

# Our Community News

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



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Issue #287 — Volume 25 Number 2 — Saturday, February 1, 2025

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**OCN.ME**

Audio is posted for many of the 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 page 21 to 23 for event locations and other details of these and many other local events.

- **OCN mailing day**, Thu., Jan. 30 & Feb. 27, approx. 7-8:30 am.
- **Donala Water and Sanitation District, election to waive director term limits**, Tue., Feb. 4, 7 am-7 pm. Donala office.
- **Funky little theater: live theater** *Love Letters*, Fri.-Sat., Feb. 14-16, Palmer Lake Town Hall. See ad on page 2.
- **Palmer Lake Historical Society**, Thu., Feb 20, 7-8 pm (doors open at 6:30) Palmer Lake Townhall, 42 Valley Crescent. Nikki Stratton tells the story of her grandfather Donald Stratton, survivor of the Pearl Harbor attack.
- **Super Saturday geology day at WMMI**, Sat., Feb. 22. See wmmi.org.
- **Restyle Your Fur**, Mon.-Tue., Feb. 24-25. Love Shop, 251 Front Street. See ad on page 8.
- **School district 38 Chess Tournament**, Sat., Mar. 8, Bear Creek elementary School
- **NEPCO**, Sat., Mar. 8, 10 am-12 pm.
- **MVEA board nomination questionnaires due**, Thu., Mar. 13. See mvea.coop
- **Updated Monument History talk**, Fri., Mar. 21, 11-12:30 pm, Silver Key Senior Center.
- **Spring STEAM Camp at WMMI**, Tue.-Thu., Mar. 25-7. See ad on page 12.



Above: Monument Hiking Group on Cap Rock. Photo by Randy Phillips See *On the Trail* column on page 17.

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### Circulation

Print Run: 24,420  
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## Fourth Annual Palmer Lake Outdoor Classic, Jan. 21



Above: First it was too warm. Then it was too cold. Finally, on Jan. 21 the weather was just right, and the puck was dropped on the Fourth Annual Palmer Lake Outdoor Classic. More than a thousand people saw Pine Creek High School beat the Lewis-Palmer Rangers for the second straight year in an overtime shootout. The score was 3-2. The Eagles took home the Star trophy, shaped like the Palmer Lake Star that was lit for the tournament. The event raises money for the Lewis-Palmer hockey team. Photo by Michael Weinfeld. See photo on page 20.

### Lewis-Palmer D38 Board of Education, Jan. 21

## Superintendent resigns; Grace Best School to be demolished

By Jackie Burhans

At its Jan. 21 meeting, the Lewis-Palmer D38 Board of Education accepted the superintendent's resignation, voted to demolish Grace Best Education Center, and accepted a letter of intent from Tri-Lakes Cares (TLC) to purchase land from the district. The board also recognized two students and a community partner. The district's principals recognized the board.

### Superintendent resigns

Board Treasurer Ron Schwarz, saying he intended to vote yes, asked that the consent item agenda relating to Superintendent Stacie Datterri's resignation be pulled out for discussion. He commented that Datterri did the consummately professional thing upon reaching an impasse and put the students first. Board

President Tiffiney Upchurch said she was grateful for Datterri's contributions and that the next step would be discussed at the February work session. She noted that some working relationships had not developed as hoped.

The board voted unanimously to accept Datterri's resignation. Her resignation letter and separation agreement were posted in Boarddocs here: <https://bit.ly/d38-supt-resign>. According to the agreement, Datterri will receive a severance payment of \$225,000, equal to one year's salary.

D38 (Cont. on 2)



Dr. Stacie Datterri

### Palmer Lake Board of Trustees, Jan. 9 and 23

## Lakeview Heights development raises safety concerns

By James Howald and Jackie Burhans

At its first meeting in January, the Palmer Lake Board of Trustees held a public hearing on an application for a master plan re-subdivision of Lakeview Heights, a proposed development that would consist of 100 lots just east of the New Santa Fe Regional Trail and southeast of Star View Circle. The hearing was followed by a vote to continue the matter and allow Eric Sepp, the developer, to address issues raised during the hearing.

At the second meeting, Reid Wiecks, chair of the Parks and Trails Commission, presented the vision he and the commission have developed for the future of the Elephant Rock property. Glen Smith, the new police chief, and Judge John Ciccolella were sworn in.

In her administrative report,

Town Administrator Dawn Collins reported on her efforts to fill open positions on the town staff.

Both meetings included executive sessions.

### Fire safety the focus of subdivision hearing

Mayor Glant Havenar opened the hearing on the Lakeview Heights development with a plea for respectful dialogue.

Town Administrator Dawn Collins reviewed the complicated history of the subdivision request, which was originally submitted in 2023. The plan before the board was a re-subdivision of a previously approved, platted subdivision that was never completed by the developer, Collins said. She pointed out the building code had changed significantly since the original ap-

PALMER LAKE (Cont. on 7)

### Monument Fire District, Jan. 22

## Wildfire Mitigation remains top priority

By Natalie Barszcz

At the Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District dba Monument Fire District (MFD) meeting on Jan. 22, the board heard about the district's desire to step up mitigation efforts in light of the recent fires in Southern California, efforts to stabilize revenue for special fire districts, accepted a petition of inclusion, and set a public hearing for a 106.6-acre parcel of land in the eastern portion of the district. The board approved the 2025 board director election, and received multiple updates, to include staffing and apparatus.

Director Randall Estes and Mark Gunderman were excused.

### Mitigation effort requested

Fire Chief Andy Kovacs said after witnessing the multiple fires over the past several weeks in Southern California, and having worked in that region for almost 30 years and knowing some of the people that responded to those incidents, it gave him pause for thought on what the district has accomplished over the past four years, but there is a lot more work to be done.

Division Chief of Community Risk Reduction Jonathan Bradley has received many phone calls and emails from concerned citizens trying to find ways to get actively involved in mitigation efforts. It prompted an open letter to the community via this publication and although this community may never see fires of the magnitude seen in California, locally it has happened before with the Waldo Canyon Fire, the Black Forest Fire, and the Marshall Fire in Boulder County, said Kovacs. See letter on page 16.

Bradley said a new Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) code is expected to become law later this year,

MFD (Cont. on 10)