

Texas Lottery Commission Press Release - January 16, 2002

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Fort Worth Pharmacy Owner Proves He's Not Always Joking Around

(Austin, January 16) - - *Lotto Texas* player Jim Ater has a reputation for kidding around and playing practical jokes. And when it comes to winning the lottery, it took the A & P Pharmacy owner 21 days, a four-hour bus trip and a lot of work for Ater to convince the five members of the Triple J NXS Trust they actually won the \$36 million *Lotto Texas* jackpot from the December 26, 2001, drawing. Each member of the group pitched in \$5 a piece for 25 sets of numbers. The sole, jackpot-winning ticket was purchased and forgotten about until later the same night of the drawing.



Jim Ater, owner of A&P Pharmacy in Ft. Worth, prepares to join fellow winners, friends and family on a chartered bus to Austin to collect the winning jackpot.

"It was in my mind the night of the drawing because my boss, Jim, called me to see if I had made copies of the tickets. Sometimes I do that, but that night I didn't," said Jenny Willis, one member of Triple J NXS Trust. Jim said, 'he had heard the winning ticket was sold in Fort Worth,' and so he joked around about who was going to beat each other to work the next morning."



*Jenny Willis reacts to
Lotto Texas jackpot*

"I was late as usual," she added.

Jenny told lottery officials that Jim took her aside after a customer left and gave her the good news. "We won, we won!" she said Ater told her. Jenny explained that she didn't believe him at first because of Ater's reputation as a jokester.

"He told me to call my fiancé, Chad, and tell him the good news," Willis said. "I finally believed him when I realized he was shaking and I saw the evidence (the ticket) in his hand."

Willis was planning her wedding prior to the group's win, but now says she's going to let someone else do the planning for her.

"We're going to fly to Hawaii with some of our friends and family, and go to Maui for a week."

All five of the members of the trust work at A&P Pharmacy in Fort Worth. He explained to lottery officials, "We filled 240 prescriptions the day we found out, and that's even with closing the doors for a little while to tell a co-worker about the winning ticket. It's been crazy!"

Justin Pratz, the youngest member of the group, told lottery officials that the experience has been overwhelming. Pratz explained that Ater woke him up to tell him the good news.

"I thought I had overslept," Pratz said. "He asked me, 'Do you feel rich today?' I told him 'No', and he said 'You should, because now you're a millionaire.' I won't really believe it until I see the money in my checking account."



Justin Pratz believes

The group has worked together for a number of years, and when asked what it meant to them that they had won the jackpot together, Willis pointed to them all and said, "I couldn't win with better people besides my family."

The winning *Lotto* ticket was purchased at the Riverside Food Mart, located at 350 N. Riverside Drive in Fort Worth. The winning numbers selected were 08 - 20 - 47 - 51 - 40 - 44. The lucky retailer is eligible to receive a bonus of one percent of the jackpot amount, which totals \$360,000.

The winning Quick Pick ticket was purchased with the 25-year annuity payment option. The trust will receive an initial payment of \$1,460,149.20, and receive equal payments of \$1,440,000 every December for the next 24 years. Tonight's *Lotto Texas* jackpot is an estimated \$21 million.