



## FARM & RANCH: SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH AQUAPONICS

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# MONTROSE DAILY PRESS

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## Hobby Lobby, Discount to move into River Landing

*Craft store expected to open in early 2022*

By JOSUE PEREZ AND KATHARHYNN HEIDELBERG  
MONTROSE DAILY PRESS

Hobby Lobby and Discount Tire are moving into River Landing Shopping Center soon, according to Max Gansline with TSG Properties, a real estate firm that manages River Landing.

“We’re thrilled to welcome Hobby Lobby and Discount Tire to River Landing,” Gansline told the Press Thursday morning. “And (we’re) excited those businesses are coming to the Montrose community.”

Sandy Head, Montrose Economic Development Corporation executive director, said Hobby Lobby is going to be useful for Montrose residents and that Hobby Lobby is a good store to fill the vacant building left by J.C. Penney.

“(Hobby Lobby) is one of the reasons why some people had to go to Grand Junction for certain things you can’t yet get in Montrose. J.C. Penney was a huge loss for us. It’s good to get another strong, nationwide-type retailer in the community. It will be a good addition,” Head said.

“And it’s always good to have your buildings occupied. It’s more sales tax here, which is awesome. I think Hobby Lobby will be good for the community. It’s good to have buildings occupied and it’s overall a good feeling for our community as these businesses continue to grow.”

According to Pete Neumann, with Leadership Circle LLC, which does property management at River Landing, Hobby Lobby signed a lease for the 88,000 square-foot former J.C. Penney

building. The store is expected to take up about 60,000 square feet. He didn’t know how else the building would be used, but he believes the national craft store retailer will be completely renovate the building and is expected to open in early 2022. He believes the store is taking control of the building Aug. 1.

Discount Tire, according to Neumann, purchased a lot near Target. Discount Tire is planned for the southwest corner of Rio Grande Avenue and U.S. 550.

## Sale closes on former Furniture Connection building

*Ridgway’s Bluecorn Beeswax to enter space, focus on growth*

By JOSUE PEREZ  
JOSUEP@MONTROSEPRESS.COM

The sale of 1842 S. Townsend Avenue in Montrose, formerly the home of Furniture Connection, closed Tuesday, allowing Bluecorn Beeswax owner Jon Kornbluh to begin renovation of the property (renovations inside the building started Wednesday).

The sale closed for \$1.75 million. Bluecorn Beeswax (beeswaxcandles.com), a candle store in Ridgway, will relocate to Montrose with an immediate upgrade in square footage.

The store’s location in Ridgway, roughly 4,500 square feet, was no longer big enough to accommodate the company’s accelerating growth, large-

ly due to the pandemic — direct-to-consumer sales via Amazon and the company’s website skyrocketed in the past year, Kornbluh said. With the new location, Kornbluh and his employees will have more room to play with — a little more than 25,000 square feet.

“We started looking around for buildings, and there wasn’t really something in Ridgway to accommodate us, and most of our employees work in Montrose, so it seemed like an obvious fit,” Kornbluh said in an interview. “We looked at the possibility of building a facility in (Montrose), but my preference was to find an existing building and we did just that.



A “sold” sign in front of the former Furniture Connection building in Montrose. The sale of the building closed Tuesday. (Josue Perez/Montrose Daily Press)

“Ed (DeJulio) was kind enough and gracious enough to do the deal with us.”

The sale finalizes a 20-year run for former

Furniture Connection owner Ed DeJulio. He’s been in the furniture business since 1963, when he established Flairmont

Furniture, which will remain open (1836 E. Main St.) and is operated by Ken and Mark DeJulio, Ed’s son and nephew.

Ed DeJulio, former owner of Furniture Connection, and Bluecorn Beeswax owner Jon Kornbluh, right, pose for a photo inside the former home of Furniture Connection, and stand in front of Bob DeJulio’s mural “Monument Valley.” (Courtesy photo/Ed DeJulio)

Furniture Connection opened in 2001, and recently completed a 60-day run liquidating its existing inventory in sales after DeJulio announced in March he would close the store.

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## Final suspect in Norwood child deaths set for trial

*Eden was formerly deemed incompetent*

By KATHARHYNN HEIDELBERG  
KATHARHYNNH@MONTROSEPRESS.COM

More than three years after her arrest, Ika Eden will stand trial in the deaths of young sisters Hannah Marshall and Makayla Roberts, whose partially mummified remains were found in a trash-filled car parked on a Norwood farm in 2017.

The children were staying at the farm with an end-times religious group, whose leader ordered them to be confined to the vehicle in the heat of summer; they were denied regular meals.

Pathologists suspect starvation, dehydration and heat exhaustion killed the girls, but could not determine that for certain because of the condition of their bodies.

Eden was among adults on the property to be charged



Makayla Roberts and Hannah Marshall. The last suspect in their 2017 deaths on a Norwood farm has been set for a June trial on charges of fatal abuse. (Submitted photo)

with two counts of child abuse resulting in death; however, she was at first found legally incompetent to stand trial.

That changed Feb. 4, when Montrose District Judge Keri Yoder issued an order agreeing with prosecutors that Eden had been restored

to legal competency.

Yoder also granted a prior defense motion for a venue change, finding that extensive media coverage of the case warranted moving the trial out of the 7th Judicial District.

See TRIAL page A11

## Man, 80, convicted of attempted murder

*Dispute originated after building purchase went sour*

By KATHARHYNN HEIDELBERG  
KATHARHYNNH@MONTROSEPRESS.COM

What began as a dispute over a building purchase ended with a Delta man’s conviction for attempted murder.

William Harmon faces up to 24 years in prison after a jury found him guilty on May 12 of showing up at the home of Paul and Anna Hershberger armed with loaded guns. Harmon also was convicted of stalking the couple, driving while impaired and illegally having alcohol in his vehicle. The stalking conviction can carry as many as four years in prison.

Harmon is free on bond pending sentencing Aug. 2. Although prison could be ordered, probation or community corrections options are also open to the court.

Paul Hershberger died in an unrelated matter before the case went to trial. The founder of Sharing God’s Abundance ministry and local construction company

owner died in 2020, at age 67, in a motorcycle accident near Nucla.

Harmon’s listed attorney could not be immediately reached for comment Wednesday, when the 7th Judicial District Attorney’s Office announced the verdict.

“We respect the jury’s verdict and appreciate the attention that they gave to the trial over eight days,” said Assistant District Attorney Rob Zentner, who with Deputy DA Robert Whiting prosecuted Harmon.

“We find that the convictions that have been entered against Mr. Harmon are very serious and we anticipate requesting a fair and just sentence to be imposed.”

Harmon was arrested on Jan. 9, 2019, after Delta County Sheriff’s Office deputies responded to Anna Hershberger’s 911 call, in which she said Harmon showed up at their home to harass them.

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Native Drumming, Fry Bread, Native Vendors & More

**MAY 29 | 9 am-4 pm  
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### FESTIVAL SCHEDULE

**9 AM - 4 PM** Opening of STEM Exhibit  
**9 AM** Peace Pole Dedication  
**9 AM - 12 PM** Community Tipi Painting  
**10 AM/12 PM/2 PM** Ethnobotany in the Garden Tours  
**10 AM - 12 PM** Native Films  
**10 AM** Wickiup Investigation Documentary  
**11 AM** Ute Wisdom Language and Creation (Kids Film)  
**12 PM** Original Coloradans (Ute) Documentary

**11 AM - 2 PM** Kids Activities (On-Going)  
Tipi Making and Painting  
Petroglyph Carving  
**12 PM** Free Fudgsicles and Popsicles  
**1 PM** Naturescape Ground Breaking  
**2 PM** Tipi Demonstration  
**3 PM** Silent Auction Closes



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# First phase of the Palisade Plunge trail opens

SPECIAL TO THE MONTROSE DAILY PRESS

The first phase of the Palisade Plunge, a 32-mile mountain bike trail from the top of the Grand Mesa to the Town of Palisade, is open for public access on Saturday, May 29. Phase two is expected to be complete at the end of July.

The Palisade Plunge trail is the result of a partnership between the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, Mesa County, Town of Palisade, City of Grand Junction, Grand Junction Economic Partnership, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and the Colorado Plateau Mountain Bike Trail Association.

The phase one section begins on Lands End Road, approximately three miles below the Lands End Observatory and traverses more than 17 miles from the forested slopes of the Mesa to a classic desert canyon at Highway 6 and the Palisade Rim Trailhead.

This section of the Palisade Plunge

navigates remote, backcountry terrain with some sections of extreme exposure recommended only for experienced riders.

Trail users should use the U.S. Forest Service’s Wild Rose recreation site for parking. The Wild Rose site can only be accessed from the bottom of Lands End Road at US 50. The gate past Wild Rose will remain locked until snow melt and road conditions on top of the Mesa allow the road to reopen. Please do not block the road. Commercial permits for shuttle service will begin operations on May 29 and use of shuttle services is encouraged to reduce parking congestion.

Trail enthusiasts are encouraged to consider their experience, skills, and preparedness before taking “The Plunge.” Bring plenty of food and water, appropriate clothing, and bike repair supplies.

For updated information on the Palisade Plunge and a list of shuttle providers, visit [www.Palisadeplunge.com](http://www.Palisadeplunge.com).

# Western Colorado Community Foundation opens grant apps

The Western Colorado Community Foundation announced a new funding opportunity to help youth regain skills and build resilience coming out of year of isolation and loss due to COVID-19.

The Community Grants for Recovery and Resilience for Youth Fund is now accepting applications and the deadline to apply is July 15. This funding opportunity is available to organizations operating within the counties served by the foundation: Delta, Eagle, Garfield, Mesa, Montrose, Ouray, San Juan and Rio Blanco.

Grant funding targets after-school and school break programs that pro-

vide academic support while offering coping and confidence building activities. Programs that offer parents and teaching staff resources to help youth build back up skills, focus and self-regulation will also be eligible.

For more information, or to apply, visit [wc-cf.org/nonprofits/grantmaking](http://wc-cf.org/nonprofits/grantmaking).

The Western Colorado Community Foundation serves seven counties in western Colorado, managing charitable funds for community good. Currently, the foundation manages over 300 charitable funds totaling \$100 million in assets and awards nearly \$5 million in grants and scholarships annually.

# TRIAL

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Because other trials and proceedings in the case took place in the 7th Judicial District, the jury pool here was also effectively drained of those who could impartially hear the case. Yoder moved the trial to Mesa County, the population of which provides a larger pool of potential jurors.

Eden’s trial has been slated to begin June 14.

A Gunnison jury previously convicted sect leader Madani Ceus of child abuse resulting in death. Jurors acquitted her of first-degree murder. Ceus, who has since filed for an appeal, was sentenced to 64 years in prison.

Nashika Bramble, the girls’ mother, was convicted by a Montrose jury of first-degree murder and was later sentenced to life in prison. She is appealing.

Group member Ashford Archer was also tried in Montrose. He convicted of fatal child abuse and helping to conceal a crime. He was sentenced to 24 years in prison and is appealing.

The Norwood farm’s owner, Frederick “Alec” Blair, pleaded guilty as an accessory for helping Archer conceal with a tarp the vehicle in which the children died. He was sentenced to 12 years in prison.

Hannah, 8, and Makayla, 10 came to Colorado in 2017, along with their

mother, Bramble, who had joined Ceus’ cult.

Group members encountered Blair at a Grand Junction truck stop; according to testimony and court records, Blair was captivated by Ceus and others, who deemed him an archangel.

Blair, who invited the group to live on his farm, came to know Ceus as “Yahweh,” the Hebrew name of God. He would himself would eventually assume the title “Ra” after the Egyptian sun god, displacing another man who held that title, and who left the Norwood property before the girls died.

In testimony, he detailed Ceus’ controlling behavior. Blair said he was manipulated to believe Ceus could

“reap” his soul if he did not obey her. When he was ordered to let his beloved dog starve to death, he did as instructed — although friends ultimately saved the dog.

They were not aware, though, that the two girls were on the property and had been ordered to their mother’s car.

Ceus ordered first one girl, then the other, to the vehicle, decreeing they had been impure during past lives, case testimony indicated. (At her sentencing, Ceus denied being a cult leader or deliberately causing the children harm; Yoder, who presided at the hearing, said Ceus had set the wheels in motion and did nothing to stop the

children’s deaths, which she likened to torture.)

After Hannah and Makayla were ordered to stay in the car, Ceus — who did all the cooking — decreed they could not be fed anything she had prepared. Blair and Bramble visited a Telluride food pantry that July; prosecutors characterized that meal as Makayla and Hannah’s “last supper” and said that thereafter, the children were denied contact.

During the summer of 2017, sect members removed themselves to another part of Blair’s property to prepare for an apocalyptic event foretold by Archer and possibly connected to the eclipse that year. As part of prepa-

accommodation he said was important (some will commute from Ridgway). The company is also closer to its trucking lanes, Kornbluh said, and being closer to the airport is also a plus.

Kornbluh’s immediate plans include moving the manufacturing facility over to the Montrose location (before Q4), but he will take time developing the retail space, which will have candles (tea lights, pillars, vapers and more), candle holders and gift sets, among other inventory.

The hope is to have a soft opening of the retail store in October.

There’s also plans to install a cafe, and a potential food and beverage operation, though the latter is in its infancy of being developed.

The overall focus, though, is growth.

“To see 30, 40, 50 employees here is a very realistic goal,” Kornbluh said. “To see our product line grow and develop and become a much stronger national, and even international brand, is very much a goal, and I can’t think of a better place than Montrose to base that out of. I think it’s very supportive of business and I expect nothing but smooth sailing, even though I know that’s not always the case.”

DeJulio, too, is excited about the business’ potential at the South Townsend location. Though there’s a bit of sadness, DeJulio said, seeing the building empty for renovation after 20 years, he reported hearing from others that there’s excitement to see a business model that Kornbluh has planned.

“We had hoped that it would be someone that would be a real asset to

the community, and I’m positive that they will be,” DeJulio said. “They have good plans, and Jon is so enthusiastic about it, and the people that work for him, so I know it will be a success, and I feel good about them taking over.”

“... to be manufacturing candles here in little Montrose, a product that is marketed nationally, and they hope internationally, I think Montrose can take pride in having this here.”

The City of Montrose Planning Commission granted Kornbluh a conditional use permit for the manufacturing facility, considering the zoning is geared more towards a retail center.

Kornbluh said the company will eventually vacate its space in Ridgway, but he won’t vacate his position as head boys soccer coach in Ridgway.

Like DeJulio, who’s also known for his time as radio announcer for the Montrose Indians wrestling team in the 1950s and 60s, Kornbluh is involved with local community sports, having coached Ridgway High School’s boys soccer program to a win in the 2A state championship in 2019. His sons, Jonah, now a senior, and Ruben, currently a junior, were a part of that 2019 championship team.

As for DeJulio, he plans to stop by Flairmont Furniture at times and spend more time with family and friends.

For more information about the new company in Montrose, visit [beeswax-candles.com](http://beeswax-candles.com). You can also find them on Facebook, at Bluecorn Beeswax (@bluecornbeeswax).

*Josue Perez is a staff writer for the Montrose Daily Press*

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