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BROWNSVILLE AND THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY

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AROUND THE VALLEY

Political consultant convicted of sexual assault

► EDINBURG — Political consultant Carey Lee Cramer was convicted Tuesday of four sexual assault charges involving children.

Cramer, 44, of Tucson, Ariz., was convicted of aggravated sexual assault of a child, two counts of indecency with a child by contact and one count of indecency with a child by exposure.

The jury cleared Cramer of nine other first- and second-degree counts.

In 2000, Cramer gained national attention after he produced an anti-Al Gore television ad accusing the Clinton-Gore administration of giving nuclear technology to China in return for campaign contributions. Cramer's well-known commercial showed a young girl picking daisy petals and ends with a nuclear blast, a remake of a 1964 ad by Democratic President Lyndon B. Johnson's campaign against Republican Barry Goldwater.

Cramer's trial began June 7 before Visiting Judge Homer Salinas in state District Auxiliary Court A. Jurors began deliberating late Friday, continued throughout the day Monday and reached the verdict around 4 p.m. Tuesday.

Assistant District Attorney Gracie Saenz Reyna will begin presenting evidence in the trial's sentencing portion today at 9:30 a.m. Cramer faces up to 99 years in prison or life for the aggravated sexual assault of a child, a first-degree felony.

Cramer had been free on bond since his 2005 arrest. After the verdict, the judge ordered sheriff's deputies to take Cramer into custody on a \$4 million appeal bond while he awaits sentencing.

Former Scoutmaster arrested again

► EDINBURG — The former Mission Scoutmaster charged with molesting two Boy Scouts in his care a decade ago was released on bond Tuesday from the Hidalgo County Jail, only to be arrested again before he made it out of the parking lot.

Genaro Vela, 58, who is also a former junior high math teacher and boys' cross country coach, is now set for arraignment today in Mission Municipal Court on a felony charge of child aggravated sexual assault. The charge is the third to come from former Boy Scouts who claim their leader molested them, said Mission Police Spokesman Martin Garza.

LOTTO

► TEXAS LOTTERY RESULTS

Winning numbers, Tuesday, June 27:

Mega Millions: 2-14-20-29-44 MB 32

Megaplier: 4

Cash Five: 2-8-10-18-32

Pick 3 Day: 1-2-4; Pick 3 Night: 1-4-3

Find past winning numbers at www.txlottery.org

GETTING IT RIGHT

The correct position for Diana Bustinza, who was mentioned in *The Brownsville Herald's* "Questions raised about Good Neighbor services" article published on June 19, is assistant to the executive director. *The Herald* regrets the error.

► CORRECTIONS/CLARIFICATIONS

It is the policy of *The Brownsville Herald* to correct errors in a timely manner. Corrections and clarifications will be published in this space. To inquire about corrections, readers may call an editor.

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Foundation aims to create philanthropy on border

BY SARA INÉS CALDERÓN
THE BROWNSVILLE HERALD

RANCHO VIEJO — Border cities from Brownsville to San Diego kicked-off their annual conference Tuesday aimed at creating self-sustaining philanthropic organizations along the border.

The Border Community Foundations: Sustainability for Community Impact's seventh learning conference brought together people from 22 different cities in the United

States and Mexico who are developing projects with money raised through different philanthropic organizations.

The Brownsville Community Foundation was host of the conference for the U.S.-Mexico Border Philanthropy Partnership. Over time, organizations created through the partnership aim to help communities help themselves.

Since 1997, the Brownsville foundation has raised more than \$4.5 million and just recently granted \$25,000 to community projects.

The foundation works closely with the

Fundación Comunitaria in Matamoros and both have created projects focusing on local education, health care, environment, history and culture.

The Palo Alto National Historic site visitor's center, Paseo de la Resaca on the north side of town, and Proyecto Digna, an after-school tutoring program in Cameron Park, are some of the projects the Brownsville foundation has funded recently.

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Ex-Commissioners Court counsel expected to be released

THE BROWNSVILLE HERALD

Former Cameron County Commissioners Court Counsel Charles Douglas Wright is expected to be released from custody after a county court judge gave him a bond for an alleged probation violation.

The 57-year-old attorney retrieved from his post amid legal problems last year. He turned himself for probation violation Monday.

The incident marked his fourth arrest since a November 2004 traffic accident on South Padre Island where he was arrested on charges of a traffic violation, driving while intoxicated and unlawfully carrying a weapon.

Wright was arrested two more times in August and April for allegedly exposing himself on South Padre Island.

A Cameron County grand jury later indicted Wright on charges of indecency with a child by exposure, five counts.

Judge Menton Murray with the 103rd state District Court accepted Wright's "not guilty" plea to the charges Monday and gave him a \$7,500 bond.

Wright was held Monday night for failing to appear before Judge Daniel Robles of County Court-at-Law No. 3 for another hearing but received a \$5,000 bond Tuesday.

The attorney claims he was unable to attend the hearing in Robles' court because he was in a substance abuse program.

Former court clerk gets 10 years' probation

A state district judge gave a former Brownsville Municipal Court clerk 10 years of probation for accepting bribes to fix traffic tickets.

Court records show that Juana Maria Ballasteros, 34, pleaded guilty to two counts of bribery earlier this year and appeared Monday for her sentencing before Judge Abel Limas with the 404th state District Court.

Brownsville police arrested the clerk on a bribery charge in October 2004. An investigation revealed the woman accepted bribes from at least two people in 2004.

Under state law, Ballasteros faced two to 20 years in prison for each count but Limas gave her 10 years probation.

Police and court briefs are compiled by *Herald* reporter Sergio Chapa

RUBBER DUCKY, YOU'RE THE ONE



G. DANIEL LÓPEZ/THE BROWNSVILLE HERALD

Philip Arista, 12, lines up the winners Saturday of the corporate duck race held at Dean Porter Park. The seventh annual Rubber Duck Race was organized by

the Infant and Family Nutrition Agency (IFNA) of Brownsville, a United Way Agency. Proceeds will help IFNA continue services to local mothers and infants.

Document: Federal center purchased water from private company

BY ALLEN ESSEX
VALLEY MORNING STAR

Documents provided to the *Valley Morning Star* through a Freedom of Information Act request confirm reports last year that payment for water sold to the immigration detention center at Bayview went to a private company, rather than two irrigation districts that provided water.

S&R Properties, Route 3 Box 19, Los Fresnos, billed the former Immigration and Naturalization Service, now called U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, on June 23, 2004.

A government check dated Sept. 17, 2004, for \$2,160 was sent to and cashed by S&R Properties.

Although most names of persons on the federal documents were blacked out, Cameron County Clerk Joe G. Rivera's office records show S&R Properties is owned by Gordon R. Hill.

Hill was general manager of Bayview Irrigation District for 15 years before resigning after a June 23, 2005, district board meeting.

Hill said last July he had been planning to retire and that he knew of no problem involving water at the federal immigration camp.

He did not immediately return a reporter's telephone calls on Thursday.

Amy Gonzales, now general manager of the Bayview district, said Thursday she was not working at the district at the time Hill left.

The Star obtained the documents 11 months after filing a Freedom of Information Act request with federal officials.

Information was only obtained after hiring an attorney to work on the request and after the newspaper asked for help from U.S. Sen. John Cornyn's office.

The federal FOIA law requires the agency respond within 10 days of such a request.

A letter with the information apologized for the delay and blamed the delay on a heavy workload and lack of staffing at ICE offices.

An ICE spokeswoman could not confirm Thursday whether any federal charges have ever been brought against Hill.

Injured boy wants to be with father

BY SERGIO CHAPA

THE BROWNSVILLE HERALD

A 3-year-old La Feria boy recovering from a cracked skull and facial bruises, allegedly at the hands of his mother's boyfriend, told social workers he wants to be with his biological father.

Child Protective Court Judge Ricardo Flores on Tuesday ordered that Steven Florido Jr. and his older sister, Krystle Nicole Florido, remain under foster care until authorities can determine their safety with their father, Steven Florido, or one of their great aunts, Adeleida Peña of Pharr.

Both children clung tightly to their father before and after the hearing.

The boy appeared apprehensive and had fading bruises around his eyes and on his face but no other visible scars.

Javier Solis, a court-appointed attorney for the two children, said the two want to go home with their father or Peña.

The child's mother, Krystal Joanna Florido, was arrested by Cameron County Sheriff's Deputies on injury to a child and child endangerment charges on June 20.

The 21-year-old woman was caught while driving to Dallas with her injured son and with more than 13 pounds of marijuana during a June 12 traffic stop in Hidalgo County, according to a probable cause affidavit.

Chief Deputy Gus Reyna said baby Steven received the fractured skull and other facial injuries at the hands of his mother's boyfriend, Raul Serna of Harlingen.

Reyna said an investigation cleared baby Steven's 24-year-old father of criminal charges, contradicting Krystal Florido's claims that her estranged husband was responsible for the brutal beating.

"We're working with different individuals to find (Serna's) whereabouts and have him arrested," Reyna said.

Flores ordered that the children remain in foster care while Steven Florido undergoes a substance abuse assessment based on past drug abuse, random drug testing, counseling, a psychological evaluation and anger management classes.

The father said after the hearing that he would comply and said he was reunited with his children for the first time in two weeks. He will now be able to see them twice a week for two-hour visits.

The children's mother did not attend the hearing because she was in jail, but Flores ordered that the children be allowed supervised visits with her.

Steven Florido said he did not oppose those visits but noted that his wife had changed since they separated.

"The person she is now, is now the person I was with," he said.

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The Herald

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DON PEDRO SAYS

"So, Rush Limbaugh was apparently caught with a bottle of someone else's Viagra, eh?" Don Pedro said as he entered the newsroom.

"This is on top of his previous abuse of pain medications," the city editor replied.

"I can understand his addiction to the pain medications," the Don said. "I'm not sure I want to speculate on the Viagra."

And out he went.