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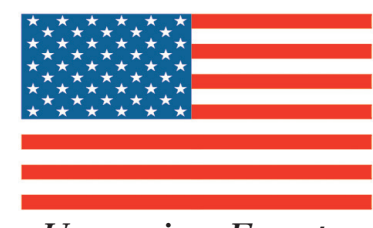
# HERALD

**BIG SPRING** **80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary** **PEARL HARBOR** **1941-2021**

**TUESDAY EDITION, DECEMBER 7, 2021**

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## Local entities hold Leadership Summit



HERALD photo/Roger Cline

**Big Spring Economic Development Corporation Executive Director Mark Willis, at podium, lays out upcoming plans and challenges of the EDC during the Joint Leadership Summit Monday evening at the Dorothy Garrett Coliseum.**

**By ROGER CLINE**  
 Herald Staff Writer

Ten of Howard County's governmental and business entities met Monday evening and each gave a brief presentation, including their current status and the challenges facing them in the coming months.

"I think it went well," said Big Spring Mayor Shannon Thomason, following the "Special Joint Leadership Summit," held on the floor of Howard College's Dorothy Garrett Coliseum. "It's good to

get all of the groups together in the same room and kind of talk about what the challenges are, and find out from each one what they might need help with, and basically give us all some ideas what we can do to work together."

The event, which was open to the public, drew about 40 members of the public, who watched from the Coliseum's bleachers. Those in attendance had the opportunity to submit written questions to the various entities. Only one such question was read and responded to during the meeting.

Entities who offered presentations at the event included Howard County, the City of Big Spring, the Big Spring Economic Development Corporation, the Big Spring Area Chamber of Commerce, Howard College, Big Spring ISD, Coahoma ISD, Forsan ISD, the West Texas VA Healthcare System, and Scenic Mountain Medical Center.

- Howard County – Commissioner Jimmie Long (Precinct 3): Commissioner Long spoke about challenges facing

See **SUMMIT**, page 3

Upcoming Events

*The Comanche Trail Park Festival of Lights is open nightly from 6 to 10 p.m. through Dec. 25. Use the entrance across U.S. 87 from Wal-Mart.*

*Christmas in Coahoma at the Park will be Saturday, Dec. 11, from 3 to 6:30 p.m. The event will include hayrides and caroling, Christmas art projects for kids, and holiday snacks. Sponsored by the Coahoma Lions Club. The Big Spring*

*The Big Spring Symphony's concert "Home Is Where the Heart Is" will be 7:30 p.m. Dec. 18 at First United Methodist Church, 400 S. Scurry St. Tickets are on sale at [www.bigspring-symphony.org](http://www.bigspring-symphony.org)*

**INDEX**

News .....1 & 3  
 Obituaries .....2  
 Sports .....5  
 Classifieds.....6-8  
 Comics .....9  
 Santa Business Contest .....10



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## Lights, camera, action: The Big Spring Christmas Parade was a huge hit for the community



Herald Photos/ MaLinda Pope

This past weekend Big Spring held its annual Christmas parade. The parade had over 40 floats and was fantastic this year to witness.

**By DUSTIN POPE**  
 Managing Editor

This past weekend Big Spring held its annual Christmas Parade. This year's theme was "Lights Camera Action" you could base your float off any Christmas movie theme. There were so many fantastic floats in this year's parade; it was cool to get to see how creative everyone was. You could defiantly see all the hard work and dedication that the participants put into their floats. Pretty much any Christmas movie you could think of was represented. From Polar express to Charlie Brown, and yes, even my favorite Die hard.

The winners from the parade were as follows: First place for the non-

See **PARADE**, Page 5

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**SUMMIT**

Continued from page 1

the county, including the recent closure of the local private GEO prisons, and ongoing damage to local roads. Long offered a piece of good news regarding the roads: "We have received a grant from the Texas Department of Transportation of about \$8.6 million with a 20 percent match on the county's part, and with it we have made some progress repairing our roads." Long presented slides showing photos of damaged county roads and progress of repairs. Long reported that the county, through the Sheriff's Department and Sheriff Stan Parker, has created an Environmental Task Force with authority to identify health and safety issues on private property in the county, and to request that the owners clean up the property or face fines or jail time. Long also mentioned the commissioners' work on deciding how to spend about \$7 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grants, and dealing with unfunded mandates from the State of Texas.

• City of Big Spring – Mayor Shannon Thomason: Mayor Thomason spoke about the recent Andrews ISD bus crash which claimed three adult workers' lives and left many Andrews students injured. Thomason expressed pride at the unity Howard County entities displayed in offering assistance during the crisis. "The entities involved: the city, the county, the school district, the college, and all of the citizens that showed up bringing pizzas and food, and offering prayers, made me personally proud to be a resident of this great city and county. It proved to me what West Texans can do when we pull together." Thomason noted that infrastructure is the city's main challenge. "Streets are a continuing problem. Water and sewer lines are old and getting older, and we are moving forward with solutions on both." The mayor said new methods of pothole repair should allow repairs to be completed faster and last longer, and that the city's ARPA grant – \$6.9 million – will be used entirely for water and sewer upgrades. The city has held property taxes to the "No new revenue" tax rate for the past three years, Thomason said; bringing in more money through business expansion and construction. The mayor said "new sit-down, casual restaurants" are coming to Big Spring, as well as new businesses in the downtown area, which he called a "jewel of the city." "We still have our historic downtown, whereas most of our neighbors around do not," he said. "Thanks to the investment in the Settles Hotel, downtown has a crown jewel. We need to continue that motion." Thomason said the city has started the process of creating a Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ) in the downtown area to help fund infrastructure improvements without cost to taxpayers. Thomason also said the city is exploring "alternative sources of revenue that will lower or eliminate property taxes."

• Big Spring Economic Development Corporation – Executive Director Mark Willis: Willis spoke about the EDC's work on the U.S. Hwy. 87 Reliever Route and the McMahan-Wrinkle Airpark. "The EDC has spent about \$17 million out at the Airport to improve rail service, improve the runways out there, and, most recently, about \$6 million on roadways out there," he said. Willis also spoke about a project to open up land for development west of

the Airpark. "This is where the future of business growth industry, heavy commercial, what we refer to as 'base jobs.' My board and myself, that's what we see. This is a long-term potential," he said. Willis said that, although a potential \$5 million grant for improvements in the area was declined, he remains hopeful that the EDC can receive a \$1.5 million grant for the project instead. "The good thing about it is, we have a prospect that could bring in as much as \$14 to \$15 million more property value for county and city taxes," he said. Willis said, like the city's plan for the downtown area, he hopes to form a TIRZ west of the Airpark. "If we get that \$14-\$15 million of value out there and it's in a TIRZ, and if both the city and the county pledge 75 percent of the property tax out there to improve infrastructure, and if we get that first prospect out there, the TIRZ can leverage that to another half-million dollars, which we'd like to see run down to Frazier Road, opening up another couple hundred acres for development," he said. Willis said Howard County's central location is a big asset. "We enjoy a location where, if you draw a 100-mile radius around Big Spring, there's 1.4 million people," he said. "We are set up to be warehouse and distribution. You can come in by air, by rail and by road."

• Big Spring Area Chamber of Commerce – Chamber President Kristy Tyra: Tyra spoke about several of the Chamber's activities. "We promote our members through email blasts, Facebook, ribbon-cutting celebrations, Alive After Five, and shopping excursions," she said. "We have several annual events of the Chamber. We have the Chamber Banquet, which is held in February. We have the Health Fair, in late April, and our newest event is our Clay Shoot. We have that at Moss Lake, which takes place the first Saturday in June." Tyra said the Chamber provides information to the community and volunteers for events. Through the Big Spring Area Chamber of Commerce Charitable Trust, the Chamber helps fund events such as Pops in the Park and the Festival of Lights; and projects such as the Amphitheater Improvement Project. The Chamber also hosts promotional events to encourage the public to patronize local businesses.

• Howard College – President Dr. Cheryl Sparks: Dr. Sparks spoke about the college's unique status as the only community college in the United States with a school for deaf learners: The SouthWest College for the Deaf. Sparks also spoke about Howard College's recent work on its mission statement. "Overwhelmingly, people wanted the emphasis on making a national impact," she said. "So our mission is that 'We will be known for enriching the lives and the futures of those we serve as a unique rural community college, a national model of success that includes a campus specializing in deaf education.' You're going to see us embrace that in a very strong way. We're proud of 'rural' and we're going to embrace that right up front." Four areas the college will focus on going forward include Access, Student Success, Community and Workforce Development, and Performance Excellence. Sparks said the college is working to restore student enrollment at Howard to pre-pandemic levels; and to increase faculty salaries and state funding. She also said one of the college's goals is to help the area's economic

recovery.

• Big Spring ISD – Superintendent Jay McWilliams: McWilliams stressed that BSISD's primary focus is its students. "In everything we do, we always stress, 'Is it in the best interest of the kids?' Period. If it's in the best interest of the kids, I can sleep at night and those people over there (pointing at BSISD delegation at the Summit) can sleep at night. Whether people agree with everything we do or not, that is our goal. We want to do what's in the best interest of our kids." McWilliams listed four other priorities of the district; first, recruiting and maintaining certified teachers for the district. McWilliams praised the TechTeach Program, which partners BSISD with Howard College and Texas Tech University to train new teachers for the district. McWilliams' second talking point involved the district's Career and Technical Education (CTE) program. "We now offer close to 60 different career and technical courses at Big Spring ISD. You can get anything from Microsoft Word endorsement and certification, you can take fashion design, you can take welding, culinary arts...you name it, we offer it. What this is doing is, this is allowing us to train and teach kids skills for life." The third of McWilliams points was on technology. He praised many advancements in the district's technology to Director of Technology Jamie Scott. He touted the district's "One-to-One" status, meaning each student is allowed to check out technology including tablets, iPads or Chromebooks; improvements to internet bandwidth and preparedness for distance learning at the onset of COVID-19. McWilliams also praised the districts improvements on safety and security of its schools, and improvements to district facilities.

• Coahoma ISD – Superintendent Brad Cox: Superintendent Cox spoke about four challenges for the Coahoma district. The first item he addressed was Texas House Bill 4545, a bill designed to help struggling students catch up on passing the STAAR test through supplemental accelerated instruction in a small group setting. "The challenge for us is fitting that in our daily schedule with the amount of teachers and staff that we do have," he said. The second item addressed was facilitating growth. "Pre-pandemic, we were really at the top of where we could

See **SUMMIT**, page 4

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Sammy Muniz, 57, died Wednesday. Services are pending at Myers & Smith Funeral.

C.K. Kenneth Orr, 95, died Saturday. Graveside service will Tuesday 11 a.m. at Trinity Memorial Park Peace Chapel.

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## SUMMIT

Continued from page 3

be from a student enrollment standpoint, from a facilities standpoint," he said. "So we were looking at things and then the pandemic hit so we didn't know, and now GEO, so we kind of don't know." Cox said the district's 1,100 enrollment is "really about the peak for our district," he said. Cox's third point was on mental health resources. "The challenge for us is the avenues," he said. "We can't find the path to help these people. That's what we're searching for, so if anyone can reach out and provide us with some avenues and opportunities, we would jump on it. We have a lot of kids and even adults who need help coming out of the pandemic. Cox's fourth point related to human capital and recruitment. "We're fortunate to really have it good - all the way from the school board down to the operations staff," he said, adding that the challenge is maintaining the excellent staff the district already enjoys.

• Forsan ISD - Superintendent Randy Johnson: Superintendent Johnson said that GEO's closures could have a significant impact on Forsan schools. "If all the Forsan families that are tied to GEO were to leave Howard County, that would cost us about 4 percent of our student body," he said. "That's significant when we start talking about the way school finance is set up." Johnson said that one former GEO employee had found a job with the Forsan ISD. Johnson announced that, after 20 years with the Forsan district, he is retiring; and the school district is currently in the process of seeking his replacement. He said that the board hopes to have a new superintendent in place by April 1, 2022. Johnson said many of the issues facing Forsan had already been covered by McWilliams and Cox, including test scores and teacher incentives; and Career and Technical Education and Career, College, and Military Readiness.

• West Texas VA Healthcare System - Medical Center Director Jason Cave: Cave, who stepped into his position at the WTVAHCS in 2019, explained that the system covers 33 counties in West Texas and East New Mexico. He spoke about several building projects at WTVAHCS facilities, including residential facilities at the Big Spring facility, as well as a 40-bed residential facility for substance abuse rehabilitation. "We have approximately a \$53 million ongoing construction budget," he said, noting that much of the budget was spent on "non-aesthetically attractive, but necessary HVAC work."

Keeping capacity to accommodate demand for veterans' healthcare benefits is a challenge; as is updating old technology at the VA facilities.

• Scenic Mountain Medical Center - President Stacey Brown: Brown made the point that SMMC is a private, for-profit hospital, and the only full-service hospital in Howard County. As a for-profit, SMMC is not funded by taxpayers through city or county government, Brown stressed. "We must generate revenue to cover our salaries, supplies, overhead, equipment and facility upgrades," she said. "It also means that Scenic Mountain is a taxpayer. If we don't receive taxpayer funds, then we pay taxes. So we pay property taxes and sales tax annually to the amount of about \$1.7 million each year to help them fund our city and county governments." Brown said she realizes that many Howard County residents have lost confidence in Scenic Mountain, and she and the hospital staff hope to regain that confidence. "We're working very hard to regain that confidence," she said. "We realize that people should not have to leave our area for services we provide right here in Howard County. So with that, our challenge is our past reputation." Other challenges mentioned by Brown include aging equipment and facilities, which need replacement; and staff shortages and difficulties with recruiting to rural Big Spring, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and nurses and other staff relocating to areas paying higher wages in response to the disease, or leaving health-

care jobs altogether. Brown said local citizens' lack of confidence in SMMC is making it difficult to upgrade their facilities to the highest level. "We replaced our MRI earlier this year at a cost of \$2.5 million. That's almost two years of our annual earnings. So think about that for a minute. How much equipment do you think we can replace, when it's taking all of our earnings over that period of time. Not a lot, right? We can't continue to invest in expensive equipment if our own community, our own county, is not willing to use our hospital so that we in turn can generate the funds for these investments. That's really why we need your help." Brown said between wages and taxes, SMMC has an economic impact on the local commu-

nity between \$58 and \$76 million each year.

Big Spring EDC Executive Director Mark Willis said he felt the event went well for a first try.

"I think it went alright," he said. "It's a start. I've already, out of this just from putting it together, committed to giving the county commissioners an update once a quarter, which I haven't done before. Hopefully that's the way this will work. Make everybody try to catch each other every now and then. We'll get better. I don't feel like I did a particularly great job, but I got across the information I wanted to get across. The more we know about what each other is doing, the better off we're all going to be."

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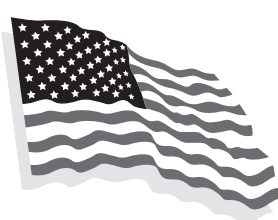
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### Coahoma and Forsan hoops to honor Veterans on historical day in American History



By **DUSTIN POPE**

Managing Editor

This coming up Tuesday night, Dec 7, the Forsan buffaloes and the Coahoma Bulldogs will be hosting a very fantastic night of basketball. The event will be the Howard County Hops Military Recognition night. It will be held at the

Dorthy Garrett Coliseum at Howard College; Tip-Off is at 7:45 p.m.

This special event will have plenty of basketball and a necessary time to honor those who have served this great Country. Both boys and girls varsity teams from Forsan and Coahoma will be in action. They will invite all Veterans onto the floor to be recognized in front of the entire crowd. It will be an extraordinary moment for those in attendance and those honored.

### Lady Steers Basketball team drops game last week Dec 3 to Abilene Cooper



Courtesy Photos/Tony Claxton

Top Left Ryen Terrazas battles for a ball this past Friday, Dec, as the Lady Steers took on Abilene Cooper. Top Right: Tristan Smith stuffs the Cooper player with a nice block. Unfortunately, the Lady Steers lost this game 63 to 39.

### Analysis: Patriots' downfall after Brady lasted one season

By **ARNIE STAPLETON**

AP Pro Football Writer

It didn't take long for the New England Patriots to become the New England Patriots again.

After stumbling through a 7-9 season last year while watching Tom Brady win a seventh ring in his first season with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Bill Belichick's squad is once again the class of the AFC.

Josh McDaniels' brilliant plan to have rookie quarterback Mac Jones throw just three passes Monday night paved the way for New England's 14-10 win at Buffalo in the snow globe and wind tunnel that was Highmark Stadium.

Behind those 46 runs in 49 snaps, the retooled Patriots won their sixth road game in six tries and pushed their winning streak to seven games, improving to 9-4. That's a half-game better than the Kansas City Chiefs, Tennessee Titans and Baltimore Ravens in the logjammed conference race.

And the Patriots are still finding ways to shut down Peyton Manning, who lost his head-to-head series with Brady 11-6.

The quarterback who was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame four months ago explained on

ESPN's "ManningCast" during the Patriots-Bills slog-fest that the Patriots public relations politely declined his request to interview Jones.

"Well, I tried to talk to Mac Jones, and he was very respectful," Manning relayed. "He said, 'Peyton, I want to do it, but can you call our PR director, Stacey (James)? Because he kind of has to oversee all things. I said, 'No problem.' I called Stacey, very professional, I said, 'Stacey, I'm talking to Coach Belichick, can I talk to Mac Jones?'"

The answer was no, although Manning took the rare rejection in stride.

"And I gotta tell you, I appreciate how they're handling Mac Jones. They are trying to protect him, give him as few off-the-field distractions as possible, let him concentrate on playing football," Manning said.

"So, yes, I did get denied. It was the first quarterback I haven't talked to. But, I appreciate it," Manning said.

Although Manning isn't accustomed to getting turned down, he said he understood what the Patriots were doing because he encountered the same treatment during his rookie season in Indianapolis in 1998.

"Bill Polian, as a rookie with me with the Colts, did the same thing. He didn't let the marketing depart-

ment talk to me, the community relations department talk to me. He said, 'Hey, it's all football this first season. Don't bother him,'" recounted Manning. "And I think the Patriots are taking that same approach with Mac Jones and it's paying off, it's working."

Everything's working in New England a year after the Patriots stumbled behind aging QB Cam Newton.

Jones, the 15th overall draft pick out of Alabama last June, finished 2 of 3 for 19 yards in becoming the NFL's third quarterback to win nine games in his rookie season, joining Pittsburgh's Ben Roethlisberger in 2004, and Dallas' Dak Prescott in 2016. He also joined Roethlisberger and Prescott in becoming the NFL's third rookie QB to win his first six road starts.

### PARADE

Continued from page 1

profit category was The First Church of the Nazarene. Second place went to Cub Scouts 305. Uprising Youth Ministry came in third. In the School category, Big Spring Independent School District took home first place. Runnels Academy finished with second-place honors, and third place went to the Forsan Cheerleaders. In the commercial division, it was 5 Star Transport who took home first-place honors; The Herald's own Ashley Teal had a big part in putting together that float, so congrats to her and that entire group. Gentle Pricks finished in second place, and Mighty Wash came in third. In

the Wild Card division, the 40 something cowgirls took first place. Big Spring Pride Drive followed with a second-place finish, and in third place, it was 3E ranch. ALSA took home the top prize in the Car division, followed by Crossroads Farmers Market in second. Finally, Killerwax West Texas took down third place. Congratulations to all of the winners; it was well deserved.

As with every year, the parade was a huge success; there were many smiling kids and, and just a lot, of Christmas spirit. It was a great way to kick off Christmas time here in Howard County!

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The Big Spring Herald is looking for individuals to throw newspaper routes in the Big Spring area.

If you have a reliable vehicle and valid automobile insurance

We would like to talk to you!

### Help Wanted



The Big Spring Herald is currently hiring for a sports writer.

The full-time position includes coverage of high school, local college, and individual athletics.

The sports writer is responsible for developing relationships with coaches, local athletes, and news sources.

He/she will be required, at times, to travel to cover local teams.

Applicants must have reliable transportation with mileage reimbursement and reside or be willing to relocate in Howard County.

Send resumes to Dustin Pope at editor@bigspringherald.com.

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### Help Wanted

Big Spring State Hospital  
1901 N. Hwy 87 Big Spring, TX 79720

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### Items for Sale



For Sale: Lighted Christmas Poinsettias, Cactus, Trees, and more decorations of all sizes. Call 432-935-5307 or 432-816-2922 or come by 1433 Hilltop Rd.

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## Broken Windows in Business are Fatal and Often Go Ignored

Something as small and innocuous as a broken window sends a signal to those who pass by every day. If it is left broken, the owner of the building isn't paying attention or doesn't care. Social psychologists and police officers agree that if one window is broken, all of the other windows will soon be broken too. It sends a bad message. It shows there is no order, no maintenance, and ultimately that whoever is in charge simply doesn't care -- a kind of anarchy by neglect.

This is a term coined by the criminal justice system but does not just have to do with crime and criminals; it can be applied to busi-

nesses as well. Take a messy bathroom, an indifferent employee, or a messy condiment area at a fast-food restaurant. Broken windows indicate to the consumer that the business doesn't care -- either that it is so poorly run it can't possibly keep up with its obligations or that it has become so oversized and arrogant that it no longer cares about its core consumer. They are the little details, but those are the things a consumer may notice the most, and it points to a bigger message.

The way a consumer perceives your business is a crucial element in a business's success or failure. If a consumer has a negative experience even one time, it is inviting disaster. Perception can change even after years of positive experience with a business, and it can be what makes a customer nev-

er return back.

Say a person visits the same coffee shop every single day. But one day, they are standing in line and notice the paint on the wall is peeling. This makes the customer wonder, what if that paint is peeling off and falling onto a surface where food is being prepared? The customer then wonders about the overall cleanliness of the store itself. That one seemingly minute detail can lead the customer's entire perception of a business to change -- even if it is not the reality and the business is clean. It's better to create a positive perception of course, but avoiding the negative one is far and away the most crucial thing one can do to attract and keep customers.

And while most customers will just leave the store and never

return, some may turn to social media if they had a very bad experience. Most people do not want in-person confrontation, with "store managers or telephone shouting matches with customer service representatives." Social media serves as a safe space for people to recount their experiences with a store and has more of a chance of holding the business accountable.

Kalev Leetaru wrote in Forbes, "It is remarkable how many stories about companies behaving badly these days begin with a wronged customer trying to solve the situation directly with the company and only after the company refuses to make things right, airing their grievances on social media, wherein the story goes viral and the company immediately apologizes and fixes things." It can spark a discussion of

other peoples' similar recants with that business and cause a lot of damage to the company, such as damaging its stock price or leading to forced executive resignations.

Constant vigilance, an absolute obsession with detail, is essential to running a business today. If you're not obsessed with the details of your business, believe me, there will be someone who is obsessed with theirs, and they will see to it that they overrun your customer rolls and decimate the loyalty you've built up with your regular clientele. A broken window needs to be repaired before it breaks so that the consumer never sees it in the first place. A quick cosmetic touch-up will not do the job either; it has to be a whole-hearted, quality repair, or the paint will start peeling soon again.

No window is too

small to break, nor is any window too small to repair. Everything counts, significantly more than you might think, especially on social media. And while consumers do not fully have a role in a customized production design process yet, they have a large and growing role in the survival of a business thanks to social media. There is a spotlight on broken windows now. Almost everyone can probably think of an instance where they had an issue or a complaint with a business and they were not listened to -- but now many of these issues are being brought to the public eye thanks to social media. Your business, to put it simply, will not survive too many broken windows. And "too many" is one.

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TUESDAY

DEC. 7

Table with 30 columns (channels) and 24 rows (time slots) listing TV programs and their details.

Contract Bridge

By Steve Becker Steppingstone to success

West dealer. East-West vulnerable. NORTH ♠652 ♥Q87 ♦854 ♣7642 WEST ♠1087 ♥43 ♦1063 ♣J9853 EAST ♠KJ94 ♥K6 ♦KJ92 ♣KQ10 SOUTH ♠AQ3 ♥AJ10952 ♦AQ7 ♣A

The bidding: West North East South Pass Pass 1NT Dble 2♣ Pass Pass 4♥ Opening lead—five of clubs. Lack of sufficient entries can be very bothersome at times, and many contracts fail solely because declarer lacks communication from one hand to the other. This situation is particularly annoying when one or more finesses need to be taken but declarer can't get to the correct hand to make the desired play or plays. In this deal, for example, if declarer could lead from dummy at will, he could take successful finesses in spades, hearts and diamonds and make 11 tricks. But with no ready-made entry to dummy, South must play exceedingly well to make even 10 tricks. He knows from the bidding that each of the three possible finesses is sure to succeed, but the best he can hope to do is to tunnel his way into dummy to take two of them. So after taking the ace of clubs, he leads the jack of hearts at trick two and overtakes it with the queen. (Note that South does not play the ace of hearts first, which would deprive him of a vital entry to dummy.) East wins the heart with the king and returns a club. Declarer ruffs high in order to preserve his 5-2 as entries to dummy's 8-7. South next crosses to dummy with a low trump and takes a spade finesse that succeeds, then returns to dummy with another low trump and takes a diamond finesse that succeeds. As a result of this meticulous manipulation of his trumps, South loses only a spade, a heart and a diamond and so makes four hearts. Tomorrow: Once upon a time. ©2021 King Features Syndicate Inc.

Annie's Mailbox

Dealing With Difficult Exes

Dear Annie: How do I convey to my adult married children that I do not like being around my ex for the holidays? My son lives several states away, and he invited my daughter and her family, my ex, and my wife and me for Thanksgiving together. This will be the first time in close to seven years that I will see both of my children together for a holiday. My daughter has had Christmas at her home every year since my granddaughter was born. We are invited, but my ex is always there. I think holidays should be happy occasions, at a minimum, so maybe we could rotate years. But that does not happen. I am dreading Thanksgiving and being around her. She puts in digs at me or, in my opinion, wants to start a fight when everyone else is out of earshot. I consider her a lying, cheating, adulterous witch.

I want to spend time with my kids, just not with her around. My daughter-in-law and son-in-law have had disagreements with her in the past. My letter is long enough; I could go on and on. -- Avoiding Ex

Dear Avoiding Ex: The best way to convey to your adult children that you would not like to be around your ex for the holidays is to tell them that. But understand that might mean less time with your kids.

You really have two choices: Ignore the chatter and negativity that is your ex-wife for the sake of spending more (quantity) time, or spend less time -- but quality time -- with your kids without your ex making rude remarks.

Regardless of what you decide, she is going to be in your life. It's best to try to let go and forgive some of the anger you have toward her for her adultery. Not for her sake, but for yours.

Dear Annie: I broke up with the mother of my children two years ago. We have had a very rocky past. I treated her badly for the first couple of years, and we separated for two years after our first child was born. We got back together 18 months later.

We were together for seven years on our second stint, and we had another child. We eventually didn't work out when my job took me away and she refused to leave her mother.

Now I am treated like a criminal. I don't get to see them and am only allowed to talk to the youngest one, and that's only once a week. The mother refuses to work with me on a fair schedule, and the courts are so backed up it may be another six months before I can get a court date.

The mother isn't a good person, and I fear for the way my kids are being raised and what

they are being told. I'm at a loss on what to do while I wait for the court date. -- Concerned Father

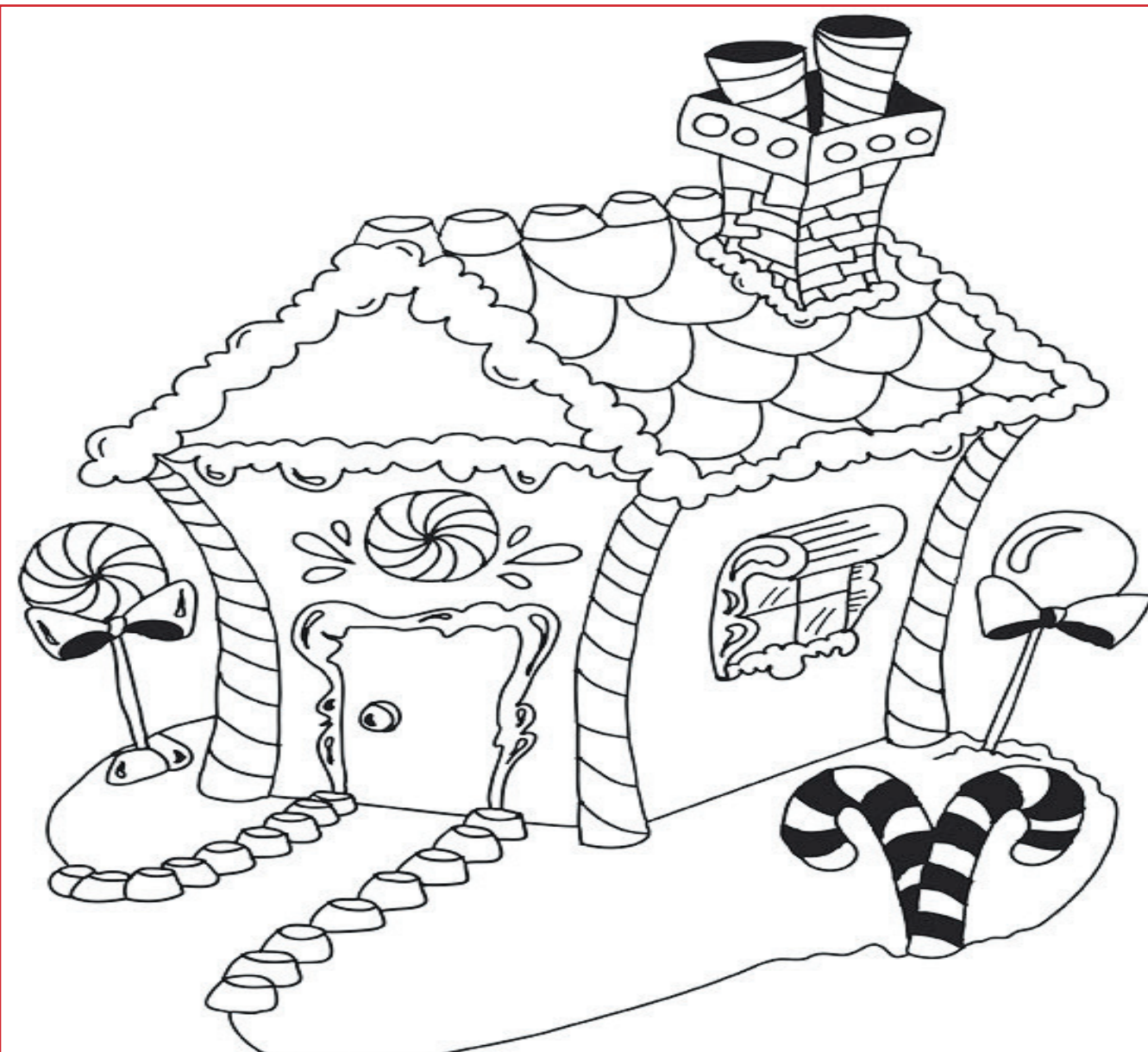
Dear Concerned: At least you're honest, admitting that your treatment of her was not good, so you can understand why she is keeping you away. But if you have really changed, why not write her a letter explaining what was going on in your life? Send her flowers; send the kids gifts. You might even try to have a calm, quiet conversation with her mother as well. Try courting them a little, rather than waiting for your day in court. If you are successful, you won't need it.

"Ask Me Anything: A Year of Advice From Dear Annie" is out now! Annie Lane's debut book -- featuring favorite columns on love, friendship, family and etiquette -- is available as a paperback and e-book. Visit http://www.creatorspublishing.com for more information.

Send your questions for Annie Lane to dearannie@creators.com.

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Christmas Holiday coloring FUN! Brought to you by: BIG SPRING HERALD Rich History, Big Possibilities







# Santa Business Contest

## Match The Santa To His Workshop!!



Santa No.	Business
_____	Double L BBQ
_____	Kassie Abrego Realtor
_____	Big Spring Fire Extinguisher
_____	Hull's Meat Market
_____	Franklin & Son
_____	Big Spring Herald

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

This entry form must be received by Tuesday, December 14th at 5 p.m. Drop off your form at the Big Spring Herald at 710 Scurry St. The winner will be the one who correctly matches the most Santas to his business/workshop. Gift certificates will be given away to use at the participating businesses. Winners will be announced in the Sunday, December 19th Edition of the Big Spring Herald!

*All decisions are final at the discretion of the Big Spring Herald*

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