

The Winters Enterprise

Volume 22, Issue 14

Thursday, February 02, 2012

Winters, Texas 75c

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PHOTOS: RUBEN CANTU-RODRIGUEZ

Don Jones, of the tree removal service, directs the rescue operation from above after a fallen tree landed on top of a 1951 Ford, in a lot located on the 1000 block of Concho St.

Tough as nails, antique car takes on fallen tree

RUBEN CANTU-RODRIGUEZ
 WINTERS ENTERPRISE

WINTERS- Against all odds a 1951 Ford came out with a few minor dents and scratches after a huge tree fell on its roof and trunk, last week. Blas Lugo, owner of the vehicle said that the car had been parked in his lot, located on the 1000 block of Concho St. in Winters, Texas, where he has been working in the restoration of the car.

"I've had this car since 1963, and I have been working in its restoration, I used to drive it everywhere," said Lugo.

On Tuesday night, January 24, winds gusting up to 55 miles an hour knocked down an old tree from Lugo's next door's neighbor, with the tree trunk and many of the limbs landing on the car.

On Friday, January 27, a tree service out of Ballinger, Texas, started a rescuing operation, to remove more than 6,000 pounds of limbs and branches, tangled in a bird's nest from over the vehicle.

The operation took over two hours, with the workers planning every cut and lift, but at the end the car came out with just a few minor dents.

"This is good stuff, these cars were built tough, they don't make them like this anymore," said Lugo.

Don Jones, of the tree service, said that it was for much the hardest tree cleaning his crew had ever performed. "We had to plan every single one of the cuts and lifts, because we didn't want that a swinging branch would hit the car," said Jones.



After a couple of hours and numerous cutting and lifting operations the car was rescued with only a few minor scratches and dents.

Speed limit to increase in portions of Texas highways

WINTERS ENTERPRISE
 STAFF REPORT

AUSTIN- Miles and miles of Texas highway will soon see speed limit increases following

last week's Texas Transportation Commission action approving 75 mph designations for close to 1,500 miles of interstate.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

Expect water charges, the City advises

Zero readings in January's bill are the consequence of the installation of new meters; accumulated charges will be effective next month

RUBEN CANTU-RODRIGUEZ
 WINTERS ENTERPRISE

WINTERS- The Winters City Council warned water customers who got a zero reading for the month of January 2012, to expect their water usage to be charged during the next month along with February's bill.

Lewis Bergman, Winters City Mayor, said that the zero reading that many water customers are getting is caused by issues with the billing cycle and the installation of the new meters.

"Water customers should expect to be charged for their water consumption in their next bill, we will catch-up," said Bergman.

The issue could affect many of the water customers whose water meter has been replaced. The Water Department has replaced nearly 1,300 of the almost 1,500 meters in the water system. The rest of the meters will be replaced shortly and could be facing the same issues, said Bergman.

Last Monday, January 30 at the regular meeting the City Council also approved several items, including removing the one-way restriction on State Street, on the portion between Main St. and Church. After an extensive discussion council members voted 3-2 to make it a two-way street. The motion was presented by Rene Woffenden and seconded by Jim Lincycycomb. Those voted against

the motion were aldermen Rick Dry and Chris Bahlman. Council member Armando Tamez broke the tie to pass the motion.

At Monday's meeting alderman passed pay request No. 9 for improvements of the USDA - Rural Development funded Water Distribution System Project, by John Voller, of eHT.

The Council carried the emergency action plan revision for Elm Creek Dam, and renewed Hach contract.

Mark Bridgeman and Joyce Green were appointed as new members of the Housing Authority Board of Directors.

The Winters City Council passed a resolution to contract the services of Bureau Veritas for City Inspections at a rate of \$76 per stop.

Aldermen also passed a resolution that will allow as many as 10 residents of the city to benefit of the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs program. Last year four citizens got their new homes through this program. For the new program a total of \$4,800 is required in any form from the City of Winters.

The City Council discussed to install a sewer line at the RV Park on State Street. After evaluating several options, and hearing to Water Department Superintendent Jack Davis, Jr., the council voted to install

a dump station for the park. Davis said that a sewer line could bring many problems to the Water Department due to the solids dropped by RVs and the lack of a constant stream toward the main line.

Nathan Johnson, Winters Chief of Police presented a note to the City Council on regards of the sale of the Dodge Charger formerly used as a patrol car. The sale of the vehicle will allow the Police Department to almost pay-off the note of another one of the department's vehicles.

The Council also passed a request by the Police Department to spend an amount of nearly \$1,000 to pay for the training of the Fire Marshall as a State Fire Inspector.

Chief Johnson presented his yearly report on racial profiling and the Council included an item for the next meeting's agenda to discuss an ordinance to prevent repeated fight offenders from trespassing at the Winters Community Center.

Mayor Lewis Bergman, Council members Rene Woffenden, Jim Lincycycomb, Rick Dry, Armando Tamez and Chris Bahlman were present at Monday's meeting. Also assisting to the meeting were Acting City Secretary Shelly Antilley-Guevara, City Attorney Ken Slimp and Water Department Superintendent Jack Davis, Jr.



Basketball season coming to an end

PAGE 3

County 4-Her places first at Ft Worth Stock Show

WINTERS ENTERPRISE
 STAFF REPORT

FORT WORTH- Shane Flanagan a 4-H member from Ballinger, exhibited the first place Two-Tooth Ram in the Junior Southdown Jr. Breeding Sheep Show at the 2012 Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo on January 23, 2012. The 2012 Show is hosting nearly 10,000 junior exhibitors from across Texas, competing for prizes and \$94,065.00 in premiums.

Since 1896, the Fort Worth Stock Show & Rodeo has remained a prominent figure in the livestock industry. The nation's oldest livestock show will see nearly 22,000 head of world-class livestock roll through "cowtown" between January 13 - February 4. While the show is continually looking ahead, the focus on the livestock industry and our youth is unwavering.

"One of the show's main priorities is our commitment to the livestock industry



PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

Ballinger 4-Her Shane Flanagan placed first in Two-Tooth Ram in the Junior Southdown Jr. Breeding Sheep Show held last week in Fort Worth, Texas.

and the agriculture leaders of tomorrow," said Bradford S. Barnes, President and General Manager of the Fort Worth Stock Show. "Junior exhibitors learn many valuable life lessons during their years of

showing livestock, which will serve them well throughout their lives. Our Show ensures a progressive future for agriculture by assisting in the development and education of 4-H and FFA students."

The 116th edition of the legendary Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo offers visitors a chance to experience the unique western lifestyle along with a one-of-a-kind combination of history, tradition and Western heritage.

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Runnels County ROLL-UP

Winters Enterprise

Thursday, February 02, 2012

The Great Depression, and how wind turbines changed Runnels Co

CONTRIBUTED BY RUTH COOPER
RCHS CHAIRPERSON

WINTERS- The years of the Great Depression began a period of great change in Runnels County. A decrease in jobs in the agricultural areas came about because the number of farms decreased in the 1930's. Public emergency work projects provided jobs during this period of time for 272 county residents. In May of 1936, a group of area farmers formed the Ballinger Co-Operative Gin Company as an effort to weather the economic crisis. This Co-Op was also known as the Farmer's Co-Op, and was located at the site of the former Ballinger Cotton Oil Co. (north of the railroad project area along the railroad tracks at the intersection of 4th Street and Hutchings Avenue.) The initial company included 212 stockholders who invested a total of \$35,792.61 in the enterprise. Most of the sites' buildings were erected in 1936 and later. The Co-Op retained a small number of the rock buildings from the Ballinger Cotton Oil Co. (formerly occupied this site).

World War II brought

an end to the economic crisis and the established and associated industrial enterprises in the area. In Ballinger, the number of businesses reached the high of nearly 300 during the war years. War industry added jobs in Runnels County during and immediately after the war period and contributed to the continued decline of farming as its residents left rural areas and moved to urban areas to take advantage of increased employment opportunities. The decrease in the country's number of farms within Runnels County changed to an increase in the number of large-acreage farms that employed fewer people. Specifically, "the number of farms fell from a high of 2,544 with an average of 234 acres per farm in 1930 to 1,707 with an average of 377.2 acres per farm by 1950. In that same period the number of farmers fell from 3,554 to 2,156." This also was likely driven by mechanization of farming. The production of cotton, sorghum grains and wheat along with livestock continued to be a significant sector in the county's economy during

the postwar period.

The AT&S Railroad sold 375 miles of its railroad trackage in West Texas in 1989. This was due to the reduced traffic levels. This included the portion that extended into the project area of the South Orient Rural Rail District. At the time TxDOT provided the SORR District with a 3 million dollar grant to purchase and obtain the existing right-of-way for the rail line and a security interest in the installed rails and ties. The district entered into a lease and operating agreement with private investors. This led to the formation of the South Orient Railroad Company (SORR). In 1999, the Texas Legislature in a bid to formally purchase the railway from the SORR, set aside 6 million dollars toward the 9.5 million dollars to purchase. Two years later, TxDOT agreed to lease this trackage to Texas Pacific Transportation (TXPF) for 3.5 million dollars (the balance of the purchase price). As a result of these transactions in 2001, TxDOT formally received "all rights, titles and interests in the rail line" including the part that runs through the

project area of the Colorado River Bridge.

The rail line, now known as the South Orient Railroad, supports the movement-shipping of agricultural products (grain, wheat, cotton and sorghum), steel, paper and sand. Runnels County remains a leader in Ag production in West Texas along with livestock production. Cotton remains a significant contributor to the county's economy.

The Pratt Truss was invented in 1844 by Thomas and Caleb Pratt. In this truss configuration, the diagonal members are in tension, while the vertical members are in compression. This truss configuration can be used with bridge spans up to 250 feet. This was used for railroad bridges and the Pratt Truss has stood the test of time because of its economical section. This type of style was predominately used from 1890 until 1920. It still retains a high integrity in design, materials and workmanship. It is a good example of the American Bridge Works design that includes designs of the late 19th Century and early 20th Century Pratt Pinned Through-Truss Railroad

Bridge design. Significant and contributing features include its 200-foot length truss span and the 1888 stone masonry piers. The 1913-42 foot Open Deck Timber Pile Trestle approach on the northeast bank and the 1913-210-foot open Deck Timber Pile Trestle on the southwest bank of the Colorado River are non-contributing elements. The resource remains in its original location and retains its original function.

The construction of the new bypass bridge over the Colorado River is parallel to the Pratt Truss Bridge in place and did not affect the 1888-1906-1913 construction. The new bridge will accommodate wind power components of 65 to 70 ton load strength and a clear width exceeding 14 feet-2 3/8 inches. The possibility of future developments in the wind power industry will most likely result in increasing component size and rehabilitation of the existing rail line.

References: Texas Department of Transportation, South Orient Railroad Ballinger Bridge over the Colorado River.



Fears of another drought may result in fewer irrigated and more dryland cotton.

Drought pushes dryland cotton

WINTERS ENTERPRISE
STAFF REPORT

COLLEGE STATION- Ironically, fears of another drought may result in fewer irrigated and more dryland cotton acres in the Texas High Plains this year, said a Texas AgriLife Extension Service expert.

Typically, the Texas High Plains cotton acres will be nearly evenly split between dryland and irrigated, said Mark Kelley, AgriLife Extension cotton specialist, Lubbock. This adds up to about 2 million dryland cotton acres planted, with the same number of irrigated acres.

"Last year, we had 4.6 million acres total, with about 55 percent being dryland," Kelley said. "Usually our acreage would be split with about a 52/48 percent mix of dryland and irrigated. Looking ahead there's a chance that we'll see a little more dryland than irrigated this year."

With the area remaining dry, fears of continued drought are the biggest issue facing producers and will be at the heart of any additional shifts in planting, he said. "They will go ahead and plant, but if we don't get some help from Mother Nature, a lot of the irrigated producers here have indicated they will just wait and see how things look before committing to an irrigated practice in 2012," he said.

The "wait-and-see" game could play until July 15, which is the latest date producers can certify a crop as dryland for crop insurance purposes, he said.

The producers he has talked to have indicated they plan to plant for irrigation, which is about four plants per row foot on row spacings of 40 inches, which works out to about 52,000 plants per acre, Kelly said. "Typically, Texas High Plains cotton growers will 'pinch back' a little for dryland, and plant about three plants per row foot."

Input costs are considerably higher on irrigated cotton due to pumping costs, but the potential profits are higher too, so most producers with irrigation will probably go ahead for an irrigated crop, he said.

"Then they (those planting for irrigation) will play the wait-and-see game, and as the situation develops, if there hasn't been enough rain to fully augment their normal irrigation capacity, they will squeeze back on what they can manage with their irrigation," Kelley said.

"I would highly recommend that they stay in conversation with their crop insurance agent, and make sure everything they're doing is communicated, so that can be insured properly," he added. "They need to stay in contact with their insurance agent throughout the process. We don't want anyone getting to the point where their crop is uninsurable."

Last week, the Texas AgriLife Extension Service reports compiled 1.3 to 2.5 inches of rain in Central Texas. The runoff filled most stock tanks. Thanks to timely rains throughout January, small grains continued to do well. Winter wheat and winter grasses were also thriving and were being heavily grazed.

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PUBLIC RECORD

Runnels County Jail Log

Frank Hutchings	21	Concho
Terrorist threat public place		
Jackie Gibbs	45	RCSO
Theft		
Eugene Vasquez	26	BPD
Shoplifting		
Richie Tubbs	43	RSCO
Child support		
William Prater	30	BPD
Poss. CS (Indictment) Forge Prescription		
Travis Willborn	36	WPD
Assault		

Rene Cisneros	47	Concho
Parole violation		
David Molina	32	BPD
Asslt. F.V.		
Marjorie Isaacs	65	BPD
Criminal trespass Asslt. Class C		
Scott Boyd	22	DPS
Poss. Marijuana Poss. Dang. Drugs		
Manuel Roman	19	WPD
P.I. Enhanced		
Gloria Vasquez	42	Concho Warr.
D.W.I.		
Raul Samaniego	45	Coke
D.W.I. Enhanced		

Veteran's Corner

Texas veterans can now have their veteran status listed on their driver's license. The Texas Department of Public Safety Office on Strong Avenue (next door to my office) is ready to accept veterans wanting the new license, which has the word "Veteran" printed in black font. The cost is \$11, the fee being waived for veterans who are 60 percent or more service connected disabled. This new license is for veterans of all armed forces and the Texas National Guard with honorable discharges. Veterans need to take the original or a certified copy to the DPS to get the license. For more information, contact Sandra at the Veterans Service Office at 602 Strong Ave or call 365-3612.

Woman killed in rollover in Callahan County

WINTERS ENTERPRISE
STAFF REPORT

ABILENE- A woman from Lubbock was killed in a rollover accident occurring last Sunday, January 29, on Farm Road 880, in Callahan County. Denise Gail Kopriva, 56-years-of-age was pronounced dead at the scene by Judge Steve Odum at 2 p.m. The body was taken to Abilene Professional Services in Abilene, Texas.

Kopriva was driving a 2004 Ford pickup northbound on Farm Road 880, one tenth of a mile south of mile marker 308 in Callahan County. According to the Texas Department of Public Safety release the driver traveled off of the roadway to the right, over-corrected and lost control of the vehicle.

The pickup skidded sideways and overturned several times. Kopriva, who was wearing a seat belt, was pronounced dead at the scene. The roadway was dry and the weather was clear.

The crash is being investigated by Trooper Jim Cook.

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TUESDAY
Breakfast Pizza or Cereal or Breakfast Taco, Toast w/Jelly, Juice, Choice of Milk.

WEDNESDAY
Biscuit/Egg Pattie or Oatmeal or Breakfast Burrito, Toast w/Jelly, Juice, Choice of Milk.

THURSDAY
Breakfast Pocket or Cereal or Pancake/Sausage Link, Toast w/Jelly, Juice, Choice of Milk.

FRIDAY
Biscuit/Sausage or Cereal or Muffin/ Sausage, Toast w/Jelly, Choice of Milk.

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Note: Menus are subject to change without notice. Students may purchase extra Entree for \$1.00, Milk for \$.30, Sides for \$.50, Large Chef Salad for \$2.00, Small Chef Salad For \$1.00, Tea \$.50 (Jr. High and High School), Water \$1.00, Visiting Adult \$4.00, Visiting Child \$3.00.

MONDAY
Chicken Fries/Gravy or Fried Rice/ Egg Roll, Broccoli w/Cheese, Oriental Vegetables, Tossed Salad/Carrot Sticks, Rosy Applesauce, Hot Roll, Choice of Milk.

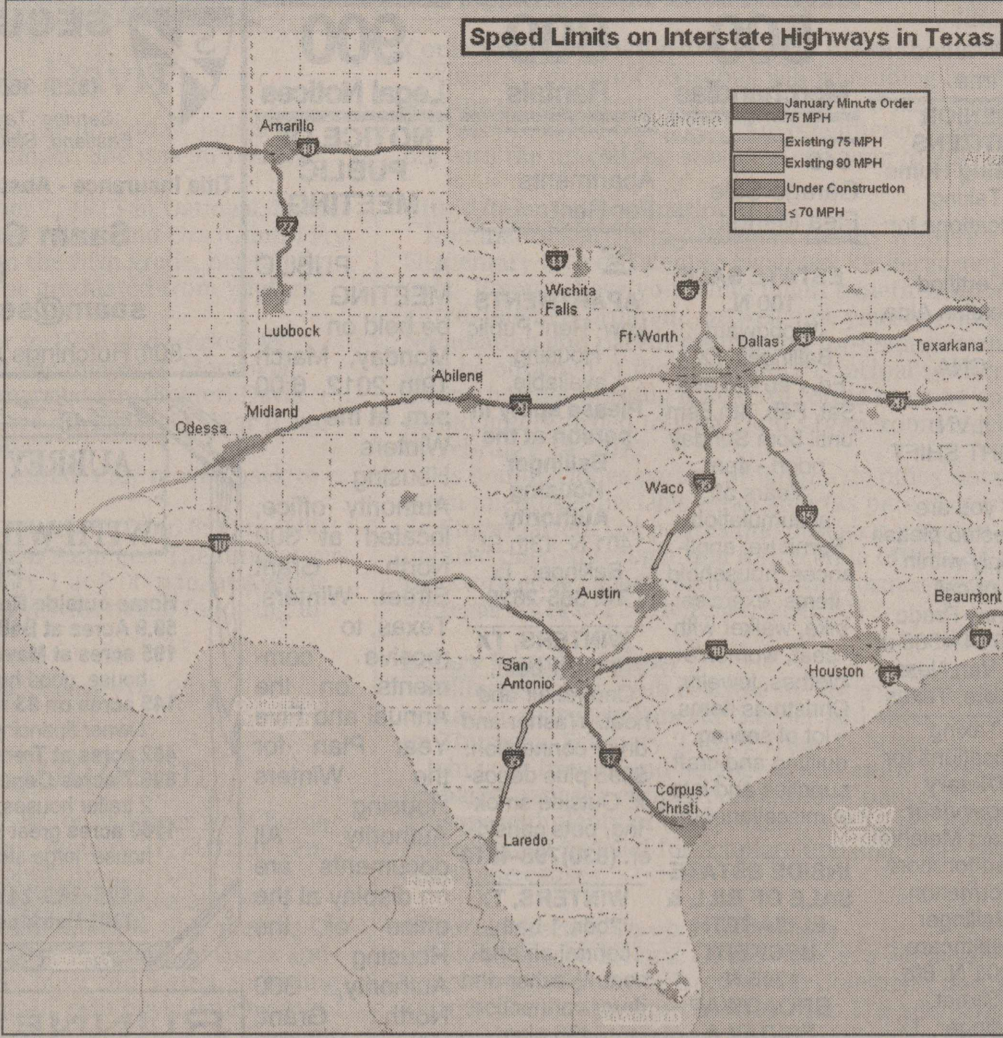
TUESDAY
Spaghetti/Bread Stick or Chicken Pot Pie, Green Beans, Corn, Tossed Salad/Carrot Sticks, Hot Roll, Rainbow Bar, Choice of Milk.

WEDNESDAY
Frito Pie or Grilled Cheese Sandwich, Spanish Rice, Pinto Beans, Coleslaw, Tossed Salad/Carrot Sticks, Orange Wedges, Cornbread or Jalapeno Cheese Bread, Choice of Milk.

THURSDAY
Grilled Chicken/Bun or Steak Fingers/Gravy, Mashed Potatoes w/Gravy, Tomato Pasta, Tossed Salad/Carrot Sticks, Hot Cinnamon Apples, Hot Roll, Choice of Milk.

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Highway speed: Result of House Bill 1353

CONT'D. FROM PAGE 1

The speed limit changes span 60 Texas counties making it the largest conversion since a new law was passed last year. The 82nd Texas Legislature passed and the Governor signed House Bill 1353 which allows the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to establish 75 mph speed limits on Texas highways providing speed studies show it can be done safely. Since September, the agency has been reviewing existing 70 mph speed limits across the state to determine where a 75 mph limit may be safely posted. Four Central Texas highways were the first to see higher speeds after the new law took effect. Last week's Commission action brings the number of miles now zoned at 75 mph as a result of House Bill (HB) 1353 to 1,618.

Posting new speed limits on 1,500 miles of interstate highway is a major milestone in implementing the new law, said Carol Rawson, TxDOT Traffic Operations Division director.

"Texas' economic strength depends on the efficient and safe movement of people and goods," Rawson explained. "These new speed limits increase highway efficiency while maintaining the safety of the transportation system."

TxDOT recommended to the Commission that speed limits be raised on segments of I-10, I-20, I-27, I-30, I-35, I-37, I-40, I-44 and I-45 after engineering studies showed that higher speeds could be posted safely.

Motorists must continue to travel at the posted speed until new signs are installed, said Rawson.

"The new speed limit is not official until the signs go up," she added.

TxDOT studies of speeds on U.S. highways, state highways, farm-to-market and

ranch-to-market roads are still under way.

Prior to HB 1353, Texas had 1,445 miles of 75 mph speed limits and 521 miles of 80 mph speed limits on certain state highways. These speed limits were previously restricted to specific rural counties and highways located mostly in West Texas. Texas now has almost 3,600 miles zoned at 75 mph or higher.

New 75 mph speed limits approved on Thursday, February 26, 2012

- I-10 — 289 miles across El Paso, Gillespie, Kerr, Kendall, Bexar, Guadalupe, Caldwell, Gonzales, Fayette, Colorado, Austin, Jefferson and Orange counties
- I-20 — 423 miles across Crane, Ector, Midland, Martin, Howard, Mitchell, Nolan, Taylor, Callahan, Eastland, Erath, Palo Pinto, Van Zandt, Smith, Gregg and Harrison counties
- I-27 — 109 miles across Lubbock, Hale, Swisher and Randall counties
- I-30 — 139 miles across Hunt, Hopkins, Franklin, Titus, Morris and Bowie counties
- I-35 — 106 miles across Webb, Medina, Atascosa, Bexar, Hill and Cooke counties
- I-37 — 130 miles across Nueces, San Patricio, Live Oak, Atascosa and Bexar counties
- I-40 — 166 miles across Deaf Smith, Oldham, Potter, Carson, Gray, Donley and Wheeler counties
- I-44 — 11 miles across Wichita County
- I-45 — 143 miles across Walker, Madison, Leon, Freestone and Navarro counties

Go to http://www.txdot.gov/safety/speed_limit/75mph.htm for more information on the locations of the new speed limits.

Moving?
Check out the Classifieds

Crash near Anson leaves four killed

WINTERS ENTERPRISE STAFF REPORT

ABILENE- Four people were killed in a two-vehicle crash occurring on Sunday, January 29 at 10:50 p.m. at the intersection of Farm Road 600 and U.S. Highway 180, east of Anson, Texas, in Jones County.

The Texas Department of Public Safety in Abilene, Texas released the names of the victims: Stephanie Marie Perkins, 25, of Stamford, Texas was pronounced dead by Judge Smith at Hendrick Medical Center in Abilene, at 2 p.m. Linda Galvan, 50-years-of-age, Jesus Gimaldo Mata, 40, and Joe D. Flores, 29-years-of-age, all of them of Anson, Texas.

According to Texas DPS investigation Galvan, Mata, and Flores were not wearing a seat belt. They were all pronounced dead at the scene at 12:01 a.m. by Judge Cheryl Guernsey. The bodies were taken to Abilene Professional Services, in Abilene, Texas.

It is not known if Perkins was wearing a seat belt.

The accident occurred when Perkins was driving a 2000 Ford Mustang northbound on Farm Road 600. She failed to stop at the stop-sign at the intersection of U.S. Highway 180. The Mustang struck the left back quarter panel of the westbound 2007 Dodge pickup driven by Daniel Layne Thomason, from Mineral Wells, Texas. Thomas was not injured in the crash.

The crash is being investigated by Trooper Charles Wheeler.

Angora goat performance test on Feb. 27-28

STEVE BYRNS TEXAS AGRILIFE EXTENSION SERVICE

SONORA - The 2012 Angora Goat Performance Test is set to begin with delivery of the bucks on Feb. 27-28 to the Texas AgriLife Research Station at Sonora, located 28 miles south of Sonora on U.S. Highway 55.

Dr. Dan Waldron, AgriLife Research geneticist at San Angelo and the test's coordinator, said that as in years past, at least 10 different breeders must enter a minimum of 50 bucks collectively for the test to occur.

Breeders should notify Waldron of their intent to enter goats by Feb. 3 by contacting him at 325-653-4576, d-waldron@tamu.edu.

"The cost of entering bucks on this year's test will be \$290 per head which is due when the animal arrives for the test," Waldron said. "The fee is to cover feed, shearing and laboratory work on the fleeces."

Waldron said the test helps breeders and prospective buyers make valid comparisons among animals for mohair quality, production and growth rate, when they are all growing in the same environment.

Individual breeders can enter no more than 12 animals except by special permission. A minimum of four animals per owner and sire group is suggested but not required, according to Waldron.

The Angora bucks are scheduled to be shorn March 6, then weighed on March 7 to start the test. The goats will be weighed again on May 2, then weighed a third and final time and then sheared on June 27.

The annual field day and potential sale, which is determined by the breeders with animals on the test, is set for July 26. Test entry forms and other information can be found at safiles.tamu.edu/genetics/angoratest.htm.

For more information, contact Waldron or Dr. Frank Craddock, Texas AgriLife Extension Service sheep and goat specialist at San Angelo at 325-653-4576 or email Waldron at d-waldron@tamu.edu.

Woman killed attempting to pass in Comanche County

WINTERS ENTERPRISE STAFF REPORT

ABILENE- One person was killed in a two-vehicle crash occurring Sunday, January 29, 2012 at 7:08 p.m. in Comanche County on State Highway 16, 3 miles north of Comanche, Texas.

Kimberly Ann Maret, 30-years-of-age of Waller, Texas was pronounced dead at 9:29 p.m. at John Petersmith Hospital in Fort Worth, Texas by Doctor Hiesel. The body was taken to Tarrant County Medical Examiner's Office. Maret was wearing a seat belt.

Maret was driving a 2005 Nissan Altima northbound on State Highway 16, 3 miles north of Comanche. The Nissan attempted to pass another northbound vehicle in a no-passing zone. The Nissan swerved back into the northbound lane to avoid hitting a 2010 Chevrolet Express driven by Francis Lee Johnson, 52-years-of-age from Valley Mills, Texas.

The Nissan lost control and slid sideways into the southbound lane striking the Chevrolet. Johnson was not injured in this crash.

The road was dry and the weather clear. This accident is being investigated by Trooper Bradley Couch.

Students not sheltered from budget cuts: Texas AFT

WINTERS ENTERPRISE STAFF REPORT

WINTERS- A recent Texas American Federation of Teachers survey of public school superintendents from 241 districts found that state budget cuts of \$5.4 billion are having a significant impact on classroom instruction, teacher morale and help for struggling students.

"Students are not being sheltered from budget cuts, as some of the state's leadership suggested would be the case last year when they took an axe to public education funding," said Texas AFT President Linda Bridges. "Instead superintendents are telling us that teacher layoffs, larger class sizes and cuts in services for struggling students are creating a stressful environment and creating concerns about how to deal with the implementation of the new standardized tests being rolled out this spring."

As one superintendent noted, "The funds to produce a world-class educational system in Texas are there. The willingness to invest in our kids and our state is not. Cut now, pay later. Our state leadership has failed us."

Texas AFT mailed surveys to 1,051 superintendents throughout the state in December and received 241 responses, 23 percent of the districts statewide. The superintendent survey findings echo concerns revealed in a November Texas AFT online survey of some 3,500 teachers and school employees regarding the impacts of budget cuts. That report also showed widespread teacher layoffs, increased class sizes, cuts to key services designed to help students pass standardized tests, and stressful working environments for teachers.

Texas AFT represents more than 65,000 teachers, paraprofessionals, support personnel, and higher-education employees across the state. Texas AFT is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers.

Bridges said superintendents noted that most positions eliminated from budgets cuts were for teachers. She added that a large number of superintendents said that larger class sizes and mounting pressures to achieve on the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) tests this spring were likely to drive others out of the profession.

One superintendent wrote, "I believe more experienced teachers (about to retire) will leave the profession and more younger teachers will do all that they can to find jobs in other professions. Why go where you are not appreciated." Another stated, "Most staff are thankful to have a job, and I feel they will stay in place for the next three years. After that, the accountability system will drive them out."

In the November survey of school employees, 81 percent of respondents said the school climate for students, teachers and staff was worse or much worse, with 72 percent saying it was "stressful and taxing" and another 9 percent describing it as "hostile and unfriendly."

"Superintendents are backing up what teachers and school employees by the thousands have told us," Bridges said.

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