

We fondly say "Thank You" and Goodbye to Our Readers and Advertisers!

Volume 8
Issue 13
Decemberr 28, 2011



Direct Mailed to
More Than 10,100 Homes
Every Week.

Proudly Serving Rathdrum, Spirit Lake, Blanchard, Athol and Hauser Lake.

PRSRT STD
US POSTAGE
ECRWSS
RATHDRUM, ID
PERMIT NO. 9

A Look Back at the News of the Second Half of 2011

By TOM BURNETT
Of The Star

Let's get busy with the events of the second half of 2011 ...

In July, the Kootenai County Commissioners gave an approving nod to the STAR Discovery Technology Center projected for the center of some 285 pristine acres north of Rathdrum, just off Highway 41 at Willadsen Road. Progress was delayed as project developers Lorna and Paul Finman encountered a few rough spots in their plans.

Popular grocer Jim Stein was voted the one most wanted to see Kiss the Donkey during upcoming Rathdrum Days annual celebration. Stein of Stein's Family Foods, edged out some stiff competition from Police Chief Kevin Fuhr, Northern Lakes Fire Lt. Fritz Weidenhoff and Mayor Vic Holmes.

Mayor Holmes announced he'd been able to twist a few arms and divert monies that had been earmarked for the currently-shelved Bridging the Valley project to rebuild the aging railroad-highway bridge on Highway 41 in front of Lakeland High School. Before federal agencies ran short of available funds, the ambitious Bridging project was designed to remove all "at-grade" railroad crossings between the Spokane Valley and Athol.

The City Council approves an \$11.5 million budget for the coming year – of which \$4,416,642 is earmarked for the day-to-day operation of the city. Taxpayers will be responsible for \$1,929,612 – or 1 percent over the previous year's asking, which comes to about a buck more each month.

Sandy and David Gibson discovered, salvaged, moved and found a new home for an abandoned 1800-something wooden boxcar on property in the Twin Lakes area. The Gibson's "found" the old railroad car on Craigslist being offered "free for the taking" by those of Twin Lakes Friends Camp who had other plans for the ground under the old wooden car.

Close to 180 participants took part in Rathdrum's first annual Relay for Life celebration, raising more than \$18,000. Some 60 local cancer survivors were joined by an enthusiastic crowd in circling the track at Lakeland High School, beginning at 6 p.m. and – for some – walking all night.

Mark Cotner, eight years as executive director of the Canyon-Owyhee School Service Agency, was selected as administrator of the proposed Kootenai Technical Education

Center. COSSA is similar to KTEC in that a number of school districts combined to offer high school students alternatives to their seeking a college degree. Featured occupations will include health care, automotive repair and manual arts such as plumbing, welding and carpentry.

In early September, Gov. Butch Otter visits Spirit Lake, spending the good part of the morning answering questions from residents along the lines of trash along the highways, a shooting range in the Far-ragut State Park area and a perceived onslaught of pesky mosquitoes. The governor – or one of his staff – patiently answered each question.

"Sometimes it's not that easy to bring your concerns, your questions to Boise, so we come to you," Otter said.

Lakeland public schools opened this fall with 4,281 students, some 133 less than were in class at the end of last year, a first, reported District Business Manager Tom Taggart. There were 104 fewer elementary school students and 29 less secondary school students, he said. Speculation lead to financial hardships in many cases, with families leaving the area in search of jobs.

Former Rathdrum Lions Club President Larry Quimby is honored as this year's Community Star, an annual award presented by Panhandle State Bank. Quimby was cited for his role of Mr. Relay for Life and for his efforts in the construction of the popular Lions Pavilion in City Park.

The Rathdrum United Methodist Church building is up for tax sale for a minimum bid of \$12,500 – the amount of delinquent taxes owed on the 100-plus year old building at Post and McCartney Streets. No bids. Ultimately, the Kootenai County Commissioners took away the minimum bid requirement and the building sold to the highest bidder – for \$10,200.

New owners Bob and Jeannette Delauter of Post Falls announced plans to bring the building up to cur-

rent code standards. Rathdrum joins the Kootenai County-wide Reverse 911 emergency phone system, whereby by registering a home telephone, cell phone or an email address, individuals would be advised of local disasters such as a nasty railroad spill, a fire or perhaps, a serious flood. Those registered would be informed as to where to go, what to do or when it would be safe to return home.

Registration is available through www.kcsheriff.com, then clicking on Mass Emergency Notification Citizen Registry. It's cost free.

The City Council gets out of the dog registering business after realizing very few of the city's dog owners are registering their canines. No more is a license required. However, dog owners remain responsible for, and have proof of, the dog's annual inoculations. Also, an identification tag must be with the dog at all times – should the family pet get loose.

Representatives of the State Department of Transportation sponsor a public session to explain plans for the new bridge over the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway tracks on Highway 41 between the high school and Les Schwab Tire Co. A room full of drawings, maps and sketches detail how the 75-year-old span will be doubled in size as four vehicle lanes and two pedestrian lanes replace the current two-lane and one-pedestrian lane.

Lakeland High School is awarded a \$100,000 grant from the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Foundation to enhance its Go On Challenge, various programs designed to interest more students in seeking a four-year college diploma. LHS was one of eight high schools throughout the state to receive the sizeable grant – one of only two north of the Boise area.

The money represented the largest grant ever for LHS, reported Principal Conrad Underdahl.

And with that, we end another year...

And with that, we end another year...

And with that, we end another year...

'Gosh, If I Were Mayor, I'd...'

What started innocently enough, actually turned into one of the cutest class projects to come forward in many a day. John Brown Elementary first grade teacher Debra Cashman asked her students to complete the sentence: "If I were the mayor of Rathdrum..."

The answers...in unedited form

Lilly opened with: "It would be exciting. I would help the city by making festivities when they don't have

them. "I hope people vote for me a lot!"

Meanwhile, Kaleb had a different approach. "It would be distressing to be mayor. I would be distressed, but it would be fun if they build me a swimming pool and a trampoline. In a nutshell, Kaleb admitted, "I would really not want to be mayor."

Nathan, however, thought being mayor "would be unbelievable. If I was mayor, I



**What's this! A Letter to the Editor on Page 1!
Yes, it took a dear friend to tell-it-like-it-is...**

To the readers of The Star:

Please let me join with those who share regrets over the end of The Star. Although I don't live in your community, I have read every issue because I am a friend of the editor, because I love journalism and because I've gotten interested in reading about what goes on in your neck of the woods.

The editor and I have worked alongside each other at different times in our careers, sometimes shoulder to shoulder. We covered the Sunshine Mine disaster together for The Spokesman-Review in 1972, and he and his wife and my husband and I have spent many hours together talking about all sorts of things – many times lamenting the changing face of news coverage.

From those conversations I know well what he faced in putting out a weekly newspaper, especially in difficult economic times.

And I know the heartbreak he feels over closing the door on The Star. I know how strongly he feels, as do all caring journalists, that a community needs a voice. And especially for smaller communities, that voice is often only heard through its newspaper.

Oh sure, if there's a house fire or a wreck on Highway 53 or a big fat political scandal, journalists from larger surrounding communities will make mention. But nobody in the news media really cares about what's going on in your city hall, elementary schools, town councils or civic life otherwise – except your local paper, the one that gives voice to all of it.

Maybe you hate the paper, disagree with its editor or take issue with editorial stands. You're allowed. But know this – Tom Burnett bled for you. He put his personal resources behind the paper to keep it afloat as long as he could. And he loved every minute of his work – no, make that his passion.

And for those of you who didn't support The Star with your advertising or drove his accounts receivable beyond the point of no return, shame on you. Whether you know it or not, you have lost your voice. To those of you who have given your support and encouragement, you have done a good thing.

I'll miss hearing about Rathdrum and Spirit Lake and Hauser.

Sadly, you'll all become just signs on the roadway once again.

Stefanie Pettit, Spokane

City Plans Town Hall Meeting

Since the recent municipal elections something Mayor Vic Holmes admitted "has been bothering me. And I feel something can be done about it!"

The "something," he said last week is "the huge number of questions people have about their city government... things they just don't know or understand. Sometimes they are embarrassed by not knowing something – and that bothers me. We truly strive for an open government, an open City Hall..."

"So...my plan...a public informational evening. Sort of like a Town Hall Meeting."

Holmes along with City Administrator Brett Boyer have scheduled from 6 to 7:30 p.m., Tuesday evening, Jan. 31 for the meeting at City Hall.

All department heads are expected to attend and provide answers to questions from the public.

"Like how does the city's annual budgeting process actually work," is something I hear quite frequently, Holmes said. "We'll have answers.

"Why does the city require backflow values on lawn sprinkler systems is another question I hear a lot, along with citizens questioning why the city is developing another municipal park when, in their opinion, this or that needs attention.

"How do we determine which streets are cleared of winter snow...? How do we set speed limits? Or, perhaps people have questions of how a particular city department operates, what are its duties, its personnel?"

"It's these kinds of issues we want our folks to understand.

"And now with The Star leaving us, the local news out of Rathdrum could become less.

"So we're as a city, making it possible for people to find out what might be a question that's been bothering them or, simply, a way to better understand their municipal government.

"From my campaign," the newly reelected mayor explained, "people *do* have questions. As an added bonus, Boyer added that punch and cookies will be available – on the city's nickel!"

Fund Established for Fr. Scarcello

A donation fund has been established for Fr. Michael "Father Mike" Scarcello to help the long time local Catholic priest get back on his feet following a recent devastating fire at his home.

The fund is established at Wells Fargo Bank.

Scarcello's home at 3427 Scarcello Rd., was destroyed when an errant ember popped out of his wood stove and

landed in a nearby chair cushion. His one-man efforts to control the resulting blaze proved unsuccessful.

Firemen arrived to find the house in flames and beyond saving, leaving them little choice but to protect nearby structures.

Scarcello was hospitalized following the incident, treated and later released.

See **IF I WERE** Page 7