

# PIRATE PRESS

family school community—a partnership of learning

NOVEMBER, 2005



Dr. Tonya Hubbard of Skyline Vision volunteers to examine at-risk students' eyes.

## Optometrist Volunteers To Increase Learning

Every fall school nurse Debbie Eggleston does preliminary eye tests on elementary school students. If a student does not do well on these exams, she calls Dr. Hubbard of Skyline Vision.

Dr. Hubbard comes to Cotopaxi School and examines the eyes and vision abilities of these students. Because 80% of students' learning is visual, it is especially important that the children have a thorough visual examination.

In fact, Dr. Hubbard believes that the most crucial ages for eye exams is before the children reach school age. Without adequate eye tracking and focusing functions, it is very difficult, and in some cases

impossible, for students to learn to read. Dr. Hubbard estimates that 80% of Cornell School resident students have learning disabilities that are directly linked to vision problems. If students can't be successful in school, they often turn to other less lawful pursuits.

Excessive time spent watching television and playing video games by young children also leads to impaired visual ability. If babies and young children don't spend time developing their gross motor skills by playing with blocks, they don't develop the fine motor skills that lead to hand eye coordination and the visual tracking that is so crucial to learning to read.

### ADMINISTRATION

- *Geoff Gerk—Superintendent*
- *Peggy Murphy-Gerk—High School Principal*
- *Kristi Wilson—Elementary Principal/ Counselor*

### SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

- *Mark Gillespie*
- *Dan Ogden*
- *Charlie Green*
- *Cindy Milton*
- *Dawn Moody*

### COUNSELORS

- *Tony Marchese—Counselor*
- *Karen Predovich—Home School Coordinator*

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## Reading Grants Help Add Instructional Opportunities For Students

Cotopaxi Elementary School received two major reading grants that will fund resources to teach reading in the primary grades for the next several years.

Our **Read To Achieve Grant** is in the second year of a three year grant cycle. Last year we received \$22,000 to support the reading skills of second and third grade students on Individual Literacy Plans. The money was used to fund a reading teacher to work with small groups of second and third graders on specific reading skills and to fund the reading lab. Students use the reading lab computers to improve reading skills, including work on phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension skills.

This year the funding for Read to Achieve was reduced to \$6,600, but Cotopaxi School District is still providing the resources funded under last year's grant to the second and third grade students on Individual Literacy Plans.

Our **Reading First Grant** will be funded for the next three years at \$131,000 per year. The funds will provide reading instruction support to kindergarten through third grades. We have hired Teri Kraemer as a Reading Coach to help support teachers and students in kindergarten through third grades and Title I reading teachers and special education teachers working with students in reading. Our funds will also be used to buy Houghton-Mifflin Reading Program and leveled reading books for each grade level. Teachers will receive professional development training through grant money as well.

Cotopaxi's reading grants help enable Cotopaxi Elementary to stay on the leading edge of reading instruction, using research based instruction and materials to insure that all children are able to read at or above grade level.

—Libby Medina, Title I Reading & Math Coordinator and Title I Math Teacher

### Election Results: 3 New Board Members

The November 1 mail ballot election results are official. Fremont RE-3 Consolidated School District has three new directors.

In District C, Dawn Moody received 450 votes to win over Lyle Latvala's 327.

District D had a three way race. Cindy Milon won with 286 votes over Mickey Kulick with 271 and Mark Barry with 203.

District E's race was uncontested, and Charlie Green received 618 votes.

The new directors will be sworn in at the next board meeting on November 14. Election of officers will take place after the new members are seated.

After so many years of uncontested elections, community interest has been revived.

### Thanksgiving, Winter Breaks

There will be no school on Wednesday and Thursday, November 24 and 25, so students, faculty and staff can celebrate Thanksgiving.

Winter break begins after semester tests on December 23 and school resumes January 10, 2006.

### It's Official—October Count Finalized

On October 1, our official school population was 324 students.

Of those 324, only 294.5 are fully funded or FTE, Full Time Equivalency. Because kindergarteners and pre-school students are considered half-day students, they are funded at .5.

In pre-school through sixth grade, there are 118 students. Junior and Senior High School (7-12) has 154 students. Included in the total are 52 Home School Partnership Program students.

The past few years have shown a slow, but steady decline in student enrollment. Because the school funding by the state is based on enrollment, this could have a serious impact on the school district's finances.

### School Receives Monitors, Keyboards and Networking Hardware

High Country Bank in Salida donated 17" monitors, keyboards and networking hardware to Cotopaxi School. This used computer equipment will replace some of the old or outdated monitors and hardware currently in use.

Be sure to thank them the next time you stop in.

## Administrators share success strategies at reading summit

On Friday, October 21, the Colorado Department of Education hosted the Colorado Reading Summit focusing on replicating the reading successes experienced by some Colorado schools and districts.

Because Cotopaxi 9th and 10th grade reading scores have dramatically risen since 2003, the administration was invited to present their success strategies. Cotopaxi Junior-Senior High School was recognized as a “Gain-Maker School” for exceptional improvement in student achievement as measured by the CSAP in Reading from 2003-2005.

Cotopaxi Elementary received a “Gain-Maker”

Award for exceptional improvement in at least one grade level in Reading and Math.

Superintendent Geoff Gerk, Secondary Principal, Peggy Murphy-Gerk, and Elementary Principal, Kristi Wilson presented changes made at Cotopaxi to invited educators at the Reading Summit.

It was an honor for Cotopaxi to be recognized as a school district that has such dedicated and progressive teachers. To be showcased on the state level as one of Colorado’s schools that is tipping the scales toward reading success proves that small, rural school districts can be just as, or possibly even more effective, than larger schools.

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### Paxi P.R.I.D.E.

#### Working to improve learning

In 2004, Cotopaxi Schools applied for and received a grant for **Positive Behavior System or PBS**.

Last summer a team of teachers and administrators were trained in PBS and became leaders and trainers for our teachers. Before school began in 2004, all of Cotopaxi’s staff was trained to respond to students’ problems with the same responses.

From teachers to cooks to bus drivers to office staff, all school personnel learned that consistency is the key to uniform discipline throughout the school.

At a workshop the team came up with Paxi PRIDE to remind the students how to act at all times. P is for Positive Attitude; R is for Respect; I is for Integrity; D is for Determination; E is for Excellence.

Through skits, the students were taught how to act, and how not to act, so they were consistently demonstrating their Paxi PRIDE. From hallways to the cafeteria to restrooms, various staff and high school students modeled the correct behavior.

Students are encouraged to behave in a manner that respects themselves and the school.

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### From Trash to Treasure

Did you know that stuff you throw away every day can help our school? Send some of these things to school with a student you know and they will be earning cash or school supply items: Empty Ink Cartridges, PopTops, Box Tops for Education; Campbell Soup Labels especially Campbell’s Kitchen Classic Soups, Campbell’s Soup at Hand, Campbell’s Select Soups, V8 Splash, V8 Splash Smoothies.

### Substitutes Needed

Not only does the school need substitute teachers, but also cooks, custodians and bus drivers.

Because working around school children requires a background and drug check, it could take some time from when you apply to when you could start working.

Teachers and bus drivers require certification and licensing. Please call 942-4131 for more info.

COTOPAXI CONSOLIDATED SCHOOLS

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## Storyteller coming to cotopaxi

On Thursday, November 17, the Collegiate Peaks Reading Council and Title I Reading are sponsoring an evening of storytelling and family fun. Following a family presentation by professional storyteller, Mary Smalling, students will be able to participate in an "Open Microphone" to show off their creative talents. They may read or recite short poems or stories, and every participant will receive a prize.

During the school day, students in the preschool and elementary will have an additional opportunity to hear Mary Smalling spin her tales. With almost 20 years of storytelling, Smalling has performed California, Iowa and Texas. She enjoys acting and has organized literacy and library events and has taught storytelling techniques to

teachers. With a range of stories from humorous to serious and religious, she has something in her storytelling bag for all ages.

The funding for this program comes from both Title I Reading and a Family Reading Celebration Grant from the Colorado Council of the International Reading Association.

Come join the fun in the multi-purpose room. Mary Smalling's performance will begin at 7 pm followed by the students' presentations.

Refreshments will be served and the community is encouraged to attend this delightful evening.

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## Community Dinner and Dance

On Saturday, November 19, the community is invited to a ham dinner in the cafeteria from 5 to 6:30pm. Adults: \$7, Kids (11 & under) \$5. Dancing begins in the multi-purpose room at 6:30 till 10pm for \$4. From 7-9pm there will

be bingo in the cafeteria with gifts as prizes. For kids 11 and under, there's a scavenger hunt and treasure chest piñata in the multi-purpose room. The Cotopaxi Cheerleaders are raising money so they can attend camp next summer at Pueblo Community College.