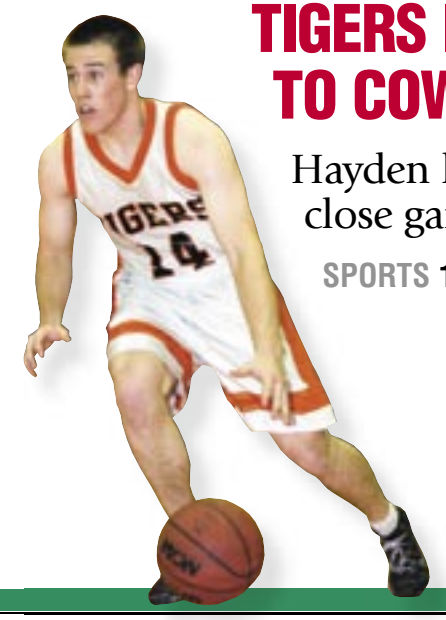


Your guide to Winter Carnival INSIDE

# STEAMBOAT PILOT & TODAY

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## TIGERS FALL TO COWBOYS

Hayden loses close game  
SPORTS 1D



## Local dies in jet crash

Jeanette Symons, son killed in Maine

Mike Lawrence  
PILOT & TODAY STAFF

### STEAMBOAT SPRINGS

A Steamboat Springs woman and her son were killed Friday when the woman's private jet crashed shortly after take-off near Augusta, Maine.

Jeanette Symons, 45, was a mother of two who lived in Steamboat Springs for about 18 months. She regularly flew her jet to and from the San Francisco area, where she had an extraordinarily successful career in the electronics and telecommunications industries.

Traveling with her son  
See **Crash**, page 10A

## Parties prompt charity

Local kids use birthdays to give

Melinda Dudley  
PILOT & TODAY STAFF

### STEAMBOAT SPRINGS

Instead of unwrapping the usual mountain of presents at his last birthday party, Lisa Gamber's first-grade son raised money to adopt a pair of wild gorillas.

Surprisingly, turning his birthday party into a charity event did not take too much prodding — once Gamber assured her son that the gorillas would stay in Africa and not come live with them in Steamboat Springs.

"All I had to say to him was 'What do you think about helping gorillas?'" Gamber said. "All I had to do was mention the word 'poaching' and his eyes got real big, and he was like 'I want to do that!'"

Gamber is coordinating Kids Give, an effort encouraging elementary school children to give instead of receive at their birthday parties.

"It's good for them to start thinking about giving back,"  
See **Birthdays**, page 13A

# Raking it in

Rising mill levy funds boosting coffers, concerns across county

**S**ome Routt County taxing entities are seeing massive budget increases this year from escalating property tax revenues, creating a controversial windfall that is expanding the scope of local services but also raising concerns about the use of taxpayer dollars.

**SUNDAY FOCUS**  
STORY BY BRANDON GEE

From new fire engines to increased programming for those with developmental disabilities, rising mill levy revenues will be put to noble causes. While virtually no one argues that value, there are widespread concerns about unrestrained taxes that are boosting the budgets — in some cases, by hundreds of thousands of dollars — of taxing entities across Routt County.

For example, Horizons Specialized Services collects 1 mill of property taxes countywide to provide services for those with developmental disabilities. On just that 1 mill, Horizons will collect \$1,093,543 from Routt County taxpayers in 2008, a 34 percent increase from the \$812,913 it collected last year.

The growth is even larger in smaller taxing districts whose appreciation has outpaced the county as a whole. Colorado

Mountain College, which collects property tax only in Steamboat Springs, will see the revenues it collects on nearly 4 mills rise from \$2,555,646 in 2007 to \$3,543,311 in 2008, a 39 percent increase.

By comparison, the county's base property tax will increase only 6 percent.

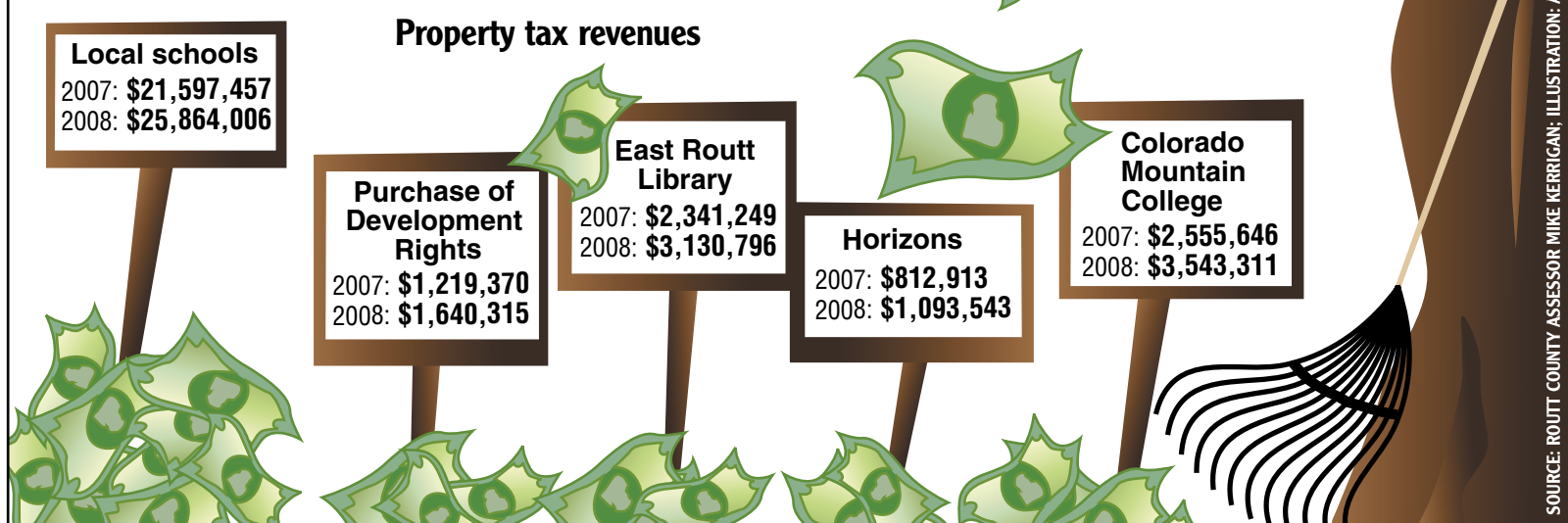
A mill is \$1 of tax per every \$1,000 of assessed property value.

Routt County properties were reappraised in 2007 to reflect values as of June 30, 2006. It is this appraisal that will determine property taxes collected in 2008. The county's overall assessed valuation has increased 34 percent since the last appraisal, but not all taxing entities' revenues will increase by the same percentage as the properties in their district.

Colorado's Taxpayer Bill of Rights, or TABOR, adopted in 1992, limits the growth of government revenues. In the case of property taxes, entities are required to reduce their mill levies so revenues will remain relatively constant, unless voters approve additional mill levy increases. TABOR does allow governments to adjust levies for inflation and new construction.

Taxing entities can ask voters to exempt them from the TABOR

See **Funds**, page 12A



## Working through warfare

Volunteer talks about political unrest in Kenya

Margaret Hair  
PILOT & TODAY STAFF

### STEAMBOAT SPRINGS

In the days following accusations of a rigged election, Narok, the city in Kenya where Mary Walker lived and volunteered, was relatively calm — during the day.

"I would say within three hours of when the election results were made public there was unrest, and certainly by dark things had gotten worse," Walker said, back home in Routt County after spending two months volunteering in a safe house for teenage girls in Narok, a 50,000-person city in Kenya's Masai region.

In the four or five days following the election results, everything in Narok shut down. Shops were closed. There wasn't any gas. The hospital was a madhouse. During the day, the town was dead. At night, it erupted into burning storefronts and frustrated brutality.

"It was very unsettling; it was uncomfortable," Walker said, describing her view of the turmoil from Tasaru Girls Rescue Center, about a mile outside of Narok.

"It was uncomfortable to go to bed at night hearing gunshots and smelling smoke and hearing about people being beheaded. But personally, I never felt threatened — there would have been no reason for someone to target me," she said.

On Dec. 27, 2007, the people of Kenya, a then-functioning African democracy, cast their votes in a race between President Mwai Kibaki and opposition leader Raila Odinga. On Dec. 30, results came in declaring Kibaki the winner. Within hours, ethnic

See **Warfare**, page 10A



Dead lodgepole pines such as this one are scattered throughout the Ted's Ridge area at the Steamboat Ski Area.  
MATT STENSLAND/STAFF

## Losing the beetle war

Ski area, Forest Service end mitigation efforts

Mike McCollum  
PILOT & TODAY STAFF

### STEAMBOAT SPRINGS

Splashes of red and gray emerge from a large canvas of green along Ted's Ridge at the Steamboat Ski Area.

The colors act as a before-and-after warning to impacts of the mountain pine beetle, a grain-of-rice-sized insect that federal and state officials predict will kill all of Colorado's mature lodgepole pine forests within three to five years.

Ski area and Routt National Forest officials hoped to save patches of pines along scenic areas, in campgrounds and throughout the ski area. Those efforts have been largely

abandoned as strategies to manage the beetle epidemic proved ineffective.

Doug Allen, Steamboat Ski and Resort Corp.'s vice president of mountain operations, said Ski Corp. and U.S. Forest Service officials collaboratively began proactive efforts to combat the beetle infestation more than 10 years ago.

"There was a very significant effort where we treated lodgepole pine that were infected," he said. "We cut, sprayed, peeled and removed lodgepoles from infected stands. Last year, the (Forest Service) told us the party was over. The treatments were no longer effective."

Healthy, green pine needles turn red as  
See **Beetle**, page 11A

PAGE DESIGNED BY MICHELLE FINKLER



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### OUTSIDE

- Snow accumulating 1 to 3 inches. High of 31.  
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### VIEWPOINTS

- LAST WEEK: Have the recent snow immersion deaths at Steamboat Ski Area made you reconsider your skiing or snowboarding habits? Results/5A
- THIS WEEK: Should Intrawest do more to expand nightlife options, such as a large venue for live music, in Steamboat Springs?

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