

Local photographer wins top honors



Special to the Banner Professional Photographer, Donna Cummings of Jacksonville, Texas, received an unprecedented score of 100 for her wedding entry print, "Daddy's Girl", at the East Texas Pro Forum Competition last Tuesday.

The East Texas Professional Photographer's Forum gathered Tuesday evening in Tyler for their annual competition with PPA master photographers, Gabriel Alonso and Steve Kozack who judged the event along with guild member Johnny Welsh. All three judges gave the winning print a perfect score of 100.

The winning wedding print entitled, "Daddy's Girl", captured a candid moment at the January 2006 wedding of Kari Barber and Aaron Bonner of Tyler. The print received the highest print score of the evening, won "Best Wedding Image" and took the "Judge's Choice" ribbon as well.

Donna Cummings, who serves on the board of the Pro Forum, received an "Excellent" merit score of 81 on her unclassified print entry, "Dream World" which was taken in Waikiki Beach, Honolulu, Hawaii during a recent destination wedding shoot. Donna also won a distinguished ribbon and a merit score of 86 on her wedding album entry, "One Fine Day" featuring the Eagle's Bluff Country Club wedding of Tory Mills and Chris Vey of Tyler.

The Pro forum, which is a regional affiliate of the Texas Professional Photographers Association, meets monthly in Tyler for aspiring and professional photographers from East Texas for education and fellowship. For more information, call Donna Cummings at 903-586-8087 or visit her website at www.donnacummings.com.

Bullard library receives grants for Jewish materials

Bullard Community Library Receives Grants of Jewish Materials

The Bullard Community Library is pleased to announce the award of grants from the Tocker and the Aytz Chaim Foundations of books, and additional books and DVD's focused on Jewish life and culture from "Learn Israel."

The collection, with materials for all ages, is part of projects whose objective is to increase public awareness of Judaism and the story of Israel.

Among the books in the collection is "I Am

Jewish," a tribute to Daniel Pearl.

It commemorates the life of Pearl, a newspaper correspondent abducted and killed in Pakistan in 2002.

To celebrate his life, many well-known people, including Larry King, Harold Kushner, Senator Diane Feinstein, and Elie Wiesel, write of what being Jewish means to them.

Other books in the collection include "Shared Dreams: Martin Luther King, Jr." and the "Jewish Community," "Hannah Senesh: Her Life and Diary," "The Case for Israel," and "The Complete

Idiot's Guide to Jewish History and Culture," as well as other titles.

Five books for children and youth include Does God Hear My Prayer?, What You Will See Inside a Synagogue, and Because Nothing Looks Like God.

Bete'avon! a collection of recipes from Sisterhood Agudas Achim in Austin, includes a large number of Jewish holiday dishes. The five hundred plus recipes in the book were reviewed to comply with kashrut, the Jewish dietary laws.

"We are delighted to make these informative

and inspirational materials available to the people of Bullard and the surrounding communities," said library director Debbie Brown. "The library looks for just such opportunities to promote intercultural awareness and understanding, and to expand our current collection."

All the books and DVD's are now available for check-out.

They are displayed in the Cameron Room at the library on display furniture from International Library Furniture, Keene, Texas, through a joint grant with the NorthEast Texas Library System.

Map

Continued from Page 1

Larry Morgan. "But it has turned into something much broader in scope than even we could have imagined.

Fleming first told her idea to Bullard council members in June. She appeared before council telling members that she understood the issues the city is facing, and she wanted to help.

"I liken it to a tsunami," Fleming said of the growth Bullard is facing. "And I know both by watching and by experience that if cities don't get ahead of the growth, it's near impossible to catch up."

Morgan was initially interested in a group-buying cooperative with the county. Because Smith County buys materials - such as asphalt - in larger quantities, it gets better prices.

"Smaller quantities - purchased by cities our size are always going to be more expensive," Morgan said. "So I was excited about the idea."

But when Fleming addressed the council, she had a bigger vision. And when Bullard newly elected council member Teresa Adams Wilks heard Fleming speak, she knew she wanted to help.

The result has culminated in an inter-local agreement - signed by Bullard council this month - allowing the city to avail itself of the counties services - as outlined in Section 6 of the RoadMap. The first project, should Bullard choose, would be IT services - which fall under Fleming's domain.

And Wilks hopes to keep the relationship and sharing of resources going.

"JoAnn put herself on the line for us," Wilks said. "And I know I speak for other council members when I say I appreciate her fortitude."

But, when it comes to politics - especially on a county level - nothing is as easy as it sounds.

And Section 6 does sound easy: Intergovernmental Networking Intergovernmental link established with the City of Tyler, surrounding municipalities, and other taxing entities

- Discover areas for consolidation of services and operations
- Identify inter-local purchasing opportunities
- Desires, Results, Measures and Performances
- Reduced or avoided costs through partnerships

- Reduced reliance on property tax
- Reduced funding/resources allocation decisions

What it said to both Fleming and Wilks is that the county was giving its blessing. Wilks spent countless hours meeting with and talking to Fleming.

"I'm so impressed with JoAnn," Wilks said. "She had nothing to gain by telling us about this, but she did it because she doesn't want to see us fall behind as the city grows.

"She's looking out for Bullard citizens just as much as we are."

But Fleming's decision to follow the county's master plan proved full of potholes - at least figuratively.

A district judge complained to the media that commissioners shouldn't be outsourcing staff when the county could use them. Fleming chose not to back down from her commitment, but instead bring in a third party to examine where the powers lie.

On Nov. 8, an Austin attorney told Smith County commissioners the clashes with district judges were nothing out of the ordinary.

Last month, commissioners voted 3-2 to spend up to \$5,000 from the work force fund (which comes from the portion of her salary that Commissioner Fleming doesn't collect) to bring in Greg Hudson.

"He said there's a natural tension," Fleming said. "And that the misunderstanding comes - in part - from the state constitution."

Bullard's stake is this: Fleming is using the city as a test case for the RoadMap, but she said it was more difficult until Hudson came in.

"It was a chance for the constitutional boundaries to be explained to us. We want to continue to try to form agreements with other cities, streamline operations and run Smith County on a business-like model," Fleming said. "The county needs it, and the taxpayers deserve it.

Fleming says commissioners are encountering roadblocks as they attempt to implement the county's business efficiency plan.

"In order to fully implement a cost-effective business plan for this county, set sound policies and carry out our constitutionally established authority, the Commissioners Court needs to clearly understand the scope of its authority," Fleming

said. "That's why Hudson was brought in," she said.

Hudson said Attorney General opinions are clear that there are limits to district judge's powers.

"The district courts may overturn actions taken by the commissioners court, but only when the court finds that the action of the commissioners court is beyond its authority, or constitutes an abuse of discretion," Hudson said.

The principle is that there should be a separation of powers, he said.

"The district court has no right to substitute its judgment and discretion for that of the commissioners court," Hudson said. "It cannot tell the commissioners what decision to make. Judges can invalidate an action, but they cannot tell a court how to legislate."

But, Hudson said, Smith County is certainly not unique.

"These questions and this tension seem to surface over and over," he said.

Smith County Commissioners last month approved a resolution agreeing to help Bullard - an act Fleming hopes sets a trend and continues with other outlying cities.

"Basically what we did was reaffirm what was already in the RoadMap," Fleming said.

"We have a business plan in place that allows saving taxpayers money by lowering the expenses in some of our outlying cities," she said. "We need to get the word out more."

Wilks agreed.

"This is something that's going to benefit all of us," Wilks said. "And I am appreciative of the help she's extended to our city."

Already Smith County IT personnel have visited city hall, getting input and developing a plan for better services.

Fleming said the county has a dedicated training person, who would greatly benefit a growing city like Bullard.

"It's a wonderful opportunity for the city to save a lot of money through cooperation and purchasing agreements," Wilks said.

How Bullard Benefits The City of Bullard could see some savings in materials, human resources and information technology.

Fleming addressed the council at its June meeting, telling council members what she per-

ceives the benefits would be to the city and citizens of Bullard.

"I want to be a resource for you, a benefit to you," she said.

Fleming said because of discounts on volume and cooperative agreements with a purchasing group, Smith County gets better prices on fuel, road materials and even computer hardware and software.

"We can also offer all sorts of human resources assistance," Fleming said. "We have a talented person in Smith County who can offer training to you all."

Bullard, because of its size, has no dedicated human resources department.

Fleming also said that because of recent budget allocations, the county has a staff of information technicians who could be of aid, as well.

"Years ago, no one planned for these growth issues in Smith County," she said. "So we've found ourselves trying to catch up," she said. "I don't want to see that happen in Bullard."

Fleming said she and Morgan have been acquainted for years, and she hoped Bullard would take the opportunity to partner with the county.

"I hope this works as a model and other cities take advantage of it, too," Fleming said.

Long before taking office in January 2005, Fleming was an advocate of the RoadMap, calling for a business-like approach to county government.

She serves as the Court's liaison for the Information Technology and Road & Bridge Departments. By working closely with the county engineer and department team, the county has lowered equipment maintenance costs, implemented a new work-order and road history system, and developed a long-range department plan with the goal of putting more dollars into road reconstruction.

Fleming said that with the new measures in place, the Road and Bridge Department doubled the number of miles resurfaced than the year before, and in 2005 reduced the number of roads rated "bad" and "poor" from 71 percent to 67 percent.

Commissioner Fleming's current projects include implementation of cost-reducing measures in the county's energy and fuel costs as well as information technology-related expenses.