

RATON ~ NEW MEXICO NEWS



Photos by Tim Keller

Left: Des Moines students await their turn to join the show Tuesday night. Right: Des Moines School's annual spring play featured dances including the Cotton-Eyed Joe.

Des Moines School's spring play is an extravaganza

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sing "Mockin' Bird Hill." There were introductions and recitations, bits of script and an abundance of smiles. One group of children was costumed as "Seeds", another as "Sprouts", one as "Honey Bees", another as "Bumble Bees". Second-grader Donovan Allis played the featured role of

Skinny Horse. Student art works surrounded the production, even extending to banners behind the audience in the grandstands. Outside the gym door, exiting community members found a table selling blank greeting card sets featuring student art works, which did a brisk business that benefited "Art Plays

Its Part!", which will continue at the school next year. Integrating art into the regular core curricula, and aiming its production at a year-end play that combines themes of all the classes, is cutting-edge education. Another aspect to applaud is the widespread participation by the community; the program lists several dozen

people who contributed to "Spring Flowers for Skinny Horse." Des Moines and its school have had a banner year for pooling resources to bring out the village's best attributes: nowhere has this been more evident than in Tuesday night's spring play.

County Commissioners request proposals for new software for Assessor's office

By LAURA L. BREWER
The Chronicle-News

The Colfax County Commissioners approved the Request for Proposal for software for the office of the county assessor. The commissioners had concerns about the assessor's software, Appologix, which was currently being used, but was not compatible with the county treasurer's accounting system by Triadic. There had been numerous errors in calculations that required hand correction because the one software calculated on a parcel base and the other on an owner-based system. At times if owners changed, the change was not recorded the same throughout both sys-

tems. The assessor's office requested that a new system be put in place before the end of the year numbers would be posted. The RFP deadline is May 22 at 2:00 p.m. The commissioners also approved an extension on the Triadic software contract until October 28, which will include a provision that may cost the county an additional \$5,000. The additional funds would ensure that whatever accounting software is used in the assessor's office, it would work with the treasurer's software. The commissioners also stated its intent to award the contract for the new Judicial Center to Michael S. Rich Contractors, an Albuquerque

firm, with the submitted bid of \$4,721,000, which included options of a back-up generator, landscaping and irrigation, and driveway paving. Commissioner Whitney Hite estimated the total cost, including gross receipt taxes, would come in at \$4,817,063.00. With expected additional expenses for phone system, furniture and land preparation, the final cost could be more than \$5,655,404. The new center, which will be located at the south end of Raton on south Second Street, is expected to open sometime next spring. It will house the sheriff's office and the district court, both of which currently have their offices in the Colfax County courthouse. The District Attorney's office, which is currently located on Hereford Avenue, will also occupy space in the new facility.

The commissioners hired Rohde May Keller McNamara Architecture, the judicial center architect, to serve as project manager to oversee the construction. In other action during last week's meeting, the commissioners approved an agreement for \$2,500 per month for services by Dr. Gilbert Aragon for indigent care. The agreement would allow indigent patients to receive a doctor's care in a clinic instead of going to the hospital emergency room. The commissioners voted to approve a Regional Mutual Aide Agreement, with the stipulation that changes that they deem necessary upon review with County Attorney Robin Blair, be accepted by other municipalities and governing bodies, some of which have already signed the agreement without the requested changes. The agreement may be cancelled before going into effect.

Governor backs review of N.M. investment funds

BARRY MASSEY Associated Press Writer
SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — Gov. Bill Richardson is backing a proposal by lawmakers to jointly commission an independent view of New Mexico's pension and investment funds.

A corruption and influence-peddling investigation of a New York state pension fund has raised questions about investment practices in New Mexico, particularly the hefty fees paid to third-party marketing agents by money management firms that won investment business with the State Investment Council and an educational retirement fund.

The Legislative Council voted last week to ask the Richardson administration whether it would help pay for hiring an independent firm to audit the nearly \$11 billion permanent funds managed by the Investment Council and New Mexico's public pensions: a \$6 billion fund for educators by the Educational Retirement Board and a more than \$8 billion retirement fund for state and local workers administered by the Public Employees Retirement Association.

Richardson announced his support for the proposal on Monday — a day before the Legislative Finance Committee was to review the role of third-party placement or marketing agents in the investment of public money. The governor said the Board of Finance and the Legislative Council Service will work on the scope of the independent review and how much it will cost.

"While the State Investment

Council has produced impressive investment results during the past six years, I welcome an independent review and any recommendations that will improve the state's practices," Richardson said in a statement.

At a Tuesday hearing, the LFC also is to hear from investment agency officials on how to ensure that state investment committees operate independently and have an adequate background in financial matters.

Richardson vetoed legislation this year that would have revamped the membership of the State Investment Council, but on Monday the governor said, "I'm happy to work with the Legislature on changes to the makeup of the council."

Currently, the council is under the control of the governor, who serves as its chairman. The governor, administration officials and gubernatorial appointees account for seven of the council's nine members. The vetoed bill would have expanded the council's members to 13, but reduced the governor's direct influence to just three members — the governor and two administration officials.

Richardson said in his statement that he would consider proposals to give the Legislature a voice in deciding who serves on the investment council. Under the vetoed bill, Democratic and Republican legislative leaders would have named four people to the council and four members of the public would have been appointed by a majority of the other nine members of the council.

Land commissioner to run for PRC

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — Republican state Land Commissioner Patrick Lyons is running for the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission's District 2.

The seat is currently held by Republican David King, who cannot seek re-election due to term limits.

Lyons was first elected to the state Land Office in 2002 and was re-elected in 2006. The land commissioner also is barred from more than two consecutive four-year terms.

The PRC's District 2 encom-

passes all or part of 14 counties.

The commission regulates utilities, telecommunications, transportation, railroad safety, natural gas and hazardous liquid pipelines, insurance industries, and oversees business and industry compliance, organization and registration.

The Land Office manages 9 million acres of trust land and 13 million acres of subsurface rights to oil, gas and minerals.

N.M. now has 44 confirmed swine flu cases

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — The New Mexico Department of Health has confirmed 13 more cases of swine flu.

The state now has 44 cases of swine flu, up from 31 at the last announcement Friday. State health officials said they do not yet know the location for all the new cases.

New Mexico also is looking at five probable cases.

Health officials say that so far, the illness — officially

known as H1N1 flu — has been mild, and most patients already have recovered.

According to the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there are about 4,800 confirmed cases of the flu in 30 countries, including at least 1,626 in Mexico, 2,618 in the United States and 330 in Canada.

Rep. Luján demands accountability for mortgage and corporate fraud

Special to The Chronicle-News

Washington, DC — Today, Rep. Ben Ray Luján joined his colleagues in Congress to demand accountability for mortgage and corporate fraud by voting for the Fraud Enforcement and Recovery Act, which takes common sense steps to address and fix the causes of our current economic crisis. The legislation provides resources for law enforcement to investigate and prosecute fraud that may be a cause of larger financial problems. The legislation will also establish a bipartisan commission to investigate the causes of the collapse of our financial system and the ensuing recession.

"Too many New Mexican families are struggling because of corporate and mortgage fraud and irresponsibility," said Rep. Luján. "People have lost their savings and their homes, and we have to take steps to protect the people of New Mexico from fraud. The Fraud Enforcement and Recovery Act protects taxpayers by providing law enforcement with the resources to investigate and prosecute fraud and by establishing a commission to investigate the causes of our current financial crisis. The legislation increases accountability and improves protections against fraud that can compromise our financial system and hurt families in New Mexico."

Specifically, the Fraud Enforcement and Recovery Act will provide law enforcement with funding and resources to investigate and prosecute cases of mortgage and corporate fraud. The legislation will protect families from mortgage fraud by extending current fraud laws to apply to the mortgage lending business. It will also pro-

vide additional accountability for Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) funding and the Recovery Act by making it a federal crime for government contractors to defraud the government of funds received through TARP and the Recovery Act.

The legislation also creates a financial markets inquiry commission to investigate what led to the current economic crisis. The commission is designed to create a detailed examination of the problems in the financial systems and the steps that we should take to increase accountability, stop rewarding irresponsible practices, and begin to develop long-term reforms to prevent future crises. The efforts to investigate the causes of the current economic crisis are similar to those undertaken by the Pecora congressional committee that conducted an investigation after the Stock Market Crash of 1929. The Pecora commission found cases of fraud and dishonest Wall Street practices that compromised the financial system.

"We cannot allow for the same type of fraud and irresponsibility that led to this current economic crisis," said Rep. Luján. "The regulations we have in place are not working and the commission established by the Fraud Enforcement and Recovery Act will help us to understand the weaknesses in our system that led us to our current economic crisis. This is an important step toward reform that can help prevent future crises."

COLFAX COUNTY CALENDAR

■ May 14 - 7:30 pm Man of La Mancha- The Impossible Dream Musical By Dale Wasserman May 14-16, 2009 Friday and Saturday 7:30 pm, Sunday 2:30 pm - Historic Shuler Theater in Downtown Raton

■ May 15 - 7:30 pm "Man of LaMancha" performance by Raton Choral Society. - Shuler Theater

■ May 16 - 7:30 am Kick off of Great American Cleanup Day followed by awards ceremony and barbeque. - Raton Visitor's Center

■ May 16 - 8:00 am till noon. Giant yard sale. Proceeds to help youth attend Heifer Project in Arkansas. - First Presbyterian Church, Raton.

■ May 16 - 8:00 am Girl Scout Troop #1091 Bake Sale in cooperation with International Bank - Downtown Raton

■ May 16 - 10:30 am Run for the Wall riders arrive in Raton. - Conoco station on Clayton Road

■ May 16 - 7:30 pm "Man of LaMancha" performance by Raton Choral Society. - Shuler Theater

■ May 22 - 7:30 pm Raton Youth Theater performance of "Arabian Nights" - Shuler Theater

■ May 23 - 7:30 pm Raton Youth Theater performance of "Arabian Nights" - Shuler Theater

■ May 30 - 0: am Sugarite Canyon State Park Fishing Derby, Saturday May 30th through June 7th. Kid's Derby June 6th - Lake Maloya, Sugarite Canyon State Park, East of Raton

■ May 30 - 7:00 am Week long Fishing Derby begins. Sponsored by Raton Kiwanis and NM State Parks (575)445-5607 - Sugarite Canyon State Park