

Eagle Lake Headlight

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VOLUME 103 NUMBER 12

EAGLE LAKE, TEXAS

JUNE 8, 2006



Hats Off To The Class of 2006!

Members of The Rice High School Class of 2006 celebrate after graduation exercises last Thursday.

Part Juvenile Facility To Be Used By State

Colorado County Judge Al Jamison announced Friday that an agreement had been reached with the state Department of Health and Human Services to lease a portion of the administrative offices at the now closed county Juvenile Detention facility in Eagle Lake.

Jamison said the lease is for 5,300 square feet of space and the county will receive \$4,800 a month for the lease.

He said 38 employees will be housed in the facility.

They will be moving from Columbus where the building in which they had worked was sold to the Texana Mental Health-Mental Retardation agency.

Jamison said the offices will include those dealing with food stamps, Medicaid, aid to needy families, nursing home assistance, aged and disability services and child protective services.

He said that if the lease had not been worked out, the workers would probably have moved to Bellville.

"It would have hurt the county for the facility to move, so we wound up with a win-win situation," he said, pointing to the loss of local jobs.

He said the lease is for five years.

"I think we've turned the corner on bleeding to death," Jamison said of loss of money the county incurred when it attempted to keep the facility open.

He said he was hopeful that the Rice School District would continue to house its alternative education program at the facility, but said no decision on that had been made yet.

Also, he said, he had discussions with two other groups about using some of the remaining vacant space in the facility, but said the discussions were preliminary.

Could Cost Over \$60,000 In Tax Revenue Water Plan Draws Concerns

Colorado county's chief tax appraiser has expressed concern about possible adverse impact to the county if the Lower Colorado River Authority buys up 10,000 acres for a water reservoir.

Billy Youens made the comments in a letter to taxing jurisdictions in the county.

He said two of the proposed sites are in the Rice School District and one is in the Columbus school district.

He said that a minimum figure on loss of tax revenue, based on agricultural land values, would be \$60,000 a year.

"Gravel deposits will be covered by water and oil and gas may not be produced because of concerns from contaminating a water supply," Youens said. "If all ownership of this facility is considered exempt (from taxes) and we lose tax base, all taxpayers would have to contribute more to make up the difference.

"If no compensation is made, we are all asked to sacrifice for the benefit of the San Antonio water supply. Please don't allow this to happen."

He also said there were other detrimental economic effects including: impact on recreational hunting, livestock production, crop production, fertilizer sales, equipment purchase and repair and hotel and restaurant business.

The LCRA is looking at three possible sites in Matagorda County and three in Colorado County.

Youens said he felt that there is a greater likelihood of Colorado County being selected because it is closer to San Antonio, it is at a higher elevation, which would mean less pumping costs, and there is no groundwater conservation district to regulate pumping of groundwater.

"I wanted to warn officials that we need to be diligent," Youens said.

He said he was not aware of whether state law provided for any compensation to be paid to the county for loss of property from the tax rolls.

Youens did note the federal government pays local taxing jurisdictions about \$24,000 a year in compensation for approximately 8,400 acres lost from the tax rolls as a refuge for

Prairie Chickens.

When contacted, County Judge Al Jamison said he had been in contact with the LCRA about ensuring that the county is compensated for the loss of property from tax rolls.

He said he was told that it could amount to about 2 percent of the county's tax rolls.

If that issue is resolved satisfactorily, he said, he was neutral on the question of locating a reservoir in the county.

He said he understood the preliminary contract calls for taking a maximum of 150,000 acre feet from the Colorado River, and most of that would be gained from decreases in water needed for Rice production.

At an earlier briefing by LCRA officials on the project, Jamison asked whether the impact of taking land off the tax rolls had been discussed. He said it hadn't been discussed, but would be.

Jamison said he was planning to talk further about the issue to LCRA General Manager Joe Beal this week.

NEWSBRIEFS

Texas Master Naturalist meeting is tonight

The Gideon Linecum Chapter of TMN will hold its first meeting Thursday, June 8 at 7 p.m. on the second floor of the Sales Office at the Washington County Fairgrounds. Susie Rigler of Lone Star Wildlife Rescue, and her friend, Hudson Hawk, will present a program about "Fawns and Raptor Rehabilitation". Social time is from 7 to 7:30 p.m.; program, 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. business meeting, 8:30 to 9 p.m. The public is invited. For more information call 936-878-1988.

Pee-Wee bake sale is Friday

The Pee-Wee All Stars will hold a bake sale Friday June 9 in front of Eagle Lake Supermarket and First National Bank starting at 8:30 a.m. Proceeds will be used to purchase Pee-Wee All Stars baseball equipment.

County Fair broiler order deadline is Friday

Colorado County Fair Broiler order deadline is coming up June 9, at 5 p.m. A minimum of 25 birds per exhibitor is required and chicks will be \$1.05 each. Orders or being taken at the Colorado County Extension office. Broiler chicks will be picked up at M-G, Inc. in Weimar on Friday August 4. For more information contact the Extension Office.

ELES PTO taking yearbook orders

The Eagle Lake Elementary School (ELES) PTO is currently taking 2005-2006 year book orders. The price is \$16 each. The PTO is required to have a minimum order of 75 years books sold. Please contact Lydia Contreras at 234-3239 or Daryln Henderson at 979-232-0600 to get an order form. No extra yearbooks will be ordered. Purchase your yearbook and have memories of this school year.

WCJC announces summer hour schedule

Wharton County Junior College (WCJC) began operation of summer hours as of May 22 and will continue through August 18, at all campus and extension center locations. The college's summer hours for all administrative offices and libraries will be as follows: Monday - Thursday, 7:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. and Friday, 7:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. This office schedule does not affect class schedule. For more information, please call 979-532-6322.

RMC Community health fair is Saturday

Rice Medical Center (RMC) will be hosting a Community Health Fair Saturday, June 10. The Health Fair will offer blood pressure screening, pulse oximetry, pulmonary function screening, PSA testing, cholesterol screen, glucose screen, bone density screen, activities for the kids, several informative booths about massage therapy, home health, assisted living, durable medical equipment, physical therapy and much more! The Health Fair will be from 9 a.m. to 12 noon at the Rice Medical Center Hospital, 600 South Austin Road in Eagle Lake. The RMC Employee Volunteers will have a bake sale in conjunction with the Health Fair. For more information call Vicky Pavlu at 979-234-5571 x 5216.

4-H Horse Club horse show starts June 12

The Colorado County 4-H Horse Club invites you to come watch their Horse Show and enjoy their concession stand on the following Monday evenings at 7 p.m. at the Ag Complex in Columbus: June 12, 19, 26, July 3, and 10, weather permitting. Participants earn points for awards that will be given at their banquet. There will also be a drawing the evening of their banquet from the tickets sold. Anyone that would like to make a donation, please mail it to Colorado County 4-H Horse Club, PO Box 1291 Columbus, TX. 78934 or contact Manager, Jeri Jobe at 979-732-8044. We thank you for your support!

Library to host movie day

The Wintermann Library is adding a new element to their Summer Reading Program. Beginning on Tuesday, June 13 there will be a movie day. Children age 4 - 2nd grade will come at 10:30 a.m. and 3rd grade - 6th grade will come at 1:30 p.m. If you have a child in each group, your children can come together at the same time. The schedule of the movies will be posted each week at the library.

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Appraisal Notices Going In Mail

Appraisal notices of new property values are scheduled to be mailed to taxpayers in Colorado County by Friday.

Billy Youens, chief appraiser with the Colorado County Central Appraisal District, said he has not yet calculated figures on overall changes in values.

But he did say the most significant change involves increases in oil and gas values, and added that the majority of the increases will be in the Rice School District, in the southern part of the county.

He said notices will be mailed for approximately 30,000 property accounts.

Taxpayers have 30 days after receipt of the new values to file an appeal. He said property owners with questions should contact the appraisal district at 732-8222.

Jobless Rate Totals 4.4 Percent

The unemployment rate for Colorado County for May 2006 was 4.4 percent, figures from Texas Workforce Commission show.

For May in Colorado County, 9,929 persons were employed and 454 seeking work.

The figure compares to statewide unemployment in May, 4.8.

For Fayette County, unemployment was 3.5 percent, with 11,645 persons employed and 419 looking for jobs.

For Lavaca County, unemployment was 3.6 percent, with 10,429 persons employed and 387 looking for jobs.

For Wharton County, unemployment was 4.9 percent, with 19,839 persons employed and 1,022 looking for jobs.



Judge Al Jamison examines some of the plaster from the courthouse ceiling, the debris from which is visible in the background.

District Courtroom Repairs Underway

Colorado County Judge Al Jamison held a press conference Friday to discuss action taken to ensure safety of the courthouse after part of the ceiling in the district courtroom collapsed last week.

Jamison described the collapse of part of the ceiling on Tuesday, May 30, as a "near catastrophe."

No one was in the courtroom when the ceiling collapsed.

Structural engineers were called in to examine the courtroom, advise about the cause of the collapse and recommend measures to stabilize the ceiling.

He said the collapse was caused when a decorative ceiling beam settled

and pulled part of the ceiling down. He said the beam moved about four inches.

The judge said the beam was nailed and not bolted to floor joists above the ceiling.

He said metal plates were installed in the floor joists above the ceiling and the decorative beam was bolted to a large metal plate to prevent it from moving.

He said three other decorative ceiling beams were also attached to metal plates as well.

In addition, he said, the screen on which the plaster ceiling was applied had been nailed with finishing nails and that the nails would be reinforced

with broad-headed screws.

Jamison said when the ceiling debris hit the floor in the district courtroom, it cracked the ceiling in the county clerk's office below.

Jamison said the engineers determined there was no structural damage or problem with the first floor ceiling. But he said that it also would be reinforced with broad-headed screws.

The judge noted that commissioners court would meet on June 12 at the county services building near the jail.

He said that a schedule would be worked out to allow the district court to use the first floor courtroom, which

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The Eagle Lake Police Department recently received two new vehicles. The city decided to try out some sport utility vehicles in hopes that they will last longer on the city's bumpy roads. Pictured with the new vehicles, from left, are Police Chief Bill Lattimore, Lt. Wendy Alley, Officer Tomas Gonzalez.