GREAT FALLS TRIBUNE

CHASING CHAINS

Great Falls is slowly growing more attractive to big-name chains /**BUSINESS**

Volleyball, prep football results /**1S**
Pakistani president grabs power /**2A**
White Sulphur standoff ends /**1M**

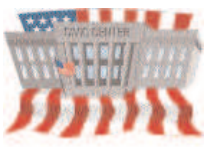
SIX-MAN FOOTBALL

Why it's a whole different ballgame; plus, TV listings and more /**PLAY**

Sunday, November 4, 2007 MONTANA'S NEWSPAPER **$1.50**

One issue looms large

Candidates debate whether election rides on power plant



One poll for all
Find out where and how to register and vote /**7A**

Belt, Cascade
A glance at area races /**7A**

By RICHARD ECKE
Tribune Staff Writer

Great Falls voters on Tuesday will pick two city commissioners, at least one of them new, and a mayor.

One hot issue in the race has been the proposed Highwood Generating Station, a coal-fired power plant that five Montana rural electric cooperatives want to build in cooperation with the city of Great Falls. The city would own 15 percent of the plant, if it can obtain revenue-bond financing for its share of the plant. The power plant would be located east of Great Falls.

Opponents of the power plant have blasted its environmental effects and the impact it could have on a Lewis and Clark portage route, sparked arguments over renewable energy as an alternative and criticized the city for taking financial risks.

"I hope it's not a one-issue election," said plant supporter Elna Hensley, a former city employee running for one of the two City Commission seats. "Certain candidates seem to be trying to make it so."

One of those candidates is Stuart Lewin, who said "I am opposed to this plant and I don't want it constructed," during the last candidates' forum.

"It is a one-issue race," Lewin maintained Friday.

There are plenty of other

See ELECTION, 7A

Grains of compassion

Choteau native helps combat poverty and save a wonder by selling rice

By KAREN OGDEN
Tribune Enterprise Editor

Mary Hensley was a 22-year-old Peace Corps volunteer from Choteau, when she climbed on a military truck bound for the Philippines' lush Cordillera Mountains.

She disembarked high in the ancient rice terraces, known to tourists as the stepping stones to the sky, or the Eighth Wonder of the World.

Hensley

Little did she know she was stepping into a simmering civil war.

"They didn't tell us these things when we got dropped off," Hensley recalled.

But she came armed — with iodized salt.

Her mission: To fight the goiters that bulged from the necks of villagers, particularly women, mired in poverty and malnutrition.

Three decades later — having pursued an American life a world away from the Philippine mountainsides — Hensley would return to her base village of Uma with a new mission in a changed country.

Hensley's Ulm-based rice import company, Eighth Wonder, is selling "heirloom" rice — distinctive-tasting varieties cultivated for centuries by families in the mountains of the northern Philippines — in upscale restaurants and supermarkets across the United States.

While pleasing gourmet palates, the rice is putting cash in the pockets of impoverished farmers and helping preserve the imperiled terraces.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization recently recognized Hensley's work with a $2,000 grant. It's a small sum from an American point of view, but it's enough to purchase cleaning equipment so farmers will no longer have to hand clean their harvest with mortars and pestles.

"The stories that come out, they both fill you with hope and also break your heart that something so small can also have such a huge effect on peoples' lives," Hensley said.

See RICE, 5A

COURTESY OF EIGHTH WONDER

The rice terraces of Banaue are a UNESCO World Heritage site.

EIGHTH WONDER

Harvest time near the village of Amganod in the Banaue area in Ifugao Province.

Toxic legacy: Years after first warnings, lead, mercury and other poisons remain health threats

NOTE: This is the last in a three-part series. The first looked at the lingering threat from lead and the second examined the threat from toxins in plastics. To read a rest of this series, including multimedia and interactive graphics, visit www.gftribune.com. You'll find a link on the home page.

Mercury may be taking huge toll on America's kids

➤Widely used toxin could be causing brain damage in hundreds of thousands each year

By LARRY WHEELER
Gannett News Service

Despite decades of government attempts to erase it from household use, the poisonous metal mercury remains a threat to the environment and public health, especially to children and women of childbearing age.

As many as 600,000 babies might be born in the United States each year with irreversible brain damage because pregnant mothers ate mercury-contaminated fish, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. Medical researchers are just beginning to explore the effect of mercury exposure on adults that leaves some in a disorienting "fish fog."

Nationwide, more than 8,000 lakes, rivers and bays are compromised by mercury's toxic effects.

In Montana
Coming mercury-emissions standards controversial /**4A**

Where is all the mercury coming from, and can something be done to stop it?

A partial answer can be found in the nearly 500 coal-burning power plants that supply about half the nation's electricity. The $298 billion electric utility industry is the nation's largest source of airborne mercury emissions and the latest target of federal and state clean-air regulations.

U.S. mercury emissions have been cut nearly in half since 1990 as municipal, medical and haz-

See MERCURY, 4A

Village locks down in fear of rabid wolves

By MARY PEMBERTON
Associated Press Writer

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — Children in the village of Marshall do not go outdoors without an adult. They have been told to stay inside after dark. When night falls, three sentries are posted along the village periphery to keep the wolves out.

Precautions have been taken in the Eskimo village in western Alaska after a pack of wolves attacked sled dogs Oct. 26, killing three adults and three puppies. A wolf killed by villagers turned out to be rabid.

"There is a concern about the pack that is left remaining that is wandering out there," he said. "That pack is still out there and might have the rabies."

On Friday morning, fresh wolf tracks were spotted a quarter-mile from town, said Ray Alstrom, mayor of Marshall.

Ron Clarke, assistant director of the Division of Wildlife Conservation with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, said it is likely that all members of the pack are infected with the fatal disease.

"It is likely all of them will die of it," he said.

Rabies is spread through saliva and attacks the nervous system. The only way to determine if an animal is rabid is to cut off the head and test it. The disease is usually fatal in animals and humans.

Marshall, with 380 residents, has dozens of dogs. Alstrom said many homes have at least a few dogs to help haul fish, check trap lines and bring home firewood.

The wolf pack attacked three dog teams, one belonging to Clem Kameroff. His lead dog, a 10-year-old female, was badly injured. She had to be shot and her carcass burned. Kameroff

Gannett News Service/Tribune

said another injured dog, a 2-year-old, was put down Friday.

"I am kind of hurting about it and feeling sad about it," Kameroff said. He uses the dogs for subsistence and in village races.

Kimberlee Beckmen, a wildlife veterinarian with the Department of Fish and Game, said rabies is rare in wolves in Alaska, but the other pack members might be infected.

"Rabies virus is present in saliva, and when several animals eat from the same source, the virus can be quickly spread to other members of the pack," she said.

According to state epidemiologists, three people have died from rabies in the history of Alaska. Two of the three cases involved wolves, while the other one was a dog. The last case was in 1943 in Wainwright.

Only 18 wolves have tested positive for rabies in Alaska since 1977. The last confirmed case was in Dillingham in 1998.

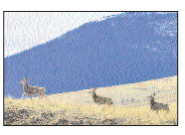
Wolf encounters with dogs are a fact of life in rural Alaska.

"They kill them and eat them," Clarke said. "A wolf pack wandering by goes, 'Wow, look at that. There's an easy meal.' "

The Rabies virus incubates in for approximately three-12 weeks. Infected animals usually die within seven days of becoming sick.

Great Falls forecast
High: **52°** – Low: **26°**
Mostly cloudy with chance of rain
Full weather report on back page

More travel plans are now online



Visit www.gftribune.com for Lewis and Clark forest travel plans. Site now includes Little Belts and Crazies.

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A Gannett newspaper
No. 175 — 123rd Year

Rice: Demand for Hensley's product increasing

FROM 1A

Her story is one of risk, personal sacrifice — Hensley didn't draw a paycheck from her new business for four years — and homecoming.

After spending much of her adult life in Vermont, Hensley decided to locate her company in the Great Falls area.

She found invaluable help here in dry-land wheat country, for her watery, faraway farm operation.

Timeless Seeds, a Conrad-based company famous for its organic seed, cereal grains and edible seed, helped Hensley package her product and break into the upscale food market.

Timeless Seeds CEO and General Manager David Oien gave her office space at the company's processing facility in Ulm in exchange for answering the phones and other work.

Hensley's efforts to support family farmers, even across the Pacific Ocean, mesh with Timeless' mission to promote environmentally and socially sustainable agriculture, Oien said.

"It's about saving the environment," he said. "It's about creating a social and business infrastructure that's grassroots."

Changing course

Hensley's mission was born out of one of the most poignant memories of her two-year stay in the mountains.

"When that rice was cooked it smelled so wonderful I could hardly wait to eat it," she said.

Hensley graduated from the University of California-Berkley in 1976 with a degree in social work and signed up for the Peace Corps without a second thought.

"In my family it was expected that you do some kind of public service," said Hensley, whose mother was a church organist. Her father was a school board member in Choteau, where her family owned the Hensley motel.

After her tour of duty, Hensley settled in Seattle and worked with a shop that helped refugees from Laos sell handcrafted goods at Pike Place Market.

Next came a 21-year stretch in Vermont, where she found what many would consider a dream job. While working for a high-end travel agency, Hensley toured the world setting up vacations for wealthy clients.

But it never felt right.

"It didn't have a lot of redeeming qualities when you're sitting in a five-star hotel in Africa," Hensley said. "There was something uncomfortable about that for me."

She traveled across Europe, China and Central America, but never returned to the Philippines.

"I didn't have the courage to go back to see how people remember you or what sort of damage you would have done when you were there," Hensley said.

Her complacency was shaken when, in 1995, her beloved older brother and role model died of leukemia.

Franklin Hensley was executive director of Catholic Community Services for the Catholic Archdiocese in Portland, Ore.

"You sort of review your own life when someone who is doing so much for people dies," Hensley said. "So I started rethinking what I was doing."

Back to the future

Without a definite plan, Hensley returned to school in 2001. At the School for International Training in Brattleboro, Vt., she earned a graduate degree in organizational management with an emphasis on social entrepreneurship.

The school's business philosophy matched hers — a "triple bottom line" that factors in social and environmental impacts as well as profit.

She did her required internship with a Catholic organization in Manila and found a country changed for better and for worse.

The goiters she had once set out to eradicate were almost unheard of, except in the elderly.

"You didn't see people starving like you did," Hensley said.

However, new problems had taken hold. The nation's population has doubled in the past 30 years, but the infrastructure hasn't kept up.

"Super malls" are popping up in the cities, but not the waste facilities to handle the trash of an emerging consumer society.

Ox-drawn carts and air-conditioned tour buses jockey for space on the two-lane road into the mountains.

Most disturbing to Hensley, the terraces are drying up and crumbling as young people abandon them in search of jobs in the city or overseas.

Hensley's return to the village of Uma lifted her heart.

"Mary, where have you been? Who did you sell your motorcycle to?" friends asked after her 27-year hiatus.

One woman brought Hensley a hand-woven basket that she had ordered and paid for, but never picked up.

There, among the steaming pots of rice, lay her future.

For her graduate work, Hensley developed a marketing plan and feasibility study on a rice import business.

"If I asked the farmers to go out on a limb and sell it, I wanted to make sure the business part was going to work," she said.

Real cash, real change

For three months, Hensley toured almost 30 villages talking with farmers, mayors and agriculture officials about her idea.

Could they, would they, produce enough rice for a shipment of at least 1,000 kilos (a metric ton)? Were they willing to meet new sanitation and quality-control guidelines? Would government regulations allow for export?

"They were looking at it as do we want to sell a piece of our culture," Hensley said "The grain, especially for the older people, is very sacred."

With everyone on board, Hensley returned to the United States.

The farmers in the Philippines are trained by RICE, a nonprofit organization headed by Vicky Garcia, a Filipino community development expert.

Garcia and her staff have trained and certified 60 farmers, who return to their villages and teach others the required sanitation and quality-control measures. In an e-mail to Hensley, Garcia related the stories of farmers who brought their grain in for the latest shipment.

Many live below the region's poverty line of $240 per capita a year.

Angelina, a widow with seven children, "has not been proud of herself for once (sic) but after seeing how her inspected rice passed quality she was in tears," Garcia wrote.

One farmer produced 500 kilos and used his earnings to buy a generator. He then leveraged his investment by renting out the generator.

Hensley pays from about 55 cents a pound for the staple varieties to 80 cents a pound for sticky dessert rice.

Most of the terrace farmers don't sell their rice for the paltry sums they'd get on the local market. Instead it's used as a staple food and bartering tool.

"What to me is so amazing is that no one ever tried doing this before," Hensley said.

Even the roughly $30 a farmer earns from the minimum crop — 25 kilos — is enough to buy school clothes or stash away capital to start a small shop.

Many of the farmers rarely have significant cash. One young woman, when asked what she would do with her cash after this fall's harvest, said she would go home and show it to her family, Garcia wrote.

"It is significant money to them, and when you pay significant money they can do something with it," Hensley said.

Buying in

Demand for the rice is growing as production ramps up.

Hensley imported less than a ton of rice her first year in business. Last year, she brought over two shipments totaling seven tons. Last month, an 18-ton shipment harvested by 395 farmers from 60 villages arrived in U.S. ports. Hensley hopes to import 40 to 50 tons of rice next year.

"I've been amazed by what she has managed to do," said Mary McNally, a professor at Montana State University-Billings, who taught as a guest instructor in Hensley's graduate program in Vermont. "She's sort of bootstrapped it herself pretty much. She didn't do it through any structured program. She just sort of figured it out."

The largest chunk of financing for the enterprise was Hensley's life savings combined with money given by friends.

"You don't do this without a certain amount of personal sacrifice when you don't have any startup capital or some huge amount of money behind you," Hensley said.

As the business grows, more assistance is flowing in.

This year, Heirloom got a $40,000 loan from Root Capital, a Cambridge, Mass.-based group that promotes enterprises based on the socially and environmentally sound fair-trade model.

The loan allowed Hensley to pay farmers upfront for their rice, and be paid back when her buyers receive their shipment.

Hensley was able to draw a paycheck from her business for the first time this fall.

"My hope is that this can be a sustainable business, that it can sell enough product and it will get enough money back to the farmers that they can continue farming if they choose to do so," she said.

Hensley said she hopes the farmers' story coupled with the promise of a delectable taste, will move the rice off the shelves.

Once consumers smell it cooking, she's convinced they'll be back for more.

Reach Tribune Enterprise Editor Karen Ogden at kogden@greatfallstribune.com or at 791-6536 or 800-438-6600.

PHOTOS COURTESY EIGHTH WONDER

A woman winnows, or cleans, rice by hand in the town of Banaue.

About the rice

To learn more about Heirloom Rice, visit the Web site at www.heirloomrice.com.

Heirloom Rice is sold at the following Montana locations:

- Choteau: Mountain Front Market
- Great Falls: 2J's
- Helena: Real Food Store
- Missoula: Good Food Store
- Whitefish: Third Street Market
- Billings: Global Village

Heirloom Rice is served at Benny's Bistro in Helena.

Rice bundles dry after the harvest in the village of Amganod. For more images, visit **www.gftribune.com/galleries.**

Unique rice prized by gourmets, chefs across the United States

The purple, gold and pink-hued grains of rice imported by Montana businesswoman Mary Hensley are sought after by hobby gourmets and by professional chefs such as Romy Dorotan, owner of the Cendrillon Filipino restaurant in New York's trendy Soho District.

"They have a very distinctive taste for every variety and texture," Dorotan said.

Although he grew up in the Philippines, he didn't know about the native rice varieties until he learned of Hensley's product, Heirloom Rice.

For years, the Philippine government pushed farmers to abandon their native rice in favor of new, higher-yield strains.

Dorotan uses Heirloom's sticky dessert varieties in a dish called "Champorado," a rice pudding made with "lots of milk and chocolate." Another variety is used as a side dish for baby-back ribs.

"It doesn't have the courseness of a brown rice, yet it's still nutty, buttery, chewy," Dorotan said.

> "You're preserving a variety that is not found anywhere else in the world."
>
> — *Sharon Chittick, co-owner of Bear Creek Fine Foods*

Each Heirloom rice variety has a distinct look and taste.

Fast-cooking "Tinawon Fancy," for example, is treasured by farmers in the high Banaue Rice Terraces. "Kalinga Unoy" has a "delectable taste and aroma" and is served during ceremonies to please the Kalinga God "Kabunyan," Hensley said.

A California-based company, Indian Harvest, has exclusive rights to market the rice to restaurants, promoting it to upscale restaurants across the United States.

The rice also is sold to three retail distributors in Seattle, Northern California and New England and placed on shelves in upscale and alternative food stores.

A one-pound bag of Heirloom Rice retails for roughly $5 to $6.19.

When people hear the story behind the rice it sells well, said Sharon Chittick, co-owner of Bear Creek Fine Foods, a wholesaler that distributes to high-end grocery stores across the Pacific Northwest.

"Everyone's wanting to preserve some of these agricultural areas in the world," Chittick said. "... You're preserving a variety that is not found anywhere else in the world. It's a unique product. It's an all-natural product."

— *Karen Ogden*

Central Montana's Cardiac Care Keeps Getting Better.

L.P. Maxwell, MD, our newest cardiology physician, returns to Montana after spending three years practicing in Missouri. Dr. Maxwell will be residing in Helena and providing a full range of cardiovascular services, both in the Helena office and at St. Peter's Hospital. He is a diplomat of the American Board of Internal Medicine, certified in the sub-specialty of cardiovascular disease with added qualifications in interventional and nuclear cardiology. Dr. Maxwell specializes in consultative adult clinical, invasive and interventional cardiology.

To schedule an appointment, call 406/442-8777.
Office hours are Monday through Friday 8 A.M. to 5 P.M.

Great American Smokeout® Fair

Learn how to kick the habit for good at this free event designed to help you become tobacco-free. Community resources will be on hand to provide information and answer questions on effective ways to quit for good. And while you're here, you can help judge the artwork of local school children in our Great American Smokeout® poster

When. 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Saturday, November 10

Where. Westgate Mall 1807 3rd NW