

WHITE MOUNTAIN Independent

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75 CENTS | NAVAJO AND APACHE COUNTIES

THE WHITE MOUNTAINS' AWARD-WINNING NEWSPAPER

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About \$200K to be recovered for irrigation district

Civil suit against Palmers concluded

BY BARBARA BRUCE
The Independent

NAVAJO COUNTY — A little over two years ago a civil lawsuit was filed against Harvey Leon Palmer and his wife, Gloria Ann Palmer, by the Navajo County Attorney's Office regarding the embezzlement of over \$800,000 from the Silver Creek Irrigation District (SCID). As of April 9, the matter has come to a close with a Stipulated Judgment and

Order for Forfeiture issued by the Superior Court of the State of Arizona for Navajo County.

In March of 2017 it was first reported that Harvey Leon Palmer, a bookkeeper for the Silver Creek Irrigation District (SCID) for 42 years and former town manager of Taylor, allegedly revealed to authorities that he took more than \$800,000 from the district between 2011 and 2016 and gave those funds to Margaret "Peggy"

Rogers, a woman he had a sexual relationship with. Palmer died Feb. 8, 2018, with no criminal charges having been filed against him.

A 20-page civil lawsuit, however, was filed early in 2017 by the Navajo County Attorney's Office accusing Palmer and his

wife, Gloria Ann Palmer, of multiple racketeering counts. Under the Arizona Racketeering Act the Palmers' real property at 818 East Bullduck in Taylor, along with U.S. currency from two bank accounts in their names at the National Bank of Arizona totaling \$27,627 were seized Jan. 26, 2017, by a Notice of Forfeiture and Seizure Warrant.

Palmer had told investigators that he "loaned" the \$800,000 to Rogers who needed it for "a diabetic study" and hoped to earn a better interest rate than

what the bank offered. He also told them she never repaid any of the loans he made to her with irrigation district money. Rogers allegedly spent the money at a number of casinos in Arizona and surrounding states.

With Leon Palmer's death, Gloria Ann Palmer became the representative of his estate. She and her husband had entered into a Land and Home Purchase Agreement with Shawn Palmer, their son, and his wife, Dicie, in August of 2004. Under the terms of the agreement, Shawn

Palmer was to purchase the real property from his parents for \$75,000, which he paid in August 2013. In the agreement the parents were to remain in the home on the property until their passing. However, prior to the seizure of the real property, no deed was ever executed or recorded with the Navajo County Recorder's Office transferring legal title to Shawn Palmer or his wife.

The Stipulated Judgment and Order for Forfeiture resolves all issues in this

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Palmer



Bob Martinson/The Independent

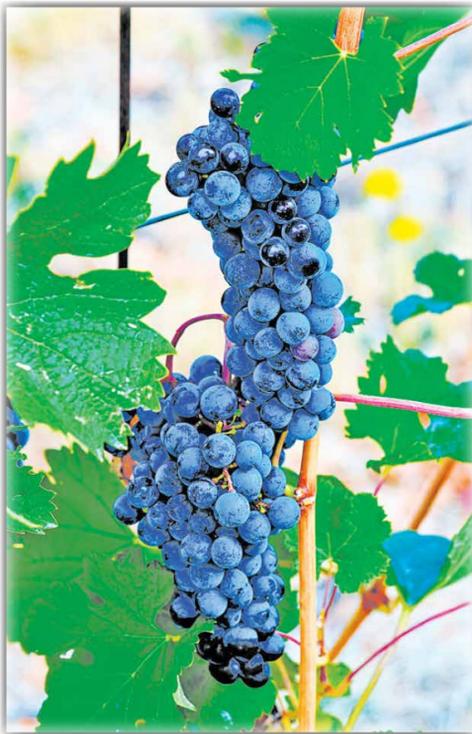
Paying tribute

Miss Ft. Defiance Agency Veteran Princess, Kiana Boyd, talks to the crowd during the tribute to Taylor Susan, a White Mountain Apache who is completing term as Miss Indian World in Albuquerque next week at the Gathering of Nations. Royalty from all parts of Indian country came to pay tribute to Susan on Saturday, who traveled the world sharing Apache culture for the past year. See additional photos on Page 2.

Vineyard comes to Apache County

BY BARBARA BRUCE
The Independent

CONCHO — At one time Concho was Arizona's state capitol due to its prosperous farms. Though it may not be the state capitol today, the community is attracting many individuals with dreams and plans of changing the area's



economy through a return to farming and more. One such individual is Robert Lansford who has a lofty dream for his 40 acre property next to Red Rock Lavender Farm. Lansford recently received approval from the Apache County Board of Supervisors to rezone his Unit 2 of the Rancho Alegre Subdivision from agricultural to commercial for Lansford Vineyards.

Lansford's vineyard is already established, having harvested its first full crop last year. In Arizona a vineyard is exempt from zoning, but with the change from residential to light commercial, Lansford will be able to add amusement or entertainment establishments.

The vineyard will also be a venue for weddings and the plan includes having a historical area featuring information on St. Johns and the tribes of the area. Lansford has plans for a conference center, a waterfall, a canopy for wine tasting, 15-car electric train for tours around the vineyard as well as a storage facility, two steel buildings, a crushing facility, a new well and another house for guest workers.

Lansford, who owns Lansford Roofing in California, bought 40 acres from Mike Teeple of Red Rock Lavender Farms around 2004 with the plan of eventually moving to Concho. In 2006 he built a house on the property. "Mike talked about a vineyard and I said I am into it, and we tried it on mine," explained Lansford.

With a lot of hard work and trials with the grapes in 2014 and 2015, Lansford still had a bit of a set back and lost 25 percent of his crop. Things turned around for the positive in 2018 and he actually harvested his first full crop.

"Right now the buds are just about to break and watering will begin in the next couple of weeks," said Lansford. "The vines are still two to three years old and need pruning. Last year was the first time of right pruning. I just re-did all the water lines and put in 3-inch pipe around the vineyard."

Just like his 20-year roofing business, Lansford is

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SUICIDE EPIDEMIC

NFL player raises awareness of local problem

BY LAURA SINGLETON
The Independent

WHITE MOUNTAINS — Three special guests traveled over 1,200 miles, one way, from Minnesota to Blue Ridge High School on Thursday, April 18, to participate in NFL Suicide Prevention Night.

Robert Pico of State Farm and Heck's Collision Center and others worked tirelessly with the school's administration to coordinate all the moving parts to bring Minnesota Vikings defensive end Steven Weatherly to Lakeside to speak to parents, students and the community about the suicide epidemic in Navajo County that shows no signs of letting up.

Navajo County's rate of suicide is more than twice that of the US average, according to the 2018 Navajo County Public Health Assessment.

To spark interest and communicate the seriousness of mental health issues and to demonstrate ways to help prevent suicide in youth, Weatherly was accompanied

how to refer a person in crisis to a teacher, coach, mentor, parent or friend who would be able to assist in getting them the help needed to ultimately prevent suicide.

Weatherly added immense

"Whether you are an NFL player, a student, a parent or a working professional, I want you to know that we all have problems ... Always know you can ask for help. One of our greatest weaknesses is our refusal, (not our inability), to ask for help."

Les Pico, Executive Director of Player Development/Legal
Minnesota Vikings

value and accessibility to the overall presentation, speaking candidly about growing up in Georgia and being raised by



Laura Singleton/The Independent

Minnesota Vikings player Stephen Weatherly shakes hands with David Lee, a ninth-grade student at Blue Ridge Junior High. Weatherly visited with fans outside the BRHS auditorium last Thursday as part of NFL Suicide Prevention Night.

by Dr. Nyaka Niilampiti, the vice president of Wellness and Clinical Services for the National Football League. Vikings executive director of Player Development / Legal, Les Pico, was part of the trio dedicated to bringing education and awareness to the community.

Both Niilampiti and Pico are involved with the personal welfare of players, coaches and staff and utilize the nationally recognized suicide prevention platform called QPR (question, persuade and refer).

They stressed the importance of talking with friends, family, classmates, teachers and coaches about depression, stress and suicide. They also demonstrated, through a role-play exercise on stage, how to ask someone if they are considering suicide which is the first step in the QPR method.

Finally, Niilampiti and Pico followed through with dialogue that showed how to provide hope to someone feeling hopeless so that they could be persuaded to seek help. And lastly, they demonstrated

his mother — a single parent.

Despite his success as a professional football player, he struggled with depression following a painful breakup and attempted suicide as a young adult. "When I was in high school, my first relationship was not healthy," explains Weatherly. "My girlfriend at the time was verbally and emotionally abusive so I went through a lot of ups and downs."

This experience contributed to Weatherly choosing to major in sociology at Vanderbilt University in Nashville. He also became active with the One Love Foundation which is dedicated to eliminating relationship violence through education and empowerment on college campuses.

"I'm here to listen. I'm here to help and I'm in your corner," is what Weatherly tells those that may be struggling with depression or stress.

"Mental health is a significant issue in all communities," echoed Les Pico during the presentation. "It doesn't

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3-day weather forecast

Tuesday: 64/38. A 20% chance of showers before 9 a.m. with increasing clouds and a 70% chance of precipitation in the afternoon.

Wednesday: 70/45. A 10% chance of showers and thunderstorms after noon.

Thursday: 77/48. Sunny and mostly clear.

