

East Side

El Paso Times

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Neighborhoods, city desk, 546-6352, neighbors@elpasotimes.com | www.elpasotimes.com **3B**



Fort Bliss

Program seeks to match soldiers with business partners

Coming Friday

Star Lighter

The Star on the Franklin Mountains may be lighted in honor of an El Pasoan or an El Paso business. Tonight, the star is lighted:

► In recognition of **T & T Staff Management**, official sponsor of the Star on the Mountain. The Greater Chamber and the El Paso community thank you for keeping it shining brightly.

The cost to light the star is \$50 a night. To light the star, call the Greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce, 534-0500, one week in advance.

In brief

King food drive starts today in East El Paso

EL PASO — The annual canned food drive to honor Martin Luther King Jr. will begin at noon today at the Wal-Mart Neighborhood Market at 3000 Saul Kleinfeld in East El Paso.

The annual event is sponsored by several organizations, including the city and county of El Paso, Center Against Family Violence, El Paso Rescue Mission, Opportunity Center for the Homeless, the Salvation Army and UTEP.

The food drive continues through Jan. 18. Collection bins will be placed at supermarkets, city and county buildings, public libraries and participating businesses.

The collected food will be sorted and distributed among agencies serving the community.

Times staff report

Helping others



Photos by Mark Lambie / El Paso Times

EL PASO — Conservative radio talk-show host Greg Freyermuth will be the guest speaker for the next meeting of the Greater El Paso Republican Women this fall.



Freyermuth will speak on "An Exciting Time in Texas Politics," focusing on the coming race for Texas governor. The Republican Women will meet at 9 a.m. Sept. 16 at Vista Hills Country Club, 2210 Trawood.

A breakfast buffet will be served; the cost is \$12. The public is invited.

Information: Elizabeth Leal, 820-9011.

Times staff report

Health fair at church to offer screenings

EL PASO — The public can receive free screenings for blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol during a health fair Saturday.

The fair, sponsored by Superior Health Plan, will begin at 8 a.m. with a 1-mile walk. At 9 a.m., the health fair will begin offering screenings, low-cost childhood immunizations, physicals and free information on dental health, family planning, CHIP and Medicaid health coverage. Admission is free.

The event will take place at the Word of Life Church, 11675 Pratt.

Information: 855-9673.

Times staff report

Things to do

A few East Side attractions:

► **Bowl El Paso**, 11144 Pellycano. 593-7777.

► **Cinemark 14** theater in the northwest parking lot of Cielo Vista Mall. 779-2215.

► **County Commissioner Miguel Terán Park**, 15375 Kentwood, has a skate park, community center and recreational courts.

► **Dick Shinaut Skatepark**, 11701 Rufus Brijalba.

► **Eastwood (Album) Skatepark**, 3110 Parkwood.

► **El Paso County Sports Park**, 1780 N. Zaragoza. Baseball and softball leagues. 857-7676.

► **Esperanza Acosta Moreno Regional Library**, 12480 Pebble Hills. 921-7001.

► **Gary Del Palacio Recreation Center** at Eastwood (Album) Park, 3001 Parkwood. 629-7312.

► **Hawkins Indoor Pool**, 1500 Hawkins. 594-8031.

► **Irving Schwartz Branch Library**, 1865 Dean Martin. It is closed Sundays and Mondays. 857-0594.

► **Marty Robbins Indoor Pool**, 11065 Vista Del Sol, 855-7456.

► **T&I Indoor Pool**, 9031 Viscount, 598-1163.

Girl Scouts aim to help kids get fun from words

By Pink Rivera

El Paso Times

EL PASO — A service project by two Girl Scouts will provide a valuable reading resource for students struggling to read and will help the teen-age Scouts earn the highest award offered by Girl Scouts.

Mattison Miertschin, 16, and Katie Wentworth, 18, members of Troop 342, will each receive the Girl Scout Gold Award this May. Their service project involved recording themselves reading children's books available to young students at the Bridges Academy. Students who are struggling in reading can play the compact discs as they read the books to help them.

"We both came up with the idea and we've been working on it for about a year and a half," Wentworth said. "We wanted to help kids who don't have people to read to them."

The girls will donate the voice recordings on the CDs they made to local organizations. They also created various activities to go along with the books for children to enjoy, including seek and finds with magnifying glasses, word searches and word matching activities.

"My brother attends this school, and I know how difficult it is for him to read," Wentworth said.

"I think the kids will really enjoy these packets we made them and it'll make reading more enjoyable for them," she said. "Personally, we love to read and this was a fun project for us. We also learned a lot and hope future Girl Scouts will use our idea to earn their Gold Award as well."

Wentworth and Miertschin contacted the publishers of the children's books to get permission to record their readings of the books for their project.

They said that it was difficult to make a perfect recording without stumbling over words, but that their efforts became better with practice.

Miertschin said she plans to become a writer and hopes to write successful children's books.

"This is where I got the idea from," she said. "I love reading and I used to love being read to when I was

Going for Gold



An audio CD was created to accompany the children's book "Max's Breakfast" by Rosemary Wells.



Mattison Miertschin, right, holds a children's book as an audio CD plays along with the text Wednesday at the Bridges Academy.

younger. I think it's important, and I hope this makes it more enjoyable for the kids who need that extra push."

The projects Girl Scouts perform for the Gold Star Award are designed to help them develop leadership and organizational skills, as well as help them feel a sense of community and commitment and set the foundation for a lifetime of active citizenship.

"The troop started off with 24 members and now we're down to four," said Lisa Miertschin, troop leader, pre-kindergarten teacher and Mattison's mother. "They wanted to stay and earn their Gold Award, and these two were the only ones that actually went through with their ideas. Only about six girls (in El Paso) earn this award every year because it takes a lot of work and dedication."

About 5,500 Scouts in the nation earned the Gold Award last year, according to information on the Girl Scouts USA Web site. That's about 5.4 percent of eligible scouts, ages 14-18.

"I worked on the books for the younger kids," Mattison Miertschin said. "I really enjoyed the Mercer Mayer books, like 'Me and My Dad,' because I like how he uses his characters and there's a picture of them on each page. It was hard coming up with activities and trying to find fun things for them to do."

Irma Keys has been the director at Bridges Academy for 20 years, and said about 70 students attend the school to meet their special needs.

"Some of these students are dyslexic or have attention deficit disorder, and we specialize in that," Keys said. "They're very smart, creative kids; they

just learn in a different way. The written English language is very foreign to them, and they need help reading. The audio (recording) helps them, kind of like speech therapy, to understand the words and the flow, and they love to listen along."

Keys said the girls' project fits into the school's curriculum perfectly because they had asked teachers to suggest books teachers use in their classes.

"They will become part of the class," Keys said. "This will definitely help them and motivate them to read. To know that someone thought about them and created something for them is really inspiring."

The girls each spent about 200 hours recording their voices and preparing the activities for 80 books total. They donated 20 books each to four organi-

zations: the Bridges Academy, the Child Crisis Center, the Advance Program at Newman Elementary School and the Lee and Beulah Moor Children's Home.

Materials and books cost the girls about \$400, but cookie money came to the rescue.

"We're very proud of the girls," said Karen Wentworth, Katie's mother. "She's always helped me with her brother and read to him to help him with his dyslexia. She loves helping other children, and to me, as a mother, that's wonderful, because you raise your kids to give back to the community and she's always been a self-starter and very active in school."

Miertschin and Wentworth are Eastwood High School students.

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