



Tremor Atwater receives his Wendy Heisman Scholar/Athlete award from Mr. Bosarge, Des Moines Superintendent. (Photos courtesy of Des Moines School)



Amaris Newkirk receives her Wendy Heisman Scholar/Athlete award from Mr. Bosarge, Des Moines Superintendent.

Des Moines to elect four school board members tonight

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 says, "I had people that wanted me to run, more than anything. But I was also concerned about some of the people that were coming off of it that were pretty rock solid. I think there needs to be some people that are similar to them, that are pretty level-headed, that can go forward with it. Basically, I was convinced by community members to run." Hittson is President of the Sierra Grande Land Owners Association. He serves on the Farm Bureau Board and with Sierra Grande Horse Association. District Sales Manager for NC+ Hybrid, a seed company, Hittson says, "The biggest challenge is keeping the school open in years to come. If the funding formula doesn't get changed, it's gonna be a challenge. I want to do everything possible to keep the community from being consolidated with Raton or Clayton, either one." He identifies low enrollment and high energy costs as the big issues. Hittson's daughter is in third grade, his son in Kindergarten.

and 5. Asks about challenges facing the school, he responds, "I don't know that there's any real issues. I think there's some need for improvement in the structures of the building. I think we ought to improve the personality of our school, the morals of our school. We need to have a more positive atmosphere than we do today." On falling enrollment, Rivale says, "We just need more people, younger people, moving to our community. Maybe I can advocate some people to come to this area by, hopefully, selling them some land."

Local rancher Raymond Rivale has been a licensed real estate agent for 30 years, selling ranches. He explains his candidacy, "In these tough economic times, we need a good slate of officers. I have children that attend this school and I graduated this school: I feel it's my duty to serve my time." His daughters are in grades 10, 8,

Damon Brown was appointed by the board to fill a vacancy two years ago; today, he serves as President. "I think we need to give back to our community and try to help make positive changes," Brown says. "We have the typical issues for small communities. How are we going to deal with declining enrollment? How are we going to deal with funding issues? Our district in the last several years has really taken steps in how we deal with that." He cites the district's Rural Revitalization Initiative, the new Business Incubation Center, and district-wide strategic planning. Brown, who has no children of his own, works on his family ranch. Asked what he thinks his chances are for re-election - he's running unopposed - he allows a small grin and says, "Well, fair."

Students selected as Wendy Heisman winners

Courtesy of Des Moines School
 Special to the Chronicle

Tremor Atwater, son of Kim and Brad Atwater, was selected as the male school winner and Amaris Newkirk, daughter of Marla and Alfred Newkirk, was selected as

the female winner for the Wendy's Heisman Scholar/Athlete award at Des Moines Municipal School. The Heisman award is based on a student's participation in school athletics and excellence in academics. These students will continue to

participate in the State competition. Wendy's will select 20 boys and 20 girls to be semi-finalists in the competition. Then one boy and one girl will be selected to be State winners and eligible to compete in the National Competition.



Tiger Fest Royalty, l to r: Gian Poteste, Brittny Duran, Syngen Duncan, Kyle Allen, King Lucas Serna, Queen Megan Pacheco, Ricco Tapia, Heather Romero, Robert Garcia, Jessica Vertovec. (Photo by Marty Mayfield)

AG: Very few choices for NM telecom consumers

Special to the Chronicle

(ALBUQUERQUE) - Attorney General Gary King released a report today showing that New Mexico ranks dead last in America for telecommunications competition. The report, prepared by expert consultants to the AG's office, shows only eight percent (8%) of New Mexicans are served by competitive telecommunications companies. By comparison, the states with the highest competitive penetration -- Rhode Island and Arizona -- enjoy forty eight percent (48%) and thirty four (34%) percent market share respectively by competitive communications companies.

"I am very concerned about New Mexicans being denied basic phone service or Internet connectivity and I'm asking the Public Regulations Commission to take long term measures to protect the consumer," says Attorney General King. "Since 1996 at the federal level and 2000 in New Mexico, policy makers and legislators have been trying to bring the promise of advanced communications at affordable rates to all New Mexicans, yet for a variety of reasons this hasn't happened yet."

The Attorney General believes that promoting telecommunications competition would lessen the need for government regulation. Factors such as disparities between

wholesale and retail rates, relatively low population density, and resistance among the state's largest phone companies (known as ILECs or "incumbent local exchange carriers") have made New Mexico a difficult place to operate for many companies wishing to compete.

As the recent billing dispute between Qwest and SkyWi shows, consumers are not being adequately protected from service outages outside their control. In December and January approximately 7,000 New Mexicans suffered a temporary dislocation of service when Qwest cut off SkyWi circuits over protracted billing disputes.

Veterans invited to informational meetings

ALBUQUERQUE - Local organizers and past participants will gather on Tuesday, February 3, 2009 from 6 to 7 p.m. and again on Thursday, February 5, 2009 from noon to 1 p.m. to talk about the NMVAHCS Creative Arts Festival which is taking place March 4-5, 2009 at the Raymond G. Murphy VA Medical Center. Both orientation meetings will take place in the Recreation Hall (Building 2) at the Medical Center, 1501 San Pedro Drive SE in Albuquerque. Organizers will provide information on the various categories, distribute applications and answer questions.

The festival recognizes the progress and recovery made through arts therapy, and raises the visibility of the creative achievements of New Mexico veterans. All first place category winners will be entered into the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival which will be held October 5-11, 2009 in San Antonio, Texas. Last year, 4 New Mexico Gold Medal winners received all expense paid trips to the national festival in Riverside,

California.

The NMVAHCS Creative Arts Festival is open to all veterans receiving care at the Raymond G. Murphy VA Medical Center, at VA Community Based Outpatient Clinics in Alamogordo, Artesia, Espanola, Farmington, Gallup, Las Vegas, Raton, Santa Fe, Silver City, Truth or Consequences and Durango (CO), or at the Albuquerque, Farmington or Santa Fe Vet Centers.

For those unable to attend the meetings, festival applications may be picked up at the Recreation Hall Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. To request an application by mail, call Cathy Williams at 505-265-1711 ext. 2469 or Jerry Perea at 265-1711, ext. 4208. Veterans can also call toll free at 1-800-465-8262, ext. 2469 or 4208. Completed applications and entries must be delivered to the Recreation Hall on Thursday, February 26, 2009 between 12 p.m. and 8 p.m., or Friday, February 27, 2009 by 5 p.m.

Small dogs at risk in area

Courtesy of the Animal Protection of New Mexico
 Special to the Chronicle

ALBUQUERQUE - Animal Protection of New Mexico, an Albuquerque-based animal advocacy group, is offering a \$2,500 reward for information leading to the arrest and prosecution of a person or persons believed to be stealing small dogs in Colfax County.

Angela Stell, shelter manager at Colfax Pet Rescue in Springer, said she has received reports of at least seven small dogs that have disappeared under suspicious circumstances in the area around Springer and Maxwell in the last several months.

"Everything I've heard has led me to believe these dogs were taken out of their yards," Stell said.

Springer resident Helen Benne said she's sure her teacup-sized Chihuahua "Peanut" was stolen from her fenced yard in December. Even her story's happy ending seems to prove humans were involved in Peanut's disappearance, she said.

"I had let him and our two other dogs, Furby, a big Aussie mix, and Chocolate, a dachshund, out in our yard. When I came back 15 minutes later, Furby and Chocolate were still there, but Peanut was gone," she said.

"I called Angela and the next day she got a call from a lady in Maxwell, who had found a dog that turned out to be Peanut. There's no way that tiny dog could have gotten all the way to Maxwell in one day," she said.

Steve Duran, also of Springer, said his Jack Russell terriers Shango and Maria disappeared July 11, 2008. He and

his wife, Louise Bernal, searched for them daily, until Bernal was killed in a motorcycle accident July 25. One of his regrets is that Bernal died before she could see her dogs again, Duran said.

"I hope this opens people's eyes to take close watch on their pets, and opens the eyes of the people taking the dogs to the impact they have on other people," he said.

Sherry Mangold, APNM's cruelty complaints administrator, said she doesn't want to speculate on who is taking the dogs or why they are taking them. But, she added, almost always people who steal dogs do so for personal profit, with no regard for the pain they inflict on the animals or their owners.

Mangold offered key precautions:

- Never leave your dogs outside unattended or for a long time.

- Keep your dogs appropriately licensed.

- Have your dogs microchipped.

- Save veterinary records to help identify your animals as yours.

- Take photos of yourself with your dogs to help identify them as yours when found.

Colfax Pet Rescue's Stell contacted APNM about the numerous missing dogs. She states that the group should be among those called to report a missing dog. Contact Colfax Pet Rescue at (575) 643-6664.

To provide information that could lead to the arrest and prosecution of anyone stealing dogs in this area, call the toll-free Attorney General's Animal Cruelty Task Force hotline at 888-260-2178.



At least seven small dogs have been reported missing around the Springer and Maxwell area in the last several months.



Rash of suspicious dog disappearances in Colfax County leads to \$2,500 reward offer.



On Saturday night, the Cimarron King and Queen were announced during the basketball games. Jake Arko was crowned King and Gabby Espinoza wears the tiara as Queen. (Photo by Jeannie Barnes)