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Al Bello / Getty Images

San Antonio Express-News

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Health agency boss quits

Janek had faced calls to resign after contract scandal

By Brian M. Rosenthal and Peggy Fikac
AUSTIN BUREAU

AUSTIN — For much of the first few months of this year, Texas Health Commissioner Kyle Janek weathered controversies over no-bid contracts and free tuition for top aides, as well as calls by lawmakers

to resign. “I love my job,” the former state senator from Houston repeated to reporters and lawmakers, stressing that he wanted to fix the problems that came to light on his watch. Until Friday, Gov. Greg Abbott announced that Janek would step down July 1 from the \$35 billion me-

ga-agency that oversees all health and human services in Texas. Janek insisted that his decision was not prompted by the contracting scandal, the headlines or any pressure from Abbott. Instead, he said, it was the “right time” partly because of an upcoming consolidation at the agency.

“History will show this job has a shelf life,” said Janek, 57, who had been the commissioner for nearly three years, making an annual salary of \$260,000. Second-in-command Chris Traylor will take the top post at the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, Abbott *Janek continues on A12*



Associated Press file photo

Kyle Janek will step down July 1 as leader of the Texas Health and Human Services Commission.

DAYS FOLLOWING D-DAY



Photos by Ray Whitehouse / San Antonio Express-News

World War II veteran Bill Scott is reflected near three medals he was awarded for his service: a Bronze Star, a Purple Heart and a Good Conduct Medal. Scott was a medic who treated the wounded in the days after D-Day.

‘Extremely lucky’ medic lived to serve again

While tending the wounded, he faced danger, too

By Sig Christenson
STAFF WRITER

By the time Bill Scott set foot on French soil, the Allies had taken a sliver of Normandy, just enough of a foothold to allow thousands of reinforcements to pour in. A week had passed since 156,000 American, British and Canadian troops landed on five beaches June 6, 1944. That number soon would double, with many more following over the final year of war in Europe. All along the way, Scott would respond repeatedly to the cries of “Medic!” from nearby wounded GIs. Tending those hit in France, Belgium and Germany, he was



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a cool-headed soldier who often worked out of a muddy foxhole and once set up shop at the edge of a minefield. He'd hug

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Slideshow: Go online for more photos.

the earth as artillery and mortar rounds fell on his comrades with amazing accuracy, but he survived each time. “All I did was hope. All I had was hope,” said Scott, 89, of San Antonio. “People were getting killed and severely *D-Day continues on A12*

Scott still has a photo, dated November 1943, of his medical training battalion. He often worked out of a muddy foxhole in treating wounded soldiers.

All three Blue Bell plants tied to listeria

Private lab links strain to Alabama production site

By Mark Collette
HOUSTON CHRONICLE

A private laboratory has linked a deadly strain of listeria to a Blue Bell plant in Alabama, providing the first evidence that all three of the ice cream maker's production facilities distributed contaminated products. The lab tested a half-gallon of Cookies 'n' Cream on behalf of Brent McRae, a Florida man recovering from a suspected bout of meningitis. McRae, 75, was admitted to a hospital in April. His family saved the ice cream in his freezer and sent it to Kappa Laboratories of Miami, which issued the results Wednesday. A product code on the bottom of the carton confirms that it came from Alabama. The Florida Department of Health said late Friday that, in conjunction with the Centers for *Blue Bell continues on A12*

Urgent care centers drawn to shoppers

By Peggy O'Hare
STAFF WRITER

A growing number of urgent care centers are putting down stakes in shopping centers and strip malls as quick-delivery health care providers compete with hospital emergency rooms and physician practices for business. This is particularly apparent in Texas, where the rise of urgent care has accelerated more rapidly than elsewhere because of the state's population growth and a limited access to primary care, industry observers said. Wherever a so-called big-box store or a major restaurant franchise can be found, an urgent care center likely isn't far away. “I think you can argue Texas has pretty well led or been at the forefront of the development in this space for sure,” said Nathan Palmer, vice president of National UC Realty, which specializes in finding sites for new urgent care centers across the country. “You go to other markets — Califor- *Health continues on A13*

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FROM THE COVER

HEALTH

From page A1

nia's a great example — where you really don't have a huge presence yet of health care in the retail setting. But it's coming."

Concentra, which owns 300 urgent care centers nationwide, including six in San Antonio, is relocating its clinics as leases expire to more visible retail locations so they'll be more appealing and more convenient for consumers, one executive said.

"Developers who at one time really did not want medical-type services in their shopping centers — they're now looking for creative ways to lease their facilities," said Alan Ayers, Concentra's vice president of corporate development, who is based in the Dallas area. "Urgent care centers make pretty good tenants because they can drive traffic into a shopping center."

Urgent care also can revitalize retail centers and present new opportunities to fill vacated spaces, he said.

"Retail in the United States is somewhat mature as an industry," Ayers said. "We have an aging population.... The demand for retail in the United States has somewhat gone down. But you have these retail facilities that can be very easily repurposed for medical use, like urgent care."

Around 6,400 urgent care

centers are operating in various locations across the country, more than 500 of them in Texas, according to a database maintained by the Urgent Care Association of America. At least 40 of those are in San Antonio.

According to certificates of occupancy issued by the city of San Antonio, around four to six new urgent care centers open here each year.

The Urgent Care Association does not track annual growth in the number of such businesses, but Ayers, a member of the group's board of directors, estimates that about 500 new urgent care sites open nationwide each year.

Such centers are attractive options for consumers without primary care physicians or for patients unable to wait for appointments with their regular providers. Urgent care clinics usually have extended operating hours on nights and weekends, which appeals to people unable to take time off from work. The prices are more affordable than those charged by hospital emergency rooms or free-standing emergency centers.

"I would very much characterize the growth of urgent care as a consumer-driven phenomenon," Ayers said.

The urgent care business also has proved popular with investors because of health care's consistent performance in times of economic uncertainty, Palmer said.

In recent years, urgent care



Edward A. Ornelas / San Antonio Express-News

Concentra's newest urgent care clinic in San Antonio opened this year at the Fiesta Trails shopping center on Vance Jackson Road. Concentra owns six urgent care centers in San Antonio.

centers — like many forms of health care — have become increasingly retail-oriented, going to places where consumers already shop.

NextCare Holdings, the owner of 122 urgent care clinics in 11 states, said three of its four Impact Urgent Care clinics in San Antonio are in shopping centers containing Target department stores.

"We like the strong retail centers with a big anchor tenant," said Jeff Gerlach, NextCare's senior vice president of business development and strategic growth. "We like that simply because of the visibility, the ease of ingress and egress into the location."

NextCare prefers to put its clinics on the end of a strip center or on a pad site at the front of a shopping center — and almost always builds out new space rather than retro-

fitting previously existing buildings, Gerlach said.

While physicians shifting into retail settings is a fairly recent trend, Dr. Bernard Swift, the owner and founder of Texas MedClinic urgent care centers in San Antonio, New Braunfels and Austin, said the idea is not new.

"Health care and particularly primary health care is a retail business, as far as I'm concerned, and has been for many years," Swift said. "The dentists figured this out a long time ago. ... Dentists have been going into shopping centers and retail locations for many years. Physicians have only recently become aware of that and have gone en masse to retail locations."

Swift formed Texas MedClinic in 1982 at a time when urgent care centers did not exist in San Antonio. He said he was the first physician in town to

open for business in a retail shopping center. He also put up a neon sign, which he recalled caused some controversy at the time and even horrified his mother. "Now everybody puts a sign up and is in a retail area," he said.

With the push toward convenience, three of Texas MedClinic's locations in San Antonio are open 24 hours.

While the number of urgent care centers has surged in the past two to three years, Swift believes that eventually will slow because of supply and demand.

"Just like in any business where a lot of people sense an opportunity ... there's going to be a flood of locations," Swift said. "And they're not all going to make it. And the market will settle out."

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Robots compete at mastering disaster situations

ASSOCIATED PRESS

POMONA, Calif. — It's shaping up to be a snail's pace race featuring cutting-edge robots doing simple but critical tasks.

Robots in the disaster response competition in California must push buttons, turn valves, cut through a wall and drive a light utility vehicle.

The winning design team will collect a \$2 million research award along with bragging rights in the rapidly developing robotics industry.

"We get most of our ideas about robotics from science fiction. We want to show a little bit of science fact," said Gill Pratt, who organized the competition for the U.S. Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, which focuses on futuristic technologies for national security.



Alex Gallardo / Associated Press

Robot Running Man walks over unstable bricks. Robots from 24 teams are taking part in a contest hosted by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency.

The contest at a Pomona racetrack is designed to look like a disaster zone.

The robots may be slow, clumsy and delicate, but they might just save lives by braving dangerous disaster zones. Pratt cited the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan as an emergency where such robots would have come in handy.

"Sometimes in a disaster, it is too dangerous for people to go in," he said.

Teams of engineers, programmers and designers from research institutions across the world have worked for years to build robots that can maneuver the course and complete the assigned tasks.

"We have a valve that we need to turn to shut off a gas leak or something similar," said John Seminatore, a Virginia Tech graduate student with Team Valor. "We have to cut a hole in a wall to get access to something behind it. And there will be either rough terrain or

rubble that we get past."

The most difficult task, getting out of the small utility vehicle, is so hard that many teams aren't even attempting the dangerous egress, preferring to be docked on their times rather than risk toppling their robots into the dust.

"Robots don't have that sense of touch that humans do to know where they are inside the car," Seminatore said. "So it's going to be really nerve-racking for teams because the training wheels have come off."

The robots come in all shapes and sizes. Most appear humanoid, but some can switch to wheels to get around.

"RoboSimian" looks like a double-jointed monkey without a head. Another has a torso on a 4-wheeled base, like a centaur. Several teams used DARPA's Atlas robot as a start for their own designs.

DARPA's first robot competition in 2004 was a race for driverless cars. None of the entries finished and most made it only a few miles. But 11 years later, Google's driverless cars are cruising. Pratt says that means the competitions are a success.

So even if the robots struggle to exit a car this year, their designers will learn. And when DARPA issues a challenge and invites the public to watch the results, it means the Pentagon's "mad science" division is serious about disaster response robots.

"What I love about this is it introduces everybody to the new dream. This is something you can do right now," said Jonathan Daniels, who teaches robotics at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. "Give me five years, and we'll have this in high schools."

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