

UTAH VALLEY

DAILY DIGEST

Development grants on their way

Agriculture Under Secretary for Rural Development Thomas C. Dorr recently announced \$13.7 million in economic development grants for rural communities and American Indian organizations in 48 states. The funds are being provided through the Rural Business Enterprise Grant and Rural Business Opportunity Grant programs. The RBOG program provides funding to schools, businesses and local organizations to help them conduct economic development activities, finance business expansions and make infrastructure improvements. The RBOG program finances training and

technical assistance for business development. Thirty recipient organizations are receiving funding under a priority effort that helps create economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of Americans Indians living and working in rural communities. In Utah for example, RBOG funds are being used by Tooele County to create a countywide economic strategic plan in hopes to attract and save 150 jobs and assist 70 businesses. A complete list of grant recipients is available on the Rurdev.gov website at www.rurdev.usda.gov.

HIGHLAND

► A model home in Town Center was scrutinized by the Highland Planning Commission on Sept. 25. It opened on Aug. 16 before officially getting a permit. A neon light also was installed in the window, which was not in accordance with the city's sign ordinance. Steve Maddox, who is developing the Coventry Townhouses on 5600 West, applied to the Planning Commission

for a permit for a model home twice before but failed to appear both times. "It was a judgment on my part," he said. The panel voted to recommend approval of the model home's conditional use permit for two years from the Aug. 16 opening. It must provide eight off-street parking places, which can include the visitor parking.

PROVO

► The Women's Legislative Council of Utah County will meet at 10 a.m. on Thursday at the Provo City Library, 550 N. University Ave. The program will be on the education and voucher controversy with various state legislators responding to questions from the group. Visitors are welcome. For more information, call 373-2070.

PRICES AT THE PUMP

\$2.61	Maverik, 341 E. State St., Pleasant Grove
\$2.61	Flying J, 87 E 12300 South, Draper
\$2.61	Flying J, 931 W State St., Pleasant Grove
\$2.64	Chevron, 456 E. State St., Pleasant Grove
\$2.61	Flying J, I-15 Exit 261, Springville
\$2.62	Flying J, 840 N Main St., Payson
\$2.64	Walkers, State St & Center St., Lindon
\$2.65	7-Eleven, 496 N University Ave., Provo

Prices reflect the cost of regular unleaded gasoline at 5 p.m. on Sunday. More prices at www.heraldextra.com/gas.



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The Springville Herald
Pat Conover
489-5651

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Angie Parkinson
344-2547

Provo, countywide

Communities for Decency will discuss information at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday at the Provo City Library, 550 N. University

Ave. Various state legislators will discuss information related to this material and

proposed changes to the laws. For more information, log on to www.communitiesfordecency.org.

Smokers would pay disproportionate share of House's children's health plan

Charles Babington
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Congressional Democrats have chosen an unlikely source to pay for the bulk of their proposed \$35 billion increase in children's health coverage: people with relatively little money and education.

The program expansion passed by the House and Senate last week would be financed with a 156 percent increase in the federal cigarette tax, taking it to \$1 per pack from the current 39 cents. Low-income people smoke more heavily than do wealthier people in the United States, making cigarette taxes a regressive form of revenue.

Democrats, who wrote the legislation and provided most of its votes, generally portray themselves as champions of the poor. They do not dispute that the tax plan would hit poor communities disproportionately, but they say it

is worth it to provide health insurance to millions of lowest-income children.

All the better, they say, if higher cigarette taxes discourage smoking.

"I'm very happy that we're paying for this," Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., said in an interview Friday, noting that the plan would not add to the deficit. "The health of the children is extremely important," he said. "In the long run, maybe it'll stop people from smoking."

Congress probably will revisit the cigarette tax issue soon because President Bush has pledged to veto the proposed \$35 billion expansion of the State Children's Health Insurance Program. The decade-old program helps families buy medical coverage if their income is too high to qualify for Medicaid.

Bush has proposed a more modest growth for the program, and both political parties seem inclined to pay for it

through a tax on an unpopular group, cigarette smokers.

By most measures, the average smoker is less privileged than the average nonsmoker. Nearly one-third of all U.S. adults living in poverty are smokers, compared with 23.5 percent of those above the poverty level, according to government statistics.

The American Heart Association reports that 35 percent of people with no more than 11 years of schooling are smokers. Those with 16 or more years of formal education smoke at a 12 percent rate.

Non-Hispanic black men smoke at slightly higher rates than do non-Hispanic white men. But the reverse is true among women.

The demographics of smoking and taxation received scant attention during last week's House and Senate debate. "But it is still a tax increase on the backs of the smokers. And in order to get enough money to pay for this, it would require 22 million new smokers."

Rep. Frank Pallone, D-N.J., defended putting the burden of expanded medical care on smokers. "The tobacco tax is a great way to pay for it," he said, "because if you tax people who are smoking and they smoke less, then we have less health problems."

Rep. Jim McCrery, R-La., did not buy that logic. "To propose funding a growing program with a declining revenue source is, I would submit, irresponsible fiscal policy," he said.

If the federal cigarette tax nears \$1 per pack, smokers in many states will pay hefty sums into government coffers unless they kick their habit. On top of the federal tax, New Jersey levies a \$2.57 per pack tax on cigarettes, followed by Rhode Island at \$2.46.

California is the next middle, at 87 cents a pack. Three states tax cigarettes at less than 30 cents per pack. South Carolina is the lowest at 7 cents.

Bill Phelps, spokesman for Philip Morris USA, based in Richmond, Va., said a steep federal tax increase could accelerate the national decline in smoking to the point that the insurance would have to find other revenue sources.

The average U.S. price of a pack of cigarettes has risen by 80 cents since 1999, Phelps said, largely because of state tax increases. State and federal tax increases received more than \$21 billion in cigarette excise taxes in the 2006 budget year, he said, "so we think this trend is unfair to adults who smoke and to retailers who sell tobacco products."

In Congress, these groups receive little sympathy. But some lawmakers say voters should know the details of the insurance program's proposed funding structure.

Rep. Mike Pence, R-Ind., who spoke against the bill in last week's debate, said: "The headline ought to read, 'Smokers in America to pay for middle-class welfare.'"



ASHLEY FRANSCCELL/Daily Herald

The day of the procedure, Ashley Franscell was supposed to put in eye drops every hour, no matter where she was. Much of the day her eyes felt very dry and she was consistently reaching for saline drops for comfort.

LASIK

Continued from B1

Finally they called my name and I anxiously, but hesitantly, walked into a small examination room.

I smiled when they asked me to take off my glasses. It would be the last time.

A nurse numbed and dilated my eyes for surgery and the surgeon marked my eyes to fit the laser to me.

It was a blurry walk into the surgery room.

I climbed into the chair and a handful of doctors and nurses began putting in numbing drops. They patched one eye up and put a speculum around my right eye. There was a little pressure but it didn't hurt. I looked straight ahead. My vision went fuzzy. Then they patched up my right eye and did the same to my left. In just a quick couple of minutes the laser had cut flaps in my eyes.

Then the doctor peeled back the flaps. My vision went really blurry and then to black. I could see only the light from the laser above me.

"Here's the laser, Ashley," the surgeon said.

There was a ticking noise and the nurses counted down from 18. The doctor then put the flap back into place and continued on the left eye.

In eight short minutes I was back in the waiting room. I couldn't believe how quick it was. It wasn't nearly as bad as I had prepared myself for. There was no pain.

My world was a little unfocused. But I could still see my boyfriend waiting for me.

When I got home I laid down for a nap, getting up every hour to put in eye drops. As I got up in the third hour I noticed how clearly I could see. I smiled.

"I can see. I can see," I exclaimed to no one in particular. It was amazing. Throughout the day my sight continued to get even more crisp.

As I drove myself to my follow-up appointment the next morning I couldn't help but laugh. I could see everything. Everything. It was amazing. The light poles a mile down the road were in focus. The edges of the road signs were crisp.

It's still hard to imagine that in one night, I had regained all of my sight. Just as fast as it seemed I had lost it, it was back.

Herniated Disc? Sciatica? Leg Pain?

UTAH — Have you tried pills, therapy, injections, massage, surgery and failed? Have you wondered if your severe back, sciatica, or leg pain will ever go away? Now there is a back pain guide that your doctor may not even know about that you can receive for free entitled, "The Severe Back, Sciatica, And Disc Pain Guide" that reveals a relatively new surgery-free, non-invasive technology designed to treat severe low back, buttock and leg pain along with herniated and slipped discs. To receive the guide free, call 1-800-893-7644 (Toll-free 24 Hour recorded message) or go to: www.911backpaininfo.com Frank C. Stafford, D.C.

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