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Theft, forgery charges asked

by Marcia Martinek
Herald Editor

Assistant Police Chief Rod Fenske has asked the district attorney's office to file felony charges of theft and forgery against Burgundy Jelinek, 23, of Leadville after she allegedly defrauded Dr. Kristine Medin, Dr. Curtis Slack and various insurance companies out of more than \$10,000. Jelinek worked for Medin, who had a dental practice in Leadville from April 2003 until she sold the practice to Slack on Dec. 1, 2003. Jelinek then worked for Slack until April 6, 2004, when he fired her for "work problems," according to what Slack told police. Her job involved submitting insurance claims and running the day-to-day business of the office. Slack went on vacation for a week after firing Jelinek. When he returned, he was puzzled to receive an insurance check for \$1,378 made out to Medin for services that had reportedly taken place on March 22, 2004. This was almost four months after Medin sold the practice. Slack discovered that the insurance company had been billed for a patient who had not actually been in the office since May 2003. It indicated, incorrectly, that the patient had had root canal work and a crown replaced on March 22, 2004. After the bill had been submitted to the insurance company, it had been deleted from the office computer. Fenske then began an extensive investigation which revealed that 37 checks made out to Medin had been cashed at High Country Bank, allegedly by Jelinek, who either signed Medin's name or used Medin's signature stamp, which Jelinek had in her possession. She apparently always went to one teller who was her friend. This person, who is no longer working for the bank, has not been charged with anything. Fenske discovered five of the 37 checks should have actually been made out to Slack. He also discovered that Slack's name had been forged once. Fenske discovered that Jelinek apparently forged 19 fraudulent dental appointments. For each one, she received an insurance check in Medin's name, which she endorsed and cashed, he said. Fenske received Jelinek's permission to investigate her checking account and discovered that between April of 2003 and April of 2004, she made cash deposits of \$13,542. Fenske also said that in interviews, Jelinek admitted to taking \$400 cash from Slack and also admitted to forging \$2,000 to \$3,000 in insurance checks. Fenske's investigation has involved speaking with a number of Slack's patients to verify information in the case.



Contributed sketch
The Leadville Ranger District will occupy this new building at 810 Front St. Construction should begin this spring.

New Forest Service building slated for construction

The USDA Forest Service, Leadville Ranger District, is looking forward to a new district office building. With 20 full-time employees and up to 15 seasonals during the summer season, it has outgrown its space at 2015 N. Poplar St. where the forest service has been located since 1987. The newly built district office building will be approximately 9,000 square feet to include warehouse space. The building will be located at 810 Front Street, between Elm and Front streets, bordering McWethy Drive on the west. The new location will allow for better customer service, provide better access to visitors and improved working conditions for 20+ employees. Developers James Martinez and Linda Duthie of Kootenay Club Property Management, LLC, will employ the Buchanan

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Yonushewski Group (BYG) of Denver as the architectural, mechanical, electrical and civil engineers. BYG will oversee all phases of the construction schedule, with Todd R. Norris as superintendent. Construction is expected to begin in April 2005 and slated to be completed in October of 2005. Once the building is completed, Kootenay Club Property Management, LLC, will oversee the needs of the facility. District Ranger Jim Zornes said, "The Forest Service is ecstatic about moving into a new office that will better serve public needs."

Economically, the construction of a new building adds to the community with the added benefits of a public-use conference room and expanded space for displaying interpretive information about the local area.

"We are very excited for this opportunity," said Martinez.

"This new building will add a new image to the existing commercial properties on the south edge of the town."

Any parties interested in bidding any portion of the construction are encouraged to mail contact information to Martinez at P.O. Box 926, Leadville, CO 80461.

Hector Ruiz-Gonzales dies in crash on U.S. 24, west of town

by Jenn Wiant
Herald Staff Writer

Twenty-four-year-old Hector Ruiz-Gonzalez of Leadville died Monday night, Dec. 6, after his car collided nearly head-on with a Dodge Durango.

Ruiz-Gonzalez was reportedly traveling west on U.S. 24 about three miles west of Leadville in his Honda Civic when he entered the eastbound lane and collided with the oncoming vehicle, according to a report by Trooper Clay Lebet, Sergeant David Long and Sergeant Luke Armstrong at the State Patrol.

Ruiz-Gonzalez's vehicle began to spin and ran off the north side of the highway. The Durango also spun and ran off the south side of the road.

The accident occurred at 8:20 p.m. County Coroner Deborah Bailey declared Ruiz-Gonzalez dead on scene at 9:55 p.m. Long said the road was clear at the time of the accident and light snow flurries were falling.

"Road conditions didn't play into this," Long said. "We're looking more at driver error." However, the state patrol has not yet declared a cause of the accident. The estimated speed of the vehicles and the toxicology report to determine alcohol or drug use is still under investigation.

Ruiz-Gonzalez was taken to Bailey Funeral Home. The victim in the Durango, a 39-year-old Leadville woman, was taken to St. Vincent Hospital, treated and released.

Ruiz-Gonzalez was not wearing his seat belt. The woman in the other vehicle had been wearing a seat belt at the time of the accident.

Community invited to view NREL renewable energy vehicle

by Marcia Martinek
Herald Editor

The community is invited to tour the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) bus on Friday, Dec. 17, from 3 to 5 p.m. at the high school parking lot facing McWethy Drive. The visit is being sponsored by The Leadville Institute of Science and Technology and Vail Resorts. A raffle will be held at 4 p.m. by the Leadville Rod & Gun Club with prizes donated by Leadville merchants as well as Copper Mountain. Proceeds will help support the event, and tickets will be available from Robin Littlepage, 486-3499, or Maryellen Thoren, 486-8301. Tickets are \$5 and just 250 will be sold. Items for the auction, to be held at 4 p.m., include coasters from the Rock Hut, a hoodie from Melanzana, two lunches for two from Cloud City Coffee House, a month's pass and start-up fee from Altitudes; \$25 in merchandise from Safeway; four \$25 gift certificates from Shop and Save which can be used for food or gasoline; and golf for four at Copper Mountain.

The vehicle, called RnE2EW (Renewable Energy and Efficiency Education on Wheels), will actually be in the lot for two days, and nine classes from the high school will attend classes on the vehicle.

Vail Resorts has donated \$2,000 to bring the bus to Leadville. Other contributors to the event include Columbine Inn and Suites, Peoples Bank, Leadville Liquors, John Wells and Bob Deister.

The vehicles are designed to educate students, teachers and the community about renewable energy and efficiency sciences and to showcase the DOE/NREL research and technology.

The vehicles are a customized propane fueled bus and trailer. The bus is a teacher resource center, outfitted with electronics, displays and work stations. The trailer demonstrates renewable energy technologies and systems. The curriculum and hands on energy kits on RnE2EW allow students to learn about energy in a fun and active way. The themes include solar, biomass, hydrogen, geothermal, wind and energy.



Mike Bordogna is one of the adults who read books to local kids at Cloud City Coffee as part of Even Start's storytelling event and book drive. Clockwise from Bordogna are Tabor Farrett, Adrian Ortega, Vianet Monge and Pedro Hernandez. Ramiro Monge is also on the couch.

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