

LOCAL

Austin Bank Awards Bullard Student Savings Bond

Santa visits Mission House



The Mission House led a community wide effort to collect gifts for more than 300 children in Bullard and the surrounding area. "It's a blessing," said Jess Stewart, who was among the hundreds helped by the service.

Austin Bank has kicked off "Teach Children to Save" – an educational program dedicated to teaching East Texas elementary school students the importance of financial literacy.

As part of that educational program, Austin Bank has awarded Brittany Wheeler from Bullard Primary School a \$50 Savings Bond. Miss Wheeler is a Kindergarten student who won the bank's Teach Children to Save coloring contest at her school.

"Teach Children to Save" focuses on saving, money management and math skills by providing area schools educational materials on these topics. Austin Bank gave area Kindergarten teachers a class-

room workbook entitled, "Saving Money is Cool," and the book, A Dollar for Penny, as part of the program.

Working with 74 elementary schools, Austin Bank sponsored a coloring contest for Kindergarten students. A Kindergarten student from each participating school or school district was selected to receive a \$50 Savings Bond. All the children were given educational handouts and a bank. In Bullard approximately 140 Kindergarten students from seven classes participated in the program.

Schools in all communities served by Austin Bank's 28 locations were invited to participate in "Teach Children to

Save." Teaching tools and materials were distributed throughout East Texas to 296 classrooms which included 7,330 Kindergarten students from both public and private schools.

"We would like this program to help children gain money-management skills and be better prepared to make financial decisions in the future. All children should be encouraged to save, share and spend wisely as the basics of this program demonstrate," said Jeff Austin III, Vice Chairman of the Board.

"We want to thank the schools and their teachers for allowing students to participate in the 'Teach Children to Save'

program. Austin Bank is proud to take an active role in the development of financial education of the youth of East Texas," said Austin "This program aims to incorporate a little fun into the classroom while promoting these important principles."

Austin Bank, a community bank with headquarters in Jacksonville, Texas, has in excess of \$1 billion in assets with 28 offices in nine counties throughout East Texas. More information about Austin Bank can be found on the bank's website at www.austinbank.com.

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Study: Illegal Immigrants' care costs state \$677 Million

Jim Gilchrist.
Minuteman Project

The state of Texas and local hospital districts spent an estimated \$677 million to provide health care to illegal immigrants in a year, a new study says.

The survey, issued by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, said that most of the money — \$597 million — was spent by local hospital districts for the immigrants' care during the state's fiscal year that ended on Aug. 31, 2006.

Lawmakers from both parties said they were not surprised by the millions spent and expressed hope that the report, required by the 2007 Legislature, will help prompt Congress to pass comprehensive immigration reform legislation.

State Rep. Garnet Coleman, D-Houston, said the study only tells half of the story.

He noted that the immigrants contribute to government coffers by paying sales and property taxes.

The report said that in the fiscal year ending Aug. 31, 2007, the state spent \$80 million under the Texas Emergency Medicaid program, which pays hospitals to provide life-saving care, including labor and delivery services, to patients living here illegally. The state also paid \$1.2 million to provide services to undocumented immigrants in family violence

shelters.

Federal law requires hospitals and ambulance services to provide care to anyone needing emergency treatment regardless of their citizenship, legal status or ability to pay.

The Harris County Hospital District provided \$203.5 million in uncompensated care to illegal immigrants in 2006, the report said.

But county hospital district officials disputed the report's numbers, noting that they were calculated on the basis of charges instead of costs. They said charges are inflated, typically double the actual costs of services to taxpayers.

"The cost of health care to undocumented immigrants is something we worry about, something we monitor, but we don't want to overstate it," said David Lopez, president and CEO of the Harris County Hospital District. "It's not an overwhelming percentage of our budget."

Lopez said the actual cost is 10 to 14 percent of the hospital district's budget, or about \$100 million to \$120 million.

About 80 percent of the district's illegal immigrant patients were women and children, and most were pregnant women. Lopez said the hospital district was not consulted for the report. your borders or at least pay for 'em if you're going to allow them to come over here.' "

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