# Actress Gilbert to speak at fund-raiser

Melissa Gilbert of 'Little House' fame will be featured at the event, put on to benefit the Centers for Children and Families.

i3y Ginger Pope Odessa American

From the Prairie to the Basin, Melissa Gilbert of "Little House on the Prairie" fame will speak at a Centers for Children and Families' fundraiser.

This is the third year the Centers for Children and Families has put on its "An Evening With ..." event. Thursday's event will also feature local celebrity waiters who will serve up desserts and coffee.

Gilbert will speak at the Midland Center and cover a little bit of everything.

"At least so that people will understand why I'm here," she said Friday in a telephone interview. "I'm honored they asked me to do it."

Gilbert said she checked out the Centers for Children and Families before agreeing to speak.

"I actually went on to their Web site. I was impressed with

"... One of the greatest things a parent can say is 'I don't know' — and find help."

**Melissa** Gilbert



the work that they do," she said. "I'm such a believer in a place to get therapy."

Gilbert, a mother to two sons, ages 8 and 15, and two stepsons. ages 18 and 24, said family is important to her. She sets limits as to how much time she spends working, whether it be as president of the Screen Actors' Guild or working on a movie.

"It's important to be there for the kids," she said.

Being a mother has not been without challenges. Gilbert's youngest son with husband Bruce Boxleitner was born two months prematurely. She said he was very sick as a newborn and has battled a weak immune system and some attention deficit issues.

Even without health problems, Gilbert said children and families face nearly insurmountable challenges in today's world. She said the Centers for Children and Families is a great source people can

"I don't think there's any-

thing even close to a perfect parent," she said. "None of us set out to mess up our kids' lives. You can read all the books you want and still you never know what's coming up."

Gilbert cited the Sept. 11 attacks as just one example of a more confusing world families live in.

"We live in a very complicated society and one of the greatest things a parent can say is 'I don't know' - and find help,' she said. Gilbert said this will not be

her first time in Texas. In 1984, at the age of 20, Gilbert shot a movie in Marfa and spent about two months in the Alpine area. The movie was "Sylvester"

and was the first time the actress was on a set shooting a film without her mother's pres-Gilbert, who was adopted,

began performing at the age of 2. Her father, Paul Gilbert, was a stand-up comic, and at a young age she would travel with him and was soon looking for the spotlight onstage.

Seeing Well Is The Magic of Learning

### IF You Go ...

What: "An Evening With Melissa Gilbert" When: Thursday with a silent auction at 6 p.m. Where: Midland Center

Cost: \$35 per person and \$300 a table. Tickets are available by calling 570-1084 or 580-7006 or at the Midland Centers for Families and Children, 1004 North Big Spring St., or the Odessa Centers' office at 835 Tower Drive, Ste No. 1. Tickets are also sold at Cavender's Boot City in Midland.

### CENTERS FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

- Was established in 1957 and serves all of the Permian Basin, with offices in Odessa, Midland and Abilene.
- Their post adoption program serves 60 counties providing counseling, parent training and support groups.
- Has five programs: counseling to anyone aged 3 or older, parenting classes "Parent Education," Kids First, a visitation program for noncustodial parents, and PALS, or Preparation for Adult Living.

■ ODESSA AMERICAN

Gilbert said performing gives her a chance to get under a character's skin, travel and

make great friends. "That's my passion, my outlet, and it's very fulfilling to me," she said.

Gilbert just finished filming "Heart of the Storm" in New Orleans. She said it is a psychological thriller about a woman and her daughters being held hostage during a hurricane. She does not know yet whether the movie will be

released for television or in theaters.

Megan Doerfner, Centers for Children and Families director of marketing and development, said "An Evening With ..." is the center's largest fund-raiser each year.

Previous speakers were Henry Winkler and Lisa Welchel.

Doerfner said the center sought out Gilbert because of her adoption story and her commitment to family values.

## ROUNDUP Officials OK North **Texas rail plan**

**ODESSA AMERICAN** 

**◆ STATE NEWS** 

IRVING (AP) — Dozens of North Texas leaders have agreed to a formal plan to build a six-county regional rail network stretching from Denton to Waxahachie and McKinney to Cleburne.

Now the leaders must sell the plan, agreed on Friday, to state lawmakers and ultimately to voters. The \$3.5 billion, 260-mile commuter rail blueprint would require a half-cent sales tax increase.

#### Former coach is in more hot water

FORT WORTH (AP) - A nationally recognized diving coach accused of molesting a 12-year-old boy is facing additional charges that he tried to sexually assault another child.

Wirt Norris, a judge at the 1976 Olympics, was indicted Friday on charges that he tried to molest an 11-year-old boy at least three times in 1987 at his Eagle Mountain Lake home.

The boy, now 27, watched pornography with Norris but thwarted an attempt at oral sex, according to the indictment. Norris, 76, was charged with one count of attempted aggravated sexual assault of a child and two counts of attempted indecency with a child.

## **ECISD** school board to adopt new budget

**By Ginger Pope** Odessa American

Several ECISD teachers expect to be at Tuesday's School Board meeting to cheer on the approval of a teacher pay raise.

The 2004-'05 proposed school budget includes a pay increase for teachers of more than \$4 million and a total of \$800,000 in pay increases for other ECISD employees.

Ector The Independent School District School Board will have a public hearing on the budget at 5:30 p.m. The board is then scheduled to adopt the budget during the 7 p.m. meeting in the ECISD Board Room at 802 North Sam Houston Ave.

Permian High School teacher Terrie Reed said she expects a few teachers to be at Tuesday's meeung

"We hope that once they vote and announce the pay raise we can give them some applause,' she said. "We feel like the board is anxious to work with us.'

Reed, who is president of the local chapter of the Texas State Teachers Association, said she and other teachers are encouraging all teachers to be there Tuesday. She said teacher morale seems to be good for the start of the year.

"Everything is looking so positive," she said. "We've got some opportunities here we've never had before. We hope we can repay (the board) by upping the quality of teaching.'

The teacher pay increase will balance out the current pay schedule and create more equality between the years of experience for each teacher. That will cost about \$3.5 mil-

Bruce Revell, ECISD executive director for finance, said anther \$1 million will be used for one-time stipends. In balancing the teacher pay schedule, to get rid of the "swag," some teachers would receive only a \$5 pay raise. The stipends will go to these teachers to give them

more than just a \$5 pay raise.

The proposed budget also includes \$1 million for the purchasing of about 14 to 15 buses, Revell said. The district will be purchasing buses with air-conditioning.

Revell said that despite the district advertising a property tax rate of \$1.45 per \$100 valuation, the district now is looking at a tax rate of \$1.43 per \$100 valuation.

The current tax rate is \$1.50 per \$100 valuation.

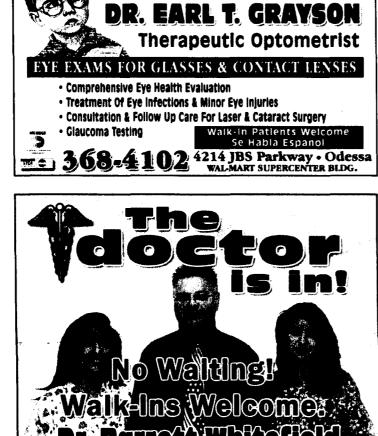
Because of increased property valuations in Ector County, Revell said, a tax rate of \$1.43 is sufficient to operate the budget he has proposed.

A public hearing for the proposed tax rate will be in September.

Board members were first presented with the proposed budget on July 28.

For Tuesday's meeting, Revell said he will give a brief overview of the budget.

"I'm just going to present the meat and potatoes — major increases and the functions of the budget," he said.



BAMILY PROGREGE

School Physicals, Texas Health Steps

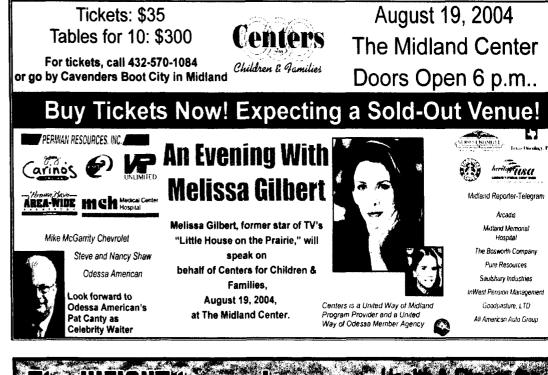
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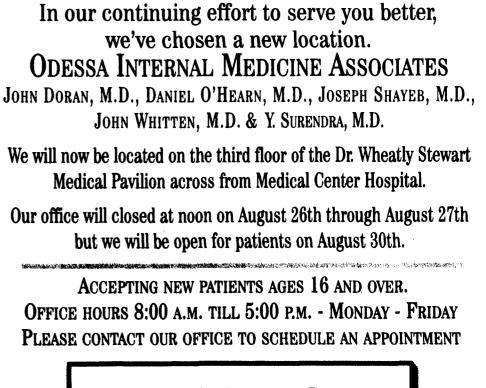
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