

At the Stock Show & Rodeo

Heifers, even with glamorous names like Tyra, need beauty treatments before they are paraded before judges. And bathing a heifer takes dedication. **Page 5B**

FIRST DAY OF 40



DELICIA LOPEZ/STAFF

Skyy, 5, watches as her mother, Rachel Crisostomo, is marked with ashes as Ash Wednesday signals the beginning of Lent — a 40-day period of prayer, penitence and sacrifice — at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church. Watch more on MySA.com, keyword: EN Video.

Retired general says surge puts strain on forces

Abizaid speaks at Trinity's Distinguished Lecture Series.

BY SIG CHRISTENSON
EXPRESS-NEWS MILITARY WRITER

The commander who led U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan for the bulk of both conflicts said Wednesday that the surge is straining America's military.

But retired Army Gen. John Abizaid, who led the U.S. Central Command until last spring, told reporters in San Antonio there are solutions to the problem and a decision to be made as America settles in for a long struggle with Islamic militants.

"Clearly there is a stress on the force but there is a choice," he said in a news conference at Trinity University. "There's a choice of making the armed forces bigger, especially the ground forces, or bringing the force down in the theater."

In town to speak at Trinity's Distinguished Lecture Series, Abizaid made his remarks on the same day the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of

See **RETIRED/5B**

Lytle strip club is a values issue for decency group

BY SARA INÉS CALDERÓN
EXPRESS-NEWS STAFF WRITER

MEDINA COUNTY — An ordinary-looking building at the end of Main Street outside Lytle set off a wave of controversy Friday when it changed from a bar to a strip club.

Some residents and local churches responded immediately by banding together under the moniker Citizens for Decency and starting a petition against the "indecent and immoral establishment." Meanwhile, the owner of the Cabaret Dance Club said he's violated no law and took every step to inform the public of his plans before investing the money to open the club.

"I had to ask permission from the commissioners and there's no ordinance against it," said Amrik Ram, owner of the topless club.

Ram has owned and operated businesses in Lytle and Seguin for several years and began to convert his bar into a strip club about a month ago after customers encouraged the idea. The bar had been

See **GROUP/7B**

TYC head defends biz ties

Acting executive director says she may not have a job with the agency.

BY LISA SANDBERG
AUSTIN BUREAU

AUSTIN — In a clear sign that leadership woes continue to plague the Texas Youth Commission, the agency's newly appointed conservator, Richard Nedelkoff, was grilled by a panel of lawmakers Wednesday over his business ties to experts he

has consulted with for his state job. And after intense fire from the same panel, the agency's acting executive director conceded that she had been passed over for appointment to the permanent post.

"I applied but I was told I was not a candidate for the position. I can't sit here and lie to you," Dimitria Pope told lawmakers with a House subcommittee on criminal justice. "I don't know if I'll be here next month or next week. I don't know if I'll be here tomorrow," she said.

Her failure to snag the permanent executive director position did not surprise insiders.

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Keyword: Blogs
Texas Politics keeps you in the know on state's political landscape.

She was criticized for stepping up the use of pepper spray against unruly youths; allegedly ignoring reports that more youths were being kept in isolation as punishment for poor behavior; and for spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on of-

fice furniture and remodeling that was apparently meant for hiring correctional staff.

Nedelkoff said he was still deciding whom to appoint to the permanent post and wasn't yet sure if Pope would remain at TYC in another capacity.

Pope's candor appeared to stun Nedelkoff, who had repeatedly deflected questions about whether he would pass over Pope in favor of someone else.

"Is Ms. Pope going to be the executive director of TYC?" demanded

See **TYC/7B**

MAGNIFIED: DANGEROUS DOGS?



ANGELA GRANT/STAFF

David Perez, an animal control officer with Animal Care Services, tries to lasso a loose dog that aggressively charged an ACS vehicle on patrol. The dog escaped, but was accidentally run over by a vehicle operated by another officer during the ensuing chase.

Both sides of fence



KIN MAN HUI/STAFF

Pit bull owner Lizanne Sanchez kisses her dog during a recent meeting of the group Alamo City Bully Breeds United at O.P. Schnabel Park. Sanchez was joined by fellow members of the group who support and advocate for proper care and training of pit bulls. The group often meets at various parks around the city to help educate the public about the breed.

Last year, several attacks by dogs made headlines, putting the spotlight on dangerous canines. In Magnified, our special video series examines the situation in San Antonio. Get an up-close look at how Animal Care Services is addressing the complaints of residents and meet a group of owners passionate about pit bulls.



Keyword: EN Video
Magnified takes a look at the canine debate in San Antonio.

Motorists forced to face toll roads as state plays budget shell game



JAIME CASTILLO

It's amazing what pushes the outrage needle these days.

Web hits mushroom and national debate ensues when a blowhard like Al Sharpton accuses another blowhard like Don Imus of making dumb statements.

If Britney so much as leaves her compound, the world stands still.

But here in Texas, it's a mere annoyance that the Legislature and state transportation officials are making bigger fools out of us than we previously thought.

Gridlocked Texas drivers have known for some time that they are being held hostage, caught between a vice of gutless state budgeting and Gov. Rick Perry's love affair with toll

roads.

We've been asked to swallow tolled highways as the only way out of a situation in which construction costs are rising as fast or faster than a booming general population.

And we've been told to do this while state lawmakers poke us in the eye with one hand and use the other to continue to drain highway dollars for things that have nothing to do with building roads.

In the current two-year state budget, another \$1.57 billion will be diverted from road building to allow the supposedly fiscally conservative state leadership to balance the books

See **CASTILLO/3B**

Texans are not used to being cast in influential political positions



CARLOS GUERRA

With Super Tuesday behind us, no candidate in either party has the delegates for the nomination. Other media finally are writing what the Express-News reported Sunday: There weren't enough delegates in play to give any candidate the nod.

And finally, everyone realizes that for the first time since the parties let regular voters into the nominating process, Texans could pick the winners.

But Texans are unused to being in such a powerful situation.

Will we know how to act? I sought the expertise and advice of Bill Israel, a journalism professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, since his credentials might

be particularly valuable to Texans.

In addition to specializing in political communication, Israel spent most of the 1990s at the University of Texas at Austin, earning his doctorate while co-teaching a class with Karl Rove.

He also learned firsthand about living in a state where the primary process has been a spectator sport to all but the state's most powerful.

"It was a contrast, too, because I grew up in Iowa, where the caucuses were supreme," he says, before sagely advising us about participating in the presidential nomination process: "Be picky is the first thing."

See **GUERRA/3B**