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Twelve dead in shooting at theater

By Thomas Peipert

The Associated Press

AURORA, Colo. (AP) — A former medical student in a gas mask barged into a crowded Denver-area theater during a midnight showing of the Batman movie early today, hurled a gas canister and then opened fire, killing 12 and injuring at least 50 others in one of the deadliest mass shootings in recent U.S. history.

When the smoke began to spread, some moviegoers thought it was a stunt that was part of the “The Dark Knight Rises,” one of the most highly anticipated films of the summer. They saw a silhouette of a person in the haze near the screen, first pointing a gun at the crowd and then shooting.

“There were bullet (casings) just falling on my head. They were burning my forehead,” Jennifer Seeger said, adding that the gunman, dressed like a SWAT team member, fired steadily except when he stopped to reload.

“Every few seconds it was just: Boom, boom, boom,” she said. “He would reload and shoot and anyone who would try to leave would just get killed.”

The suspect was taken into custody and identified by federal law enforcement officials as 24-year-old James Holmes. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss an ongoing investigation. Authorities did not release a motive. The FBI said there was no indication of ties to any terrorist groups.

Holmes had an assault rifle, a shotgun and two pistols, a federal law enforcement official said, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss the ongoing investigation.

FBI agents and police used a hook and ladder fire truck to reach Holmes’ apartment in Aurora, police Chief Dan Oates said. They put a camera at the end of a 12-foot pole inside the apartment.

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County to buy medical gear

By Christina Beringer

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Saying more and more people are too heavy for standard cots, Emergency Medical Services Director Joe Hickert got approval from county commissioners Monday to look into buying “bariatric” equipment for one ambulance.

He said there’s a real need to serve a growing population.

Hickert said for just under \$10,000, he can equip the department with a cot and a bariatric kit. Having this equipment available

could turn into an additional revenue source, he added.

“We’ll be the first in the area to have it,” he explained. “Other counties will have to come to us for that service.”

Hickert also reported that since the state signed a contract with Zoll, a company that provides medical equipment, he found a discounted price for automated external defibrillators used to revive heart patients.

Firefighters in Brewster and Rexford both asked him to buy the

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Snakes, wildlife moving into the city

By Sam Dieter

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Colby residents may have a new problem to worry about with the heat wave this summer.

Interim City Manager Randy Jones said Thursday that snakes

and other wildlife have been coming into the city, probably looking for shade and water.

Jones said that he has heard of two snakes, one a rattle snake, that had been killed recently in the city. People have also reported seeing

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Courthouse closed all day for funeral

The Thomas County courthouse will be closed all day Monday for the funeral of County Appraiser Mary Cech after a change in plans. Officials said earlier that offices would reopen for the afternoon.

County Clerk Shelly Harms said her office got a call about the change late Thursday afternoon from Ken Christiansen, chairman of the county commission. Basically, she said, because Cech had worked for the county 35 years and knew pretty much everyone, he thought it would be better not to make

employees rush back to work at 1 p.m. after the funeral.

Instead, the courthouse, other county offices and the landfill will be closed all day. Harms said county employees plan to gather that afternoon away from the courthouse to celebrate and remember Cech.

At City Hall, Public Works Director Omar Weber said city trash trucks will run regular routes Monday despite the landfill closing. And Judge Glenn Schiffner said court offices will be open from 1 to 2:30 for a child support enforcement hearing. Many people travel from a distance for the hearing, court workers said, and it wouldn’t be fair to them to cancel.



Bluegrass festival begins with potluck

Blake McLemore of Driven (above) stood and played bass while (from left) Landon Miller and Levi Miller of Triple L and Brandon McLemore of Driven sat in during a jam session that opened the Pickin’ on the Plains Bluegrass and Folk Festival on Thursday night. The festival began with a potluck dinner in the 4-H building and the jam session outside just afterward.

Mark Johnson sat next to Amy Miller of Triple L (below) and talked with a spectator at the jam session. Johnson, a long time volunteer at the festival, will be helping coordinate performances Sunday morning.

Festival emcee Marshal Allen Bailey (below left) accompanied his wife Janey’s singing during the jam session.

Levi Miller (left) played his mandolin at the evening session. Miller and his family, who make up Triple L, came from New Mexico to play the festival.

SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press



Three women receive scholarships

Three Thomas County women have received scholarships from the Citizens Foundation, the fund-raising arm of Citizens Medical Center in Colby.

Tera Raymond of Colby won a \$1,000 Dr. Jeff Jennings Memorial Scholarship, established in 2003, said Tama Unger, the foundation’s director. Raymond is studying at the University of Kansas and plans a career in pharmacy.

Whitney Schultz of Brewster received a \$1,500 award from the Citizens Medical Center Health Care Scholarship. \$500 of that is provided by the Citizens Medical Center Auxiliary, Unger said. Schultz is in the nursing



Dani Dietz



T. Raymond



W. Schultz

program at Colby Community College. Dani Dietz, also of Brewster, won a \$1,500 annual scholarship from an endowment established in 2009 by Dr. Floyd and Mary Smith

of Colby. Dietz is in the registered nursing program at Colby.

“Providing scholarships to students in the nine-county area of northwest Kansas has been a project for Citizens Foundation since its inception,” said Unger. “Northwest Kansas should be very proud of its young people who have chosen a career in health care.”

“Annual scholarships of this size aren’t around every corner, and it is because of the continued financial support Citizens Foundation receives from its public that makes these awards possible.”

