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Moving on: Economic uncertainty forcing many East Texas families to relocate

By JESSICA COOLEY
The Lufkin Daily News

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This summer, while most East Texas families are packing suitcases for vacations others will be packing moving boxes, making the hard decision to leave to their homes for better opportunities, hoping to secure a better future in an uncertain economy.

Brandon Elementary has at least four students who will not be returning to Lufkin ISD because of parents relocating, according to Melissa Powell, Brandon fourth grade teacher.




Jessica Cooley/The Lufkin Daily News
(ENLARGE)

Diane Rodriguez and her family outside of their Lufkin home, listed with Gann Medford, last week. The lifelong Lufkin resident said she is sad to leave, but knows there are more opportunities for her family in the city of Houston. She said her husband Chris, who started a new job in Houston April 1, has been commuting, but with gas prices cannot continue to do that.

move, but Ryan is staying optimistic.

"I know of at least four students in my class alone who will be leaving the area because of job-related moves," Smith said. "I'm not really sure if its because of loss of a job but it's definitely for a better opportunity. I've got one whose parent is going to school, one whose parent is commuting right now to Houston so the family is moving there and two others whose parents are getting transferred for work."

Even though the rising unemployment rate is a national problem, rural areas have been impacted the most. The unemployment rate for Deep East Texas was 7.2 percent compared to the state average of 6.4 percent, according to a report from Workforce Solutions of Deep East Texas. The Deep East Texas unemployment rate for April 2008 was 4.6 percent. People are quick to jump on any opportunity that will eventually offer better job security even if that means moving, according to Leighton Brown who will be moving with his wife Tara and daughter Lillian to Arlington this summer.

"I just got accepted to an aerospace engineering program at UT-Arlington and there's no regional schools around here who offer that type of program," Brown said. "We moved here three years ago from Palestine as sort of a pit stop and now we're leaving for a bigger city with more opportunities. We've lived in small towns our whole life and now we're trying something else. We've enjoyed it here but it's time to move on."

Lufkin mom Diane Rodriguez attributes her family's upcoming move partially to the rising cost of fuel. Rodriguez's husband Chris started at a position in downtown Houston April 1 and has been making the commute for the past two months, she said.

"I've lived here all my life and I'm really sad to be leaving, but Chris got a new job as a TABC officer in Houston. They have a TABC office here but there's only one officer compared to 33 in the Houston area. There's definitely more opportunities there," Rodriguez said. "He got a raise but the way it is with the expense of driving and gas it doesn't really seem like it."

Rodriguez's two children Ryan, 11, and Lillyana, 7, are not excited about the

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"It's closer the Splashtown and my dad said we could go every day this summer," he beamed.

"It's really hard when you've lived here so long to move somewhere where you don't know anyone," Rodriguez said. "Lillyana does competition gymnastics with Darlene at Academy and I don't think we'll find anyone like her down there. They both play summer ball too and they always look forward to that."

The family listed their Brookhollow home located at 2306 Hanks St. last week and as soon as it sells will be making an offer on a home in the Houston area, Rodriguez said.

While some are relocating to secure to their family's future a recently laid off Lufkin man, Lynon Mixon, said that moving just isn't an option for him because in the construction field the lack of jobs is a national epidemic.

"My family is without insurance right now and because of that I thought about moving, but it's not just this area it's across the nation in my field," Mixon said.

"It's going to be that way any town you go to. There's no use moving somewhere else for me. My best bet is to just stay here until this thing turns around."

Mixon said he's been looking for wages comparable to what he made before being laid off but doesn't feel it will happen in this economy. He said his attempts to get into another field have been unsuccessful, turning up empty handed after attending a job fair last week. He's been depending on the Workforce Center for help with filing for unemployment and finding a new job.

"I've got 15 years of experience in this industry, but when I've been out looking for jobs everywhere I go they say 'you're not qualified enough or we're not hiring,'" Mixon said. "I went to a job fair last week but the jobs they were hiring for were more advanced — not for people who've been in construction. I just don't have the aptitude for that type of job. Hopefully I'll find something soon."

To receive help from Workforce Solutions of Deep East Texas go by the office located at 539 S. Chestnut St. or call (936) 639-8898.

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By kevin

Jun 1, 2009 6:20 AM | [Link to this](#)

I got a feeling we will be seeing alot of this in the future, in fact this option is currently being considered by me. The group currently in charge of lufkin is making very poor buisness choices . This town will never make it as a retirement town, people need more than fast food to be able to make a living ! And the amount charged for taxes are a joke , I'm going to list my property and get the heck out of this town !!!

By Tony

Jun 1, 2009 6:12 AM | [Link to this](#)

How can this be in our fair city of Lufkin? We just bought almost a million taxpayer dollars worth of land to expand our high school. We just paid 16 million taxpayer dollars for three water wells at the Abitibi wasteland. We are spending what I am told is another 16 million taxpayer dollars to develop a industrial park while half the large industrial sites in the city sit vacant. And once again we hear from the work ý farce commission, an organization who cant even find wait staff for the too many area restaurants. It sounds like one area of the Lufkin economy that is well off is government.

By lynette vaughn

Jun 1, 2009 4:18 AM | [Link to this](#)

relocating has another face. There are people who were relocated from one county to another because of a hurricane. They were uprooted eight months ago because of obvious damage to their home. Today,they are still waiting for repairs to their home. Suddenly, their case is dismissed. They are left to pay bills in a place that some agency PUT them in with no way to pay the utilities and after returning paperwork "necessary" for their claim, are still denied by this agency.HOW CAN THIS BE? Either the tree fell in your house caused by the hurricane or not. If so,then WHY were you relocated in the first place. The stress alone is enough. After EIGHT months,following rules,dissapointments,no repairs...Someone needs to pay attention to these "agencies". If there's monies to help the hurricane survivors..do not neglect to follow through.

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