



TUESDAY
NOVEMBER 24, 2009

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THE CHRONICLE-NEWS

50 CENTS
TRINIDAD, COLORADO

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Early Deadlines

The Chronicle-News will be closed on Thursday, Nov. 26 and Friday, Nov. 27 in observance of the Thanksgiving holiday. We will also have early holiday deadlines: All classified and display ads will be due by Noon Tuesday, Nov. 24 for the Friday, Nov. 27 and the Monday, Nov. 30 editions.

THE FINE PRINT

Please see page 1 for all SCHOOL EVENTS

THANKSGIVING CLOSURES:

- There will be no Chronicle Newspaper on Thanksgiving Day. Delivery will resume on Friday. Happy Thanksgiving every one!
- Carnegie Public Library will be closed Nov. 26-28 /Thurs., Fri., & Sat for Thanksgiving.
- City of Trinidad Office & the Landfill will be closed Nov. 26-27, Thurs. & Fri. for Thanksgiving. (The Landfill will be open from 8 a.m. to noon on Saturday, Nov 28 & the City Offices will reopen on Monday, Nov 30.)
- Las Animas & Huerfano County Health Departments will be closed Thurs. & Fri. - Nov. 26-27 for Thanksgiving.
- South Central Council on Governments main office in Trinidad and Walsenburg, COG Early Learning Center, Corazon Kitchen, Harry Sayre Center Kitchen, Meals on Wheels and all outlying nutrition sites will be CLOSED - Thursday & Friday Nov. 26-27 for Thanksgiving. On Friday - Nov. 27 COG Transit will be operating for pre-arranged appointments. Call the Ride-Line @ 719-845-1127 to make reservations.
- Trinidad Rotary Club will not have its usual Thursday Luncheon Meeting in observance of Thanksgiving.

TUESDAY - Nov. 24

Pastor's Study

Meeting - 9 a.m. Tues. - Zion's Lutheran Fellowship Hall - all Pastors welcome.

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WEATHER WATCH

Today: Sunny, with a high near 46. Wind chill values between zero and 10 early. West southwest wind between 5 and 10 mph becoming calm.



Tonight: Mostly clear, with a low around 19. Southwest wind between 5 and 10 mph.

Tomorrow: Sunny, with a high near 52. North northwest wind around 5 mph.



Tomorrow Night: Mostly clear, with a low around 20. Southwest wind between 5 and 10 mph.

RIVER CALL

Purgatoire River Call-as of 11/23-09 Elmoro Priority #8 11/15/1862

Trinidad Lake accounting: Release-78.15 acre ft.; Inflow-52.88 acre ft.; Evaporation-3.73 acre ft.; Content-15,835 acre ft.; Elevation-6,173.53; Precipitation-0

Downstream River Call-JMR 12/31/1948

(Provided by Division of Water Resources)

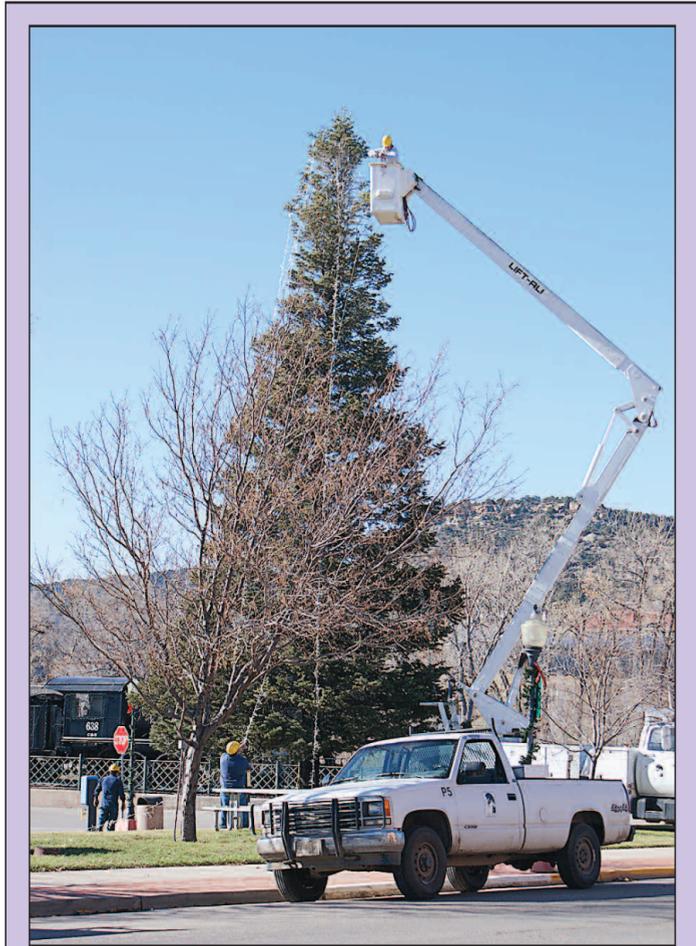


Photo by David Santistevan Jr.

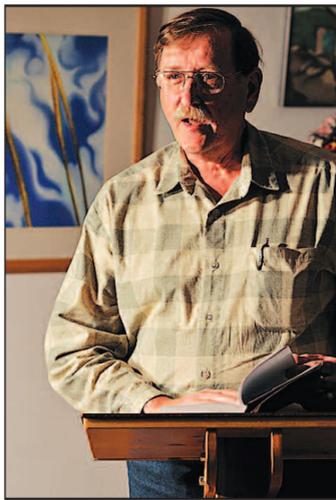
Trinidad city crews have done their part to help prepare for the official tree lighting ceremony which will be held later this week. Long strings of electric lights were tested and placed on the branches of the tall tree near city hall by city workers. The holiday tree lighting event will take place at 5:15 p.m. on Friday, November 27.



Karen Anderson plays a Gregorian chant at Studio C Saturday night.



Joan ("of Raton") MacNeish tells of her Trinidad music series, Concerts for Causes.



Photos by Tim Keller

Raton novelist Steven F. Havill reads from his new mystery, Red, Green, or Murder.

Raton headliners star in Des Moines show

By TIM KELLER
The Chronicle-News

First came the turkey. Then the gravy.

Performers and listeners shared a Thanksgiving dinner at Studio C in Des Moines Saturday night and then, with desserts and coffee, settled back to enjoy the art gallery's 3rd Annual Show of Gratitude, featuring two Raton artists - prolific novelist Steven F. Havill and gifted harpist Karen Anderson.

All Studio C shows begin with an open mic. Trinidad's Joan MacNeish took advantage of the opportunity to tell the audience about her successful concert series, Concerts for Causes, which has teamed with Studio C to give back-to-back concert nights to professional touring performers.

Studio C's own Christina Boyce followed with her thanksgiving, expressing gratitude for realizing her dream of having an art gallery, her appreciation of its beauty, and the joy of being amid so many wonderful artists and art lovers.

Then Boyce gave her audience the opportunity to design the rest of the show: whom would they prefer first, Havill or Anderson? They came up with a sort of Thanksgiving tag team:

Anderson opened, followed by Havill, then more Anderson, followed by Havill, who closed the evening.

Anderson's first mini-set consisted of three Gregorian chants played on a large Gothic harp, named for its high front peak. Anderson interspersed the music with teaching moments, explaining the harp's uses and history, telling, for example, that her Gothic harp has soft, flexible monofilament strings which many harpists disdain, calling the strings "garden hose." But Anderson proved that the sound is exquisite.

Havill read a section from his latest New Mexico mystery, a police procedural featuring undersheriff Bill Gastner in fictional Posadas County, New Mexico. He explained how the scene grew out of a drive over Johnson Mesa when he encountered a herd of cattle blocking the road. Gastner, patrolling in town, gets a call over his radio from the woman dispatcher about a herd of cattle blocking the highway up on the mesa. As he heads that way, his exchange with the dispatcher provides dry humor and authentic local flavors with a strong sense of place. New Mexicans should find the book irresistible.

For her second set, Anderson intro-

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Photo courtesy of Kathy Lucas

Dennis Gatlin, director of the Colorado Public Employees Retirement Association's Field Education Services Division, speaks to Trinidad Area Schools PERA retirees at their Friday meeting in the Trinidad State Junior College Pioneer Room. He addressed what is currently ailing the PERA retirement plan and what remedies are being offered to fix the plan.

Trinidad area PERA retirees hear proposal for repair

By MIKE GARRETT
The Chronicle-News

The Colorado Public Employees Retirement Association (PERA) Pension Plan has some broken and missing parts that need to be replaced and repaired to keep the plan functional and sustainable after it took a big hit with the severe 2008 economic downturn.

That in essence is what Dennis Gatlin, Colorado PERA's Field Education Services Division director, told a group of about 25 Trinidad Area School PERA retirees at their annual shareholders' meeting Friday in the TSJC Sullivan Center Pioneer Room.

Fort Collins-based Gatlin, a DePaul and Kansas State University graduate, has nearly 22 years experience with Colorado PERA in directing all of Colorado PERA's member, retiree, and employer education programs while marketing the retirement plan to Colorado public employers that are considering affiliation.

Almost every video chart and graph he showed and developed from the direction PERA's Board of Trustees has given its field reps, that Gatlin offered to Trinidad area retirees, exhibited a downward trend, particularly the current PERA assets vs. liabilities market value as of Dec. 31, 2008.

Gatlin said PERA impacts almost 439,000 Colorado residents and members with 83,000 PERA benefit recipients receiving a check every month. At least 90 percent of those recipients are still living in the state. "We have a lot of contact with a lot of people across the state. We pay out about \$2.3 billion a year to those benefit recipients. This pension plan has a lot of multiplying effects, with that money re-circulated back into local communities, and is important for state tax purposes."

He said 95,000 PERA members are still actively employed and are not yet retirement eligible. About 101,000 people are still working for PERA employers and will become PERA retirement eligible, he added.

In terms of its pension plan's assets versus liabilities, PERA has seen a sharp decline in the relationship between the two, Gatlin said. Liabilities are all the benefits PERA is paying out to all its retirees and all the future benefits and commitments owed to them. At the end of 2008, plan liabilities were near \$57 billion, while assets, which had peaked at about \$42

billion at the end of 2007, have dropped to about \$25 billion by the end of 2008.

Those figures are in contrast to 1999-2000, when PERA was 103 and 105 percent funded between assets and liabilities, respectively. Over a 25-year period ending in 2008, Gatlin said PERA's average rate of return was a little over 9 percent. That was a drop from what had been a little over 10 percent return rate, due to the 2008 downturn, Gatlin said.

"But in 2008, we lost about 25 percent of the pension fund's total value through the market downturn," said Gatlin. PERA retirees he has talked to who have 403B tax sheltered annuities, PERA's 401K plan, or the state's deferred compensation plan for college employees, have lost 40 to 60 percent of their plan values. "As institutional investors, we really did substantially better than what most of us as individuals could do. My 401K account was down 40 percent, although the last six months have been pretty good and might have a double digit return for the year," Gatlin said.

While the short-term prospectus is looking relatively good right now, Gatlin warned that long-term, large-scale economic problems still haven't been addressed by the pension plan.

Gatlin discussed PERA school, state and local government divisions' trust fund actuarial projections, based on pessimistic, optimistic and expected return rates and their corresponding funded ratios. The graphs showed pessimistic return rates based on funded ratios from 0 to 100 percent in all three divisions that have been taking dramatic downturns in the past two years. Expected pension plan rates of return on investment were at more level indicators, at 8 1/2 percent at the end of 2008, but were still sliding lower.

"When you couple those things up with economic downturns, it shows up in those ratios," said Gatlin. "Twenty years from now, in the year 2029, we are no longer able to pay benefits to people who retired from the state of Colorado." A 7 percent rate of return would mean PERA is out of money in 2026, he added. School division retiree projections are only slightly better, he said, with 2033 the date when PERA would run out of benefit payouts for school district retirees.

Gatlin extensively outlined what PERA is doing to develop a comprehensive plan proposal, establishing a framework by which the new plan will

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SCHOOL EVENTS

TUESDAY - Nov. 24

Trinidad Schools Board of Education - Tues. 6 p.m. - Administration Office, 215 S. Maple. Info: 719-846-3324.

Hoehne R-3 School District's Regular Board Meeting - has been changed to Tues. 7 p.m. in the Superintendent's Office. There will also be a SPECIAL Board Meeting prior to the regular meeting at 6:30 p.m. on the same day. Info: 846-4457.