GRAND JUNCTION FREE PRESS WEEKEND
gjfreepress.com
Vol. 6, No. 076 November 13, 2009 FRIDAY

BLM CLEAN-UP: What's a fridge doing in the desert? **PA3.**

MOOOOVING PICTURE

COURTESY I "RANCHES OF COLORADO," COPYRIGHT JOHN FIELDER, 2009

Nature photographer John Fielder shot a number of photos of the Aubert Ranch on Glade Park for inclusion in his new book "Ranches of Colorado." The 3,700-acre Aubert property was conserved with the Mesa Land Trust in June. The project, a partnership with the Colorado Division of Wildlife, the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, the landowners and Mesa Land Trust, permanently protects from development land that has been in the Aubert family for six decades.
Fielder will be in Grand Junction Tuesday giving a free slideshow presentation. Read more about it in today's FreeTime section B1.

'Independence day'

For a local blind man, that day came when he moved out on his own

BY SHARON SULLIVAN
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Like any grown-up kid, Gary Sasser wanted to move out of his parents' home and into a place of his own.

At 38, he finally did.

"The hardest part was convincing my family I could do it," Sasser said. "They said, 'you're not going to — you will never make it.'"

Sasser, 51, was born blind. He was also born with a cleft lip and palate.

Sasser was a client at the Center for Independence 13 years ago. The nonprofit organization helps people with disabilities learn skills to achieve various levels of independence.

Center staff members came to Sasser's home to tell his parents they'd help him learn the skills needed to live on his own. They showed him how to sign up for phone service, and access human services so a home care provider could come twice a week to his apartment to assist with housekeeping, and meal preparation.

"One of the (CFI) staff came over and helped me organize my kitchen, and taught me kitchen skills," Sasser said. "They helped me set up my apartment for what I needed."

On March 22, 1996, Sasser moved into his own apartment.

"To this day I call that my independence day," Sasser said. "It was a whole new life. It opened a lot of doors that wouldn't open before."

The first couple of years had its bumps.

"I'd call staff and they'd come over to help me resolve what I thought were crises at the time, like for example the exploding meat loaf," Sasser said.

Over time the "disasters" decreased.

INDEPENDENCE I A2

SHARON SULLIVAN I FREE PRESS

Gary Sasser practices the piano Monday in the gymnasium at the Center for Independence. Sasser will perform Saturday during the center's benefit arts and crafts fair, which starts today.

Apartment vacancy rates rise

BY WYATT HAUPT JR.
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

A steep hike in the regional unemployment rate helped push apartment vacancies to the highest level in more than four years, state housing data showed Thursday.

The vacancy rate for multifamily units in the Grand Junction market skyrocketed to 7.5 percent in third quarter ending Sept. 30. That was up from 2.4 percent in the same three months of 2008, the Colorado Division of Housing reported.

The regional jobless rate was up more than 4 percent in the same one-year period.

"For the last several years the vacancy rate and the unemployment rate are tracking very similarly," said Gordon E. Von Stroh of the University of Denver, who authored and researched the report. "When unemployment goes up, vacancies go up. That is what happened in

VACANCY I A2

Political File: Rep. King being 'patient'

BY WYATT HAUPT JR.
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

State Rep. Steve King, R-Grand Junction, said this week that he would not challenge state Sen. Josh Penry should he decide to seek re-election to the Senate.

King was in the early stages of a campaign for the state Senate seat when Penry said he was abandoning his gubernatorial bid. Penry left the governor's race earlier this week.

"If Sen. Penry decides to run for re-election I would yield to him," King said.

That would seemingly leave King with only one other possibility — running for re-election to his House seat.

"I would consider it. Unfortunately it is complicated," said King, who was referring to a couple of other Republicans that have declared for the House seat. "It tends to be complicated because there are other people involved."

In the meantime King said he was going to be "patient," mainly because nothing has to be decided right now. King represents the 54th House District.

Tancredo for governor

Former Republican congressman Tom Tancredo is reportedly mulling a gubernatorial bid in 2010. The disclosure comes on the heels of Penry's announcement.

Tancredo would join a field consisting of Evergreen businessman Dan Maes and Scott McInnis, another former congressman.

"I had said that if Josh Penry wasn't in the race, I would be," said Tancredo in remarks to The Denver Post.

He added that his candidacy could rub some people the wrong way: "I know if I got into this thing, most of the party elite would not be happy."

Tancredo, who represented the 6th Congressional District of Colorado from 1999 to 2009, is perhaps best known for his opposition to illegal immigration.

FILE I A2