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Defending their court

The hosting Antlers face two opponents in the first day of the annual Tivy Invitational Tournament. 1B

Sports

Graciously feeding the hungry

Kerrville native Cindy Sebek's company, The Gracious Gift Wine, helps provide meals to the hungry through an arrangement with the San Antonio Food Bank. 1C

Life & Times



KERRVILLE DAILY TIMES SPECIAL COVERAGE

'WE ARE LOSING'

Shift in law enforcement focus makes drug war harder

By Mark J. Armstrong Assistant Managing Editor mark.armstrong@dailytimes.com

A 17-year-old recently attempted to kill himself rather than go back to the only life he knew.

Kerr County Sheriff Rusty Hierholzer, who helped talk the young man out of harming himself, said the teen had just been released from the juvenile detention system, and despite having earned a GED certificate, he was already making \$600 a day as a mule delivering drugs.

"In the war on drugs, we are losing," Hierholzer said.

The "war on drugs" is a term used since the 1970s to describe ongoing efforts to curb drug trafficking and abuse nationally. Hierholzer, a 30-year veteran of law enforcement, understands those efforts from first-hand experience and from growing up as the son of the first Texas Department of Public Safety narcotics officer assigned to Kerr County.

Hierholzer spent most of the early part of his career as a narcotics officer through the Kerr County Sheriff's Office in the war on drugs, while his chief deputy, Clay Barton, spent 16 years as a narcotics officer in a four-county task force that included Kerr County.

Although the war on drugs was a never-ending fight in the '80s and '90s, Hierholzer said there were decades of federal and state support that made it possible. However, he said all of that changed after Sept. 11, 2001.

See War, page 8A

Officials: Meth on the rise in Kerr County

By Sean Batura, Staff writer

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In the last two months, meth possession charges led to the arrests of at least 13 people in Kerrville and the indictments of 12 others by Kerr County grand juries. At least nine more people either received deferred adjudication probation or were convicted of meth possession or dealing in the last two months.

Lucy Wilke, assistant 216th district attorney, said drug possession and dealing cases seem to comprise the largest proportion of felony court cases.

"I think heroin is the drug we see the least of, but it is the hardest to beat," Wilke said. "We see more meth cases than anything else."

Kerrville police seized at least 159 grams of meth from January 2012 to September 2012, and at least 28 grams during the same period this year, according to monthly reports the city submits to the state. Between 58 and 141 grams of meth seized in 2012 stemmed from a police raid on a drug dealer's home in July that year. Meth seizures decreased in the beginning of 2013, dropping to none seized in May and June. However, 3 grams were seized in July, 13 grams in August and 7 grams in September.

Although local licensed chemical dependency counselors generally say they see more people seeking treatment for alcohol and opiates, such as heroin and

See Meth, page 8A

HIGH COST of METH



Editor's note: This is the first part in a weeklong series on meth and its effects on our community.

Inside today

Cleaning up: Tens of thousands of houses have been used as meth labs the last decade and a cottage industry is developing around cleaning them up. 2A

Let's talk about meth: Times editor gives a look inside the weeklong series on meth. 4A

Meth 101: Get the facts about the highly addictive, toxic drug. 8A

Coming Monday

Manufacturing: Law enforcement faces challenges in new, cheaper ways to make meth.



PRMC questions report critical of hospital services

Medicare ranks hospital among worst for joint replacements

By Marivel Resendiz Staff Writer

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A recent report by Medicare has ranked Peterson Regional Medical Center one of the nation's worst hospitals for joint replacement, but hospital officials say they have questions about the analysis.

Peterson Regional Medical Center chief executive officer Patrick Murray said the quality service department will analyze the published data.

"This report took us very much by surprise, and we certainly have questions about the data used in the analysis," Murray said in a press release. "While the source data goes back to 2009, we work every day to improve and advance our surgery programs in numerous ways."

As part of Medicare's goal of analyzing hospitals throughout the nation, it evaluated operations between July 2009 and June 2012 and identified 95 hospitals where elderly patients may be likely to suffer setbacks and 97 hospitals where patients may have the smoothest recoveries.

Peterson was listed as one of nine hospitals where knee and hip surgery patients experienced difficulties after operations with high re-admissions and high complication rates.

Murray said the report is "unusual" and "a complete contradiction" to the hospital's track record, because during the same time frame, the PRMC, as well as orthopedic surgeons associated with the hospital received numerous high level awards that include:

- Healthgrades America's 100 Best Specialty Joint Care awards for Joint

See Report, page 3A

Cash rewards for help catching these wanted

From staff reports

Kerr County Crime Stoppers is offering rewards to residents who provide tips that lead to the arrest of individuals wanted on warrants. The full list of wanted individuals is on page 3A of today's newspaper.

The list includes those with outstanding warrants in the 198th and 216th district courts in Kerr County as of Dec. 20. Many of them have multiple felony warrants and some also have misdemeanor warrants.

Kerr County Crime Stoppers will pay \$300 per felony warrant and \$100 per misdemeanor warrant for information that leads to the arrest of the individuals identified in this list. All tips to Crime Stoppers are anonymous. Rewards are picked up at a local bank to guarantee the anonymity.

"Help make our community safer by making these people accountable for their crimes," said a spokeswoman with Kerr County Crimestoppers, which offers rewards for tips that lead to arrests.

Inside

Get the list: More than 100 people with outstanding warrants. 3A

City taking Christmas trees for recycling

The city of Kerrville will be accepting Christmas trees through Jan. 16 for recycling.

Due to the ongoing renovation at Louise Hays Park, the tree recycling site has been moved this year to the Lehmann & Monroe Park to the east of Louise Hays Park. The drop off area is near the entrance to the park at Park Lane and La Casa Street.

There is no cost to drop off Christmas trees.

Christmas trees should be free of ornaments, lights, hangers, icicles, strings and any other glass, metal or plastic. Trees that were not sold from retailers will be accepted. However all ropes, twines and plastic nettings must be removed before delivery to the park.

Unlike the previous years, the city will not mulch the trees this year. The trees will be recycled at a local ranch property, according to city officials.



BEHIND THE MUGS: Get details on some of Kerr County's recent methamphetamine-related drug cases, 8A.

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Weather High 68 Low 39 Showers and thunderstorms likely before noon, then cloudy.

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