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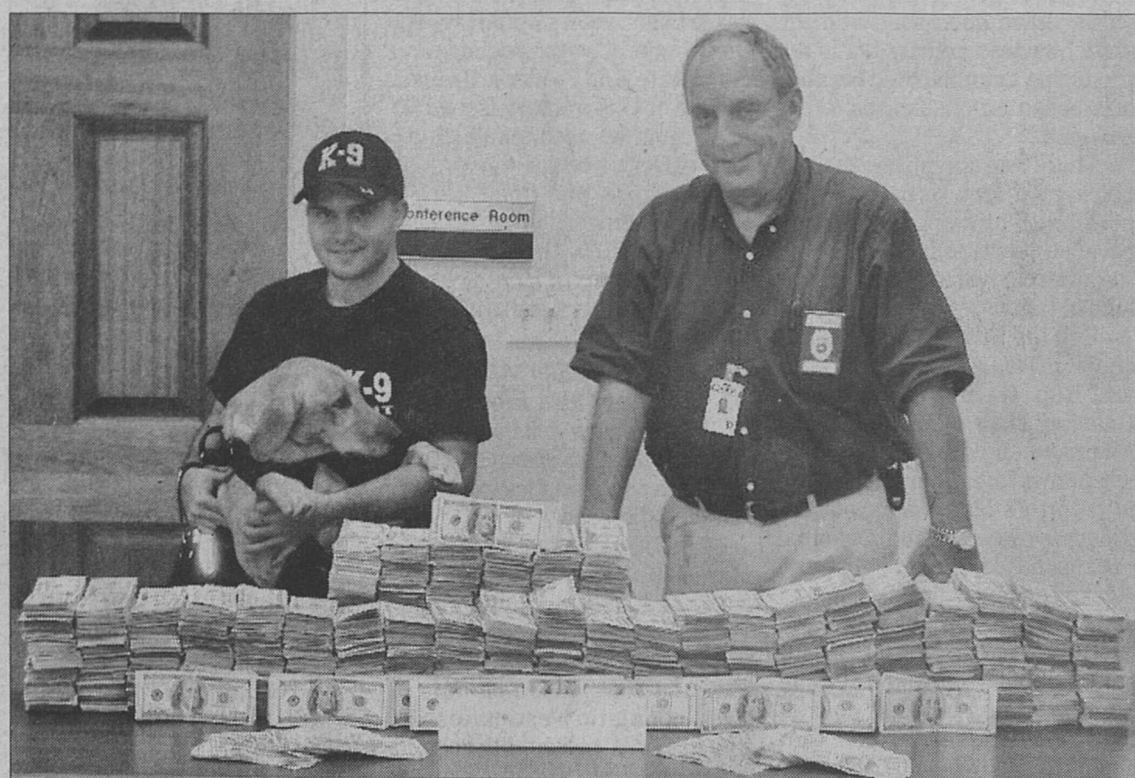
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EAGLE LAKE, TEXAS

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Eagle Lake Officer John Williams, left, poses with Lulu and Weimar Police Chief Bill Livingston following the November 2008 seizure of over \$740,000 in cash. Lulu was instrumental in finding the cash and Livingston has said he plans to give Eagle Lake some of Weimar's 70 percent share of the money.

Eagle Lake Likely To Get Some Of \$740,000 Money Seizure

A forfeiture judgment has awarded local law enforcement agencies a large amount of currency and a bus used to transport the money.

A petition seeking the forfeiture of \$742,320 and a 1995 MCI passenger bus filed by the Colorado County Attorney's Office was granted following a hearing on March 23.

Under the judgment and a local agreement, 70 percent of the proceeds will be awarded to the Weimar Police Department, and 30 percent will be awarded to the County Attorney's Office.

The bus will be sold at auction with a minimum bid of \$19,269.60, which is the amount of the lien on the bus held by the company that financed its purchase.

If the bus does not get a bid that high, the bus will be awarded

to the lien holder, ABC Bus Leasing, Inc.

Weimar Police Chief Bill Livingston said he plans to grant some of the money to the Eagle Lake police department, whose drug dog was instrumental in locating the money, but had not decided on an amount.

"We want to try to be more than fair," he said.

The case arose on Nov. 4, 2008, after the Weimar Police department received a tip that a bus traveling west on Interstate 10 was carrying a large amount of drug money.

Lt. Steven Krhovjak spotted the bus, and Officer Emil Martinez conducted a traffic stop after it crossed over the white fog line.

The three Hispanic males on the bus gave consent to search the bus.

Nothing was found until Eagle Lake Officer John Williams brought his drug dog, Lulu, to the scene.

Lulu alerted on the money, which was found hidden in the air conditioning panels running along the floorboard of the bus.

Thirty-four packages of money

were wrapped in cellophane, black paper, duct tape and vacuum-sealed plastic and contained a charcoal residue to mask the odor of narcotics.

"Lulu saved the day in this case," said County Attorney Ken Sparks.

"She alerted on the drug money, which usually has an odor from individuals handling the money and the drugs bought with the money," he added.

Sparks explained that the police department is restricted to using the money for law enforcement purposes including officer training, specialized equipment and supplies and items used by officers in direct law enforcement duties.

Livingston said he had not yet decided how to use the money that the police department will get.

Under the law, he said, he submits a budget to the city council, but the council does not have the power to approve or deny the use of the funds.

The prosecutor's office is restricted to using the money for the official purposes of the prosecutor's office.

County OKs Grant For Courthouse Plan

Colorado County commissioners, meeting Monday, March 16, took the first step toward a \$6.3 million restoration and renovation of the county courthouse when they approved accepting a \$400,000 planning grant from the state.

The county will come up with \$154,430 to do the plans, according to estimates by the county's architect.

The architect, Chris Hutson, with Volz and Associates, said his firm's fee is normally 15 percent

of the project cost, but would be reduced to 13.5 percent because of previous work that has been done.

He also cautioned that the county is not guaranteed a grant for the construction. He said that the legislature must appropriate funds.

He also said that in the past the maximum grant that a county has received has been \$5 million, and in the last round of funding construction projects, the grants were capped at \$4 million.

He estimated the cost to the county for the entire project at \$1.5 million to \$2 million.

County Auditor Raymie Kana said that much is left in certificates of obligation that the county issued earlier.

The architect said the costs do not include moving offices from the courthouse during construction.

The restoration would involve removing the offices of the county clerk and tax assessor collector, which were added on in the 1950s.

Commissioners have previously talked about constructing an annex, but balked at one cost figure of \$5.6 million for a 24,000 square foot building.

Kana, who was named to a committee appointed to study an annex, said after the meeting that the group had not met recently, but would be meeting again.

She said her feeling was that a new annex would be much smaller than the one proposed earlier.

Commissioners voted unanimously in favor of proceeding and accepting the grant.

They also approved hiring Drymalla Construction Co. as a construction manager at risk.

Under that arrangement, Drymalla would pay additional costs if the project exceeded the architectural firm's estimates.

However, after the meeting, County Judge Al Jamison said an error was made and the commissioners should have asked for companies to submit bids or proposals to serve as a construction manager.

He said he would ask the commissioners to rescind the action naming Drymalla, but noted the company could submit a proposal to serve as construction manager.

"I'm terred in the Commissioners' Court meeting by naming Drymalla Construction as construction manager at risk for the courthouse renovation," Jamison said. "We must go through one of two defined processes to determine who will perform this work. "As a result of my error, I have called a special court meeting for Monday to ask commissioners to rescind that portion of my motion that references the name of any contractor to perform this work."

Drymalla, which is located in Columbus, is doing the roof and dome restoration work. In other matters, commissioners:

—Heard Shirley Kearbey express concern about the pay for the Emergency Medical Services director and emergency management coordinator.

Last year, the county hired a full-time EMS director for a salary of \$55,000 annually. Until then Chuck Rogers had been the EMS director and emergency management coordinator at a salary of \$39,000 annually and was part-time in both positions.

At the time the full-time EMS director was hired, commissioners agreed to pay Rogers \$30,000 a year for continuing the emer-

gency management coordinator duties on a part-time basis.

Commissioners did not respond to Kearbey because her comments were made in the public comments portion of the meeting.

She said she was told the Wharton county EMS director was making only \$48,000 a year.

After the meeting, Kana said when commissioners considered setting the salary that the county had asked surrounding counties for information on EMS director salaries and she got responses only from Fayette County, where the salary was \$60,200, and Washington County, where it was \$64,500.

Kearbey also said that Rogers was also using a county vehicle for taking and picking up children from school, personal errands and going to church.

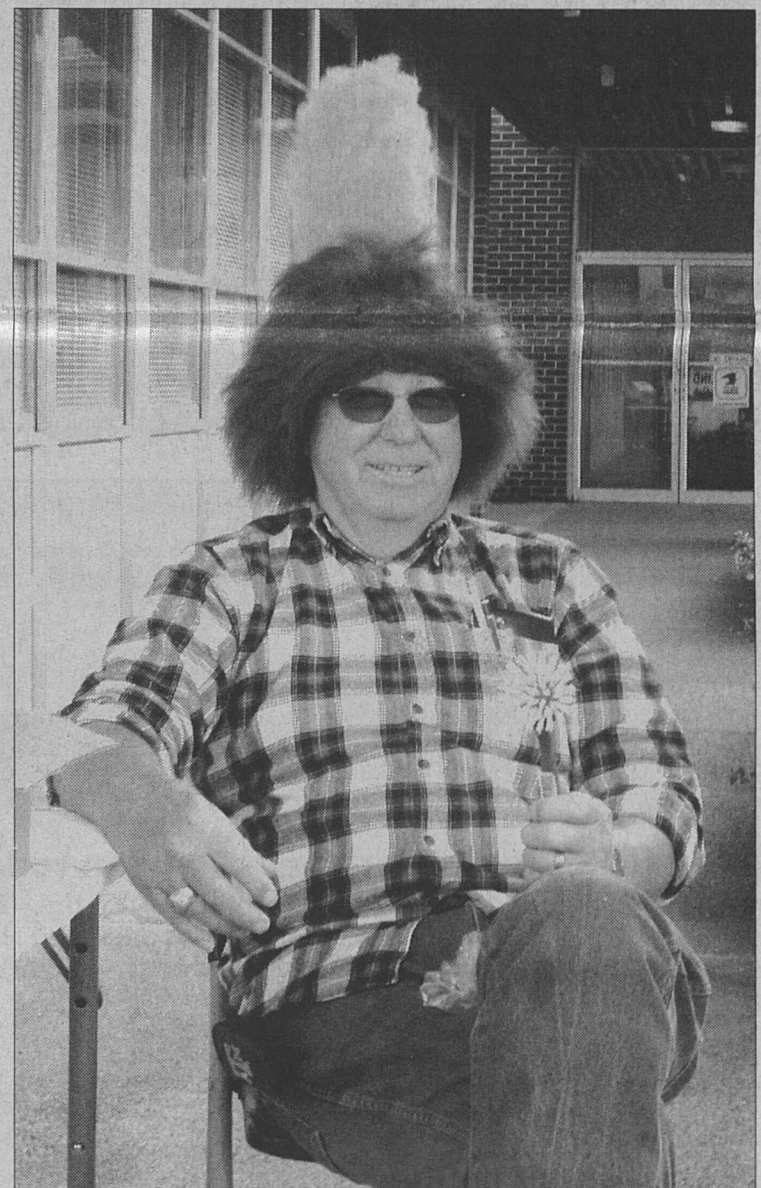
Asked about that allegation after the meeting, Jamison said county employees should not be using county vehicles for personal use and said he would check into the situation.

When contacted, Rogers said that when he was EMS director he did drive his county vehicle to church when he was on-call, but had stopped doing so when he resigned as EMS director in December.

He said that he does not take his daughter to school in a county-owned vehicle, but acknowledged he occasionally picked up his daughter from school activities in a county vehicle when his wife has been unable to do so.

He also said he does stop occasionally going to or from work to make a "quick purchase," but

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Pictured above is Victor Corman putting in some time at the Lion's Club broom and mop sale that was held last Thursday.

NEWSBRIEFS

Band to compete in Blinn Contest

The Rice High School Band will compete in the "Blinn College Music Meet" this Wednesday, March 25, at 6:30 p.m. The performance will be in the Dr. W.W. O'Donnell Performing Arts Center. The band will be performing the following selections: Radetzky March, Air and Variations, Dances from Terpsichore.

Attention RHS graduating seniors!!

Rice Medical Center (RMC) Employee Volunteers' scholarship application is now available in your counselor's office. RMC is pleased to offer four (4) \$500 scholarships to deserving students planning to enter the health care field. Thanks to all the supporters of our recent Hamburger drive thru dinner, which allowed our organization to raise the scholarship funds. For more information, contact Kurt Sunderman, President of RMC Employee Volunteers at 979-234-5571.

Annual Lenten luncheons underway

The United Methodist Church (UMC) of Eagle Lake is hosting its 13th Annual Lenten Luncheons each Monday thru April 6 from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. with special music and guest speakers. A love offering will be taken. Net proceeds go to the Eagle Lake Community Food Pantry. The fifth luncheon Monday, March 30, will feature Rev. Kevin Collison of First Baptist Church (FBC) in Eagle Lake as guest speaker. FBC members will provide an array of soups and desserts. A sliced meat and cheese tray, crackers, sandwich bread, hot cornbread, iced tea and coffee will be furnished by the UMC of Eagle Lake. Everyone is cordially invited...bring a friend!

Car wash is Saturday

Old Skool Organization, Inc. will hold a car wash (weather permitting) on Saturday, March 28 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at B&B Grocery Store. Please come and support our youth!! Oldskool2007@sbcglobal.net.

PEM to hold open house Sunday

The Prairie Edge Museum Board of Directors invites you to an open house Sunday, March 29 from 2-4 p.m. at the museum. Special thanks to The Eula & David Wintermann Foundation and to all of our loyal supporters and volunteers.

Umpire class scheduled for Sunday

An umpire class will be held Sunday, March 29 starting at 3 p.m. The class will be held from 3-5:30 p.m. Tentative meeting place is Christ Episcopal Church (pink church) parish hall at 306 Stockbridge. For more information call DJ Sosa at 979-234-5321.

BVFD Dinner is Sunday

The Bernardo Volunteer Fire Department (BVFD) will hold a chicken fried steak dinner with all the trimmings Sunday, March 29. Drive thru or dine in. Serving will be from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the fire station (FM 949 @ Bernardo Road). Plates are \$8 each. Proceeds will go towards the purchase of new fire equipment. Advance tickets available from any fireman, Bernardo Farm and Ranch Supply or Pilsner's Place. Your support is greatly appreciated.

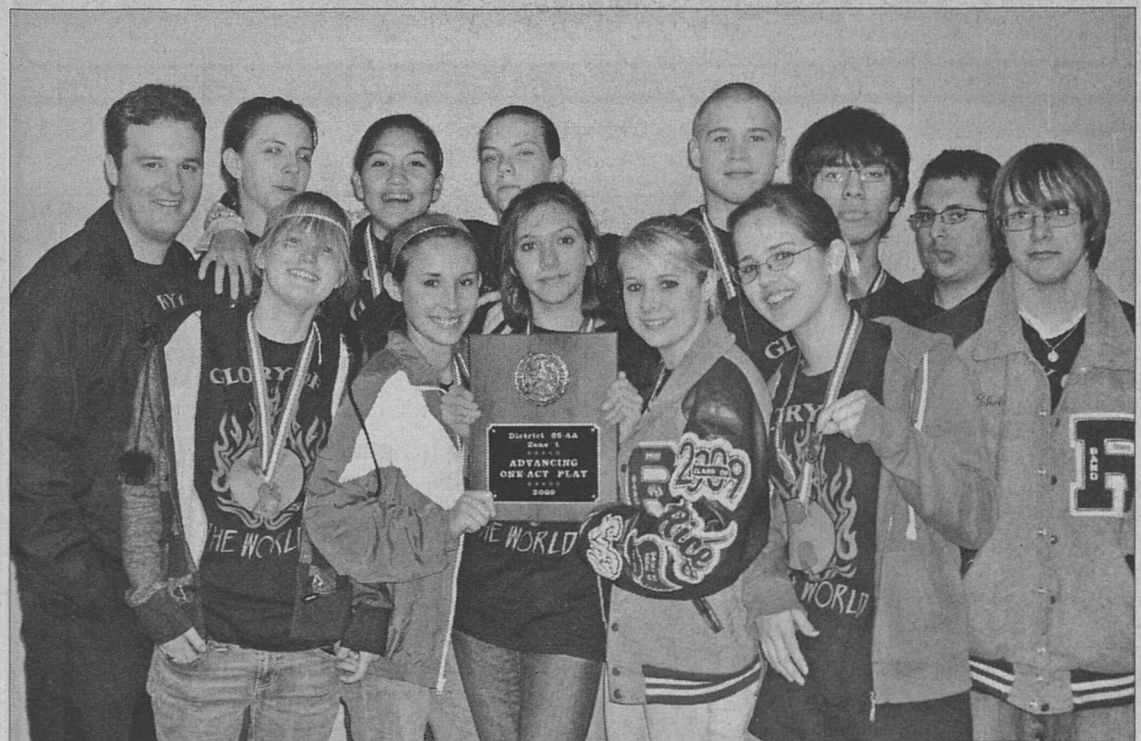
Dance to be held in Industry

A public dance sponsored by the Top Cat Dance Club will be held Sunday March 29, at the Fireman's Hall in Industry from 3 to 6:30 p.m. Doors open at 2 p.m. Music will be provided by Music Masters. The Top Cat Club is committed to providing first-class live bands that play polkas, waltzes, and country/western music. The club is kicking off the 2009 dance schedule on March 29 and encourages all those who love good music and love to dance to join our club. Walk-in guests are always welcome. Cookies and coffee will be served. Plan to attend and enjoy an afternoon of dancing, fellowship and fun.

Relay for Life meetings scheduled

The Colorado County Relay for Life will hold team captains meetings starting at 5:30 p.m. at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Columbus on March 31 and April 7 and April 14. Relay is set for April 17 at the

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Rice One-Act Play Advances to District Competition

On March 14, Rice High School theatre performed "Gloria Mundi" at the UIL One-Act Play zone competition hosted by Schulenburg High School. The students did an excellent job, and their play was chosen to advance to the next level of competition. They will compete at district this Saturday afternoon, March 28, at Hempstead High School. Performances start at 1 p.m., and the public is invited to attend.

Pictured are: Front row, left to right: Shaina Bowen, Tina Till-Honorable Mention All Star Cast, Kayla Llanes-Honorable Mention All Star Cast, Katie Moss-Best Actress, Anna McConnell, Christopher Kucera. Back row, left to right: Brennan Jobe (director), Caleb Gould-All Star Cast, Carmen Saenz, Brittani Bartlett-All Star Technical Crew, Garreth Casper, Frank Cisneros-Best Male Technician, Juan Martinez.