid a bonus of \$23,500 an acre and a 25 percent royalty. Lease signings concluded Monday, the group said.

Chesapeake also pledged \$500,000 to Benbrook on Saturday toward expansion of the Benbrook Community Center and YMCA. The company gave the first \$100,000 of that commitment to the city at the second annual Heritage Fest, which celebrates the city's incorporation in 1947.

Chesapeake's Julie Wilson said the company's contribution recognizes "the importance to expand the often-cramped quarters of the Community Center/YMCA, a popular workout facility and meeting place that is also used as a needed shelter in times of emergencies."