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BUILDING  
CONFIDENCE

Real estate sales, new construction trending upward

By Drew Setterholm | Daily Press Staff Writer

Positive trends in home sales, median home prices, building permit issuances and other indicators are causing cautious optimism in the real estate market. • Statistics for the third quarter of 2014 show continued growth in sales numbers. Montrose County’s 189 single-family residence sales show a 4 percent increase over the third quarter of 2013 and a 44 percent increase over the third quarter of 2009, according to Comparable Sales Research, a Montrose-area business compiling real estate information.

Dining for the  
Dolphin House

Child abuse numbers rise  
as funding dips

BY KATHARHYNN HEIDELBERG  
DAILY PRESS SENIOR WRITER

Jack Ludwig sees a problem that he can’t explain — child abuse — but he doesn’t surrender to helplessness on the issue. Rather, the local restaurateur serves as a member of the Dolphin House Child Advocacy Center’s board of directors, and for a number of years now, has hosted an annual wine-pairing dinner that raises badly needed cash for the organization.

- Dinner details

  - Nov. 19, 6 p.m., The Stone House, 1415 Hawk Parkway
  - Brie wrapped in puff pastry; strawberry spinach salad; roast tenderloin of beef with three grilled prawns; lemon/raspberry cheesecake
  - Each course paired with wine from The Pour House Wine & Spirits
  - \$69/person, excluding tax and tip
  - Inquire as to available spots at 240-8899 or 901-9100
  - Donations welcome

The center serves child victims of physical and sexual abuse, as well as domestic violence, in the 7th Judicial District’s six counties. It also assists their non-offending family members. As have many nonprofits, the Dolphin House has seen available grant funding take a nosedive while competition for remaining money increases.

“A lot of the grants a lot of nonprofits have depended on, they’re not coming up with as much money as they used to, funds have dropped and some have gone away, so you have to create ways to generate cashflow for the organization yourself,” said Ludwig.

He is presenting this year’s wine-pairing dinner on Nov. 19 at his restaurant, The Stone House. The dinner includes a four-course meal, accompanied by wines from The Pour House Wine & Spirits, plus a silent auction.

The event was nearly sold out as of Friday; Ludwig said it and the accompanying silent auction are expected to raise between \$2,500 and \$3,000 for the Dolphin House.

“My husband and I have both worked in the legal field and know how many children in our community need help. The Dolphin House is a godsend,” said Linda Angelo, who owns the Pour House with her husband, Wyatt, a former district attorney and assistant U.S. attorney.

“Every time Jack does something for the Dolphin House, we help. There are a lot of children in our community who need help. It’s much larger than people understand,” she added.

In 2013, the Dolphin House had by mid-November assisted 278 children; all but 10 cases involved sexual assault, with Montrose and Delta counties leading the pack for numbers.

In just the first three months of this year, the Dolphin House saw 94 child victims; 72 of those cases were sexual assaults.

As of last week, numbers were slightly ahead of what they were

SEE DINNER, PAGE A3

“Single-family is really the driver in this community,” Lynn Vogel, owner of Comparable Sales Research, said.

In median prices, the county’s trend is toward small growth or stabilization. The 2014 third quarter median price for single-family residences came in at \$178,000, a 5 percent increase over the third quarter of 2013, but a 20 percent decline from the third quarter of 2009.

While median home prices are not as quick to recover to pre-2011 levels, the increase in total sales is reason for optimism in the market, realtors said.

“I think it’s kind of become apparent — we’re looking good, it’s definitely positive trends, but it’s slow growth,” Diana Atha, lead broker associate at Keller Williams Realty, said.

Atha has seen signs of improved confidence in the market, particularly from first-time homebuyers.

“I’ve had 53 sales this year, and a quarter of that was first-time homebuyers, which I think is a huge chunk,” she said. “That definitely shows the health of the market that new people are getting in. It’s not just investors buying up the foreclosures.”

Foreclosures are declining in the county. According to Rosemary Murphy, Montrose County treasurer, foreclosures to date in 2014 stand at 93. Murphy predicted a year-end total of 105 foreclosures, compared to the county’s 386 in 2010.

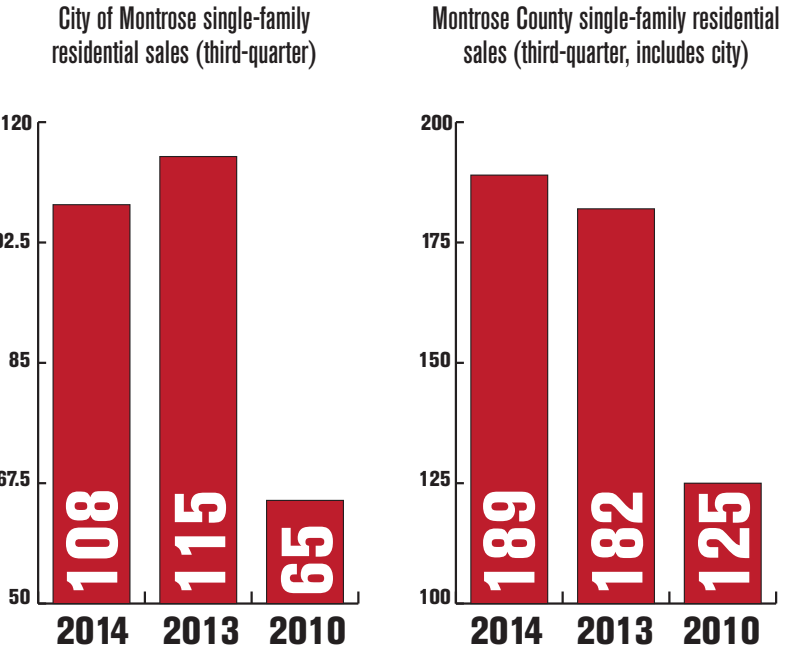
Interest rates for potential homebuyers are not as low as the 3.5 to 3.625 percent that consumers saw in the second half of 2012 and into 2013, but 30-year fixed rate loans are still in a reasonable range, said Lynda Wareham, mortgage loan originator at Montrose’s Major Mortgage.

“Definitely we’re seeing the trend that people can take on new projects, and we have a number of homebuilders coming in here like we saw years ago, with consistency as far as new housing starts goes,”

Kerwin Jensen, Montrose planning services manager



John Renfrow walks out of a building he has listed for sale on south Townsend Avenue Friday.





# Coat Closet keeping Olathe students warm

**BY NATHAN MEACHAM**  
DAILY PRESS STAFF WRITER

Students at Olathe Middle/High School don't have to worry about being cold on campus this year.

That's because work between staff members and the participation of students has resulted in the first Ar-rgh! OMHS Coat Closet, which allows students to trade in old coats, take one if they need it and stay warm.

Custodian Lois Drysdale sees the problem when she gets to school.

"A lot of kids don't have coats when I open up the school in the morning," she said.

She brought the concern to student advocate Stacy Goza, and the coat closet was born.

Students officially opened the closet, located in the school, with a ribbon cutting on Friday, but about 15 coats had already been handed out to students in the last week.

"Olathe is a family and families take care of each other," principal Scot Brown said.

Students also recognized the benefit of a coat closet on campus, and they are spreading the word through the school.

"People were staying inside during lunch because they didn't have a coat sometimes," seventh-grader Caleb Bachman said.

"It feels good because now you know that kids have coats and nobody is cold," seventh-grader Juanita Arellano said.

Other staffers helped put the shelf up to hold all the coats, and custodian Ron Russell also painted a new sign in front of the closet with the slogan: "Need a coat, trade a coat."

The closet is also for gloves, scarfs, ear muffs and other warm clothing.

"We're like a family, so it makes you feel as one with the community to be able to help somebody," Russell said. "I've been there and I'm sure other people have been there, and now we're able to help."

Teachers have started challenging each other to see which classrooms can bring in the most coats, and the contest will last all winter.

Goza said a big part of the new program is that students aren't embarrassed



Olathe Middle School students and staff Stacy Goza, left, and Lois Drysdale, pose for a picture in the new Olathe Middle/High School Coat Closet, which allows students to trade or use coats for cold days at school.

to pick up a coat because they are able to bring in their old ones that might not fit anymore.

"They're not asking for a coat," she said. "They're part of it."

There are times when parents have to drop off students at the school as early as 6 a.m., a cold time to stand in front of locked school doors.

"When I get here at six, there are kids out there and it just breaks my heart," Drysdale said. "It isn't acceptable to not have one, and we can help."

Goza said she has already received coat donations from Flower Motors and the Salvation Army.

Anyone looking to donate more coats can contact the school at 252-7945.



**Seventh-grader Caleb Bachman hangs up a coat in the new Olathe Middle/High School Coat Closet, which allows students to trade in coats or take one for the day. Through donations from local businesses and families, more than 15 coats or other cold weather clothing have been used by students so far this winter.**

## DINNER: High hopes for fundraising dinner

FROM PAGE 1

last November, Dolphin House executive director Sue Montgomery said in an email.

"We have had a lot of children brought in from smaller communities which hadn't, in the past, used us very much," she said.

"They have learned the positive reasons for coming to the Dolphin House and are now bringing all of the child abuse cases to us. We've also had a great deal of support from San Miguel and Gunnison counties this year — using the Dolphin House more than ever before."

The center provides forensic examinations and interviews in a kid-friendly environment, plus resources and support for children and non-offending family members. The number of children it sees are not necessarily reflective of the numbers of arrests and prosecutions.

Law enforcement agencies, mental health and medical professionals, Health and Human Services and attorneys are part of the Dolphin House's multi-disciplinary team, which is designed so that all parties that may be involved in a child abuse case are on the same page — and to minimize trauma to

the child victims.

Ludwig said he is mystified as to why child abuse occurs; he said it could be down to the economy or substance abuse.

"There's a million different things that could (contribute); maybe it's a combination of many things that causes these people to do things to children. Why in the world would anybody, if they want to act out, choose to do that? That's really tough to figure," he said.

"Unfortunately, child abuse is not going away," said Elaine Wood, victim services assistant at the Dolphin House. "It (the center) is one of the best places to bring children and families of abuse to deal with the unpleasant things they have to go through and try to help them with the healing process."

The estimated intake cost is \$300 per child; the center asks for "Friends of the Dolphin House" to pledge \$25 a month to cover the tab. The Dolphin House also needs in-kind goods, from paper/hygiene products, to beverages, toys and clothing basics, as well as part-time volunteers who can clean a fish tank, disinfect playroom toys, or even translate for Spanish-speaking families.

Funding is tight, as former standby grantors have turned the

Dolphin House away; Montgomery last year implemented budget cuts to help offset the shortfall.

Community members and organizations willing to step up for the advocacy center are a bright spot: In the past, organizations have hosted a giving tree and businesses have donated a percentage of daily profits to the Dolphin House. The Bridges this past summer brought Firefall to Montrose and donated a portion of concert proceeds. The Bridges also hosts an annual golf tournament in memory of child abuse victim Owen Reak, and donates proceeds to the Dolphin House.

The Stonehouse dinner is next on tap.

Wood said she is grateful for the support offered by the wine-pairing dinner and the silent auction.

"We're so grateful we have some great businesses in town that help us out with those silent auctions, as well," she said.

To learn more about ways to help the Dolphin House, visit [www.dolphinhousecolorado.com](http://www.dolphinhousecolorado.com) or call 240-8655.

The numbers to call to report suspected child abuse are 252-5000 (HHS, weekdays) or 252-4010 (dispatch) for Montrose County. Call 911 for emergency situations.

## REAL ESTATE: First-time buyers entering market

FROM PAGE 1

Current rates are between 4 and 4.375 percent with fewer loan programs and more stringent guidelines for purchasers.

"With the guidelines tightening and certain loan programs going away, people truly do have to qualify for a mortgage now," Wareham said. "Some of those less favorable programs that got us in trouble in the first place aren't out there anymore."

The increase in interest has not kept consumers away from the real estate market, though; in fact, potential homebuyers who waited through down market years are now exploring their options.

"We're seeing activity where people who have sat back are coming out now and wanting us to pull credit and see what it looks like," Wareham said.

After some "doom and gloom" years, Wareham said, it's taken time for consumers to regain confidence in home buying, but it appears they are coming around.

"We're seeing a lot of activity like that and that's very encouraging," she said.

The atmosphere for home builders also appears to be a positive one.

In the City of Montrose, permits issued for new, single-family residence construction have increased from a low of 19

in 2012 to 30 in 2013 and 41 to date in 2014. The valuation of these permits has also increased, from \$3.79 million in 2012 to \$7.69 million in 2014 to date.

"Definitely we're seeing the trend that people can take on new projects, and we have a number of homebuilders coming in here like we saw years ago, with consistency as far as new housing starts goes," Kerwin Jensen, city planning services manager, said.

Home building has been a significant contributor to the local economy, Jensen said, and business is facilitated by the number of already platted, currently vacant, lots spread throughout the city.

"There's a great opportunity for homebuilders to come in here on properties that are already platted and ready for building permits," Jensen said.

On the increase in building permits issued, Jensen said: "Definitely, we learned years ago when the construction started faltering just how important it is for our local economy to have construction here in Montrose. So it's just a great sign."

Commercial building projects are more difficult to build a trend on than residential sales, but there are signs for optimism in the commercial market, as well, according to John Renfrow, broker/owner at Renfrow Realty in Montrose.

**Single-family residential sales (County total):**

Third Quarter 2014: 189  
Third Quarter 2013: 182  
Third Quarter 2010: 125  
2013 total single-family residential sales: 655  
2014 projected single-family residential sales: 681

**Single-family residential sales (City total):**

Third Quarter 2014: 108  
Third Quarter 2013: 115  
Third Quarter 2010: 65  
2013 total single-family residential sales: 392  
2014 projected single-family residential sales: 396

**City of Montrose single-family residence building permits:**

2014 year-to-date: 41  
2013: 30  
2012: 19  
2011: 22

**"In Montrose, residential leads commercial," Renfrow said. "I'm seeing stuff on the lower end — lower than \$300,000 — start to get picked up."**

**Renfrow, a Rocky Mountain Commercial Brokers partner, has seen markets across the Western Slope pick up in pace.**

**"If you look at every single one of those counties throughout western Colorado, trending is up," he said.**

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Fox Theater 2

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Penthouse

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(1:00 & 4:15 Saturday & Sunday)

San Juan Cinema 1

Disney's  
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2D 7:05 Only Sunday-Thursday, 7:10 Only Sunday & Sunday  
3D (4:30 Saturday & Sunday)

San Juan Cinema 2

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(2:00 & 4:35 Saturday & Sunday)

San Juan Cinema 3

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(2:10 & 4:25 Saturday & Sunday)

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