

Polk County
Itemizer-Observer
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NOW HIRING

An employee at MAK Metal welds a component on Monday. The company recently finished an expansion. JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

IN YOUR TOWN

DALLAS
Dallas holds its first budget committee meeting with a focus on the city's long-term outlook.
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FALLS CITY
Brittany Varney takes first at invite to lead the Mountaineers' track and field squad.
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INDEPENDENCE
Second-grader Isabel Garcia-Becerra takes the helm as principal for the day at Independence Elementary School.
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MONMOUTH
Western Oregon University is part of a program to redefine masculinity.
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SPORTS
Perrydale senior Kirk Fairchild's love of track and field overrides physical challenges.
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POLK COUNTY
Polk County Administrator Greg Hansen reports 12 percent higher budget numbers for 2016-17.
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Local businesses seek qualified workers for living wages

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — Like the rest of us, Ray Tate is waiting for the end of the rain.

The founder and CEO of American Gas & Technology, the company converting the former Tyco building off Monmouth Cutoff Road in Dallas into its new production facility, said the frequent showers — or downpours — has the remodel in a holding pattern.

At issue is the work remaining on the 127,000-square-foot building's roof. Tate said about 40 structures need to be removed, leaving holes that rain could pour through.

"We can't do a lot of that until the weather improves," Tate said, noting he's encouraged by last week when the valley saw its first continuous days of sunshine



this year. He hopes having to dodge rain like a baseball team in March won't last much longer, and it certainly hasn't diminished the company's plans in Dallas.

AG&T's rain delay is not unlike what Dallas and the wider community endured during the recession and recovery — and like the weather reports, indicators suggest sunnier times may be on the way.

The arrival of the company, which specializes in the development of inexpensive



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer
The economic outlook in Polk County looks brighter.

liquefied natural gas fueling stations, and growth in existing businesses has played a part in those more hopeful expectations.

AG&T picked Dallas after looking at several other locations across the country, including Tennessee, Missouri,

Oklahoma and California, Washington and other communities in Oregon.

AG&T leaders found what they needed in Dallas. "I just came up here and the more we looked, the better it got," Tate said.

Dallas was more than will-

ing to welcome the business into the long-vacant facility that stood as a symbol of lost jobs in the community.

"I think just the fact that something positive is happening there and that you've got ownership that is optimistic and wanting to locate here and believes that this is the place for their company, is pretty great," said Jason Locke, Dallas' economic development director. "Success builds on success."

AG&T believes it has developed technology that will lead to plenty of success.

Tate said investors in the technology will receive a healthy return on their investment, estimating a 13 times their initial contribution in five years. With government subsidies given to companies producing alternative fuels, that figure grows to 18 times.

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Indy man arrested after long standoff

Itemizer-Observer staff report

INDEPENDENCE — On Sunday, just after 5 a.m., 49-year-old James Michael Munoz, of Independence, was taken into custody with the assistance of Salem SWAT after an almost six-hour standoff, according to a press release from Independence Police Sgt. Tino Banuelos.

On Saturday, at 11:05 p.m., Independence Police officers were dispatched to a domestic disturbance involving firearms on South Sixth Street near Monmouth Street.

The first responding officers encountered Munoz, who was armed at the time, Banuelos said. Munoz entered his residence and refused to come out. With victims away from the location, officers from surrounding agencies assisted

in preparing the scene for negotiations with Munoz based on reported threats to engage law enforcement. Neighborhood residents were notified and evacuated as necessary in preparation for a Salem SWAT response, Banuelos said.

Munoz ultimately came out and was taken into custody without incident. Banuelos said. He was lodged at the Polk County Jail pending charges of unlawful use of a weapon, menacing, coercion, fourth-degree assault and three counts of reckless endangerment.

"We would like to thank the Salem Police Department, the Monmouth Police Department, the Polk County Sheriff's Office and the Dallas Police Department for their prompt response and assistance," Banuelos said.

Adams steps down as publisher

Leppin, Mentzer to take reins as leadership team of I-O

Itemizer-Observer staff report

DALLAS — Heidi Leppin and Emily Mentzer will share day-to-day managerial responsibilities at the *Polk County Itemizer-Observer*, as long-time publisher Nancy Adams transitions into retirement.

Leppin, advertising and production manager, and Mentzer, news editor, will team up to lead the *I-O*, Joe Petshow, president of Eagle Newspapers Inc., announced to employees last week. Eagle is the parent company of the *I-O*.

Adams, publisher and editor, will be transitioning to other work for the corporate

office, Petshow said. She is a former board member of Eagle.

"Nancy's professionalism is unmatched; her loyalty unwavering," he said. "Nancy will be exploring options over the next months, including some within the Eagle family."

Leppin has worked for the *Itemizer* for more than 17 years in the advertising department.

"I am excited about all the new media we will be taking advantage of," she said. "The business community deserves it."

Leppin grew up in Dallas and Independence and

raised three sons here.

She will oversee the advertising and production staff as well as continue to sell ads to local businesses.

Mentzer started with the *Itemizer-Observer* as the Monmouth-Independence-Western Oregon University reporter in 2013. She has lived in Monmouth since 2008.

"I am eager to serve the *Itemizer* and the community in this new capacity as editor," Mentzer said.

Mentzer will oversee the new staff as well as the circulation employees while continuing to provide coverage of the Monmouth, Independence and Western Oregon communities.

Mentzer and Leppin look forward to continuing the transition from a strictly print product to a multi-media news operation.

Independence man sentenced for crimes

Itemizer-Observer staff report

DALLAS — Eric Spier, 29, of Independence, was sentenced by Polk County Circuit Judge Monte Campbell to serve seven and a half years in prison after pleading guilty to a series of theft, drug, and weapon-related crimes that occurred between May 2014 and May 2015 involving multiple victims.

Spier was convicted of first-degree aggravated theft, second-degree burglary, first-degree theft, theft of a firearm, possession of methamphetamine, possession of a destructive device, and felon in possession of a firearm.

He was also ordered to pay restitution to the victims of his crimes. The case was investigated by the Independence, Monmouth, and Dallas police departments and the Polk County Sheriff's Office.

THE NEXT 7 DAYS PLANNING FOR YOUR WEEK

wed Put your spelling cap on and head to Indy Public Library for Scrabble with Betty. Prizes are available. 1 p.m. Free.	thu Save a life and donate blood during the American Red Cross blood drive at Dallas High School. redcrossblood.org. 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Free.	fri Relay for Life will hold its annual spaghetti feed and silent auction at Christ's Church in Monmouth. 5 p.m. \$5.	sat Swing your partner at the second Saturday old-time square dance at Guthrie Park Community Center. 7-10 p.m. \$5-\$15.	sun Buell Grange Hall will be the place for Sunday breakfast this morning, just off Highway 22 north of Dallas. 8-11 a.m. \$6.	mon Learn about the history of Chinese Americans, hosted by the Independence museum, at the Indy Civic Center. 7-8 p.m. Free.	tue Overeaters Anonymous, a support group, meets at Salem Health West Valley each Tuesday. Noon-1 p.m. Free.
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