

The PRESTON COUNTY News

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COMMUNITY



Sibyl Stevens, who was diagnosed with cancer in 2013, gets her wish to meet the Disney princesses.

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SPORTS



The JROTC rifle program finishes 10th at Brigade BOB Air Rifle Championship in Lexington, North Carolina.

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ON THE WEB

ONLINE POLL

This week's question: Now that the Republican Party has taken over both the House and the Senate at the state Legislature, how do you believe state government will perform?

- Better. The Republican Party is more in tune with the majority of Mountain State residents. .0%
Worse. The Republican Party will spend too much time trying to undo past policies instead of looking to the future. The GOP also will clash with Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin, a Democrat. .33.3%
No Change. Because the power is split between the Legislature, the governor and other state elected officials, the majority of whom are Democrats, there will be little to no change in how government performs. .66.7%

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Drowning in debt County PSD owes \$134K to Kingwood Water Works

by Theresa Marthey STAFF WRITER

KINGWOOD — Preston County Public Service District Number 2 is literally drowning in more than \$134,000 of debt owed to the city of Kingwood Water Works, and no one but Office Manager Joyce Myers is talking about it.

"We do not know when we will be out of debt," Myers said. "With the new rate increase that took effect in September 2014, the debt should be decreasing, but slowly."

According to documents obtained by the Preston County News, the debt was as high as \$161,752.51 back in July 2011. As of January 5, 2015, the debt is \$134,314.32, including current usage, payments and penalties. The reduction or amount paid since 2011 is \$27,438.19.

According to Myers the PSD No. 2 board of directors have been working "diligently" to reduce the debt, but, she admits "it is a slow process."

"Each month, we set aside in a separate account 7.27 percent of collections to go towards the arrearage," Myers said. "We work with a very tight budget, but we still have to have line maintenance and operating costs."

The minimum bill for PSD No. 2 is \$22.26 per

month for the first 2,000 gallons of water used. Myers said the average bill is \$26 for customers using approximately 3,000 gallons of water per month. There are currently 1,500 residential and commercial PSD customers.

City of Kingwood Water Works Office Manager Amy DeBerry said they have been working with PSD No. 2 to pay down the debt, but recently had to penalize the PSD for late payments.

"PSD No. 2 is required to pay their monthly usage bill, along with the percentage of their collections to decrease the account balance," said DeBerry. "November was the first month the Kingwood Water Works placed a penalty on the account, because payment was not received in full."

In November, the usage bill was \$41,089.46. PSD No. 2 submitted a payment of \$13,599.40 on December 12 toward the full billed amount but still owes \$27,490.06.

"We have tried to be a good neighbor," DeBerry said. "No one knows what it is like to be a small utility. I think we have a good working relationship with PSD No. 2 right now."

"We are very grateful for our working relationship with Kingwood Water Works," Myers said.

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Staff photo by Theresa Marthey

Public Service District No. 2 shares offices with PSD No. 1 located on U Road in Arthurdale. PSD No. 2 serves the areas of Pleasantdale, Manown, Howesville, Kane's Creek and parts of Tunnelton and Bird's Creek Road.

Herto, attorney skip motion hearing; next hearing set

by Theresa Marthey STAFF WRITER

KINGWOOD — Former Kingwood chiropractor Stephen Dwight Herto and his attorney, William C. Brewer, were absent for a scheduled motion hearing on Thursday in Preston County Circuit Court.

Prosecuting Attorney Mel Snyder said the defendant's attorney informed the court he was not aware of the hearing and was with another client at the time and had electronically submitted motions to the court.

In October 2013, Herto was charged with 13 sex crimes that included two counts of sexual abuse by a parent, guardian, custodian or person of trust, 10 counts of soliciting a minor via computer and one count of use of obscene matter with the intent to seduce a minor.



Herto

Herto was sentenced in July 2012 to 2-10 years in prison and a \$5,000 fine after entering a plea in April of that year.

According to court documents, Herto was released on probation based upon the Defendants Motion for Correction or Reduction of Sentence and related motions from the state.

Herto's next hearing is set to begin January 27 in Preston County Circuit Court.

Staff writer Theresa Marthey can be reached at (304) 329-0090 or by email at tmarthey@prestonnj.com



Staff photo by Theresa Marthey

Severe winter weather hit Preston hard this past week. All county schools were closed four days. Aside from area sanitation workers, very few braved the snow and the sub-zero wind chill.

Hard decision

School officials announce makeup days

by John Dahlia EDITOR

KINGWOOD — The first real effects of winter hit Preston and surrounding areas hard this week. Several inches of snow and sub-zero temperatures forced officials to close county schools four days in a row.

School Superintendent Stephen Wotring says he and his staff have made adjustments to the school calendar to make up the lost days.

"We'll make up those days from the last week in May into the first week in June," Wotring said. "Those days will be May 27, 28, 29, and June first."

The new 180 school day rules make it mandatory that all school districts provide in-school instruction no less than 180 days each year. So far, Preston has cancelled school five days, the first of which took place

in November. "Typically," explained, "on each day missed we meet and decide how to make it up."

Wotring



Wotring

Last year students missed a total of 22 days due to snow and severe cold temperatures. In order to follow the 180-day mandate, school officials have made contingency plans in order to mitigate school closings and delays.

"One of the ways we did that," Wotring said, "was adding an additional 15 minutes of daily instruction into the schedules at every school."

Essentially, according to Wotring, the additional 15 minutes gives the school

district enough banked or saved time equivalent to 22, two-hour delays.

So far Preston County has taken five two-hour delays already this school year.

"That leaves us with up to 17, two-hour delays left," Wotring said.

One of the ways school officials freed up the calendar was removing the week-long spring break, which typically occurs during the Easter holiday period in March/April. But, Wotring said, they have no plans on taking the Friday before and Monday after Easter Sunday.

"We want to protect those days for our students and staff,"

Schools in West Virginia can stay open as late as Tuesday, June 30 according to the 180-day mandate.

Editor John Dahlia can be reached at (304) 276-1801 or by email at: jdahlia@prestonnj.com

Bridgeport's Ryan Environmental purchases Terra Alta pipeline firm Hawkeye

From Staff Reports

TERRA ALTA — A family-owned Terra Alta pipeline service company was bought out by Ryan Environmental, LLC of Bridgeport.

The company, Hawkeye Services Enterprises, was founded more than 12 years ago by Ralph Lewis. They specialize in

pipeline services for the natural gas and chemical industry throughout West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Ohio.

"With Hawkeye's expertise and reputation in the marketplace," Ryan President and CEO Clayton Price said. "We are excited to add their service offerings to our company."

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BUILDING FOR A HEALTHY FUTURE

Preston Memorial Hospital Foundation

We're approaching \$2,000,000 of our \$3,000,000 campaign.

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Contact the PMH Foundation at (304) 791-3742 or visit www.prestonmemorial.org to learn more.

