



## FILLING A VOID

Local shop moves downtown  
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## New vehicle will help Posse with rescue operations

By PAUL HURSCHEMANN  
MONTROSE DAILY PRESS PHOTOJOURNALIST

The Montrose County Sheriff's Posse will now be able to assist in winter search and rescue operations with the recent acquisition of a new Polaris all-terrain vehicle.

Earlier this month, the Posse took delivery on a new RZR 900 and a set of optional snow tracks, allowing them to get out in the back country in all seasons, if needed.

"That's something we've never really been able to do before," said Mark Rackay, co-director of the all-volunteer Posse. "We don't have a snowmobile and we've never had the capability to get out there in the snow. We are no longer restricted by the weather."

"Generally, this new RZR is the type of vehicle needed for winter rescue. Four feet of snow is no longer a problem with that machine we got."

The search and rescue group was able to acquire the new equipment using a Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) grant.

"We applied for a DOLA grant and we received a portion of the money at first," Rackay said. "Then they came back later and gave us the rest of (the money needed). I guess because some of the other applicants who put in for the grants that we did didn't qualify."

"That really helps us. We're only allowed to apply for an off-road machine every five years. This vehicle was \$26,000. The snow tracks were another \$5,000."

Five years ago, the Posse obtained an Arctic Cat four-wheel drive vehicle, but it is just a single-seater. According to Rackay, that vehicle has been useful but wasn't necessarily the right equipment for their needs. The only other option they had was a 2001 six-wheel Polaris, which also only offered a single seat.

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## Second trial brings guilty verdict

By KATHARHYNN HEIDELBERG  
MONTROSE DAILY PRESS SENIOR WRITER

Jurors on Monday handed down a guilty verdict in the re-trial of Clinton Cooper's sexual assault case.

Cooper was charged last year with sexual assault on a child as a pattern of abuse after a 13-year-old girl's sister disclosed having seen him sexually abusing the teen.

The victim asked her sister not to tell, but the sister eventually told a family friend during a bowling trip, then her grandmother, before disclosing to their mother.

"The District Attorney's Office wishes to thank the members of the jury for their willingness to participate in these always challenging and meaningful cases," prosecutor Seth Ryan said in a statement.

Cooper's defense attorneys, Andrew Nolan and Christopher Decker, told the jury there was a lack of physical evidence, that the timeline did not fit with the allegations, and of shifting stories among witnesses.

Pat Cooper maintains her son is innocent.

"Mr. Decker and Mr. Nolan both said you cannot let feelings override the facts and when you put facts in a timeline in front of people and they go with their feelings, not the facts, innocent lives are messed up," she said.

"We aren't in there with the jury during deliberations and neither is she,"

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Michael Cascia cuts the ribbon on his new home Tuesday as Habitat for Humanity of the San Juans office manager Allison House, left, and executive director Colleen Burke cheer him on. His son, Matthew, is standing behind the bow. (Paul Hurschmann/Montrose Daily Press)

## Dream fulfilled

### Habitat leaves Montrose man with 1st home

By PAUL HURSCHEMANN  
MONTROSE DAILY PRESS PHOTOJOURNALIST

Michael Cascia and his son, Matt, will have something very special to be thankful for this Thanksgiving: A brand new home.

Habitat for Humanity of the San Juans Executive Director Colleen Burke, members of her staff and volunteers gathered at the Bluegrass Court address for a dedication and ribbon-cutting ceremony Tuesday to hand over the keys to the Cascias.

"It's amazing. I can't even really explain it," said the happy new homeowner. "It's been a long process ... but now that we're here, it's unbelievably satisfying."

Cascia's long journey leading up to Tuesday began four or five years ago when he first applied to the agency for help with purchasing a home. He made it through the qualifying process at that time — a very lengthy process, (9 to 12 months), according to his Habitat advocate, Linda Copley. But, he was denied, as the agency selected another family with needs he determined to be greater than Cascia family.

"Our committee has to determine who has the greatest need," Copley said. "At that time, it was decided that he did not have the greatest need. He was really disappointed. It was probably about three years later and we had an extra slot to fill. I immediately

thought about Mike and sent him a letter to let him know about the opening."

She and Cascia described how he let that letter sit on his desk for several months before he eventually contacted them for a second attempt. He said he read the letter and thought to himself he wouldn't have a good shot since it didn't work out the first time.

"I thought we stood less of a chance the second time, because Matthew was older, he was leaving to go to college," he explained. "I didn't want to go through the letdown twice. One day, I called Linda and she talked me into it, convincing me that this was a

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## Poaching case brings down Nucla men, clients

### 17 bull elk, 1 mountain lion illegally taken

By KATHARHYNN HEIDELBERG  
MONTROSE DAILY PRESS SENIOR WRITER

A Nucla man ran an outfitting company for more than a decade, bringing clients for hunts in the coveted Game Management Unit 61.

But the man, Gerald Lee "Jerry" Sickels, was not a licensed outfitter and his clients had no business in Unit 61, where hunting licenses are limited. Sickels and his friend, Jay Remy Grierson, also of Nucla, have since been convicted of illegal hunting activities, while two clients, Ben Williamson and his son, Brett, of Tennessee, were fined and ordered to turn over their trophy mounts.

"The reason we invested so much time and money into this case was the enormity of the violations and what this unit, in particular, means to the public," Renzo DelPiccolo, area wildlife manager

for Colorado Parks and Wildlife, said Tuesday.

"The hard work and incredible cooperation with the various agencies led to the successful prosecution of these individuals."

Sickels and Grierson were indicted in 2014 for violations of the Lacey Act, per a Monday news release from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Sickels and Grierson were initially indicted on six conspiracy counts and interstate sale of unlawfully taken big game.

Sickels pleaded guilty to one count of conspiring to violate the Lacey Act, while Grierson pleaded guilty to three misdemeanor violations of the act.

The Lacey Act is a conservation law that prohibits its trade in wildlife, fish or plants that have been illegally taken, transported or sold.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife learned of Sickels' operation when investigating another matter, USFWS spokesman Steve Segin said.

"There were some federal violations. They referred that portion to U.S. Fish



Ben Williamson of Morristown, Tennessee, poses with the rack of a bull elk killed illegally in 2004. (Submitted photo/Colorado Parks and Wildlife)

and Wildlife," Segin said.

According to the USFWS news release, investigators learned that between 1999 and 2011, at least 17 bull elk were illegally taken in Unit 61 by Sickels and his clients, who were charged between \$1,000 and \$3,000 for multi-day hunts.

"In some instances, he had them get documentation from somewhere else and cover up the illegal killing," Segin said.

In 2009, Sickels and Grierson guided a Tennessee hunter on a

mountain lion hunt; the hunter killed a lion, but did not have a license, according to Grierson's plea agreement. Grierson took the lion to his home for taxidermy and was paid \$1,300.

Per the plea document, in 2010, Grierson accepted a mule deer carcass from Sickels' home; the deer was killed by an Iowa client of Sickels.

The hunter removed his hunting license from the

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## Montrose County Offices

# will be CLOSED November 24th & 25th

We will be closed Thanksgiving and Friday to spend time with our family and friends.

We wish you all a very Happy and Safe Thanksgiving!



Obituary

Margie C. Keep

October 30, 1927 - November 20, 2016

Margie C. Keep, longtime area resident, passed away Nov. 20, at Horizons Care Center in Eckert, Colorado. She was 89. Margie was born in Farmington, New Mexico, on Oct. 30th, 1927, to Bart and Irene Zanon. She moved to Olathe with her family in 1947, where she met her husband of 64 years, James "Jimmy" Keep. They were married on Nov. 13, 1949. James passed away in 2011.

Margie was a homemaker and took on odd jobs to help the family. She enjoyed gardening and belonged to 4 Seasons Garden Club. This last summer she beautified the garden at Horizons Care Center with flowers and grew vegetables to share with all of the residents.

She is survived by four children, Steven Keep of Grand Junction, Colorado, Arlene (Dirk) Jones of Eckert, Colorado, Elaina (Tim) Frey of Austin, and

Mark (Bobbie Carson) Keep of Montrose Colorado. She was a proud grandmother to nine grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren. Margie was preceded in death by her son, Michael Keep; and husband, James Keep. Mass of Christian Burial will be 10 a.m. Saturday, Nov. 26, at St. Philip Catholic Church in Cedaredge. A rosary service will precede mass at 9:30 a.m. in church. Interment will immediately follow at Valley Lawn Cemetery, Montrose, Colorado. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made in Margie's name to St. Jude Children's Hospital by visiting <https://www.stjude.org/give.html>. Arrangements have been entrusted to Rose Memorial Parlour & Cremation Center, Montrose. For info, contact 970-249-4444 or visit [www.rosememorialparlour.com](http://www.rosememorialparlour.com).



Montrose Sheriff's Posse co-director Jerry Sierverson recently shows off the new Polaris RZR 900 inside their facility on North Grand Avenue. (Paul Hurschmann/Montrose Daily Press)

VEHICLE

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"That's a 15-year-old vehicle," he said. "It really needs to be retired. We've had a lot of issues with that. We've had a few rollovers with our own people ... because you don't always take the best trails ... when you've got someone hurt, we're going over whatever terrain to get to them. It happens. Good people get hurt trying to help other people. It's a risky business."

The age of the six-wheel Polaris is one of the main reasons they went after the new vehicle, he explained. It's solid axle restricted their maneuverability and, without a passenger seat, also restricted their effectiveness.

"We put out bids to all of the ATV dealers in Delta and Montrose counties," he said. "We went with the lowest one, of course. Got it set up with tracks, so we can use it in the winter."

Weekender Sports of Hotchkiss was the dealer providing the lowest bid and, according to Rackay, also threw in some extras and "a whole lot of free labor" setting up the machine.

"Whenever we can work with a municipality, a sheriff's department, any type of search and rescue - which is what the Posse does - then I think it's in our best interest to put out a good bid," said Weekender owner

Dennis Durmas. "If I can make a good deal for them, I think it makes sense. I believe it comes back to us in some way. There are so many people in this area out there on ATVs, 4-wheelers. The Posse is there for them and whatever we can do to help, we're happy to do so."

The cab of the new Polaris carries two people and also has room for an injured party to be carried on the back, according to Rackay.

"Another good thing about this new machine, it's only 55 inches wide," said Rackay. "It will fit legally on ATV trails throughout the state."

While touting the virtues of their latest acquisition, Rackay and fellow Posse member Paul Gottlieb gave the Daily Press a tour and overview of their facility on North Grand Avenue, next to the Sheriff's office.

Another recent upgrade the Posse received in 2015 was a new set of radios. The 12 new Motorolas they purchased allowed them to replace two sets of older equipment.

"We can now communicate with federal agencies like the U.S. Forest Service and BLM, (Bureau of Land Management)," Rackay explained. "That didn't work on the old VHF (frequencies). What we used to have to do is take two radios and then you're listening back and forth."

"These new Motorolas offer (the more modern)

800 frequencies, VHF and they also have a GPS (Global Positioning Satellite capability) built into them," he added. "So, that's three pieces of equipment that we no longer have to juggle. We can just use this one now."

The cost of the new radios was more than \$75,000, which may sound like a lot of money for a volunteer organization.

"The grants are what keep us going," said Rackay said. "We got these on another DOLA grant. These (new radios) are \$6,500 each. They are state-of-the-art. Even our local sheriff's department, police department and fire department don't have that (capability) yet. This was part of the (Emergency Medical Services DOLA) grant."

"We look for all the grants to try and help us along our way because all of this stuff costs big bucks and we're volunteers," he added. "We require the community to help us."

Rackay and Jerry Sierverson, (the other co-director), wanted to stress that they are still in need of the community, and they rely on fundraisers for other basics.

"We wouldn't have a lot of this equipment if it weren't for the grants," Sierverson said. "Sure, it's nice to have some new equipment, but it's the community and their gifts to the Posse that pay for us to operate and maintain everything you see here,"

(with a sweeping gesture to all the vehicles and the building itself).

The Montrose County Sheriff's Posse is a non-profit corporation, comprised of volunteers who provide search and rescue support to the Sheriff's office or any other emergency agency in the county. According to its website ([www.mcspi.org/](http://www.mcspi.org/)): "All the members of the Posse are highly trained, qualified and certified for the operations that they perform. The Posse does not charge for their services, but they do rely on the generous contributions from our neighbors and fellow citizens through an annual fund drive."

Rackay said their next newsletter will go out in January, announcing the 2017 fundraiser.

"We maintain our own building, we do our own everything here," Rackay said. "Everybody here is on their own time. We also use our own vehicles, our own ATVs, our own gas, our own mileage, our own everything. We train a lot. I think we have 17 or 18 training (events) a year. CPR and First Aid is about 20 hours. We are all wild lands firefighters. The annual firefighting training is another 10 hours. We do a brush truck training. We do an ATV training."

You'll never find a more dedicated bunch of people."

To comment on this story, visit [montrosepress.com](http://montrosepress.com)

Death notices

Jeanette Marie Habenicht

Jeanette Marie Habenicht, 75, passed away Friday, Nov. 18, 2016, in Hotchkiss, Colorado. Arrangements are being handled under the direction of Sunset Mesa Funeral Directors, (970) 240-9870.

Robert H. "Bob" Wilson

Robert H. "Bob" Wilson, 82, of Montrose, passed away Monday, Nov. 21, 2016, at Valley Manor Care Center in Montrose. Services are pending with Crippin Funeral Home & Crematory in Montrose.

**Weather forecast**

**TODAY** Sunny, High 52F. Winds NE at 5 to 10 mph.

**THURSDAY** Clear 44° 19°

**FRIDAY** Clear 50° 26°

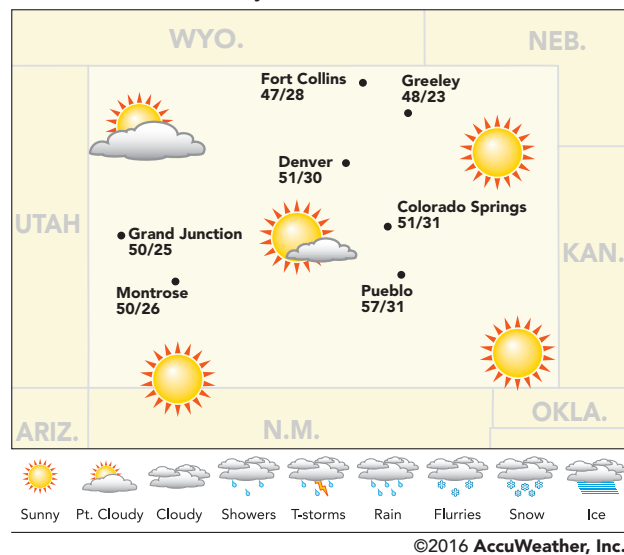
**SATURDAY** Clear 54° 28°

**SUNDAY** Mostly cloudy 41° 23°

**MONDAY** Partly cloudy 36° 21°

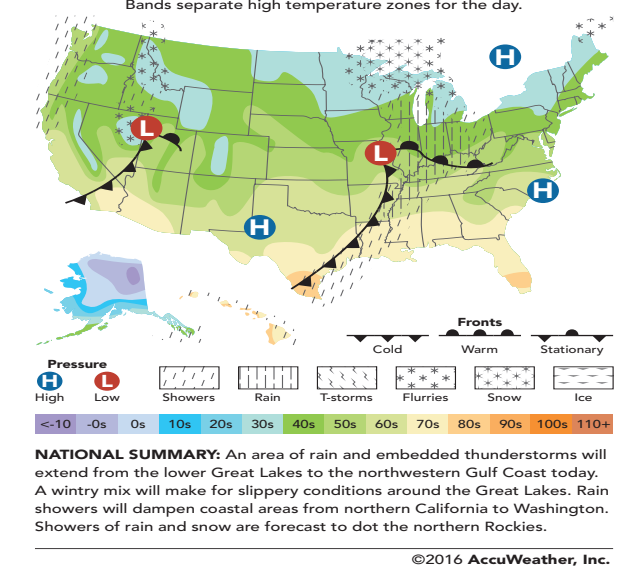
Today's weather [AccuWeather.com](http://AccuWeather.com)

Forecast for Wednesday, November 23, 2016

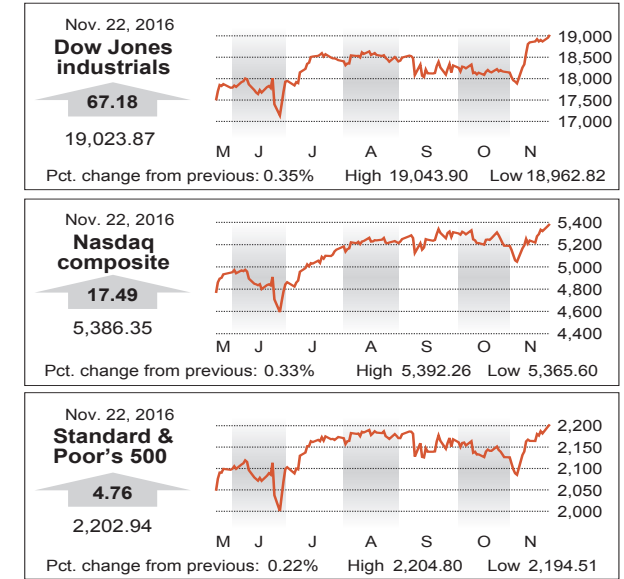


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