

Shorts



Town of Center Christmas Parade is Dec. 18

CENTER — According to the Town of Center Facebook page, “The Center Christmas Parade has been moved to Saturday, December 18.”

The annual Center Christmas Parade is presented by the Kiwanis Club and the Town of Center. The parade lineup will be on 2nd Street beginning at 12:30 p.m. with the parade to start at 1 p.m. with a route around town.

Santa will be at Casa Blanca Park after the parade. There will also be raffle tickets available for purchase at local Center businesses with the drawing winner announced at Casa Blanca park after the parade and you must be present to win.

People wanting to participate in the parade must sign up at Town Hall, with cash prizes awarded for the best float.

Commodities distribution in MV on Dec. 15

MONTE VISTA — Commodities will be distributed at 10 a.m., Wednesday, Dec. 15, at the Church of the Nazarene gym in Monte Vista by the Chapel of South Fork. You must be a resident of Rio Grande County and meet household income guidelines to receive commodities.

Girl Scout Troop 30104 collecting pajamas Dec. 18

MONTE VISTA — Girl Scout Troop 30104 is collecting new children’s pajamas for Hope and Home Foster Care Agency. Donations can be dropped off on Saturday, Dec. 18, from 12 to 2 p.m. at First Presbyterian Church, 705 Second Ave., Monte Vista.

SLVH Foundation seeks gently used medical equipment

ALAMOSA — San Luis Valley Health Foundation is asking for gently used wheelchairs, crutches, walkers and or other medical equipment. With the supply chains still being affected by COVID-19 any help with donations would be greatly appreciated. For questions or to make pick up or drop off arrangements, contact Kelly Gurule with the SLVH Foundation at 719-587-5707.

Saguache Jail Committee recommends funding jail near airport

STAFF REPORT

SAGUACHE COUNTY — The Saguache County Jail Committee is recommending that the County Board of Commissioners fund construction of a new jail on land the county owns at the Saguache Municipal Airport.

The Jail Committee is comprised of eight local law enforcement leaders and community members — Center Police Department Chief Dale Meek, Saguache County Sheriff Dan Warwick, Saguache County Jail Commander Ken Wilson, Dave

Mehaffee, Ed Powszukiewicz, Elvie Conley, Benjamin Byer and Joe Buckley.

The Committee issued a press release Tuesday afternoon, Dec. 7, that outlined the committee’s mission, provided background on

why a new jail is needed, looked at locations and funding, and its overall recommendations.

“In conclusion, the Committee agrees that the Saguache County Board of County Commissioners

Please see JAIL on Page 6A

SLV Research Center Holds Open House for Farmers and Community



Photo by Mechel Meek

The San Luis Valley Research Center held an open house on Thursday, Dec. 2, to show a selection of its current crop of potato varieties.

BY MECHEL MEEK

CENTER — The San Luis Valley Research Center held an open house on Thursday, Dec. 2, to show a selection of its current crop of potato varieties to the surrounding farmers and community.

The warehouse building was opened to the public who were greeted by the staff of the Research Center. Potato samples were laid out for viewing and information was given about each variety from the ubiquitous Russet to the exotic Masquerade bicolor variety and everything in between.

Technical information was given about each variety, including growth time, resistance to disease and suitability standards for use as chips or fries.

Research Associate Caroline Gray said, “We are excited to host live events, such as the Open House, at the San Luis Valley Research Center again. Interaction with growers and the local potato industry is crucial to the success of the Potato Breeding Program.”

The open house was attended by growers and local government representatives. The event allowed participants to view the potato samples first hand, to discuss the

SCSO provides update on missing woman from Crestone area

Warwick says it might be a ‘self-inflicted situation’

Warwick says it might be a ‘self-inflicted situation’

BY PRISCILLA WAGGONER

SAGUACHE — Although nothing definitive is known at this time, Saguache County Sheriff Dan Warwick said the whereabouts of Jenifer Ann Driver, who went by her spiritual name Mountain Sun, was still unknown.

Please see DRIVER on Page 4A



All eyes are on Subdistrict No. 1

Will San Luis Valley farmers save their aquifer — and themselves?

EDITOR’S NOTE: This is the first of a two-part look at Subdistrict No. 1 — past, present and future.

BY PRISCILLA WAGGONER

ALAMOSA — From her family’s farm near Mosca, Erin Nissen can see the Great Sand Dunes in the distance. Whether through a window or from the porch, the towering 700-hundred-foot ridges of sand are always in view, a constant reminder of what she fears may come.

“That’s how we could end up if we’re not careful,” the fourth-generation farmer says. “If we keep on draining

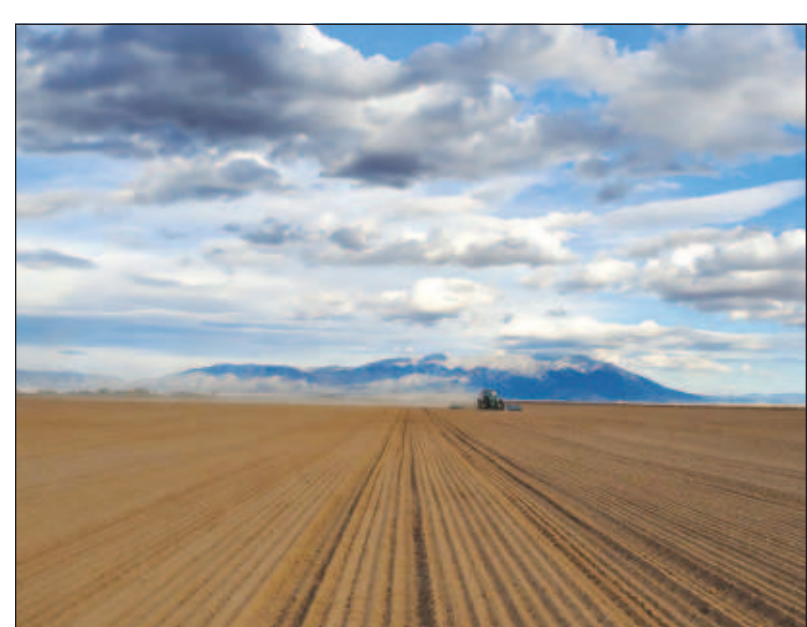
the aquifer like we’ve been, our farm could end up being nothing but sand.”

Nissen, 30, has reason to be anxious. Drought and excessive pumping by some farmers have drained water levels in the aquifer to an almost

Please see AQUIFER on Page 4A

Years of drought and over pumping by some farmers and ranchers has taxed the San Luis Valley’s aquifer. Some like Nissen Farms recognized what was happening and changed their farming methods, while others continued as they always did. In 2006, Subdistrict No. 1 was formed locally with the goal of restoring the ‘unconfined aquifer’ and avoid the state from stepping in

Courtesy photo



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OBITUARIES

Peggy Jo Blenden

Peggy Jo Blenden died on Nov. 11, 2021, while visiting family in Columbia, Mo., at the age of 65. She lived with her husband, Michael Dale Blenden, in Del Norte, Colo. Her death was due to unexpected heart failure. Peggy was born in Fulton, Mo., on Dec. 26, 1955, to Barbara Gum Books and Maurice Tate Books.

Her childhood was spent riding her horse, exploring her family's small farm and adventuring along her cherished rivers in the Missouri Ozarks with her immediate and extended family. She attended South Callaway High School in Mokane, Mo., before attending the University of Missouri, where she earned Bachelors and Masters of Science degrees from the School of Forestry, Fisheries and Wildlife.

During graduate school in 1980, she started dating her future husband, whom she married in Hamms Prairie, Mo., on Jan. 10, 1981. After their marriage, Peggy worked as a wildlife biologist, first with the Rosebud Sioux Tribe in South Dakota, and then the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Cold Bay, Alaska.

In 1988, Robin Michael Blenden was born, and she became a full-time mom. After 4 years in Homer, Avvlaska, Peggy and Michael moved to Kenmare, N.D., where Ian Dale Blenden was born in 1993. The family

moved to Monte Vista, Colo., in 1995. After a brief stint in Evergreen, Colo., from 2014 to 2018, Peggy and Michael moved to Del Norte.

Peggy had many passions. She was a tireless reader and devoted herself to homeschooling and working with public schools to allow her sons the best education possible.

She was a committed conservationist, volunteering countless hours to the National Wildlife Refuge System, Friends of the San Luis Valley National Wildlife Refuges, Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust, and Jefferson County Library system.

Her lifelong love of plants was filled with identifying, admiring and photographing wildflowers throughout the Missouri forests, the northern Great Plains, Alaskan tundra and southern Rocky Mountains. She brought her vegetable and flower gardening skills with her everywhere she lived. She gave her cats and dogs the best lives imaginable, possibly even spoiling them.

She loved both national and international travel, especially when birding was involved. Her cooking and baking interests and skills were epic.

She was preceded in death by her brother James Neal Books in 1975, her father in 1980 and mother in 2003.

She is survived by her brother Lee



Books (67) Roswell, N.M.; husband Michael (68) Del Norte, Colo.; son Ian (28), Alamosa, Colo.; son Robin (33) and his spouse Kelli (33) Lafayette, Colo.; her dogs Millie and Abby; and cats Oliver and Tristen.

A celebration of life will be planned and advertised at a later date. Please consider making memorial contributions to the Conour Animal Shelter, 2825 Sherman Ave., P.O. Box 369, Monte Vista, CO 81144, urgasconouranimalshelter.org, 719-852-3366 or the San Luis Valley Animal Welfare Society, 76 El Rio Dr., Alamosa, Colo., slvaws.org, 719-587-9663.

Don Gary Allee

Don Gary Allee, 78, passed away on Nov. 27, 2021, surrounded by his loved ones. Born in Childress, Texas, Don eventually made his way to Del Norte, Colo., in 1979 with the love of his life, Sally, by his side. Together, Don and Sally opened the Tin Cup restaurant. They operated the business for 2 years and eventually sold it after they realized they weren't restaurateurs. However, this allowed them to meet and become part of the community they loved.

Don loved and enjoyed the outdoors of Colorado, and he had a great passion for exploring with his wife and kids. One of Donnie's most favorite places was Bellows Creek, where he spent many summers hiking and fishing. He also served the Del Norte community as the municipal judge for almost 30 years, and was honored to remain in that position until the time of his passing. Don had a chuckle that topped most laughs and a soft voice that was always heard, his kind and gentle spirit will be missed.

Don is survived by his wife of 41 years, Sally; his two children Andrew Allee of Alamosa, and Emily Boyd (Brady) and their two



children Blakley and Blayne Boyd of Del Norte.

He was preceded in death by his parents.

Cremation was selected and a memorial service was held at 2 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 3, at the funeral home in Monte Vista. In lieu of flowers, the family asks that you make donations to Blue Peaks Developmental Services in Alamosa, Colo.

To express condolences to the family, please visit www.rogersfunerals.com. Rogers Family mortuary in Monte Vista is in care of the arrangements.

Doroteo C. Martinez

Longtime Monte Vista resident Doroteo C. Martinez, 74, passed away from dementia on Wednesday, Nov. 24, 2021, at the San Luis Valley Health in Alamosa, Colo., with his loving wife by his side. Doroteo was born on Aug. 5, 1947, in Monte Vista, Colo., to Jose Ignacio "Nacho" and Estefanita Lucero Martinez.

Doro grew up in Center, Colo., and after graduation, he joined the United States Air Force. After he completed his duties in the service he came out with an honorable discharge and was a staff sergeant.

After the service, Doro went to college and chose to do refrigeration as his career. He owned and operated Valley Refrigeration Company for over 30 years. In 2019, he was in a car accident going to work which ended his career due to the dementia.

Doro was cared for by his wife Maria until his passing. They shared a loving union of 26 years together. Doro was a kind and gentle man. He always tried to help those in need. He enjoyed watching football, car shows, and home building programs. His favorite pastime was playing pool with his wife and friends at the senior center in Monte Vista.

He is survived by his wife Maria Martinez whom he met in 1992, his son Jason Martinez (Marilyn) from a previous marriage, stepchildren Tara Lloyd and Matthew Shaffer; one grandson Marco Martinez; four step-grandchildren Jeanne Gurule, Joey Cisneros, Angelo Cisneros, Niclo Cisneros; adopted brother Tony Martinez whose whereabouts are unknown. He is



also survived by many nieces, nephews, cousins and friends.

Preceding him in death were his parents Jose Ignacio "Nacho" Martinez and Estefanita Martinez-Maez, stepfather Ernest Maez, granddaughter Chloe Martinez.

Doro will be missed by his family and friends so much. He and his wife Maria had a love that only comes once and a lifetime.

A Funeral Service was held on Wednesday, Dec. 1, 2021, at 11 a.m., at the Romero Funeral Chapel in Alamosa. Interment will follow at the San Luis Valley Cemetery in Monte Vista with full military honors.

Donations can be made to the dementia/Alzheimer's society at 225 N. Michigan Ave. FL 17, Chicago, IL 60601.

If you would like to leave online condolences, please visit romerofuneralhomes.com. The care of arrangements has been entrusted to Romero Funeral Home of Monte Vista.

Arthur Palmer Kraft

March 26, 1931-Oct. 27, 2021

Arthur Palmer Kraft, 90, of Banning, Calif., died peacefully at home from complication from dementia with family by his side. Born in Pomona, Calif., the son of Frank and Marguerite (née Palmer) Kraft.

Attended college 1951 to 1953 at Oklahoma A&M, Stillwater, Okla. (now Oklahoma State University). He joined the Army in 1953, in 1955 he met his future wife in Garmisch, Germany, Gladys Blair who was there with the Air Force. They married Christmas evening that year in Gladys' hometown of Wadena, Minn.

Art worked at his parent's dairy in Banning, the Sun Up Dairy as a co-manager and route driver until 1962. From 1959 to 1962 he joined the Banning Fire Dept. as a volunteer. From 1962 to 1966 he was a Fire Prevention Inspector, 1966 to 1968 Fire Engineer and finally to Fire Chief in 1968 to 1972. After he was let go from the Fire Dept. He eventually joined the State

Fire Marshal's office out of the Bishop, Calif., in 1974 until 1981 when their house between Bishop and Mammoth burned down. With the insurance, they bought a business in South Fork, Colo. They sold the store in 2002 to enjoy retirement in Banning.

Always reading and learning, while with the Fire Dept., he would even use his vacation time to attend classes to improve his knowledge of the fire service. If he wasn't sure how to do something, he would find a book and read about it.

Art was preceded in death by his parents, Frank and Marguerite, and brothers, Jack and Donald.

He is survived by his wife, Gladys and son, Jack of Banning and granddaughter, Minna of Stockton, Calif.

Art will be interred at the National Cemetery in Riverside, Calif. Services and interment will be at the National Cemetery in Riverside at 11:15 on Dec. 13 in Area No. 4.

Free COVID at-home rapid testing kits available

STATE — In an effort to aid Colorado residents and school-aged children, the state has recently announced that it will also be providing free-over-the-counter COVID-19 rapid test kits, directly to people at home.

The program will use Abbott BinaxNOW rapid antigen tests that show results within 15 minutes of taking the test. The program has been designed to allow parents, guardians, and caregivers a way

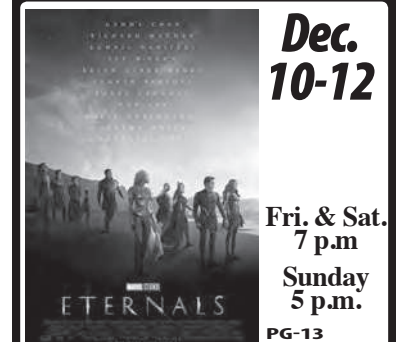
to test their children at home.

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment has an individual enrollment form on its website for the kits. The kits will be mailed free of charge and contain four tests each. Multiple kits for the rapid testing can be ordered separately and are also free of charge.

For more information on the rapid test kits, visit the CDPHE website at cdphe.colorado.gov.



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OPINION & EDITORIAL

Memorization is a lost art

Most of you out there in reader land can remember the days when we had to memorize certain things.

Schools back then were big on that. From the alphabet to the multiplication tables to all the States and their capitals, all that information went into tiny heads to be pulled up at a moment's notice like a life raft on a sinking ship.

This was necessary as one never knew when a teacher or Grandma Mabel might ask us to recite just such things and show off our mental prowess to the other cousins in the room.

I really cannot for the life of me think how memorizing the alphabet did me much good as no one has asked me to sing the song since about First Grade.

Those darned multiplication tables, however, come in handy as heck.

When I was learning them, my mom put me through flash card hell to make sure I was speedy with my multiplication tables, bless her heart. And I do still use that knowledge today when trying to figure out whether the best buy on eggs is by the dozen or by the 18.

I guess that's more of a long division problem, but it uses the same principles just in reverse and sure comes in handy all the time.

Other things we memorized at least in our house were the names of the 12 disciples and books of the Bible. I guess those did come in handy in quiz bowls at church but honestly, I have not needed that knowledge in quite some time, and they are slipping from memory day-by-old-age-day.

Just the other day, Ol' Dutch was just minding his own mindless business when the song "There Were Twelve Disciples" came to mind like a blast from the past.

Now I have not sung that song for about 55 years or so and where that was stored to suddenly come rushing in like a flood from a nearby creek, I have no idea. And suddenly I could recall all 12 disciples by singing that little song. Amazing.

Now, however, those same 12 disciples won't leave me alone and the song plays constantly in my mind.

An earworm of tune that will not go away until at some point the synapses in the rusty old noggin decide to let it go and some other nonsense replaces it. Which with Ol' Dutch is another song. Maybe it's because I sing all the time that this happens or maybe it's because I am simply loony, the jury



Trout Republic
by Kevin Kirkpatrick

is still out on that. Back in the good old days before cell phones, we memorized everything including the phone book.

I can faintly recall knowing about 50 telephone numbers by heart along with addresses and codes and other things we needed on a daily basis. In writing this column, I came up with my grandmother's phone number and address out of the blue and where that was stored and released from, I do not know. But it's in there. Accessing is the real problem.

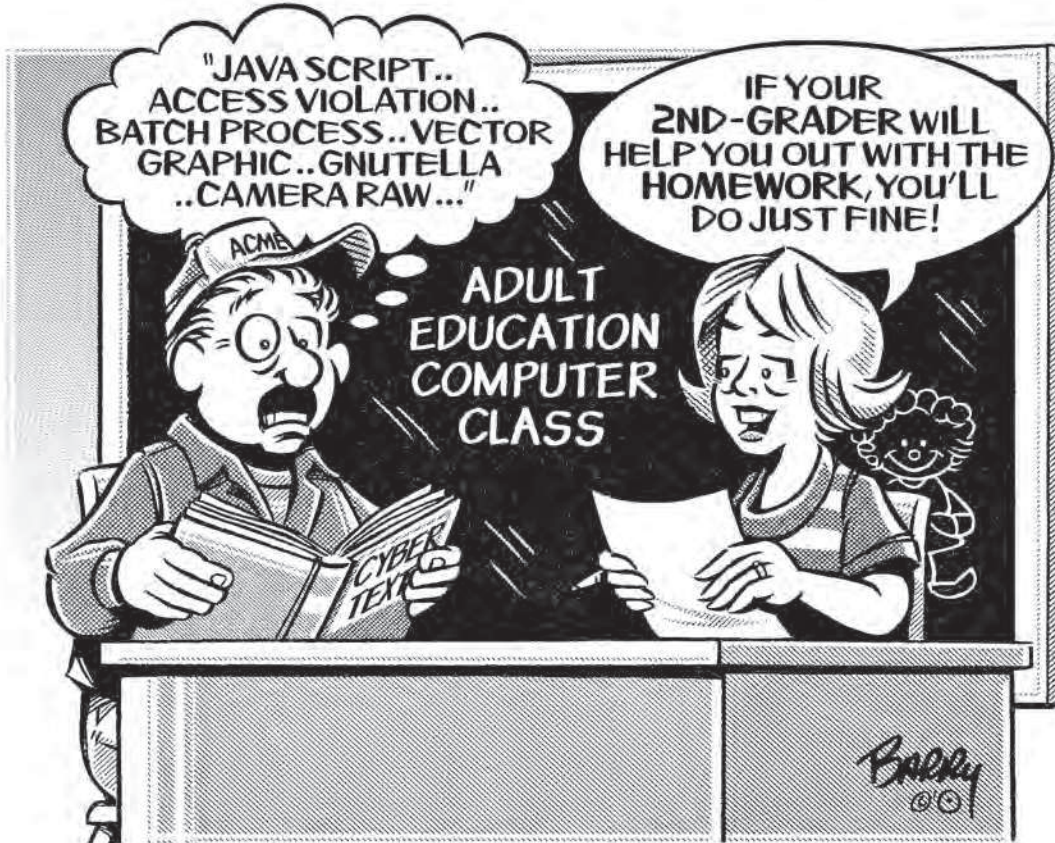
Our reliance on those infernal smartphones to keep all of the information we acquire these days really came to light when someone asked me for Miss Trixie's phone number, and I could not for the life of me come up with it.

I got to thinking about that and if I were ever injured just who would the rescuers be able to call on my behalf if my phone was missing or destroyed. The only number I can recite by heart is Gladstone 549, which was our phone number when I was 5 years old. Not much, there.

Ol' Dutch has even had a hard time coming up with my own number at times as I have relegated my brain to letting a smart phone take care of all those necessary details.

As the Christmas season approaches, I know you have a lot to remember. So, let me help you with your peace and quiet and remind you of a partridge in a pear tree so you too can join those of us and get your own ear worm for the season.

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.



YOUR NIGHT SKY

BY DARLENE DANKO

Orion the Hunter

Now that winter has almost arrived, there are different things to look at in the night sky. My favorite constellation Orion the Hunter is back! It's currently low in the east around 9 p.m., but by the end of this month it will rise at nightfall.

Orion is often referred to as The Lord of the Winter Sky because it's so bright and easily seen. Even if you live in a small city with lights, you should be able to see it.

Currently Orion is tipped on its side with his three-star belt pointing directly up in the sky. The three brightest stars are Betelgeuse which marks Orion's right shoulder (assuming he's facing you when you look up at him), Rigel is his left foot, and Bellatrix which marks his left shoulder. Altogether Orion contains 20 stars.

His right arm holds up his sword, and the left arm holds the lion's pelt, like a shield. The belt is his most distinctive feature because it's a line of three bright stars. Hanging from his belt is his sword which contains a great star forming region called the Orion Nebula. It's visible with the naked eye, but obviously spectacular with binoculars or a telescope.

There are several mythologies involving Orion. He is most notably a giant hunter or warrior facing a charging bull, Taurus, and followed by his dogs Canis Major and Canis Minor. In Greek mythology, Orion was the Son of the Sea God, Poseidon, who was famous for being handsome and strong. Orion was known as a great hunter.

This is a very ancient constellation that's positioned on the Celestial equator with his right arm brushing



the Milky Way. It's also one of the few constellations mentioned in the Bible. Orion is referenced in the book of Job 9.9 and 38.31.

Meanwhile, the Geminid Meteor shower peaks on Dec. 14. Since the full moon is on the 19th, there won't be many visible. The good thing is that this is a very active meteor shower with many bright meteors. Last week I told you that the moon will go away around 3 in the morning, so that's when you should get up if you want to go out to look at them, which I certainly am going to do.

LETTER

Proud Military Parents and supporters thank the community

Editor,

On Saturday, Nov. 6, the members of Proud Military Parents and Supporters met to pack care packages for military members from the San Luis Valley who have been serving for 5 years or less.

Thanks to the many donations from businesses and families in the San Luis Valley, we were able to pack 30 boxes full of non-perishable snacks, socks, pens, paper, envelopes, personal hygiene items such as soap, shampoo,

conditioner, lip balm, Q-tips, floss sticks and hand sanitizer.

We also sent card games and t-shirts in the boxes plus many more items too numerous to list.

Many of our young military members will be away from home this Christmas.

A huge thank you to: Monte Vista City Council, Southern Colorado Computer Services, 360 Insurance, Roberts Real Estate, Rio Grande Bank, Gabe, Karyn, Reagan and Logan Futrell, Cheryl Jones, Alamosa

State Bank, Sunflower Bank, Wilbur-Ellis, Wenta Nip and Sanitizing Alamosa Senior Citizens REC, Valley Meat, Jake Mellott and Family, Doc's Outdoor Sports, Nancy Starling Ross, Suzanne DeVore, Alamosa Building Supply, Marcia Candy Auto Zone, Monte Vista Eye Care Monte Vista COOP, SLV Health Lukas and Stephanie Riggensbach and anonymous donors.

*Proud Military Parents and Supporters
Paula Martinez*



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AQUIFER

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unprecedented level, leaving the San Luis Valley at a crossroads and local water officials faced with a decision that could put some farmers out of business. Nissen runs Nissen Farms with her father, Lyle, whom fellow growers in the Valley describe as being “head and shoulders above everybody else” when it comes to sustainable farming.

“Lyle was doing things 20 years ago that nobody was even thinking about,” says John Kretsinger, a farmer and rancher who bought land in Alamosa in 1989 because it had one of the most responsive aquifers in the country.

In the years before Kretsinger transplanted himself from Texas to Colorado, the Valley was rich with farms growing a cornucopia of vegetables — turnips, spinach, broccoli, carrots, and lettuce. In the late 1940s, the Valley produced enormous crops of peas with entire freight cars full trucked out every week.

Don Shawcroft is a 64-year-old rancher who runs cattle in Conejos County. His family came here in the 1800s, and the Valley he remembers is a far cry from the Valley he sees now. “When I was a kid, there were some places where the ground was so marshy,

you couldn’t ride a horse across,” Shawcroft says. “Water coming out of some of those wells that were dug early on would shoot straight up in the air and over the house. Those days are over. All that water has been pumped out of the ground.”

Now, with only 7 inches of rainfall per year and “barely half the groundwater that was available just a decade ago,” everything on the Nissen’s farm — every seed they plant, every decision they make — “is all based around water,” Nissen says.

Decisions like adding radish and green manure to the soil so it retains more moisture. And choosing crops based on how much water they will need and when they will need it. And tracking how much water the farm pumps, down to 0.08 inches, and recording that amount every single day. And, ultimately, calculating how much water they can put back into the aquifer, whether through recharging ponds or other surface water, to replace what they have withdrawn.

“We’re doing different things all the time so we can keep cutting back. But it’s hard, and it’s getting harder,” Nissen says.

But what is hardest, she notes, is “when we see other farmers doing nothing.” Because what other farmers do is crucial to the Nissen’s operation.

Though father and daughter have complete control of their own farming practices, they are part of a group of 300 farmers bound together because of the collective depletion of the aquifer.

Water bureaucracy can be a snoozer, as can hydrology. So, for the purposes of this story, suffice it to say that the group, called Subdistrict No. 1, was formed as a political subdivision and corporate body in 2006 by holders of surface-water and ground-water rights in Alamosa County and parts of Rio Grande and Saguache counties — the heart of this alpine desert valley — specifically for the purpose of taking action to restore what is called the “unconfined aquifer.” That’s the water table closest to the surface, which is not to be confused with the “confined aquifer” several layers deeper underground.

The gist of the collective — and why people far beyond the San Luis Valley and even Colorado state lines are watching it so closely — lies in the idea that, because there are too many farmers relying on a finite and ever-dwindling layer of groundwater in a time of prolonged drought and climate change, everyone using that water is inextricably tied.

About half of Subdistrict No. 1’s members are farmers who, like the Nissens, are committed to sustainable farming. The other half are not and continue to pump more water from the aquifer than they return to it.

No matter what members are growing or how they grow it, no matter if their families have worked the land for generations or if a farm or ranch was bought last year by anonymous hedge funders, members of the subdistrict have united in hopes of keeping their water fate in local hands rather than in those of state water regulators, who have the power to shut down their wells.

The collective actions of Subdistrict No. 1 ultimately could have more of an impact on the future of the Nissens’ farm — or any other — than the actions of individual farmers themselves.



Erin Nissen Miller



Don Shawcroft

In Colorado, the dynamics of hydrology are not the only powers and factors farmers need to fear when they take more water out of the ground than they put back in. State government has authority, wielded through the Office of the State Engineer within the Division of Water Resources, to step in and shut off irrigation wells when farmers fail to live within their means. It is power the state will use.

During a severe drought in 2002, farmers in Adams, Weld and Morgan counties along the South Platte River were locked in a legal battle over farmers’ excessive use of groundwater for irrigation impacting the rights of farmers who relied on surface water to irrigate. The State Engineer stepped in and shut down wells — 8,000 of them — until farmers using groundwater could develop a plan to replace the water they had depleted, reducing injury to the senior surface water rights holders. The shutoffs were devastating to farmers and their communities. And for the owners of about 2,000 wells, the impact was permanent since the wells were never turned back on.

Three hundred miles to the southwest, farmers in the San Luis Valley watched the state’s response along the South Platte as it was unfolding in 2002, and what they saw was the writing on the wall. Groundwater regulations from the state were coming, and the levels of water in the aquifer, tracked since 1976, were of great concern. In the 2002 drought — the worst ever on record in the valley — withdrawals

had caused an unprecedented decline of almost 400,000 acre feet. The levels continued to decline to almost 800,000 acre feet in 2006.

Cleave Simpson is a fourth-generation San Luis farmer and rancher and head of the Rio Grande Water Conservation District. As he tells it, his community realized the state could just as easily come in and shut down their wells, too, and that they had to find a way to collectively manage their aquifer.

“I can’t say what was in the heads of those farmers on the South Platte. I think they knew about their problem, but they didn’t act on it aggressively enough,” Simpson says. “We were determined to have a different outcome. We were going to find our own solution.”

That determination — and the decision to create the subdistrict in 2006 — was driven by two factors:

Shutting down all 3,000 wells to the Valley’s unconfined aquifer until its water levels were restored would mean the suspension of almost all agriculture production for at least a year, if not longer. A year of not actively farming and ranching would strip between \$400 million and \$500 million from the valley’s economy annually and devastate not only growers, but also other businesses and local governments. Property values also would likely plummet because farmland depreciates when its wells are red tagged and water is shut off.

The likelihood of such shut offs increases each year that levels in the aquifer continue to drop.

DRIVER

 Continued from Page 1A

Warwick provided an update on the missing person case last week. After an extensive search of the area where she was last seen plus an investigation into other factors, Warwick said, “It’s looking like this might be a self-inflicted situation.”

Driver was last seen in the North Crestone Campground area near Crestone on Oct. 16 and was reported missing to the Saguache County Sheriff’s Office (SGSO) on Oct. 29. At that time, it was believed that she might have left the campground to hike to North Crestone Lake.

SCSO immediately issued a press release asking for anyone with information to contact their office and then launched an extensive search conducted both on foot and by helicopter in the area where Driver was reportedly last seen. The search turned up nothing — no clothing, no items that Driver allegedly had in her possession at the time she went missing, nothing indicating that she had been hiking in or through the area.

Further investigation revealed that, in the days preceding Oct. 16, Driver had been camping at the campground at the same time as a woman associated with the “Love

Has Won” group, known to reside in the area. They had both exceeded the time they were allowed to camp on the property, and a local official had instructed them to move their campsites.

SCSO was able to get in touch with the woman last seen with Driver. The woman, who was in Pennsylvania, told SCSO that she and Driver had parted company when they were told to leave the campground, and she had not been in touch with her since.

That was the same area where SCSO Search and Rescue had already conducted their search.

After speaking with previous associates and friends, SCSO learned that Driver had indicated that she was planning on ending her life.

In response to a message on social media from a friend who was wishing her well, Driver wrote, “I will be leaving my body and going to my star system at the end of September. I stayed to get the most of my journey here but am tired of the upkeep of the vessel.”

Sheriff Warwick said the case will remain open until they find definitive evidence that tells them what happened to Driver.

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Center Vikings wrestling, basketball teams participate in tourneys

By MECHEL MEEK

CENTER — The Center High School Viking athletes have been busy participating in numerous tournaments.

According to Superintendent Carrie Zimmerman, "Our Viking athletes had a busy weekend. Our wrestling team traveled to Moab, Utah and took part in the Red Rock Invitational tournament. They had a great showing and took 4th place overall in the tournament. Several wrestlers placed in the top five in their weight classes: Jordan Duran-2nd, Lorenzo Trujillo-4th, Aaron Valadez-4th, Martin Palma-3rd, Jesus Valadez-1st and Omar Hernandez-5th. Thanks to Coaches Mondragon, Rael, Martinez for making this opportunity possible for our students."

The Center Vikings basketball teams also competed in the Sangre Shootout, at Sangre de Christo School in Mosca. Both teams placed well in the tournament with the girls basketball team placing fourth and the boys basketball team placing second.

According to Zimmerman, Alexis Varela and Alicia Rios were selected to the SDC all-tourney basketball team. These tournaments are just the beginning of a long season of Viking athletics. The full athletic calendar can be found on the Center Consolidated Schools website.



Courtesy of Center Consolidated Schools

The Center High School Vikings wrestling team competed in Utah. Several wrestlers finished in the top five.



Center High School girls basketball players Alexis Varela and Alicia Rios were named to SDC all-tourney team.



Photo by Mechel Meek
The Center High School boys basketball team competes in the tournament at Sangre de Christo school.

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December Community Events and Fundraising at Center United Methodist Church

By MECHSEL MEEK

CENTER — Center United Methodist Church is inviting all members of the community to attend its upcoming events for the holiday season.

Yoga is held every Friday at 9:30 a.m., except on Christmas Eve. Bible study will be held every Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. with a special focus on the Redemption of Scrooge. Movie Night will be a double feature this month, to be held at 6 p.m. and will be showing the “Muppets Christmas Carol” and “Nativity” and is an opportunity for a family-friendly event for the holiday season.

Blue Christmas Service will be held on Wednesday, Dec. 21, at 6 p.m., and Christmas Eve Service

will be held in Saguache at 5 p.m. and in Center at 7 p.m. with regular services held every Sunday. The church is also asking that the community help them raise funds.

According to Vicki J. Ratzlaff, Center Finance Chairman, “Our little church also has something to be thankful for, a wonderful Memorial Donation has brought our deficit in the checking account to minus \$5,670.69. This is still a cause for concern for our church as we continue to have our bills to pay.”

Donations can be made via the mail to Center UMC at P.O. Box 626 Center CO 81125, by text at 719-628-1830, or online at www.umofcenter.org via their donation link.

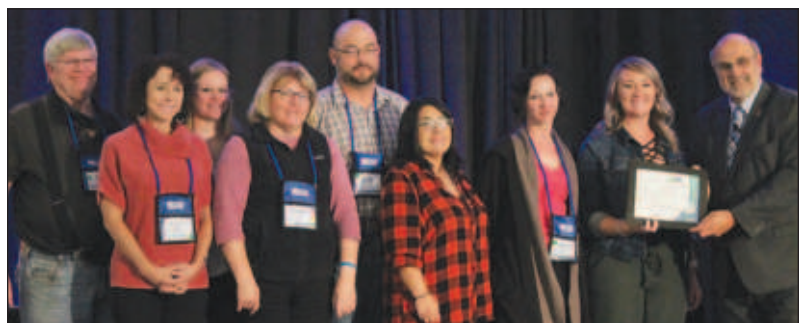
RGH receives Summit Award at 21st annual Night of Excellence celebration

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

The Summit Award is the highest award of excellence presented at the HealthCare Service Excellence Conference. It is awarded to qualified, innovative, and progressive individuals, teams, and healthcare facilities who have made outstanding progress towards improving the patient experience and staff engagement. Individuals, teams, or organizations must be nominated to be eligible for a Summit Award.

Rio Grande Hospital received one Summit Award, three Pinnacle Awards and 13 Breakthrough Awards. Dr. Heidi Helgeson received the highest honor, the Summit Award for Motivating Administrator. Amanda Lewis, PA-C received Pinnacle Award for Customer Focused Provider.

“Rio Grande Hospital was very proud of all their team members and these amazing accomplishments,” RGH



officials stated.

In 2021, the Summit Awards committee received 240 nominations from 21 different healthcare organizations spanning 10 states. 68 of the nominees were chosen as Pinnacle Achievers (the best of the best), and 19 of those were presented the Summit Award at the Night of Excellence held on Wednesday, Nov. 10.

The 2021 Breakthrough Awards were open to all Service Excellence Initiative™ participants and alumni and highlights improvements and achievements of Patient Satisfaction and Patient Experience Scores within

an organization. These awards were presented during the Breakthrough Awards Luncheon and serve to draw attention to and reward excellence in score improvement.

Both the 2021 Summit and Breakthrough Awards are presented by Custom Learning Systems during the annual HealthCare Service Excellence Conference, held this year at the Hilton La Jolla Torrey Pines, La Jolla, Calif. The HealthCare Service Excellence Conference is dedicated to delivering evidence-based solutions to help hospitals and other healthcare facilities improve the overall patient experience.

JAIL Continued from Page 1A

should allocate appropriate funds and use the current property at the Airport for the new Sheriff’s Office/Jail facility,” the Committee stated.

Background

The Saguache County Sheriff’s Office, that is currently housing inmates, was built in 1957 and was constructed as a residence at 530 5th St. In Saguache. Although there have been some remodels to the facility, they are not sufficient to keep up with the needs of the communities.

The current Saguache Jail is still out of compliance in regard to state and federal laws causing distinct liability to the County due to the uncertain safety of deputies, prisoners and the community, the Committee stated.

“Additional remodeling and upgrades to the current facility would not bring it into compliance; therefore, a new facility is absolutely required,” the Committee stated.

The location of the current facility is in the heart of the Town of Saguache and directly adjacent to a public school. That school encompasses grades K-12. The students from that school spend recesses and breaks outside and are in direct line of sight with the current facility.

Due to the inadequate construction of the current jail, inmates are being walked for recreation around the block and students are in proximity to mandated inmate recreational activity. There are ongoing and regular complaints from the community concerning this form of inmate exercise.

Unfortunately, due to the current location and limited space of the facility, no other options are available in this facility.

There have been several instances where inmates have escaped the current jail due to the facility not having adequate perimeter fencing and proper locking mechanisms. When those escapes have happened, inmates are directly in the community with the intent to flee at any cost.

This danger of escape into a populated area creates even more liability for the County and its citizens. Inmates were able to overcome being caught in a timely manner because they were able to easily hide in the populace, the residential homes, vehicles and businesses of Saguache.

“Due to this, we realize a new facility must be built outside of the populated areas of the County to deny opportunities for flight or other high-risk occurrences in the community,” the Committee stated.

Location Analysis

Multiple location sites have been considered during this process and two distinct locations are the most feasible for this project. Those two locations are at the current Saguache Municipal Airport, 810 Gunnison Ave., which the county currently owns and is located a few miles west of Town.

The other is at the end of Denver Avenue, on the western edge of Town. The Denver Avenue location is owned by someone other than the County of Saguache and would need to be purchased.

The Denver Avenue would provide a water tap and sewer resources, but is also still on the edge of Town and within a populated area. That location would additionally put an added burden on the infrastructure of the Town of Saguache.

The current jail is already overburdening the water and sewer infrastructure. A new facility, which would hold a significantly higher jail population, and would cause more costs to the Town by necessitating the immediate upgrade to existing sewer and water utilities to prevent a catastrophic failure, the Committee stated.

The location at the Airport would need a commercial well and septic system. This would not burden any current infrastructure and could add a layer of protection when or if infrastructure goes down at other locations of the community, i.e., water. This location is outside any populated areas and would add an extra layer of security to the

community in case of any potential escapes. The Airport location also allows for any added growth for Saguache County infrastructure, according to the Committee.

Funding Analysis

In the last two years construction costs have gone up at least 25%. The longer the wait to begin planning and construction the higher the cost will be. Incoming revenue sources are not keeping up with the rising costs of construction.

“We believe that there are numerous grant opportunities that will help fund this type of building which additionally coincides with potential funds from the new Congressional Infrastructure Bill. However, we cannot apply for those funds without having matching funds available or obligating them to the project,” the Committee stated.

The Committee concluded the press release stating it was ready to assist throughout the process.

“The Committee also appreciates the opportunity to be a part of the process and would enjoy continued participation on the layout of the new facility once funding is approved. Once funding is approved, the Committee is ready to move forward with any assistance on layout and design. The Committee also understands there is a design in place but this design may need some minor to moderate revisions. Without Commissioners’ approval of funding there is no way to apply for funds through any grant opportunities or other state and federal funding,” the Committee stated.

Coffee with the Chief to Showcase K9 Kit and discuss crime in Center

By MECHSEL MEEK

CENTER — On Saturday, Dec. 11, Coffee with the Chief will be held at the Center United Methodist Church at 9 a.m.

Center Police Chief Dale Meek said, “Sgt. Fresquez will be there with K9 Kit to provide some information on many of our recent arrests and I will have some news on who we may be hiring as we start the new year.”

The Chief also plans to discuss the efforts of the department over the last two years to combat crime, he will be providing statistical information regarding crime and crime trends in Center. Several high-profile drug arrests have taken place in the Center community in the last month involving Center PD K9 and this event will be a chance for the public to meet K9 Kit and to hear about these issues.

SAGUACHE COUNTY SHERIFF’S REPORT

SAGUACHE COUNTY — The following information was provided by the Saguache County Sheriff’s Office for the period between Nov. 29 and Dec. 5, 2021.

The Sheriff’s Department’s activity on the road included one injury crash and one crash with property damage. They also patrolled the Town of Saguache six times and the Town of Crestone once and conducted two VIN inspections.

In addition, there was one stolen property report, one report of theft, one animal problem report, one report of harassment, one report of property

damage, one protection order violation report, one suspicious activity report and one noise complaint.

They also responded to three controlled burns, one fire (other), provided information two times, assisted nearby agencies once, and responded to five ambulance calls.

ARRESTS

• A 49-year-old Center woman was arrested on drug charges, resisting arrest, criminal possession of financial device and attempted tampering with evidence.

• A 34-year-old homeless man was arrested on an outstanding warrant.

Public Notice

Rio Grande Water Conservation District Appointment

The Saguache County Board of Commissioners are accepting letters of interest for appointment from an individual who would like to serve as the Saguache County representative to the Rio Grande Water Conservation District Board whom resides South of Saguache County Road L, have an interest in both surface and ground water, have an interest in agricultural and represent municipality water interest.

Letters of Interest may be addressed to the Board of County Commissioners and submitted to the Saguache County Administration office in the basement of the courthouse or mailed to PO Box 100, Saguache CO 81149. The deadline for letters of interest is Friday, December 17, 2021. The Board of County Commissioners will review comments and make a decision on this request at their regular meeting on Tuesday, December 21, 2021.

No. 1615 published in the Center Post Dispatch, Thursday, December 2, 9 and 16, 2021.

Saguache County Board of Commissioners Seeks Saguache County Planning Commission Members

Saguache County Board of Commissioners are seeking members and alternates from:
Town of Saguache surrounding area – member and alternate
La Garita/Center area – member and alternate
Town of Center and surrounding area - alternate
Cochetopa area – Member and alternate
Moffat and surrounding area – alternate
Hooper and surrounding area – alternate
Villa Grove and surrounding area - alternate
At Large for All of Saguache County – alternate
Crestone and surrounding area - alternate

The representative must be a property owner or property manager and reside in the area they are interested in representing. Regular member terms are for three years and the alternate terms are for one year.

Saguache County Planning Commission meets on the last Thursday of each month in the Road and Bridge meeting room. The Planning Commission may also have work sessions throughout each month to work on the Saguache County Master Plan and different items. If you are interested, please send a brief letter of interest stating qualifications and interest to: Saguache County Land Use, Attn: Amber Wilson, PO Box 326, Saguache, CO 81149 prior to Friday, January 7, 2021. Should you have any questions please call Amber Wilson at 719-655-2321.

No. 1616 published in the Center Post Dispatch, Thursday, December 9, 16, 23 and 30, 2021 and January 6, 2022.

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San Luis Valley Health welcomes new pediatrician



SUBMITTED ARTICLE

ALAMOSA — Jason Kalan, M.D., joined the San Luis Valley Health Pediatrics Clinic in Alamosa.

Dr. Kalan has spent most of his career in Denver and Colorado Springs and previously studied in Ohio and Texas. He graduated from

the University of Cincinnati with a Bachelor of Science and completed his Doctor of Medicine from the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine.

Kalan completed his residency at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center Dallas at the Children's

Medical Center and is board certified with the American Board of Pediatrics. He specializes in behavioral and developmental pediatrics.

When he isn't spending time with his family, he loves reading about classic automobiles and looks forward to the San Luis Valley's car festivals.

Dr. Kalan joins Drs. Bresnitz and Deng in providing pediatric-focused specialty care for patients under the age of 18 years old. The SLVH Pediatric Clinic is located in the Regional Medical Center in Alamosa at 106 Blanca Ave. and can be reached at 719-589-8004.

Rio Grande County to host concealed carry class

By **LYNDSIE FERRELL**

DEL NORTE — The Rio Grande County Sheriff's Department in partnership with the Rio Grande County Victim's Advocate Courtney Arthur is hosting a concealed carry class on Friday, Dec. 10 at 5 p.m. and Saturday, Dec. 11, at the local shooting range.

The class is open to the public and will take place at the Rio Grande County Annex building in Del Norte. The course will cover basic gun safety, Colorado State statutes pertaining to gun laws and the best practices to conceal carry without incident.

According to Arthur, the course will also focus on the psychological side effects of carrying and the after-effects when a weapon is used against another person.

"This portion of our classes is something that most courses do not offer, but it is a very serious thing anyone wanting to conceal carry needs to consider. We also talk about tunnel vision and after-effects when practicing or using the weapon," organizers stated.

Most of those interested in concealed carry do not think about the actual moment of use when

discharging a weapon in the act of self-defense. Law enforcement and emergency service members from across the country deal with the after-effects of situations every day, and the general public interested in owning a firearm need to be aware of the risk and consequences of that decision just as much as anyone else who uses a weapon for self-defense.

The second part of the class is on Saturday, Dec. at 9 a.m. at the Rio Grande Club gun range located on Highway 160 just east of the 5-mile hill, south of Del Norte. This portion of the class will focus on the safety of handling a firearm, making sure the owner is comfortable with the weapon and fire practice.

"This part of the course also includes practice in some of the drills we as law enforcement officials train in, for those who want to participate. It is not a mandatory part of the class, but those who wish to be successful with conceal carry, should consider participating," organizers stated.

For more information, contact Courtney Arthur at the Rio Grande County Sheriff's Department at 719-657-4000 or send an email to rgso@riograndecounty.org.

Connect for Health Colorado
Walk-in Enrollment Event - One Day Only!
sponsored by Valley-Wide Health Systems, Inc.

Friday, December 10 Cesar E. Chavez Medical Center
9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. 186 N Hurt Street
Center, CO 81125

For each family member, even if they are not applying for insurance, please bring:

- Name, address, and contact information
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- Full social security number
- Case numbers for members who have applied to Health First Colorado.

For all family members over 18:

- Driver's license or photo ID
- Employer's name, address and phone, and whether they offer health insurance to employees.
- Income-related documents (2 most recent paystubs, self-employment income (current profit and loss statement), tax documents, social security awards benefits letters for 2021, interest and dividends, unemployment, alimony, rental income and retirement)
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For more information, please call 719-587-5931



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Turning Interruptions Into Amazing Opportunities

Jesus was a master storyteller. Many times when people asked Him questions, He responded with parables to help them understand the point He was trying to make.

For example, in Luke 10:25-28, a lawyer, who is described in The Amplified Bible as "an expert in Mosaic Law," asked Jesus, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" When Jesus asked him what the Law said, the lawyer's response was, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself" (v. 27).

When Jesus told him he was correct, the man then asked, "Who is my neighbor?" and Jesus responded by telling him the story of The Good Samaritan.

In this parable, we read about a man who was going from Jerusalem to Jericho when he encountered robbers who stripped him and beat him, leaving him half dead. After this, a priest came along, but when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. Then a Levite (a very religious man) came by and did the same thing.

Verses 33-35 (ESV) say, "But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.'"

I love how Jesus said the Samaritan "had compassion" for this man, so he stopped his journey to care for him and then take him to a place where he could safely rest and receive the help he needed until he was better. It wasn't a quick, easy job, either. And

this Samaritan was going somewhere, just like the priest and the Levite, but he was willing to be interrupted to take care of someone in need.

Make Allowances for Divine Interruptions

We all have moments when something comes along that can interrupt our plan, and sometimes they are "divine interruptions" we should take. We shouldn't be so focused on doing what we want, or planned, to do all the time that we limit God when He wants to use us to help someone else. That's like walking around with a "Do Not Disturb" sign hanging around our necks.

I often hang this sign on my door at hotels when I don't want to be bothered, and that's okay. But it's not okay to have this attitude when God wants to interrupt our plan.

If we're really going to love people the way Jesus loves us—following the example He showed us of how to walk in love—then we can't have a selfish, self-centered mindset that says, "Don't bother me. I don't want you in my space!"

A Day in the Life of Jesus

Matthew chapter 8 gives us some insight about Jesus' life on Earth. Verse 1 says, "When he came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him" (ESV). Notice that Jesus "came down from the mountain." He spent time alone with His Father before He went about His day, reaching out to others. If He needed to do this, then we need time alone with God even more!

In verse 2, a leper came to Jesus and asked Him to heal him. "And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, 'I will; be clean.' And immediately his leprosy was cleansed." Jesus made Himself available to people in need as He followed God's plan each day. He was willing to go to people who had needs.



When we see people in need but it's not convenient for us to help them, it's easy to say, "God bless you! I can't stop what I'm doing to help you but I'll pray for you!" And there will be times when distractions and interruptions are not part of God's plan.

But I've found that many times, God wants me to allow Him to change the course of my day so He can use me to bless someone else. It could be a small act of kindness that only takes a few minutes or it could be something that totally changes my day. Either way, when I'm following Jesus, I never have regrets!

I want to encourage you to pray every day, "God, what can I do for YOU today?" You'll be amazed at the ways He works in and through your life when you do—even when it interrupts your plan.

For more on this topic, order Joyce's three-CD series **Do Unto Others**. You can also contact us to receive our free magazine, *Enjoying Everyday Life*, by calling (800) 727-9673 or visiting www.joycemeyer.org.

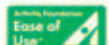
Joyce Meyer is a New York Times bestselling author and founder of Joyce Meyer Ministries, Inc. She has authored more than 135 books, including **BATTLEFIELD OF THE MIND** and **AUTHENTICALLY, UNIQUELY YOU** (FaithWords). She hosts the *Enjoying Everyday Life* radio and TV programs, which air on hundreds of stations worldwide. For more information, visit www.joycemeyer.org.

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SLV Extension open house to honor retirees on Dec. 10

BY LARRY BROWN
SLV Area Extension Director
 Maxine Lujan and Mary Ellen Fleming are retiring from Colorado State University, SLV Area Extension. Lujan started in 1986 as the 4-H secretary and advanced to office manager, which she has been for the

past two decades. Fleming started in the Valley in 1999 as the Family and Consumer Science Agent, after having already served 17 years in Extension in New Mexico and on the West Slope of Colorado. If you or your kids were in 4-H

anytime in the past 35 years, or if you were a 4-H volunteer leader, Lujan enrolled you, helped you enter your projects in fair, and held your hand in completing any one of a hundred requirements of succeeding in your 4-H experience. If you called or came into our office, she greeted you and helped you get the information or service you needed.

Likewise, for the past two and a half decades, if you were a kid in the San Luis Valley, if you were a senior citizen in the Valley, if you ate at restaurants in the Valley, Fleming's teachings and trainings helped you grow healthy and strong, stay healthy and strong, and be safe when eating out. She is also known for delivering her educational programs in both English and Spanish.

They have served the San Luis Valley community with their hearts and souls. Now is our chance to honor them and express our gratitude as they move to the next chapters of their lives.

Join us for an open house celebration of their service and commitment Friday, Dec. 10, from 4 to 7 p.m., at the Extension office, 1899 East Highway 160, Monte Vista. Extension staff will be hosting the open house and serving

ice cream and cake.

For more information, contact

Larry Brown, Morgan Young, or Jennifer Norris at 719-852-7381.



Mary Ellen Fleming



Maxine Lujan

Christmas tree and firewood permits available in Monte Vista

STAFF REPORT
MONTE VISTA — Permits for cutting Christmas trees and firewood on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands are available online and from the SLV Field Office in Monte Vista.

cutting and removal from BLM public lands and costs \$10 per cord. Permits purchased from the U.S. Forest Service are not valid for cutting firewood on BLM.

For more information, call the San Luis Valley Field Office at 719-852-7074.

Christmas tree permits are \$10 per tree and may be purchased online at forestproducts.blm.gov, or purchased from the field office Monday through Friday between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

Warm clothes and boots, tire chains, a shovel, and emergency supplies are also important to bring along.

ABL permit is required for firewood

CENTER

Continued from Page 1A — merits of each variety and was a chance for growers to gather, reconnect and discuss the new varieties.

Some of the samples viewed were also able to be purchased by growers to plant in their fields next year.

The event was capped off with lunch for the attendees. The next event at the SLV Research Center is a Potato Postharvest Storage Workshop on Dec. 9 starting at 9 a.m. and concluding with lunch.



Photos by Mechel Meek

Valley-Wide Welcomes
Ryan Miller, DDS
 to our
 Alamosa Dental Clinic
 128 Market Street
 &
 Center Dental Clinic
 135 6th Street

San Luis Valley native, Dr. Ryan Miller recently joined our teams at Alamosa Dental Clinic and Center Dental Clinic. Dr. Miller enjoys getting to know his patients so he can truly understand their needs and feels that it is important to treat them as well as he would like to be treated. He appreciates all aspects of general dentistry and is especially interested in basic oral surgery. In his free time, Dr. Miller enjoys spending time with his wife and two children in the mountains. He also enjoys fishing!

Call to set up an appointment with Dr. Miller today!
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Serving the entire San Luis Valley

Supplement to The Monte Vista Journal, Center Post-Dispatch, The Conejos County Citizen, The Mineral County Miner, The South Fork Times, and The Del Norte Prospector. BOXHOLDER LOCAL-RURAL CAR-RT SORT STANDARD MAIL RATE U.S. Postage PAID Permit No. 70 Alamosa, CO 81101

Rio Grande County Sheriff collecting Toys for Tots

BY LYNDIE FERRELL
RIO GRANDE COUNTY — For several years in a row now, the Rio Grande County Sheriff's Department has offered a drop-off location for Toys for Tots and this year is proving to be one of the biggest yet. According to the department, Toys for Tots has already come and picked up a full box of holiday joy for children this holiday season, and they are well on their way to filling a second box for the organization. According to the organization, "Toys for Tots began in 1947 as the brainchild of Marine Corps Reserve Major Bill Hendricks. Actually, it was his wife, Diane, who was the real inspiration. She had a few handcrafted dolls and asked Bill to deliver them to an agency that supports children in need. "When Bill reported back to his wife that he could not find such an organization, she instructed him to "start one!". Maj Hendricks

and the Marines in his reserve unit in LA collected and distributed 5,000 toys in 1947. The Foundation raises funds, purchases toys, provides promotional and support materials, manages all funds raised and donated, solicits corporate support, educates the public, and handles day-to-day operations. Presently, the Marine Toys for Tots Program distributes an average of 18 million toys to 7 million less fortunate children annually." Rio Grande County Sheriff's Department Public Information Officer Courtney Arthur was grateful for the community support. "The Rio Grande County Sheriff's Office are proud supporters of Toys for Tots in the San Luis Valley," Arthur said. "Last year, we were able to fill our box a little under four times, between toys being put in the box or giving a monetary donation. Which was amazing, seeing that kind of support from our community, especially during these difficult

times for everyone." All the toys that are donated stay in the San Luis Valley. "So, you are really going a long way to help out your community," Arthur said. "It is a really great thing and toys stay here locally. Our goal this year is to go above and beyond what we managed to do last year; every little bit helps. Whether it is dropping a toy in the donation box or giving a monetary donation for us to go get toys to put in the box. The Sheriff's office wants to thank you in advance **Please see TOYS on Page 2**

Rio Grande County Sheriff's Department Undersheriff Chris Crown, Toys for Tots representative Nadia Flores, and Rio Grande County Sheriff Don McDonald pose with the first box of collections for the 2021 holiday season.
 Photo by Courtney Arthur



Deadline for Colorado Master Gardener Program is Dec. 10

SUBMITTED ARTICLE
 Whether you are a person doing your own back yard gardening or someone who does it for a living, the Colorado Master Gardener program may be for you. The Colorado Master Gardener program is a program where you learn about gardening in Colorado. The gardening classes includes vegetable gardening, tree care, diagnosing problems, weed control, plant pathology, soils and some time spent on mountain gardening. This Colorado Master

Gardener program will be taught totally online, starting on Jan. 10, 2022, and going through April 30, 2022. The two program tracts are the volunteer tract. If a person has time to volunteer to teach horticulture to others, they can take the class for a reduced fee. By agreeing to be a volunteer the fee is reduced to \$200. With the reduced fee the volunteer agrees to provide 50 hours of volunteer time back to Colorado State University and the San Luis Valley through the local

Extension office. The second tract is the non-volunteer tract. It is called the Colorado Gardener Certificate. Those who chose this program will not provide the volunteer hours to Colorado State University and the San Luis Valley. Those following the Colorado Gardener Certificate tract are also not a Colorado Master Gardener. They are not eligible to call themselves a "Master Gardener". This tract pays the full fee of \$530. There is also a Short Course

option at a reduced fee, and there are a limited number of scholarships available which cover half of the fee. All details can be seen by going to the link provided below. Time is of the essence to register. As is required of all Colorado State University volunteers, a background check and reference check are required before you can begin the course, and this takes a couple of weeks to complete. Therefore, we request your registration by Dec. 10. Registrations received after Dec. 10 will be processed but may not clear in time to enroll in the course. All details and the on-line registration form can be found by going to the following link: <https://cmg.extension.colostate.edu/about/become-a-colorado-master-gardener-2/> For more information on the Colorado Master Gardener or Colorado Gardener Certificate program contact the San Luis Valley Extension Office at 719-852-7381 or email Larry Brown at L.Brown@colostate.edu.

All Natural Beef

It's true that my steer is all-natural I've dispensed with all vaccines and drugs Not one pesticide is poured on his hide He'd be lonesome without all the bugs!

The lice are his own peanut gallery The ticks and the heel flies too. He scratches all day while they nibble away But it does give him something to do.

I've no use for antibiotics. For those drenches and potions and pills. He's had a rough time, but now doin' fine. Though he's pore as an ol' whippoorwill.

He's had rickets and double pneumonia. He's a veteran of all that I've learned. Coccidiosis, Leptospirosis, And the scours are waiting their turn.

So you see all you slavers of science Who depend on hi tech for it all. My steer is alive, weighs three twenty-five But, he only turned seven last fall!

Baxter Black, former large animal veterinarian and irregular commentator on National Public Radio, is America's best-selling cowboy poet. He is a frequent performer at national stock shows and rodeos as well as in many smaller local events. He is author of several books, including Cactus Tracks, Croutons on a Cow Pie, Hey, Cowboy, Wanna Get Lucky? and Dunny and the Duck. Baxter Black can be contacted via e-mail at: vikki@baxterblack.com



Christmas tree permits on sale from RGNF

STAFF REPORT
MONTE VISTA — Christmas tree permits for the Rio Grande National Forest are now available to purchase both in-person and online through Recreation.gov for this holiday season. There are three methods to purchase the required permit before you harvest your Christmas tree. • Visit one of our participating vendors listed the RGNF Christmas Tree page. These vendors make it convenient to obtain a permit, due to their extended business hours. • Visit one of our forest offices in Del Norte, La Jara, Monte Vista and Saguache. Some offices have limited, and varied hours and we highly recommend calling before your visit. • Visit recreation.gov and follow the easy steps to create an account and make your purchase. It is important to carefully read the overview and need-to-know information before purchasing the permit.

Please note that you must be able to print a paper copy of the permit to have with you when cutting your tree. "Cutting a Christmas tree on a National Forest has been a treasured tradition for many Coloradans," said Dan Dallas, Forest Supervisor for the Rio Grande. "It gives us much pleasure to play our small role in these family traditions. The Rio Grande National Forest is a great place to cut your own tree." With the mild early winter, this year may prove to offer access to more locations than normal. Fourth-graders may get a free Christmas tree permit when they present a valid Every Kid Outdoors pass. These passes may be obtained at <https://everykidoutdoors.gov/index.htm>. The free permit may only be obtained online and at Rio Grande National Forest offices. The participating fourth grader must be present. For information on the Rio Grande National Forest, call 719-852-5941, visit the forest website, or follow uon Facebook or Twitter.

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SLVREC gives back to the San Luis Valley

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

SANLUIS VALLEY — San Luis Valley REC's core job is keeping the lights on, but the co-op's passion is serving its members. The purpose of any cooperative is to enrich members' lives and serve the long-term interests of the local community. This service focus is at the heart of who REC is.

Over the years, REC's charitable efforts, volunteer service hours and other locally-focused projects have built playgrounds, supported Valley schools and young people, supported local food banks, assisted families in need to keep the lights on and much more.

Recently, REC employees have taken time out of the regular day-to-day duties to assist local organizations. Starting with improvements at Monte Vista's Sanchez Park, three different REC groups spent time preparing the ground and assembling playground equipment for the new kid-designed play area.

In a second project, another REC group installed a wood pole for a new emergency fire well on the Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge. The project benefits both the Monte Vista Fire Department and the Bureau of Land Management in fire protection/mitigation efforts.

A third endeavor involved placing a pole to hang fiber near Monte Vista School District's admin building.



Photos courtesy of San Luis Valley REC

REC employees help at Sanchez Park.

As a local business, REC is proud to help bring good things to the San Luis Valley community. While the larger environment is constantly

changing, one thing remains constant. Working together with the members, REC will continue to be a catalyst for good.



An emergency fire well can be created with the installation of the new pole.

St. Nick at the Bricks Dec. 8

ALAMOSA — The Alamosa Alumni Association along with Maroon Pride, Alamosa High School Student Council, Ef's Restaurant and the 5 Star Riders Car Club will be hosting the annual St. Nick at the Bricks for the Alamosa and surrounding communities on Wednesday, Dec. 8, 4-6 p.m.

There will be free posole, biscochitos, hot cocoa and candy canes as well as free craft activities, selfies with Santa, holiday music and more.

Donations for the Alumni Association food drive, coat drive and toy drive will also be accepted that evening.

TOYS

Continued from Page 1

for any support you can offer."

Toys are collected through toy drives and drop-off locations. Items can also be sent to the Toys for Tots Foundation.

The SLV Toys for Tots campaign is graciously housed out of VFW Post 899 in Alamosa. Requests can be made at alamosa-toys-for-tots.org. Donations can also be made using the website. During 2020, the Toys for Tots campaign in the San Luis Valley served 2,340 children and distributed 4,920 toys, books, and stocking stuffers.

If you would like to help, but are unable to donate, Toys for Tots always needs volunteers. Contact Coordinator Rowena Martinez at 719-580-7791, for more information on volunteering.

For more information or details about how to donate, contact the Rio Grande County Sheriff's Department at 719-657-4000.

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SOIL Sangre de Cristo 0% interest loan applications are available

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

SAN LUIS VALLEY — The window for farmers and ranchers in South Central Colorado to apply for a 0% interest loan is now open. The application in Spanish and English is available on the SOIL Sangre de Cristo website. The deadline for submitting the loan applications is Jan.

31, 2022. The loan application includes the matrix in which the vetting committee will judge the merits of each applicant based on regenerative farming practices and commitment to supporting others in our community. Awards will be voted on by the Investor Members of SOIL Sangre de Cristo on March 6, 2022.

SOIL Sangre de Cristo supports farmers, ranchers and other food producers in our region with 0% Interest Loans.

Since its founding, SOIL Sangre de Cristo has loaned \$20,000 to three farms and ranches in the region to support the local food economy and strengthen its resilience.

Members of the community become investors by building the revolving loan fund to support this effort.

Farmers and food producers can join SOIL for \$25 annually. General memberships start at \$250 per person and up, it includes a vote on loan distributions.

The mission of SOIL Sangre de Cristo is to unite the communities of South-Central Colorado through direct support for local farmers, ranchers and food producers, improving food security, improvement in soil carbon and health for all residents.

Members want to see a diverse and resilient food chain. Thanks to their generous contributions the loan fund has grown substantially. All contributions are tax deductible and are matched 50% by the Mighty Arrow Family Foundation.



Photos courtesy of SOIL Sangre de Cristo

Past recipients of a 0% interest loan from SOIL Sangre de Cristo have used it for vital purchases, such as this walk-in refrigerator unit at Rocky Mountain Garlic.



Free COVID at-home rapid testing kits available

STATE — In an effort to aid Colorado residents and school-aged children, the state has recently announced that it will also be providing free-over-the-counter COVID-19 rapid test kits, directly to people at home.

The program will use Abbott BinaxNOW rapid antigen tests that show results within 15 minutes of taking the test. The program has been designed to allow parents, guardians, and caregivers a way to test their children at home.

While the program is geared toward

helping parents and school-aged children, all Coloradans are welcome to sign up for the Rapid At-Home COVID-19 testing program kits.

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment has an individual enrollment form on its website for the kits. The kits will be mailed free of charge and contain four tests each. Multiple kits for the rapid testing can be ordered separately and are also free of charge.

For more information on the rapid test kits, visit the CDPHE website at cdphe.colorado.gov.

SLVH Foundation seeks gently used medical equipment

ALAMOSA — San Luis Valley Health Foundation is asking for gently used wheelchairs, crutches, walkers and or other medical equipment. With the supply chains still being affected by COVID-19

any help with donations would be greatly appreciated.

For questions or to make pick up or drop off arrangements, contact Kelly Gurule with the SLVH Foundation at 719-587-5707.

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SUDOKU

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

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: Beginner

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

U	R	U	S	P	A	R	J	I	D	H	A	L	
T	A	R	O	O	R	I	O	N	A	E	R	O	
A	M	I	A	E	I	G	E	N	D	R	A	T	
H	A	C	K	S	S	I	B	R	A	B	B	I	
				S	I	D	E	L	I	N	E	S	
C	R	T	T	A	N	D	A	B	H	E	M		
H	A	C	K	E	D	D	E	B	W	A	D	I	
E	P	H	A	S	F	A	N	S	A	B	E	R	
S	H	A	W	H	A	G	R	A	C	E	M	E	
T	E	D	M	E	M	S	A	G	R	A	D		
				S	I	L	I	C	A	T	E	S	
H	A	K	K	A	L	L	I	T	S	A	M	A	S
A	G	U	A	H	I	R	E	D	T	A	B	I	
H	E	R	L	E	A	R	E	D	E	R	I	N	
N	E	E	D	P	R	I	N	T	S	E	B	E	



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 ~ Maryann M., Google Reviews

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05 Notices

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07 Help Wanted

Ecodynamics Inc is hiring a pump technician! This includes, but is not limited to, pulling & resetting water well pumps, shop time, cleaning & maintenance. Valid driver license and drug free are non-negotiable requirements. Call 719/852-2662 for more info, prefer drop off of resumes in person at 5492 US Hwy 160 E, east of Monte Vista. (12/8)

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32 Fuel & Heating

Firewood for sale \$180.00 per cord. Delivery Available. Call Atlee Jay Hoshstetler. 719-850-4012. (3/22)TFN

36 Miscellaneous

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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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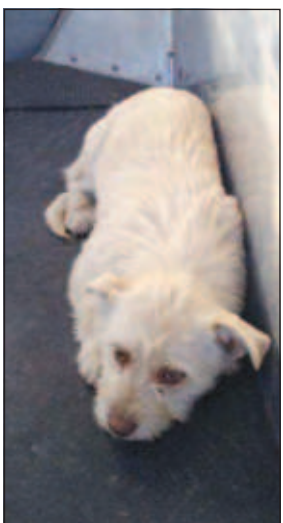
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Cumbres & Toltec announces 2022 season

Steam railroad to build on success of 2021 with early announcement of 2022 schedule

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

ANTONITO — It's "full steam ahead" for the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic (C&TS) Railroad. Only weeks after concluding the 2021 season, C&TS has released its schedule for its 2022 season and is now accepting reservations. The railroad has never finalized its schedule and opened reservations so early. Typically, schedules are announced in the first quarter of the year.

According to Scott Gibbs, C&TS President, "We wanted to get out early and build on the incredible success and momentum of our 2021 season. We're excited about the direction the C&TS is headed and want to give our fans plenty of time to plan the ride of a lifetime aboard America's most authentic steam railroad."

The Cumbres & Toltec set a new record for revenue in 2021 thanks to operational efficiencies introduced last year. The number of passengers who rode the railroad in 2021 did not meet the record-setting 2019 passenger numbers but was nearly to pre-pandemic levels, with only an 11 percent difference.

"We are extremely pleased with our 2021 season performance. We wondered what the lingering impacts of the pandemic would be and were concerned about the delays in opening our full schedule," Gibbs noted. "But railfans returned in force to support the C&TS and enjoy a steam railroad ride along the Colorado-New Mexico border. Despite the challenges, it was an outstanding season."

The C&TS 2022 kicks off on June 11, 2022. The later opening addresses the variable weather on Cumbres Pass and ensures a more pleasant outdoor experience for passengers. The season will run through Oct. 23, 2022.

The new 2022 schedule features a mix of offerings, including:

- Full Excursion Trips travel by train the full line between Chama, N.M. and Antonito, Colo. and includes a one-hour bus ride. These trips are called the Antonito All Aboard and the Chama All Aboard and include lunch and motorcoach service.
- Half Limited Trips travel half the C&TS line from either Chama, N.M., or Antonito to the mid-way point

of Osier Station and back. Lunch is included and the trips, are called the Chama Limited or the Antonito Limited, are solely via train, with no bus service.

- Short Express Options are perfect for people short on time, families and people who want to "chase the train" as well as ride it. The three-and-a-half hour Cumbres Express departs from Cumbres Pass at 11:10 am, heads to Osier for lunch service (included in the price) and returns to Cumbres at 2:45 p.m. On Fridays in July, the Chama Express will depart Chama at 1 p.m. and travel to Cumbres Pass, the highest operational railroad pass in the country and back to Chama by 3:30 p.m. Lunch is not included.
- Special Trips are trips that do not run weekly, including the monthly 168 Brunch Special, the 168 Dinner Special, the Geology Train, which will run twice this year and the annual Wildflower (Botany) Train. In addition, there will be a special photography charter and Moonlight Dinner Train Trip only available to members of the Friends of the Cumbres & Toltec.

See the website for ticket prices, specials and more information. The Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad follows the original 64-miles of tracks first laid down in 1880, crossing the borders of Colorado and New Mexico 11 times, as it skirts along canyon walls through Toltec Gorge, burrows through tunnels, steams over Cascade Trestle (137-feet above a roaring river), and climbs to the top of 10,015-foot Cumbres Pass, the highest point reached by any steam railroad in North America.

The railroad has been featured in more than 40 motion pictures, including the current number one film on Netflix, *The Harder They Fall* as well as *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, *Hostiles* and more. The railroad also has the country's largest collection of narrow-gauge locomotives and cars.

Traveling on the train provides the most authentic look at steam railroading in the 1880s. Passengers can move between cars, ride outdoors on a gondola car, listen to a steam whistle echo down a canyon, enjoy mile after mile of aspen and conifer forest, see wildlife such as elk, deer and sometimes even bear from their seats, or visit the bar and snack car — all at a pleasant top speed of 12 mph.

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San Luis Valley Area Real Estate



Great location! Close to town and the golf course. Just minutes from Wolf Creek ski area and National Forest. Level building spot across the street from the Rio Grande River located on a quiet dead-end road. Build your dream home today! **\$49,000** MLS#775737

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This lot has beautiful views all around with year round access, and is close to the Alamosa River, Rio Grande National Forest, La Jara Reservoir State Wildlife area, and Hot Creek SWA for easy access to hunting and fishing. The area would be a great place to build a comfortable home on. Call to view! **\$5,999** MLS#787432



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Enjoy the serenity of this cabin nestled against the cliffs behind it. Close to center of town and only 18 miles from the Wolf Creek Ski Resort. This cozy 1 bedroom cabin has gas fireplace, six foot wood fence surrounding property, a 8'x12' storage shed with electricity. Close to the Rio Grande Golf and Resort and many fishing holes in almost all directions. Home can be used as full time or part time. Cabin has recently been stained outside. **\$175,000** MLS#787843



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This home sits on a very large lot that equals almost 1 acre! Lots of potential for this home to be just as you love it with some TLC. Large living room with a fireplace and big windows with lots of light! Two bedrooms with a 3rd room that was a bedroom at one time and could be turned back

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Charming home on Over-sized Lot! This nice 2 bedroom home sits on an oversized lot, so there is plenty of room to add on if you wanted. Has good space, and some updates. Has been a rental, so great for the investor looking for a rental investment. Some outbuildings, and established yard. Call today for more details. **\$153,000** MLS#786169

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FOR SALE
 Custom built, impeccable quality, full log home located just minutes from the town of South Fork, Colorado. The 4443 sq. ft. home and 1015 sq. ft. bunkhouse provides a total sq. ft. of 5458. Features in the home include a massive rock fireplace, 3 bedrooms, 3-1/2 bathrooms, loft that boasts a futon plus two-window beds, office, playroom, and a large living room for you to enjoy with family and friends. The wrap around deck will allow you to experience world-class high mountain views. Above the garage is a custom log guest quarters with a spectacular kitchen, bath, large living room, and bedroom combined into one unit. Bear Creek subdivision offers controlled access through a gated entrance. MLS #738155
107 Marmot Lane • South Fork
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FOR SALE Organic Peddler Casita Bonita Inn located in Del Norte, Colorado DEEDED ACREAGE: 47 Acres +/- Almost 3 full lots IMPROVEMENTS: Currently there are a total of 4 great rental units on the property with a historic small log cabin that provides a lot of possibilities. 1. 648 sq. ft. Cozy 1 Bedroom Casita includes a living room, bath, and kitchen. 2. 920 sq. ft. Log cabin has an open floor plan with one bedroom, bath, and kitchen. 3. 2240 sq. ft. Building has been remodeled into 2 separate rental units: **The beautiful Cordwood unit is 861 sq. ft. with one bedroom, bath, living room, gourmet kitchen, gas fireplace, and fabulous attached courtyard. **The Historical adobe 1556 sq. ft. home has 3 bedrooms, one bath, full kitchen, living room, and nice front yard. 4. 168 sq. ft. historic log cabin that can be remodeled into an additional rental unit. The views are panoramic in all directions providing a peaceful atmosphere. ACCESS: Year-round off U.S. Hwy 160. ZONING: Residential/Commercial \$690,000 MLS # 770529 14475 U S 160 • Del Norte
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FOR SALE This 2500 sq. ft. building is located at 102 North Main St., in the thick of tourist traffic, in historic Creede, Colorado. The building is divided into two separate and operating retail spaces, but a common interior door could make this a large operating space. 1. Elk Country Boutique on the corner of the building is a T-shirt Shop. 2. Creede Olive Oil Shop. Both businesses draw visitors as they walk the town shopping for unique gifts. Utilities include electric, pellet stove, Creede water & sewage, and phone. Each business has its own electrical meter and is paid for by that tenant. 1. Elk Country Boutique T-shirt Shop has an extremely high recap rate but will need to be kept as a T-shirt shop to obtain maximum income on the building. 2. Creede Olive Oil shop rents for \$1300 per month year-round. The estimated total recap rate based on the above description is 15% to 20% annual return on investment. This historic building is located on Main Street in Creede, Colorado, and is a thriving business. Creede is a major vacation destination and sportsmen's dream paradise. **\$692,000** MLS #774985 • 102 N Main Street • Creede
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FOR SALE
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Kent Curtis named to Colorado Bankers Association Board

DENVER—Kent Curtis, President and CEO of First Southwest Bank, with six locations serving Southern Colorado, will serve on the Colorado Bankers Association Board of Directors for a multi-year term.

The Board of Directors of the Colorado Bankers Association leads the organization in its policy and industry advocacy efforts. The Colorado Bankers Association represents more than 95 percent of the 129 banks operating in Colorado, which have \$190 billion in assets, 1,445 branches across the state and more than 20,000 dedicated employees.

The organization strives to ensure the Board is representative of banks in every part of the state. Directors serve three-year terms; officers serve a yearlong term.

“Serving on the CBA board affords bankers to amplify their customers’ voices at the state and federal levels,” said Jenifer Waller, president of the Colorado Bankers Association. “As our country works to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, bankers’ input is particularly vital to ensuring a better today and stronger tomorrow for Colorado’s economy and people.”



With over 25 years of successful banking experience, and proven abilities in all facets of management, motivation, team building, lending, and turn-around, Curtis has held various executive officer positions as well as board memberships throughout his community banking career.

The son of a banker, Curtis began his journey as a banker and entrepreneur upon graduation from Fort Lewis College in 1982. Kent currently serves as President and CEO of First Southwest Bank. With a desire to differentiate First Southwest Bank in the post-Great Recession era, Curtis led the bank to its CDFI (Community Development Financial Institution) designation in November of 2014. As a CDFI Bank, First Southwest Bank cultivates valuable relationships, invests in economic and social doers, and fosters a well-lived rural culture.



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- The Ramble House
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- Wander Off Broadway
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Rio Grande Public Health breathes life back into prevention program

BY LYNDISIE FERRELL

RIO GRANDE COUNTY — For almost a year, newly hired Rio Grande County Public Health Department Prevention Program Coordinator Juan Maravilla has been working on revitalizing how the prevention program works.

"I didn't want one organization, one entity, or one person to shine. I want to see the entire community shine," Maravilla said.

Over the last several years the program has been running through funding provided by Communities that Care (CTC). Though CTC offered excellent funding opportunities, the deliverables for the grant were hard to reach and caused some issues within the department for previous coordinators. "It was one thing to get

the funding but the program was really based on a flat educational structure that wasn't working. We wanted to do something different and though we are grateful, we have found other funding that will allow us to expand the program and take a better look at what works and what doesn't," said Maravilla.

So over the past year, Maravilla in partnership with the rest of the Public Health Department and outside entities and organizations has taken steps to revamp the prevention program and breathe new life into how he plans to educate the students,

parents, and community members in Rio Grande County.

"We had to look at this differently in order to understand the needs of the community and through that process, we inadvertently collected data," Maravilla said. "I hear a keyword repeated by a classroom of students during my presentations for instance and I can use that to focus my attention where it will be most useful."

In the past week, Maravilla tried one of his ideas and combined it with an event planned by his public health team.

"We just recently did a cancer

awareness event with local middle school students," Maravilla said. "I suggested renting a cotton candy machine to include in the event and the feedback we received was very positive. Students did a walk around their school for cancer awareness and then got cotton candy at the end. It directed their attention just enough that I believe our message got through and we want to continue to do that."

Maravilla said that he would like to turn away from just dry facts and statistics to educate youth in the communities of Rio Grande County on harmful activities like vaping, smoking, or substance abuse and turn toward other methods that he feels would be more successful in the future. "When I was that age, it didn't matter how many times someone told you it was dangerous," Maravilla said. "You were curious and did it anyway unless, unless, someone could have turned our attention to other things. That is what we want to do here."

Maravilla also wants to hear from

the communities he serves, he wants to hear from the senior citizens and the business owners, and private organizations to better understand the needs of each community and how his prevention program could help.

"It is important that we look at this from a community standpoint," Maravilla said. "We are a small community and that makes it so much more important to be aware of our needs and the needs of everyone who lives here. It is what we do and who we are."

Though the program is barely getting back on the ground, Maravilla has several plans in place to jumpstart the program in each community and to continue the forward-moving momentum he has gained in the past year. The prevention program recently received a \$50,000 donation to help with costs and Maravilla hopes to find more funding sources that will allow him to achieve his goals.

"I want to see this community shine and to work together towards something better," Maravilla said.



SLV Transit Plan seeks community input to inform transit service options and alternatives

STAFF REPORT

SALIDA — In 2021, the Chaffee Shuttle was awarded funding from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to conduct a transit planning study for the San Luis Valley Region.

This Plan aims to identify existing transit-mobility challenges and opportunities, seek input from community members and stakeholders about how mobility could be improved, and develop a plan that addresses the transit needs of community members, employers, and employees.

The San Luis Valley Transit Plan kicked off in June 2021. To date, an assessment of demographic and employment travel pattern data and an inventory of existing transit services in the seven-county region

have been assembled in an Existing Conditions Report.

Additionally, public and stakeholder outreach has been conducted across the region through in-person and virtual interviews, online digital engagement opportunities, and seven local, in-person pop-up events. Through these engagement opportunities, a wide range of feedback on local mobility challenges were collected and documented in a Public and Stakeholder Engagement Summary.

The Existing Conditions Report and Public and Stakeholder Engagement Summary are available for anyone interested in learning more about the project and can be found on the project webpage, slvtransitplan.com.

During the first phase of community engagement, Chaffee Shuttle asked for the public's help to identify mobility gaps in the San Luis Valley.

"We heard about many transit and mobility needs across the region," Chaffee Shuttle stated. "Now we would like your help in prioritizing how transit should be enhanced to better meet the needs of community members in the Valley."

People are being asked to complete a survey online at slvtransitplan.com. The survey will close on Friday, Dec. 24. Survey input will help inform service options and alternatives and help provide more accessible and reliable transit service in the San Luis Valley.

For more information, visit slvtransitplan.com.



Build Bridges with SLV GO! this Colorado Gives Day!

We're inviting the San Luis Valley to support SLV GO!'s mission of providing equitable access to outdoor spaces by donating to this year's campaign: Building Bridges. The Building Bridges campaign embodies SLV GO!'s overall objective to bridge the gap between SLV communities and outdoor access, recreation, health, and wellness. **Our goal is to raise \$10,000 to build the fifth and final bridge at Rito Seco.** Located in Costilla County near San Luis, this park boasts 4 miles of single track trail open to hikers and bikers and also allows access to fishing ponds and the north entrance of the park.

We are accepting donations through Venmo, www.slvgo.com, and through the Colorado Gives Day website at www.coloradogives.org/slvgo. Let's work together to finish this project!

Sincerely,
The SLV GO! Team

Check out what your donation will do!

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San Luis Valley HEALTH

Saguache County COVID-19 vaccine clinics for December

BY MECHEL MEEK
SAGUACHE COUNTY — As of Tuesday, Nov. 30, there were eight acute cases in various cities within Saguache County with no hospitalizations.

Saguache County Public Health Director Mona Lovato said, "Mobile testing winter hours have changed, and testing is available in Saguache on Wednesdays from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. at the Saguache Community Building."

As family and friends gather to celebrate the holiday season, cases may rise again. The CDC now recommends that all persons 5 years old and older receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

If you have already completed the first course of the vaccine, the CDC now recommends all people over 18 receive a booster shot. People who received the Moderna or Pfizer vaccine can get a booster shot six months after the second dose.

People who received the Johnson and Johnson vaccine can receive a booster shot two months after receiving the vaccine.

Booster shots are available at all Saguache County vaccine clinics.

The CDC recently stated, "You may choose which COVID-19 vaccine you receive as a booster shot. Some people may prefer the vaccine type that they originally received, and others may prefer to get a different booster. CDC's recommendations now allow for this type of mix and match dosing for booster shots."

Vaccination Clinics for December

- Dec. 9, Mountain Valley School 2 to 6 p.m.
- Dec. 10, Baca Grande POA parking lot 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Dec. 13, Saguache Community



Creede organizes Holiday Decorating Contest

CREEDE — The City of Creede with the help of Mineral County 4-H is hosting a Holiday Decorating Contest. Business owners are encouraged to show their festive spirit by decorating.

Only businesses in Creede are eligible. Registration is not required. Judges will be Mineral County 4-youth. Judging will take place during the week of Dec. 6-10. Organizers ask that participating businesses leave their holiday lights and décor on from 5 to 9 p.m.

A winner from each category will receive a \$200 cash prize and mention in the Mineral County Miner. Photos of winning businesses will be shared on the City of Creede website and social media platforms.

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Colorado Trust seeks Center residents for grassroots effort

BY MECHEL MEEK

CENTER — The Colorado Trust, a statewide health equity foundation, has expressed a desire to partner with the Center community.

"The organization is looking for 10-12 grassroots community leaders that could help identify and solve problems that may exist in Center. Their criteria for community leaders

is that they are passionate about aiding our community, truly grassroots and have lived experience with the issues, and have the time to dedicate to these initiatives," according to Keith Brockhurst, VISTA Volunteer for the Town of Center.

The involvement of leaders in the Center community will be vital for the near- and long-term development of

current and future projects, including the North 90 Addition. Positive change in the Center community will require investment by the citizens of the town with their time and ideas on how to move the town forward. Progress has already begun to take shape with the award of several grants to downtown businesses.

To take part in this initiative, contact Brockhurst at Town Hall.

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San Luis Valley Health gives back



Photos courtesy of SLVH

Employees at San Luis Valley Health donated some of their time Friday and Saturday, Nov. 19 and 20, to help pack boxes to be delivered to area families for the annual Thanksgiving Food Box drive to ensure that families in the SLV don't go hungry over the holiday. Twenty-three staff members showed off their teamwork and generosity by packing 450 boxes and then helping load into delivery vehicles. SLV Health is a community hospital and cares deeply about providing food to local families in need. They generously donated \$5,000 to the Thanksgiving Food Box drive to ensure healthy and abundant meals could be delivered to those who need it most. Left to right, Ressa Gonzales, SLVH; Annalise Baer, Garrett Gardner, and Connor McDonald, La Puente Food Bank Network; and Christina Valenzuela, SLVH. San Luis Valley Health employees volunteer to pack boxes and deliver them to waiting vehicles on the weekend before Thanksgiving at the Food Bank Warehouse in Alamosa.



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