

Merry Christmas

DOUGLAS BUDGET

\$1⁰⁰

Wednesday,
December 21,
2016

Vol. 130 No. 51

AT HOME IN THIS WORLD



Jen Kocher photos

Gloria admires her ornament hanging on the Phillippi family Christmas tree, an ornament that helps mark her new life with her new family in Douglas.

After years-long effort to bring Gloria to U.S., personal ornament brings it all home for her

By JEN KOCHER
jennifer@douglas-budget.com

Gloria can't walk past the Phillippi family Christmas tree without stopping to admire her new ornament. "Me," she says, pointing to a colorful globe hanging on a branch at eye-level on which a dark-skinned angel soars above the world. She turns the ornament in her hand to get a better look at the angel, that she notes, looks a lot like herself.

Sara nods and smiles from her spot on the couch. She's still new at recognizing herself, Sara explains. Up until a few months ago, she'd lived without mirrors in the orphanage in Kinshasa, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where she'd spent the first three years of her life – until being adopted by the Phillippis last March. Since arriving in Douglas, Gloria spends a lot of time scrolling through pictures of herself on Sara's phone. Then, she runs to the mirror and giggles.

The ornament was a gift from one of Sara's youth fellowship students and was given to them as a symbol of hope during the long three-year period they waited for Gloria's exit papers to clear. To have this ornament now hanging on the family tree is a blessing that none of them takes lightly, especially as Gloria spins it in her hand, marveling at her likeness.

It's been a year of transitions for the family, some easier than others. Weather was initially a hard one. Back in March the snow scared her and she would scream whenever Sara tried to put a hat on her head or zip up her coat. Today, however, she's excited for snow and asks to go outside and play in it. Food

was a bit tricky at first but in the past nine months she's adopted a healthy appetite and has grown quickly.

It's been a year of transitions for the family. . . this season, it's about counting all of their blessings.

Communication, too, initially posed a few challenges. Speaking in her native Lingala, Gloria would attempt to talk to her new family only to burst out in frustrated tears. That was nine months ago. Today, at 4 years old, not only does Gloria speak fluent English, she attends pre-school at Head Start where she socializes

Please see
AT HOME,
page A-2



Peak season BLUES

By JEN KOCHER
jen@douglas-budget.com

By the end of this week, Danny Martinez and his team of six local UPS drivers will have driven nearly 8,000 miles, made 4,100 stops and delivered as many as 4,000 packages just this week alone. They will have maxed out their 60-hour allotted work week and, with the help of a couple alternate drivers and a few part-time helpers, they will have safely delivered Christmas packages to nearly every family in the vicinity from Douglas to Esterbrook to the surrounding communities of Glendo, Lusk and Bill.

Many will return from work exhausted, and there's a good chance that during this week some of those drivers will grow weary and several tempers will flare.

But, according to 36-year veteran driver Danny Martinez, it just part of what constitutes the 'peak' Christmas

Please see **UPS,** page A-3

Wilcox tapped as Wyoming commissioners assoc. treasurer

Wyoming's County Commissioners Association members elected new leaders – including Converse County's Jim Wilcox – at its winter meeting earlier this month in Lusk.

Natrona County Commissioner Rob Hendry was elected as the 2017-2018 president, taking the reins from Richard Ladwig of Niobrara County. Laramie County Commissioner Troy Thompson was elected vice president, and longtime Converse County Commissioner Wilcox was tapped to serve as treasurer.



JIM WILLOX

Hendry has served as a county commissioner since 2007 and was WCCA vice president for the last two years.

Please see **WILLOX,** page A-8

A Rotary-inspired holiday surprise for December

By SANDRA MUDD
sandra@douglas-budget.com

Very merry December received an early visit from Santa last Thursday night as part of the Douglas Rotary Club's annual gift giving

charity.

Who says Santa only comes down the chimney? Sometimes he even makes a personal visit to a four-plex apartment building where 7-year-old December Matter lives with her family.

In their festively decorated apartment, complete with a brightly lit Christmas

tree, December's mom and dad stand across the room, with dad's arm draped across mom's shoulders. They smile and watch December sitting next to Santa on the couch in her pj's as she watches with big eyes as Santa pulls out six presents

Please see **DECEMBER,** page A-2



December Matter, 7, hugs Santa during the Douglas Rotarians' annual Christmas package delivery Dec. 15.

This week's weather

	Wed.	Thur.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
High	32	32	39	39	17
Low	5	21	22	15	0

See the **LETTERS TO SANTA** in this week's Douglas Budget!



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High 32 32 39 39 17

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Gloria enjoys climbing on Sara's lap and 'styling' her hair as the new mother and daughter continue forming strong bonds.

At home

from the front page

easily with the other children and has shown no problems adjusting. Since arriving, she's grown nearly four inches and has put on several pounds. Her malaria is gone and save for a left drooping eyelid that doctors say will eventually have to be operated on when she's older, she's thriving and enjoys wrestling with her new brothers, 4-year-old brother Caleb and Jacob,

6, who treat her like she's always been here. That's especially true for Caleb who treats her like one of the boys.

This afternoon, after a morning apart, Gloria, dressed for ballet class in her black body suit and frosty pink tights, wrestles with Caleb in the corner of the kitchen as the two wobble like tops before collapsing into a pile of knees and elbows, which sets off a frenzy of ear-splitting giggles as the two race from the living room to the kitchen and back again – until a near miss with the Christmas tree shuts the game down. They settle together on the Oriental carpet at Sara's feet with a wooden puzzle.

This is quiet time, she explains to them, the brief calm before the next proverbial storm. In an hour, Jacob gets home from school, followed by husband Carsten, a math teacher at Douglas Middle School, as the family switches over to night with a whole new list of activities and schedules that can get a little confusing.

But it works, she laughs with both hands on her newly emerged pregnant belly, especially now that she's through her first trimester. Another unexpected gift to round out the year. The kids are excited about their new sister, she says – even Gloria, who initially had a hard time sharing Sara with her siblings after having spent her life without a mother. It took some time to set those boundaries, and now they are working on Gloria's sleeping patterns, which are pretty erratic.

She sleeps soundly from bedtime to about midnight or 2 a.m. at which point she wakes up ready to play and doesn't understand why her parents or brothers might want to get some sleep. Sleep in general, for Gloria, is akin to an acrobatic performance as she flops and turns like a porpoise, to the point where now she sleeps in her own room with her toys at the ready for her late-night play sessions.

They're still transitioning, Sara smiles, marveling more at the welcoming from community members who has gone out of their way to make Gloria and the Phillippis feel at home, and this season it's about counting their blessings.



The bonds of a family supercede skin color and origin of birth, according to the Phillippis, who are just happy for the opportunity to raise Gloria in a loving family in the warm community of Douglas.



Caleb and Gloria join forces to piece together a puzzle on a wintry December afternoon. The two 4 year olds have become close friends and playmates in the months since Gloria has joined the Phillippi family.

On behalf of Converse County Aging Services, Inc., we would like to express our sincere appreciation to the

KNISELY FAMILY FOUNDATION

for its generous donation. This contribution will be used to supplement the home services program which prevents long term care institutionalization. The mission of the Knisely Family Foundation is to assist in building strong communities.

Its generosity is truly appreciated!

December

from the front page

out of his bag - all of them just for her.

December just celebrated her birthday on the 10th of this month and this second round of gifts from Santa is an unexpected delight.

She is all smiles as she stacks her presents under the tree with the handful of others in anticipation of the big day.

Bringing joy to children is what it is all about, according to Rotary Committee Chair Blake Hollon, who heads up

the Rotarians' yearly effort to bring cheer to families in need.

Going on more than 22 years of delivering an early Christmas to local families, Hollon says the Rotarians collect the names from applicants who have signed up for the Noel's Christmas Giving program – people who think their children might like a visit from Santa.

"We are a service organization, and this is just another community service

we get to fulfill," Hollon said.

Rotary members pick one family each, call them to get to know their needs a little better, then go out and buy the 'gifts.'

Three Santas made their way around town on Dec. 15 with maps Hollon created, handing out gifts like warm coats, hats and gloves, and special requested items to 36 children, all along 17 stops that only took each "Santa" around an hour and half to deliver.



Phillip Harnden photos

December Matter, 7, excitedly looks at the presents she received from Santa and his elves during the Douglas Rotarians' annual Christmas package delivery Dec. 15.

Man allegedly uses shotgun to settle religious argument, facing charges

By SANDRA MUDD
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An argument over religious beliefs that escalated into an aggravated assault and battery charge has a Douglas man facing up to 10 years imprisonment and a \$10,000 fine, if convicted.

The case began when Douglas police officers were called to a residence on 4th Street in late November for a disturbance.

After talking to the victim, police were informed that Andrew Cain and the victim had gotten into an argument over religious beliefs and that Cain had allegedly become angry, started yelling and calling the victim names.

He then allegedly placed the loaded shotgun on her chest and told her to get out of the residence, according to records filed in Converse County Circuit Court.

After Cain agreed to let the officers see the gun, they saw at least one shell in the magazine, police allege.

Cain is out on a 10 percent down payment of his \$10,000 cash bond. His next hearing is scheduled for Dec. 27.



ANDREW CAIN

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Gifts.

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FOR YOUR COWGIRL

FOR YOUR BEST PAL, FIDO

FOR YOUR OUTDOOR ADVENTURER

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COUNTRY CHRISTMAS SALE
SALE ENDS DECEMBER 24!

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