

Local News

EILERS NEIGHBORHOOD

'We've proved there is a risk'

City Council frustrated toxic test results were not reported earlier

BY PETER ROPER
THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

Federal health officials defended to City Council the blood and urine testing they did in the Eilers neighborhood two years ago, even though those tests found few children showing elevated lead levels in their blood.

At Monday's work session, doctors from the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry said those tests still showed five children — out of 80 children 12 years or younger — had "reportable" lead levels

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above 5 micrograms per deciliter.

Reportable means the ATSDR notified those families of those children with their test results within weeks of testing back in September 2013.

Dr. Lourdes Rosales-Guevara, senior medical officer for the agency, said, "We think we're just scratching the surface. We've proved there is a risk."

Council was clearly

frustrated that it had taken ATSDR two years to report the test results to city officials. Back in January 2014, council reluctantly agreed to request that the Eilers area be placed on the national Superfund list for environmental cleanup.

Councilman Bob Schilling said the ATSDR report showed not many people seemed to be affected by the lead in the neighborhood.

"That (Superfund) listing has devastated that neighborhood," Schilling told Rosales-Guevara.



Bob Schilling

"I was expecting your report to have some devastating numbers in it."

Capt. Bruce Tierney, of ASTDR, said any lead was a hazard to children and that the agency had notified quickly the few families where lead levels were above the 5 microgram mark.

"I'm also frustrated that its taken so long to report the results," he told council.

Tierney said the long delay is caused by the agency's protocols in preparing and releasing a final study.

Councilman Chris Nicoll said he still supported listing the neigh-

borhood for cleanup. He made that decision when he saw kids playing in the dirt, in their yards in the Eilers area, near the slag pile of the old Colorado Smelter — which is considered to be the source of the lead that's been found in soil tests.

"We're right to be working with the (Environmental Protection Agency)," he said. "The city doesn't have the resources to deal with that."

ATSDR officials intend to have two community

SEE COUNCIL, 6A



CHIEFTAIN PHOTO/BRYAN KELSEN

Intellitec College of Pueblo student Natosha Haskell (right) smiles as she is hugged by Jennifer Mason, division brand manager for Matrix, as Intellitec cosmetology program supervisor Peggy Gunther looks on Monday at the school's North Side campus. Haskell was one of seven students awarded \$5,000 scholarships by Matrix.

EDUCATION

Smoothing out the struggle

Seven IntelliTec students surprised with scholarships

BY ANTHONY A. MESTAS
THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

Natosha Haskell's eyes welled up with tears Monday afternoon during a short ceremony in the cosmetology center at IntelliTec Colleges of Pueblo.

The single mother of three said coming to school is a struggle, but thanks to a \$5,000 Matrix Imagine All You Can Be Scholarship to go toward her tuition, a huge weight has been lifted off of her shoulders.

Haskell was one of seven students in the cosmetology program to win a scholarship from the school's brand partner Matrix, an industry leader in professional

hair color and hair care.

Other scholarship winners were Adriel Brantley, Billee Conci, Christina Dodge, Katerina Reyes, Kayla Stein and Sharnell Pike.

The Pueblo program took seven scholarships out of 20 rewarded nationwide.

"I'm really excited and overwhelmed. This is really huge for me ... This is going to help me so much," Haskell said, moments after being surprised with the good news.

School officials along with Peggy Gunther, program supervisor, and Jennifer Mason, division brand manager for Matrix, surprised the students with their



This is where it all starts, so we set money aside every year for programs like this.

JENNIFER MASON
MATRIX DIVISION BRAND MANAGER

scholarships during a special ceremony before their peers.

The students earned scholarships by creating 60- to 90-second videos on YouTube imagining all they could be in the industry.

Haskell, who has been in the 18-month program since November, plans to graduate in February.

"It's a dream come true for me. I actually have never won anything before, but I al-

ways try," she said with a laugh.

Tuition can cost up to \$25,000.

"That may not be a lot to some people, but it's a lot for students at this economic level," Gunther said.

"So if we can wipe out \$5,000 and get them going down that path where they can at least feed their kids and stand on their own two feet, enjoy what they do and have an education to

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back it where they can go out and stand beside a licensed hairdresser that's been doing it for a while, then that's huge."

Matrix partners with more than 500 schools that provide cosmetology programs.

"This is where it all starts, so we set money aside every year for programs like this," Mason said.

Gunther said she shares with students their struggle and their joys.

"They are like my own kids. That's how I think of all of them," she said. anthonym@chieftain.com

CRIME

SEC charges Morelli with stock fraud

'Mob Cheff' figure accused in scheme

BY PETER ROPER
THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

The federal Securities and Exchange Commission is charging Frank Morelli III, of Florence, and a Massachusetts business partner with defrauding investors in what is commonly called a "pump and dump" stock scheme.

Morelli, 59, has been involved in developing "Mob Cheff," a proposed television show about Mafia cooking. Efforts to contact Morelli about the SEC statement were unsuccessful Monday.

The federal agency said Morelli has already agreed to at least a partial settlement that bars him from serving as an officer or director of publicly traded companies in the future or participating in the issuance of penny stocks.

The SEC claims Morelli and Louis Buonocore, of Boston, used false and misleading information to pump up the price of YaFarm Technologies, Inc., and then sold their majority holdings for a \$1.2 million profit.

The SEC said it intends to recover that money, plus interest and penalties.

The U.S. Attorney in Massachusetts filed criminal fraud charges against Buonocore on Monday in Boston. That announcement made no mention of whether the office was looking at Morelli as well, but said the charges were the result of a multi-year probe into stock manipulation schemes and that more than 20 individuals have been either charged or convicted thus far.

The SEC complaint is a civil charge punishable by fines and regulatory actions.

The criminal penalty for securities fraud is up to 20 years in prison and up to \$5 million in fines.

Both the SEC complaint against Morelli and the criminal filing against Buonocore claim the men concealed the fact they owned virtually all of YaFarm's stock and paid promoters in 2013 to tout the stock as a legitimate company with growing

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CITY SCHOOLS (D60)

Master plan could set course on construction

BY GAYLE PEREZ
THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

Pueblo City Schools (D60) board of education will decide tonight whether to move forward with a districtwide facilities master plan.

The board is scheduled to take action on

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a resolution to spend \$44,000 to complete a district facilities master plan when it meets in regular session at 6 p.m. in the Arapahoe Room

of the Administrative Services Center, 315 W. 11th St.

District leaders have proposed a comprehensive look at the physical state of school buildings to help guide them for future capital projects and potential funding sources.

The first step in the process would be to conduct a facilities master plan that would identify current and future needs of the school buildings and serve as a guide for future improvement projects.

The planning process would include condi-

tion and needs assessment of all buildings. An engineering assessment would include a comprehensive look at the structural, mechanical and electrical systems to identify deficiencies.

In other action items,

SEE D60, 6A