

## Community pitches in



**Left:** Community members came together to help a local family in need on a cold Sunday in November. Karrah Martin put a call out to her network and on Nextdoor.com for anyone who could help her family build a fence that was required for a K9 Buddies placement for her son Andrew. Andrew was recently

diagnosed with a neurologically based vision problem, which causes him issues with reading and schoolwork at Bear Creek Elementary. She got a response from Bret Berg, who owns a local company called CPR that specializes in building decks and fences. Other volunteers included the Tri-Lakes Moms Club, which provided food; Cub Scout Pack 17 members and leaders; U.S. Air Force Academy cadets sponsored by the Martins; her husband's colleagues from the Military Strategic Studies Program at the academy; as well as local friends and neighbors. Martin noted this was truly a community effort of nearly 40 people for which she is most grateful. *Photo by Jackie Burhans.*

## Palmer Lake Lantern Festival



**Above:** Despite inclement weather, the Palmer Lake Lantern Festival was held Nov. 24 after the lighting of the Palmer Lake Star. Planned vendor activities were moved indoors and curtailed due to high winds. Attendees' tickets got them a beautiful paper lantern with a marker for writing their sentiments on the lanterns before launching them from the eastern shore of Palmer Lake. Proceeds from this event go toward Palmer Lake Parks, particularly lakeside improvements like the planned pedestrian bridge. *Photo by Jackie Burhans.*

## Child trafficking widespread

By Janet Sellers

Monument Community Presbyterian Church hosted an informational night about Human Trafficking on Nov. 7 to help raise local awareness of child trafficking in El Paso County and nearby neighborhoods. Attendees learned what human trafficking looks like, its pervasiveness, where it happens (including in the Tri-Lakes and Front Range areas with teens and preteens), how to help, and more. A caveat for all is to learn the "in plain sight" indications of child trafficking and how and what to report to authorities to ensure safety for the child and the informant.

Child trafficking has been found across all socio-economic levels, races, and ages, according to representatives from the Human Trafficking Task Force of Southern Colorado. Boys and girls are trafficked into Colorado as victims of these coerced crimes. Children are lured into situations and then forced to do things against their will (such as prostitution, labor, crime) and keep it a secret with threats against their personal and family safety.

Colorado has improved from an "F" grade five years ago to a "B" grade in human trafficking response. But the state has failed to pass a Safe Harbor law to protect victims, instead charging these child slaves for crimes they are forced to commit. In the past four years, Colorado law enforcement has rescued 420 children and arrested 146 abusers, with courts handing down sentences ranging from 24 years to 472 years for a Denver-area kingpin trafficker.

Even without the Safe Harbor law that has been stymied by prosecutors, local law enforcement wants to send out the message that "Our children are not for sale," according to the task force representatives. However, Colorado lacks secure restorative treatment facilities, and the courts pay only if the victim is on probation. So children are charged with, for example, prostitution, which turn the victims into criminals.

Safe sanctuary homes allow the children to reclaim their childhood and be loved and cared for in a safe,



**Above:** The Rev. Dr. Becca Jordan-Irwin, left, Monument Community Presbyterian Church, and Patti Neely, Sarah's Home Volunteer Coordinator, share helpful information at the child trafficking seminar. *Photo by Janet Sellers*

supported environment with services specific to their needs and ages so they can return to society. There is a severe shortage of these safe homes.

CO-4-kids, which is an awareness campaign organized to get Colorado citizens involved with the issue of human trafficking, notes, "If you see signs that concern you, you don't have to be the expert or make the determination. If a child needs help, report to (the Colorado Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline) 1-844-CO-4-KIDS (1-844-264-5437). If a child is in immediate danger, always dial 911. Your call could be the link to get the child the support they need." Safe2tell.org has phone apps and a phone number operational 24 hours a day to anonymously report anything that concerns your safety or the safety of others.

Citizens can help law enforcement in powerful ways by collecting and reporting information – such as descriptions of people, vehicles and license plates – as well as supporting fundraising.

In a related matter, a local holiday art and gift sale will benefit children rescued from trafficking. Southwinds Fine Art Gallery, 16575 Rollercoaster Road, is conducting fundraising on December weekends, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., with generous portions going to child trafficking rescue groups, including Aspire Academy and Sarah's Home, a sanctuary home for teen girls in Colorado, located in Peyton.

## Our Community Notices

By Judy Barnes, Events Editor

*Although we strive for accuracy in these listings, dates or times are often changed after publication. Please double-check the time and place of any event you wish to attend by calling the information number for that event.*

### MVEA Christmas light roundup ends Jan. 31

Mountain View Electric Association (MVEA) wants to help you make the energy efficiency switch this holiday season. Drop off your incandescent C7 and C9 Christmas light strands at an MVEA office and receive a \$5 per strand bill credit on up to 10 strands per MVEA member. You could earn up to a \$50 credit on your next electric bill. C7 bulbs measure over 2 inches, while C9 bulbs are just under 3 inches, base to tip. These are the large, traditional Christmas lights. The Monument MVEA office is at 15706 Jackson Creek Parkway, Ste. 100. For more information, call 800-388-9881. See ad on page 15.

### Toy donations needed for Santa on Patrol

Santa on Patrol will team with the Monument Police Department, Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District, and the Palmer Lake Police Department to deliver toys and good cheer to many children in the Tri-Lakes area from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Dec. 22. Santa and his elves from the fire and police departments hope to deliver more than 1,000 toys again this year. New, unwrapped toys and gift cards may be dropped off by

mid-December to the following locations: Monument Police Department, 645 Beacon Lite Rd.; YMCA RAD, 17250 Jackson Creek Pkwy.; Lewis-Palmer High School and Palmer Ridge High School;

Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Stations 1, 2, and 3; and Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Department administration offices, 16055 Old Forest Point, Suite 103. For more information, contact Monument Police Chief Shirk, 481-3253.

### LEAP—Help for heating bills

The Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP) is a federally funded program that provides cash assistance to help families and individuals pay a portion of winter home heating costs. The eligibility period for LEAP runs **Nov. 1, 2018 to April 30, 2019**. Application packets will be automatically mailed to residents who received LEAP assistance last year at the address where they were living at that time. To find out if you qualify for LEAP, call 1-866-HEAT-HELP (866-432-8435) or visit [www.colorado.gov/cdhs/leap](http://www.colorado.gov/cdhs/leap).

### Kiwanis holiday bell ringing

Look for Kiwanis members and volunteers ringing the holiday bell for Salvation Army's Red Kettle Campaign at Monument King Soopers, Safeway, and Walmart **Nov. 23-Dec. 24**, 11 a.m.-6 p.m. All proceeds go to Salvation Army in El Paso County. For more information about Kiwanis, visit <https://monumenthillkiwanis.org/mhk/>. See ad on page 11.

### MVEA scholarships

Each year, MVEA awards \$1,000 scholarships to 14 graduating high school seniors. Applications are due by **Jan. 15, 2019**. Apply online at [www.mvea.coop/youth-programs](http://www.mvea.coop/youth-programs).

### Tri-Lakes Women's Club's 2019 Grant Process, Jan. 15-March 15

Tri-Lakes Women's Club's (TLWC) grant application for 2019 will be available online **Jan. 15 through March 15** on the TLWC website, [www.tlwc.net](http://www.tlwc.net). Eligible organizations include nonprofit and public service organizations and public schools that serve the Tri-Lakes area. Special program and project requests are welcomed. The application package includes the instructions as well as other important qualifying information. For more information, visit [www.tlwc.net](http://www.tlwc.net).

### Tri-Lakes Y winter basketball

Registration is now open for winter basketball, preschool through grade eight. The season begins **Jan. 19**. Financial assistance is available. Register at [www.pymca.org](http://www.pymca.org); or at the Y, 17250 Jackson Creek Parkway, Monument; or phone 481-8728. See ad on page 6.

### Free tutoring in reading

Children's Literacy Center offers free one-to-one tutoring for children reading below grade level. Tutors are volunteers from the community, 14 years of age and older. Tutoring is held every **Tuesday and Thursday**, 5:30-6:30 p.m., at the Monument Library.

For more information, go to [www.childrensliteracycenter.org](http://www.childrensliteracycenter.org), call 471-8672, or contact Liz Eden at [Liz@childrensliteracycenter.org](mailto:Liz@childrensliteracycenter.org).

### Free grief group forming

The Church at Woodmoor, 18125 Furrow Road, Monument, is forming a group for people who have struggled with grief for six months or more. This group will meet for six weeks with a trained leader who will provide a safe place to process the grief resulting from the loss of a loved one, or grief due to a change in health or finances. Participation is limited to 10 individuals on a first-come, first-served basis. For more information, contact Rick Jackson, 488-3200, [Rjackson.tcaw@gmail.com](mailto:Rjackson.tcaw@gmail.com).

### Prescription drug drop box

Monument Police Department, 645 Beacon Lite Road, has a secure green drop box to safely dispose of medications so the drugs are not stolen, lost, or misused. The drop box is open **Monday through Friday**, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Accepted items include prescription and over-the-counter drugs, opioid painkillers, tranquilizers, antidepressants, vitamins, heart medicine, liquid medications (sealed in original container), prescription patches, medicated ointments, and veterinary prescriptions. Labels can stay on the containers since all are incinerated. No chemo drugs, marijuana, illegal drugs, or sharps can be accepted. For more information, call the Monument Police, 481-3253, or visit [Takemedback.org](http://Takemedback.org).