

Eagle Lake Headlight

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EAGLE LAKE, TEXAS

JANUARY 7, 2010



Eagle Lake said goodbye to the "aughts" in its usual awe inspiring style.

NEWSBRIEFS

Little League meeting is Jan. 7

Eagle Lake Little League will hold a meeting Thursday Jan. 7, at 7 at City Hall. Board members, committee persons and volunteers wishing to coach should attend. Parents and community are welcome and encouraged to participate for the benefit of the youth of Eagle Lake.

Rifle project aims to begin

The Columbus Area 4-H Shooting Sports Club will sponsor a rifle project sign up at 7 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 7, at the Colorado County Fairgrounds H.E. Building. The rifle project will be on the following Sundays: Jan. 10, 17, 24 and 31st at the Bailey Range. The rifle project is open to boys and girls, ages 8 - 9 years old, and in the 3rd grade through 18 yrs. old throughout Colorado County. Attendance at the first meeting is mandatory, as this is a sign up meeting. Both the participants and parents should attend. Participants will shoot each week, under the supervision and instruction of certified rifle coaches serving as volunteer 4-H leaders. For more information, contact 979-732-2530, 732-9498 or (979) 733-4374.

Revival is Saturday

Jesus is My Refuge at 115 N. McCarty in Eagle Lake will hold a revival Saturday, Jan. 9 at 7 p.m. Guest speaker will be Rev. Mark Johnson. The revival will continue Sunday, Jan. 10 at 1 p.m. Come receive your miracle. For more information call Pastor Dianna Aguilera at 713-894-1868.

Habitat Orientation is Jan. 9

Colorado County Habitat for Humanity (CCHFH) will host an Orientation for Prospective Homeowners on Saturday January 9, 2010 at 10 a.m. at the Wintermann Library. Families interested in learning how to become a Habitat homeowner should plan to attend. Call 979-732-5677 to reserve a seat.

Project graduation meeting is Jan. 11

There will be a Project Graduation meeting on Monday, January 11 at the Rice High School Commons at 6 p.m. Seniors and their parents are invited to attend. Reservations for Senior Serve need to be sent in as soon as possible. This is the last meeting before Senior Serve.

Y&FS Parenting workshop set

Youth and Family Services (Y&FS) will host a six-week Successful Parenting Workshop at Y&FS in Columbus. Classes will meet Monday evenings, Jan. 11 thru March 1 from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. Please call 979-732-8355 by Jan. 11 to register or for more information. The workshop is free. Please note that there will be NO childcare provided.

Relay for Life kickoff rally

The Colorado County Relay for Life Birthday Party Kickoff Rally will be held Tuesday Jan. 12 at 6 p.m. at St. Paul Lutheran Fellowship Hall. Each birthday brings us closer to a world with more birthdays. Team registration gets underway and exciting news for the upcoming event to be held on April 23, at CHS football stadium starting at 6 p.m. Contact Robin Maertz at 979-732-1687 for more details. Join today and part of a great relay.

Reception slated for Jan. 12

On Tuesday, Jan. 12 there will be a welcoming reception for Kara Matheney who will be the new Colorado County Agriculture Agent. The reception will be from 2 to 5 p.m. at the County Ag Building, 316 Spring St. Matheney officially starts Feb. 1.

Art open house is Jan. 13

Rice CISD District Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo Art Open House will be held Wednesday January 13. The open house will be held in the Rice High School commons from 3:30-6:30 p.m.

Ducks Unlimited banquet set

Eagle Lake Chapter Ducks Unlimited will hold their banquet on

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Hockley Man Killed In New Bielau Area

A Hockley man was shot to death on Wednesday, Dec. 30, at a residence at 1123 FM 532 in the New Bielau area, and his nephew was charged with murder in the case.

Slain was Don Ulbricht, 49.

He was rushed to Colorado-Fayette Medical Center by Emergency Medical Service ambulance, but was pronounced dead at the hospital.

His nephew Francis Madison Johnson, 27, of Weimar, was charged with murder.

His bond was originally set at \$1 million by Peace Justice Bill Hefner and was later reduced to \$150,000 by District Judge W.C. (Bud) Kirkendall.

He surrendered at the scene of the shooting, without incident, according to Sheriff's Lt. Troy Neisner.

Deputies responded to a 9-1-1 call about a shooting at 7:20 p.m., Neisner said.

He said that Ulbricht had been shot in the chest and had more than one gunshot wound, but said the exact number of wounds would be determined by an autopsy to be performed by the Travis County Medical Examiner's Office. That autopsy was ordered by Peace Justice Francis Truchard.

A SKS assault rifle was recovered at the scene, Neisner said.

He said Johnson had given investigators a statement.

Neisner said that Johnson and his mother, Elizabeth, were living at the residence. She had been at the residence, but had left at the time of the shooting.

Neisner said there had been a quarrel before the shooting over family matters, including an inheritance and care for a family member.

Texas Ranger Brian Taylor was assisting in the investigation.

County Attorney Ken Sparks said the slaying of Ulbricht and a slaying on Dec. 22 in Eagle Lake were the first murder cases in the county since 2001.

918 Cases Filed In County 2009

Colorado County Attorney Ken Sparks reports that 918 new cases were filed in the District and County courts in 2009 compared to 960 cases filed in 2008. Sparks attributed the decrease to a legislative change reducing the offense of driving while license invalid (first offense) to a Class C misdemeanor, which is filed in the Justice of the Peace courts.

The 918 total includes 248 felonies, 599 county court misdemeanors (including 61 hot check cases), 48 juvenile cases, 17 bond forfeitures, and 6 asset forfeitures. The total does not include unsolved cases, cases not filed due to insufficient evidence, motions filed to revoke probation or adjudicate guilt, children's protective services cases, assault-family violence protective orders, or cases filed in the justice of the peace courts.

Merchants submitted hot checks worth \$82,218.91 to the County Attorney's office in 2009, compared to \$135,902.48 in 2008. This lower amount reflects the increasing use of debit cards and the decision by Wal-Mart's corporate office to use private collection companies for all their stores. The hot check division collected \$73,432.80 in addition to fees of \$19,603.58 and paid \$93,036.38 to Colorado County merchants. Collection efforts are underway on

the remaining checks.

An analysis of felony cases revealed 20% controlled substances and marihuana, 10% aggravated assault, 13% DWI 3rd, 9% burglary, 9% theft, 9% forgery, 4% evading arrest with a vehicle, 4% unauthorized use of a motor vehicle, and the balance for various types of cases.

The breakdown of misdemeanor cases was 26% marihuana and controlled substances, 19% DWI 1st or 2nd, 11% assault, 10% theft by check, 5% trespassing, 3% driving while license invalid 2nd, 3% theft, and the remainder for

different crimes.

Felony drug cases have steadily decreased from 35% in 2006 to 28% in 2007 to 25% in 2008 to 20% in 2009. However, misdemeanor drug cases increased 4% from last year. In comparison with 2008, hot check cases decreased 17% to 10%.

"My staff continues to do an excellent job of handling hot checks and filing and prosecuting cases to keep our dockets current," said Sparks. "We look forward to a new year of productive work in the courtroom to serve our crime victims and citizens," he added.

Late Rains Bring 2009 Total To 32.14 Inches

2009 Started the way 2008 ended, dry. Late year rains brought much needed relief and brought the 2009 total to 32.14 inches.

After getting only 19.81 inches of rain in 2008, the first three months of 2009 saw only 3.19 inches.

April brought almost six inches, but May and June brought only 0.98 inches.

With just under 10 inches through the first half of 2009, things were looking bleak.

July brought a little relief, with

1.62 inches.

It was the next five months that brought real relief from extremely dry conditions.

August saw over 3 inches, then over four in September and another 6 in October.

November and December added another 7 to the total.

All told, the area is still about 11 inches below the average of 43.

See page 9 for more rainfall information.

Eagle Lake Headlight Year In Review: Part 2

July

A swarm of what are believed to be Africanized bees was found last weekend in a large hive near Sheridan. Aaron Keller, who owns the Keller Ranch mile west of Sheridan, was mowing his lawn when he was stung by a bee on the forehead. Upon finding the hive, the beekeepers were amazed to find three honeycombs that were 18 inches wide, four inches thick, and six feet tall, the largest hive they had encountered in 26 years.

Work has been completed on the restroom facility at E. H. Henry Park.

Preliminary estimates on property values on the tax rolls in Colorado County show a 4.9 percent decline in overall values. The estimated total value for this year is \$1.659 billion, according to figures from the Colorado County Appraisal District. The decrease is the first in a number of years in the county. Last year property values increased by 6.9 percent. Most of the decrease was in oil and gas property values. Those decreased by 13.7 percent or \$47.8 million.

A huge wildfire that started on Saturday, July 4, northeast of Columbus, had burned more than 1800 acres by Tuesday afternoon. At one point, fire fighters said the fire covered a heavily wooded area about a half-mile wide by four miles long. The heavy smoke could be seen for miles and one person described it as looking

like a dark thundercloud. It was the largest fire in the county in recent memory.

Through the first six months of 2009 Eagle Lake is on pace for another year of record low rainfall. In 2008, only 19.81 inches of rain fell in the area, a record low since the David R. Wintermann Rice Research Station began keeping track in 1976. So far in 2009, the area has received only 9.84 inches of rain and over the last 12 months, only 18.85 inches have fallen. Average rainfall for the area is typically about 40 inches per year.

The Rice Raider 7 on 7 team had a great run last Thursday and Friday at the State 7 on 7 Championship in College Station. The Raiders fell to 3A Celina Bobcats in the Championship game 33-19 on a hot Friday afternoon inside Kyle Field.

August

Colorado County commissioners, meeting on Monday, voted to propose a tax rate of 46.429 cents per \$100 valuation. That is an increase of 1.529 cents per \$100 valuation, or 3.4 percent from the current rate. The rate is what is termed the effective rate, which is designed to bring in the same amount of revenue in 2010 as in 2009 on property that was on the tax rolls both years.

Rice CISD officials held a groundbreaking ceremony August 5 for work on the Intermediate School on Tate Street.

The Eagle Lake City Council,

during their regular meeting August 11, presented a certificate of appreciation to Thurston Webb in recognition of his nine years of service to the city as Director of Public Works. Webb has recently announced his retirement from the position for health reasons. "I want to express my thanks for this," Webb said. "My years with the city were enjoyable ones," he added.

The Rice CISD Board of Trustees voted to adopt a balanced budget of \$12,162,208 during its regular meeting on August 24. Last year's budget was slightly larger at \$12,335 million. They also voted to set the tax rate at \$1.28542 per \$100 of valuation. The tax rate is the same as the current tax rate.

September

The Rice Raiders opened the season last Friday in Wharton with a 14-12 victory in a game shortened by weather. The game was called during the halftime break, after waiting to see if stormy skies would clear out.

The Rice Raiders dispatched Freer 61-0 Friday night in Victoria in game scheduled to take the place of the cancelled Edna game. The Raiders rolled-up 316 yards rushing in the contest.

The 31st Colorado County Fair is here and will run from Sept. 10 to 13 at the Ag Complex in Columbus. A top-flight entertainment lineup as well as many other activities are scheduled for

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Charred tree trunks marked the path of a massive wildfire northeast of Columbus that started on July 4 and burned 1,800 acres.

2010

Happy New Year