



Photo by Laura L. Brewer

Toby Kessler, Executive Director of the Colfax County Senior Citizens' Centers, addresses a group of citizens about the rumored closing of the Maxwell Senior Citizens' Center. The CCSC board of directors, from left, are Monte Randles, LeAnn Smith, Phyllis Mead, Mary Goff, Joe Campanella, William Hickman, Kessler, Jean Mobley, and Mary Helen Grimm. Not shown at far left is Deputy Director Julie Mance.

Maxwell Senior Citizens' Center to remain open with limited services

By LAURA L. BREWER
The Chronicle-News

RATON – The Colfax County Senior Citizens, Inc. board of directors and Executive Director Toby Kessler met with a group of citizens Feb. 18 to discuss concerns that the Maxwell Senior Citizens' Center would close. With only two seniors eating at the Maxwell Center on a regular basis, Kessler and the CCSC board determined that the center's kitchen would be moved to Springer in order to cut costs at Maxwell.

"The utilities are eating us up," exclaimed vice-chair Mary Helen Grimm. Kessler went on to explain that Maxwell is the only center that does not contribute financially to its operation, and that because the state reimburses the CCSC for services, if services are not being used at a center, CCSC does not receive money toward the operation of that center.

Many residents of Maxwell, when learning of the move to close the kitchen at the Maxwell center, feared the center would no longer be able to provide other services to the small community, and the doors would close permanently.

At the Feb. 18 meeting, Kessler explained that there was no intention to close the center, but to modify how and when it is used. The center would still be available for celebrations, meetings, and other uses, but with the move of the kitchen, the kitchen staff would no longer be on the premises. With no other staffing, the center could not remain open, except for special occasions when staffing could be provided, because of safety concerns. However, the senior meals would continue to be delivered to those in the area using that service and transportation for seniors would still be provided as needed.

The Maxwell Senior Center has shown a steady decline in usage in the past several years, causing Kessler and the board to take steps to determine if anything could be done for the Maxwell center to better serve the community. During Thursday's meeting, several seniors requested that the CCSC board of directors survey the seniors in and around Maxwell to determine why they aren't using the center, and what events or services could be offered to increase attendance. In order to make anyone taking the survey feel more comfortable expressing his or her concerns and suggestions, several at the meeting strongly suggested that the survey be done by an outside party, not someone directly involved with the center.

"There are reasons they're not going, but they're not telling," responded Marva Deines, retired accountant, about

the seniors in the area.

County Manager Don Day offered to help develop the survey and to implement it through county personnel. The survey committee, consisting of Day, Kay Pinkston, Charlie Hoy, and Kessler, met the following day and again this week to work out the details of the survey. According to Julie Mance, deputy director for CCSC, Kessler will meet with the committee again on Wednesday afternoon to finalize the survey. During an earlier interview, Kessler stated that in a preliminary unofficial survey, he found that many of the qualifying seniors are still employed, and are not able to participate in activities at the Maxwell center during working hours, which attributes for some of the low attendance. Kessler said he is looking forward to addressing the areas of opportunity that the survey may provide for the seniors in the Maxwell area.

SCHOOL EVENTS

GENERAL INFO

■ **Scholarship** – Miners' Colfax Medical Center Auxiliary \$1,000 Medical Scholarship offered per year to assist one or more Colfax County high school graduates interested in Medical or Health related fields. Contact Shirley Faver at 575-445-4988 for more information. Deadline is April 5.

■ **Delta Kappa Gamma Society, Iota Chapter** is offering a \$1,000 Scholarship for a female education major in the Raton, Trinidad, or Walsenburg area. If interested contact Shari at <scholarship.dkg@gmail.com> for eligibility requirement information. Deadline is March 19, 2010.

FRIDAY

■ **TASPERA** - Trinidad Area Schools & Public Employees Retirement Association meets 12:30 p.m. Fri in the TSJC Sullivan Center cafeteria. Please call Paul Monteria for more information.

MONDAY

■ **Primer School Board** work session 4:30 Mon @ the School Cafeteria, 2200 Hwy 12, Weston.

TUESDAY

■ **Trinidad Band Boosters** meet 5:15 p.m. Tues @ the THS Band Room. Info: 680-1419 (Rhonda). All parents are encouraged to attend.

■ **Trinidad Board of Education** regular meeting 6 p.m. Tues @ the Administration Office, 215 South Maple St.

Longtime Hoehne educator to be honored Sunday

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ence. Thank you!
Mrs. Karspeck, you have put forth more than enough of your time and hard work whether it was May Fair, banquet, donuts after long, drawn-out meetings, or helping us keep this shindig a surprise from good ol' Mr. K! We greatly appreciate each and every moment you have sacrificed for our chapter! Not only will we miss Mr. Karspeck, but your presence in all our events will be truly missed!

All who have been members of the Hoehne FFA, Agriculture Education Advisory Board, employees

and school board members of the Hoehne School 1976-2010 are invited to gather in Mr. K's honor at the Hoehne School on Sunday at 2 p.m. Meat, table service and beverage will be provided. Guests are asked to bring a potluck side dish or dessert for the meal. The Hoehne FFA Officer team would very much appreciate your appearance as we cherish all the amazing memories we share with Mr. K!

Respectfully submitted by
Aimee Duran (Head Cook),
Chantel Brunelli (Vice President) and Chelsey Martin (Secretary).

TSNH graduates second class of nurses aides

By MIKE GARRETT
The Chronicle-News

Trinidad State Nursing Home graduated another class of certified nursing assistants in a special ceremony and lunch on Thursday.

The nurses assistants completed the nursing home's second four-week class taught by TSNH's nurses

aide instructor Mary Haun.

Haun, nursing home administrator Lee Burkholder and Human Resources Director Juanita Wright spoke to the graduating class, offering words of encouragement that the home, despite its shaky ownership situation, is still in an economic position to offer the graduates full and part-

time employment after they become fully certified. The nurses assistants are now eligible to go on to become certified to eventually become licensed practitioner nurses or registered nurses.

"Don't let your education go to waste because there is still a very high demand for nurses and health care people in the U.S.," said Wright. "You can find a job no matter



Photo by Mike Garrett

The Trinidad State Nursing Home held special graduation ceremonies Thursday for its Certified Nurses Assistant Program graduates who completed a comprehensive four-week class at the home and are now eligible to go on to earn an advanced nursing degree to become an LPN or RN. In front from left are Justin Rohrer, Lacy Garcia, Danielle Valdez and Vanessa Maxfield. In back are from left, Augustine Vega, Robin Sanchez, Cheri Rogina, Louie Bueno and Jourdin Vallejos. All are from the Trinidad area.

where you look." She added that the Trinidad nursing home will be looking to hire several of the graduates for full or temporary work if they so choose to work there. Many of the students also befriended and learned how to care for residents in the home while taking their training classes there. "We're not going away, we're going to be here for you," said Wright.

Burkholder agreed that despite tough economic times with many of the

area's largest employers downsizing their work force or having to transfer their people to other locales like Pioneer Natural Resources has done, the nursing home, as one of Las Animas County's largest employers, is always looking for quality nurses aides and RNs. The home currently employs around 130 full and part-time people.

Graduates are Augustine Vega, Robin Sanchez, Cheri Rogina, Louie Bueno, Jourdin Vallejos, Justin

Rohrer, Lacy Garcia, Danielle Valdez and Vanessa Maxfield. Several of the students said that the four-week class went by so quickly and they really enjoyed the times they spent getting to know the residents and how nice they were. They also learned the art and mechanisms that go into being a good caregiver.

The next class is tentatively scheduled for May and will probably be an evening class to better accommodate working people, Haun said.

The king of snow days

By TIM KELLER
The Chronicle-News

RATON – Raton Public Schools Superintendent David Willden carries a heavy burden: when snow and ice coat the roadways, it's his decision, and his alone, whether to delay the school day, or even cancel it. "It's one of the most agonizing decisions I make," he says, "because I don't want to be responsible for a student getting injured. It's my responsibility."

Does he consult the National Weather Service in Albuquerque in the middle of the night? Does he call the New Mexico Department of Transportation? How does he make such a decision?

Willden has two primary tools: his iPod Touch and his alarm clock. The night before, he consults the standard weather feature on his iPod. If he's still up at 10 p.m., he'll watch the news, but he's usually asleep by the time the news comes on.

When snow or ice are possible, Willden sets his alarm for 4 a.m. He gets up and looks outside. If there's snow or ice, he pulls on some clothes and goes for a drive.

"I get in my school car and drive to the end of my street. There's a stop sign. I hit the brakes. If I skid, I figure we need a delay.

"If I don't skid, I'll drive to other areas of Raton, especially areas with more hills than my neighborhood. I drive up 1st Street to the north side, and, of course, I check Tiger Drive."

By 4:30 he's decided whether to delay the school



Photo by Gail Dixon-Willden

It's 4:10 a.m. and this man is setting out to see whether he can slide his car on ice.

day.

Back home, he makes a series of phone calls. First, he calls Assistant Superintendent Paul Malano, who in turn calls all principals and central office staff with the superintendent's decision. Willden next calls cafeteria manager Jackie Jones, followed by maintenance supervisor Charles Gonzales. Then Willden calls Sharon Ortega at the bus barn to reschedule the bus runs. Finally, he calls the media.

He calls KRTN and KCRT, leaving messages on their voice mails. Then he calls TV stations KOAT and KOB, each of which has provided him with a username and password to be sure it's really the superintendent and not Ferris Bueller. He leaves a final notice, via e-mail, with KRQE.

If the snow is bad enough, Willden still has another decision to make. He has until 8 a.m. to decide whether to cancel the school day altogether. "The decision to delay, I make that by myself," he says, "but for a closing, I make

some more calls." He checks in with Pat Vigil, Raton's Public Works Director, for a report from the road-clearing crews. He'll call Malano again to ask what the roads are like out his way, toward Yankee Canyon. Willden will dial 5-1-1 to get the New Mexico road conditions, though he says the highways aren't much of a concern.

"We have a few staff members who commute to work on the highways, but most of our people just use Raton's streets," Willden says.

He'll drive to his office and check KOAT-TV's weather coverage, and he'll look up weather radar online.

Finally, he decides whether to get dressed for work, or to start his long round of phone calls again, this time to announce a cancelled day.

As often as not, he'll stop by KRTN-FM's morning show, This That & the Other, to chat about how he's spent his morning so far. He's been hard at work for four hours when the morning show begins.

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