

The Carbon Valley Herald

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Covering the Carbon Valley area, including Frederick, Firestone, Dacono, Platteville and Mead

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Photo by Chuck Ballou

Grace Ward, 7, and Sophie Ward, 5, of Firestone feed the goats Saturday at Anderson Farms north of Erie. Anderson Farms hosted the Southwest Weld County Future Fair. The event was organized by the Southwest Weld Alliance for Preservation, a nonprofit organization founded to address area land preservation issues.

Dacono mayor urges councilors to vote against mill levy override

Says Dacono ignored by St. Vrain Valley School District

By Jen Reeder
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DACONO – Dacono Mayor Wade Carlson asked his fellow city councilors to join him in taking a stand against the St. Vrain Valley School District's proposed mill levy override and bond issue at a meeting Aug. 25. Carlson said Dacono, the only municipality within the district that has no school, has been repeatedly "wronged" and even "discriminated against" by the district.

"It's time Dacono took a strong stand. I'll probably be tarred and feathered, but I believe strongly that we have been wronged," Carlson said.

The mayor said that as a former president of the St. Vrain school board, he has an appreciation for schools and "loves teachers." However, he named several instances in which he believes the district has ignored the needs of Dacono; from not building a K-8 school last year when it was discussed, to holding Dacono to a different standard than other communities. He said that Erie High School was built below capacity standards.

"The school district is talking out of both sides of their mouth," he said.

The proposed mill levy override,

(School District, page 4)

Tragic traffic accident kills family

Semi truck driver was from Tri-Town region

Staff reports

WELD COUNTY – A tragic traffic accident claimed a family of six from Thornton Sunday afternoon when their mini-van attempted a U-turn and was struck by a northbound semi-tanker, according to the Colorado State Patrol.

The driver of the empty gas tanker, Brian Wheeler, 53, of Firestone was taken to North Colorado Medical Center, and was treated and released Sunday, according to Gene Haffner, director of public relations at NCMC.

The accident occurred around 1:25 p.m. on Weld County Road 49, located two miles north of Interstate 76. The driver of the 2000 Oldsmobile minivan, Adriana Ronquillo, 26, apparently missed a turn into the driveway of a relative's residence on Road 49 and attempted a U-turn, according to State Patrol Cpl. Eric Wynn.

The semi was going the posted 65 mph hour speed limit on the two-lane highway. Wheeler slammed on the brakes, but could not stop the semi in time, and struck the van broadside, according to the state patrol.

The crash also claimed the lives of Ronquillo's husband, Jose Vencomo, 33, her brother, Jamie Arais, 28, of Arizona, and the couple's three children, Gyareli Vencomo, 6, Eddie Vencomo, 4, and Jesus Vencomo, 9 months.

Wynn said that the investigation is ongoing and that no charges are pending against Wheeler. Authorities don't suspect that drugs and alcohol were involved in the crash. They also cited driver error on the part of Ronquillo, adding that it's unclear whether anyone in the van was wearing seat belts.

To: Postal Patron

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THE CAFFEINE GENERATION



Photo by JoAnn Knutson

Perfect Cup employee Elizabeth Hamilton serves a smoothie to Frederick High School student Shawn Hewitt during Hewitt's lunch period last week. The Perfect Cup has become a popular hangout for the high school crowd as well as adults and senior citizens.

By JoAnn Knutson
Editorial Contributor

In the 1950s and 1960s teenagers flocked to the local malt shop after school to hang out with friends and have a Coke. In the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s any fast-food restaurant would do for the "Pepsi generation" as long as there was a pop dispenser nearby.

Today the beverage of choice is coffee and the popular hangout for teens is the coffee bar.

There's no way of knowing for sure when coffee became the

number one contender as the most-consumed beverage in the world.

Locally, coffee beverages are rapidly growing in popularity as the drink of choice for the local caffeine generation of teens who walk the three blocks from Frederick High School to the Perfect Cup each day for their favorite cappuccino or latte.

According to at least one local high school student, it's not the caffeine buzz that drives students to choose the \$2.75 latte over the \$1 Coke, but the social status that goes with holding that Starbucks cup in

a crowd of friends.

Shawn Hewitt, a junior at Frederick High School, said holding a latte or power drink while socializing with other students has become a status symbol.

"It's just popular right now," Hewitt said. "If (a drink) is popular, even though the kids don't like it, they'll drink it."

According to Hewitt, energy drinks are becoming the most popular drink at informal teen gatherings.

In addition to a variety of lattes and cappuccinos, smoothies and frozen perfections are a big hit with the younger teens during the warm weather, according to Perfect Cup employees Elizabeth Hamilton and Becky Johnson.

Johnson said occasionally students will buy a dish of ice cream or a sandwich.

Aside from the featured menu items, Hewitt said he likes making the short trip from the school to the coffee bar to get off campus for a few minutes.

"It's not too far from campus and it's not as busy as some of the other places the students go to on their lunch hour so I don't have to rush to get back to school."

Another feature of the coffee bar that appeals to Hewitt and students like Ashton Taylor is the Christian

atmosphere promoted by the Perfect Cup, owned and operated by Life Fellowship Family Bible Study.

"I'm actually a Christian," Hewitt said. "I like the atmosphere of the Perfect Cup. It's peaceful and relaxing and it's a quiet place where I can come in and do my homework and read a book."

Johnson said it's not unusual to see teens pause at the open Bible laying on the edge of the counter.

But the Christian atmosphere and the background music don't appear to discourage other teens from frequenting the coffee bar, according to Hamilton.

The coffee bar also provides a comfortable atmosphere for students wanting to spend time on homework. For people like Jody Waldrop, the youth pastor for another local church, it's a good place to meet with students.

The Perfect Cup opened in October 2007 under private ownership. When school closed for the summer, business dropped off to a point where the bar was forced to close. Life Fellowship Family Bible Church took over the ownership and operation of the bar when it reopened in mid-August.

Life Fellowship Pastor Brady Thornton said the coffee bar (*Caffeine*, page 19)

St. Vrain Valley School District under fire in Dacono

(School District, from page 1)

which will appear on the Nov. 4 ballot, would raise an estimated \$14.6 million for the St. Vrain Valley School District to decrease class sizes and increase teachers' pay and upgrade technology. The ballot will also contain a bond issue for the school district, which would generate an estimated \$186.5 million in funds, \$53.86 million of which will be used to build a new high school in Frederick. Carlson asked his fellow councilors to oppose both issues.

Carlson said that by not building a school in Dacono, the school district is impacting the city because when families consider moving to the Tri-Town area, they will prefer to settle in a town with a school. Currently, all students in Dacono are bused to neighboring schools.

"All of our students need to be bused – that is not acceptable," he said. "It is time that Dacono took a stand on this matter and said 'No.'"

Carlson said in the last few months, he had sent a request to the school board to consider using St. Vrain buses to send Dacono students to the Weld RE-8 school next year when it is built in Fort Lupton.

"They have not answered us yes or no ... they haven't had the courtesy to respond. It is as if we are incommunicado," Carlson said. "If they were truly interested in giving Dacono students the quality education they keep talking about

... they would grant that request."

In a phone interview, Scott Toillion, planning director for St. Vrain Valley School District, said he didn't know who had received Carlson's request about busing students to Weld RE-8, but that it would be unusual to pay for students to attend school in another district. He said Dacono students will be closer to the new high school than some district students are to their schools in places like Longmont.

"This will be a great benefit to their students," he said.

Toillion said that Erie High School was built below the usual capacity standards because the district had no other choice.

"When Erie High School was built, they were in a very constrained middle/senior (school) – they were significantly overcrowded and there was no ability to expand, and Erie is probably our fastest growing area," he said. "We had no space and no options, so that was the big reason that had to be done."

He said there was a similar situation in Frederick when the district built Coal Ridge Elementary.

"Generally we do have a guideline. If we open too many schools under those break-even points, it's very difficult for us," he said.

Typically, elementary schools open at 80 percent of capacity, according to Toillion. He said last year there were 255 Dacono elementary students attending school in Frederick, and the district

standard is 525. So the Dacono numbers would only be at around 55 percent of capacity.

"We continue to be interested in setting aside sites in Dacono because at some point, their growth will warrant it," Toillion said. "Our business is educating the students and giving them the best education we can. We're not an engine to start a community's economic development, though we're part of it. That's one reason why we're going for the mill levy."

Whether these sentiments will appease the disgruntled councilors remains to be seen. At the meeting, Carlson was not alone in his opposition to the mill levy and bond issue.

Councilmember Charles Sigman also wants to see the school district build schools in Dacono.

"Until they decide to reinvest in Dacono, I won't support a higher tax base for our residents," he said.

Councilmember Kevin Plain admitted to being "kind of torn" because he supports teachers, but feels strongly that Dacono students don't deserve to be bused and doesn't see anything that motivates him to support the school district.

"St. Vrain, in my mind, has not been a friend to Dacono," he said.

Councilmember Steve Bruno said he has children in all levels of the school system, and wondered if the mill levy should be considered as a separate issue from the bond issue, a point echoed by Councilmember Kay Cole.

Cole said she opposes the bond issue, but thinks the mill levy would "go to the kids." Without it, she said she believes class sizes will be bigger and teachers will be cut.

"Wade, I'm sorry, but I think you're wrong," she said.

The council voted to table the issue of whether to support the mill levy override.

In other action:

- The council approved the lease-purchase of a police patrol car.
- The council approved the establishment of a three-person Pension Committee for Dacono city employees, consisting of the city clerk, financial officer and city employee representative.
- The council approved an amendment to the 2008 budget to account for the slowing economy.
- The council approved Ordinance 719, which will rename several Dacono streets (see related story).
- The council approved the award of a contract for water system improvements to BT Construction.
- The council approved adoption of a policy for Connect-CTY that will alert Dacono residents in the event of a National Weather Service warning, not a watch.