

News-Sun

JAL EUNICE HOBBS LOVINGTON TATUM SEMINOLE DENVER CITY

Witness: Victim 'wild, violent'



KELLEY MCMILLAN NEWS-SUN

In the early hours of Jan. 5, 2009, 32-year-old Kaci Rucker took a shower.

She showered until the hot water ran cold. She showered until the dead body in her bedroom was gone.

Rucker, a Hobbs resident, testified in District Judge William Shoobridge's court Tuesday in

the state's case against Carlsbad man Billy Maples, 35, in connection with the death of 26-year-old Jennifer Cox of Carlsbad.

Cox was found dead inside a garage at 335 W. Taos in Hobbs on Jan. 5, 2009. Maples and Rucker were arrested in connection with the death. Autopsy reports cited asphyxiation as the cause of death.

Rucker testified Tuesday Cox

had been exhibiting erratic and strange behavior in the hours before her death inside Rucker's home. Rucker said she had fallen asleep on her bed while Cox, Maples and another Carlsbad man were in the living room.

"I don't know what woke me up, but I was startled and woke up and kind of sat up on my elbows and there was Jennifer standing over me with two pocket knives,

both blades extended, kind of hovering over me," Rucker said. "... Billy was right there behind her and put his arms around her, like to grab her wrists to get the knives."

The struggle was violent and ended up on the floor with Maples on top of Cox, Rucker said.

"I find it hard to articulate just how wild and how violent she

(Cox) was," Rucker said.

Maples requested Rucker's help in restraining Cox, Rucker testified. Rucker said she provided Maples with duct tape and twine.

Moments later Rucker testified she heard Maples say Cox had stopped breathing. Maples attempted CPR, according to Rucker. Maples then decided to

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\$72 MILLION



International Isotopes Inc.

Bonds to help build facility approved

BETH HAHN NEWS-SUN

LOVINGTON — For the second time in about six years, the Lea County commission approved the sale of industrial revenue bonds to help fund the construction of a nuclear industry business near Hobbs.

Commissioners unanimously approved the sale of up to \$72 million in industrial revenue bonds to benefit International Isotopes, an uranium byproduct processing facility that is targeted for a 640-acre site 14 miles west of Hobbs.

International Isotopes of Idaho Falls, Idaho, is proposing to build a \$93 million facility that would extract fluorine gas from uranium hexafluoride tails created in the nuclear enrichment process. The fluorine gases are used in medical equipment and the manufacturing of solar panels.

Allen Hall, who represented International Isotopes during Tuesday's meeting, said phase one of the plant should be completed by Dec. 31, 2014.

International Isotopes will employ 75 people by Dec. 31, 2015, he added.

Hall praised the county's partnership with Louisiana Energy Services to construct the \$3 billion National Enrichment Facility five miles east of Eunice and said this bond process would use much of the same mechanisms to protect the county financially while moving the project forward.

Issuing industrial revenue bonds will enable Lea County to help finance the construction of the facility without violating state anti-donation laws, Hall said.

The agreement also allows for a payment in lieu of taxes to benefit Hobbs Municipal Schools and New Mexico

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KIMBERLY RYAN/NEWS-SUN

The smell of green

Kobe Hollingsworth smells a tomato plant growing in Kelli Ann Moore's third-grade class at Jefferson Elementary in Lovington.

Lovington school enrollment 'on the rise again'

LEVI HILL NEWS-SUN

Lovington's school district continues to grow in size, but the reason is unknown.

That was the news Tuesday night at the school board's regular meeting. Superintendent Steven O'Quinn presented the board with the enrollment numbers for the 120th day of school, which were up 26 students from the 100th day and up 70 students from last year's 120th day. Enrollment on the 120th day was 3,318 students.

"We are on the rise again," O'Quinn told the board.

Last year O'Quinn said the district did not know why the student population was on the rise when the district was up 86 students on the 20th day of class.

"I don't know (why it is growing)," O'Quinn

said last year. "Before we attributed it to oil and gas, and oil is back some, but we continue to see a steady growth."

Whatever the cause, Lovington's student population has climbed steadily since 2003. The district's student population on the 120th day in the 2003-04 school year was 2,859.

According to a chart provided to the board by O'Quinn, the district's population fluctuates over the course of each school year, but each year begins and ends higher than the year before.

In the last seven years, the largest jump from year to year was in 2006 when the student pop-



O'Quinn

ulation at the beginning of the school year was 169 students higher than the beginning of the year before. The district saw the most growth in the 2005-06 school year with 92 more students at the end of the school year than the beginning.

The increased enrollment is good news for the district following two cuts in state funding last year and another cut during the 2010 legislative session, O'Quinn said.

He said the district received a 1.8 percent cut during the 2010 legislative session and a total funding cut of \$100 per student over two cuts last year. For every one percent cut the district loses \$240,000-\$250,000, he said.

"Roughly we lost \$1 million in the last year to start the next school year with," he said.

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OIL PRICES

West Texas intermediate		
Spot	\$81.49	-.38
Posted	\$78.00	-.50
Sour	\$76.21	-.50
N. Gas	\$4.516	-.011



MS AWARENESS WEEK

Key to survival is to fight

LEVI HILL NEWS-SUN

The lowest point for Hobbsan Lesli Bruce was the 10-hour drive to Houston knowing in the pit of her stomach that doctors were going to diagnose her with multiple sclerosis.

"I was pretty sure the test would be positive," Bruce said, "and making that drive over there and thinking about it the whole time was the worst part."

That was 11 years ago. Today Bruce, 36, is one of an estimate 50 Lea County residents surviving each day while combating the debilitating effects of multiple sclerosis.

Multiple sclerosis or MS is a disease that affects the brain and spinal cord resulting in loss of muscle control, vision, balance and sensation such as numbness. With MS, the nerves of the brain and spinal cord are damaged by

'I realized I can deal with

it. You have to wake up every day knowing you are fighting.'

Lesli Bruce MS sufferer

the body's immune system. MS affects more than 400,000 people in the U.S. and 2.1 million worldwide.

This week is National MS Awareness Week and registration has begun for two MS walks in Lea County next month that are hoped to raise

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Hobbsan Lesli Bruce, a multiple sclerosis survivor, stands on her back porch. Doctors told her to avoid the heat so cool, sunny days in spring are one of the best times of the year for her.

LEVI HILL NEWS-SUN

Trial

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get the body out of the house and store it in a garage building on Rucker's property.

"He asked me if I had a sheet ... I just assumed he was going to carry her out there (to the garage)," Rucker said.

Rucker testified she went outside and unlocked the door of the garage.

"I told him I, 'I can't be around her. I can't be around this,'" Rucker said. "I was extremely panicked, almost frozen. ... I went and took a shower. I went to the other bathroom at the other end of the trailer, and was in there, long after the water ran cold. I was in there crying."

When she got out of the shower, she said, the body was gone.

Maples, Cox and Cox's boyfriend Rusty Reed were in Hobbs late Jan. 4, 2009 and early Jan. 5 after escorting Rucker back to Hobbs from Carlsbad in two separate vehicles after Rucker became ill and felt she could not drive home.

Reed testified Tuesday the group

went to Rucker's home and smoked methamphetamines and injected methamphetamines. Reed later left the home to return to Carlsbad, leaving Maples and Cox behind at Rucker's home.

Reed testified he received one call from Cox while on the road. He received another from Rucker, demanding he return to pick up Cox because she had gone "crazy."

Reed testified he believed Cox was bipolar and her behavior would likely seem abnormal to people who were not used to her.

Maples faces charges of voluntary manslaughter, false imprisonment, tampering with evidence, conspiracy to commit tampering with evidence and conspiracy to commit false imprisonment in connection with Cox's death.

Rucker, formerly Kaci Easter, plead guilty in to tampering with evidence and attempted trafficking a controlled substance. Additional charges against Rucker were dismissed by the prosecution.

The trial continues today.

Isotopes

from PAGE 1

Junior College.

"Education will be fully funded," county attorney Larry Hanna said. "The schools will be held harmless."

Bonds are a way for a business to raise capital and receive a tax benefit from a municipality or county — without the city or county being held responsible for the success or failure of the business.

Hall said the agreement between International Isotopes and Lea County has mechanisms in place to protect the county if the business does not fulfill its end of the deal.

The mechanisms include the land reverting back to the county if International Isotopes

has not made "substantial investment" on the property by Dec. 31, 2014 and giving the county the first right to purchase the land if International Isotopes cannot obtain financing for the project, Hall said.

When County Commissioner Mike Whitehead asked if construction will take four years or more, Hall replied the lengthy schedule allows for Nuclear Regulatory Commission licensing processes.

County commission chairman Gary Schubert said he is pleased with the partnership between Lea and International Isotopes.

"We look forward to seeing some progress at the site," he said after the commission unanimously approved the issuance of the bonds.

Bank of America ending overdraft fees on debit cards

NEW YORK (AP) — Bank of America customers will soon be unable to spend more than they have in the accounts linked to their debit cards. It's a step that may become a common move ahead of new regulations limiting overdraft fees.

Rules set by the Federal Reserve that will ban banks from charging such fees, without first getting permission from the customer, are set to take effect July 1.

But Bank of America is going a step further than the regulations require. It will simply no longer allow debit card purchases to go through if there isn't enough money in the account. For ATM transactions, customers who try to withdraw more than their balance will have to agree to pay a \$35 overdraft fee before they can get the money.

"The majority of our customers who overdraw their account do so with everyday debit purchases," said Susan Faulkner, senior vice president of consumer banking for Bank of America. "They're doing this unknowingly, because they aren't aware that they are about to over-draft."

The bank's new policy will kick in on June 19 for new accounts, and in early August for existing accounts. It will replace the bank's current terms, which allow overdrafts to go through but only charge a fee if the deficit is greater than \$10.



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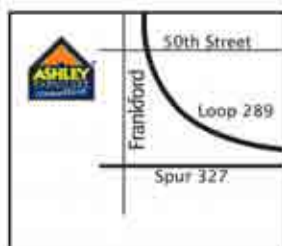


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