



LOCAL

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JAY CRONLEY

Don't start with me — at least not yet

There's much to be done as we sit reflecting and contemplating on this, the 29th day of December, 2006.

There is weight to be lost, body shapes to be pulled together. Over the holiday period that runs Halloween through New Year's Day — or Thanksgiving through New Year's at the least — many people put on five or more pounds.

As we eat ourselves toward a new clothing size, thoughts of a fresh move toward better health are in the backs of most minds: sugary, buttery cookies go down better if it is believed that all sweets lead to a gym or exercise room.

Along with stomachs, much work is dropped over the holiday season.

Even if offices are open between Christmas and the new year, people wander in late and leave early.

Children are out of school and frequently accompany parents to abbreviated work days.

Few projects are started toward the end of the year.

We are currently in the eye of a gigantic cinnamon roll.

Much physical and mental activity is just around the next pizza.

Start at the very beginning: The start is the most important part of any project.

A great piece of writing can only start one way; same with a business proposal or a nutritious low-calorie eating program.

Good starts must be psychologically pleasing and should point toward good middles and successful conclusions.

Good starts have to be filled with hope.

False starts are time-consuming — and before you know it, it'll be time to try on spring shorts.

You can't launch a new beginning midweek.

That's depressing.

You can't start anything mid-month; it feels late.

You can't start anything mid-season.

It's difficult to start anything mid-thought.

Tomorrow is another day: Although I know people who have resolved to begin again upon the new year, I wouldn't be able to concentrate on much of value the first work day of 2007, a Tuesday after an OU football game the night before.

The changing of the climates has become somewhat blurred.

A changing of a sports season seems more defining of a time to get organized and fit.

College football bowls extend into the second week of January.

The Super Bowl is played in Miami the first week of February.

Turning on the switches that signal a single-minded seriousness toward fitness and creativity might be difficult during the professional football playoffs.

The pressure to begin anew is almost palpable.

Who could work, or work out, under such a stressful atmosphere?

I'm looking at the Monday after Valentine's, Feb. 19, as a starting point.

Be honest. Too soon?

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Embattled DA again under fire

► The Wagoner County prosecutor helped a campaign donor get a reduced DUI sentence, critics say.

By Rod Walton
World Staff Writer

WAGONER — District Attorney Richard Gray, who already is facing a felony embezzlement charge, is the subject of additional criticism during his last week in office for helping a

campaign contributor gain a reduced charge after a drunken-driving arrest.

Wagoner County District Judge Bruce Sewell is upset with Gray for taking an Okay man's misdemeanor case to a judge in Adair County. Sewell and Associate District Judge Darrell Shep-



Gray

herd both had rejected the reduced plea deal.

"How often do you reduce a DUI to a reckless driving?" Sewell asked Thursday regarding the Dec. 21 plea agreement. "That's very unusual."

Ted Boswell Jr. pleaded no contest to reckless driving and was fined for his July 15 arrest in Okay.

District Judge John Garrett approved the plea deal even though he rarely takes cases out of Wagoner County.

"I guess you could say it was un-

usual," Garrett said. "My understanding is that Sewell did not want to take the plea."

Boswell, 45, contributed \$5,000 — the maximum allowed — to Gray's campaign this year to keep the top prosecutor's post for Wagoner, Cherokee, Adair and Sequoyah counties.

Gray lost in the Democratic runoff to Jerry Moore, his former assistant.

Moore also won the general election and will take office next week.

SEE DA A-13

Icing on the cake

Benefit hockey game skates second to fun

By Leigh Woosley
World Staff Writer

From a few yards away, the children gliding across the ice rink looked like any kids at play.

They ran until an adult told them to slow down. They laughed until they folded over.

It took getting closer to see in each child's face the distinct physical features of Down syndrome — the full lips, the wide eyes. The traits cause people to stare, parents say, but that is changing because of occasions such as this.

Children with the Down Syndrome Association of Tulsa played hockey Thursday morning with the Tulsa Oilers at the Maxwell Convention Center downtown.

The rare outing on the ice was intended to acquaint the kids with the sport before they attend a Jan. 12 game, when the Oilers will face rival Oklahoma City Blazers.

From every ticket sold, \$4 will go to the Down Syndrome Association of Tulsa if the buyer mentions the organization.

An average of 5,200 people show up to most Oilers games, but that night, a larger crowd of more than 6,500 is expected.

A full house could raise more than \$28,000 for the association, a nonprofit organization of volunteers, most of whom have a personal link to Down syndrome, a genetic condition.

Erin Paul didn't expect to join the association, much less be its vice president, but since her 5-year-old

daughter, Taylor, was born with Down syndrome, Paul has found the group a tremendous support.

Her husband, Adam Paul, is president of the association.

"It's not the path you would have chosen," Erin Paul said as her blonde-headed daughter pranced across the ice. "It's not a bad path. It's just a different path."

The relationship between the association and the Oilers started last year when the hockey team was asked for support by Beth Soderfelt, an association board member and the mother of a 5-year-old boy with Down syndrome.

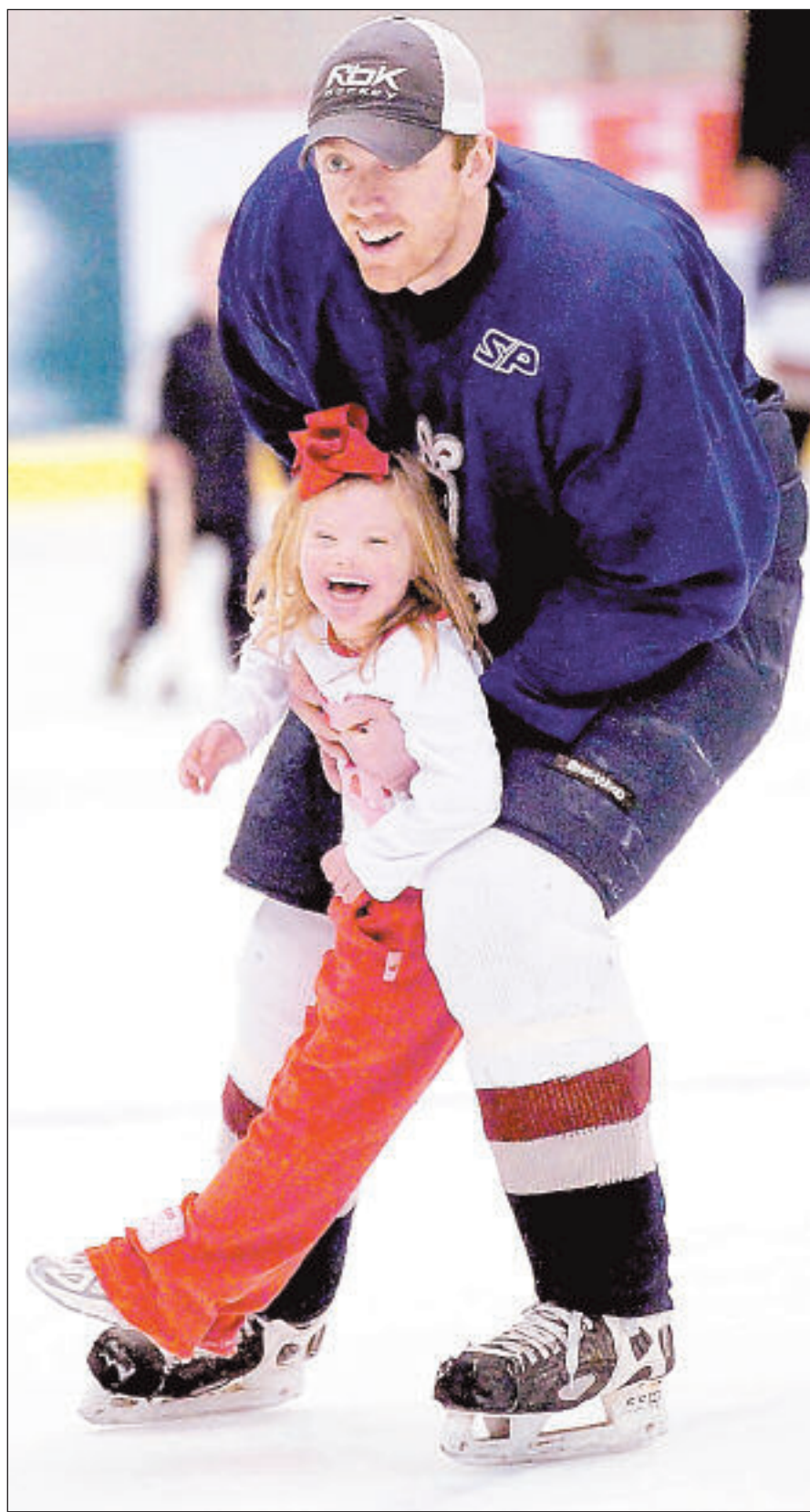
"We want to get our children to do things other kids do," Soderfelt said. "Then individuals in the community see that children with Down syndrome are more like normally developing children. It is important for others to see these children out in the community."

Paul said she constantly educates others about her daughter's condition.

"They say, 'Oh, she's a Down's child,' but I tell them that Taylor has Down syndrome," Paul said. "It's using forced language. That's important because it sets the tone. She is Taylor. It just so happens she has Down syndrome. It's just part of who she is."

The disorder doesn't stop Taylor from taking dance lessons, learning in a regular classroom or playing soccer with 7-year-old Benjamin Ahumada, who also has Down syndrome.

SEE HOCKEY A-13



MIKE SIMONS / Tulsa World

Tulsa Oilers hockey player David Beauregard skates with Taylor Paul, 5, on Thursday at the Maxwell Convention Center downtown. The Oilers invited children from the Down Syndrome Association of Tulsa to play on the ice with them in advance of a Jan. 12 home game that will serve as a fundraiser for the association.

3 towns declared speed traps

► The designation restricts local police from enforcing traffic laws on major highways.

By Curtis Killman
World Staff Writer

Three state towns have been designated speed traps, a label that restricts local police from enforcing traffic laws on major highways.

Caney, in Atoka County, and Mof-

fett, in Sequoyah County, both were notified Dec. 20 that they are to cease enforcing traffic laws on the respective U.S. highways that pass through their towns, state Department of Public Safety spokeswoman and Oklahoma Highway Patrol Trooper Kera Philippi said.

In contrast, Jones sees a town crying out for the commercial help that a prison could provide.

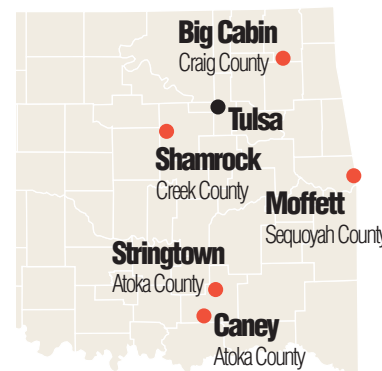
Spavinaw sports only a handful of businesses and, according to the

The Attorney General's Office also has approved the speed-trap designation for Stringtown, in Atoka County, but DPS officials said they haven't taken any action against that town.

The action has Caney officials worrying about both the safety of residents and the financial future of the town, said Sharon Crites, Caney's court clerk.

SEE SPEED A-13

Speed trap probes



Source: Department of Public Safety Tulsa World

Prison offers economic boost, Spavinaw officials say

By Rhett Morgan
World Staff Writer

SPAVINAW — Spavinaw probably is best known as the birthplace of baseball Hall of Famer Mickey Mantle.

But economically speaking, the community has continued to strike out, Vice Mayor Jerry Jones said.

Some residents say landing a private prison could change that.

"This thing could be the drive we need," Jones said of a proposed pris-

on in the Mayes County town of about 600 people. "It's not for all of us. It's for the future of the town — the kids, the grandkids."

Florida-based GEO Group Inc. has told state legislators that it is considering an expansion of its for-profit correctional facilities, state Rep. Doug Cox, R-Grove, said.

The company has proposed erecting a 1,000-bed prison in Spavinaw, a move that GEO claims would generate 200 jobs.

Jones said he and other townsfolk

were incensed by published comments made earlier this week by a Tulsan who owns property in Spavinaw.

Kathy McKenney said housing inmates in Spavinaw would be a public safety risk and would destroy the community's picturesque lakeside ambience.

In contrast, Jones sees a town crying out for the commercial help that a prison could provide.

Spavinaw sports only a handful of businesses and, according to the

Oklahoma Tax Commission, monthly sales tax revenues that have averaged about \$2,100 over the past year.

The prekindergarten through eighth-grade school is struggling to stay afloat, and most residents drive to such nearby communities as Pryor and Jay to work, Jones said.

Lake Spavinaw is among Tulsa's main sources of drinking water, and the city of Tulsa is Spavinaw's largest employer, Spavinaw Police Chief Jerry McDonald said.

Tulsa employs 16 people — 13 full-time and three seasonal workers — at its water treatment plant and other operations there, said Bob Brownwood, the city of Tulsa's water supply manager.

Jones believes that a prison could spark the construction of businesses such as motels and restaurants.

"It's not the ideal situation," said Jones, a Spavinaw resident for about 12 years. "But it's the only situation.

SEE PRISON A-13