



The I-70 Scout

Searching for news in Watkins, Bennett, Strasburg, Byers, Deer Trail, and Agate

Volume 30, Number 2

Wednesday, December 6, 2023

Bennett Schools plan new bond question

by **Steven Vetter**
Managing Editor

BENNETT — Even on the heels of a disappointing and decisive defeat in the recently concluded 2023 election, Bennett School District officials appeared prime to bring another construction funding question to voters next year.

“We’ve already been told to expect another bond issue next year,” reported District Accountability Committee member Sandy Kane at the Nov. 30 school board meeting. “Things have already started for

what the next steps will be.”

According to Kane, that was the message from Superintendent Robin Purdy during the DAC’s most recent meeting, which followed the returns from Election Day Nov 7.

As 60% of the board was replaced by new members last Thursday, the three outgoing directors all stated their disappointment in the final tallies for the proposed \$80 million bond question that failed 63% to 37%.

“It seems to me there’s 1,034 people that we should be expecting to run for this board the next time around,”

said eight-year board member and term-limited Nancy Barden, noting an early number of district residents who voted against Issue 5A before the final vote certification was announced Nov. 28. “Especially since they think they know more than the others of us that have served on this board.”

“We tried to instill in the people of the community the urgency, necessity of more room. This isn’t a wish of mine but a goal for all our kids. It is going to impact our kids,” added Dennis

SEE BENNETT BOE PAGE 2



STEVEN VETTER/The I-70 Scout

Incoming Bennett School Board members Brennan Westendorf, Darvin Harrell and Alyssa Pae take the oath of office Nov. 30.

Bennett sales tax revenue growth rate slows in 2023

by **Kathy Smiley**
Staff Writer

BENNETT — The town of Bennett’s sales tax revenue, while still increasing quarterly, is currently trending below the town’s 3% growth projections.

The Bennett Board of Trustees

heard a third-quarter budget summary status report in a Nov. 28 study session.

Finance Director Danette Ruvalcaba reviewed revenues and expenditures in all funds and noted how each number stacked up against the expected benchmark of 75% of the 2023 budget.

“This report is an integral part of the budget process,” she said. “It provides transparency to the town’s budget and finances.”

The slowdown in sales tax revenue was somewhat surprising, but not concerning, Ruvalcaba added.

“2023 sales tax revenue projections were based on a conserva-

tive estimate of a 3% increase over 2022,” she told the board. “At this time sales tax is trending slightly behind budgeted revenues.”

Ruvalcaba said that both January and February 2023 sales tax numbers exceeded budget estimates

SEE BENNETT SALES TAX PAGE 20



RICHARD SOUTHARD/For The Scout

Santa Claus poses for a photo with Jakob, left, and an unhappy Charlotte Heitman at Breakfast with Santa at the Bennett Community Center Dec. 2.

Wreaths will honor vets in Byers Cemetery

by **Kathy Smiley**
Staff Writer

BYERS — Evergreen wreaths will be laid on the final resting places of veterans in Byers Cemetery this month through a project by the local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR).

The Strasburg-based Silver Spike DAR Chapter successfully registered Byers Cemetery with Wreaths Across America,

a nonprofit organization that distributes wreaths to military and other cemeteries across the United States. This year wreaths throughout the country will be simultaneously placed on Saturday, Dec. 16, in ceremonies at each cemetery — 10 a.m. at Byers.

Silver Spike Chapter historian/librarian Holly Kaye, who spearheaded the

SEE WREATHS PAGE 10



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

The plot of Charles Raymond Franks, who served in the Air Force in Korea, was covered with weeds before DAR Silver Spike Chapter members cleaned it up in October.



Outgoing Bennett School Board members Nancy Barden, left photo, James DuBois and Dennis Smialek pose with framed photos they received as gifts of appreciation — Bennett’s original schoolhouse for Barden; his daughter and two sons wrestling for DuBois; and himself cutting wheat in his combine for Smialek. Kyle Meyer, right, was named new board president.

BENNETT BOE

FROM PAGE 1

Smialek, who did not win his bid for re-election to the board after a four-year term. “The challenge is going to be getting kids into the district without the necessary space. The new board is going to have some tough decisions.”

Smialek added that recent Bennett School boards have not spent frivolously and have been constrained by the funding processes for school buildings. He also said that a state funding number disseminated by bond issue opposition is incorrect.

“We are not getting \$32 million for each of the next three years or any years,” Smialek said. “If that was the case we wouldn’t have needed a bond issue and we would have gone out already start digging a hole. From the new part of the community, we don’t have buy-in for the school district like we should have. Also, school buildings are built from bond money and not general fund dollars.”

The \$32 million figure appears to be the result of an incorrect calculation that used “18,000 additional students,” which would make Bennett similar in size to districts like Brighton or District 51, which entails 46 schools throughout Mesa County, including all of Grand Junction and Palisade.

Opposition to the bond question included Colorado House District 56 Rep. Rod Bockenfeld, R-Watkins, and constituents, who said that the ballot request failed well before the extra \$32 million was bandied.

“The problem is not the ask, it is how they are financing it. It is being done on the backs of the people already living here to pay for people in the future who want to live here,” Bockenfeld said. “It also shoves older people out of their homes causing high Medicaid expenses at the state and federal level. Lastly, it hinders young folks from getting a starter home by raising their income rations to qualify for a mortgage.

“Just a pretty stupid time to make this kind of request as some people are looking at 40%,

maybe more, in their property taxes.”

Bockenfeld also questioned whether the request needed to be as large as it was.

“[This] was their desire for a new school and not their need,” he told *The I-70 Scout* of the school district’s request. “Remember there are differences between needs, wants and desires.”

According to final canvasses of votes, the \$80 million question to expand the Bennett School campus, including a new high school on the west edge of town, failed 1,558 against to 910 in favor.

What a bond question might look like next year is uncertain but this year’s ballot question asked for \$30 million more than a similar ballot initiative in 2022.

DIRECTOR TURNOVER

Barden, Smialek and outgoing board president James DuBois were replaced by new directors Alyssa Pae, Darvin Harrell and Brennan Westendorf, who all defeated Smialek in the four-person race for three four-year terms.

During officer elections, Kyle Meyer was named the new board president, while Harrell will take over as vice president, Andrew Thornton as secretary and Westendorf as treasurer. Pae was approved as the district representative to both the DAC and East Central BOCES, while Thornton will be the board’s legislative liaison with the Colorado Association of School Boards.

During their last speeches, all three outgoing board members were thankful for their time on the board and their interaction with students, staff and administration.

“It’s all about the kids. This is why we do what we do on this board,” said an emotional DuBois as he held a framed picture of his three kids from their time at the state wrestling tournament, including oldest son Cody, who was a two-time state champion. “It’s all about these guys here and everyone else’s kids that have gone through Bennett and are going to go through here.

“To our staff, we didn’t get you everything you

needed, but we gave you what we could.”

Barden, a Bennett native and alum, was all tears when presented a framed picture of the original Bennett schoolhouse, but she still advised the new board members on two points.

“Children have to be the first priority and, please remember, you have only one employee,” she said, referring to Purdy. “Over the last eight years, we did approve pay increases for staff, the masking issue with COVID was tough, and I’m super proud of that intermediate building. It’s been an honor and privilege to serve on this board.”

Smialek, holding an outgoing gift of a framed picture of him in a combine, said new board members should be able to clearly answer one question — “Is this place going to be any better when I leave?”

Smialek also cleared the air about rumors that the district’s purchase of land a couple years ago for the proposed new high school campus directly benefitted him or immediate family.

“We did not buy the 75 acres from me nor was it for \$10 million,” he said. “Pretty low overall, “1.2-1.3 million.”

Before the three outgoing members left the directors’ table for the final time, Purdy thanked them for their years of service.

“They were all instrumental in rising staff salaries. Eight years ago, which is when I started here, beginning teachers salaries were just over \$33,000,” she said. “They’ve been raised about 40% just over the past four years alone, and that’s been in a state that hasn’t fully funded schools since 2008.”

Purdy also noted that the board navigated the tough waters of COVID and the dilemma over masks and that additional educational opportunities have sprouted in recent years.

The new board agreed to keep the regular meeting schedule at 6 p.m. on the third Thursday of the month but, for December, the meeting has been moved up to 6 p.m., Monday, Dec. 11.

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STEVEN VETTER/The I-70 Scout

Thomas Stockman plays a small hollow-bodied bass guitar during a rendition of the 1967 Halloween classic “Spooky” by the High Plains Music Ensemble at its Mysterious Masterpieces concert Oct. 28 at the Bennett High School auditorium. The band will host its first-ever Christmas concert at 7 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 16, also at the auditorium.

Building permit fees: ArapCo proposes 30 percent increase

LITTLETON — Arapahoe County is proposing a 30 percent increase in building permit fees to keep up with the increased cost of land development services and to stay in line with the fees of neighboring jurisdictions.

Increased fees will help the county provide planning, engineering, permitting, plan review, and inspections services.

The county last increased its building fees in 2021. An analysis of the current fee schedule showed that Arapahoe County fees are low when compared to neighboring jurisdictions.

For example, the per-unit cost associated with building 333 single family homes on 67 acres with an average unit valuation of \$500,000 would result in \$6,908 in land development fees collected by the county.

The same project would result in fees of \$19,849 for the city of Aurora; \$12,501 for Adams County; \$11,847 for the city of Centennial; and \$8,129 for Douglas County.

With the proposed new fee schedule, a building permit for a \$50,000 project would now cost \$2,093, an

increase from \$1,610.

The county is also proposing to stop discounts for “repeat master” building permits. Currently, the county collects the full amount for building permits for model homes proposed within a development, but then gives a discounted rate for permits that follow these model building designs after the first permit is approved.

The discount is not part of the county’s formal fee schedule, and the county in its analysis found out that no other neighboring jurisdiction provides one. The county is proposing that this practice be eliminated effective Jan. 1.

The public can comment on the proposed 30-percent fee increase through Dec. 12 at www.arapahoe-co.gov.

The Board of County Commissioners will vote on the fee increase during its Jan. 9 meeting, which starts at 9:30 a.m. at the Administration Building, 5334 S. Prince St., Littleton.

If approved, the fee increase would go into effect March 1.

For more information, visit www.arapahoeco.gov.

CORRIDOR CALENDAR

THURSDAY, DEC. 7

Bennett Parks & Recreation District Board. 5:30 p.m., Bennett Recreation Center, 455 S. First St.

SATURDAY, DEC. 9

Bennett-Watkins Lions Club. 9 a.m. via Zoom. Call Diane at (303)644-3717 for log-on information.

MONDAY, DEC. 11

Food Bank of the Rockies Mobile Pantry. 9-11 a.m., Kelter Library parking lot, 585 S. Main St., Byers. Optional pre-registration at newclient.link-2feed.com.

Byers Water & Sanitation District Board. 7 p.m., District Office, 421 S. Sherman St.

Comanche Crossing Historical Society. 6:30 p.m., museum office, 56060 E. Colfax Ave., Strasburg.

Bennett sixth- and seventh-grade band concert. 7 p.m., high school auditorium.

TUESDAY, DEC. 12

Food Bank of the Rockies Mobile Pantry. 4-8 p.m. or while supplies last, Hinkley High School, 1250 Chambers Road, Aurora.

Strasburg School Board. 6 p.m., Stras-

burg High School Central Services building board room. Zoom participation available. Visit strasburg31j.com for link.

Daughters of the American Revolution Silver Spike Chapter. 6:30 p.m., TBK Bank Committee Room, Strasburg.

Bennett Board of Trustees. Work-study 5:45 p.m. Regular meeting 7 p.m. For a Zoom link, visit townofbennett.colorado.gov.

Deer Trail Town Board. Work session 6:30 p.m., regular meeting 7 p.m., Town Hall, 555 Second Ave.

Bennett eighth-grade and high school band concert. 7 p.m., high school auditorium.

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 13

Deer Trail Conservation District Board. 1 p.m., Farm Service Agency office, 133 W. Bijou, Byers.

“A Magical Christmas Journey” performed by the Deer Trail secondary theater and choir classes. 6:30 pm in the auditorium.

Deer Trail Fire Protection District Board. 7 p.m., Deer Trail Firehouse.

Strasburg Sanitation & Water Board. 7 p.m., TBK Bank conference room, 56641 E. Colfax Ave., Strasburg.

14th

TOY

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Cancer Fighters to the Rescue

LOCATIONS TO DROP OFF TOYS:

Strasburg Parks & Rec; Bennett Parks & Rec; Byers General Store; Gift Shop, Strasburg; O’Malley’s Mercantile (1600 Hudson Rd., Watkins); Ladybug Landing (31 W. Bijou Ave., Byers); Escape the Clock (251 U.S. Hwy. 40, Byers); Tractor Supply (200 W. Marketplace Dr., Bennett); NAPA Auto Parts, Strasburg; Salinas Mexican Food, Strasburg; Latina Salon II (992 S. Abilene St., Aurora); Outlets @ Castle Rock; 2354 Basil St., Strasburg

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AS SEEN ON ANIMAL PLANET

COMMUNITY CORRAL

DAR chapter to lay wreaths on graves of vets at Byers

BYERS — The Silver Spike Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution invites the community to honor fallen veterans at 10 a.m., Saturday Dec. 16, at Byers Cemetery.

The group will hold a brief ceremony followed by the placement of evergreen wreaths on each veteran's grave — 114 in all.

Byers Cemetery is now on the list of cemeteries served by Wreaths Across America — a nonprofit organization that distributes wreaths to cemeteries across the United States. Community volunteers are welcome to help lay the wreaths.

For more information, text or leave a message for Holly Kaye at (303)378-1647.

Lutheran church in Bennett issues its Advent schedule

BENNETT — Christ Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Bennett plans Advent services every Wednesday through Christmas: Dec. 6, 13 and 20.

The evening will begin with a meal at 6 p.m. followed by worship at 7 p.m.

A Christmas Eve candlelight service starts at 7 p.m., Sunday, Dec. 24.

Christ Our Redeemer is located at 275 Ash St.

Byers church plans service on the year's longest nite

BYERS — The Christmas season is expressed as joyous and happy, yet for some the holidays are a hard journey involving grief, missing loved ones, or the winter blues.

To help celebrate in a different way with the growing light that overcomes the darkness of winter days, a Longest Night Service, a day in the Advent season marking the longest night of the year, will be held at 7 p.m., Thursday, Dec. 21, at Byers Community Church.

The service will feature readings, hands-on reflections, and candlelight as participants journey to

Holiday boutique set at Byers women's center

BYERS — The Eastern Plains Women's Resource Center Holiday Boutique will run from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 9, at the center at 228 W. Front St., Byers.

The boutique will feature new and used toys, blankets, Christmas outfits for children (sizes 0-6), books, coats, shoes, and many other items for children.

The boutique is open to the public, and all items are free. Attendees should come through the front door and a volunteer will accompany them through the store.

Participants are asked to shop for immediate family members only. Children should go to the adult supervised playroom while their parents shop.

The event will replace the center's open boutique on the fourth Saturday for November and December. No pre-registration is required.

The center will close for the two weeks of Christmas and New Year's days. It will reopen from 1-5 p.m., Monday through Wednesday, starting Monday, Jan. 8.

bring the joy of light into the dark places.

Byers Community Church is located at Sherman and Front streets.

Parade of Lights with cars slated from DT to Bennett

BYERS — Eastern Colorado Car Enthusiasts will present a Christmas Light Parade beginning in Deer Trail at 6 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 16.

The convoy will travel Highways 40 and 36 to Bennett. Participants will throw candy to onlookers along the way.

For more information and to register, call Pattie Lindsay at (303)886-0771.

ArapCo CSU Extension sets class on wine jelly canning

CENTENNIAL — Food preservation is making a comeback across the country, and Colorado State University Extension is participating with a wine jelly-making workshop.

The in-person event will run from 6:30-8:30 p.m., Tuesday, Dec. 12, at the in Arapahoe County CSU Extension office, 6934 S. Lima St., Suite B, Centennial.

Canning, drying and pickling were once a fact of life. Wine jelly is an easy, tasty way to learn basic hot water bath canning. For seasoned canners, wine jelly is great to make when fresh produce is not in

season.

The fee is \$20 and participants will take home a 4-ounce jar of wine jelly and directions to make it.

For a registration link or for more information, visit arapahoe.extension.colostate.edu.

Strasburg Lutheran Church announces holiday events

STRASBURG — Saron Lutheran Church in Strasburg has announced its Advent and Christmas events, which are open to the community.

Advent Soup Suppers begin at 6:30 p.m., Wednesdays, Dec. 6, 13 and 20, followed by evening prayer at 7:15 p.m., at the church at 1656 Main St., Strasburg.

Hayride caroling and cocoa will begin at 3 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 16.

A candle light Christmas Eve service will begin at 5 p.m., also at the church.

Christmas village planned for Arapahoe fairgrounds

LITTLETON — The public is invited to Visit the Village at Holiday Family Fun Day at the Fairgrounds from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 9, at the Arapahoe County Fairgrounds Event Center, 25690 E. Quincy Ave., Aurora.

Visit the Village activities will include photos with Santa Claus, horse-drawn carriage and train rides, a two-by-two petting zoo, a

model train display, a snow land foam pit, a gingerbread house contest, a bounce house, face-painting, and a S'mores making station.

Tickets cost \$10 per person, but one admission per household is free with the donation of a new, unwrapped gift.

Admission is free for children ages 2 and under.

Tickets can be purchased on-site or in advance at www.arapahoe-countyeventcenter.com. For more information, send an e-mail to Fairgrounds@Arapahoegov.com.

Adams County seeks artist for new arena at large park

BRIGHTON — Adams County is seeking an artist or team to create fully integrated interior and exterior artworks for a new multi-use arena at Riverdale Regional Park in Brighton.

The arena will explore narratives around land, agriculture, and industry in the West. As a member of the design team, the artist will closely collaborate with Adams County Cultural Arts; Populous, the architecture design firm; and the general contractor's team.

Once complete, the design will be presented to the Adams County Board of County Commissioners for approval. The selected artist or team will design to a \$1.3 million fabrication and installation budget.

The project is open to professional artists nationally and internationally. To apply, visit artist.callforentry.org. The application deadline is Thursday, Dec. 14.

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LIBRARY NEWS

ANYTHINK BENNETT LIBRARY
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Coffee & Cards: Adults will drink coffee, eat snacks and play hearts, poker, cribbage, Farkel and other games. 10:30 a.m. to 12 p.m., Friday, Dec. 8.

Puppies & Cocoa: Lifeline Puppy Rescue will bring its cutest pups to the library for de-stressing during the holidays. Hot chocolate and a free gift-wrapping station will be provided. Appropriate for all ages. 12-2 p.m., Friday, Dec. 8.

Yoga in the Stacks: Adults can practice poses that focus on alignment, stability and flexibility with local yoga instructor Scott Noble. Mats provided. All skill levels wel-

come. Space limited; registration required. To sign up, visit Anythinklibraries.org. 10:30-11:30 a.m., Saturday, Dec. 9.

Artist meet-up: The Corridor Creative Arts League will host an end-of-the-year celebration for adults. Attendees are asked to bring a snack to share, design a holiday card, and participate in an art-based game of Jeopardy. The color for the month is white and the themes are outdoor scenery, holiday lights, and the mountains. 2-3:30 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 16.

Major model Xmas train: All aboard! The public is invited to enjoy an amazing LEGO model train display as it travels through a wintry town and landscape. A member of the Youth in Model Railroading Club

will be on hand to answer questions. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Wednesday, Dec. 20; 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Thursday, Dec. 21; 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Friday, Dec. 22.

DAVIES LIBRARY
128 Second Ave., Deer Trail
(303)769-4310
www.arapahoelibraries.org

Friday matinee: All ages are invited to an afternoon showing of “The Santa Clause” (1994, rated PG, 1 hour, 47 minutes). 1-3 p.m., Friday, Dec. 8.

Cozy winter crafting: An afternoon of winter-themed crafting for kids ages 5-12 is planned. All supplies provided; all skill levels welcome. 4-5 p.m., Wednesday, Dec. 20.

KELVER LIBRARY
585 Main St., Byers
(303)822-9392
www.arapahoelibraries.org

Adult book club: “The Masterpiece” by bestselling author Fiona Davis. In this historical fiction novel, Davis takes readers into the glamorous lost art school within Grand Central Terminal, where two women, 50 years apart, strive to make their mark on a world set against them. 6-7 p.m., Tuesday, Dec. 12.

Cozy winter crafting: An afternoon of winter-themed crafting for kids

ages 5-12 is planned. All supplies provided; all skill levels welcome. 1-2 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 16.

Barbie Beyond 50: The Denver Museum of Miniatures, Dolls & Toys will host a presentation on the Barbie doll. Attendees can explore Barbie’s Denver roots and wild history while connecting with other members of the Byers community. 1:30-3 p.m., Wednesday, Dec. 20.

ARAPAHOE LIBRARIES ON ZOOM
To reserve a spot or for more information on Zoom programming, call (303)542-7279 or visit arapahoelibraries.org.

Favorite kids books of 2023: Librarians will share their favorite books for kids ages 9-18 at a virtual book party on YouTube. Closed captioning provided. 6-6:30 p.m., Tuesday, Dec. 12.

Paper Airplane Guy: World record holder and paper airplane expert John Collins, a.k.a. “The Paper Airplane Guy,” will share cool facts about aerodynamics and teach kids ages 5-12 how to fold and fly paper planes. 4-5 p.m., Tuesday, Dec. 19.

Cute and cuddly animals: Eco Adventures will host a free virtual event on cute and cuddly animals. Kids ages 5-12 will meet different animals — from hedgehogs to baby alligators — from all over the world. 10-11 a.m., Wednesday, Dec. 27.

Church Directory



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1656 Main St. | Strasburg, CO | saronstrasburg.org

Worship 8:30 a.m. In-Person or on Facebook




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Christ Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
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Sunday Worship at 9:30 a.m.

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303-822-9366 • mttaborybers.org

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Sun., 9:00 a.m. Sunday School
Sun., 10-10:30 a.m. Fellowship; 10:30 a.m. Church Awana Tuesday, 5:15-7:15 p.m., Dinner served

I Peter 3:15 Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.



Strasburg Presbyterian Church
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www.spcusa.us
303-622-4325

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Middle/High School Youth Group - Wednesdays @ 7pm
AA - Fridays @ 6pm
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New 17th Judicial District chief judge named

BRIGHTON — Colorado Supreme Court Chief Justice Brian D. Boatright recently appointed the district court judge Kyle Seedorf to serve as chief judge in the 17th Judicial District.

Seedorf will become chief judge upon the retirement of Donald S. Quick on Jan. 23. He was appointed as a district court judge in November 2019 after serving in private practice and as general counsel and director of legal affairs for the Colorado Department of Higher Education since his graduation from the University of Michigan Law School in 2002.

As chief judge, he will serve as the administrative head of the district, responsible for appointing the court executive, chief probation of-

ficer, and clerk of court; assisting in personnel, financial and case-management duties; and conducting the business of the courts efficiently and effectively.

Quick was named to the district court bench in December 2014 and was appointed as Chief Judge in December 2020.

“Over more than 30 years of public service as a prosecutor and judge, Judge Quick has displayed admirable dedication to the people of Colorado, and the judicial department is grateful to have benefited from his depth of experience and wisdom since he joined the bench,” Boatright said.

The 17th Judicial District is comprised of Adams and Broomfield counties.



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Merriam-Webster’s top word for ’23? Hint: Be true to yourself

by **Leanne Italie**
AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — In an age of deepfakes and post-truth, as artificial intelligence rose and Elon Musk turned Twitter into X, the Merriam-Webster word of the year for 2023 is “authentic.”

Authentic cuisine. Authentic voice. Authentic self. Authenticity as artifice. Look-ups for the word are routinely heavy on the dictionary company’s site but were boosted to new heights throughout the year, editor at large Peter Sokolowski told The Associated Press in an exclusive interview.

“We see in 2023 a kind of crisis of authenticity,” he said ahead of the Nov. 27 announcement of this year’s word. “What we realize is that when we question authenticity, we value it even more.”

Sokolowski and his team don’t delve into the reasons people head for dictionaries and websites in search of specific words. Rather,

authentic adjective

au-then-tik ⓘ
Synonyms of authentic >

1

a : worthy of acceptance or belief as conforming to or based on fact

| paints an *authentic* picture of our society

b : conforming to an original so as to reproduce essential features

| an *authentic* reproduction of a colonial farmhouse

c : made or done the same way as an original

| *authentic* Mexican fare

2

: not false or imitation : REAL, ACTUAL

| an *authentic* cockney accent

3

: true to one's own personality, spirit, or character

MERRIAM-WEBSTER VIA AP

they chase the data on look-up spikes and world events that correlate. This time around, there was no particularly huge boost at any given time but a constancy to the increased interest in “authentic.”

This was the year of artificial intelligence, for sure, but also a moment when ChatGPT-maker OpenAI suffered a leadership crisis. Taylor Swift and Prince Harry chased after authenticity in their words and deeds. Musk himself, at February’s World Govern-

ment Summit in Dubai, urged the heads of companies, politicians, ministers and other leaders to “speak authentically” on social media by running their own accounts.

“Can we trust whether a student wrote this paper? Can we trust whether a politician made this statement? We don’t always trust what we see anymore,” Sokolowski said. “We sometimes don’t believe our own eyes or our own ears. We are now recognizing that authenticity is a performance

itself.”

Merriam-Webster’s entry for “authentic” is busy with meaning.

There’s “not false or imitation: real, actual,” as in an authentic cockney accent. There’s “true to one’s own personality, spirit or character.” There’s “worthiness of acceptance or belief as conforming to or based on fact.” There’s “made or done the same way as an original.” And, perhaps the most telling, there’s “conforming to an original so as to reproduce essential features.”

“Authentic” follows 2022’s choice of “gaslighting.” And 2023 marks Merriam-Webster’s 20th anniversary choosing a top word.

The company’s data crunchers filter out evergreen words like “love” and “affect” vs. “effect” that are always high in look-ups among the 500,000 words it defines online. This year, the wordsmiths also filtered out numerous five-letter words because Wordle and

Quordle players clearly use the company’s site in search of them as they play the daily games, Sokolowski said.

Sokolowski, a lexicologist, and his colleagues have a bevy of runners-up for word of the year that also attracted unusual traffic. They include “X” (look-ups spiked in July after Musk’s rebranding of Twitter), “EGOT” (there was a boost in February when Viola Davis achieved that rare quadruple-award status with a Grammy) and “Elemental,” the title of a new Pixar film that had look-ups jumping in June.

Rounding out the company’s top words of 2023, in no particular order:

Rizz: It’s slang for “romantic appeal or charm” and seemingly short for charisma. Merriam-Webster added the word to its online dictionary in September and it’s been among the top look-ups since, Sokolowski said.

Kibbutz: There was a mas-

SEE WORD
PAGE 8

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GENERAC

WORD

FROM PAGE 7

sive spike in look-ups for “a communal farm or settlement in Israel” after Hamas militants attacked several near the Gaza Strip Oct. 7. The first kibbutz was founded circa 1909 in what is today Israel.

Implode: The June 18 implosion of the Titan submersible on a commercial expedition to explore the Titanic wreckage sent look-ups soaring for this word, meaning “to burst inward.” “It was a story that completely occupied the world,” Sokolowski said.

Deadname: Interest was high in what Merriam-Webster defines as “the name that a transgender person was given at birth and no longer uses upon transitioning.” Look-ups followed an onslaught of legislation aimed at curtailing LGBTQ+ rights around the country.

Doppelganger: Sokolowski calls this “a word lover’s word.” Merriam-Webster defines it as a “double,” an “alter ego” or a “ghostly counterpart.” It derives from German folklore. Interest in the word surrounded Naomi Klein’s latest book, “Doppelganger: A Trip Into the Mirror World,” released this year. She uses her own experience of often being confused with feminist author and conspiracy theorist Naomi Wolf as a springboard into a broader narrative on the crazy times we’re all living in.

Coronation: King Charles III had one May 6, sending look-ups for the word soaring 15,681% over the year before, Sokolowski said. Merriam-Webster defines it as “the act or occasion of crowning.”

Deepfake: The dictionary company’s definition is “an image or recording that has been convincingly altered and manipulated to misrep-

resent someone as doing or saying something that was not actually done or said.” Interest spiked after Musk’s lawyers in a Tesla lawsuit said he is often the subject of deepfake videos and again after the likeness of Ryan Reynolds appeared in a fake, AI-generated Tesla ad.

Dystopian: Climate chaos brought on interest in the word. So did books, movies and TV fare intended to entertain. “It’s unusual to me to see a word that is used in both contexts,” Sokolowski said.

Covenant: Look-ups for the word meaning “a usually formal, solemn, and binding agreement” swelled March 27, after a deadly mass shooting at The Covenant School in Nashville, Tenn. The shooter was a former student killed by police after killing three students and three adults.

Interest also spiked with this year’s release of “Guy Ritchie’s The Covenant” and Abraham Verghese’s long-awaited novel, “The Covenant of Water,” which Oprah Winfrey made a book club pick.

More recently, soon after U.S. Rep. Mike Johnson ascended to House speaker, a 2022 interview with the Louisiana congressman recirculated. He discussed how his teen son was then his “accountability partner” on Covenant Eyes, software that tracks browser history and sends reports to each partner when porn or other potentially objectionable sites are viewed.

Indict: Former President Donald Trump has been indicted on felony charges in four criminal cases in New York, Florida, Georgia and Washington, D.C., in addition to fighting a lawsuit that threatens his real estate empire.

LUNCH MENUS

AGATE
Thursday, Dec. 7: Shredded pork, mashed potatoes.
Monday, Dec. 11: Crunchy chicken wrap.
Tuesday, Dec. 12: Spaghetti, garlic bread.
Wednesday, Dec. 13: Chicken patty sandwich, fries.

BENNETT
Thursday, Dec. 7: Cheeseburger, French fries, fruit cup.
Monday, Dec. 11: Pulled pork sandwich, chips, salad, pears.
Tuesday, Dec. 12: Tejas meatballs, mashed potatoes, green beans, roll, mixed fruit.
Wednesday, Dec. 13: Deli turkey sandwich, French fries, mixed vegetables, chips, peaches.

BYERS
Thursday, Dec. 7: Chicken tacos, Spanish rice, baby carrots with ranch,

strawberries.
Friday, Dec. 8: French toast with syrup, sausage links, country potatoes, grapes.
Monday, Dec. 11: Walking taco, broccoli and carrots with ranch, pears.
Tuesday, Dec. 12: Lasagna roll-up, breadsticks, green beans, peaches.
Wednesday, Dec. 13: Pulled pork sandwiches, Sun Chips, baked beans, grapes.

DEER TRAIL
Thursday, Dec. 7: Pizza, assorted veggies, assorted fruit.

STRASBURG
Thursday, Dec. 7: Spaghetti with meat sauce, garlic bread.
Friday, Dec. 8: Hot dogs.
Monday, Dec. 11: Mozzarella sticks with marinara sauce.
Tuesday, Dec. 12: Chicken sandwich.
Wednesday, Dec. 13: Egg, sausage patty, hash browns.

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FRIDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2023

Eastern Colorado News

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Arson suspect hospitalized during arrest

by Steven Vetter
Managing Editor

BENNETT — Many questions remain after a suspect in a suspicious fire 6-7 miles north of Bennett had to be hospitalized during his apprehension last weekend.

But it will probably be until the first quarter of next year before many incident particulars come to light.

According to the Adams County Sheriff's Office, deputies were dispatched to the area of 68th and Highway 79 a little after 2:30 p.m. Nov. 25 on reports of an "arson in progress." But upon arrival, officers reportedly had issues subduing the adult male suspect who was on scene.

"He became combative. The male fought with deputies and as they attempted to place [him] into custody, he stopped breathing," said Sgt. Adam Sherman, public information officer with the sheriff's office. "Deputies immediately aided the male on the scene and he was transported to an area hospital for medical treatment."

The exact health status of the suspect was unknown but sheriff's sources indicated Nov. 28 that he was still alive and in the hospital.

Specifics behind the circumstances leading to the original arson call are unavailable and whether any charges will be filed against sheriff's officers is uncertain. Sherman said that the investigation has been taken over by the 17th Judicial District's Critical Incident Response Team.

A DA's office spokesman indicated the investigation will take an extended period of time.

"No [updates] yet," the DA's Director of Communications Christopher Hopper said. "The CIRI team investigates, hands that information over to us, then we make a decision related to any criminal charges, if necessary, against the law enforcement officer(s). That usually takes months."

Information regarding damage from the originally reported fire was unavailable at press time.

Sources close to the situation said that the suspect is not the same person that has been the subject of multiple recent law enforcement visits in the same vicinity.

In The Christmas Spirit!

Board members and volunteers from Byers Park & Recreation District installed holiday decorations around town Nov. 19. Kagen Kitzman and Tyler Brewer, on a lift, confer with Tim Brewer on the ground while putting decorations on power poles.

Agate School Board dwindles to three members

by Steven Vetter
Managing Editor

AGATE — As the 2023 election season comes to a close, the Agate School District is looking to fill two board vacancies.

The district canceled its board election because of a lack of interested candidates, which was followed up by October resignations by directors Tina Sunshine and Tefanie Rector. While those resignations were received, they have not yet been codified by the board. No votes were taken during the Nov. 27 board meeting.

According to board president Doug Purdy, interest has been shown by one district resident and that the topic will likely be addressed at the Dec. 18 meeting.

"Hopefully we get a bit more interest over the next few weeks," he said.

In addition to Purdy, Tonia McBride and Ray Martin remain on the board. While not ideal, three directors are still enough for a meeting quorum.

While Rector had been on the board multiple years, Sunshine was

SEE AGATE BOE PAGE 4

Agate School Board members Ray Martin, left, Doug Purdy and Tonia McBride discuss business items during their Nov. 27 meeting. The board is down to three members after a pair of resignations in October and no interest from district residents to run this election season.

STEVEN VETTER Eastern Colorado News



Tyler Brewer and Kagen Kitzman wave from their perch on a lift while hanging a Christmas tree on a power pole along Front Street Nov. 19 as board members and volunteers from Byers Park & Recreation District installed holiday decorations around town.



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WREATHS

FROM PAGE 1

project, said that other Colorado DAR chapters sponsor wreaths at Fort Logan, a U.S. National military cemetery in Denver.

“We decided we wanted to get some of the cemeteries out here involved,” she told *The I-70 Scout* Nov. 30. “Sometimes veterans buried in the small towns are just kind of forgotten. We started with Byers, and we will work to get the cemeteries in Bennett and Deer Trail (registered) in future years.”

Kaye said that the Byers Community Cemetery Association’s Kristine Reed, who keeps the cemetery’s records, provided a list of 114 veterans buried there.

“The association tries to keep flags on all the veterans’ graves year-round,” Kaye said. “Some have military headstones, and some do not, but their regular headstone might indicate their service. Others are identified through written records.”

Veterans interred in Byers Cemetery gave military service spanning more than 150 years, the earliest of which — Evan L. Evans (1844-1914) — is believed to have served in the Civil War.

Organizations such as the DAR that work with Wreath Across America cemeteries collect sponsorships for wreaths. Kaye said word-of-mouth and Facebook posts resulted in 116 individual and business wreath sponsors as of Nov. 30.

“People out here were wonderful and sponsored, so we could really honor the veterans at Byers Cemetery,” she said.

Wreath sponsorships are \$17. The live balsam fir wreaths are a basic design with red bows. Wreaths Across America delivers boxes wreaths to an agent for each cemetery a week prior to the ceremony date. In many cases, deliveries are made by volunteer truckers in their own vehicles.

Kaye emphasized the Wreaths Across America ceremony on Dec. 16 will be brief.

“It will be cold, and there is no seating,” she said, adding that locations of the veterans’ graves will be mapped out ahead of time, and community volunteers are welcome to help place the wreaths.

The wreaths will stay on the gravesites until the second week of January, when they will be collected and disposed of by DAR members and volunteers.

The Silver Spike chapter was officially welcomed into the Daughters



One of the earliest veterans buried in Byers Cemetery is Evan L. Evans (1844-1914). The gravestone indicates he was a Corporal in Company A in the Union 73rd Regiment Indiana Infantry in the Civil War.

of the American Revolution last February at a luncheon in Strasburg attended by local, regional and state representatives of the service organization. The DAR holds a National Day of Service each October, and the newly-formed Silver Spike chapter chose sprucing up Byers Cemetery as its first project.

“Ladies from the chapter as well as a couple husbands worked hard for two days, removing weeds, trash, and downed tree limbs from the cemetery,” Kaye said.

The busy chapter members also helped at the Arapahoe County Stand Down for veterans event in June, took bags of gifts to assisted living residents in Strasburg at Thanksgiving, and have adopted Bijou Manor in Byers for a Christmas stocking project.

Kaye said the chapter has around 16 charter members.

“We’re small, but we’re working on it,” she said.

Eligibility for DAR membership is certified by the national society by verification of proven lineal descent from an ancestor who gave aid to the American colonists during the American Revolution. Any woman, regardless of race, religion or ethnic background who can prove this lineage is eligible to join.

“If you are interested in joining a lively group of women with hearts for service to our communities, please consider membership,” Kaye said.

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The Bennett boys started their 2023-24 basketball season with a thrilling 67-66 overtime victory over Frontier Academy to conclude the opening night of the Tiger Tip-Off Tournament Nov. 30. From left photo, Owen Stiers dishes out to a teammate; Diego Madera puts up a contested shot; Ethan Francis shoots over a Wolverine defender; and Juan Santoyo steals the ball.

Tigers open hoops season with OT thriller

by Steven Vetter
Managing Editor

BENNETT — In a case of both teams starting out the season displaying Jekyll-and-Hyde tendencies, the Bennett Tigers outlasted visiting Frontier Academy

67-66 in overtime to conclude the first night of the Tiger Tip-Off Nov. 30. After Bennett junior Owen Stiers hit a three-pointer with about a second left in regulation to tie the game at 61, senior Isaac Santoya performed his own heroics

when he was fouled on a three-pointer at the buzzer in overtime. With his squad down 66-65, Santoya missed the first free throw but calmly sunk the next two to give the Tigers the topsy-turvy victory. “Quite the exciting start

to the season,” exclaimed first-year Tiger coach Stephen Hollingshead, who is under the tutelage of Lady Tiger head coach Mike Rios. “We hung in there and kept fighting.” Both teams appeared to seize momentum multiple

times throughout the contest but the game tightened down the stretch. The hosts jumped out to a 15-4 lead over the first five minutes but the Wolverines responded with a 22-4

SEE BB BENNETT
PAGE 14

Unpracticed Strasburg boys shoot past Weld Central

by Steven Vetter
Managing Editor

STRASBURG — Despite more than half the team having only one practice under their belts, the Strasburg Indian boys basketball team opened its season with an impressive 71-53 victory over visiting Weld Central Nov. 28. “Pleasantly pleased for sure. A few lapses but we’ll take it given the circumstances,” said red-and-black head coach Kyle Bollers, noting that four of five starters and two other key bench cogs played in the 1A state football championship game three days earlier. “In the past it’s sometime has been three days before the first game, but this year only one. [We were] in a lot better shape than I thought we’d be


in and that especially showed up in the second half.” Rust appeared minimal early on as the Indians scored the first 10 points on their way to a 17-9 lead to end the first eight minutes and a 44-30 advantage at halftime. Out of the locker rooms, the visiting Rebels closed the gap to single-digits before Bollers’ troops regained the momentum midway through the third to cruise to victory. “Wasn’t happy with how my guys started the third, allowing them to get it within seven (48-41), but our own 12-0 run put us back in charge and we didn’t have another let-up.” Despite the lack of practice for much of the roster, Strasburg outshot the visitors from the field, 53%

SEE BB STRASBURG
PAGE 14



PHOTOS BY SCOTT GERRARD/For The Scout

From left photo, Indian Julian Valencia drives against a Weld Central defender Nov. 28, and team-mate Nick Glatfelter puts up a contested layup.



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BB STRASBURG

FROM PAGE 11

to 31%. Both teams made only four three-pointers and made about two-thirds of their free throws — 15-of-24 for Strasburg and 16-of-26 for Weld Central — but the Indians strength showed closer to the bucket as they went 22-of-33 (67%) from two-point range. The hosts also recorded 24 assists on 26 made field goals.

“Got the ball inside and we were still able to get out and run and attack the bucket pretty well, which is what I was kind of worried about going in,” Bollers said. “Shared the ball well, pretty decent chemistry for the first game out.”

Eight Indians got into the scoring column, led by junior forward Tyce Bollers with 21 and senior center Austin Velasco, who shot 7-of-9 from the field for 16 points.

Senior point guard Landen Martin had a game-high 13 assists to go with his seven points. Sophomore Cam Manahan also added 7 points, senior Colton Hall and sophomore Nick Glatfelter 6 apiece, sophomore Cade Hemphill 5, and senior Julian Valencia three.

Velasco was one rebound shy of a double-double with nine boards, followed by Glatfelter with eight and Bollers and Manahan five apiece.

Defensively, Strasburg recorded 14 steals, led by Bollers with four, Martin three and Hall, Manahan and Velasco two apiece.

For the full preview of the Indians’ and coverage of last weekend’s Corridor Classic hosted by Strasburg, see the Dec. 8 edition of the *Eastern Colorado News*.

BB BENNETT

FROM PAGE 11

run that put them up 26-19 midway through the second period; however, Bennett appeared to right the ship with its own 18-2 run to go up 37-28 at halftime. Frontier Academy came out of the locker room with what appeared to be a better set of adjustments as they more than doubled Bennett’s output to take a 56-47 lead into the fourth quarter, which Bennett won 14-5 to send the game into extra basketball.

While the Tigers got the better of two-point field goals, 21 compared to 13 for the visitors, and shot 68% from the free-throw line (13-of-19)

compared to the Wolverines’ 57% (19-of-33), Frontier Academy recorded seven three-pointers to the Tigers’ four.

In addition to his game-tying effort from deep, Stiers led the Tigers with 23 points, including three triples and 6-of-8 effort from the charity stripe. Juniors Jayden Ivory and Ethan Francis also reached double-digits with 14 and 11 points, respectively. Sophomore Austin Stiers chipped in 8 points, Juan Santoya 5, Isaac Santoya 4 and senior Triston Cronk 2.

For more Tiger coverage, see the Dec. 8 *Eastern Colorado News*.



SCOTT GERRARD/For The Scout

Strasburg’s Hannah Damron attacks the bucket as a bevy of Lady Indian teammates surround the paint during the season-opener against Weld Central Nov. 28. The red-and-black won 47-11.

Strasburg rolls past Lady Rebels

by Steven Vetter
Managing Editor

STRASBURG — The Strasburg Lady Indians opened the 2023-24 hardwood season with a stellar defensive effort on their way to a 47-11 victory over visiting Weld Central Nov. 28.

“We pulled our press off after the first quarter and still did some pretty good things on the defensive end,” said Strasburg head coach Merci Ames. “Still have a lot of work to do, especially with our shooting, on the offensive end.”

The outcome was never in doubt as Strasburg held the Rebels scoreless for almost 12 minutes. Strasburg had a 19-0 lead after the first quarter and were up 24-0 until the visitors scored their first bucket with 4:15 left in the second quarter. The Indians had a 34-6 halftime advantage and 43-9 after three quarters. The mercy rule running clock ran all fourth quarter.

Despite the lopsided victory, the hosts shot less than 30% for the evening (16-of-58) and were 5-of-24 behind the stripe. The Indians were also 10-of-17 from the free-throw line.

Strasburg committed 19 turnovers on the evening.

Senior Graecy Graf led the way with 19 points, followed by junior Natalie Damron with 9, sophomore Hannah Damron 8, senior Katie Seligmann with 7, senior Aubrie Archuleta 3 and freshman Wynne Winter with 1.

The Indians corralled 34 re-



SCOTT GERRARD/For The Scout

Lady Indian Graecy Graf scores 2 of her game-high 19 points against Weld Central Nov. 28.

bounds, led by both Damron sisters with seven apiece, and Seligmann, Graf, senior Kenade Hickson and sophomore McKenna Sell with three each.

Junior Peighton Marrero recorded more than half of Strasburg’s seven assists with four.

Defensively, the Indians recorded 26 steals, led by Graf with eight, Natalie Damron five, Marrero four, and Hickson with three. Active hands were the theme of the night as Strasburg also recorded an additional 22 pass deflections.

“Still an opening game with some frustration, but looked OK defensively,” Ames said. “Offense is going to have to come around and catch up. Always have to be working on our shooting and getting the ball to fall.”

For a full Lady Indians’ season preview and coverage from this past weekend’s Corridor Classic hosted by Strasburg, see the Dec. 8 edition of the *Eastern Colorado News*.

- COMING UP**
- Dec. 12: University
 - Dec. 16: @ Eaton
 - Jan. 6: @ Rocky Ford
 - Jan. 9: @ Highland
 - Jan. 11: @ Ellicott
 - Jan. 13: @ Valley
 - Jan. 16: @ Liberty Common
 - Jan. 18: @ Platte Valley
 - Jan. 20: @ Byers
 - Jan. 23: Frontier Academy
 - Jan. 25: @ Brush

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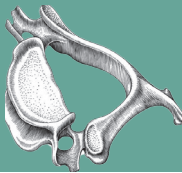
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WEEK OF DEC. 4

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

The Not-So Dusty Pages

20 YEARS AGO
DECEMBER 9, 2003

The Colorado Department of Transportation likely will add toll booths and express lanes in certain high-traffic locations, including I-70 from Denver east to the Kanas border.

CDOT rates part of the route east of Bennett as having the “highest potential.”

The Colorado Tolling Enterprise, CDOT’s toll-road division, in November hired Wilbur Smith Associates, a South Carolina consulting company, to study the feasibility of toll highways in the state.

The company will study at least 43 location identified by CDOT and having high potential for toll roads to offset an anticipated \$20.2 billion in highway needs by 2023.

Toll roads will account for \$4 billion of the package.

A 2002 law allows new toll lanes on free routes as long as the existing free capacity is left in place.

10 YEARS AGO
DECEMBER 10, 2008

COLORADO SPRINGS — The largest health care provider along the I-70 Corridor is expected to take on a new name as part of a much larger network during the first quarter of next year.

Plains Medical Center and Colorado Springs-based Peak Vista Community Health Centers announced Dec. 5 that they are merging form a single Federally Qualified Health Center group. The PMC board of directors

first approved the merger Nov. 26 with the Peak Vista board following up with a similar vote Dec. 3.

Under the merger plan, which should be formalized by the end of April, PMC clinics in Strasburg, Limon, Kiowa and Flagler will operate under the Peak Vista Community Health Centers name. PMC’s four locations that serve more than 9,500 patients over 5,000 square-miles will be joining Peak Vista’s network of 21 health centers that serve approximately 66,000 patients over 2,700 square miles in El Paso and Teller counties.

5 YEARS AGO
DECEMBER 4, 2018

KIOWA — A Parker man accused of driving the wrong way, colliding with another vehicle and killing a 6-year-old girl during an Eastern Colorado ice storm Nov. 17 is facing a bevy of charges.

Gary Wayne Williams, 68, of Parker allegedly struck another vehicle while driving the wrong direction on I-70 near Limon. At approximately 6 p.m., the Colorado State Patrol was dispatched on I-70 near mile marker 358 on report of a two-vehicle collision. Drivers of both vehicles were transported to Lincoln Community Hospital in Hugo with moderate injuries but, 6-year-old Reagan Purdy, properly secured in a passenger booster seat, was pronounced dead at the scene.

The accident report indicates Williams was driving a red Toyota 4-Runner with trailer in tow eastbound in the westbound lanes when he approached a white Toyota pickup heading in the correct direction.

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Fill in the blank squares in the grid, making sure that every row, column and 3-by-3 box includes all digits 1 through 9.

SOLUTION ON PAGE 5

Today In History

Today is Wednesday, Dec. 6, the 340th day of 2023. There are 25 days left in the year.

TODAY’S HIGHLIGHT

On Dec. 6, 1865, the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, abolishing slavery, was ratified as Georgia became the 27th state to endorse it.

ON THIS DATE

In 1790, Congress moved to Philadelphia from New York.

In 1907, the worst mining disaster in U.S. history occurred as 362 men and boys died in a coal mine explosion in Monongah, West Virginia.

In 1917, some 2,000 people were killed when an explo-

sives-laden French cargo ship, the Mont Blanc, collided with the Norwegian vessel Imo at the harbor in Halifax, Nova Scotia, setting off a blast that devastated the Canadian city.

In 1922, the Anglo-Irish Treaty, which established the Irish Free State, came into force one year to the day after

it was signed in London.

In 1923, a presidential address was broadcast on radio for the first time as Calvin Coolidge spoke to a joint session of Congress.

In 1957, America’s first attempt at putting a satellite into orbit failed as Vanguard TV3 rose about four feet off a Cape

Canaveral launch pad before crashing down and exploding.

TODAY’S BIRTHDAYS

Actor James Naughton is 78. Former Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood is 78. Former Sen. Don Nickles, R-Okla., is 75. Actor JoBeth Williams is 75.

—The Associated Press

HOROSCOPE

Neptune Awakens

Yesterday is not tomorrow, and yet the past helps us imagine the future. The first witnessed repetition of history is poetic. The second is a lesson. History repeating with great predictability is science. Neptune has been dreaming in retrograde since June 30, and now the great visionary opens his eyes to a lucid and forward-thinking consciousness.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Something you learned long ago will be reiterated: Love isn’t a barter system. Trade affection for favors and you’ll lose every time. Today, you’ll give from the heart, and the giving will be its own reward... then comes the bonus.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Doubt is helpful in the early stages of a project, as it prompts you to make sure you’re going the right way before you commit. But now you’re too late in the game to waiver. Keep the faith and continue the work.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). As great composers know, a well-timed silence rings out loud with a quiet more beautiful than sound. You will use this principle to make sweet music wherever you go today.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). You’ll gravitate to like minds and pool together like water droplets that find and join one another. You’ll bond and prevail. Together you will flow past and spill over everything in your path.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Other creatures think, but do they contemplate and ruminate? Your profound reflections are the seeds of a new connection, endeavor or adventure, waiting to bloom in the garden of possibilities.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Humans have an instinct to imitate the influences around them, which is why full-grown adults who move to foreign countries sometimes pick up accents. You’ll be around worthy role models and pick up the habits of success.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). While being focused can have positive results, there’s

also the danger of focusing so narrowly that you limit your awareness and miss the chance to express your many dimensions. Stay open to developing interests outside your main goal.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Friendships are a pay-as-you-go plan, voluntary commitments without lasting obligation. You’ll give and get value from a relationship as you keep building it together, with stable routines and with whimsical fun.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Happiness is a jaguar. You can chase it if you want, but it will always be faster than you. Mine the treasures of your current circumstance in whatever mood you happen to be in and the jaguar will come around when it wants to.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). The usual problem-solving techniques won’t work, which is a blessing and an invitation. You’re ready to get unconventional. Learning what’s new in the world will help more than just this effort.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). You’ll be there for a special friend in a time of need, but what makes you special is that you don’t wait for that time to do something nice. It’s the unexpected things you do for no apparent reason that will have impact.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You encourage people to tell you their ideas no matter how off-beat or silly they may be. It never fails; a brilliant solution always falls accidentally into the mix. The input you receive will invigorate a tired scene.

TODAY’S BIRTHDAY (Dec. 6). A cosmic pendulum swing gives your year rhythm and flow. First, you enjoy comfort, then excitement. Projects thrill, then work gives you the stability you can build on. More highlights: There’s a favorable end to negotiations and legal matters. Joint ventures will provide more than monetary riches. Your driving motivation is to help others achieve their aims, and through your service you get your own needs met many times over. Virgo and Scorpio adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 10, 1, 3, 33 and 38.

—Horoscopes by Holiday

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THEME: HAPPY HOLIDAY

ACROSS

1. Bag holder

6. P in mpg

9. Eye part

13. Dog

14. ___ Gershwin

15. *Eggnog ingredient

16. Hold the floor

17. ___ Mahal

18. Anti-elderly one

19. *Breaking news, to a caroler

21. *Coming, in Latin

23. ___'easter

24. "Begone!"

25. Parent-child divide

28. Fur-dwelling parasites

30. Lacrosse stick

35. Kiln for hops

37. Feline vibration

39. Little Richard's "___ Frutti"

40. Cream-filled treat

41. *Number of candles in kinara

43. Mountain goat terrain

44. **Prancing and pawing of each little hoof," e.g.

46. Carpenter's joint

47. Drug-induced state

48. Make lovable

50. "Cheers" regular

52. *Max to #57 Across

53. Overwhelming defeat

55. Thailand native

57. *Dr. Seuss' spoilsport

60. *Santa chute

64. Water border

65. "What?"

67. D in LED

68. Carved

69. Stars and Stripes land

70. Astronomer ___ Hubble

71. Hitler's sidekick

72. Joaquin Phoenix' 2013 movie

73. Crows' homes

DOWN

1. Dick's and Jane's dog

2. Famous Amos

3. Cormac McCarthy's "The ___"

4. Join the cast of (2 words)

5. Carbolic acid

6. Deodorant target

7. Pitcher's stat

8. Indian prince

9. More than suggest

10. Blood tunnel

11. 90 degrees, on compass

12. Invoice qty.

15. Romp around

20. Key ___ on a movie set, pl.

22. Med school grad

24. Passepartout to Phileas Fogg

25. *Popular traditional holiday entree

26. Home run hero

27. Impostor

29. Prompted

31. "That hurts!"

32. Vegas' main drag

33. Coach-and-four

34. *Number of days in Hanukkah

36. Muscle quality

38. Word processor command

42. *Like Santa's pole

45. Repaired, as in socks

49. Mythical giant bird

51. Unmarried woman, archaic

54. Affirmative interjection

56. What timideest and polyimide have in common

57. Clarified butter

58. Theater seat arrangement

59. Wraths

60. Burn to a crisp

61. "___ your chance..." contraction

62. Make changes

63. Yearnings

64. "Be quiet!"

66. Don't waste

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BENNETT SALES TAX FROM PAGE 1

by approximately \$20,000 and \$25,000, respectively. While the March sales tax number had a deficit from budget of approximately \$87,500, second quarter's total still exceeded budget estimates by approximately \$15,000.

Third quarter revenues showed a deficit of \$25,000, however.

"Based on the performance of the first three quarters, staff has adjusted sales tax revenue projections for the fourth quarter to match actuals for the 2022 fourth quarter. Therefore, we anticipate sales tax growth at 1.27% versus the 3% (originally) budgeted."

In 2022, the town took in \$4,296,506 in sales tax. This year to date, \$3,295,195 has been received, down 1.73% (\$76,003) from the original projections. The modified projection for 2023 is \$4,321,898 in total sales tax revenue.

Ruvalcaba noted that 2023 is still proving to be a successful year, "but we have seen less of an increase in sales tax revenue than we have probably in the past six or seven years."

"I don't think it's a cause for concern," she added. "Inflation and the pandemic have done what they do and slowed the economy a little bit as far as discretionary spending goes."

Ruvalcaba reported that general fund revenues are at 78% of budget projections, trending slightly ahead of the benchmark.

Building permits and other development-related fees are the primary revenue source driving the positive trend.

General fund expenditures are at 60% year to date.

"Mostly this is because we do all of our end of year transfers (to next year's budget), but things like personnel expenditures are right on track at that 75%," she said.

Staff is projecting a \$165,000 decrease in the general fund balance because of the Pearl Street completion project.

"That project was approved by the board this year, so we will do a budget amendment and carry that forward because construction will not take place until 2024," Ruvalcaba said.

The entire third-quarter financial report is available to view on the town of Bennett website.

In the regular business meeting, the board of trustees approved the first amendment to the Subdivision Agreement (SA) for Bennett Ranch Filing No. 1.

The Bennett Ranch Property is located at the southwest corner of East 38th Avenue and Colorado Highway 79, which becomes Palmer south of the school campus. Planning Manager Steve Hebert, in presenting the amendment, noted that the board first approved the SA in October 2020. The agreement obligated the homebuilder, LGI, to put in certain improvements before they could start pulling building permits for the 145 planned single-family lots.

"LCI has completed all of the improvements except for the final improvements to the state Highway 79 (Palmer Avenue) at the Morgan Way intersection and the East 38th Avenue intersection," Hebert said, adding that the improvements at both locations include new acceleration and left turn lanes.

Those improvements were originally scheduled to be constructed earlier this fall, but, because the construction would have caused significant congestion along Palmer Avenue in the vicinity of the school campus, town staff recommended the work to be postponed to the spring and summer of 2024, a change LGI Homes accepted.

Hebert asked the board to consider amending the SA so LGI could begin building homes this winter and next spring.

"Staff is recommending the SA be amended to allow the issuance of no more than 50 building permits and certificates of occupancy before the Highway 79 improvements are completed," Hebert said, adding that the Colorado Department of Transportation and the town's traffic engineer, Mike Heugh, support the proposal.

After discussion, the trustees unanimously approved the amendment.

The next order of business was a staff proposal to vacate a portion of the town's right-of-way on Penrith Road.

A recently discovered error in a 1998 survey resulted in a portion of town right-of-way to overlap home lots built on the rear lot line on the east side of Penrith, south of East Colfax Avenue.

Two slivers of land, between .41 and 4.37 feet, have been occupied by the lot owners, who made improvements on it as part of their backyards.

Planning Manager Steven Hoes, in his staff report on the issue, noted that the portions of the overlapping right of way are not needed for municipal purposes now or for the foreseeable future.

"It would be a hardship to require the lot owners to move the fence and landscaping the .41 to 4.37-foot distance and revise the legal descriptions for their title documents," he said. "Approving the vacation request would leave the single family lots the same size and would not change their ownership, while only slightly reducing the size of the town's right-of-way."

Trustees agreed, and unanimously approved an ordinance to vacate the section of right-of-way.

In other business, the trustees adopted a resolution approving the Bennett Crossing Filing 1, First Amendment Minor Subdivision Plat.

The amendment divides Lot 11 into two buildable lots to provide a location for a proposed Intermountain Health Facility.

In his staff report, Hoes noted that the Bennett Crossing commercial subdivision is east of Highway 79 and north of I-70, and lot 11 is south of the intersection of Pearl and Cedar, immediately north of the Comfort Inn Suites and Hotel. The property is zoned Planned Development.

Hoes added that the Planning & Zoning Commission reviewed the proposal Nov. 27 and recommended approval. The Board of Trustees' resolution was adopted unanimously.

The next meeting of the Bennett Board of Trustees is at 7 p.m., Tuesday, Dec. 12.

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CHUCK WAGON



Cranberry Apple Cake

by **Bobbie Keefer**
For The Scout

It's cranberry season!
Cranberries are a fall fruit so now is the time to find them fresh in the produce department.
I make this festive cake every holiday season. Frozen cranberries can be used but fresh is best.
How about the apples? All apples aren't baking apples. Choose varieties that hold firm while baking. I like Honeycrisp, Fuji or Gala. They aren't always labeled so ask the produce person to help find them.
This cake is pretty! My grandkids call it Christmas Cake, a holiday tradition at grandma's house. You can dust the top with powdered sugar or make a glaze for extra sweetness. I serve it with sugar glazed pecans.
'Tis the season for sugar overload!

CRANBERRY APPLE CAKE

INGREDIENTS

- 2 apples, peeled and chopped

- 1 (12-ounce) bag fresh cranberries
- ¼ cup flour
- ¼ cup sugar
- 1 white cake mix
- 3 eggs
- ⅓ cup vegetable oil
- 1 cup water

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spray 9- by 12-inch baking dish with non-stick spray.
Put apples and cranberries in large bowl. Add flour and sugar. Toss to coat.
In mixer bowl, stir in cake mix, eggs, oil, water. Beat at low speed 1 minute and then medium speed 1 minute.
Fold in apple cranberry mixture. Spread evenly in prepared dish. Bake about 40 minutes until center tests done and top is golden brown. Cool completely.
Slice and serve on pretty dessert plates.

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PHOTOS BY ALYSSA STEMOFOR The Scout

What would you answer if someone asked “Are you dying to be a millionaire?” Members of the Bennett High School Drama Guild perform playwright Pat Cook’s murder-comedy “Who’s Dying to be a Millionaire?” Nov. 9-10 at the school auditorium. Within the production, contestants drop as fast as the wisecracks in a wild, riotous lampoon of quiz shows, politics and basic human nature. Clockwise from top left, Vivi Cranwill appears as Joyce Mansfield and Katelyn Faczak as Clovis Darnell, director of the hottest game show in town; Orion Markovitz as Reginald Smarmy, the host of the show, Chelsea Mejia Gonzalez as Mayor Bertha Hoggens, Annalisa Millholland as Sue Banderhill and Sissy Millholland as Nola Bartel; Natalee Sanders as Barbara Philpot; Katelyn Russo as Phoebe Kendall; Damien Wise as Sam’s father; and Salvatore Lomri as Sam Dithers, one of the three contestants who dies during the play, and Markovitz.



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2-Day Christmas Market

4-8 p.m., Friday, Dec. 15
Sip Holiday cocktails with local vendors
Woodhill Small Batch BBQ

9 a.m.-3p.m., Saturday, Dec. 16
Pics with The Grinch (Sponsored by PickleChic)
Breakfast & lunch w/Le Crepe (Mimosas @ Bar)

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CARL STEITZ/For The Scout

Good Luck Bulldogs!



Colorado State Spirit Championships
Thurs. - Sat., Dec. 7-9
Denver Coliseum

2A/3A Gameday Competition on Thursday:
Byers performance approx. 9:14 a.m.
Gameday Finals start Thursday @ 4 p.m.

**Byers Athletic Dept. &
Byers School District 32J**
For online broadcast, visit nfhnetwork.com
(subscription fee applies).



STEVEN VETTER/The I-70 Scout

STATE SPIRIT BOUND!

Three I-70 Corridor cheerleading programs are headed to this weekend's Colorado State Spirit Championships, Dec. 7-9 at the Denver Coliseum. The Byers Bulldogs will be the first of 28 2A/3A Gameday squads to take the mat on Thursday. The green-and-white are slated for their preliminary performance at 9:14 a.m. The top seven teams from the division will qualify for Thursday night's finals competition, which commences with the Parade of Champions at 4 p.m. The 4A/5A Gameday competition will also take place on Thursday. Strasburg and Bennett are the first two 3A Cheer squads to compete on Friday at 8:05 a.m. and 8:13 a.m., respectively. The Indians and Tigers are among 14 schools in their category with the top four squads to participate in Friday night's championship round beginning at approximately 6:45 p.m. Friday's competitions will also include 2A, 4A and 5A Cheer, and 2A/3A, 4A and 5A Co-Ed Cheer. Saturday is reserved for all the pom and dance classifications. Clockwise from bottom left, the Byers cheerleaders and coaches are all smiles as they pose with the Denver Broncos cheerleaders during the Broncos Prep Game of the Week, which was hosted by the Bulldogs on Sept. 29; Strasburg finishes up its routine in the Traditional category during the Patriot League Championships, which were hosted by the red-and-black on Nov. 17; and the Bennett squad enjoys the opening night of the Tiger Tip-Off basketball tournament Nov. 30.

Good Luck Indians at State Spirit!



Strasburg cheerleading team members, are, in no particular order: Cheyenne Lee, Alexa Thwaites, Emily Kopsch, Desirae Cox, Liberty Rose, Alyssa Todack, Jule Kalina, Ali Edmonson, Yamie Coronel Munoz, Lily Hernandez, Jordan Duhon, Jordan Garcia, Elena Reyes, Aislynn Safe, and Alyssa Schaffer. The Indians are coached by Stephanie Peabody, who is assisted by Alaina Franklin and Melissa Martin.

Colorado State Spirit Championships
Thursday - Saturday, Dec. 7-9
Denver Coliseum

Strasburg to perform its 3A Cheer routine
@ 8:05 a.m. Fridays; Finals at 6:45 p.m. Friday.

Good Luck Red-and-Black!
From Strasburg Athletic Department



STEVEN VETTER/The I-70 Scout



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Good Luck Indians!
We're all rooting for you at State Spirit!



GOOD LUCK LADY TIGERS!
From the Bennett Athletic Dept. & Bennett School District



Congratulations to our Cheerleaders who are heading to the:

COLORADO STATE SPIRIT CHAMPIONSHIPS
DEC. 7-9; DENVER COLISEUM

Lady Tigers take mat at 8:13 a.m. on Friday
3A Cheer Finals at 6:45 p.m. Friday

For tickets and information, visit CHSAANow.com.
Event will be available online at nfhnetwork.com.
(Subscription fee applies)