



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Betty the PDAP dog and MyPower girls at Jefferson Elementary in Hobbs during a recent presentation.

Betty the PDAP dog to receive award

ALMA OLIVAS-POSADAS
NEWS-SUN

A 2-year-old golden retriever is receiving an outstanding service award in Santa Fe today.

Betty, a service dog who works with Palmer Drug Abuse Program in Hobbs, is receiving the second annual John Henry Award from the New Mexico Behavioral Health Planning Council.

The John Henry Award honors an exceptional animal who on a daily basis and over the course of his or her lifetime has demonstrated loyalty, dedication and love to consumers and their family members.

According to a press release, Betty is being honored for her work at PDAP where she assists in individual and group counseling.

Sara Sroufe, who is Betty's handler and a counselor at PDAP, said she wishes she would have had a dog in her practice during her counseling career of more than 30 years.

According to her handler, Betty checks on each person during group meetings and often stays with the person who has the most anxiety and stays with children who fall or stand by themselves during playtime.

"Betty provides comfort and companionship for clients who are recovering from drugs and alcohol along with their family members," Sroufe said. "Betty helps people share difficult emotions."

Betty was nominated for the award late last year by Barb May, who is the Total

Community Approach Coordinator. Although May had not personally met Betty, she has heard about the work Betty does and believes the dog is a valuable tool in the fight against drug abuse.

"Betty plays an important role in the trust issues Sara has to have with her clients," May said. "She seems to know when someone is hurting and when someone is down. She is a source of comfort in a time when someone needs comfort."

Sroufe and Betty go to schools every week to counsel and mentor students.

Be Too Doggone Smart to Do Drugs, which was a red ribbon drug abuse prevention puppet show performed throughout all the elementary schools in Hobbs last year, was modeled after Betty.



HOBBBS SCHOOLS PHOTO

Join the band

Taskervitch members, including Aaron Campos on saxophone, recently made the rounds of Hobbs elementary schools demonstrating through song and dance that music can be one of the best parts of junior high school and high school. The recruiting trip was made to encourage next year's eligible students to sign up for band.

Town hit by fires to give away trees

BASTROP, Texas (AP) — A Central Texas city has announced plans to give away about 2,000 trees to help reforest the community devastated by 2011 wildfires.

Free young trees will be available Saturday in Bastrop, where wind-driven fires that started Labor Day weekend left two people dead and destroyed more than 1,600 homes. The Texas Forest Service says about 1.5 million trees were killed.

The state agency, which is co-sponsoring the giveaway, said Tuesday that the trees are for residents of Bastrop, about 30 miles east of Austin, and others affected by nearby wildfires. City officials say a maximum of four trees are available per household.

The trees, in 5-gallon buckets, will be available at the city's public works parking lot from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday.

Woman found dead on college campus was area high school student

EDINBURG, Texas (AP) — Police at a South Texas university have confirmed that a woman found dead on campus was an 18-year-old high school student in the area.

University of Texas-Pan American officials said in a statement Tuesday that the woman's identity was being withheld "because of the nature of the incident." No further explanation was given.

The university says a relative of the woman contacted campus police Monday, the same

day the body was found. Investigators are awaiting autopsy results. The woman was enrolled in the Edinburg Consolidated School District.

Construction workers found the woman near the bottom of an outdoor staircase at the campus science building.

Death notices

Jewell White

Jewell White, 87, of Jal died Feb. 5, 2012, at Hobbs Health Care. She was born Dec. 23, 1923, is Wasioto, Ky. Cremation has taken place, and there are no services scheduled at this time. Arrangements are under the direction of Calvary Funeral

Home.

Melvin Stokes

Melvin Stokes, 64, of Breckenridge, Texas, died Feb. 4, 2012, at his home. Funeral services were Tuesday, Feb. 7, at Morehart Mortuary Chapel. Services are under the direction of Morehart Mortuary.

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High court hears redistricting dispute arguments

SANTA FE (AP) — The New Mexico Supreme Court on Tuesday waded into a political dispute over legislative redistricting that could influence elections for the coming decade and may help determine whether Republicans can win a majority in the state House of Representatives for the first time in a half century.

After hearing arguments from lawyers for about two hours, the court took the case under consideration and said it will issue an order "expeditiously." The court didn't announce a deadline for its decision, however.

House candidates typically file for office next month but the redistricting appeal has cast doubts over that schedule.

The Legislature and a group of Democrats and minority voters asked the court to overturn a plan for new House districts that was ordered by a district judge last month, but a lawyer for Republican Gov. Susana Martinez urged the justices to stick with the court-approved districts.

The case offers the Supreme Court its first chance to set the legal standards in New Mexico that must be followed in redistricting, particularly when a court must take over the task after the Legislature and governor failed to agree

on a plan for revamping district boundaries.

Several justices, in their questions to lawyers, appeared to express doubts over the plan adopted by retired state District Court Judge James Hall.

District boundaries must be adjusted for population shifts during the past decade. The total number of House seats will remain unchanged at 70, but the goal is to equalize district populations as much as possible to ensure that each New Mexican's vote has equal weight. That's necessary to comply with the legal requirements of one person, one vote.

Hall approved a plan that dealt with rapid population growth in the state's largest metropolitan area by creating new seats in GOP-dominated Rio Rancho, a Republican-leaning seat in the Albuquerque area northwest of the Rio Grande and a Democratic-leaning seat on Albuquerque's west side.

To offset those changes, two southeastern New Mexico districts were consolidated. That placed Roswell Republicans Bob Wooley and Dennis Kintigh in the same district.

Two districts in north-central New Mexico also are merged, pairing Democrats Nick Salazar of Ohkay Owingeh and Thomas Garcia of Ocate into one.

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