

CLIP AND SAVE

\$88

COUPONS INSIDE

LIFE, E1

GIFT OF WATER

Local Rotary clubs work to build filtration systems in Nicaragua

BUSINESS, B7

AN ECONOMIC ROLLER COASTER

The decade in review



TODAY'S QUICK 'CAST

Clearing skies but quite cold.

TOMORROW

Fair and chilly. High of 31 and low of 11.

Full forecast on Page B6

TIMES-CALL

No. 361

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2009 | LONGMONT, COLORADO

IN THE NEWS

Dangerous road conditions remain

DENVER — Driving conditions throughout northern Colorado remain dangerous after a snowstorm swept through the state this week. Transportation officials had closed U.S. Highway 287 from Fort Collins to the Wyoming border because of blowing snow and high winds. The highway reopened just before 10 a.m. Saturday. Similar conditions were reported east of Greeley and Sterling with some icy spots. South of Denver, road conditions were not icy, but the Colorado State Patrol says as many as 20 vehicles were involved in multiple crashes on northbound Interstate 25 near Castle Rock.

Gift wrap causes fire at Evergreen home

EVERGREEN — Fire officials say an Evergreen family opening Christmas presents caused a fire at their home when they threw the gifts' wrappers into their fireplace. Officials say no one was injured and firefighters were able to quickly put out the blaze, which had spread through the chimney to the roof and deck of the home. Fire officials say the fire left a 3-foot hole in the roof. The fire happened Thursday night.



A man sprays water on sand sculptures depicting tsunami victims at Marina Beach in Chennai, India, on Saturday.

Monks, villagers, tourists mark tsunami anniversary

PHUKET, Thailand — Buddhist monks in orange robes chanted on a Thai beach, an Indonesian mother mourned her children at a mass grave, and a man scattered flowers in now-placid waters Saturday to commemorate the 230,000 killed five years ago when a tsunami ripped across Asia. An outpouring of aid that followed the Dec. 26, 2004, tsunami has helped replace homes, schools and entire coastal communities decimated by the disaster. But at Saturday's ceremonies, survivors spoke of the enduring wounds.

FULL STORY, A11

Clarification

There is no D section in Today's Times-Call because of our special press configuration. There is no missing section.

Times-Call wire reports

Off the Streets



Richard M. Hackett/Times-Call

Henry Rodriguez, right, speaks with his children — from left: Anna Rodriguez, Amanda Vallejo and Henry Alexander Rodriguez — at an apartment in Longmont on Tuesday. Henry Rodriguez moved into the apartment on Dec. 15 with assistance from the Longmont Housing Authority.

'Rapid rehousing' program gets homeless into affordable apartments

By Rachel Carter
Longmont Times-Call

LONGMONT — Henry Rodriguez knew he could take care of himself. Even if work was hard to come by, even if money was tight, even if he wasn't sure where he would live, he figured he would be fine. But he refused to do that to his

children.

"I didn't want to take them out and put them on the streets with me," he said. "I can handle myself, moving here and there. But I didn't want them to suffer like I did."

Henry Rodriguez now has a place to call his own. And now his children do, too.

On Dec. 15, he and his 16-year-

old son, Henry Alexander Rodriguez, and 18-year-old daughter, Melissa Vallejo and her 5-month-old son, Elijah, moved into their apartment on Terry Street.

Theirs is one of 10 apartments the Longmont Housing Authority leased this month to give homeless families and individuals a place to

Please see **REHOUSING** on A4

WHERE ARE THEY NOW? LOCAL TROOPS

FAMILIES WAIT FOR TROOPS TO RETURN FROM IRAQ

It's the time of year when the Times-Call checks in with area residents who were featured on our pages in 2009 and updates their stories with our annual Where Are They Now series.

By Scott Rochat
Longmont Times-Call

LONGMONT — Spc. Joshua Webb won the race to see his son.

"As soon as I got to the hospital, they pointed me down every hallway I needed to go," said Webb, who made it from his duty post in Iraq to McKee Medical Center in Loveland just a few hours before his wife, Jade, gave birth to their first child, Kaden Louis Webb. Kaden arrived at 12:23 a.m. Dec. 12, about five and a half hours after Dad did.

"I got in the room and



Lewis Geyer/Times-Call

Spc. Joshua Webb holds his newborn son Kaden with his wife, Jade, at their Longmont home Dec. 18.

everyone cleared out and let us be alone for a few minutes," said Webb, a Longmont resident. "It was a very emotional time. Both of us were so happy to see

each other."

"After having to be apart for the last six months, I didn't want to see anyone else, I didn't want to be with anyone else," Jade Webb

said. "I just wanted to be with him."

Spc. Webb is one of the Colorado National Guard troops who shipped out to Iraq in June with the 3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery. Since leaving Fort Hood, Texas, it has been a busy six months — both for the troops and for the families left behind.

Not always an easy six months, either.

"It's like a piece of you is missing," said Sara Sanchez of Greeley, the wife of Sgt. 1st Class Robert Sanchez. "You don't really feel whole."

Friends help. Sanchez and her friend Robin Weis of Windsor head up a support group for the service families. They've gone to Elitch's together, celebrated holidays together, even talked together when

nothing will do but the ear of someone who really understands.

"You learn a lot about other people, and you learn about yourself as well," said Weis, whose husband, 1st Sgt. Eric Weis, is on his third deployment.

And what has she learned?

"That I'm really strong," Weis said.

Hurry home

The Webbs talked with each other about four times a week, sometimes on the phone, sometimes by instant message. It's a good thing, too. Otherwise, Spc. Webb might not have realized time was running out fast.

His leave had been set for Dec. 15, plenty of time if Jade delivered by late

Please see **TROOPS** on A12

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REHOUSING: Shelter first, then tackle issues

From A1

live — and a chance to start over. “We get to be a family again,” Henry Rodriguez said Tuesday. “That’s what I’ve always wanted.” He added, “I’m a happy person. I’m one of the happiest people in Longmont right now.”

Hope from LHOT

The Longmont Housing Opportunities Team, or LHOT, asked the Longmont City Council in November for money to fund the most serious and most immediate needs for the city’s homeless, such as extending hours at the OUR Center’s day shelter and warming center.

One of the group’s requests was for \$36,200 to “master lease” 10 apartments for families and individuals, rather than relying on costly and temporary motel vouchers to ensure that people had a roof over their heads in severe weather.

The group initially planned to lease 10 apartments for four months, to get through the winter.

Now, because the Longmont Housing Authority partnered with the Inn Between and Thistle Community Housing, that money likely will secure 14 to 16 apartments for six months, said Krystal Winship Erazo, Longmont Housing Authority’s resource coordinator.

Family struggles

Henry Rodriguez gathered with three of his four children — Henry Alexander Rodriguez, Amanda Vallejo and Anna Rodriguez — in his still-sparsely furnished apartment last week.

Everything changed for the children when their mother died Nov. 1, 2002. Norma Vallejo had been diagnosed with bone cancer. The four children knew she was sick. They just didn’t know her death would happen that quickly.

They also didn’t know that their mother had called their father to come to Colorado from Texas.

But even after their father moved here, the family splintered after their mother’s death.

“Everything changed when she passed away,” said Anna Rodriguez, the oldest of the four children at 23.

Over the years, the children split: They lived with extended family, ended up with foster fami-



Henry Rodriguez cooks beans and rice Tuesday at his new apartment in Longmont.

Richard M. Hackett/Times-Call

lies, landed in group homes or rented their own apartments. Anna Rodriguez married and started her own family.

Henry Rodriguez also struggled, moving from place to place, renting rooms or weekly apartments.

He works for a landscaping company, but the work is seasonal. In the winter, he collects unemployment and picks up odd jobs, like shoveling snow.

Henry Rodriguez was renting a room at a home on Bross Street, but the house went into foreclosure. He moved in briefly with Anna Rodriguez before taking a room at Dickens Manor.

He had never asked for help before and was afraid to ask for help now. At the same time, he was afraid of what would happen.

“I was thinking, ‘What am I supposed to do? Where am I supposed to go?’” he said.

“I knew there were shelters in Boulder, but I couldn’t go to Boulder because I would be stranded there.”

Anna Rodriguez took matters into her own hands, calling the OUR Center and Homeless Out-

reach Providing Encouragement.

HOPE executive director Bray Patrick-Lake eventually put her — and her father — in touch with the right people, who recommended Henry Rodriguez and his children for the apartment.

Housing first

In the month since the City Council approved the additional money, LHOT has put all its plans into action — including placing four families and four individuals in apartments, 17 people in all, Winship Erazo said.

Two more households are pending placement, and another 10 are on a waiting list for additional apartments that may be available, she said. Each individual or family will be prioritized based on the most immediate need and the most potential to stabilize.

The Longmont Housing Development Corp., a nonprofit created by the Longmont Housing Authority, has leased all the apartments, then sub-leases them to families and individuals who pay 30 percent of their income toward rent.

That may be an eye-opener for some, Winship Erazo said. The

people being placed in these apartments work, she said, but perhaps they couldn’t scrape together money for a deposit or couldn’t afford weekly rents.

Each family or individual also will work with a case manager.

The model is known as “housing first” or “rapid rehousing.” The idea is get people into stable housing first and foremost, then tackle the issues that led to their homelessness.

“If people have a home and housing, that’s truly the first step to stabilizing and achieving self-sufficiency,” Winship Erazo said.

Leasing apartments is better than relying on vouchers to put people up in local motels; it gives people more time and a better chance to get their feet under them, said Kathy Fedler, the city’s coordinator for affordable housing and community development block grants.

Fedler said money is set aside for motel vouchers, but they are expensive and temporary.

“The thought was, ‘What if we use that money to master lease some apartments that are vacant anyway?’” Fedler said. “That

way, they can be in a shelter situation for four to six months so they can get stabilized.”

But placing families in those apartments does not — by a long shot — replace the need for motel vouchers.

Both the OUR Center and HOPE provide vouchers to get people off the streets, out of brutal weather and into warm motel rooms.

The OUR Center has given about 190 vouchers for emergency shelter since the start of cold weather this fall, executive director Edwina Salazar said — a 27 percent increase over the same time last year, when the OUR Center issued about 150 motel vouchers.

“Clearly, there’s still a huge need,” she said.

Together for Christmas

For the first time since their mother died, Henry Rodriguez and his children spent Christmas together. They planned to start the festivities at Anna Rodriguez’s home and end up back at her father’s new apartment.

The two-bedroom apartment is sparsely furnished: a couch and chair, a couple of paintings on the wall, a small Christmas tree that Anna Rodriguez bought for her father. When Henry Rodriguez moved in, he brought his only possessions: clothes.

The family hoped to get a table for the dining room in time for Christmas.

“We haven’t been like this since my mom was living,” Anna Rodriguez said. “It’s the first time we’ve all been together in a long time for the holidays.”

Although Henry Rodriguez and his case manager, Jill Babcock of the Inn Between, will start working to plan for his and his children’s futures, he is still taking life one day at a time.

“But I know it’s going to be good, especially because I have my kids,” he said.

His daughter Amanda Vallejo chimed in: “It’s a good road to be on.”

“People out there, don’t give up hope. Faith, too,” she said.

“You’ve got to have hope and faith.”

Rachel Carter can be reached at 303-684-5216 or rcarter@times-call.com.

PLUNGE:

From A1

And even though the sponsoring Alzheimer’s Association allowed the Longmont Humane Society to continue its own independent fundraising at the Plunge for the past two years, O’Keeffe said Humane Society officials ultimately decided that “it’s not our event.”

Sara Spaulding, spokeswoman for the Alzheimer’s Association of Colorado, said the two nonprofit orga-

nizations parted “on friendly terms” from their dual Polar Plunge fundraising efforts.

Last year, the Polar Plunge raised more than \$24,000 to support Alzheimer’s research, education, counseling, support groups and a 24-hour help line provided by the Alzheimer’s Association of Colorado, Spaulding said.

O’Keeffe said pledges for the Longmont Humane Society that resulted from staff and supporters participating in the 2008 and 2009 Plunges were “probably to

the tune of a couple of thousand (dollars) a year.”

Event-day registration for the 2010 Polar Plunge begins at 10 a.m. New Year’s Day, with jumping in the Boulder Reservoir, 5565 N. 51st St., to start at 11:30 a.m.

The Alzheimer’s Association is offering a \$5 discount for people who preregister for what the organization calls “a cold dip for a great cause.”

Event-day registration fees are \$25 for an adult and \$20 for a teenager or child.

Participants will get a long-sleeve T-shirt and Plunge certificate, as well as refreshments and a dip in a hot tub.

Further information, including a link for preregistering, is available at www.alz.org/co or by calling 303-813-1669.

Although the Longmont Humane Society won’t have a fundraising presence at the 2010 Polar Plunge, it’s already planning a new fundraising venture of its own — one that’s likely to be decidedly less chilly.

O’Keeffe is encouraging Humane Society supporters to mark Saturday, July 17, on their calendars. He said

that’s the date for “our first annual golf outing,” to be held at Longmont’s Ute Creek Golf Course.

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Boulder County Public Meetings & Hearings

THIS WEEK

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 29
9:00 a.m. **BUSINESS MEETING:** New Business

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 31
No Commissioners meetings are scheduled.
Boulder County offices close at noon.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 1
Boulder County offices closed for the New Year's Day holiday.

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Linking you to community resources

www.BoulderCounty.org
or call 303-441-3500

You are invited to attend and comment at all Commissioners' hearings. Location: Boulder County Courthouse, 3rd floor, 1325 Pearl St. (13th & Spruce Sts.), Boulder. For FREE PARKING information and other questions, please call 303-441-3500 or email: commissioners@bouldercounty.org. Agendas are subject to change. Please call ahead to verify an item of interest. For special assistance, please contact our ADA Coordinator (303-441-3508) 48 hours before the scheduled agenda item.