

Shorts

Fly the Coop 5K Run, Walk is March 11

MONTE VISTA — Join us for the first annual Fly the Coop 5K Run and Walk March 11 at 10 a.m. This race is scheduled to provide a fun, new event for the Crane Festival. All proceeds will go to Monte Vista Community Ambulance Service.

This race is for runners and walkers of all abilities, ages, and sizes. The event will begin at Ski Hi Park. There are numerous age divisions and the top three racers in each age group for both the run and the walk will receive ribbons. The top-three finishers of each race will receive medals. All entrants will receive a T-shirt and snacks after the race.

For more information email Deb Haverfield at runnerangunner@gmail.com, or contact the Monte Vista Chamber. Pre-registration cost (before March 1) is \$25. Race day registration will be at 9 a.m. with the cost of \$30.

SLV Extension offering free lunch and learn series

MONTE VISTA — The Colorado State University San Luis Valley Area Extension Office is offering a free lunch and learn series for America Saves Week, Feb. 27-March 2, from noon to 1 p.m.

Monday, Feb. 27, — Saving Automatically

Tuesday, Feb. 28 — Saving for the Unexpected

Wednesday, March 1 — Saving for Major Milestones

Thursday, March 2 — Paying Down Debt Is Saving

Register online at <https://23moneytalks.eventbrite.com>. A Zoom link for this online class will be emailed upon registration.

For more detailed information and application, contact Janae Naranjo at 719-852-7381 or janae.naranjo@colostate.edu.

Center prepares for Urban Renewal Authority

BY PATRICK SHEA

CENTER — Dozens of Center business leaders, residents, and elected officials met at the Center Viking Youth Club on Feb. 21 to celebrate achievements over the past five years that put development plans into motion. Establishing Urban Renewal Authority (URA) is the next step.

After sharing tacos, rice, and beans from Azteca De Oro, participants heard reports from Center Town Manager Brian Lujan and representatives from Downtown Colorado Inc. (DCI). Center Consolidated Schools

Superintendent Carrie Zimmerman had to leave early to catch the end of the girls high school basketball playoff game. For tax-collection and distribution, special districts like the school infrastructure play a key role in development.

To qualify for the money required *Please see URBAN on Page 2A*

Center Town Manager Brian Lujan kicked off presentations and celebrations of development plans at the Center Viking Youth Club on Feb. 21.

Photo by Patrick Shea



Center Kiwanis 67th annual Pancake Supper



Photos by Sandra Marquez

People again supported the Kiwanis Club of Center's President's Day Pancake Supper on Monday, Feb. 20, at the Center School Cafeteria. This was the 67th year of the supper that serves as a fundraiser for the local Kiwanis Club.



Photo by Patrick Shea

State Land Board Stewardship Trust expanding

BY PATRICK SHEA

SAN LUIS VALLEY — In 2022, the Colorado State Land Board managed multiple parcels across the San Luis Valley, and the board is looking to add at least one more to the Stewardship Trust for 2023.

Out of Colorado's 66.5 million acres, the State Land Board owns 2.8 million acres of surface rights and more than 4 million acres underground. This ownership dates to the birth of Colorado in 1876 when the federal government granted the land, and the state constitution created the State Board of Land Commissioners to administer it. Land trusts throughout the country shared the same purpose: to generate revenue for public education and other institutions.

Please see LAND on Page 4A

Commissioner McCracken whips up leadership

BY PATRICK SHEA

SAGUACHE — Commissioner Tom McCracken has consistently questioned food bank conundrums throughout Saguache County in recent months, and he went on record again on Feb. 21 to ask for leadership from county employees. While Social Services Director Christina Wilson delivered her report to commissioners, her staff members delivered provisions to Lazy KV Estates residents in the morning and Crestone in the afternoon.

Counting trucks with families, more than two dozen residents received boxes with provisions and bags of food in Crestone. Five or six people picked up Everyday Eats applications to register to receive food and commodities from the county. Rescheduled

from the snowstorm of Feb. 14, the delivery is not the only food bank operating in Crestone.

Every Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Baca Grande Property Owners Association Library, residents can participate in another regularly scheduled food bank distribution run by Crestone volunteers.

McCracken questioned what appeared to him to be a duplication of effort.

"I would like to see the county take the lead," McCracken said. "That's our job, is the way I look at it. Public health, too. We should find a way to provide services in places that are underserved."

Commissioners Lynne Thompson and Liza Marron seemed to agree to accompany Wilson for a meeting with the Food Access

Please see FOOD BANK on Page 2A



Photo by Patrick Shea

On Feb. 21, Saguache County employees and volunteers distributed boxes of provisions to residents at the Lazy KV Estates and then later (pictured here) across the street from Crestone Town Hall.

OBITUARY

Gerald Lee Sears

March 14, 1930 - February 5, 2023

Gerald (Tiny) Sears was born on March 14, 1930, to Samuel and Viva (Hiatt) Sears and passed away peacefully at his home in Cleo Springs, Okla., surrounded by his family. He was 92.

Gerald was in the Army in Germany where he met and married his wife, Elly. After the Army, he worked at Boeing as an airplane mechanic in Wichita, Kan. The family then moved to Cleo Springs where he worked at Vance Air Force Base in Enid before he and Elly purchased his father's gas station which they ran for several years. He was also the first Fire Chief in Cleo Springs in 1964.

In 1971 they purchased a motel and moved their family to South Fork, Colo. In 1978 they sold the motel and moved back to Cleo Springs where they bought the Curve Gas and Deli.

After several years they sold the business then retired and traveled before settling back in South Fork where they resided and built storage units. They sold those and returned to Cleo Springs where they have resided since. He was definitely a man of many talents. He loved his family unconditionally and helped anybody at any time. He was full of humor and wit and he loved to go fishing whenever he had the



chance. Side hugs were generous to everyone that knew him, loved and respected him.

Gerald is survived by his wife Elly, of 69 years, his children Hal Wendler of South Fork, Colorado, Rene Littrell and husband Bill of Cleo Springs, and Karen Swan of Cleo Springs and Kurtis Sears and wife Carla of South Fork, eight grandchildren, 13 great-grandchildren, and numerous nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Sam and Viva and sisters LauraBell and LaVonna.

There are no services pending for Gerald Lee Sears, 92, of Cleo Springs, Oklahoma. Arrangements are by the Fairview Funeral Home Inc..

Condolences may be made online at www.fairviewfuneralhomeinc.com.

CCSO: Chromo man found alive after spending night in blizzard conditions

STAFF REPORT

CONEJOS COUNTY — A 72-year-old Chromo man was found alive Feb. 15 in the Trujillo Meadows Area of La Manga Pass after being caught in blizzard conditions and spending the night outside, the Conejos County Sheriff's Office reported.

At 8:20 p.m. on Feb. 14, the Conejos County Sheriff's Office was notified by the San Luis Valley Communications Center of an Emergency SPOT Signal in the Trujillo Meadows Area of La Manga Pass. The signal was coming from a device carried by Carey M. Bare, of Chromo, Colo. Bare was in the back country cross country skiing when he got lost in blizzard conditions, approximately five miles west of Colorado Highway 17 above Trujillo Meadows Reservoir.

Both Conejos County Sheriff Garth Crowther and Undersheriff Blake Crowther responded to the area. Bare's vehicle was found parked at the Trujillo Meadows Reservoir turn off. Due to the blizzard conditions and poor visibility the decision was made to leave the area and return early the following morning, the sheriff's office reported.

Sheriff Crowther and Undersheriff Crowther returned to the area early on the morning of Feb. 15 with help from US Forest Service Officers Lynn Wubben, Milo Medina, and Ariel Rodriguez. With Forest Service snowmobiles and a recently purchased snowcat,



Courtesy photo

A snowcat was used to locate a 72-year-old Chromo man and bring him to an ambulance after spending the night in blizzard conditions in the Trujillo Meadows Area, the Conejos County Sheriff's Office reported.

from the Conejos County Search and Rescue, officers made their way to Bare's location. Bare was located from coordinates supplied by his emergency device.

Bare was found by officers in a Yurt but reported he had been outside in the elements all night. He was wet, cold and on the verge of hypothermia when he was found,

the sheriff's office reported. Bare was brought out in the snowcat to an ambulance that transported him to the Conejos County Hospital.

Sheriff Crowther thanked the San Luis Valley Communications Center, members of the Conejos County Search and Rescue Team and the officers from the US Forest Service for their help.

SAGUACHE COUNTY SHERIFF'S REPORT

SAGUACHE COUNTY —

The following information was provided by the Saguache County Sheriff's Office for the period between Feb. 13 and Feb. 19, 2023.

Sheriff staff potentially collected \$1,165 for six traffic violations. They also tended to four crashes with property damage and injuries, assisted a motorist in Moffat, and fielded a traffic complaint. They conducted one search and rescue operation, arranged four ambulance rides, helped a mental subject in Crestone, and made three welfare checks.

Deputies patrolled Saguache six times, investigated suspicious activity north of Moffat and theft in

Moffat and Saguache, responded to reports of threats in Crestone, and tracked fraud in Center.

In addition to monitoring 14 controlled burns, staff responded to a fire on County Road T near Moffat.

Arrests

- A 41-year-old Alamosa man was arrested for child abuse and third-degree assault and brought in for court-ordered fingerprints.

- A 46-year-old Center man was arrested and detained for identity theft and three violations of a protection order.

- A Reno, NV man was arrested and transferred to Rio Grande County.

URBAN

Continued from Page 1A

to develop the North 90, establishing Urban Renewal Authority is essential. Fortunately, the preliminary work from Lujan, his staff, DCI, and MASS Design helped secure the first \$10 million in grant funding and laid the groundwork for meeting URA requirements. The details presented on-screen show even greater potential. Economic development in Center is not limited to the North 90 project.

One map during the presentation showed areas eligible for URA designation in and around Center. In addition to the enormous 90-acre parcel, dozens of potential sites

sprinkled across town. Projects in the community park can develop in tandem with North 90 development, for example.

Financially, URA designation allows Center and the special districts to leverage "tax-incremented financing" (TIF) for access to substantial funds. Currently, the assessed value of residential and commercial property in Center is relatively flat year-to-year because the tax base doesn't change much. But if a major project increases tax collection projections over time, the 25-year forecast shows substantial

revenues.

With tax-incremented financing, the future increase can be accessed in advance. For example, one URA in the Denver area used TIF funds to pay off loans and close out the URA 10 years before the customary 25-year time frame. Slicing this pie further, the special districts within the Center community can budget concurrently with the North 90 development project.

FOOD BANK

Continued from Page 1A

Coalition on March 3.

Before the department head reports, the board recognized David Frees for receiving the 2022 Emergency Manager of the Year Award for the San Luis Valley. Members of Search and Rescue operations and other emergency professionals from across the valley joined the recognition celebration in the courthouse. In addition to

Search and Rescue, Frees devotes time to the fire department out of Villa Grove and is a trained EMS technician who also runs his ranch.

The public comment period featured two tales of blight in Saguache County. A resident in the room encouraged the county to use more carrots than sticks and hoped the community could find a way to help people on hard times who do

not have the resources to clean up properties. The following public comment via Zoom seemed directed at legal justification for unregistered motor vehicles on private property, but the man failed to cite the statute number for Commissioner McCracken.

Throughout Colorado, residents who receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits

will notice a sharp reduction at the start of March when the emergency assistance ceases. For a household of four, the funding drop will be approximately \$360 below what they have been receiving monthly since the emergency assistance increase began during the pandemic. In the meantime, inflation has risen sharply, perhaps equaling the pre-pandemic spending power of SNAP benefits.

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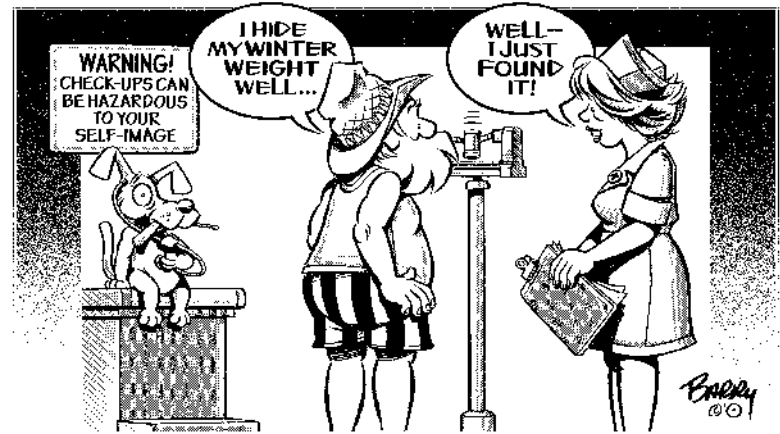
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OPINION & EDITORIAL



Get your sinning done early

This past Tuesday people gathered in various places to celebrate something called Fat Tuesday. Now Ol' Dutch can celebrate that every day of the year, but this is a tad different than a measure of my girth and weight. Mardi Gras is a French term for the phrase Fat Tuesday. It is also called Shrove Tuesday, Carnival Tuesday or Pancake Day depending on where you live. That day celebrates the end of the Carnival Season where people tend to party to the maximum while wearing clothes to the minimum at least in the warmer climes.

We all have heard of Mardi Gras in New Orleans as they splash that all over the television for us to see sans the naked people often wandering down Bourbon Street. And for some reason women can exchange a peek at their uppers in exchange for some worthless beads which they tend to do more and more as the alcohol consumed takes effect. They also have a lot of parades with outlandish floats and characters all dressed to the nines in crazy and jewel bedazzled costumes.

Now while Shrove Tuesday did make some sense being the last Tuesday before the start of Lent, I never could quite figure out the Pancake Day name. However, being from Kansas we did have our very own last Tuesday celebration and in Liberal, Kansas they have a pancake race. This is a 415-yard race (do not ask me why) and is done in competition with their sister city Olney Buckinghamshire, England (again do not ask me why) and women in skirts, leggings and tennis shoes run the race flipping a pancake in a skillet to see who is the fastest of them all. It has expanded now into an all-day affair and a big pancake eating contest is also afoot to which Ol' Dutch says, Amen.

All this celebration is in preparation for the following 40 days of Lent, which means a person needs to cut back on the partying and fast and pray. So, people have taken this to heart to mean that before they have to start being good, they need to get all the bad out of their system and let it all hang out. Literally.

Ol' Dutch was in the New Orleans area one year during this time and even though I did not go down to see the naked and drunk people on Bourbon Street, I did see some sights while there that scared me forever. For you see they do not limit their bacchanal activities to just the parade routes and bars, but



Trout Republic
by Kevin Kirkpatrick

all kinds of scantily clad individuals can be seen at the laundromat, grocery stores and fish bait stations. Again, do not ask me why. The last one really threw me for a loop as there can be nothing worse than loose appendages dangling in the wind when trying to thread a worm on your hook. I guess a naked body is not so offensive in and of itself, but the average American is just not that attractive in their birthday suit and need to keep some of that fat covered up on Fat Tuesday.

By the time you read this drivel you will have already passed the time when you can sin at will and are now supposed to be seeking forgiveness, praying without ceasing or at least wearing adequate clothes. It is interesting to note that most of the excessive partying up to Shrove Tuesday is in warmer climates and that is good as trying to keep the nips and tips from freezing on a ski slope would prove to be impossible.

Only mankind can come up with these kinds of celebrations whereby you get to do whatever you want until a certain day, when you get forgiven and can start your journey to Nirvana. Which you may not see again for the next 18 years depending on just how wild you got. So, enjoy the next 40 days of Lent and some peace and quiet, at least in your own life for now until we can come up with some other reason to party. And for those of you that missed your golden opportunity to sin at will, there is always next year.

Kevin Kirkpatrick and his Yorkie, Cooper, fish, hunt, ATV or hike daily. His email is Kevin@TroutRepublic.com. Additional news can be found at www.troutrepublic.com.



It's do or die for the Great Salt Lake

Last November, the Great Salt Lake, iconic landmark of the Great Basin Desert, fell to its lowest surface elevation ever recorded. The lake had lost 73% of its water and 60% of its area. More than 800 square miles of lakebed sediments were laid bare to become dust sources laden with heavy metals.

Without emergency action to double the lake's inflow, it could dry out in five years. "We're seeing this system crash before our eyes," warns Bonnie Baxter, director of the Great Salt Lake Institute at Salt Lake City's Westminster College.

Settlers colonized the eastern shoreline 175 years ago, displacing Native peoples, and all of us who followed have mostly taken this desert lake and its fiery sunsets for granted. But the lake is an economic engine as well as an ecological treasure.

Its waters and wetlands yield thousands of jobs and an annual \$2.5 billion for Utah from mineral extraction and brine shrimp eggs used worldwide as food for farmed fish and shrimp. The lake also suppresses windblown toxic dust, boosts precipitation of incoming storms through the "lake effect," and supports 80% of Utah's wetlands.

The Great Salt Lake has no outlet. It can hold its own against evaporation only if sufficient water arrives from three river systems, fed by snowmelt in the lake's 21,000-square-mile mountain watershed. When that flow declines, the shallow lake recedes.

In each of the last three years the lake has received less than a third of its average streamflow, recorded since 1850. And as the lake shrinks, it grows saltier, currently measuring 19 percent salinity. This is six times as salty as the ocean and well past the 12 percent salinity that's ideal for brine shrimp and brine flies.

More than 10 million birds depend on the lake's tiny invertebrates for

food. Half of the world's population of Wilson's phalaropes feasts on Great Salt Lake brine flies in summer, taking on fat reserves for their 3,400-mile, non-stop migration to South America. For phalaropes, the lake is "a lifeline," says conservation biologist Maureen Frank.

All these wonders do best with a minimum healthy lake level of about 4,200 feet in elevation, which the Great Salt Lake hasn't seen for 20 years.

You could say that the crisis snuck up on us.

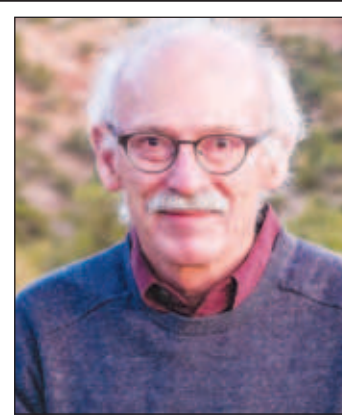
Our big build-up of dams, canals and pipelines to harness incoming water throughout the lake's watershed began soon after 1900. With a lake this big and with natural fluctuations in weather, "unsustainable behavior doesn't get noticed until you are really far down the line," says Ben Abbott, ecologist at Brigham Young University.

By the 1960s, diversions had bled the lake to levels nearly as low as we see today. But then an extraordinary wet period masked the downward trend. In the mid-1980s, the lake hit an historic high, flooding wetlands and highways and threatening the Salt Lake City Airport.

When precipitation dropped to normal, lake levels declined again, aided by today's drying and warming climate, which is reducing natural flows and increasing evaporation, a recent but growing impact.

But agriculture is the primary driver of the disappearing lake. Two-thirds of the diversions in the Great Salt Lake watershed go to farms and ranches. With climate change accelerating, experts say the only way to bring back the lake is to decrease diversions and crank open the spigots of incoming streams.

Because Utah manages its own water, it's up to the state Legislature to save the lake. "We can't talk water into the lake" through studies and task forces,



Writers on the Range
by Stephen Trimble

as Salt Lake City Rep. Joel Briscoe puts it. The State Legislature can — and must — pass mandates and incentives to reduce water use, purchase water rights, pay farmers to fallow fields and increase streamflow.

To pass such legislation, lawmakers must withstand unremitting pressure from a chorus of high-paid and powerful water lobbyists.

The 2023 Utah legislative session ends on March 3. If the members don't take sufficient and difficult action to save the Great Salt Lake from collapse, the lake will face ruin. As the Brigham Young University scientist Ben Abbott says, "Unlike politicians, hydrology doesn't negotiate."

Waiting another year may be too late. Utah — the second driest state in the nation — must come to grips with its arid heart.

Stephen Trimble is a contributor to Writers on the Range, writersontherange.org, an independent nonprofit dedicated to spurring conversation about the West. A 35th anniversary update of his book, "The Sagebrush Ocean: A Natural History of the Great Basin," will be published next year.

CENTER POST-DISPATCH

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San Juan Nordic Club's ski trails

By SUE FOSTER

SAN LUIS VALLEY — Have you ever thought about what goes into making those beautifully groomed ski tracks on the trail that take you into the quiet and solitude of the San Luis Valley's backcountry? The mission of the San Juan Nordic Club (SJNC) is to provide groomed and ungroomed winter trails for non-motorized use by people of all ages and abilities; and to provide winter recreation, education and community-building experiences. Mark Seaton, a long-time groomer and past president of the SJNC, and Laura Conchelos, current president of the club, recently shed some light on what goes into making those beautifully groomed ski tracks.

First, a snow dance or two is needed to bring about a nice snowstorm that dumps 6 inches or more of fresh snow. Then the real work begins. A cadre of five to eight groomers, all volunteers, graciously give of their time, energy, skills, knowledge and resources to prepare the newly snow-covered trails for cross-country skiing, both classic and skate skiing, and snowshoeing. Usually, the groomers work in pairs, for greater safety and efficiency. Two sites currently are groomed by the SJNC, depending on snow conditions, which include Big

Meadows on Wolf Creek Pass and Rock Creek, southwest of Monte Vista — a total of 8 miles. The SJNC also grooms the Bishop's Rock area and provides walking and ski/snowshoe trails on the Monte Vista Golf Course, as snow conditions allow.

Grooming a trail takes a half day to a full day for the groomers to complete. The SJNC membership dues and donations pay for gas, mechanical servicing, personal vehicle mileage and repairs of the snowmobiles and grooming implements. The SJNC is a nonprofit and functions solely on membership dues, annual fundraising, monetary donations and tons of in-kind donations of time, effort and use of personal vehicles.

There are four major steps to turning a snowfall into smooth, ski-able trails. These steps include:

- **Pre-Season Preparation:** The trails are cleared of windfallen trees, and vegetation is trimmed using loppers and brush saws by hand and motorized trimmers.
- **Packing:** The snow is packed down to remove the air from the snow to get a dense base along the trail. A snowmobile may be used alone initially and then a large roller or "groomer," a device attached to the back of the snowmobile, is used to put pressure on the snow to pack

it. This step may be done a day or two before step four to allow the snow to "set."

- **Leveling:** This step is done as part of the grooming process to spread the snow out evenly. The smoother and more level the trail, the better the skiing will be! This is often done by hand shoveling and occasionally a member's snowcat is used.

- **Tracksetting:** The groomer device also holds an implement called a "tracksetter," which is used to make parallel tracks or grooves using weighted moulds for classic skiing. It is best if the new tracks are allowed a couple of hours to "set up" before they are skied on.

The SJNC owns three snowmobiles and groomers and two trailers with which to transport the equipment. Several volunteer groomers donate space in their barns or machine sheds to house and store this heavy equipment.

The take-home messages are:

- The trails are for everybody.
- Please note the signs along the way that indicate the "designated" area for track skiers, skate skiers who should use the area in the middle of the trail between the two sets of tracks and snowshoers who are directed to the packed trail, outside (on the opposite side) of the tracks.
- Dog owners are asked to please



Courtesy photo

San Juan Nordic Club groomers, Chris Getz and Katie Goodleaf, doing their magic on behalf of the club.

pick up dog doo-doo along the trail. It makes for a mess on skis, the grooming equipment and the trail.

- The trails are free to all users! This opportunity for outdoor, healthy, fun-filled adventure is available only through donations, club fundraising through its annual Ski/Gear Swap in early December and volunteer community members who are willing to give of their time and resources.

The San Juan Nordic Club is one of three Nordic ski clubs in the Valley. There is also the South

Fork Nordic Club which grooms just west of South Fork and the Upper Rio Grande Nordic Club which grooms at various sites near Creede. For more information on the San Juan Nordic Club, visit <https://sjnordic.wordpress.com/> where you can submit your membership form online and then receive timely electronic grooming reports.

Sue Foster is a member of the Conejos Writers Circle that was featured in the Valley Courier on Feb. 7.

LAND

Continued from Page 1A

In 1996, Colorado voters added the 16th amendment to the Colorado Constitution, which reorganized the State Land Board structure in place since 1876. Seeking to provide long-term revenue, the amendment sparked the Stewardship Trust program. Today, this includes 296,426 acres and 110 properties across the state, roughly one-tenth of State Land Board acreage. To raise money, they have 10 separate lines of business, leasing land under terms that meet the mission of land stewardship.

Three of the six San Luis Valley counties contain Stewardship Trust parcels. In Conejos County, they stretch up into the high country, and the Alamosa County properties are not far from the city of Alamosa.

Saguache County currently includes three Stewardship Trust properties. Alder Creek south of Poncha Pass covers 480 acres. Northwest of Saguache, the Jack's Creek area is 640 acres, and the Biedell Creek property immediately west of La Garita is approximately 18,000 acres.

Every year, the Stewardship Trust generates a list of properties to add. A 640-acre parcel west of La Garita called the Little La Garita Creek area made the 2023 list.

Lindsey Brandt from the State Land Board described the selection process to Saguache County Commissioners on Feb. 14. Brandt also clarified the Stewardship Trust's role in regulation.

According to Brandt, "We are an entirely self-funded agency. We do not have any tax funding, and we're also not a regulatory agency. So, all of our lessees have to comply with local regulations and have necessary permits. We're simply a land management agency."

Like the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and other federal agencies, the Colorado State Land Board manages a variety of activities on the same ground.

Within the Biedell Creek area a few miles west of La Garita, two

lessees share part of a nearly 16,000-acre stretch. San Luis Valley Great Outdoors (SLVGO) holds a 10-year recreational lease for private activity on 80 acres. Multiple dwellings on the parcel are privately managed by

SLVGO.

Another outfit out of Del Norte has a 10-year agricultural lease on adjacent and overlapping 15,844 acres.

While the Stewardship Trust expands, it removes properties from

the program if lessees do not meet stewardship standards. Brandt said it rarely occurs. The stewardship bar remains unchanged.

Since 2008, the State Land Board has collected more than \$2 billion for Colorado schools through the Building Excellent Schools Today (BEST) grants program. Over 15 years statewide, the BEST recipients in 141 school districts have received 354 grants.

In the San Luis Valley, 20 BEST grant awards have funded construction and other capital improvements for schools in all six counties.



Photos by Patrick Shea

The Colorado State Land Board manages different leases on parcels throughout the San Luis Valley, including an 80-acre site leased by SLVGO (San Luis Valley Great Outdoors).



Blue areas mark parcels under Colorado State Land Board ownership, and gold areas show the 110 Stewardship Trust properties across the state (296,426 acres).

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES



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Dancers from Brigham Young University delight audience

By JOHN WATERS

ALAMOSA — The Brigham Young University Department of Dance International Folk Dance Ensemble (IFDE) and Mountain Strings presented a whirlwind dance and music production on Feb. 16 at Adams State University.

The production, Journey: Reflections, was a 90-minute voyage of dance and music that explored the world's cultures. According to the performance program, "Journey: Reflections, invites all to look back and reflect on the path that has shaped us into who we are today and to find unity in differences. Despite their diverse appearances, the dances exemplify how we all have the same human experiences."

Jeanette Geslison, who leads the dance group, told the BYU publication the Daily Universe in an interview that the show is about "reflecting on the differences and similarities we celebrate through the cultural variety that exists in the world. The similarities in our value systems, our traditions, and our beliefs."

Geslison added that this production invites everyone in attendance to reflect on the role that culture can and has played in their own lives.

To honor the cultures the troupe is representing on stage, costumes are either bought in their native



In the Fandango Veracruzano, the music and dance of Veracruz, Mexico blended Spanish, African, and Caribbean rhythms.

countries or sourced with local fabric.

With perfectly executed dance routines from Romania, England, Wales, Ireland, Mexico, and India, the audience at ASU's Plachy Hall experienced that cultural variety on Thursday evening through the ensemble's furious footwork.

Since 1956, the dancers of the IFDE have performed throughout the United States and in over 29 countries.

Dancers from Brigham Young University perform a Romanian folk dance at Plachy Hall on the campus of Adams State University in Alamosa on Feb. 16.

Photos by John Waters



San Luis Valley Soul Players is hosting Community Conversation series

CONTRIBUTED

COSTILLA COUNTY — Residents from all backgrounds are invited to participate in a series of community conversations.

The San Luis Soul Players of the Valley is hosting a Community Conversation series for the Rural Action Project, a partnership between Colorado State University and communities across the state designed to help rural communities thrive.

Community meetings will take place between 5:30 and 8 p.m. on Feb. 21 and 28, and March 7 at the Costilla County Conservancy District building. During the meetings, residents from Costilla County will have a chance to learn about ways to build robust rural communities

and an opportunity to share their experiences and ideas for creating a healthy community. By the end, residents will work together to develop and implement a local project to improve community.

"Civic building is one of the best investments communities can make to support long-term resilience for a thriving community," said Patti Schmitt, Community Development Director for the Office of Engagement and Extension at Colorado State University. "We have to invest in processes that bring community members together, help to create new and strengthen existing relationships, and build towards the vision we have for our local areas."

During these conversations, community members will get to know

one another and design a project for Costilla County. The Rural Action Project will honor local experiences and stakeholders and build on the

things unique and special to the community. Everyone is invited. Translation, interpretation, childcare, and food will be provided.

Register by calling or emailing Carol Gurule by Feb. 20, at carol.gurule@colostate.edu or 970-491-5699 or 719-852-7381.



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Universal Preschool Colorado: Deadline to sign up for first round extended to Feb. 24

CONTRIBUTED
DENVER — Since launching the application for Universal Preschool (UPK) Colorado this January, nearly 28,000 families have signed up to participate in the state-funded high-quality, voluntary mixed delivery preschool program available to every child in the year before they are eligible to enter kindergarten.

Over 150 new providers have signed up to participate in UPK since the January family launch. To ensure that as many Colorado parents as possible can sign up for the program and recognizing that this is a new system, CDEC is extending its timeline to allow ample time for families to re-enter the system and review and edit their applications. This adjusted timeline will also allow new families to get

into the system before the first round of matching.

“Our priority is to ensure every eligible Colorado child is able to access our preschool program and this extension will give families more time to enroll, put their child on the path to success, and help save families an average of \$6,000 per year,” said Lisa Roy, CDEC Executive Director.

From Feb. 17-24, CDEC will allow families who have already selected their providers to reopen their initial application and reevaluate their choices of providers to make sure they still have the best providers selected for their needs. CDEC has modified the timeline of future application launches to accommodate the circumstances and to give families ample time to review their choices. Additionally,

the deadline for families to apply in the first round of applications has been extended to Feb. 24.

On Feb. 27, the matching process will begin with the first batch of applications. On March 30, families will receive an email from the state letting them know who they matched with and what the next steps for enrollment look like.

The system will continue to be open to new families to apply throughout the spring, summer and into fall. CDEC will announce a date for the second batch of applications to be matched after the first batch of applicants is matched.

Every child will receive up to 15 hours of UPK per week in the year before they are eligible for kindergarten. Up to 30 hours of free preschool will be available for children with

one or more qualifying factors, pending availability and funding. Three-year-olds with one or more qualifying factors are eligible for 10 hours. Qualifying factors include household incomes under 270% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines, having an Individualized Education Program (IEP), housing status, dual language learner, and foster/kinship care.

For families with 3- or 4-year-olds in need of special education preschool services, register on upk.colorado.gov and select if your child has an IEP. Families with 3-year-olds will then select the school district they live in and will be contacted by the school district directly to determine enrollment in a specific school. Every Colorado family with a 4-year-old that wants to participate in UPK Colorado

will be able to do so and CDEC anticipates a successful launch in the 2023-24 school year.

Enrollment is on a rolling basis and families can log in to UPK.Colorado.Gov to find a provider in their area. There is no deadline to sign up. Learn more about Colorado’s Universal Pre-K program.

The Department of Early Childhood selected the vendor BridgeCare for its online application system. The BridgeCare platform offers an online, mobile-friendly application with family-friendly features like text and email status updates that can be translated into English, Spanish and Arabic.

The Early Childhood Council of the San Luis Valley has a website with information, <https://slvupkfamily.my.canva.site>.

Rio Grande Hospital recognized as Top 100 Critical Access Hospital

CONTRIBUTED
DEL NORTE — Rio Grande Hospital announced Wednesday, Feb. 15, that it was recognized as a 2023 Top 100 Critical Access Hospital. Compiled by the Chartis Center for Rural Health, this annual recognition program honors

outstanding performance among the nation’s rural hospitals based on the results of the Chartis Rural Hospital Performance INDEX.

Arlene Harms, Chief Executive Officer of Rio Grande Hospital, stated, “This is a great honor for us,

considering the last two challenging years with the pandemic. It speaks to our staff’s resilience and commitment to the organization and community. We have an amazing group of people at Rio Grande Hospital.

“This award is significant because it is

based on many factors, such as market status and strategic planning to improve population health, quality improvement and programming, and financial and operational assessments,” she added.

Now in its 13th year, the INDEX has established itself as the industry’s most comprehensive and objective assessment of rural hospital performance. Leveraging publicly available data, the INDEX is trusted by rural hospitals, health systems with rural affiliates, hospital associations, and state offices of rural health across the country to measure and monitor performance across a variety of areas

impacting hospital operations and finance.

“Across the nation, top 100 rural providers continue to serve as a source of inspiration for hospital leadership teams and staff working diligently every day to improve the delivery of care within their local communities,” said Michael Topchik, National leader for the Chartis Center for Rural Health. “The list of award winners in each category is as geographically diverse as we’ve seen in some time, which is wonderful to see. We’re thrilled to be able to honor the outstanding efforts of these top-performing rural hospitals.”

CAC opens call for entry for 2023 National Small Print Show

CONTRIBUTED
CREEDE — The Creede Arts Council recently announced that the call for entry for the 22nd Annual National Small Print Show is officially open.

The National Small Print Show (NSPS) is a unique art show of matted hand-pulled prints. Artists from all 50 states and Canada are invited to submit up to three original prints to exhibit and sell. The judge for 2023 will be Santa Fe-based, award-winning

Master Printer, Ana Maria Samaniego.

Prints will be exhibited at the Creede Repertory Theatre in Creede. Surrounded by the Rio Grande National Forest, Creede has been recognized as one of the Best Small Art Towns with artists, galleries, a theatre, and a strong summer tourism economy. For 2023, the exhibit will also be shown virtually.

The Creede Arts Council is hosting the National Small Print Show in-person and virtually in 2023.

“We are excited about the opportunity to share this show with patrons in Creede and beyond,” organizers stated.

Visit our website by heading to www.creedeartsCouncil.com/national-small-print-show, to access the call for entry and for more information on the NSPS exhibit.

Entries must be postmarked to the Creede Arts Council by April 7.

If you have any questions, contact us by email at creedearts@outlook.com or by phone at 719-658-0312.

The Solution to Overcoming an Identity Crisis

It seems we have an epidemic of insecure people in our society today. People have an identity crisis because they don’t know who they are. They try to find their identity in who they know, their position at work, their academic degrees, what they own, the clothes they wear...and the list goes on.

Insecurity involves our thoughts and shows up in the way we think and feel about ourselves. So I want to ask you: What do you think about yourself? How do you feel about yourself? Do you compare yourself with others and feel belittled or threatened around people who can do things you can’t do or have things you don’t have?

It’s not God’s will for us to be insecure and live in fear. First John 4:18 (NIV) says, “There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear...” God loves you and He wants you to learn to be all you are in Christ. Because when you know who you are in Christ, you will be secure in your worth as a child of God.

Is It About Your Who or Your Do?

For more than 45 years now, I’ve been teaching God’s Word. He put a desire in my heart to help people by sharing the Gospel and showing them how to grow in their faith in Christ, and He gave me a gift to be a communicator. By His grace, our ministry has grown and we have the privilege today of reaching millions of people around the world with our Enjoying Everyday Life show on TV, radio and online.

It’s been an amazing journey, and I feel so humbled by the way God has used me to share Christ and help people in need. But if I ever stop teaching the Word publicly, I’ll still have value because I’m a child of

God and He loves me. My identity is not this ministry—I am more than that because of who I am in Christ.

The truth is, our worth, or value, is not based on what we do. We find our value in knowing we’re created by God to be His children, knowing Christ, having Him as our Savior, and living in relationship with God, secure in His love for us.

It’s important to understand that we can’t earn God’s love; it’s a gift He offers that we receive by faith. And He wants to have a personal relationship with each one of us because He loves us. Every person is equally valuable to God!

Where’s Your Confidence?

In the Amplified Bible, Philippians 3:3 says that “we [who are born-again have been reborn from above—spiritually transformed, renewed, set apart for His purpose and] are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory and take pride and exult in Christ Jesus and place no confidence [in what we have or who we are] in the flesh.”

This scripture clearly tells us we shouldn’t get our confidence from how we look, who we know, what we have or what we do. We “place no confidence in the flesh,” and are confident in who we are in Christ: loved, forgiven, redeemed, “the righteousness of God [that is... acceptable to Him and placed in a right relationship with Him by His gracious lovingkindness]” (2 Corinthians 5:21 AMP).

As a child of God, you are a unique creation, and I want to encourage you to value and respect the person He made you to be. I’m not talking about accepting sin in your life, but when you’ve submitted yourself to God, confessed your sin and received His



forgiveness, then you can be all He created you to be and enjoy your life!

True joy comes when you know who you are in Christ and you can focus on reaching out to others, helping to make their lives better. And it all starts with knowing God loves you, that His love is unconditional, and you can’t buy His love with any amount of good works.

God’s love for us is based on who He is, not on us—who we are or how good we are. When you have a revelation of how much He loves you, it makes you secure and you can confidently say, “God loves me. He has a good plan for me. I trust Him, and everything in my life is going to work out for good—in Christ!”

For more on this topic, order Joyce’s four-teaching resource *The Fearsome Four*. You can also contact us to receive our free magazine, *Enjoying Everyday Life*, by calling (800) 727-9673 or visiting www.joycemeyer.org.

Joyce Meyer is a New York Times bestselling author and founder of Joyce Meyer Ministries, Inc. She has authored more than 140 books, including BATTLEFIELD OF THE MIND and LOVING PEOPLE WHO ARE HARD TO LOVE (FaithWords). She hosts the Enjoying Everyday Life radio and TV programs, which air on hundreds of stations worldwide. For more information, visit www.joycemeyer.org.

Please note: The views and opinions expressed throughout this publication and/or website are those of the respective authors and do not necessarily reflect those of Joyce Meyer Ministries.

San Luis Valley Scoreboard Basketball 2022-2023

Girls
Class 1A

La Veta 54	Sierra Grande 52
Centennial 51	Creede 20
Hoehne 75	Sierra Grande 34
Sangre de Cristo 62	Antonito 19
Hanover 42	Antonito 16
Sangre de Cristo 71	John Mall 2
Centennial 55	Moffat 22
Bayfield 59	Creede 24

Class 2A

Trinidad 21	Center 18
Pagosa Springs 43	Monte Vista 16
Monte Vista 48	Sargent 42
Sanford 50	Center 32
Pagosa Springs 40	Del Norte 23
Monte Vista 42	Trinidad 26
Center 42	Cotopaxi 25
Sargent 46	Custer County 44
Del Norte 36	Sanford 31

Boys
Class 1A

La Veta 47	Sierra Grande 44
Hoehne 59	Sierra Grande 29
Centennial 69	Creede 50
Sangre de Cristo 69	Antonito 34
Dolores 50	Creede 48
John Mall 59	Sangre de Cristo 52
Hanover 58	Antonito 25
Centennial 61	Moffat 40

Class 2A

Center 50	Trinidad 31
Pagosa Springs 41	Monte Vista 32
Monte Vista 48	Sargent 21
Sanford 64	Center 21
Pagosa Springs 69	Del Norte 43
Custer County 55	Sargent 23
Monte Vista 62	Trinidad 38
Cotopaxi 56	Center 51
Del Norte 54	Sanford 45

Class 3/4A

Manitou Springs 71	Alamosa 62
Alamosa 66	Bayfield 37

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San Luis Valley housing market is looking up

By LYNDISIE FERRELL

SAN LUIS VALLEY — Sitting around a table in the cozy atmosphere at Steffens & Company Realty in South Fork, four of the top realtors in the Valley discussed the current housing market and made predictions on how the market would fare in the new future. Owner Bruce Steffens opened the conversation by stating that he for one, did not see the housing sales and buyers coming in slowing down anytime soon.

Steffens specializes in ranch and farm sales throughout the San Luis Valley and through his experience in the last three years, he was confident to say that the market is not slowing down. "I see nothing slowing down. We are seeing a massive increase in sales of ranches and farms that exceed 35 acres as well as sales for vacant land all over the Valley. Really, people are coming out of the cities in droves," said Steffens.

Since the COVID pandemic, the Valley has seen exponential growth. When some areas saw a decrease in realty, the San Luis Valley exploded with people looking to escape the overpopulated areas of Colorado and with that came the surge in home and vacant land sales. "Right now, we have people buying vacant land and paying on it until they sell their other homes and by doing so, are securing their future here in the Valley."

Long time realtor with Steffens Realty, Dee Plucinski, chimed in stating that she not only agreed with Bruce but that she noticed higher end homes were flying off the market, listing at a fast rate. "We are seeing the higher priced homes sell very fast where the starter homes have slowed down. First time home buyers are facing higher interest rates and larger down payments."

Plucinski stated that Steffens Realty will be doing more Facebook live presentations with local bank representatives, beginning with Del Norte Bank in the coming weeks, to help first time home buyers navigate the market. "Watch our Facebook page for new live feeds and videos. We will be doing what we can to help people navigate this market."

Yvonne Hoffman, a Broker Associate with Steffens Realty confirmed Plucinski's take on the current market stating that now more than ever, people buying or selling homes need the advice and guidance of realtors. "We have been dealing mainly with people looking for second summer homes in the last several years, but now it looks like people are seeking primary homes. With the required larger down payments, people need the help of realtors. Some people

don't even know where to begin and that is why we are here. We are here to help and answer questions," said Hoffman.

The first thing Steffen's team of realtors suggest for anyone looking to purchase a home is to create a relationship with a realtor they can trust. "We form long term relationships with our clients. This is the biggest purchase they will make in their lives, and we work with clients to make sure they get what they need and what they want," said Hoffman.

The next step is to seek a mortgage manager and work to lower any debt owed, whether it is to pay down a credit card or pay off old debt. The last thing to do is to get a pre-approval from a loan company or bank. Having a number to work with helps in finding a home the buyer can afford.

For those selling a home the best advice from Steffen's Realty is to pack. "Pack everything you don't need. We have equipment that we use to create 3D scans on the homes we sell and some of it won't work if you have a lot of things still around the house. Not to mention, buyers are looking to see what they want in the homes they are seeking to buy. They want to be able to envision themselves there and if your stuff is still around, it becomes harder to sell," suggested Plucinski.

In addition to packing, Plucinski stressed the importance of having the home spotlessly clean. "That place really needs to sparkle. If you can, hire a professional cleaner. It



will be worth it in the end."

For more tips and tricks, those interested can visit www.steffenscorealty.com and click on Dee Plucinski's personal page through the link attached to her picture.

Steffens Realty has 24 hour a day and seven day a week phone service to answer questions and has a full listing of homes and land for sale throughout the Valley,

New Mexico, and Texas. Their team consists of Bruce Steffens, Hoffman, Bernadette Gingrass, and Tate Huffman, along with two full time Texas agents; anyone of whom is available to assist clients.

ATTENTION GRADUATING HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS
 The Saguache County Board of County Commissioners are accepting scholarship applications for graduating seniors who will be graduating high school in 2023. Commissioners will be awarding graduating seniors' college scholarships that will be paid through the Marijuana Excise Tax funds. Scholarships may be used at a trade school, college or university but you must reside in Saguache County to apply and possibly receive scholarship funds. Applications are due by April 14, 2023 and are available through our website at www.saguachecounty.colorado.gov to download the application or by contacting Wendi Maez at 719-655-2231 or by email at wmaez@saguachecounty-co.gov.
 No. 1662 published in the Center Post Dispatch, Thursday, February 9, 16, 23, March 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 and April 6, 2023.

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2023 WRESTLING RECAP

Pirates 14th, Viking 15th after state tournament concludes

By Ken Hamrick

DENVER — The Monte Vista High School wrestling team took 14th place and Center was right behind in 15th as the 2023 Colorado High School Activities Association State Wrestling Tournament wrapped up Saturday at Ball Arena.

None of the local Class 2A teams had any finalists this year.

MONTE VISTA

The Pirates had three state placers this year. Kevin Cisneros (132) and DeAngelo Archuleta (138) both took fifth place in their weight classifications, and Damian Lopez finished sixth at 126 pounds.

Two more wrestlers competed on Saturday, but Jacob Pacheco (150) and Jeremiah Baumgardner (157) were eliminated in the third round of their consolation brackets.

Monte Vista scored 49 points.

CENTER

The Vikings had four wrestlers who placed in their weight classes.

Aaron Valadez (144) and Jesus Valadez (165) were both fourth, while Jordan Duran (106) and Martin Palma (157) were both sixth.

Center recorded 46 team points.

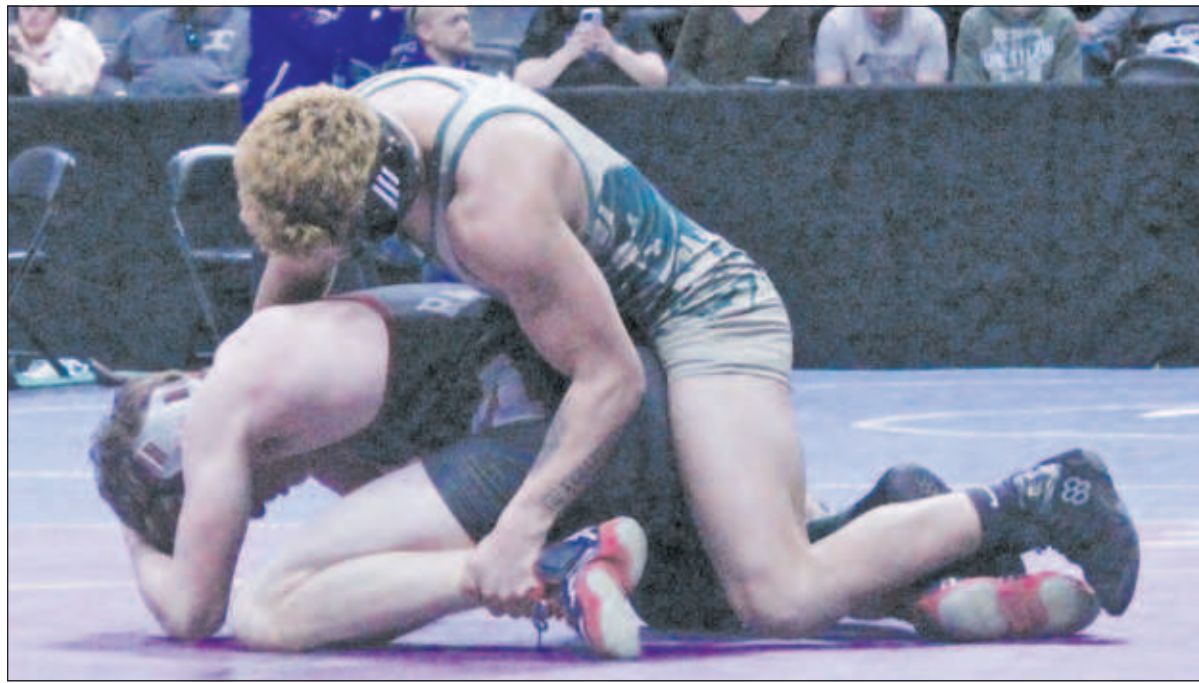


Photo by Ken Hamrick

Monte Vista High School's DeAngelo Archuleta (top) has Merino's Tyler Frank in the down position in the Class 2A 138-pound division at the CHSAA State Wrestling Tournament Saturday at Ball Arena. Archuleta finished in fifth place.

SARGENT

The Farmers had only one wrestler to compete on Saturday. Trenton Lovelace, however, was eliminated

in the third round of consolation.

Sargent tied for 36th place with six points.

Wray successfully defended its state

title with 183 points. Meeker was second with 169 ½, Mancos was third with 119 ½, Buena Vista was fourth with 91, and Rocky Ford was fifth with 86 ½.

Falcons finish eighth, Moose ninth at state tournament

By Ken Hamrick

DENVER — The Centauri High School wrestling team finished in eighth place and Alamosa was ninth as the 2023 Colorado High School Activities Association State Wrestling Tournament wrapped up Saturday at Ball Arena.

CENTAURI

The Falcons had two finalists but both were defeated in their final matches.

Riley Valdez was a finalist at 120 pounds, and he was defeated by Jefferson's Samuel Rosales. Rosales jumped to a 6-2 lead after the first period, and his lead grew to 13-4 after the second. Valdez attempted a comeback, but Rosales scored enough points in the third period to come up with a 16-8 major decision.

Josh Polkowske came the closest to winning an individual championship, but he fell short in overtime against University's Paxton Daggett.

The first period was scoreless, and Polkowske started the second period in the bottom position. He recorded a reversal to take a 2-0 lead, but Daggett escaped later in the period to cut the lead to 2-1.

Daggett began on the bottom to start the third period, and he scored an escape to tie the score at 2-2 and send the match into overtime.

It looked as though Polkowske had won the match with a takedown, however, it was waived off because the wrestlers were out of bounds. Neither scored in the next two extra periods, and it went into another overtime.

Daggett started on the bottom again and he escaped midway through the period to take a 3-2 lead. Polkowske attempted to score a takedown and it looked as though he got it, but it was after time expired, and Daggett escaped with a 3-2 sudden victory win.

The Falcons had two more placers at state. Matthew Salazar (106) and Erik Mestas (175) both finished fourth in their weight classes.

Centauri finished the tournament with 73 points.

ALAMOSA

The Mean Moose had one finalist in 150-pounder Tyler Liddell. Liddell, however, was defeated by Skyview's Isaac Ibarra.

Ibarra took a 2-1 lead after the first period, and the second period was scoreless. Ibarra started on



Photo by Ken Hamrick

Centauri High School's Josh Polkowske (top) attempts to score on University's Paxton Daggett in the Class 3A 165-pound championship match at the CHSAA State Wrestling Tournament Saturday at Ball Arena. Polkowske lost the match in overtime.

the bottom to start the third and he got a reversal and added two two-point near-falls to win by an 8-1 decision.

The Mean Moose had two more placers in Dempsey Gibbs who was third at 120, and James Sanchez who was sixth at 285.

Alamosa had five more wrestlers compete on Saturday. Jeremiah DeLaCerde (106), Anthony Griego (113), Dario Valdez (132), Dyson Woodward (132), and Donovan Valdez (144) all lost in the third round of consolation and were eliminated.

Alamosa scored 70 points.

Eaton won the tournament with 128 points, followed by Severance with 109 ½, Brush with 103

½, Mullen with 88 ½, Pueblo Central with 81, Fort Lupton with 74 ½, and Gunnison with 73 ½.

ALAMOSA GIRLS

Sarah DeLaCerde was the San Luis Valley's only representative in the girls state tournament and she finished her tournament in fine style as she recovered from Friday's semifinal loss with two win on Saturday to finish in third place at 110 pounds.

Alamosa finished in 29th place with 22 points.

Chatfield successfully defended its state championship with 133 points, followed by Discovery Canyon with 128, Pomona with 116, Loveland with 88, and Central Grand Junction with 80.

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Hundreds attend SRMAC in Monte Vista

By MARIE MCCOLM

MONTE VISTA — Hundreds of people attended the 41st annual Southern Rocky Mountain Agricultural Conference and Trade Show on Feb. 7-9 at Outcalt Event and Conference Center at SLV Ski Hi Complex in Monte Vista.

Larry Brown, director of the Colorado State University San Luis Valley Area Extension in Monte Vista, gave an introduction in the main conference room on Tuesday, Feb. 7, after the National Anthem was played.

Brown welcomed and thanked everyone for attending the conference. He then recognized and thanked the

program planning committee for their help with the conference. Brown said that the program committee was made up of producers, industry professionals, and CSU Extension and research personnel.

Brown spoke of how the CSU Extension was asking everyone who attended to fill out surveys and said that everyone who filled them out would be eligible to win a drill that was sponsored by the Monte Vista Cooperative and the Colorado Potato Administrative Committee.

Brown also thanked all the conference sponsors, highlighting

that the conference would not have been possible without such “strong sponsors.”

Please see SRMAC on Page 2

The Southern Rocky Mountain Agriculture Conference and Tradeshow begins its three-day run on Tuesday, Feb. 7, inside the Outcalt Event and Conference at SLV Ski Hi Complex in Monte Vista. The tradeshow floor was bustling with activity as people talked with vendors and the conference rooms were packed for the informational sessions.

Photo by Brian Williams



Courtesy photo

Some of the Adelante staff, (left to right), Carolyn Guymon, Family Navigator; Charlotte Orr, Working Together Family Advocate; Sarita Estrada, Family Navigator; Tara Bay, Director; and Jamie Snow, Assistant Director. Not pictured are Leslie Echavarria, Data Analyst; Becky Story, Working Together Family Advocate; and Veronica Lozoya, Housing Case Manager.

Adelante — Helping community members move forward with their lives

CONTRIBUTED

Many families and individuals benefit from a local program called Adelante. For the past 10 years, employees at San Luis Valley Health have adopted some of the families at Christmas,

fulfilling their wish lists and adding gift, gas, and grocery cards.

The children’s gifts are not wrapped by SLV Health. Each adult guardian along with staff,

Please see ADELANTE on Page 3

NPS celebrates landmark National Heritage Area Act legislation with National Heritage Areas

CONTRIBUTED

WASHINGTON — National Park Service (NPS) Director Chuck Sams met with members of the Alliance of National Heritage Areas on Feb. 7 to commemorate the historic signing of the National Heritage Areas Act last month, which establishes a National Heritage Area (NHA) System and a statutory framework for the NPS’s role in its administration.

The San Luis Valley’s Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area is one of three NHAs in Colorado. The Sangre de Cristo NHA is named for the range of jagged, 14,000-foot mountains that define the eastern edge of the San Luis Valley, one of the largest and highest alpine valleys in North America. It is also home to Colorado’s oldest town, San Luis, established in 1851. Besides Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve — whose 750-foot mounds are the tallest dunes on the continent — the heritage area contains three national wildlife refuges, a national forest and two forest wilderness areas, 13 state wildlife

areas and a Nature Conservancy preserve, the Medano-Zapata Ranch.

“National Heritage Areas represent the unique fabric of America and serve as points of community pride, where locals and visitors alike can come together in the spirit of unity and share in collective experiences,” said NPS Director Chuck Sams. “The NHA Act formalizes the relationship between the National Park Service and National Heritage Areas and will further paint America’s heritage landscape beyond the canvas of national parks.”

NHAs are designated by Congress as places where natural, cultural, and historical resources combine to form cohesive, nationally important stories. Unlike national parks, NHAs are lived-in communities and not federally owned but may contain parks or other privately owned property. Through public-private partnerships, NHAs tell nationally important stories that celebrate our nation’s diverse heritage.

Please see MPS on Page 2

C&TSRR donates to Trinidad State for scholarships

CONTRIBUTED

ALAMOSA — Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad is funding two scholarships that will start in the fall of 2023. The Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad scholarships will be valued at \$1,250 per semester.

One scholarship will go to a graduate from any high school in the San Luis Valley and the other scholarship will go to a graduate from any high

school in the counties of Colfax, Rio Arribas, San Juan, or Taos, New Mexico.

Students must have a minimum 3.0 GPA. Priority will be given to students pursuing a Skilled Trades path of study at the TSC Valley Campus in Alamosa. Secondary preference will be given to students with plans to enroll in the Construction Trades Program on the TSC Trinidad Campus.

Left to right, Alysia Martinez, Chief Financial Officer Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad; Scott Gibbs, President/CO Commissioner C&TSRR; Marvin Casias, Superintendent C&TSRR; TSC Mascot Titus, James Kynor, Vice President Trinidad State College; Kim Smith-Casford, Chief of Staff C&TSRR; Kim Garcia, Retail, On-board, and Shop C&TSRR.

Courtesy photo



HOME LOANS

- Purchase
- Refinance
- Construction

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Monte Vista Alamosa

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NPS

Continued from Page 1

On Jan. 5, President Biden signed the National Heritage Areas Act into law. The act, which designates, extends, and authorizes studies for NHAs throughout the United States, is a first-of-its-kind, landmark legislation in the 39-year history of the NHA program, formalizing standard criteria in oversight, analysis, coordination, and support to ensure

consistency and accountability of the NHA System.

As partners to NPS parks and programs, the 62 NHAs across 36 states and territories are grassroots, community-driven approaches for heritage conservation and economic development. The NPS supports NHAs by providing technical and financial assistance on fields such

as historic preservation, natural resource conservation, recreation, education, and heritage tourism.

The NHA System is composed of National Heritage Areas, National Heritage Corridors, National Heritage Canalways, Cultural Heritage Corridors, National Heritage

Routes, and National Heritage Partnerships.

In 1984, President Ronald Reagan signed the first NHA into law, the Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor. The 96-mile, hand-dug Illinois and Michigan Canal opened in 1848 to connect

the American heartland to New York Harbor and New Orleans, allowing farmers a reliable way to transport crops to market. In his dedication speech, Reagan referred to NHAs as “a new kind of national park” that marries heritage conservation, recreation, and economic development.



Photo by Brian Williams

SRMAC

Continued from Page 1

Director of External Affairs for Rocky Mountain Farmers Union Dan Waldvogel then gave some Colorado legislative updates.

“One of the ways in which we check our balances here in Colorado, is through TABOR. I am sure that all of you have heard of TABOR (Taxpayer’s Bill of Rights),” Waldvogel said. “What this means is that taxes cannot be raised in Colorado without a vote from the people. This also creates a revenue which is adjusted every year based on inflation and population growth, and really population growth has been stagnated with the state recently. We are probably going to see a lot of bills this year that are more regulatory based. Another thing to take into mind too is the impact of property taxes on state revenue as well. Residential property taxes will continue to go up, but they have slowed down a little bit. That does impact some of the boundaries that the state has to work within and certainly commercial and ag are already high, but with the complicated nature of


what we have called the Gallagher Amendment and how that relates to TABOR. It does kind of provide some restraints for the government and being able to vote on these things.”

The Gallagher Amendment was an amendment adopted in 1982. It exhibited the guidelines in the Colorado Constitution for determining actual property value and valuation in Colorado.

Waldvogel continued his talk and spoke of many of the other recent updates that Colorado legislature has given including, the veterinary education loan repayment program, the eligibility for future agriculture loans, and the prohibition of foreign ownership of agriculture and natural resources, to name a few.



Waldvogel said agriculture probably won’t see a lot of big costly bills this year, because the state isn’t going to have as much money to play with, as they have in prior sessions.

For more information on legislative updates, visit agconferencesrm.com or multistate.us.



ATTENTION HOUSEHOLDS WHO RECEIVE SNAP

After February 2023, your SNAP benefits will decrease due to recent congressional action, as the temporary increase to SNAP benefits is ending. February 2023 will be the last month that temporary increased SNAP benefits (emergency allotments) will be paid. For more information, visit cdhs.colorado.gov/snap-ea-ending

COLORADO
Office of Economic Security
Division of Food & Energy Assistance



Managed by *Upper Rio Grande Animal Society*

www.urgasconouranimalshelter.org

If you are interested in adopting, call 852-3366
Open Tues.-Fri. 11 a.m. - 4 p.m. & Sat. & Sun. 1:30 - 5 p.m.
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We would like to express our deepest gratitude and appreciation to all those who have contributed to the success of the Upper Rio Grande Animal Society by contributions, donations, volunteering and general support at Conour Animal Shelter.

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“The service was wonderful. They were the only person working and managed to take our order, make fresh pasta, pizza and wings alone! Major props for that! We will be back!”
~B Hensley, Google Reviews

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Bob and Ziggy are a lovely couple of guys looking to find the home for them both. They’re a father son duo who are quite bonded so they have to be adopted together. They have plenty of energy and do well with other dogs and everyone we’ve introduced them to. Come meet them today!



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Found on 2/10 on the 100 block of Clearview (by Pizza Hut) in Monte Vista

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Please note we are on a first come first serve basis.

All breeds & ages of animals are a “best guess” and are not guaranteed to be accurate. Adoption fee includes: neuter/spay, vaccinations, de-worming and micro-chipping.
This ad space donated by Valley Publishing Inc.

Visiting Angels receives 2023 Best of Home Care – Leader in Experience Award

CONTRIBUTED
PAGOSA SPRINGS — Visiting Angels announced recently that it received the distinguished 2023 Best of Home Care – Leader in Experience Award from HCP, the leading firm in experience management for home care.



The Leader in Experience Award is the highest recognition awarded by HCP and is given to select home care businesses that consistently rank among the very highest in 10 or more quality metrics. As a

Leader in Experience, Visiting Angels is now recognized among the top 10% of home care providers participating in the nationwide HCPEXperience Management Program.

This accomplishment demonstrates Visiting Angels' long-term dedication to excellent care and quality improvement. To qualify for this award, 10% of Visiting Angels' clients and caregivers were interviewed each month by HCP. Over a 12-month period, Visiting Angels

received high client and caregiver satisfaction ratings in areas such as caregiver training, compassion of caregivers, communication, scheduling, client/caregiver compatibility, and more. Using feedback from clients and employees, as well as quality benchmarks from HCP, the Visiting Angels management team set goals to reach the highest level of Experience possible.

The Best of Home Care – Leader

in Experience Award highlights the top-performing home care businesses in the nation. HCP believes that by honoring these providers, families looking for in-home care for a loved one will be able to recognize and choose a trusted home care provider.

“At Home Care Pulse, our mission is to help home care businesses create an experience that goes beyond client and caregiver expectations,” says Todd Austin, President of HCP.

“When we see agencies like Visiting Angels of SW Colorado that have so effectively provided outstanding care and employment experiences, we know we’re on the right track. This award allows them to show proof of quality to potential clients and caregivers.”

To find out more about Visiting Angel’s commitment to experience, visit visitingangels.com or call 970-264-5991.

ADELANTE

Continued from Page 1

wrap gifts for their children at the office. The staff wraps the adults’ gifts, so everyone gets the chance to open gifts on the special holiday. SLV Health also donates wrapping paper and gift bags. The huge undertaking is orchestrated by clinic leadership, including Administrator Antonio Gurule and Clinic Admin Assistant Ressa Gonzales.

Many of the adults do not ask for gifts for themselves, often asking for practical help such as cleaning supplies or clothes for their children. They are prompted to develop a gift-wish-list for the excited shoppers in the community. Mountain West Insurance and other individual community donors adopt other Adelante individual clients. Several days before Christmas, the Adelante office turns into a regular “Santa’s workshop.”

Adelante Director Tara Bay and Assistant Director Jamie Snow sat down with SLVH Communications Director Donna Wehe to talk about their programs and their families.

“Transitional housing has grown into supportive housing,” commented Bay. The programs and services at Adelante have changed through the years as well. Bay has been with Adelante for over eight years and knows exactly what program, grant, or resource best benefits their clients.

“Our program has been modeled around the state and the region,” Bay said. “We are involved as advocates, from the court room to the bank. We assist our clients with access to resources because getting your life back on track is full of roadblocks for a lot of people.”

She explained how one client enrolled as a full-time student only to find out that she would lose access to her food benefits, which would not work in her situation due to having young children.

“We are not here to give handouts; but to educate, remove barriers, support, and assist those who are ready to move forward with their lives,” commented Snow, who has been with Adelante for seven years. When clients first get referred to Adelante, they sometimes ask about the resources that might be available.

But Snow likes to turn the question back to them, asking, “What do you want? What do you need help with?”

After building trust, the staff at Adelante often form close, personal bonds with their clients.

“But we do not want to be their only resource. We are not their friend or emergency contact. We are their advocate, their guide, their coach, their teacher,” added Snow.

Often families and individuals fall between the cracks, meaning there are government or non-profit resources available; but navigating the roadmap can be daunting if they try to do it by themselves. For

example, Adelante conducts home visits, helps individuals map out their goals, helps with transportation, and assists with applying for benefits such as Medicaid.

As the clients become stable and self-sufficient, they often lose access to safety net programs, so again, Adelante is there to help them through that time of transition with their many tools and resources.

They operate under the Building a Family’s Five Protective Factors, which guides their work:

- Parental Resilience
- Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
- Children’s Social and Emotional Competence
- Concrete Supports in Time of Need
- Social Connections

Some of their other guiding principles, explained Bay and Snow, are “nothing about me without me,” so that each decision is based on the client’s expectations. They use the “Housing First” model and like to shift the focus to “what are your strengths as an individual” rather than “what’s wrong with you.”

In closing, both Bay and Snow emphasized their gratitude for the community partners, as it takes a whole village to make the village whole again.

For more information about Adelante, visit their website at <https://lapuntenhome.org/adelante/>.

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No Cost Consultation: Know what’s possible for You ! Includes preliminary evaluation and CBCT image. \$500 value. Expires: 2/28/2023.



Dr. Thornell helped save my life. I was having constant health problems that were getting worse every day. My diseased teeth and gums were draining me of my energy and it was impossible to stay healthy. After removing all of my bad teeth, Dr. Thornell placed dental implants and I got a new set of teeth in just one day. I am now healthier and feel better than I have in a long time. I also have a great smile. Dr. Thornell you are a life saver! I can’t thank you enough.
~ B.Gullette

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Slippers.
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The Holy Moses
Mon.-Sat.
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Creede

This Week's Feature



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Sell your household items for FREE. Total value of items must be \$50 or less. See details below.



CLASSIFIED INDEX

ANNOUNCEMENTS
01 TICKETS
02 CARD OF THANKS
03 MEMORIALS
04 LOST & FOUND
05 NOTICES/BAZAARS
06 PERSONALS
EMPLOYMENT
07 HELP WANTED
08 WORK WANTED
09 EMPLOYMENT SERVICES
FOR RENT
10 APARTMENTS
11 ROOMS
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16 VACATION
REAL ESTATE
17 REAL ESTATE
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20 BUSINESS PROPERTY
21 MOBILE HOMES
22 PROPERTY WANTED

MERCHANDISE
23 LAWN & GARDEN
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25 AUCTIONS
26 ANTIQUES
27 APPLIANCES
28 HOUSEHOLD GOODS
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34 OFFICE EQUIPMENT
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FINANCIAL
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63 TRUCKS
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66 CHILD CARE

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\$19.50 + 95¢ each additional word.

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Free ads: Lost & Found • Non Commercial items Sold for \$50 or less • Any Item or Animal being given away. (Limited to private party only, 2 ads per person, 4 weeks.)

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To place your ad in person come to the office at 835 First Ave. in Monte Vista, or call (719) 852-3531. Business hours are Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. You may also fax your classified to (719) 852-3387 or email at montevistaclass@gmail.com

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To ensure your ad is correct, check it the first day it appears in the paper. If there is an error in your ad, call us right away so we can correct it. If an error appears in your ad, Valley Publishing will credit you with one additional day of advertising.

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DEADLINE

Thursday 5:00 pm

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05 Notices

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For information on meetings for ALANON NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS AND ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS Please visit slvaa.org or call 719-937-5083.

07 Help Wanted

The City of Creede is hiring a Part-Time Public Works Parks & Building Maintenance Worker.

The City will be accepting applications for the position until Monday, March 6, 2023, until 2 p.m. The position offers a competitive hourly rate based on work experience and positive references. Applications can be completed online or in person at the Administration Office at Town Hall located at 2223 N. Main Street, Creede. A job description is also available via request. (2-22)

S Lazy U Trout Club located between Creed and Lake City desires Caretaker for the summer season, serious inquiries only to rocknredfish@yahoo.com (3-15)

Wolf Creek Ski Area is seeking

full-time, year-around mechanics. Our team has open positions for lead mechanics who are willing to learn as well as expand their skills and abilities. Applicants need to be positive, team oriented, self-motivated, and must possess own tools/tool box. Reliable 4-wheel/all-wheel drive vehicle is also a must. Knowledge of gasoline and diesel engines required. Mechanical and operational understanding of heavy equipment, snow cats, automotive electrical systems, hydraulics/hydrostatic drive systems, transport buses, and metal fabrication are all a

Write your own Classified Ad

Regular Classified Ad Deadline-Thursday 5 p.m.

15 Words or less for 4 weeks - 4 publications
\$19.50 + 95¢ each additional word.

Garage Sale Ads: 15 words or less for 1 week
\$12 + 35¢ each additional word.

Free ads: Lost & Found • Non Commercial items Sold for \$50 or less • Any Item or Animal being given away. (Private party only) Call 719-852-3531 for details.

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11 _____ 12 _____ 13 _____ 14 _____ 15 _____

16 _____ 17 _____ 18 _____ 19 _____ 20 _____

Words: _____ Times: _____ Price: _____

Class: _____ Start Date: _____

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TRADE-IN ASSISTANCE

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Valley Publishing has an immediate need in advertising sales (part-time). Any sales experience is appreciated but will train. Email resume to General Manager Brian Williams at bwilliams@valleypublishinginc.com

major plus. WCSA offers competitive wages along with career building opportunities. Starting pay between 50-100k, with benefits, depending on experience and physical ability. Applications are available at www.wolfcreekski.com. Email to wolfcreekski@wolfcreekski.com or mail to P.O. Box 2800, Pagosa Springs, CO 81147. (3-29)

Center Consolidated School District is accepting applications for the position of full-time year-round Custodial Position for the 2022-2023 School Year. School Year Hours are 1:00 P.M. to 10:00 P.M. Summer Hours are from 7:00 A.M. to 4 P. M. Qualifications; High School Diploma or GED, or, such alternative as the Board of Education may find appropriate and acceptable. Benefits include health insurance, paid vacation. Must be able to pass a background check. Applications can be found on the District Website <https://www.center.k12.co.us/page/employment-opportunities> Non Certified Application or contact the District Office at (719) 754-3442. Application Deadline: Until Position is Filled. EOE (3-1)

The Creede School District is hiring Special Events CDL Bus Drivers. Primary duties are to drive students, staff and chaperones to school events. Position pay is \$18.00 per hour. Please contact Keith Crispell, Superintendent at keith.crispell@credek12.net and or Alan Feuerbacher, Director of Transportation at alan.feuerbacher@credek12.net for more information. (3-1)

Ecodynamics Inc is hiring a pump technician. No experience

required but hard working, drug free and clean driver license are non-negotiable attributes. Call 719-852-2662 for more info or stop by at 5492 US Hwy 160 E, M.V. with resume. (3-1)

WANTED: Saguache County Road and Bridge is hiring for Operator I positions... \$18.00/hour NO CDL REQUIRED! REQUIREMENTS: Applicants must have a current and valid Driver's License. Applicants should have a high school diploma or GED and six months or more of relevant experience. Prospective employees applying with Saguache County will be required to submit and pass a pre-employment drug screening and criminal background check. Operator I is a full-time position – applicants must be able to operate light and heavy equipment and perform manual labor in the maintenance, repair and minor construction of roads, streets, bridges, signs, markings and related facilities. Applicants must be physically capable of periods of sustained physical exertion and may be required to lift and move up to 75 lbs. to 150 lbs. Applications are available at the Saguache County Road and Bridge Office 305 3rd Street, PO Box 476, Saguache, CO 81149 – 719-655-2554 or on the Saguache County website – saguachecounty.colorado.gov under the Road and Bridge Department tab. Please fill out and submit the County Application. A complete job description is available at the Road and Bridge Office. Completed applications can be hand delivered or mailed to Saguache County Road and Bridge – at the address listed above, sent by email to mhashbarger@saguachecounty-co.gov or faxed to: 719-655-2543. APPLICATION DEADLINE: Open until qualified candidates are hired. Saguache County is an Equal Opportunity Employer. (2-22)

14 Business Properties For Rent DOWNTOWN MONTE OF-FICE SUITE. 3 NICELY FIN-

ISHED OFFICES, CENTRAL RECEPTION AREA AND SECURE STORAGE ROOM. UTILITIES INCLUDED. HISTORIC LAND-MARK BUILDING. 719-588-0906 (3-1)

17 Real Estate For Sale
For Sale by Owner 1.98 acres In Monte Vista. Close to school and downtown \$60,000 OBO 719-580-1219 (3-8)

35.71 acres between Monte Vista and Alamosa on County Line Road, borders highway, good grass, easy access, power and ready to build on. Priced \$109,000. Call **Bruce at Steffens & Company Realty Inc** 719-873-1700. TFN

7 Quarters with pivots, 9350 GPM well water, 25 Shares of Rio Grande Canal, 3 decrees of good water rights out of Carnero Creek, fenced, new 200 pipe corral calf feedlot, good production and locations. Call **Bruce at Steffens & Company Realty Inc** 719-580-0770. TFN

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CELEBRATING OUR LAND, WATER, AND COMMUNITY



Saturday, March 11, 2023 9:00am-3:00pm
Centennial School in San Luis

Free lunch, coffee, snacks, and mariachi!
Door prizes throughout the day!

- All family members are invited to attend, with separate activities for children 2 and older.
- An election for the Sangre de Cristo Acequia Association Board of Directors will be held during lunch.
- Awards for student contests will be presented before lunch.

For more information, contact sangreacequias@gmail.com, 719.496.1708, or visit www.coloradoacequias.org

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SUDOKU

	4		3	9		7	2	
	7			4				5
		1				4		8
				3				9
					6		8	
	1	7			5			2
				5				
		8				5	7	
	3		8		7			

Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

Level: Advanced

Here's How It Works:
Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

Solution to last week's puzzle

		F	E	D		A	S	P	I	R	E	
		O	N	E		G	A	I	N	E	D	
P	B		R	M	A		C	L	E	F		
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				C	O	R	O	N	A		S	A
				B	R	I	G	G	S		S	S



**3RD ANNUAL
EQUIPMENT & MISC.
CONSIGNMENT AUCTION**

**MARCH 18, 2023
STARTS @ 10AM**

Consignments will be accepted on site
March 13th- March 17th until 12PM.

**TO HAVE ITEMS LISTED ON SALE BILL,
PLEASE CALL BY FEBRUARY 25TH:**

PLEASE NO ELECTRONICS OR JUNK
ITEMS NOT ON THE SALE BILL WILL STILL BE ACCEPTED.
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Valley Wide Classifieds

31 Health

Blow-Flex Treadmill treadclimber TC\$5000 great condition \$450 Ken @719-658-2370 (3-1)

32 Fuel & Heating

NEED FIREWOOD? Call Elam at Cozy Glo LLC. 719-480-5047. \$190 per cord. Delivery available. TFN

Lump coal available, supplement your wood heating by adding some lump coal. Burns clean, no soot, makes wood last longer. 719-849-8261 (3-1)

Two beautiful Americana stoves, excellent condition, one Chambers, one Gafford Sattler \$600 both, \$300 apiece. Will deliver within 100 miles. 719-588-9577 (3-1)

36 Miscellaneous

Cash for quality non-fiction books and lp records. Jeff 720-315-9145 (2-15)

Propane Refrigerators Sold Here. Call For Options and Prices. We Also Stock Solar Powered Refrigerators and Freezers. Bontrager's Variety Store, 9726 S. County Road 3E, Monte Vista. (719) 852-0500 TFN

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38 Machinery, Tools, Equipment

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Each month, the Colorado Department of Agriculture features a different product to highlight the variety and quality of products grown, raised or processed in the state. February is Potato Lover's Month! From well-known varieties such as Russet and Yukon Gold to specialty potatoes like Purple Majesty and French Fingerling, Colorado grows over 70 different varieties of potatoes. Colorado produces more than two billion pounds of potatoes annually, making the state the fifth largest producer in the nation. Avoid potatoes with wrinkled skins, soft dark spots, cut surfaces or a green appearance. All varieties should be uniformly sized, fairly clean, firm, and smooth. Potatoes are gluten free, fat free, sodium free and are high in potassium and Vitamin C. Look for Colorado potatoes at your local grocery store or at restaurants across the state.



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Feb. 18-23, 2023



Did you know?

Each year, FFA chapters around the country celebrate National FFA Week. The week-long tradition began in 1947 when the National FFA Board of Directors designated the week of George Washington's birthday as National FFA Week in recognition of his legacy as an agriculturist and farmer. The first National FFA Week was held in 1948. Today, FFA Week always runs Saturday to Saturday and encompasses Feb. 22, Washington's birthday. National FFA Week did not start out as a week-long event. At first it was National FFA Day. The 1933 National FFA Convention proceedings records the beginning of FFA Day in this way: "Stewart of Montana requested the floor at this time to present a matter of general interest. He suggested the idea of having a special Future Farmer Day some time during 1934, preferably on one of the regular national FFA broadcasting days. It was pointed out that the various state associations could perhaps plan special state broadcasts also on that day and that chapters might plan their father and son banquets on the date specified. The idea seemed to meet with general delegate approval and after some discussion it was moved by Stewart that the Board of Trustees arrange for such a day; motion passed." Reference: www.ffa.org/events/ffaweek/Pages/default.aspx

plan their father and son banquets on the date specified. The idea seemed to meet with general delegate approval and after some discussion it was moved by Stewart that the Board of Trustees arrange for such a day; motion passed." Reference: www.ffa.org/events/ffaweek/Pages/default.aspx

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February 22, 2023



Health



Rio Grande Hospital's Wound Care spotlights wound healing and prevention during American Heart Month

CONTRIBUTED DEL NORTE — Rio Grande Hospital's Wound Care recognizes American Heart Month by offering information and tips to educate patients about heart health and chronic wounds. Heart disease is the leading cause of death in Americans, and each year nearly 700,000 Americans are diagnosed with heart disease, which causes about 1 in 5 U.S. deaths, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). In addition, related complications like vascular insufficiency or peripheral artery disease can result in the development of non-healing wounds putting patients at risk of infection, sepsis, or lower limb amputation.

Due to an aging population as well as an increase in heart disease, diabetes, and obesity, the need for specialized wound care continues to grow. Currently, approximately 9-12 million Americans are suffering from chronic wounds or non-healing ulcers on the lower limbs or feet. As a result, many patients postpone treatment, hoping their wound will heal on its own, only to seek treatment after it has become severely infected.

"It is not uncommon for cardiology patients to develop painful, non-healing wounds stemming from poor circulation to the lower extremities," said Rio Grande Hospital's Development & Communications Officer, Eva Timberlake. "If left untreated, this can progress to a life-threatening condition. It's important for anyone with a non-healing wound to talk to their doctor as early as possible and get an evaluation to avoid sepsis or amputation."

Common Wound Types in Patients with Cardiovascular Disease

Without proper blood flow from the heart, chronic wounds can develop and not only fail to heal, but they can grow in size and become infected. Here are the three most common non-healing wounds for patients with heart disease:

- **Arterial ulcers:** Also referred to as ischemic ulcers, these are caused by damaged or blocked arteries which are unable to get nutrient-rich blood

and oxygen to the lower extremities. This causes an ulcer or a break in the skin. Arterial ulcers are typically located on the foot or ankle.

- **Venous ulcers:** When patients have poor blood circulation in the legs, the blood backs up and "pools" in the veins, causing an ulcer. This can cause a painful open wound and edema on the ankles or lower leg.

- **Diabetic neuropathic ulcers:** Many patients with cardiovascular disease also suffer from diabetes. Of the 34.2 million Americans suffering from diabetes, approximately 25 percent of individuals with diabetes will experience a non-healing open wound. Because diabetic neuropathy causes a loss of sensation in the limbs, many patients don't know they have an ulcer until it becomes infected.

Tips for Better Heart Health

If you have heart disease or are in treatment for a non-healing wound, paying attention to your cardiovascular health is crucial. A healthy heart stimulates the circulation of oxygen and nutrient-rich blood throughout the body, skin, and tissues and stimulates the body's healing process. Here are six tips:

- Eat a healthy diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables
- Exercise for at least 30 minutes three times a week
- Maintain a healthy weight in order to avoid high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes
- Don't smoke and limit alcohol
- Get quality sleep
- Manage stress

Rio Grande Hospital's Wound Care uses advanced wound care modalities and hyperbaric oxygen therapy to treat non-healing wounds caused by cardiovascular disease complications, including venous and arterial ulcers. Chronic wounds can be diagnosed, effectively managed, and ultimately healed, oftentimes within eight weeks. If you or someone you love has a non-healing wound, call them at 719-657-3277 or RioGrandHospital.org for more information and assistance.

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Agriculture

Invisible fencing provides visible benefits

By **PATRICK SHEA**

MONTE VISTA — No one was shocked when Beef Cattle Specialist Craig Gifford described the benefits of virtual livestock fencing on Feb. 8 during the 41st Annual Southern Rocky Mountain Agricultural Conference and Trade Show at the Outcalt Event and Conference at SLV Ski Hi Complex in Monte Vista.

No one was shocked by the electric collars during the hands-on demonstration in the parking lot either.

But if the sticker shock for virtual fencing came with a jolt, Gifford put the cost in context. For one, it has dropped significantly in recent years and will likely continue to decline. It also eliminates other expenses required for conventional fencing.

In the last six or seven years, Gifford explained, collar and lease prices have dropped from as much as \$1,500 to \$250 apiece. The technology continues to evolve as more companies begin development and increase competition.

But unlike personal computers, cell phones, and other technologies funded by individual early adopters, virtual fencing can help save money for a bigger group. If ranchers have grazing permits, they are already working with the federal government. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the United States Forest Service (USFS) bear the costs of building and repairing old-school fences.

Out of a total BLM budget of \$1.6 billion for 2023, \$1.4 billion goes to managing lands and resources. In 1946, the BLM was created by combining land use and grazing management agencies. Today, the BLM manages 245 million surface acres.

Working for New Mexico State University, Gifford described different applications for virtual fencing, primarily concentrating on their project in the Gila Wilderness Area following a devastating fire. Miles of fencing burned in an arid region covering vast acreage. Herds could not be contained otherwise, so they created virtual pastures. Mountains and arroyos compromised cell coverage, so they also erected towers to maintain connectivity with the tracking collars.

Before letting animals loose on the open range, Gifford and his team trained the herd for the better part of a week. Using existing fences, Gifford's example extended the fence line virtually into open space. He showed a video of cows slowly moving to the boundary until the lead cow quickly turned back. Another cow followed immediately, perhaps shocked herself or in response to peer pressure. Gifford said that herds continue to learn on the range.

Each collar has cellular capability and is connected to a GPS-based satellite system. The tracker dangles around the cow's neck, swinging on metal chains while they roam. The natural motion maintains the signal, which can be viewed remotely on a smartphone. If a cow goes down, it shows up on-screen. The metal chains provide the contact for a shock. A rebel cow who constantly pushes the boundary will also push the battery in her tracking collar and require a replacement sooner than others. Gifford said that most cattle respond to the audio alert and avoid the shock.

If a cow does wander past the shock zone, perhaps to chase down a calf without a collar, she is not shocked again when they return to the herd. Ranchers set the boundaries of the virtual pasture, and if they have cell reception, they can reprogram a collar or track animal location.

To accommodate deserts with limited vegetation, Gifford explained how ranchers run cattle on thousands of acres. Positioning cell towers at strategic elevations



Photos by Patrick Shea
Beef Cattle Specialist Craig Gifford allowed conference attendees to explore the virtually fenced area he created in the Ski Hi Complex parking lot, including a section sequestered within the asphalt pasture.

above the range improves tracking, but the towers are not cheap.

The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) funded the first virtual fencing program in Colorado. In two years, the program expanded from 135 to more than 2,000 cows roaming over a half-million acres in Eagle and Garfield counties. They erected 10 towers.

While ranchers and federal land managers adopt virtual fencing, interest from other livestock businesses helps boost the technology. Merck Animal Health, for example, is a division of Merck that acquired one of the first virtual fencing companies in October 2022, an outfit called Vence. The acquisition now adds to Merck's portfolio of products for animal management.

At the end of Gifford's session, an audience member asked if the collars could one day monitor a cow's health, perhaps reporting vital signs. Merck already makes fever tags and is developing other technology.

In the meantime, virtual fencing solves a number of problems, particularly for grazing on public land. If fires do not burn down a fence, elk and other animals might create a breach. Cattle guards require labor to construct and maintain. People passing through often forget to close gates. Virtual fencing technology can mitigate or eliminate a few of these costs and challenges.

Gifford described one rancher's trick with the new technology. Before roundup, he reduces the shock zone a little each day to gather the cattle in a smaller area. The technology cannot replace skilled riders and trained dogs, but it can streamline a rancher's work.



Craig Gifford, Beef Cattle Specialist from New Mexico State University, shows the invisible boundary of a virtual fence. Steady beeps alert cattle, and they receive a slight shock if they continue into the pressure zone.

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Agriculture

Farmers Union representative talks ag and rural legislation

By JOHN WATERS

MONTE VISTA — At the 2023 Southern Rocky Mountain Agricultural Conference and Trade Show, Dan Waldvogel, director of external affairs at the Rocky Mountain Farmers Union, provided a legislative update on bills currently being considered in the statehouse.

With the population in Colorado predicted to be flat in the next several years, Waldvogel predicted a modest increase in the state budget that is “not looking super great.”

The 120-day state lawmaking window began on Jan. 9 and as of Monday night, Feb. 6, there have been 339 bills introduced, about half the amount Waldvogel estimates will be included in this legislative session.

Although there have been several agriculture and rural-related bills introduced so far, Waldvogel was optimistic more will be introduced this session.

Waldvogel gave a brief overview of the following pending legislation:

HB 23-1010

Task Force on High-altitude Water Storage

The bill creates a task force to study the feasibility of implementing water storage in the form of snow in high-altitude areas of the state. The task force must submit a report to the water resources and agriculture review committee on or before June 1, 2024. State Senator Cleave Simpson is a sponsor of this bill.

On Jan. 23, the House Committee on Agriculture, Water and Natural Resources postponed this indefinitely. According to Waldvogel, this bill was tabled out of respect for Colorado House Minority Leader Hugh McKean, an early proponent of the bill who passed away last October. Although the bill is tabled for now, Waldvogel said, “I think we’re going to see this come back.”

HB23-1011

Consumer Right to Repair Agricultural Equipment

The bill addresses the requirement that an agricultural equipment manufacturer facilitates the repair of its equipment by providing certain other persons with the resources needed to repair the manufacturer’s agricultural equipment. This bill will allow farmers and ranchers to repair their own equipment. On Feb. 6, this bill was referred to the House Committee of the Whole.

HB23-1069

Study Biochar in Plugging Oil wells

The bill creates the biochar in oil and gas well plugging working advisory group in the oil and gas conservation commission. The work group’s purpose is to make recommendations for the development of a pilot program to study the use of biochar in the plugging of oil and gas wells. On Jan. 19, this bill was introduced in the House and assigned to the Energy and Environment Committee.

HB-1094

Extend Agricultural Workforce Development Grants

This bill will extend internships under this program to last for up to one year. On Jan. 30, the House Committee on Agriculture, Water and Natural Resources referred this unamended to the Appropriations Committee.

SB 23-027

Food Pantry Assistance Grant Program

This bill currently calls for \$3 million in annual funding. Waldvogel estimated this amount will be reduced to about \$500,000. The Rocky Mountain Farmers Union is advocating the use of local sources of agriculture be mandated in this bill. On Jan. 10, this bill was introduced in the Senate and assigned to Health and Human Services.

SB23-010

Water Resources and Agriculture Review Committee

This would make the committee a year-



Photo by John Waters

Dan Waldvogel of the Rocky Mountain Farmers Union spoke Tuesday about legislation at the 41st Southern Rocky Mountain Agricultural Conference and Trade Show in Monte Vista.

round committee. “Water is the main theme we are hearing about...water is number one,” said Waldvogel. On Feb. 1, this bill was introduced in the House and assigned to Agriculture, Water and Natural Resources. Sen. Simpson is a sponsor of this bill.

SB23-092

Agricultural Producers Use of Agrivoltaics

In support of the use of agrivoltaics, which is the integration of solar energy generation facilities with agricultural activities, section 2 of the bill authorizes the agricultural drought and climate resilience office to award grants for new or ongoing demonstration or research projects that demonstrate or study the use of agrivoltaics. Sen. Simpson is a sponsor of this bill. On Jan. 30, this bill was introduced in the Senate and assigned to Agriculture and Natural Resources.

SB 23-050

Eligibility For Agricultural Future Loan Program

Concerning modifications to the Colorado agricultural future loan program, and in connection to modifying the eligibility requirements for the program and eliminating the repeal date for the loan program. A key element of this bill is to remove the provision in an earlier bill that requires farmers to own their land — something many young farmers do not. On Jan. 17, this bill was introduced in the Senate and assigned to Agriculture, Water and Natural Resources.

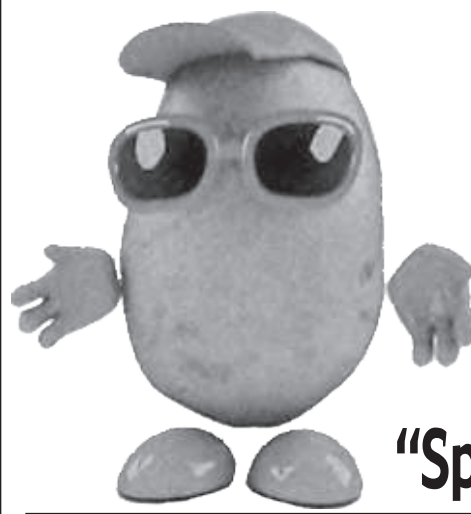
SB23-044

Veterinary Education Loan Repayment Program

Concerning updates to the veterinary education loan repayment program.

According to Waldvogel, this bill will be funded in the amount of \$500,000 to assist veterinarians in rural areas repay college loans. This bill was introduced on Jan. 12, and assigned to Agriculture, Water and Natural Resources.

In closing, Waldvogel said of state Sen. Simpson of Alamosa, “It is great to have Senator Simpson working on this [water] down at the statehouse. When you talk about water everybody says, well did you talk to Senator Simpson?”



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Government

City of Creede finishes projects, sets stage for future changes

By **LYNDSIE FERRELL**

CREEDE — The City of Creede has undergone several changes over the course of the last few years but the town has not seen anything yet compared to what the current administration and board have in store for the near future.

“We have a lot of plans in place, and we are excited to see them come to fruition,” said Creede City Manager Louis Fineberg.

In a report submitted by Fineberg at the last City of Creede Board of Trustee meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 7, Fineberg highlighted some of the grant funding the town has received over the last three years, where it was used and more funding the town is seeking to complete several projects that will bring Creede to the forefront of the future.

For the last year, going on two, the town has been working to come up to compliance with the Colorado Department of Health and Environment (CDPHE) on their current sewer collection system. Due to zinc and cadmium leakage, the town had to complete a sewer collection project that has been underway and will hopefully be near completion this summer.

“We are going to hopefully finish the sewer system replacement project this summer with the bulk of work being done this year. This has been a challenge for the town because we have to complete the work during our busy months, and it can interfere sometimes with our tourism season. The community has been great though and we are nearing the end,” said Fineberg.

The following summer will also bring changes to the downtown area along Main Street. The town received a large grant through the Colorado Department of Transportation to complete a pedestrian oriented project which will include

ADA compliant sidewalks, lighting, and outdoor furniture for the downtown area. This project is expected to be started and finished in the summer of 2024.

“We have been working on this project for some time and have done some work that has been finished including the new Gazebo and seating at Basham Park. It will be so nice to have everything finished by the end of summer 2024 and we look forward to seeing the results,” said Fineberg.

The next large project the city is currently working on includes rebuilding the current town hall. According to Fineberg, the city was put in touch with students from the Colorado School of Design who completed plans for the Creede Town Hall Complex. This is a conceptual design used to seek funding for the project through the Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA).

Please see CREEDE on Page 6



Costilla County adds to Rito Seco Park

By **DIANE DREKMANN**

SAN LUIS — Costilla County Administrator Ben Doon shared some highlights of 2022, the ongoing work in 2023 and the unique challenges Costilla County faces.

A big victory for San Luis occurred in a ribbon-cutting ceremony in July of 2022, according to Doon. After five years of planning and collaboration, Rito Seco Park, outside of San Luis, got eight miles of hiking trails, connecting popular fishing, picnic, and camping areas.

Doon explained some background and history of Costilla County.

“Costilla County has no federal public land,” Doon said. “Costilla County was originally part of a Mexican land grant, 4,000 acres were given to Costilla County for open space. Most of the rest of the county is private land, therefore not eligible for federal funds.”

Rito Seco Park was established in the 1970s, part of the 4,000 acres. It is a popular area for camping and fishing, but did not have any hiking trails until July 2022.

“Many projects,” Doon says, “are multi-year and grant-funded. For six consecutive years, Costilla County has been able to receive grant money for more public open space creating more hiking, camping, fishing opportunities. Colorado Open Lands and San Luis Valley Great Outdoors have been instrumental partners helping to expand open space in Costilla County. Colorado Open Lands is a land trust that are experts in land acquisition. San Luis Valley Great Outdoors help with technical trail construction.”

Another ongoing project supported by grant money is wildlife mitigation. County Administrator Doon recalls the devastating effects of the Spring Creek Fire of 2018.

“One hundred and fifty homes were lost. That is 6% of the population of Costilla County,” Doon said.

The grant money allows crews to go throughout Costilla County from May to September and remove trees, branches, and any debris that could be a fire hazard. The crews thin the trees in the mountainous areas,

create 80-to-100-foot road easements and fire breaks to minimize fire danger and emergency safety routes for the citizens of Costilla County. The wood collected is used to heat the furnace at the county maintenance shop.

Like other communities in the San Luis Valley, Costilla County received federal money for 2023 through the American Rescue Relief Act (ARPA). These funds will help pay for the \$400,000-\$600,000 needed to upgrade the aging wastewater infrastructure in the villages of Chama, San Pablo, San Pedro, and San Francisco.

Costilla County has also been the recipient six years in a row of a Veteran’s Assistance Grant through the State of Colorado. Doon is a proud supporter of this vital program that helps the area’s veterans.

“The Veteran Service Officer helps with utility bills, doctor visits, prescriptions, but, by far, veterans need the most assistance with home heating costs,” he said.

The county has received \$24,000 to help with these costs. Doon is “really glad the state supports such a well-used program.”

Monte Vista City Manager Dennis talks about ‘growth’ for 2023

By **MARIE MCCOLM**

MONTE VISTA — GiGi Dennis has been Monte Vista’s City Manager for just over a year now. Dennis has enjoyed her time as City Manager and has seen many different aspects of Monte Vista. From the devastation that occurred in town from a wildfire in April of 2022 to the construction of the new Outcall Event and Conference at SLV Ski Hi Complex.

“We have seen some heartache, but we have also seen some other really great things in 2022, overall, I am looking forward to helping make positive changes in 2023,” Dennis said. “Monte Vista is a great little community, and a warm place to live. Together we can make our little community flourish and grow, by moving things in the right direction.”

Dennis spoke about many of the events that occurred in 2022.

“The beginning of the year started out a little different,” Dennis said. “We had the excitement of finishing the Ski HI event center, along with the ribbon cutting ceremony. According to the Friends of Ski Hi, the event center had been an unrealized dream for such a long time, so to see it finally complete, with so many wonderful events scheduled, was a dream come true for so many people in our little town. We also then saw the devastation of a wildfire that took place in April of 2022, with a total of six displaced families. This was so hard to see, but as a city we banded together to help these folks out, using our resources. We worked to provide food and shelter for the folks that needed it. I really saw a community coming together here. We have also seen our town gain nice new roads, compliments of all the hard work that our Public Works Department has put in. We obtained this grant that has helped so much with this project, and if you look around, the grant has really helped a lot.”

Please see GROWTH on Page 6

Sales tax positively impacts Conejos

By **DIANE DREKMANN**

CONEJOS COUNTY — Conejos County Commissioner Mitch Jarvies said the biggest change for the county was the passage of a sales tax by county voters.

“In 2021, voters passed, for the first time in Conejos County history, a sales tax,” Jarvies said.

Implemented in 2022, the sales tax has already generated 2.2 million in revenue for Conejos County, according to Jarvies.

“Conejos County never had a sales tax, but the county was lacking in emergency services, with only one ambulance and a part-time crew,” Jarvies said. “If two emergencies occurred at the same time, someone would have to wait. The sales tax took the weight off the general fund.”

The sales tax allows for a full ambulance crew and another ambulance. The county has the engineering plans completed and land acquired to build an ambulance base and is moving forward in 2023.

In 2022, Conejos County hired retired school superintendent Curt Wilson as a grant writer to assist with projects like the ambulance base. In his 13 years as a Conejos County Commissioner, Jarvies stresses, “the huge importance of the sales tax. It was necessary and really helped the county.”

Conejos County never had debt, but the sales tax was necessary to provide critical services for the community, according to Jarvies.

Conejos County also received federal funds from the American Rescue Plan Act

(ARPA). Those funds are being used to upgrade area bridges. Jarvies said the federal funds will “help the county move forward, plan ahead, and not play catch up.”

Jarvies announced that, after years of negotiation, the Garcia family decided to sell their historic house in Conejos. It sits across the street from the labyrinth of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, the oldest church in Colorado. With the partnership of History Colorado and the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Areas, Jarvies hopes that one day the Garcia house can become a museum and the adjoining plaza with its general store and other abandoned buildings, can become a historic site with a visitor center — a place to share the rich history of the San Luis Valley.

Retirement

Visiting Angels of SW Colorado receives 2023 Best of Home Care – Leader in Experience Award

CONTRIBUTED

PAGOSA SPRINGS — Visiting Angels announced recently that it received the distinguished 2023 Best of Home Care – Leader in Experience Award from HCP, the leading firm in experience management for home care.

The Leader in Experience Award is the highest recognition awarded by HCP and is given to select home care businesses that consistently rank among the very highest in 10 or more quality metrics. As a Leader in Experience, Visiting Angels is now recognized among the top 10% of home care providers participating in the nationwide HCP Experience Management Program.

This accomplishment demonstrates Visiting Angels' long-term dedication to excellent care and quality improvement. To qualify for this award, 10% of Visiting Angels' clients and caregivers were interviewed each month by

HCP. Over a 12-month period, Visiting Angels received high client and caregiver satisfaction ratings in areas such as caregiver training, compassion of caregivers, communication, scheduling, client/caregiver compatibility, and more. Using feedback from clients and employees, as well as quality benchmarks from HCP, the Visiting Angels management team set goals to reach the highest level of Experience possible.

The Best of Home Care – Leader in Experience Award highlights the top-performing home care businesses in the nation. HCP believes that by honoring these providers, families looking for in-home care for a loved one will be able to recognize and choose a trusted home care provider.

“At Home Care Pulse, our mission is to help home care businesses create an experience that goes beyond client and caregiver expectations,” says Todd Austin, President of HCP. “When we see agencies like Visiting Angels of

SW Colorado that have so effectively provided outstanding care and employment experiences, we know we're on the right track. This award allows them to show proof of quality to poten-

tial clients and caregivers.”

To find out more about Visiting Angels' commitment to experience, visit visitingangels.com or call 970-264-5991.



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Government

Mineral County count blessings and move into secure future

BY LYNDISIE FERRELL

MINERAL COUNTY — Over the past several years, Mineral County has worked to improve several things throughout the county and now more than ever, they are grateful for the chance to work on even more as the county shifts and moves into the future.

Mineral County Administrator Janelle Kukuk has been instrumental in making sure the county was able to improve in several ways since she came on board and with the help of her current Board of County Commissioners and a great partnership with grant makers, has secured the county grant funding that helped with capital projects that began with the renovation and expansion of the Mineral County Courthouse.

“This was a great change that was long overdue. Not only is it nice for our administrative staff, but it was a huge improvement to the courthouse and allows the sheriff's department to flow through daily business without interruption. We have a very generous and challenging partnership with the Department of Local Affairs

(DOLA) who helped make this project happen,” said Kukuk. “None of it was possible without the help of several components and people.”

The courthouse renovation was only the beginning, and the changes that happened after the courthouse's completion threw Mineral County into a more secure and stable future. Another large and longtime project that finally reached completion was the purchase of the landfill by the county from the Rio Grande National Forest. For several years, the Mineral County Commissioners and Kukuk worked with Rio Grande National Forest representative Martha Williamson and Tom Malechek to come to an agreement and according to Kukuk, both Williamson and Malechek were instrumental in the process.

With the purchase complete, Mineral County can now rest assured that there will be a local landfill for the near future and that access to a shooting range will be available. “The shooting range was possible through a partnership with Colorado Public Health and Environment (CD-PHE) as well as Colorado Parks and Wildlife

(CPW). We can now use it for educational classes with local organizations and the school and I think everyone was happy we were able to include it in the purchase of the landfill,” said Kukuk.

Through their partnership with DOLA, the county secured funding to remodel the front of the historically significant underground Mining Museum and Community Center. With the combined efforts of the Mining Museum Board, the remodel was completed in 2022 and enjoyed throughout the summer. “It was amazing to see everyone out enjoying the new remodel in the front this summer. Guests that came to the Woodcarver's Rendezvous, the Creede Rock and Mineral Show and other events were able to be outside and it was so nice to see people enjoying the new parts of the facility.”

Finally, the county secured funding through the Division of Aeronautics to complete the surface improvement on the Mineral County Airport runway. “This was fabulous and opened the door for several opportunities in the future.”

Mineral County has focused on improving their

communications with both the City of Creede, the Creede School District and other entities throughout the county and beyond which began throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Communications with both the school and city as well as public health and Rio Grande Hospital improved significantly through the pandemic. I feel things were handled very well and though not everyone was happy, I am confident in how we responded as a community. It speaks to how we function as a community and to how we will continue to communicate moving forward,” said Kukuk.

The county was also able to sell the Mineral County Dental Clinic to a private practice which secured oral health in the area. Though the county had originally set out to provide the service to the community, it became clear that selling to a private practice was in their best interest. “We set out to make sure oral health was part of the community and I feel we did that. It was our main goal from the beginning and now we know that it is here to stay,” said Kukuk.

GROWTH

Continued from Page 6

Dennis also spoke of how the new murals that have been painted in town have beautified it.

“We had some people approach us about these murals, something that we didn't do on our own, just a few wonderful citizens that thought that these could make our little town a little more beautiful,” she said. “We now have three murals that have been painted in town and they look great. This couldn't have happened without the vision of these people. We appreciate them so much.”

Dennis also spoke about how in 2022, the city brought in a large balloon that was used for Ski Hi Stampede.

“We brought in Monte the Cowboy,” Dennis

said. “He is a large balloon that we had a ton of fun with for stampede.”

Dennis said that she was also excited about how the Christmas lights “lit up the town” in December.

“We got this grant, and the grant helped us purchase all these fantastic Christmas lights for our town,” she said. “We had so many lights, that we put up, but not all the lights were put up, we still had more, so yes, this was something else that was very positive for our town last year. The Christmas lights made our town sparkle in December.”

Dennis said that for 2023 she foresees even more growth for Monte Vista.

“In 2022, we made progress. The biggest suc-

cess was Ski Hi,” she said. “In 2023 more progress is coming from this center.”

Dennis said that a grant had been applied for and a “congressional earmark” had taken place when the grant was passed. The grant would give the city \$850,000 for the purchase of a generator, four portable showers, and a possible total of 15 to 18 RV spaces at Ski Hi. The idea behind the purchases would be to designate Ski Hi as an official emergency warming center.

“We don't know if situations may arise where folks need this center,” she said. “This would give people a place to lay their heads and feel safe. With this center, we can utilize and be prepared for anything that may occur.”

Dennis also spoke of a city-sponsored hotel, that may be another unrealized dream, that could start in 2023.

“We have thought of this for a long time, the idea would be to bring a city-sponsored hotel here that would bring more people to our little town,” Dennis said.

“Well, we have Monte the Cowboy for our events. We have over two hundred events already scheduled out at the Ski Hi center for this year. We have this congressional earmark that is going to help with our warming center. If you think about it, the Hotel could be an unrealized dream too. Growth is our plan for 2023. As a strong community we can make all this possible together,” she said.

CREEDE

Continued from Page 6

“Our first step will be to seek funding to complete construction documents through DOLA and then once that is complete, we can further seek funding for the actual project. Anyone who has spent any time in our town hall knows how much we need a new facility. It will enhance our town exponentially,” stated Fineberg.

The projects for the future or Creede do not stop there. The town recently submitted a grant application to FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) to seek funding for flood proofing Creede. Due to the town's location at the bottom of a steep canyon, the town has a long history of flooding.

The project would include changes to the northern part of the flume to decrease the risk of swelling water with sediment ponds and phase two of the flume resurfacing project.

The third phase would continue work on the flood plain south of town with the Headwaters Alliance organization. “This will take longer for us to implement but will be worth it in the end.”

In addition to the flood proofing project, Fineberg also spoke about the status of the town's Micro-Hydraulic System which would ultimately serve to provide utilities to the City of Creede. This project started years ago and the planning for the

project is almost complete. The first step was to complete a study to see if Willow Creek could produce enough hydroelectricity to provide electricity to the City of Creede and ultimately make it self-sustainable in a few years. With the planning complete, the city can now work on developing the actual system.

With all of that on their schedule, Fineberg and the Creede Board of Trustees are working to create affordable housing with the help of local landowners and the San Luis Valley Housing Coalition. Their hope is to meet the need for 11 housing units which was determined by the San

Luis Valley Housing Coalition study that was finished last year. The city will be working with Creede America owner and the housing coalition to secure funding for the project. More updates on this project will be reported as they become available.

The town is well on its way to being at the forefront of future development and things are only looking up for Creede. Creed Board of Trustee meetings are the second Tuesday of the month at 5:30 p.m. with an option to watch from home. For more information, please visit www.cityofcreede.colorado.gov.

Education

Trinidad State provides dental assistants to the SLV

BY MARGARET SANDERSON

ALAMOSA — The smooth operation of a dentist's office requires well-trained dental assistants, and many of them come from Trinidad State.

"I think it's great," said Dentist Dr. Lon Thurman, "because starting people from scratch takes a lot of time. This really cuts the gap."

The dynamic and positive Crystal Benavidez leads the program. She replaced Canada native, Sherry Dufoe-Pratzman, who opened the program in 2017 and recommended Benavidez for the job.

"You have to get hands-on experience and they're able to hit the ground running pretty fast coming out of the dental assisting program," said Thurman. Three of his assistants have come out of the Trinidad State program, "and all three have worked out great."

Other dentists in the San Luis Valley have offered help. Ten dental chairs have already been donated. One came from Dr. Thurman. Retired dentist, Dr. Rick Santi, donated six. His daughter, Carly Santi Lozoya, who has her master's in dental hygiene, comes to the class once a semester to review and assess the student's radiology performance and to certify them for that part of their degree. When Dr. Richard Williams retired, he donated three chairs with manuals, some instruments and a panoramic X-ray machine. Many of the donations will be incorporated into a new lab at the college this summer.

Students are excited about the program. Ahlisia Gallegos said, "I wanted to do the dental program because I was that weird kid who liked to go to the dentist. Since I was little, I wanted to work with teeth. I love it. It's so fun and working in a dental office now is like actually doing it. It's just a great time."

Gallegos is one of three students currently working in dental offices, all located in Alamosa. They all started assisting in December after taking a semester of training.

"I think we were too afraid to work in a dental office at first," said Gallegos. "Crystal made us feel more comfortable with the idea. It gave us the confidence we needed to go out and get a job."

Two of the three are working with dental assistants whom Benavidez trained her first year.

Benavidez' interest in dental work began when she and her partner moved to Pagosa Springs from the Valley. She responded to an ad for an office assistant in a dental office. She had worked in an office setting at Valley Wide in Alamosa for years. The dentist who hired her noticed her science background and asked if she would be interested in being a dental assistant. Benavidez had earned her bachelor's in interdisciplinary studies and geology and environmental science at Adams State.

"At the time I had no clue that teeth have numbers," said Benavidez. "I knew we had to brush and floss our teeth and that was the extent of my knowledge of dentistry!"

Benavidez was instantly introduced to high-tech dental procedures rather than routine dentistry such as fillings. The first day of work the dentist said, "We're going to extract some



Photos courtesy of Trinidad State

Trinidad State dental assistant instructor, Crystal Benavidez, explains the dental implant process where a small titanium post is anchored into the gums of a patient and is topped with an artificial tooth to replace missing or damaged teeth.

bone chips and then we're going to work with the CO2 laser that helps remove soft tissue and this afternoon we're going to do an implant. That really got my interest," she said. "The blood and gore don't bother me at all, so I said, 'Sign me up!'"

Her training was tough, requiring research, reading and testing in addition to hands-on work. She learned the trade well.

After she and her partner moved back to the Valley with their son, Benavidez worked with Public Health as a dental assistant for eight years. After she left that position, within a few months she was missing the work she had grown to love. She applied at Dr. Thurman's dental office where she has worked since. Meanwhile Trinidad State approached her about replacing instructor Sherry Dufoe-Pratzman who was returning to Canada. Empowered, by the chance to teach, Benavidez readily accepted the position with Trinidad State. "It has definitely put the spark back in the dental life for me," she said.

Because classes are Tuesday and Thursday evenings and every other Saturday, Benavidez continues her full-time work with Dr. Thurman, who has generously allowed her to use one of his workstations to train students until her new classroom is ready.

"We're definitely like the quarterback of the office," said Benavidez. There's a lot more to assisting than people realize." Her predecessor said, "They (dental assistants) become a second set of hands for the dentist. They learn what is wanted before they are even asked."

Training includes medical emergencies in the dental setting, terminology, dental procedures, dental history, radiology, infection control, how to be a professional and more.

"I think everyone should start off as a dental



Joyce Espino learns how to smooth tray edges using a straight handpiece with an acrylic bur which rotates at a fast speed like a sander.

assistant because it introduces you to everything," said Benavidez. "From there you can go to oral surgery, or endodontics (treatment of pulp inside a tooth), implants (artificial tooth root for attaching a tooth or bridge), orthodontics (correcting tooth misalignment), or periodontics (gum disease), surgical assistant, office manager, program coordinator, teacher

— lots of opportunity."

"It's one thing when a teacher can teach the curriculum but it's another thing when they have the real-life experience to help you succeed in the field. She has the ability to form relationships with every one of her students, so it just makes you feel more

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Monte Vista School District officials speak of 'positive progress' for 2023

BY MARIE MCCOLM

MONTE VISTA — The Monte Vista School District has seen some positive things happen in 2022. From the opening of a new early learning center to the dedication of an electronic sign, and the renaming of Bill Metz Elementary's central auditorium. There have been many positive changes in the district.

MV School District Superintendent Scott Wiedeman spoke about differences from last school year to this year in the school system.

"We have seen kids getting back into school. Over the last 3 years, we have worked so hard to build relationships with these kids," Wiedeman said. "COVID was a time when we had to take a step back, and

everything changed. We had kids in school online, we had kids in school part-time, we had kids just in and out of school. The system was so different, and we lost some of that good engagement with our students. Now working towards the future and this year, we really want to work hard to get that engagement back with the students. We have also partnered with the same people that helped us increase our scores at the elementary school, to go to the middle school now too, and we feel this is a very positive move in the right direction."

Monte Vista School District Board of Education President Gary Wilkson also spoke about the district.

"One of the things I really feel is positive and unique about our school

district every year, is our ability to form personal relationships, and that's attributed to our staff," he said. "We have great leadership in our district too. Our leadership is very strong."

Wilkson explained that on a weekly basis Superintendent Wiedeman meets with different leaders from all the schools in Monte Vista, including the elementary, and the high school, to have different round-table discussions regarding different issues or subjects that arise at the schools.

"They all get together and talk about things. They collaborate on anything that needs a decision," Wilkson said. "This is a strong force, different opinions, different subjects, different

schools in the district. They don't always agree, but they do agree, on always doing what is best for the students and this really helps our district and makes us unique."

Superintendent Wiedeman said that collaboration is a benefit for the schools for anything that has happened and anything that will happen in the district.

"We look at a lot that has happened, in the past few years, obviously the past is important in determining the future for our students, but we just foresee everything positive for our students. We have had a lot of growth," he said.

Wiedeman attributes many positive changes already occurring this year to the staff.

"Our staff really cares about our students," he said. "We want to do everything we can to support them. Our students' well-being is most important to us and getting them back into school after everything is our main goal. We also see growth in our Early Learning Center. This center is going to help our district so much too, in fact it already has. There are kids who aren't quite old enough to be placed in certain grades, but they can be placed in the center. This has made a tremendous impact on our district too. Our goals for 2023 are simple, take care of our students, engage them more, and just get kids back into school. We are working hard to make this happen. We see this happening for sure."

Education

URGSD looks to future outside of COVID

By LYNDISIE FERRELL

DEL NORTE — The last few years have been a struggle to say the least as many throughout the country and even the world adjusted to the swiftly changing times since COVID hit the scene in 2020. Businesses, communities, and schools all adjusted to a new norm but now, with the pandemic declared “over” by officials, many of these establishments are going back to how things used to be and with that comes a sigh of relief.

Superintendent for the Upper Rio Grande School District (URGSD) Aaron Horrocks is one that is relieved to see some form of normalcy return to the district and is looking forward to opening the doors and finally using the school the way it was meant to be used. “Things are getting back to normal. We are finally able to use the school the way it was built to be used and we are all grateful,” said Horrocks.

The brand-new school had been open for about six months before the pandemic hit and they watched powerless as the doors to the facility closed along with other districts throughout the Valley in the spring of 2020 and in a frantic effort to secure continued education for students, did what all other districts did; they turned to online classes, held their breath, and hoped for the best.

When the district came back in the fall Horrocks described it as his biggest struggle and greatest relief. “We were so happy to be back, but things changed day by day and sometimes

minute by minute. It was my biggest struggle and greatest relief. Our staff, students and teachers were amazing, and our community was a huge support. We got through it and now looking back, it makes having the school back open, that much better.”

Now, Horrocks and his team at the school can offer the full extent of services to students. Class parties are back on the schedule, team sports are no longer being canceled due to illness or positive COVID cases and the building is full. “It’s so nice to walk in and have the school alive. The building is full, our classes are full, and the community can come in and support our district. We have amazing turnout at our events, concerts, and sporting events. Our school is being used and there is no better feeling in the world.”

Horrocks also took a moment to recognize his staff and teachers. “We are now affirming our place in the community. We went from a new school to COVID and thanks to our dedicated staff and teachers, we are working on being back to normal. Everyone is dealing now with inflation and staffing issues. Everyone is dealing with those things, and we are fortunate to be where we are and to have the support of amazing people. We will do what we need to, to take care of our people. We appreciate them and we will make sure that they know that.”

With COVID sliding further and further into the rearview, Horrocks and the URGSD Board of Education have turned their sights to school



safety and will be working with local law and public health officials to ensure that the school is as safe as it can be for students.

“We are currently working on the safety of our district. We are looking at standard response protocols, response to emergencies and promoting school safety. We hope to have it in place and at a comfort level by the fall and the beginning of the next school year. Safety is paramount and getting staff on the same page is our top priority.”

The district is working with the I Love You Guys Foundation and working to increase training and education among staff and teachers throughout the district. “We are moving in a good direction, and we know we have some things that need improvement, and we will improve. It’s how we grow as a district.”

Horrocks has one goal he hopes to accomplish in the coming days and that is to pack the new gym for the first time since the school was built. The district will be hosting the 1A and 2A Basketball tournament on Feb. 23-25. The district was chosen to host the event this year and will be welcoming schools from around the region. “Please come and support this awesome event, show support for our students and let’s pack the gym!”

The district hosts a Board of Education meeting every fourth Thursday of the month at 6 p.m. in the school’s auditorium for anyone wishing to stay up to date on current changes. For more information or a complete schedule of events, meetings and other activities, please visit www.dncsd.org.

Creede School Superintendent shifts focus to community and students

By LYNDISIE FERRELL

CREEDE — Now that the COVID pandemic is less of a concern for the Creede School District, Superintendent Keith Crispell is shifting his focus to students and the Creede community. Crispell came on as the superintendent right at the beginning of the COVID pandemic and being thrown headfirst into challenging water, is now relieved to do something he knows he was hired to do and that is to improve the district for students, teachers and staff in every way possible.

“I have been here for three years and started in my position as the Creede School Superintendent right at the beginning of COVID, but now I get the chance to be the superintendent I was hired to be and focus my attention on improving test scores and the school’s relationship with the community. I think now more than anything there is less anxiety and that is what is allowing me to refocus on other topics in the district,” said Crispell.

Crispell continued to explain that though the district never lost sight of the importance of test scores and education during the pandemic, the dynamics on how it was focused on had changed. “We know more now than we did when this

first started. Everything changed so fast, and we all were in this type of reaction mode. We had to be. Our primary focus was on the changing forecast and our challenge was to keep up with the changes but now we are more mindful, and we can really focus back on education, which is why we are here,” said Crispell.

Overall, the district is seeing less of the hybrid online learning that they adapted to during the pandemic and more in school learning. Though the district still offers special educational courses through their online access, more students are completing main course learning in person and the school is beginning to feel like it did before COVID reached their doors.

“Now we can have outside excursions and weave special activities into everyday education. We have more sporting events, holiday parties and activities that take students outside of the school and that is really a great thing. It’s part of what makes learning fun,” said Crispell.

With that in mind, the superintendent is not forgetting what matters and that is a chance to improve the test scores throughout the district and to offer even more transparency and partnership to the community. “We always look at how we

can improve. Even when you have top test scores there is always room for improvement and my job is to look at our scores and see the areas where we can adjust to meet those goals. There is always room for growth and a chance to recognize our strengths and weaknesses,” explained Crispell.

In addition to the test score improvements, Crispell would like to invite the community into the school and offer additional activities that may strengthen their partnership with the community they serve through classes and educational opportunities. “I don’t know exactly how that will look but that is our goal by next fall; to have more adult centered courses and to learn from local businesses the types of soft skills they need in their workforce. We can teach those things along with our curriculum to help improve student and community interaction.”

“We want to build up that student, parent and community relationship and now that we have a better grasp on things, we can start to invite the community back to the school. Parents can walk their kindergartners to their classes at the beginning of the day again, we can have community members to school functions without putting a limit on numbers and we can use some of our teachers to offer classes.”

With that in mind, Crispell has goals set for the coming school year and will be working to create more opportunities for the community to be engaged with the school. More details will be reported as they become available. The Creede Board of Education meets every third Tuesday at 4:30 p.m. with an option to Zoom the meeting from home. For more information or a full schedule please visit www.creedek12.net.

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engaged,” said Gallegos. Fifty hours of internship is required for the program — either with a dentist in a dental setting or working directly with Benavidez. Dianne Gardner is doing her internship with Benavidez. “I know a little bit about everything,” said Gardner who has studied sociology, psychology, criminal justice, cyber security, programming, coding and more — “but this one stuck.” She was recently hired as a dental assistant in the same office where she has received training.

Molly Cavett, one of the students now working in a dental office, said “When I saw that ad for the program, I decided I’m going to try it. Crystal’s great. The program’s great.”

Deedra Gray, an ambitious student who likes variety in her life is a three-time Trinidad State graduate holding an Accounting Clerk certificate, and both Associate of Science and Associate of Arts degrees.

“I had always been interested in the dental field and I wasn’t sure it was something I wanted to take on,” she said. “I love it. This is one of my favorite things I’m doing.”

Gray now works full-time in a dental office and part-time in the radiology department

at the hospital assisting the technicians and scheduling.

All of the students want to continue in the dental field.

“I want to go to dental school,” said Gallegos. “I’m doing the assisting program to test the waters. It’s a good place to start and now that I’m doing this and working in it, I love it. And it’s something I definitely want to do. I wanted to before, but it gave me the little boost I needed to actually pursue it. We have a good time, and we learn a lot.”

Benavidez said in the state of Colorado a person can train directly with a dentist to become certified as a dental assistant or can take a one-year (two semester) course which Trinidad State offers. The graduate also certifies in the required radiology and in CPR. The average wage in the Valley runs from \$15 to \$25 per hour — not bad for two semesters of study.

Benavidez is proud of her students whose average grade on a recent emergency medical exam was 90.

To learn more, contact LoriRaeHamilton at lorirae.hamilton@trinidadstate.edu or 719-846-5524.



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