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JANUARY 22, 2006



An outside connection

A father seeks ways to connect with his son. **SUNDAY LIFE, PAGE 10**

GUIDELIVE: Another big composer anniversary year is upon us: the 250th anniversary of Mozart's birth. **IG**



WFAA High: 42 Low: 35
Metro, Back Page

Rain at last for North Texas?

Forecasters say that rain is very likely today, but not enough to have a significant effect on the drought. **2A**

GUIDELIVE

Oklahoman wins Miss America title



Miss Oklahoma Jennifer Berry, 22, an aspiring teacher, was crowned Miss America. **IIG**

METRO

Cowboys fans wince at stadium fee plans

A proposal that would increase prices for Cowboys fans and tax players for each game is drawing ire. **1B**

Also: Officials try to tackle a dramatic rise in the number of homeless people over the last year. **Inside Metro**

NATION

Student aid could be tied to curricula

The federal government would determine student aid based on the rigors of high school curricula as part of a bill expected to pass next month. **9A**

SCIENCE & MEDICINE

Studies heighten staph infection fears

Recent studies about a staph infection known as MRSA have heightened concerns, including its resistance to many traditional treatments. **6A**

DATELINE

'Lampoon' schools UT comedy students

A class at the University of Texas combines the expertise of *National Lampoon* with the comedy of the Lone Star State. **12A**

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NFL PLAYOFFS

Super matchup to be set today

AFC CHAMPIONSHIP



Pittsburgh at Denver
2 p.m. today
Channel 11, KTCK-AM (1310)

NFC CHAMPIONSHIP



Carolina at Seattle
5:30 p.m. today
Channel 4, KTCK-AM (1310)

SUPER BOWL XL

5:30 p.m. Feb. 5, Detroit's Ford Field, Channel 8

Staying power: Teams show that hiring a good coach and sticking with him can reap benefits. **SportsDay, 1C**

Cut-and-paste cheating

Web makes student plagiarism easy, but teachers fighting back

By **MIKE JACKSON**
and **KAREN AYRES**
Staff Writers

Kathy Witcher knew her student's paper on Huckleberry Finn sounded too mature for an 11th-grader.

"The light was society," the student wrote. "And Huck lived on the lampshade."

The Plano English teacher put her suspicions to the test and searched for the phrase on the Internet. The idea behind the metaphor popped up.

"When they write for us, it's like a fingerprint," said Ms. Witcher, who gave the Plano East Senior High School student a zero. "They don't change from mediocre writers to great writers overnight."

Score one for the teachers in an intensifying war on plagiarism.

Cheating is as old as homework, but educators say plagiarism appears to be more rampant than ever in high schools and colleges. They blame the Internet. Students among the first generation to grow up online are writing term papers

with unlimited resources at their fingertips, rather than combing the shelves at the library.

But these young people, educators say, often don't understand that surfing Web sites and lifting passages for their assignments is stealing ideas and words from others.

"Students use it like an 8-billion-page, cut-and-pasteable encyclopedia," said John Barrie, who created a Web site, Turnitin.com, which exposes plagiarized work.

See **SCHOOLS** Page 26A

Vanishing safety net



BARBARA DAVIDSON/Staff Photographer

Trang Nguyen of Arlington, her arm numbed by a stroke, is comforted by husband Rot Pham. The refugees, thwarted by a lack of English, lost Medicaid help because they didn't become U.S. citizens within seven years of moving here.

Refugees who don't become citizens lose health aid

By **KAREN M. THOMAS**
Staff Writer

ARLINGTON — Rot Pham squats on the floor of his apartment and opens a small plastic bag filled with prescription bottles. They hold medication to treat his wife's high blood pressure, diabetes and the gangrene that has turned her left big toe black.

All were prescribed for Trang Nguyen in April after she suffered a stroke. Now, several weeks later and home from a 13-day hospital stay, Ms. Nguyen, 74, rests in bed in a tiny back bedroom, her limbs propped

up with pillows.

Mr. Pham wants to make sure he gives his wife the right amount of medicine at the right time. But he cannot read the directions on the bottles. They are in English, which the 76-year-old Vietnamese refugee and his wife can't read, speak or write.

The couple's inability to learn English

has led them to be among the nation's 45 million uninsured. They are also part of a small but growing group of refugees left without federal assistance when they need help the most.

Under the 1996 Welfare Reform Act, refugees, who arrive here under special immigration rules, have seven years to become citizens or lose eligibility for the federal assistance that most rely on for health care and survival when they arrive in this country. But some of the oldest and sickest are failing to do so.

See **SOME** Page 18A

GETTING BY

Health care and the insurance gap
Second of three parts

Bored and weary, evacuees in tent city look for a way out

Months after Katrina, many still waiting for trailers in Mississippi

By **COLLEEN McCAIN NELSON**
Staff Writer

PASS CHRISTIAN, Miss. — Doloris King spends her days doing crossword puzzles and watching soap operas with a cocktail

Evacuees express concerns at forums. 20A

named Tweety Bird. Boredom is a problem, and Mrs. King wishes she had a window. But living in a tent isn't as tough as you might think, the 76-year-old great-grandmother insists.

The oxygen tank that helps with her chronic asthma fits neatly

in the corner, though hauling the tank to the Porta Potty in the middle of the night is a hassle. "And I really don't like taking showers with everybody else," she said.

After losing a lifetime of keepsakes and her home of 29 years to Hurricane Katrina, the widow and mother of eight has settled into her new surroundings.

See **KATRINA** Page 20A

Pakistan border efforts faltering

Officials say militants gaining strength, local government powerless

By **CARLOTTA GALL**
and **MOHAMMAD KHAN**
The New York Times

PESHAWAR, Pakistan — Two years after Pakistan's army began scouring border tribal areas to root out members of al-Qaeda and other foreign militants, Pakistani officials who know the area say the campaign is bogged down, the local political administration is powerless and the militants are stronger than ever.

Osama bin Laden, who released a new audiotape of threats against the U.S. last week, and his deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri, are believed to be living somewhere in the seven districts that make up these tribal areas, which run for more than 500 miles along the

Musharraf to U.S.:
No more airstrikes. **26A**

rugged Afghan border and have been hit by several U.S. missile strikes in recent weeks.

The officials said they had been joined by possibly hundreds of militants from Arab countries, Central Asia and the Caucasus.

The tribal areas are off limits to foreign journalists, but the Pakistani officials, and former residents who did not want to be identified for fear of retribution, said the militants — who call themselves Taliban — dispense their own justice, run their own jails, rob banks, shell government compounds and attack convoys at will.

The militants are recruiting from local tribes and have gained a hold over the people through a mix of fear and religion, officials and former residents said.

See **EFFORT** Page 26A



MONA REEDER/Staff Photographer

"Some people here are still crying. They can't stop crying," says tent city dweller Doloris King in Pass Christian, Miss.





Photos by BARBARA DAVIDSON/Staff Photographer

Rot Pham struggles to understand prescription instructions and keep up with the needs of his wife, Trang Nguyen, who is recovering from a stroke and has diabetes and an infected toe.

Some refugees losing aid when they need it the most

Continued from Page 1A

"We are talking about some of the most vulnerable people on earth. They have come here because they sided with us during war or they were persecuted because of their faith. We promised to help them, and now our government, in this instance, isn't living up to that responsibility," says the Rev. Sophia DeWitt of Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministries in California.

Some refugees face processing delays and increased security checks that prevent them from becoming citizens within seven years. Others face a backlog in getting green cards that allow them to become permanent residents and work.

Others are like Mr. Pham and Ms. Nguyen: They are too old to work. Without English, neither can pass the citizenship test. Both have failed to qualify for disability waivers, which would acknowledge that they have medical conditions that prevent them from learning English.

In July 2004, they reached their seven-year limit for benefits and lost their \$864 monthly Supplemental Security Income payment and their Medicaid coverage.

"Their income is zero," says Tuan Le, a Fort Worth Catholic Charities caseworker who has taken on their case. "I have hundreds of elderly cases. They cry, they beg, they do everything when they hit the seven-year mark. But I am powerless. It makes me very sad. They need many things."

Small but growing

In 2004, the couple were among 156 people in Texas who had become ineligible for benefits. Nationwide, 4,392 had been cut off, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a liberal think tank. And although the numbers are tiny, refugee advocates say they expect them to grow.

The Social Security Administration says that more than 45,000 refugees could lose their



Medical bills for Mr. Pham's wife are mounting. After Ms. Nguyen required an emergency trip to the hospital in May, Mr. Pham received a bill for \$10,000 for her medical treatment. With no income, there is little the couple can do to pay it off.

benefits by 2011; the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society estimates that about 20,000 of those will actually lose their eligibility.

Congress is considering legislation to extend the cutoff by two years. Refugees' advocates say that while the proposed extension will help, it is still a temporary measure.

"In the long term, we believe there should be a complete fix," says Gideon Aronoff, vice president of government relations and public policy for the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, in Washington, D.C.

"Economic survival shouldn't lie on senility, and they shouldn't be sentenced to that kind of poverty," he says.

Those who have lobbied for

stiffer immigration policies agree that an extension does little to solve the problem. They say there's a bigger issue.

"If our immigration policy was admitting too many people who use welfare — which it was and still is — the solution isn't to keep them off welfare," says Mark Krikorian, executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies, a conservative think tank in Washington, D.C. "It's to let in fewer people."

"The problem stems from trying to use welfare law to fix problems caused by immigration."

While other states slash Supplemental Security Income, some use state money to allow refugees to keep Medicaid. Texas, which has a significant number of refugees, does not.

"I recently saw a Bosnian couple," Mr. Le says. "They have taken ESL [English as a second language] classes for four years, two times a week for two hours a day. After four years, they remember very few words. They can say 'thank you,' and 'goodbye.' That's it. They are elderly, too. Their SSI and Medicaid will be cut in 2007."

Left with nothing

The story of Mr. Pham and Ms. Nguyen is familiar for many Vietnamese refugees. Mr. Pham has the equivalent of a seventh-grade education. Ms. Nguyen never attended school. Mr. Le says it is unlikely she can read or write her native Vietnamese, making it nearly impossible for her to learn to do so with English.

They married in 1963, a second marriage for Ms. Nguyen, whose first husband died. Mr. Pham, a former soldier, says he spent time in a communist jail. After less than two years, he was released and worked as a farmer.

Ms. Nguyen once owned a small stall where she sold items such as instant noodles, coffee and soda. She also cared for the baby daughter of an American soldier and a Vietnamese woman. One day, the girl's mother disappeared, and Ms. Nguyen and Mr. Pham raised the child as their own without formally adopting her.

When the Amerasian girl won approval to come to America, the couple came with her. They sold all their worldly goods to make the journey in 1997.

ABOUT THIS SERIES

Texas has a higher percentage of people lacking health insurance than any other state. One in four Texans has no coverage. Staff writer Karen M. Thomas, aided by a Kaiser Family Foundation Media Fellowship, spent a year studying the problem and attaching real people to those numbers.

□ **Jan. 15:** How Texas children suffer from a lack of dental care.

■ **Today:** Poor, legal immigrants are forced to fend for themselves.

□ **Jan. 29:** In rural Texas, the doctor-patient relationship can bridge the gap in coverage.

DallasNews.com/extra

See the previous installment in this series, and find links to organizations mentioned in this article.

"We have no house, no property, no nothing," Mr. Pham says through an interpreter. "We sell everything to have the money to come here."

When they arrived, the extended family settled in Arlington, the parents living in public housing and their daughter, who is married and the mother of four children, nearby. In the years since, though, their relationship with their daughter has collapsed.

The couple cobbled together a life in their new community, where many Vietnamese live. They made friends. They hung huge frames filled with family pictures on a wall of their apartment. They created an ancestors altar to honor their Buddhist religion. And they tried hard to become Americans.

See **FRIENDS** Page 19A

"I have hundreds of elderly cases. They cry, they beg, they do everything when they hit the seven-year mark. But I am powerless. It makes me very sad. They need many things"

Tuan Le, Fort Worth Catholic Charities caseworker



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Sent by: alozoya News

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Friends, charities help couple cope

Continued from Page 18A

Mr. Pham studied English through Catholic Charities. On the day of class, he says, he could remember some English words. The day after, he says, he could not. He shrugs and then smiles. Not understanding that his benefits might eventually be at risk, Mr. Pham stopped trying.

Meanwhile, Ms. Nguyen began to feel sick. Two months after arriving here, her knees ached. She had trouble walking. A doctor soon diagnosed diabetes. He sent her to physical therapy and prescribed several medications.

With Medicaid, they didn't worry about affording doctors or the medicine that they needed. They paid rent on their apartment and saved enough to buy a run-down, rusted-out car. They scraped together insurance money and enough gas to go to the doctor and the grocery store.

In July 2004, though, the Supplemental Security Income check stopped coming. They received a letter saying they were no longer eligible for Medicaid. The couple didn't understand.

Without the federal benefits, Ms. Nguyen tried to take care of herself. She began to skip taking insulin and other medication because she couldn't afford it. She didn't know how to apply for programs that might have helped her get the medicine for free. She didn't know whom to ask for help. She exercised by walking in circles in the apartment.

Finding help

When Mr. Pham received Supplemental Security Income, he gave money to friends who struggled. Now the couple's friends do the same for him. The man upstairs knocks on the door. A woman who lives next door peeps in, the front door propped open to cut down on electricity use and allow the whirling fan to better circulate air. They slip Mr. Pham \$10 for gas or \$5 for the electric bill, \$20 to keep the phone connected.

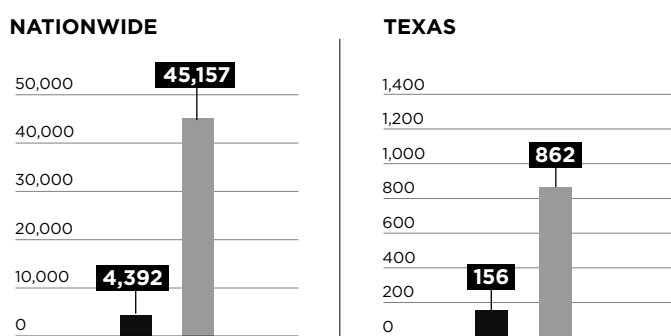
"It's very common," says Ms. DeWitt of the Fresno ministry. "In Southeast Asian communities, people like to live close together and develop their own new communities here in the United States. That practice of helping your neighbor through the hard and difficult times is just the way things operated back in the villages of Vietnam."

Mr. Pham and Ms. Nguyen will not talk about their daughter, who

REFUGEES AT RISK

Under the 1996 Welfare Reform Act, refugees have seven years to become citizens or lose eligibility for federal assistance. The number without benefits is expected to grow.

■ Noncitizens who have lost benefits as of 2004:
■ Potential number of noncitizens who could lose their benefits by 2011*



*Refugee advocates estimate that about 40 percent of these people will actually lose their benefits.

SOURCES: Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society; Social Security Administration; Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

DAMEON RUNNELS/Staff Artist

could not be reached for this article. Something has happened that they cannot yet put into words. When asked, Ms. Nguyen sits in a chair in the front room. Behind her is the wall filled with family photos. She shakes her head and cries. Mr. Pham watches, making soft clucking noises to soothe her.

For months, the couple limped along. Then, on the morning of April 26, Ms. Nguyen couldn't move her left arm. She had trouble speaking. Mr. Pham drove her to a public clinic in Arlington. A doctor examined her and sent her by ambulance to John Peter Smith Hospital in Fort Worth, where doctors discovered she'd had a stroke.

Mr. Pham struggled to figure out when to give his wife her medicine. Mr. Le of Catholic Charities, who stopped by, translated.

"This one, you take one pill at night," he told Mr. Pham. Mr. Pham made a notation on the bottle with a pen.

"If something else happens, it won't be a surprise," Mr. Le said about Ms. Nguyen's health.

It didn't take long. On May 15, Mr. Pham just had a feeling. Early in the morning, he checked on his wife. He couldn't wake her. He dialed 911. His wife was taken to nearby Arlington Medical Center. She spent several days in the hospital and was discharged. Mr. Pham doesn't know what was wrong with her.

What he does understand is that he received a bill for more

than \$10,000 for her medical treatment — a bill he cannot pay. And he could not fill the costly prescriptions that doctors ordered for his wife because she was treated at a private hospital and not a public facility.

Most states offer aid for refugees. But in Texas, advocates say, you have to know where to look

For Mr. Pham and Ms. Nguyen, Mr. Le has been the bridge to that aid.

He calls the couple lucky. At the Arlington office of the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services, an employee struck a deal with public housing to allow Mr. Pham and Ms. Nguyen to live there rent-free after Mr. Le contacted them. The couple maintained their eligibility for food stamps. The same employee was able to secure a home health aide several hours each day for the couple through a community assistance grant. The aide helps bathe Ms. Nguyen, clean the house and do the laundry.

Public clinic

Mr. Le took the couple to a John Peter Smith Hospital public clinic in Arlington and signed them up for medical services. They are supposed to pay \$20 for each visit and up to \$20 for prescriptions, far less than private health care costs. Even with that, though, they are unable to pay for their care.

"I just tell them to go there and say you don't have the money and to send the bill. Then we find some way for it to be paid," Mr. Le says.

Meanwhile, Mr. Le began helping them apply for disability waivers so that they could become citizens.

There are no national statistics on how often medical waivers are granted. Anecdotally, experts who

work with refugees say that such waivers are difficult to get.

"Our Houston program told me that they have applied for something like 15 waivers each year and they only had two waivers approved in the last two years," says Laura Burdick of Catholic Charities' Legal Immigrant Network, a support agency based in Washington, D.C.

Experts say that barriers include getting time-pressed physicians to fill out complicated forms. Doctors must clearly state that a disease or sickness is what's prohibiting an immigrant or refugee from learning to read and write.

"It is quite difficult," says Wafa Abdin, a lawyer with the Cabrini Center for Immigrant Legal Assistance, which is part of Catholic Charities, in Houston. She says that her office has worked closely with physicians and immigrant officials during the past three years and that it is starting to see an increase in the waiver approval rate.

So far, Ms. Nguyen and Mr. Pham have both applied for disability waivers twice. Both have been denied. Ms. Nguyen has applied again, and her case is pending, said Mr. Le.

As Mr. Le talks, Mr. Pham heads to the bedroom. It is time to check Ms. Nguyen's glucose level. When he is done, he shows Mr. Le the monitor. It reads 39, which is low.



BARBARA DAVIDSON/
Staff Photographer

Mr. Pham bandages Ms. Nguyen's toe, which is infected by gangrene.

FINDING HELP

For more information regarding refugee and immigration services and legal help, contact Catholic Charities of Dallas, Refugee and Empowerment Services, 9850 Walnut Hill Road, Suite 228, Dallas, or call 214-553-9909.

For information regarding federal programs, contact the Office of Refugee Resettlement at the Administration for Children and Families, 370 L'Enfant Promenade S.W., Sixth Floor/East, Washington, D.C. 20447 or call 202-401-9246.

"That's not right," Mr. Le tells him. He checks the machine and asks Mr. Pham to try again. As he watches the slight man make his way to his wife, Mr. Le shakes his head.

He says: "Everything depends on his ability and his memory now."

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