WISE COUNTY



EXODUS — After being diagnosed with dangerous levels of toxins in their blood and organs, Lisa and Bob Parr and their 7-year daughter were forced to leave their home in order to escape emissions leaking from neighboring gas well facilities.

Flight for survival

Toxic emissions force family to leave home

First in a series examining industrial pollution in Wise County

By BRANDON EVANS

They call her the canary.

For more than a year, a range of random illnesses plagued Lisa Parr.

"I started to get a little sick," she said.
"I thought I was getting the flu. I was just tired and achy and started going through appear. little product

through some little problems.
"Then I started breaking out in a rash. It literally covered my entire body — my scalp all the way down to the bottoms of my feet," Parr recalled. "I made multiple trips to the emergency room. I had six doctors working on me, and they couldn't figure out what it was.

Today, her arms and legs bear pocklike scars from rashes.
Lisa first felt sick in fall 2008. As the

immense trees across her 40-acre homestead droppd pecans, Lisa accumulated a host of unexplained ailments. The typi-cal remedies didn't work.

"I had nine rounds of steroids in six months," she said. "They just blew me up and didn't get rid of the problem."

In May 2008, Lisa married Bob Parr on golden-colored stone steps at his country home in east Wise County in the Allison community. The back porch overlooks a picturesque setting. Horses and cows

graze lazily in a green pasture. Denton Creek winds along the back of the prop-erty, bringing with it a lush river of trees along either side. It seems impossible such a scene would

provide the backdrop for the poisoning of the Parr family by a laundry list of industrial neurotoxins.

Lisa was treated by eight different doctors over the course of a year. A source of the sickness was never determined. In June 2009, after exhausting everything he knew medically, her internal special-ist suggested that something in the environment might be causing her various ailments

Continued on page 2A

Fall means time of fun and festivals

Leaves changing color, warm fires and fresh jam signal that Thursday is the first day of fall for Wise County, and there are plenty of events to mark its arrival. Each city marks the beginning

of the changing season with fanfare and celebrations. This Friday in Greenwood, a 12-acre maze of Hybrid Sudangrass opens after much planning and nurturing of the field.

The maze was designed by Kriston Wilson, who said she wished something like this was available when she was a child. Making sure people can find their way out has been a significant problem.
"If you want to make it good,

you have to put as much work into it as someone puts into their job in a year," Wilson said. The maze is open on weeker with a special haunted maze Oct. 22 through 24 and Oct. 29 through 31. A pumpkin patch will also be open by the holiday.



PEEKING THROUGH — Kriston Wilson peeks through the sugar stalks that make up a 12-acre maze in Greenwood. The attraction opens this

The Paradise Main Street Fes- the first weekend in October as a tival is 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday. See more in a story in today's All Around Wise.

The fourth annual Coal Miner's Heritage Festival is always held

good kickoff for fall. The Bridge-port festival will feature a pet parade and a hot dog eating contest in its full day of activities

The Oct. 2 festival is a good way

hot or too cold, said Teri Bland who has helped organize the Coal Miner's Days.
"It helps kick off the fall season,

and then we roll right into the hol-iday season," Bland said. It features a 5K run, pumpkin

painting, a petting zoo, the first 4x4 expo, a farmer's market with fall vegetation, a car show, baking contest and the previous Bridge port Idol winners

"It's a growing festival," Bland said. "Each year it just gets a little

The next weekend Oct 9 Green wood hosts its 13th Fall Festival with a parade and a fish fry.

"I think it is a good beginning (to fall) because the weather has usually cooled off by then, and we usually draw a really good crowd," said event coordinator Marilyan

Besides the parade and fish fry the festival boasts crafts, game

Continued on page 3A

BRIDGEPORT

Going green

Grant would provide solar energy for school

By JULIE NEAL

Bridgeport schools are pushing forward with a grant that would make go-

ing green a reality.

Bridgeport School Board wants its high school to lead the county in the green initiative. On Monday night, they voted to apply for a \$1 million grant allowing for 586 solar panels on the high

school's roof.

The State Energy Conservation office grant fund has \$15 million to award to schools, and Bridgeport is hoping to receive some of

that money.
Eric Cotney, business development manager for Axium Solar, has almost completed the application for the grant and explained the project to the board at Monday's meeting.

The solar panels would weigh less than 3 pounds per square foot and would be weighted down to the roof, instead of bolted down. They're made to withstand 120 mph winds and are covered under warranty for 25

years. The solar energy would offset 12 percent of the high

Continued on page 6A

DECATUR

Cross project will give scout wings

By MANDY BOURGEOIS

Tim Cain looked in the trunk of his mother's car. Inside were 250 metal crosses waiting to be painted.

He, his mother and grandfather had painted one side of 150 crosses Monday, and were planning to paint the rest of the week. The back of each cross has a flag holder for the Stars and Stripes to fly on veterans' holidays. A Confederate flag will fly on holidays for the Confederate

veterans. The 400 crosses will be placed at graves at Oaklawn Cemetery in Decatur Satur-

The project is Cain's last task before earning Eagle

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BREATH OF FRESH AIR

bout with the swine flu last year damaged his lungs, but Bridgeport's Tanner Hannah is now back on the field.



DISTINGUISHED **ALUMNUS**

Roy Eaton last week became Northwest's first Distinguished See page 5A

WEATHER

86/73

www.wcmessenger.com/weather

Cross project will give scout wings ...

rank with the Boy Scouts.

The idea came from the Wise County Veterans Group, which plans to place crosses at every veterans grave site in the county.

"It was mentioned that it would be nice if we could have flags fly at the cemetery. It would be nice to honor the veterans who are deceased," said Gordon Hofstra, a member of the WCVG. "Each grave will be easily identified on Veterans Day, Memorial Day and Patriots Day."

Cain, now a member of Troop 1910 in Keller, was a member of Troop 121 in Decatur when it was recruited by the WCVG to take on the project. "We

"We were approached when I was still with Troop 121. The Wise County Veterans Group asked if I wanted to do the project, and I accepted," Cain said.

Cain arranged for 5P Welding Inc. to make the crosses, which he and his family are painting.

But the family needs help installing the crosses at 400 sites Saturday, Sept. 25. Cain is asking for volunteers to pour concrete and place the crosses at 10 a.m.

"(Volunteers) would do a couple of things," he said. "They could help dig holes, pour the cement and place the crosses, and help clean

up." Call (940) 626-4201 for

more information.

Hofstra said that the WCVG worked with the Oaklawn Cemetery Association to determine the loca-tions of all veterans buried in the cemetery. However, he said that if a veteran was not included, the family can let the WCVG know. Visit www.wisecountyveterans. org to send an e-mail to the



HELP NEEDED — Tim Cain and his family will install 400 crosses at veterans grave sites at Oaklawn Cemetery in Decatur Saturday, Sept. 25, to complete his Eagle Scout project. Cain needs volunteers to help with the installation.

will be a show of community support and remembrance.

Hostra said the project in grespect for our veterans will be a show of community support and remembrance.

Hostra said the project in grespect for our veterans and the service they did for along with the (movement)

E-mail Mandy at mb in the country to recognize geois@wemessenger.com.

past, veterans have been veterans."

E-mail Mandy at mbour-

WISE COUNTY

Flight for survival ...

Continued from page 1A

In early fall 2009, she visited an environmental doctor who confirmed the presence of neurotoxins in her blood that matched chemicals used in natural gas production.

Toxic plume
Medical tests confirmed the toxins in Lisa's system matched toxins found in the atmosphere in an air-quality investigation conducted by the Texas Commission of Environ-mental Quality (TCEQ) at a nearby gas well site.

On the evening of July 25, 2010, the Parrs smelled a strong odor emanating from a frac tank at a site operated by Aruba Petroleum of Plano. They reported it to TCEQ. Investigators arrived within hours to capture air samples.

Odors were detected up to a quar-ter-mile from the well site. The investigator, Damon Armstrong, re-ported that a "plume" wafting from the tank was "visible with the naked eye." The petroleum-like odor was so intense the investigator himself felt sick in the short time he was there, noting dizziness and sore throat.

The analysis found five compounds that exceeded safe values for short-term health effects, and another 20 exceeded safe levels for long-term

The investigation found elevated levels of ethane, pentane, hexane, octane, xylene and nonane, all potentially toxic chemicals.

Four days later, a medical test dis-

covered the same chemicals inside

Lisa.

"The environmental specialist ran numerous tests on me." Lisa said. "I had about 20 of the chemicals they use in the oil and gas industry in my tiesues and in my blood system.



- During her first artistic free time at Carson mma drew a picture of gas wells surrounding her Elementary, 7-year-old Emma drew a picture of gas family and their home.

Never in my life had I been so sick." Aruba operates many of the 21 gas rells surrounding the Parr home. TCEQ has received dozens of odor, spill and nuisance complaints from Allison residents in the community over the past year. Enforcement ac tions are pending against two near-by Aruba sites, one for nuisance and another for violations without authorization.

The company has been fined more than \$30,000 in the past year by TCEQ for operations in the Allison

The July 25 report recommended that Aruba receive two more viola-tions. One was for "contaminants being in such concentration and of such duration ... to be injurious to or to adversely affect human health or welfare, animal life, vegetation, or property." A second was for failure to claim authorization for a facility

emitting air contaminants.

Toxic refugees No gas wells are on the Parrs' 40 acres. The wells in question surround their land, hundreds of yards

removed from the home. But their

location makes it a natural pocket for collecting heavy toxins.

"We live below a ridge, in a little

valley," Bob said. "At night when the wind dies down, anything down here sits and settles. Some of these chemicals and toxins are heavier than the

en.
"I was pretty much losing my memory," she said. "I couldn't walk straight, and I kept falling down. I started shaking uncontrollably. My face drew up. I was stuttering very

At one point the lymph nodes on her neck swelled as big as pecans, A doctor suspected she had lymphatic cancer, but it was only a reaction to

"Waiting on those results was two days of emotional trauma," she said. Her husband and her 7-year-old daughter, Emma, felt sick as well

"My daughter began having severe nosebleeds," she said. "She'd wake me up at 6 a.m., crying, covered in blood."

Emma was just diagnosed with asthma. She'd never had any respi-ratory problems. Emma also started breaking out in rashes and having mach problems.

Bob also suffered from nosebleeds Bob also surfered from nosenuecas.
"Tm 50 years old and probably
haven't had more than three or four
nosebleeds in my entire lifetime,"
Bob said. "All of a sudden I'm getting them three times a week. It was

"I hired someone to do water and air sampling at the home," she said.
"The methane level in my daughter's room was at asphyxiation lev-

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Parker County says take care of tickets

Residents from Wise County owe Parker County more than \$85,000 in fines and fees from a total of 398 outstanding cases in the Parker County

Justice of the Peace Courts.
Failure to pay traffic tickets will result in arrest, and a warrant roundup will begin next week.

will begin next week.

"Those who fail to pay their traffic
tickets and court fees are costing the
rest of the tax payers," Parker County
Judge Mark Riley said. "We are giving
those who owe outstanding fines an opportunity to pay now and avoid further

Parker County Justice of the Peace Precinct 3 Suzie Merkley said the four

justice of the peace offices will stay open extra hours from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Thurs-day, Sept. 23, and from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday Sept. 25, in addition to the regular Monday through Friday hours, in order for those with fines to pay be-

fore the warrant roundup begins.

"People with outstanding fines will be able to go to our website, www. co.parker.tx.us, and follow a link to check for their name and fine amount," Merkley said. "There will be an oppor tunity for those who pay their fin fees during this amnesty period to have a partial reduction in the total amount owed. The delinquent fine listing will show which justice court the payment

is owed, so that you can contact the ap-propriate precinct."

Payments can be made online at www.

trafficpayment.com or in person at the

- appropriate JP offices:

 Justice of the Peace Precinct 1, 1020 E. Texas 199, Springtown, (817) 220-5857:
- Justice of the Peace Precinct 2, 207 Fort Worth Hwy., Weatherford, (817) 598-0496:
- Justice of the Peace Precinct 3, 1112 Santa Fe Dr., Weatherford, (817) 598-6192; and
- Justice of the Peace Precinct 4, 5189 East I-20 Service Rd. North, Willow Park, (817) 441-1071.

DEATH

Billie Adam Foster 1923-2010

Funeral for Billie Adam Foster, 84, of Krum is at 10:30 a.m. Thursday, Sept. 23, at the First United Methodist Church in Krum with Bobby Cates and Keith Cupples officiating. Burial will be at Jackson Cemetery. Foster died Sunday, Sept.

19, 2010. Born Jan. 30, 1926, in Decatur to E.R. Foster and Edith C. Foster, he married Billie Louise Leddy March 21, 1958, in Fort Worth. He and his wife founded Fos-ter's Saddle Shop in 1966. Foster supported local 4-H and FFA organizations, International Professional Rodeo Association, North Texas State Fair and other non-profit organizations. He was a hunter, fisherm

nper and world traveler. He was preceded in death by his wife on Feb. 18, 2010; and son and daughter-in-law, Buddie and Jeannie

He is survived by sons, Mark Foster and wife, Mad-eline, and Brad Foster; daughters, Sandra North and husband, John, of Slidell, Lisa Foster of Little Elm, Christie Enoch and husband, Terry, of Slidell and Tina Foster-Bergbauer and husband, Craig, of Clare, Ill.; 17 grandchildren; 20 great-grandchildren; and other relatives.

Memorials may be made to a favorite charity.

Wise County Messenger, September 23, 2010

WISE COUNTY

Flight for survival ...

els. And it was barely lower than what it was outside our

She showed the results to her doctor, who told her to leave her home within 48

"The doctor told me right then," she said, pausing as her voice cracked and a tear streamed across her left cheek, "I had to move im-mediately. Because if I did not, we would have to spend more time and money on hospitalization, on chemo-therapy and morticians for my whole family."

On Saturday, Aug. 28, the Parrs said goodbye to their formerly idvllic home and moved into Bob's office in Denton. They don't know how long they'll have to

"What we are going through is one of the worst things a family could have to go through," she said. "Hav-ing to leave this house and explain to my 7-year-old

daughter that we've been run out of our house." Bob and Lisa Parr aren't

the sickly type. Bob built his home in 2001. He's en-joyed a long career in stone masonry and raising cattle. His home reflects the rugged, outdoor lifestyle he en-joys. Walls bear the trophies of big-game hunting in the wilds of Alaska. Black bear, mountain lions and elk are mounted on high wooden walls.

"We love it here," Lisa said while sitting in a wooden rocking chair on the back porch and gripping her hus-band's hand. "We're secluded, private. We just wanted to be left alone, and we've been run out of our house. It's not right. What's even more not right is we thought TCEQ would come out and help us — they would clean

up this mess.
"We've had no help. We have someone who is con-taminating our air. It has affected our cattle. We've lost pets. We've lost chickens. We're all sick, and we've gotten no help," she said. "I began affecting her husband want them to fix it so we can and adaughter.

"It had only been affecting come home."

Tony Walker, regional di-rector for TCEQ, said his agency can't shut down polluting facilities. However, it can set the wheels in motion

"We don't have the author ity to shut down (a facility)," Walker said. "But if we have to we can contact the attorney general and ask them to step in."

He said TCEQ might do so if a company has a history of non-compliance and "if there is an eminent, substantial endangerment to the pub-lic." The term public "can be only one person."

He said he can't comment specifically on this case be-cause the investigation is ongoing.

Several doctors had told Lisa for some time she need-ed to leave her home, but

and daughter.
"It had only been affecting me, so we stayed," Lisa said.
"They thought I was supersensitive. They called me the

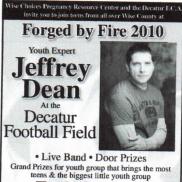
canary.
"I told them, "That wasn't

funny because eventually the canary died."

Other people in the Al-lison community have suffered adverse health effects similar to the Parrs. Several residents are working to get a comprehensive health survey, similar to one conducted at DISH in Denton County.

Aruba was contacted for this story, but Chief Finan-cial Officer Jim Lovett directed comments to Sunwest Communications, its pubrelations firm. Sunwest didn't contact the Messenger prior to press time.

E-mail Brandon at bev-



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