

Tuesday, Dec. 28, 2010

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## 'Dollars for Deals' scandal rocked our notion of justice

By the Herald staff



Lawyer Jeff Finney said that his desire to keep an addiction to painkillers a secret led him to steal money that belonged to Kennewick's Home Base program. Finney was indicted by a federal grand jury in late 2006. He and his wife, Pam, say faith has helped them cope with the ordeal. See decade rewind story.

*-- Editor's note: The Herald is looking back as the first decade of the millennium wraps up. This is the sixth of a 10-day series recounting the top local news stories of that decade.*

A program that was supposed to help a youth program but instead was also lining the pockets of a couple of attorneys was the top story of 2006.

The so-called "Dollars for Deals" scandal uncovered by the Herald revealed that a prosecutor and defense attorney were offering to reduce criminal defendants' charges in exchange for cash donations to a city of Kennewick-run youth program called Home Base.

But more than 30 stories published over 10 months revealed that Tyler Morris, a former assistant Kennewick city attorney, and Jeff Finney, a former Benton County District Court defense attorney, were pocketing some of the supposed donations.

A yearlong FBI investigation brought indictments against Finney and Morris and the end of all cash-for-deals programs in the Tri-Cities.

The attorneys, who took an estimated \$140,000, eventually were convicted.

Other top stories of 2006 were:

-- No 2: No one was happy about Hanford's vitrification plant, as the Department of Energy was hit with sticker shock when the estimated cost of the plant more than doubled from \$5.5 billion to \$12.2 billion.

Contractor Bechtel National laid off more than 1,000 workers because of a reduced budget. And state officials fumed as the project dropped further behind schedule because Congress cut funding.

-- No. 3: A lightning strike ignited the Columbia Complex wildfire, which at one time was declared the nation's top firefighting priority.

The 109,402-acre fire spread from its origin near Dayton on Aug. 21 through the Umatilla National Forest and Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness Area, forcing residents to evacuate and closing roads.

It wasn't until the end of September, with the arrival of cooler and wetter weather, that firefighters had the fire mostly contained, but it wasn't declared out until Dec. 1.

It cost \$32.9 million to suppress.

-- No. 4: The Tri-City murder count held steady from the previous year with seven people killed.

In August, Doug Britt, 29, shot and killed his estranged wife Julie Britt, 34, in Kennewick, and wounded her friend Dewey Mahoney, 42, of Kennewick, before turning the gun on himself.

In July, Steven Leighton, 57, of Pasco, killed his estranged wife, Patricia Leighton, 41. Police found him dead in the Blue Mountains of an apparent suicide.

Igor V. Samolyuk, 19, of Kennewick, was charged with the stabbing death of his estranged wife, Yana Samolyuk, 18.

And William "Jim" Kozak, 68, of Kennewick, shot and killed his estranged wife, Barbara Davis Kozak, 43, then killed himself later that night after police stopped his car north of Spokane.

In court, the Rev. Randall Foos was convicted of killing bicyclist Sara Casey, 19, in a 2003 car accident. Retired Tacoma cop Walter W. Copland was convicted of shooting Harvey "Al" Anthis in 2005.

-- No. 5: The Tri-City economy remained strong, in spite of fewer Hanford jobs, 500 layoffs at the Tyson meat plant and the closing of the Welch's Kennewick plant with the loss of 100 jobs. Regional economist Dean Schau said in November the Tri-City unemployment rate and job growth were the strongest in 30 years because of a booming construction industry.

-- No. 6: WSU Tri-Cities expanded to become a four-year university. Vicky Carwein was hired as the new chancellor, and the first freshman class was expected the next fall.

w No. 7: After a decade of impasse that stalled the issuing of new water permits, the Legislature approved the Columbia River Water Management Program. It allowed new water rights to be issued for the first time in years, while also requiring users to put water back for fish survival.

-- No. 8: It was a frustrating year for Richland drivers and businesses as a four-month construction project demolished and rebuilt parts of George Washington Way, combined with continuing work on the Highway 240 expansion, brought detours.

-- No. 9: A Tri-City man who was a member of the Islamic Center in West Richland went on a shooting spree at a Seattle Jewish center in July, killing one woman and wounding five others.

Naveed Haq was the son of a prominent Muslim family that founded the Islamic Center in the Tri-Cities.

-- Tie, No. 10: Initiative 297, which would have stopped shipments of radioactive waste from going to Hanford, was tossed out by a federal judge. The measure had been approved in 2004 by nearly 70 percent of the state's voters.

Tying for No. 10 was a series of protest rallies over proposals to control illegal immigration. A Pasco rally in April drew 1,000 people, and another in May drew 5,000 to march in Pasco in support of immigrants.

Read more: <http://www.tri-cityherald.com/2010/12/28/1306284/dollars-for-deals-scandal-rocked.html#ixzz19Wkwa7Lo>