

# Our Community News

Volunteers reporting on community issues in Monument, Palmer Lake, and the surrounding Tri-Lakes area



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Issue #277 — Volume 24 Number 4 — Saturday, April 6, 2024

Free

Visit [OCN.ME](http://OCN.ME) on the web. We now have audio posted for many of the recent articles and videos for some events.



## Local Events

Readers should assume that event information published in this issue is subject to change and information should be confirmed a day or two before the event by calling the information number or checking the organization's website.

- See pages 22-23 for event locations and other details of these and many other local events.
- OCN mailing days, Thu., Apr. 4 & May 2, approx. 7-8:30 am.
  - Monument Library Chess Club, Sat., Apr. 6 & 20, 2-4 pm.
  - Friends of Monument Preserve Trail Repair Work Day, Tue., Apr. 9, 5 pm.
  - Susan Helmich in store event for buying estate jewelry, Thu.-Fri., Apr. 11-12. By appointment. See ad on page 10.
  - 100+ women who care membership/social networking, Wed. Apr. 17, 5 pm
  - Boy Scout Troop 17 Spaghetti Dinner, Sat., Apr. 13, 5:30-7:30 pm.
  - Palmer Lake Historical Society, Thu., Apr. 18, 7 pm.
  - Earth Day Event-Friends of Fox Run Park, Sat., Apr. 20, 10-2
  - YMCA healthy kids day, Sat., Apr. 20. See ad on page 6.
  - Friends of Fox Run Park, Zoom meeting, Thu., Apr. 25, 7 pm
  - Arbor Day presentation, Fri., Apr. 26, 10 am.
  - Wildfire Risk Reduction Day, Sat., Apr. 27. PRHS auditorium.
  - NEPCO meeting, Sat., May 11, 10 am-noon.
  - Little Log Church 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration, Sat., May 11, 1-4 pm. See ad on page 2.
  - Taste of Tri-Lakes Cares, Wed., May 15, 5:30-8:30 pm. See ad on page 4.
  - Silver Key Senior Summit-Expo of Senior Services, Thu., May 16, 9-2 pm. See ad on page 8.
  - A Time to Dance, The Way Home, Fri., May 17. See ad on page 4.
  - YMCA summer day camp ages 5-12 begins May 28. See ad on page 6.
  - Kiwanis Monument Hill Foundation grant applications due May 30. See ad on page 10.
  - Space Foundation kids' summer fun weeks, June 10-14, or June 15-19. See ad on page 12.
  - Front Range Maker's Market Shop, Sat. June 22, 9-4, Sun., June 23, 10-3. See ad on page 5.

## Mount Herman "Leap"



**Above:** This group accompanied Randy Phillips on his quest to complete his "grid", summiting Mount Herman on every calendar day. For details, please see the *On the Trail* column on page 20. Photo by Randy Phillips

Lewis-Palmer D38 Board of Education, Feb. 26, March 5, 18 & 20

## New hires in leadership positions; superintendent search and farewell

By Harriet Halbig

The February meeting of the Lewis-Palmer D38 Board of Education was held late in the month, making it impossible to include in the March issue of OCN.

At that meeting, Commander Antonio Cruz of Disabled American Veterans Chapter 26 presented a plaque to the district thanking them for a \$1,500 donation resulting from a Jeans for Veterans Day in November where staff could wear jeans to work if they made a donation.

### New hires

The board approved the hiring of four individuals in leadership positions:

- Kim Briding as Palmer Lake Elementary School principal.
- Rachel Sellers as Prairie Winds Elementary School principal.
- Melissa Andrews as director of Planning, Facilities, and Grounds.
- Danielle Holmes as director of Special Education.

### Position of acting superintendent approved

Current superintendent K.C. Somers was scheduled to leave the area on

March 31. Assistant Superintendent Amber Whetstine was approved to fill the position of acting superintendent until June 30.

### New curriculum approved

The board approved the following new curriculum following public review

- National Geographic World Cultures and Geography Eastern Hemisphere for grade 7.
  - National Geographic U.S. History American Stories beginnings to 1877 for grade 8.
  - Houghton Mifflin Science Dimensions Biology for grades 9-12.
- Whetstine explained that the district reviews curriculum on a six-year cycle.

### Stakeholder survey

Board President Tiffney Upchurch reported that a stakeholder survey resulted in over 1,000 responses as part of the superintendent search. Stakeholders include members of the community, employees, parents, and students.

### Superintendent search

The superintendent search was a

*D38 BOE (Cont. on 6)*

El Paso County Planning Commission, March 7 and 21

## Highway 83 access plan approved

By Helen Walklett

At the March 7 El Paso County Planning Commission meeting, the commissioners voted unanimously to approve the Highway 83 Access Control Plan (ACP) and incorporate it into the county's master plan. The commissioners also heard three land development requests for the Tri-Lakes area during March.

### Highway 83 access plan

The ACP covers the stretch of Highway 83 from its junction with Powers Boulevard to County Line Road, a length of almost 10 miles. It is a long-range plan for 2045 and beyond aimed at improving safety and mobility. The county's Department of Public Works, the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and the City of Colorado Springs worked together to develop the plan. CDOT led the work because it owns and maintains the corridor.

The Planning Commission previously received a presentation of the proposed plan at its Dec. 7 meeting. See [www.ocn.me/v24n1.htm#wpcpc](http://www.ocn.me/v24n1.htm#wpcpc).

Arthur Gonzalez of CDOT told the commissioners that the only change since the December presentation had been the inclusion of an access based on an agreement between CDOT and an individual which had been omitted from the initial proposed plan. There are around 70 individual access points along this part of Highway 83 and most allow full movement, meaning there are no turn restrictions.

Future traffic volumes along this portion of the highway are expected to increase in the range of 17% to 86% by 2045. Without changes, this increase is expected to result in increased delays, congestion, pollution, and crashes. The plan is also intended to be a tool to help the county, the city, and CDOT make access decisions during development and redevelopment, and will streamline the access permitting process.

It was again stressed that the

*EPCPC (Cont. on 2)*

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**Above:** The March 18 D38 Board of Education meeting marked the last board meeting for outgoing Superintendent KC Somers, whose last day with the district was March 31. Somers, who started in July 2019, had a tenure of nearly five years. Leadership team members from administration, principals, and board members spoke about Somers' impact and support. Executive Director of Exceptional Student Services Rick Frampton highlighted Somers' leadership during the pandemic, and board member Ron Schwarz listed some of Somers' signature accomplishments. Somers gave a nod to everyone in the audience and all in the community and district. He emphasized the importance of relationships, noting the South African term "sawubona" which translates to "we see you" and saying it had been a privilege and an honor to serve. From left, board President Tiffney Upchurch, board members Ron Schwarz and Todd Brown, Somers, and board members Patti Shank and Kris Norris. Photo by Jackie Burhans.