



# FREE PRESS

SOUVENIR

EDITION



Vol. 125 — No. 12

\$1.00

Your West Plains Newspaper Since 1896

## Rodeo returns after year off

By JOHN McCALLUM  
Managing Editor

CHENEY — It takes a lot of work to stage the Cheney Rodeo — no small feat considering all of that work is done by volunteers.

But given all that takes place, literally beginning just a couple days after the previous year's rodeo wraps up, it's more than likely all of those volunteers would agree with coordinator Heidi

Monter's assessment of the 2021 Cheney Rodeo.

"I'm just thrilled to be putting on the rodeo again," Monter said last week.

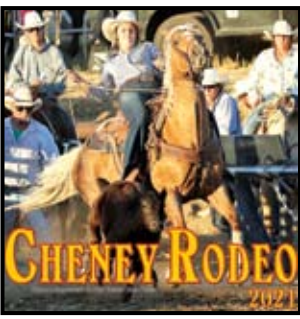
After a one-year hiatus due to the Covid-19

pandemic, Cheney's annual summer competition and party returns this weekend, July 9 - 12. The events kick-off with the traditional cancer-fighting and awareness "Tough Enough to Wear

Pink" session on Friday, and continues through Saturday night and Sunday afternoon.

One of the changes this year, Monter said, is

See Rodeo Page 7



See INSIDE for Cheney Rodeo special section



Roger Harnack | Cheney Free Press

Flames erupt from a pickup truck and horse trailer Monday as a fire spreads to the vehicles at a home at 27225 S. Phillips Road, southeast of Cheney.

## Fires erupt near Cheney

Crews keep flames from reaching top of Needham Hill

By ROGER HARNACK  
Publisher

CHENEY — The Andrus Fire continued to burn Tuesday night, prompting evacuation notices to remain in effect north of the city and east of Four Lakes.

The cause of that blaze — the largest and most recent of three in the area since Friday — remains under investigation, Spokane County Fire District No. 3 Chief Cody Rohrbach said, noting there hasn't been any injuries or

home losses.

The other fires were reported on Phillips Road, south of Cheney, and near the intersection of Sixth Street and Simpson Parkway.

As of press time, the Andrus Fire was estimated at 300 acres and growing; it was not contained, Washington State Patrol spokesman Jeff Sevigney said.

The blaze began about 11:30 a.m. in dry grass and timber near Andrus Road. It raced up Needham Hill and threatened Cheney School District offices and Three Springs High School, 12414 S. Andrus Road.

Fire District No. 3 crews raced to the scene after having just left a 9:57 a.m.

fire that destroyed a barn, pickup and horse trailer at 27225 S. Phillips Road.

The cause of that fire remains under investigation, Rohrbach said.

The larger Andrus Fire moved into dry timber and trees started crowning along the hillside.

As a result, Rohrbach requested local and state assistance. Meanwhile, the fire command was established at Three Springs.

Local crews doused the top of the hillside, keeping the flames from reaching the school.

Fire crews from county Fire District Nos. 4, 8, 9, and 10 responded, as did city crews from Airway Heights, Spokane, Spokane

See Fires Page 12



Roger Harnack | Cheney Free Press

A fire bomber drops retardant Monday along the edge of the Andrus Fire atop Needham Hill, north of Cheney.

## Romantic hookup leads to robbery

Incident took place Monday at Rosalia rest area

By BILL STEVENSON  
Whitman County Gazette

ROSALIA — An expected romantic encounter at the local rest area became a crime scene early Monday morning after two women allegedly robbed a Spokane man, taking his wallet and later allegedly shooting at him.

The women, Rienna Louise Edgeman, 24, of Evans, Colo., and Stacy Lynn Nieri, 25, of Moscow, Idaho, will be arraigned July 9 in Whitman County Superior Court on possible charges of first-degree robbery and first-degree assault.

They were arrested and booked into the jail Monday, July 5, and appeared in Superior Court on Tuesday, July 6.

According to the Whitman County Sheriff's Office, the women were arrested early Monday morning after the victim, whose name has yet to be released, called law enforcement to report the robbery.

Three deputies and a Washington State University police officer responded to the call from Horn School Rest Area, along U.S. Highway 195 south of town, at about 3:30 a.m. Monday, records show.

The victim told responding law enforcement officers that the robbery occurred during a planned hookup with a prostitute.

The victim and woman met earlier in the

See Robbery Page 3

## FCC commissioner visits Airway Heights



Riley Kankelberg | Cheney Free Press

Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers, left, and FCC Commissioner Brendan Carr prepare to make the first 5G call from Airway Heights on July 2.

By RILEY KANKELBERG  
Staff Intern

AIRWAY HEIGHTS — Eastern Washington Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers made a trip around the 5th Congressional District on July 2 with Federal Communications Commission Commissioner Brendan Carr. Their visits to hospitals, cell towers and engineering laboratories were all centered around Eastern Washington's expanding technology and network.

Carr is the FCC's senior Republican whose

platform has an emphasis on bringing high-speed, 5G networks across the country.

One of the first stops on their trip was the water tower in Sunset Park where T-Mobile's 5G network went online for the first time.

"It's a game changer," Rodgers said. "COVID-19 really established the need for high-speed connection with telehealth and online schooling. It's bringing that to Airway Heights."

Before T-Mobile's installation, Comcast and Satellite had been the only

providers for a city made up mainly of veterans and Air Force families. The new connection generates over 300 megabits per second and brings a speed increase of 150%.

This is T-Mobile's 80th site in eastern Washington, and they have 40 more planned to help close the area's digital divide. This connection will cover the city, Fairchild Air Force Base and a section of the Spokane International Airport.

Legacy Telecommunications, which has an office in Ritzville, was

responsible for installing the new cell tower.

After a presentation on the growth of T-Mobile's coverage in eastern Washington, Legacy employees took Rodgers up to the top of the water tower to make the final connection. T-Mobile, Legacy and government employees alike waited at the bottom of the tower while the city's first 5G network came online.

"This event should highlight the amazing work (Legacy employees)

See FCC Page 2