



10-digit local dialing begins April 24 in 719 area code

STAFF REPORT

DENVER — Beginning Saturday, April 24, customers in area codes 719 and 970 will be transitioned to 10-digit local dialing.

Areacode719servesSoutheastern

Colorado including all six San Luis Valley counties — Alamosa, Rio Grande, Conejos, Costilla, Mineral and Saguache.

Area code 970 is in north and western Colorado and covers Fort Collins, Greeley, Loveland, and

Grand Junction.

Beginning April 24, Colorado customers with numbers in the 719 and 970 area codes should start dialing 10-digits (area code and telephone number) for all local calls. This is known as a permissive

dialing period because if you forget and dial just seven digits, your call will still be completed.

Beginning Oct. 24, 2021, customers in the 719 and 970 area codes must dial 10 digits (area code and telephone number) for all local calls. This is known as a permissive dialing period because if you forget and dial just seven digits, your call will still be completed. *Please see DIALING on Page 2A*

Shorts

Craft and vendor fair in downtown Alamosa

ALAMOSA— Support local artisans and small businesses by shopping Valley Vinyl Supply's Craft and Vendor Fair on Saturday, May 1 from 11 a.m.-5 p.m. on the block of 4th and San Juan Avenue in downtown Alamosa. Find unique gifts and home decor; admission is free and all ages are welcome. There will also be a silent auction with funds benefiting a local non-profit. If interested in becoming a vendor, stop by Valley Vinyl Supply, 412 San Juan Ave. or call 719-298-8400 or email valleyvinylsupplyllc@gmail.com.

TEFAP Distribution on April 28 in Monte Vista

MONTE VISTA — The Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) will be distributing commodities on Wednesday April 28, in Monte Vista at the Church of the Nazarene beginning at 10 a.m. Participation in the TEFAP is available to all eligible persons regardless of age, race, sex, handicap or origin.

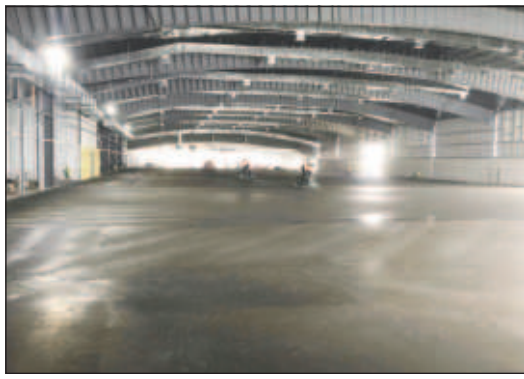
NHS hosting blood drive for Del Norte High School

DEL NORTE — The National Honor Society is hosting the annual Del Norte High School Blood Drive from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on May 5. This is the second annual blood drive hosted by the National Honor Society and is ran by Vitalant. The blood drive will be in the northwest hall of the commons area near the elementary hallway and the gym. The blood drive is by appointment only. If people are interested in donating blood, they should email kturmer@urtigers.co.

National Day of Prayer is May 6

MONTE VISTA — The National Day of Prayer will be held from 6 to 7 p.m. on May 6 at Chapman Park in Monte Vista.

Ski-Hi concrete floor poured in one day



Courtesy photos
On Thursday, April 15, the concrete floor was poured for the new Ski-Hi event center. The pour was 30,553 feet and done in one day. It took 64 truckloads of cement to complete. The entire process took 19 hours starting at 4 a.m. and finishing a little after 11 p.m. Twenty-four people worked on the pour including the screed operator. The concrete was supplied by Mathias Concrete. This was the largest concrete job Alcon Construction has ever poured at one time. "This pour was a huge accomplishment for Alcon, many hours were worked, and details planned out in preparation. Everyone involved deserves a ton of credit for pulling this large concrete pour off. There are no construction joints in the main events center side of the concrete floor which will make this floor much more seamless and user friendly," Brian Cook of Alcon Construction told Valley Publishing.



Rio Grande Hospital again named top 100 critical access hospital in U.S.

STAFF REPORT

DEL NORTE — Once again, Rio Grande Hospital was recognized nationally as one of the top 100 hospitals in the United States by the Chartis Center for Rural Health. CCRH recently released its annual list of the top 100 critical access hospitals in the U.S.

To determine the 2021 list, the Chartis Center used the Hospital Strength Index, which assesses performance in eight areas: inpatient market share, outpatient market share, quality, outcomes, patient perspective, cost, charge, and financial efficiency.

Out of the top 100 critical access hospitals in the U.S., Colorado had two. Rio Grande Hospital in Del Norte and East Morgan County Hospital in Brush. This is the second time Rio Grande Hospital has received this honor.

"This award is more special this year due to the global pandemic and the challenges faced in healthcare within the past year," RGH officials stated.

Home Lake being drained, improvements planned

STAFF REPORT

MONTE VISTA — Colorado Parks and Wildlife is draining Home Lake and making plans to improve the local fishery.

"We know this will be a disappointment for some local folks, but this will help us better utilize our water right and improve the fishery," said Tony Aloia, a water technician for CPW in the San Luis Valley.

The lake is a popular fishing spot, but a lack of water caused a fish die-off. *See HOMELAKE on Page 2A*

Colorado Parks and Wildlife staff have removed aerators from Home Lake in preparation of draining the small reservoir.

Photo by Brian Williams



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Courtesy photo

SOIL Speaker Series: Grain Chain members speaking April 22

STAFF REPORT

Every fourth Thursday of the month SOIL Sangre de Cristo invites a guest to the "Speaker Series" to share a discussion on a topic about regenerative farming, investing in our local communities, soil health and other related fields of interest.

On Thursday, April 22 Liz Carlisle from the Environmental Studies Program of the University of California, Santa Barbara and Jessica Larriva of Tumbleweed Bread Co. in Monte Vista will be the guest speakers.

Carlisle is a member of the Colorado "Grain Chain." Larriva uses local heritage grains as the primary

ingredient for the breads she delivers to customers throughout the San Luis Valley.

They will discuss the benefits of heritage grains including how it helps the soils food is grown in to enhancing the flavors of the bread people eat. Carlisle will also explain the history of heritage grains and their connection with the small flour mills that proliferated in the United States during the late 1800's. The "Speaker Series" will be held virtually at 7 p.m. on April 22.

For more information, visit soilsangredecristo.org Click on the RSVP in Upcoming Events to receive the Zoom link.

DIALING

Continued from Page 1A

and telephone number) for all local calls. On and after this date, local calls dialed with only seven digits may not be completed.

On July 16, 2020, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) approved 988 as the three-digit abbreviated dialing code to reach the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline starting July 16, 2022. The FCC order requires all telecommunications carriers, interconnected Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) providers, and one-way VoIP providers to make any network changes necessary to ensure that users can dial 988 to reach the existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline by July 16, 2022.

For 988 to work, customers in many area codes across the country with seven-digit local dialing, including 719 and 970 in Colorado, must be transitioned to 10-digit local dialing.

The FCC ordered that any area code that has the 988 prefix assigned as telephone numbers and has seven-

digit local dialing be transitioned to 10-digit local dialing to ensure everyone can reach the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline using the three-digit 988 code.

Important safety and security equipment, such as medical alert devices, and alarm and security systems must be programmed to use 10-digit dialing. Many systems operate on 10-digit dialing by default, but some older equipment may still use seven-digits. Contact your medical alert or security provider if you are not sure whether your equipment needs to be reprogrammed to accommodate the upcoming change to 10-digit local dialing. Any needed reprogramming of alarm and home security equipment must be done during the permissive dialing period from April 24 to Oct. 24 to avoid interruption of services.

Some other examples of services that may need to be re-programmed are:

Annual 5K Run/Walk and Veterans Golf Tournament for Sgt. Martinez is May 29-30

STAFF REPORT

MONTE VISTA — The 11th annual 5K Run/Walk and Veterans Golf Tournament will be held at the Monte Vista Golf Course on Saturday, May 29 (5K) and Sunday, May 30 (golf tourney).

All proceeds benefit the Sgt. Glen E. Martinez Memorial Scholarship Fund, in which \$1,000 scholarships will be awarded to a senior boy and senior girl of Monte Vista High School.

Martinez was a sergeant in the United States Marine Corps when he and three other Marines were killed in action on May of 2008 while on a combat mission. The Humvee they were riding in hit a roadside bomb in the Al Anbar Province of Iraq.

The 5K Run/Walk will begin at 7 a.m. on Saturday, May 29, at the Monte Vista Golf Course and will include breakfast, t-shirt and ribbons (eight different age groups). Cost is \$20 pre-registration or \$25 on event day. Deadline for mail-in registration and online registration is May 27. Send mail-in registration to P.O. Box 181, Monte Vista, CO 81144 and register online at www.glenmartinezmemoialscholarship.org. For more information, call Ron or Carol at 850-3758 or 849-1830.

Veterans Golf Tournament will begin at 10 a.m. on Sunday, May 30, shotgun start at the Monte Vista Golf Course. It will be a 4-man team scramble format, 18 holes and will cost \$180 per team. The tournament is limited to 15 teams. Cost is \$45 for singles; they will be grouped up.

Cost includes golf cart (limited to 15 carts), team entry fee, complementary range ball, and a gift certificate for first and second place teams and lunch after golf tournament. To sign up or for more information, call the Monte Vista Pro-shop, 719-628-0130.

Martinez knew the value of education and the value of physical fitness. Growing up in Monte Vista, he participated in nearly every sport available including football, wrestling and baseball. He played in the band and was an excellent student. He was quarterback for the Pirates football team for three years and competed four years on the state wrestling team and played baseball all four years. Glen chose to play baseball for Ottawa University in Ottawa, Kan., on an academic and baseball scholarship where he earned

his bachelor's in Mathematics.

Martinez subsequently earned a surveying degree from Westwood College and was going to work on his master's in Hydro-Engineering at Boulder, when he decided to join the Marine Corps. Living in Boulder, he explained, "he got tired of hearing people cutting down his country," so he decided to do something



Courtesy photo

Sgt. Glen E. Martinez

positive. Martinez could have gone directly into officer candidate school but chose to start at the bottom like all the other recruits. Should he go on to command, Martinez said, he wanted to have hands-on experience rather than classroom philosophy.

"I want those I command to know that I have been where they are," he said in an interview just after basic training. He was ready for whatever came. After a childhood filled with the challenge of athletic competition, staying in peak physical shape was second nature to him and he strongly supported the discipline and leadership skills learned on the mat, football field, baseball diamond and the school room.

HOMELAKE

Continued from Page 1A

die-off in early April. Water was too low in early winter to utilize a floating solar-powered machine that normally can keep sections of the lake free of ice. This winter the lake froze over completely, was covered with snow and all the fish died.

No water will be diverted into the lake this spring and the ground will be allowed to dry — a process that will take all summer. After it dries,

CPW will use heavy equipment to remove the fine silt sediment that has accumulated over the years which will help to make the lake deeper. Work to remove the silt will begin after it is dry, probably in October.

CPW staff will also test the sediment to determine if it could be used as a soil supplement for compost and possibly be used at farms and in gardens.

CPW usually stocks the lake with rainbow trout, catfish, bluegill and bass.

CPW will also use this time to rebuild the pump system that is used to bring water to Homelake.

In the meantime, low water and exposed mudflats are proving to be a boom for birds. Eagles and osprey are scavenging the dead fish. Shore birds, which are migrating through the San Luis Valley now, are feeding along the edges of the water.

"It's a good time for some bird watching at Home Lake," Aloia said.

- life safety systems or medical monitoring devices
- private branch exchanges (PBXs)
- fax machines
- Internet dial-up numbers
- fire or burglar alarm and security systems or gates
- speed dialers
- mobile or other wireless phone contact lists
- call forwarding settings
- voicemail services and other similar functions

Be sure to check website, personal and business stationery, advertising materials, personal and business checks, contact information, your personal or pet ID tags, and other such items to ensure the area code is included.

What will remain the same?

- Your telephone number, including current area code, will not change.
- The price of a call, coverage area, or other rates and services will not change due to the dialing change.

• What is a local call now will remain a local call regardless of the number of digits dialed.

• You will continue to dial 1 and the area code and telephone number for all long-distance

• You will continue to dial a prefix (such as "9") when dialing from a multi-line telephone system (e.g., in a hotel, office building, etc.) as required.

• You can still dial just three digits to reach 711 (relay services) and 911 (emergency services).

• If 211, 311, 411, 511, 611, 711 or 811 are currently available in your community, dial these codes with just three digits.

• The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline can still be reached by dialing 1-800-273-TALK (8255) even after the 988 code is in effect.

Beginning July 16, 2022, dialing "988" will route your call to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. Customers must continue to dial

1-800-273-8255 (TALK) to reach the Lifeline until July 16, 2022.

Visit the North American Numbering Plan Administrator (NANPA) website or email NANPA at 988@somos.com with questions about the dialing procedure change, or you may visit the FCC website.

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OPINION & EDITORIAL

National Crime Victims' Rights Week crucial to judicial system

SAN LUIS VALLEY — Victim Advocacy is an integral part of the judicial system giving voice to those who may otherwise get lost in a sea of court proceedings not easy to navigate. National Crimes Victims' Rights Week highlights the importance of such work and the need to keep victims informed of cases through the rigorous process as they work to heal and offers the chance to seek help.

Established in 1981, the National Crime Victims' Rights week, "(NCVRW) is a time to renew our commitment to serving all victims of crime, to acknowledge the achievements in victim services and allied professions, to honor those who have gone above and beyond in their service to others, and to remember crime victims and survivors."

Locally, victim advocacy has

been widely increased throughout several of the San Luis Valley communities and has helped enforce victim rights in more ways than one. Not only do Victim Advocates keep victims in cases informed, but they also provide important information for victims on how to seek help in their unique and difficult circumstances. In many cases in the past year, local Victim Advocates have seen cases go untried, be postponed and often dropped due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Rio Grande County spent the past year watching as many victims locally were put off not only due to the COVID-19 pandemic but also because of the changing administrations in district attorney offices throughout the Valley and the changes relating to how cases are handled today. Many have witnessed as case after case of criminal charges were handled in new ways, offering suspects a second chance and victims less and less as time goes on.

Officials are seeing it more and more often. There is an arrest, charges are filed, victims are kept out of the loop, unless a victim's advocate has been assigned, and then, the charges are lessened or dropped, and the suspect is back at it within a couple months. Same charges, same incidences, different people. Law enforcement couldn't provide an exact number of cases where this has happened in the past year but did confirm that it was a higher than in years past.

One case in the Valley involved

the sexual assault of a child by a person in a position of trust and though details pertaining to the case including names, ages and other identifying details have been withheld to protect the victim and their families, it served as a reminder as to how some cases are now being plead down and down to almost nothing.

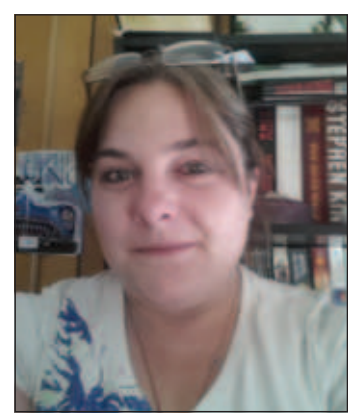
When asked, a local Victims Advocate stated that some of the reason was due to COVID but that this trend has been increasing for quite some time.

"It would be different if the perpetrators were getting the help they need, but they're not, they're only getting second chances to do it again and unless a victim has an advocate, the victims don't get the help they need either to navigate this process and what is happening," the Victims Advocate said.

Another local case involving sexual assault has been in and out of court for nearly three years. The result is shocking only because the victim, who is not getting the justice they seek, is on the brink of not fighting anymore. The following was shared by the local Victim Advocate with the permission of the victim in this case.

"If I had known that it would have taken three years for anything to be done and then find out that charges would be dropped and lessened, I would have stayed silent," the Victim Advocate said they were told.

Yet another case where this has



Reporter's Notebook
by Lyndsie Ferrell

occurred was a theft case out of Mineral County. In this case, video footage of the theft was turned over to prosecutors and felony charges were filed. Almost eight months after the case was opened, the victim found out "through the grapevine" that the charges were dropped, and the suspect was let off with only a fine.

During National Crime Victims' Rights week it is important to remind victims that they have not been forgotten and that the judicial system is doing everything they can to make sure that justice has been issued properly and fairly to all involved. Though these can be murky waters for many reasons, if a victim is on the brink of giving up then something has been done wrong and everyone should take note. Support victims, build trust, and engage the community.

Eating at the Barrel

I think that most of you probably know what Ol' Dutch is talking about when I mention The Barrel in the title to this column but for those of you hitting on only about five cylinders, it's officially called Cracker Barrel. You know? The place with the expensive rocking chairs on the porch and old people wandering about like the local nursing home just let out for recess?

But anyhow, Ol' Dutch and Miss Trixie were asked to go out by number one son Bubs and family this past Sunday in celebration of Trixie's birthday. Now Miss Trixie and I have not been out at all since they started serving up the COVID at the area restaurants last year so this was our first excursion into the abyss.

Way back about a hundred years ago before I met Trixie, I used to go to this restaurant every Sunday after church with the ex and friends. We would get the same thing every week and split the meal which may have been a portent of other splitting yet to come. I always enjoyed that time but Ol' Dutch had not been back to a CB (that's CB as in Cracker Barrel, not CBD) store since then.

The part I had forgotten was that the entrance to this chow joint is through a gift shop filled with every kind of chocolate, sweet candy, little toys, recipe books, kick-knacks and even a few paddy whacks. The plan is for the maitre d to take your name and suggest you peruse the aisle in the gift shop while you wait. Even Ol' Dutch could see this was a planned event as there were plenty of empty tables available at the time of our arrival.

But we were nonetheless herded back into the crowded gift arena where we had to keep the granddaughters from the toys and Ol' Dutch out of the chocolate. I mean really, people. Folks arrive there hungry anyway and to stack up those creamy sweets in front of a largely diabetic herds of human flesh is just plain cruel.

I also had also forgotten that the crowd leans to older people and soon Ol' Dutch and company were treated to big bosomed great grandmas who smelled like the Estee Lauder factory blew up and old men who like to fart in one aisle then quickly shuffle to the next to avoid being implicated in the crime.

These same old guys also seem determined to engage any and



Trout Republic
by Kevin Kirkpatrick

everyone in the room in some mundane conversation about their bursitis or last surgery and one actually cornered Bubs and his wife, Tinkerbelle, for a time.

Luckily, they called our number, and we left our new best friend at the gate and were taken to a lovely table. The waitress was lovely, and we got our meals ordered and we settled into our normal routine. Which is the adults conversing and Ol' Dutch and the two grand kids coloring on the kids menu.

Trixie, my son and his wife had no more gotten started on solving the world's problems between them and Grandpa had not even gotten past a blue Crayola when yes, you guessed it, our new best friend felt compelled to leave his table of 31 of his own family members and come join us. Ol' Dutch was somewhat annoyed, but I had to just giggle as it reminded me of the time, I lived in Branson.

For you see, you never go out there without some old guy striking up a conversation with you for no reason while his wife Maude digs in her massive 10-gallon purse for pictures of the grands and great grands.

We finished our meal and sang "Happy Birthday" to Miss Trixie without incurring copyright infringement fines for singing the song and Ol' Dutch even got to pay for the whole thing, which is what Dads do when they get invited out.

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

Regulus the Little King

By DARLENE DANKO

As I'm sure you remember, Regulus is the third star of the Spring Triangle. It sits along the Ecliptic where the Sun, Moon and planets travel. It's also part of Leo the Lion constellation. When you see the star Arcturus, just look to center of our sky until you find a backward question mark.

The backward question mark contains six stars, and Regulus is the bottom star. The rest of the constellation is to the left of Regulus, making that part closer to Arcturus. Leo the Lion is an easily recognizable star pattern. The backward question mark is his head. The stars closer to Arcturus are his legs. There are a total of 12 stars.

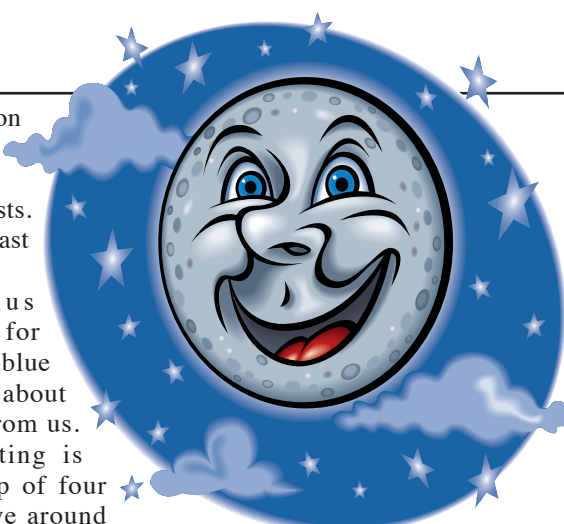
This constellation is also called the Sickle which forms its head. Bright star Regulus is the bottom dot in the

backward question mark and is also designated as the King of the Beasts. The stars on the east are his tail.

The Regulus name is Latin for "little king." It's blue white and lies about 78 light years from us. What's interesting is that it's a group of four stars that revolve around each other. The largest one is called Regulus A and is the only one we can see without a telescope. It's almost 4 times more massive than our Sun.

It's also the brightest star closest to the plane of our eclipse and is frequently covered by our moon. What's interesting is that it rotates fast — only 16 hours. Our Sun takes a month to do a rotation.

The best time to see Regulus and its constellation, Leo the Lion, is April to June. This month reaches its



highest point at 11 p.m. DST. Next month, it will reach its highest point at 9 p.m. DST. It's an interesting constellation and contains galaxies that you can't see without a telescope. In November, the Leonid Meteor shower seems to originate from this constellation.

The Lyrid Meteor shower perked early this morning but will be good again tonight. You need to get up at 4 a.m. when the moon sets and look in the southeast to see the meteors.

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Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic and Historic Byway receives Byway Community Award

STAFF REPORT
CONEJOS COUNTY — The Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic and Historic Byway completes its «Rancho la Luz — Conejos Ranchland Initiative — Preserving Working Wet Meadows» project and wins the Community Award.

Rancho la Luz, located near the Colorado-New Mexico border, is primarily an open ranchland and is an integral part of the southern San Luis Valley and Conejos County's agricultural landscape.

The property is part of a growing block of conserved land in the vicinity and is close to the 650-acre Segó Springs State Wildlife Area. The stunning pastoral landscape forms the backdrop for visitors traveling along State Highway 142, the state-designated Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic and Historic Byway.

Conservation of this property is part of the Conejos Ranchland Initiative, a partnership between Colorado Open

Lands, Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust, and CCAAL. The Rancho la Luz — Conejos Ranchland Initiative aims to protect important agricultural land in Conejos County by conserving four of the oldest ranches and permanent settlements in Colorado.

An intact cultural landscape that preserves the characteristic landscape along the Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic and Historic Byway contributes to the visitor experience. The preservation of these landscapes provides a quality experience in the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area's unique location.

The conservation easement on Rancho la Luz preserves the "sense of place" that makes the Los Caminos Byway a unique experience for visitors wanting to have a cultural experience and visualize what life would have been like for the earliest Spanish settlers.

This cultural and historical ranch was settled over 150 years ago.



Courtesy photo

John and Mary Lou Salazar, core conservators of Rancho la Luz, repurchased much of the property to keep the ranch intact.

Partners include the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust

(CCAAL), the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO), Colorado Rio Grande Basin Implementation Plan, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife and County

Commissioners. And a special thanks to Kelly Ortiz for her help.

For more information about the Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic and Historic Byway, visit online www.sangreheritage.org/los-caminos/.

Rio Grande National Forest talks coming fire season

BY LYNDSIE FERRELL
RIO GRANDE NATIONAL FOREST — With summer quickly approaching, many in the San Luis Valley turn their attention to what is in store for the coming year and whether fire danger is a concern this early in the season. The Rio Grande National Forest offered a chance to review predictions for the coming fire season and what the agency is doing to prepare for that "just-in-case" emergency.

Agencies throughout the San Luis Valley spend countless hours working to refine emergency operation plans. Tabletop exercises are conducted during annual emergency manager meetings like the one that took place in Mineral County just a few months ago. It offers a unique chance for emergency personnel, first responders, emergency managers, local and state officials as well as local fire departments to get together and practice how they will handle emergency situations should they arise.

The Rio Grande National Forest

is no different and has spent the last several months working through worst-case scenarios for the coming fire season. Last summer, the state was ravaged by wildland fires and though each fire was eventually contained, every fire offers a chance for learning something new.

"We are doing what we do every year and that is to make sure we have everything in place should an event occur," said Rio Grande Public Relations Officer Gregg Goodland.

According to information provided by Goodland, the coming fire season is expected to be relatively average. There is a chance for wildland fires throughout the region but conditions this Spring have experts preparing for an average summer depending on precipitation in coming months.

"It all depends on how you look at fire in a region like ours and those across the state; you can see it as an advantage or a disaster. Fire plays a natural role in our ecosystems and health of our forests. Local wildlife looks at fire as a natural change and one that they quickly adapt to,"

continued Goodland.

With an average fire season predicted, there are several steps homeowners and property owners can take to ensure safety during the peak season. Homeowners can mitigate natural fuels around their homes by completing small tasks such as cleaning debris like dead leaves out from around shrubbery and away from the home. Owners can also make sure to clean gutters and remove dead or dying trees from private property which helps in keeping a location safe from wildfires.

Goodland also stated that the Rio Grande National Forest is also doing

its part by helping to mitigate natural fuels in our forests by completing prescribed burns in specified areas to help minimize the potential for a fire. Timber sales also help, especially in this region because of the natural fuel that was caused by the Spruce Bark Beetle.

"We currently have 26 active timber sales throughout the region and plan to continue sales into the future," Goodland said.

Forest stewardship plays a role in wildfire safety. It involves making sure that open fires are extinguished properly in contained firepits.

"Open fires are not allowed on the Rio Grande National

Forest but a small campfire at the local campground can be just as dangerous and should be extinguished properly," Goodland said. "We need the public's help in this area. If you see someone doing something that could lead to a fire incident, be polite and say something or be the one to extinguish a smoldering campfire. Little things help and of course you can always contact us at the Forest if need be."

For more information or to stay up to date on current fire restrictions in the Rio Grande National Forest and the San Luis Valley, visit www.fs.usda.gov/main/riogrande.

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Rio Grande County Museum to host 2nd annual Student Art Show

By **LYNDSIE FERRELL**

RIO GRANDE COUNTY — In partnership with the Upper Rio Grande School District, the Rio Grande County Museum will be hosting its second annual Student Art Show.

It will showcase artwork from 6th through 12th grades. Students have spent the past several weeks working with their respective teachers to create different works of art that span several different mediums, including three-dimensional art, paintings, sketches and beyond.

The program started in 2019 through the efforts of local art teacher Susan Carrasco.

“I just really wanted to inject art into our local community and when the art comes from residents, our students for instance, the art has more meaning,” Carrasco said. “It also gives us a chance to involve the community by showcasing it at the local museum. You can host an art show all the time in a school but especially due to COVID, the school hasn’t been in a position to welcome the public. Having it at the Rio Grande County Museum offers the chance for everyone to enjoy the artwork and gives the students a chance to show off their work in a new way.”

Carrasco worked with Rio Grande County Museum Director Louise Colville to create the show in 2019 and after having a decent turnout the two decided to make it an annual event.

“We planned on having our second show in 2020 but because of the pandemic and county restrictions, we were not able to make that happen. This year will also depend on how things look when the date gets closer, but I think we will have better success,” said Colville.

The show is scheduled to open at 4 p.m. on April 28 with an open house and lite refreshments. It will also include a slideshow of artwork that was scheduled to be shown in 2020 so that students who worked on projects last year have a chance to show off their growing talents.

Highschool Art Teacher Lindsey Ibarra is new to the Upper Rio Grande School District but was more than happy to encourage her students to participate in the art show.

“Not everyone is as excited about the show as others, but everyone is doing their best to create a project for the show,” Ibarra said. “It gives them a chance to see what it’s like to have their art on display and have people come

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The 2nd annual Student Art Show is coming to the Rio Grande County Museum on April 28 and includes a chance for parents, family and friends to make their student's art into a keepsake.

to see it outside of a school setting.”

Parents of elementary students will also have a chance to showcase their student's artwork at home through a fundraiser program called Original Works. The company takes a copy of each student's artwork and offers the chance for parents, family and friends to have a student's artwork transferred to custom keepsakes.

“Parents can have coffee mugs, pillows, canvases and other items made with their student's artwork featured on the piece. All proceeds from the show and the fundraiser will go towards the art program at the school,” said Colville.

With COVID still in the area, precautions will be taken in order to ensure that the community stays healthy. At the present time, masks are required in the Museum.

For more information, contact the Rio Grande County Museum at 719-657-2847, rgmuseum@riograndecounty.org or check out Rio

Grande County Museum Facebook page. Regular museum hours are Tuesday through Friday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Saturday 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The artwork will be on display until May 9.

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Courtesy photo

Dr. Lauren Sonderegger

Straight talk about the shots: Dr. Lauren Sonderegger with Valley-Wide

Sonderegger graduated in 2015 from the University of California at San Francisco Medical School — the second-best medical school in the nation in Primary Care and the fourth best in Research. After doing her family medicine residency in Seattle, Sonderegger’s credentials could have taken her anywhere. But she headed for this part of the country, drawn by the beauty of the landscape, the ability to provide full-scope family medicine — including outpatient clinic and obstetrics — to people who may not have always had access to high quality care plus her personal connection to the Spanish-speaking population developed during the years she lived and traveled in Central and South America.

Over time, those feelings have only deepened. Not only does she greatly admire the mission and quality of health care Valley-Wide provides to the patient population, Sonderegger has grown to have a genuine and abiding affection for the community she serves.

“When I first got here, I thought people might view me as an outsider and be leery of some uppity person from the city,” she says. “But the patients have been so warm and embracing and have shared so much about their experiences. I’m honored to take care of the same people who have welcomed me.”

Against that backdrop, Sonderegger was asked how she felt — as a doctor

— upon learning what COVID could do to the human body and, specifically, her patients. She hesitates for a moment before answering.

“It was terrifying,” she says. “We go to school and learn about many disease patterns and epidemiology and how things work. But this virus was completely different. It wasn’t just like a new kind of rash that went away on its own. It caused disease-related effects throughout the body, complicated by a full-blown immune system response. We saw physiology we didn’t see with other respiratory illnesses — like patients having low oxygen levels but not feeling like they had low oxygen. Or scarring in the lungs and the liver and other organs — that’s new — and the fact that the virus causes blood clots in the legs or the lungs or the brain. But all these things together in the same virus was...pretty frightening. And we couldn’t treat patients. We could do things to help them get through it, but that was about it.”

The duration of the disease was also alarming.

“It’s striking to me how young some of the people are,” she said. “People in their late 40s or early 50s who get really, really sick and are on high-flow oxygen for weeks and weeks. That hadn’t been seen before. Early on, it wasn’t realized just how long people — young and healthy people — could be sick.”

When Sonderegger wasn’t with patients, she was reading all she could, concerned she was not “keeping up” with new treatments or ventilation strategies or transmission. Nonetheless, she kept at it, putting aside everything else.

Over time, Sonderegger did what many others in her profession likely did, as well.

“I took what I learned and boiled it

down to the pearls people needed to know,” she said. “How it’s transmitted from one person to another and how to be careful.”

If the conversation had stopped there, the story she tells would be nothing short of an enormous human tragedy. But luckily, it doesn’t stop.

Fast-forward a year to April of 2021, and the future is infinitely more hopeful with the creation, approval and distribution of a COVID vaccine.

“I’m overjoyed that we have such an effective vaccine that’s also really safe,” she said. “We frequently have vaccines that are safe, but they aren’t as effective — like the flu shot. Safe but effective at only 50 or 60 percent. But this vaccine is both safe and effective. And, frankly, I’m kind of amazed at the scientific community.”

Not everybody feels that way. Many are concerned that the vaccine was developed quickly at the expense of being safe, a concern that, Sonderegger thinks, is the result of people missing a key piece of information.

“The vaccine was developed so quickly because the technology — the process that creates the vaccine — has already been used before,” she said. “It’s very similar to what’s been used in cancer therapy for years where the immune system is taught to recognize something it doesn’t like, like a cancerous cell. So, yes, it’s new. But scientists have been researching for years how to use the process in a vaccine, and they finally did it. So, it’s really not new, at all.”

When asked if she has any hesitation in telling people to get the vaccine, Sonderegger starts shaking her head before the question is even finished.

“The physicians and scientist mentors I look up to — and they know a lot about this — are very confident,” she said.

“And I have my own experience of seeing my parents — who are 73 years old — and my younger sister take the vaccine. That underlines how easy and positive it is.”

But she’s most encouraged by the difference the vaccine makes in entire communities.

“I’m very excited to see how drastically — really drastically — COVID rates have been reduced in communities where people take the vaccine,” she said.

One of the cruelest aspects of COVID is the solitary confinement it imposes on people who become severely ill. Barred from the presence of family or friends, patients battle the disease alone except for the doctors and nurses who help them in the fight as best they can.

And maybe that’s the most egregious irony of all because the isolation that’s required also shields those who aren’t infected — or are infected but not symptomatic — from seeing firsthand just how devastating the virus can be, making space for the belief that COVID is not devastating, at all.

“When I see people discounting the virus or thinking they don’t need to protect their neighbors, I’d like them to see the amount of suffering people go through,” she said. “I’ve seen patients get really sick and I’ve seen some of them die. And I’ve seen patients who survive but develop long term COVID. That can be debilitating. And then I think about how all the suffering is so unnecessary.”

The conversation comes to a natural end, and Dr. Sonderegger has things to do. But she stops, struck by one final thought.

“I came here because there’s such a strong sense of people caring about their community and about each other. Getting the vaccine is the best way to show how much we really care.”

By PRISCILLA WAGGONER

SAN LUIS VALLEY — When a group of strangers gathered for an online focus group to discuss why they didn’t want to take the COVID-19 vaccine or why they did or why they landed somewhere in between, there was a common thread that ran through many of their responses. It involved trust.

What information could they trust? Who could they trust to tell them?

Outside of spouses, family and close friends, few relationships require as much trust as the relationship between a patient and their doctor whom they rely on to diagnose any problems with their health and to then know what must be done to get well. Likewise, that responsibility is one doctors readily assume, for they view their role in the relationship largely in that same light.

The responsibility engendered in that trust was something Dr. Lauren Sonderegger, a family medicine physician with Valley-Wide Health Systems, was acutely aware of from the beginning of the pandemic.

SAGUACHE COUNTY SHERIFF’S REPORT

SAGUACHE COUNTY — The following information was provided by the Saguache County Sheriff’s Office for the period between April 12 and 19, 2021.

The Sheriff’s Department’s activity on the road included one traffic complaint, eight traffic stops, and five motorist assists.

In addition, staff recorded one case of fraud, one assault, one case of protection order violation, five cases of theft, two cases of harassment, two animal problems, two vin inspections, two welfare checks, two citizen assists, one alarm, one agency assist, two civil standby, and four cases of suspicious activity. They also monitored 14 controlled burns.

Arrests

- Domanic Michael Gallegos, 19,



Monte Vista, warrant

- Gilberto Ramos, 35, Center, fugitive of justice.
- Christopher Bell, 36, Saguache, fugitive of justice.
- Brandon Ray Stewart, 22, Saguache, fugitive of justice.

Keys to Conquering Your Problems

Romans 8:37 says that Christians are “more than conquerors” in this world. But do we really know what it means to be more than a conqueror and live the victorious life Jesus died to give us as believers?

There were many years when I went to church faithfully every week, yet my private life was pathetic. It was so frustrating because I really loved God and was a born-again believer, but I wasn’t experiencing victory over the problems in my life so that I could really live for God and help people.

But as I grew in my personal relationship with Christ and spent time studying the Word, I came to understand what it means to be more than a conqueror and how I could get there. And if I can do it, so can you!

To be more than a conqueror means that before you ever get a problem, you already know that whatever comes your way, you can overcome it through Christ. You live with confidence that God loves you no matter what and He will never leave you nor forsake you.

When you have this kind of relationship with Christ, you aren’t constantly afraid of bad news or of things that may happen that aren’t in your plan. When the unexpected happens or you’re disappointed, you won’t be devastated by it.

When you get a revelation of who you are in Christ, you know that with Christ on the inside of you, there is nothing that can happen that’s more than you can handle because there’s nothing that’s too much for Him! First John 4:4 says, “You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world” (NIV).

It’s so important for us to get this truth down in our hearts and see ourselves as more than conquerors through Christ Jesus because if we don’t, then our enemy, Satan, will be able to confuse us and keep us from victory. And all

the enemy wants to do is kill, steal and destroy what God wants us to have (see John 10:10). He wants to diminish you—make you small-minded and small in spirit so you’ll live a small, frustrated life.

But we don’t have to live that way. Every person who confesses that Christ Jesus is Lord, repents of their sin, and gives their heart to God is a child of God and belongs to Him. In Christ, we are made right with God, we are His righteousness, and we have the power of Christ in us to live right (2 Corinthians 5:17, 21; Philippians 4:13).

Do you realize what this means? It means that as we spend time with God in prayer and studying the Bible, we can access the wisdom and strength we need to make right choices and behave right. It doesn’t happen all at once or overnight, but we will make progress every day that we seek God this way.

I really want you to get this revelation of who you are in Christ as a born-again believer so you won’t be frustrated or discouraged or feel like you’re always under attack and just trying to get through the day. God has more for us than that!

When you make a mistake and the devil comes and tells you, “You’re no good,” you don’t have to take on the guilt and condemnation he wants to put on you. You can immediately confess your mistake to God, thank Him for forgiving you and cleansing you with the blood of Jesus, and move forward in the victory of His grace and forgiveness.

God loves you so much! And He wants you to abide (live in) His love so you will always be confident that He is with you and He is for you. As 1 John 4:17 says, “...As He is, so are we in this world” (AMP). That’s the life you have in Christ!

Take time to study scriptures that show you who God really is. Get a deeper understanding of His character



and His heart for you. Spend time with Him, read His Word, and let Him love you.

Know that He loves you unconditionally. He is good. He wants to bless you and help you. When you really have a revelation of this truth, you won’t be tormented by doubts about whether God cares or whether He will take care of you.

Whatever your situation is today, God knows about it. He sees you and hears the cry of your heart. If you will give Him your problems and do what He tells you to do, you will experience His amazing love, grace and power and be more than a conqueror. Because in Christ, we can overcome the world!

For more on this topic, order Joyce’s five-teaching CD series **Bold, Confident & Courageous**. 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 130 books, including *BATTLEFIELD OF THE MIND* and her newest devotional *QUIET TIMES WITH GOD (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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Sargent School District Teacher of the Year



Photo courtesy of Sargent School District
Sargent School District honored Kari Christoferson as its Teacher of the Year. Christoferson teaches sixth grade, as well as fifth and sixth grade English.

Creede Repertory Theatre plans three plays for 56th season

Summer Day Camps, The Kid Show and more are on tap

STAFF REPORT

CREEDE — The Creede Repertory Theatre announced its 56th season will be outdoors and consist of three plays.

“The past year at the Creede Repertory Theatre has been about reframing the limitations of a pandemic into opportunities for innovation and renewal,” stated John DiAntonio, CRT Producing Artistic Director. “CRT’s 56th season will be a new and exciting experience for staff, artists, students, and patrons. We are heading outside! Piloted beautifully by 2020’s innovative outdoor KID Show, CRT is taking our whole season to the great outdoors for the very first time.”

This year, CRT will set three plays against the beautiful scenery of Creede with an open-air stage and seating area in Seime Park above town, across from the Sunnyside Chapel. CRT in the Park will offer six performances a week, Wednesday through Sunday, from June 25 through Sept. 4. On May 1, show titles will be announced and tickets will become available.

The beautifully renovated outdoor seating space at the Creede Hotel and Restaurant will host “Boomtown” every Friday night and an original CRT Cabaret on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings from July 1 through Sept. 4. “Boomtown” tickets will go on sale through CRT starting May 1. Tickets for the Cabaret can be reserved through the Creede Hotel and Restaurant at 719-658-2608.

Education at CRT is ready for



another summer of Day Camps, The KID Show, and the Young Audience Outreach Tour. Camps and KID Show registration is open now. Visit CRT’s Education webpage to learn about specific offerings and reserve a spot.

CRT is committed to continuing health and safety protocols in all spaces, crafted in partnership with Silver Thread Public Health with adherence to state mandates and Actors’ union requirements.

Attendance will be limited for all performances, patrons will be socially distanced, and masks will be required. Many factors went into crafting these plans, aimed to protect the health of our staff, artists, students, and patrons and keep our theatre open for Summer 2021, DiAntonio noted.

“We can’t wait to see you live and in-person this summer. Thank you for all your support and understanding as we navigate these uncharted territories,” DiAntonio stated. “As always, I would love to answer any of your questions — please don’t hesitate to reach out or stop me at the K-Belle. I hope you and your family are staying healthy and well.”

For more information, visit online <https://creederep.org>.

Town of Saguache Public Notice for Sale of Real Property

Notice is hereby given that the Town of Saguache Board of Trustees will receive sealed bids to purchase the following surplus Town-owned real property:

Address/Location: Town of Saguache, 305 9th Street, Saguache Colorado, 81149
 Lot/Block: 1 and 2 in Block 30 (Also known as 305 9th Street)
 Size: each lot is 50 ‘ by 130.38’
 Minimum Bid: \$35,000
 Deposit: 10% of bid amount

The property will be sold on an “as-is” basis, without any warranties of any kind and has a minimum bid reserve. All bids must be received by 12:00 PM, May 7, 2021 to be considered. For information and full bid packet please contact Iris Garcia, Town Administrator at 719-655-2232 or by email at townclerk@townofsaguache.org.

No. 1592 published in the Center Post Dispatch, Thursday, April 22 and 29 and May 6, 2021.



Courtesy photos

High Valley Community Center has been busy this past week learning about self-reflection, enjoying soccer outside and creating crafts with students.

HVCC continues soccer practice

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

Hello everyone! Despite the unpredictable weather, the kids and coaches have had a great week outside practicing soccer. HVCC will continue to have soccer practice south of the new school by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We will inform everyone about games and start times when we find out more information.

This week’s theme is self-identity. We aim to help the kids become more self-aware through activities such as blooming self-esteem and self-portraits. Our goal is to help the kids identify feelings so they can distinguish those feelings from their self-worth. We would like to acknowledge AJ this week for showing self-awareness by picking up the trash outside without being asked. Thank you, AJ!

We are happy to report that the HVCC circus is going well! The kiddos have been enjoying learning about aerial silks, hula hooping, ribbon twirling, tumbling, and clowning. This week, the kiddos will choose their favorite skill and will continue to practice until their performance on May 13.

Week three of our College and Career Exploration series was spent at Adams State University touring the campus and climbing at the rock-climbing gym. We would like to thank Adams State University for their generosity; allowing HVCC youths to explore their campus. Last week, the tour around Del Norte to an array of local businesses went well. Thank you also to all the Del Norte businesses who participated in our local tour. We appreciate your hospitality!



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ASU Theatre production takes a light look at big ideas

STAFF REPORT
ALAMOSA — Let your worries blow away in the wind while you cozy up in your favorite lounging position with a beverage of choice to view the latest Adams State University

Theatre production, "Picasso at The Lapin Agile," written by Steve Martin and directed by George McConnell, Ph.D., assistant professor of theatre. The performances will begin at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, April 22, and continue

through Saturday, April 24, via a live stream service.

McConnell connected with the comedy when he first saw an off-Broadway production in New York City in the late 1990s.

"This is Steve Martin's first play. His philosophical questioning of the world has really fun, big ideas treated comically. It makes you think, but in a fun way," McConnell said.

The play is set in 1904 at the Paris Lapin Agile bar and features a chance meeting between a young Pablo Picasso and a young Albert Einstein.

"The fictional encounter is before either of these major historical figures have gained notoriety for their work," McConnell said.

Picasso and Einstein begin talking and the play unfolds a perspective that

ideas don't exist in a vacuum and the possibility that art and science can impact each other.

As their conversation continues, they begin to shift their perceptions and ideas. The supporting cast includes a bartender, barfly, barmaid, and Parisians dropping in for refreshment.

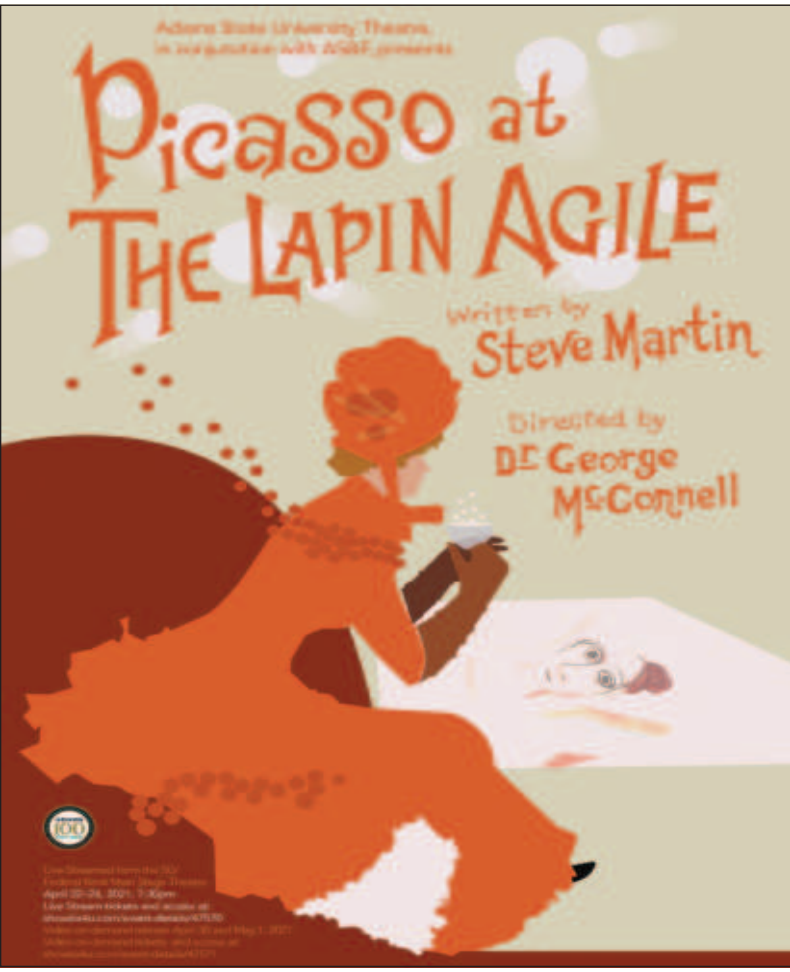
"They are all very funny and the comedy is breezy and light but with complex ideas," McConnell added.

There is a surprise and easily recognizable time-traveling guest who adds to the amusement of the story. It is a fun, what-if, plot that moves along at a quick tempo. Although there is no inappropriate content, McConnell recommends the play for pre-teen and older audiences.

Over the course of the 2020/2021

academic year, the Theatre Department has managed to bring a variety of plays to the public in safe formats which also enriched the students experience with production of live theatre. "Picasso at The Lapin Agile" will be filmed live using two cameras following a similar format as traditional television sitcoms and McConnell will live direct each performance.

"Picasso at the Lapin Agile" will live stream at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, April 22 through Saturday, April 24. The production will also be available on demand on April 30 and May 1. For tickets and access visit showtix4u.com/event-details/47570. The cost is \$12.50 to live stream per device and is free for current AS&F members.



Rio Grande County seeks new administrator

Klasmire was hired in November of 2020

BY LYNDSIE FERRELL
RIO GRANDE COUNTY —

According to reports coming out of Rio Grande County, recently hired County Administrator Leslie Klasmire is no longer with the county and the county is seeking a replacement. Though details pertaining to Klasmire's departure have yet to be released, the Rio Grande County Board of County Commissioners stated that the separation occurred within the last week.

Klasmire was hired in November of 2020 as a replacement for Interim Administrator Judy Egbert who served with the county since October. The county has been through two interim administrators in the last year after previous Administrator Tricia Slater resigned last Spring.

More information pertaining to the situation will be reported as it comes available. Below are details about the open position.

"Rio Grande County is seeking a County Administrator. Candidate will serve as the County's Chief Administrative Officer. This includes various functions of the Rio Grande County Government, in accordance with policies set forth by the BOCC. Candidate will be a positive communicator with strong organizational skills, an effective

leader with sound judgment, and be able to promote the policies of the BOCC. Education/Experience requirements are a Bachelor's degree (B.A.) from an accredited college or university in Public/Business Administration with two or more year's related experience and/or training; or equivalent combination of education and experience at the discretion of the BOCC. Drug screening, including for marijuana, and background check is required. Salary \$75k-\$90k-DOE. Application and job description available online at www.riograndecounty.org or pick up and submit to Human Resources 925 6th Street Room 200, Del Norte, CO."

CORRECTION

In last week's article, titled "\$100,000 awarded to Friends of Ski Hi" it should have stated the conservation trust fund monies from Rio Grande County was awarded to the City of Monte Vista.

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Hookten Harmony plans for community-wide event

By LYNDIE

FERRELL SOUTH FORK — Hookten Harmony has hit the scene in South Fork and has been making waves ever since arriving by offering a wide-range of opportunities to the area, including child singing lessons, Zumba classes and more.



Owners David and Keeley Hookten knew when they moved to the area that they wanted to become part of the community and have been working hard to give back through their many talents.

In March of this year while visiting family, Hookten and her husband decided that they were going to begin looking for their forever home in the town they loved.

"It was so great. My husband had a job interview and we had come down to look at homes and everything just kind of fell into place," Keeley said. "In March, when we got here, everything shut down because of the pandemic and I told my husband that I didn't want to go back to Texas. His job interview worked out and we were able to find a beautiful home, so we made the move."

The Hooktens noticed that there were not a lot of activities for children in the area outside of what is offered in surrounding towns like Del Norte and Creede, so Keeley decided to make one more leap of faith and began looking for students.

"I have a bachelor's degree in music and anthropology and have been teaching voice and piano lessons for eight years. I also have a master's in vocal performance and pedagogy, so I thought I would try

Please see HOOKTEN on Page 7

Willow Creek Inventory collects decades of reports

STAFF REPORT

CREEDE — Headwaters Alliance recently announced the completion of the Willow Creek Inventory, a foundational goal of the larger Comprehensive Willow Creek Watershed Planning Project. The Willow Creek Inventory was completed with support from Colorado Watershed Assembly's

See REPORTS on Page 7

Aerial view of the Willow Creek floodplain.

Photo by Christi Bode



St. Peter's Lutheran School hopes to reopen

By REBECCA COPLEY

MONTE VISTA — St. Peter's Lutheran School is hoping it can reopen after closing in May 2020.

Last May, the school closed due to uncertainties and the financial impacts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The school enrolls K-8 students, and uses a comprehensive curriculum including language arts, reading, math, science, social studies, music, art, religion, and P.E. Students also participate in a history fair and a science fair.

The school's hours are 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday. At this point, the school is anticipating having one full-time teacher and two

Please see SCHOOL on Page 3



Photo courtesy of St. Peter's Lutheran School

St. Peter's Lutheran School has been closed since May of 2020 due to uncertainty brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Illinois Cowboy

"Where were you born?" The reporter asked one of my Colorado cowboy friends.

"Iowa," he answered.

"Iowa!" she said. "Why did you move?"

"Because it's hard to be a cowboy in Iowa."

Well, it might be harder to be a cowboy in the Midwest but they've got a bunch of good ones anyway. No matter how much dependence modern cowmen place on man-made mechanical devices, there are times when nothin' beats a good roper a'horseback.

Illinois is an anthill of bovine activity. They have an abundance of cow calf operations and the state has ranked in the top ten in numbers of cattle on feed. So a "loose cow" is not an unusual occurrence. That's when a good cowboy comes in handy.

Dr. Matt has his veterinary clinic in one of the many small towns that dot the northwestern Illinois countryside. One afternoon he was processing a truckload of feeder steers in the back of his clinic.

Despite good help and good facilities,



BAXTER BLACK
ON THE EDGE OF COMMON SENSE

accidents can happen. A gate was left open and shornuf, one of the steers escaped. And, according to Rule #1 in the Guidebook of Loose Cattle, the steer headed straight for the center of town.

Matt leaped to his Toyota Batmobile and took up the chase as the girls in the office

cheered him on and wished, not for the first time, they'd had a video camera.

The steer had the advantage. He was able to cut through lawns, across lots filled with farm implements, behind gas pumps and down sidewalks. He jaywalked with impunity.

He galloped into the bank drive-through, raised his tail to the pie-eyed teller and proceeded to circle the bank building. Matt careened into the drive-through hot on the trail. By using the parking lot and surrounding sidewalks, he was able to keep the steer circling the bank through the manicured lawn and decorative shrubbery.

Matt's radio crackled, "Chet's just pulled into the clinic, could you use some help?"

The steer broke for the high school. "Send him on," Matt yelled, "we're headed for the football field!"

The steer had slowed to a trot by the time Chet wheeled his pickup and trailer into the school parking lot. He unloaded his horse, grabbed his rope and mounted.

Matt said it was beautiful to watch. When Chet rode through the goal posts the steer was on the twenty-yard line and pickin' up speed.

Chet's horse was kickin' up big divots and Chet was leaning forward like an outside linebacker. He sailed his loop and nailed the steer on the fifty-yard line. An amazing catch. The grandstands were empty. Nobody saw it but Matt, and he told me, with a faraway look in his eye, that to this day he can still hear the crowd.

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

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St. Joseph's Church added to National Register of Historic Places

STAFF REPORT

CAPULIN — Saint Joseph's Church is now listed in the National Register of Historic Places, according to the Sangre de Cristo Historic Area.

Built in 1912-13 in Capulin, St. Joseph's is associated with the Hispano families who emigrated from northern New Mexico to the San Luis Valley beginning in the 1840s.

The church was originally cared for by Jesuits as a mission of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Conejos.

It expanded under Theatine fathers in the 1930s, becoming an independent parish. When their first Father, Peter Ribas, arrived in Capulin, he advocated for local public schools, which were only operating two or three months a year due to limited finances.

Father Superior of the Theatines in Colorado offered to staff the public schools with Benedictine sisters, who lived at this church and taught until 1965.


The church's distinct Gothic Revival architecture includes rock-faced sandstone walls, original stained-glass windows, Gothic-arch windows and entrances, stone buttresses, and a square tower with shingled belfry.



Courtesy photo

Old St. Joseph's Cemetery has many gravestones, dating back to 1861.


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~Carissa Tripi, DO, SLVH



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~Emelin Martinez, FNP-BC, Valley-Wide




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Fridays
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To schedule an appointment call **719-587-1355** or register online.

Valley-Wide Health Systems
9:00a.m. - 4:00p.m.
Fridays
Alamosa Fairgrounds

To schedule an appointment call **719-587-9610** or register online.

 **San Luis Valley HEALTH** slvh.org

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CLUES ACROSS

1. Cold War player
5. Flat-bottomed sailboat
10. Jamaican tangelo
14. Debauched man
15. Less covered
16. Require to live
17. Patrick and Aykroyd are two
18. Mixes
19. Insurance claim expenses
20. Tries to persuade
22. Equal (prefix)
23. Czech name for Prague
24. London soccer team
27. Greek letter
30. Small Eurasian deer
31. Swiss river
32. Miller beer
35. Less appealing
37. 8th month (abbr.)
38. ___ Alto, California city
39. Grandmothers
40. American time
41. NW Chinese people
42. "Westworld" actress ___ Rachel Wood
43. Northeastern US university
44. Poplar trees (Spanish)
45. Hip hop legend Kool Moe ___
46. Not or
47. Corpuscule count (abbr.)
48. Comedienne Gasteyer
49. Fonts
52. Female cattle mammary gland
55. Down time
56. Spiritual leader
60. Small brown and gray American rail
61. Trimmed by cutting
63. NY Giants owner
64. A long narrative poem

Solution to last week's puzzle

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

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14 | | | | 15 | | | | | 16 | | | |
| 17 | | | | 18 | | | | | 19 | | | |
| 20 | | | | 21 | 22 | | | 23 | | | | |
| | | | 24 | 25 | | | 26 | | | | | |
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | | | 31 | | | 32 | 33 | 34 | |
| 35 | | | 36 | | | 37 | | | 38 | | | |
| 39 | | | | | 40 | | | 41 | | | | |
| 42 | | | | 43 | | | 44 | | | | | |
| 45 | | | | 46 | | | 47 | | | 48 | | |
| | | | 49 | | | 50 | | | 51 | | | |
| 52 | 53 | 54 | | | 55 | | | 56 | | 57 | 58 | 59 |
| 60 | | | | | 61 | | | 62 | | 63 | | |
| 64 | | | | | 65 | | | | 66 | | | |
| 67 | | | | | 68 | | | | 69 | | | |

65. Old World lizard
66. Product for sale
67. Shut Your Pie Hole (abbr.)
68. Pacific Island country
69. Whale ship captain

CLUES DOWN

1. Language
2. Fly high in the air
3. Made musical sounds
4. Organized again
5. TV channel
6. Unable to fly
7. Get up
8. Air traveler
9. Married woman
10. Take weapons from
11. Sicilian city
12. Actress Remini
13. Thought
21. Infections
23. Golf score
25. Hill or rocky peak
26. Witch
27. Adjusted

28. Succulent plant
29. Forearm bones
32. Hot fluid in the earth's crust
33. Subatomic particle
34. Part of an organism
36. 007's creator
37. Burned material residue
38. Brain layer: ___ mater
40. Unable to partake
41. Lesion
43. Historic railroad company (abbr.)
44. Basics
46. Scottish port
47. Flower cluster
49. Instruct
50. Untamed
51. Moth genus
52. Utilizes
53. Foolish
54. Fall in small drops
57. A place to get clean
58. La ___ Tar Pits
59. Metrical foot
61. Semiliquid food
62. Small crow

Rattlesnakes emerging in San Luis Valley, CPW urges caution

BY LYNSIE FERRELL

SAN LUIS VALLEY — Spring has finally arrived here in the San Luis Valley and with that comes the yearly need for caution as people begin to venture outdoors. Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) is working to help educate the public on the need for caution in the San Luis Valley due to the abundant wildlife that is part of everyday life in the mountains.

Many who reside in the region are used to the wildlife that comes with the territory but many who have just moved to the area are unaware or unfamiliar with springtime dangers that can lurk in the sunshine while out on a hike in the beautiful backcountry or even on a well-used trail or road. There is not a huge population of rattlesnakes in the San Luis Valley but those that do live here are beginning to wake from a long winter.

“There is not a large number of rattlesnakes in the San Luis Valley due to the high elevation but there are healthy populations in several places throughout the area. Compared to other areas throughout Colorado, the San Luis Valley doesn’t have the same number of rattlesnakes but that doesn’t make the need for caution any less for those out for a hike. It is always better to be aware than to be caught off guard,” said CPW Southwest Region Public Information Officer Joe Lewandowski.

Rattlesnakes are cold-blooded animals who come out mid-morning and often in the evening to sunbathe and increase their body temperatures. The Valley has not seen a high number of rattlesnake bites in the last several years, but they do occur. Those who are most susceptible are hikers and runners that venture off trails and roads and go into the dry, arid hills surrounding places like Del Norte and the La Garita area.

These specified areas are not the only locations people can run into these cold-blooded reptiles so caution is urged whenever in a dry climate or sunny location. They are most active during the spring when they are just waking up from hibernation. Caution should be used when hiking on rock outcroppings, near prairie dog holes or on country roads and hiking trails. Rattlesnakes are extremely venomous, and one bite could send a person or animal to the emergency room and result in a lifetime of challenges.

One thing a person can do to decrease their chances of running into

a rattlesnake is to make a lot of noise while moving through underbrush. These creatures are equipped with a “rattle” at the end of their tail which they use to warn oncoming animals and people of their presence. Rattlesnakes are like other animals and will slither away if they feel they need to retreat. Making noise while hiking can help scare the reptiles away and save a hiker a lot of trouble.

Another thing a person can do is carry a hiking or waking stick. Use the stick to lead in front of a person hiking and to move through bushes or rocks before stepping in that direction. Rock climbers should also use caution while out enjoying a day on the cliffs around the Valley. Rattlesnakes like to hide in rock crevices during the

warmest parts of the day to cool down after absorbing heat in the morning and can be hard to spot.

Local health facilities like the Rio Grande Hospital and San Luis Valley Hospital keep a plentiful supply of anti-venom on hand in case of a rattlesnake bite but both facilities are not equipped to deal with more severe bites should they occur and will air-transport victims to larger hospitals in most cases.

Spring has sprung in the San Luis Valley and caution is urged for those enjoying the great outdoors. Rattlesnakes are emerging from hibernation and are active during spring here in the Valley.

Courtesy photo



Saturday, May 1, 2021 at 10 a.m.
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 - Bench grinders
 - Electric cords
 - Impact sockets
 - Dewalt drills/saws
 - Routers
 - Roto zip saw
 - Items too numerous to mention

- Coins**
- Approx. 100 Silver Coins
 Coins will be sold at 10 am
- Miscellaneous**
- Multiple storage containers offered
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 - Doors
 - Bikes
 - Landscape supplies
 - Wood Stove
 - Grow lights
 - Grow fans
 - 24ft Stock panels (new)
 - 30 Power poles
 - 20 spruce trees
 - Items too numerous to mention

- Implements**
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 - Skid Steer Grapple Buckets
 - Skid Steer pallet forks
 - Allen hyd rake
 - Brush hog mower
 - Dikers
 - Blade
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 - 16 ft flat deck pull type wagon
 - JD Hay/ Silage feeder
 - 2 Wheel steel box
 - Items too numerous to mention

- Vehicles**
- Lincoln Mark III parts
 - 2000 Chevy Cavalier

- Tack**
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 - Spur straps
 - Belt buckles
 - Miscellaneous Tack
 - Items too numerous to mention

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- Kubota L35 TLB
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- Backhoe tires
- Donahue swather trailer
- Semi Double Drop Low Boy Trailer
- John Deere stationary pump motor and generator
- Terex 72-51 Loader
- 1466 International Tractor
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- 1431 New Holland Pull Type Rotary Mower
- Cake Feeder
- Brush Hog
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- Terex C6 Dozer
- Crane 50,000lb
- Double gate belly dump
- 1976 International 1466 tractor Good Shape
- Items too numerous to mention

Auctioneer’s Notes: Coins will be sold at 10 am. Partial listing only! Some listed items may not show up. Call Brady (719) 588-2573 for availability. New Items arriving daily. Most items will not be pictured



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SCHOOL

Continued from Page 1

part-time educators. The school says this may change depending on the number of students that are interested. The school also accepts students from outside of Monte Vista and in the past had students from Center, Del Norte, and Alamosa areas.

Students also do not have to be Lutheran to attend the school. St. Peter’s Lutheran School would like parents know they offer Christian values, small class sizes, multiage classrooms, and affordable tuition.

The school’s mission statement is, “To reach out with the Gospel to children and families in the church and the community to develop every aspect of the child, with Jesus Christ at the center of all activities.”

The school is located at 330 Faraday St. in Monte Vista. At this point, it is not fully open. They are currently taking letters of interest from parents to see if they can reopen.

If you are a parent or guardian interested in more information, call or text 719-852-5449, or email cjmbaird@gmail.com or markdwanahaugen@gmail.com.

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GUN/KNIFE SHOW PAGOSA SPRINGS: Tables \$60, Food Trucks \$80. Archuleta Fairgrounds. June 18-20. Mike (970)946-2841 (05/05)

07 Help Wanted

Care Giver Needed In the Antonito area a young lady needs full time caregiver that is trustworthy and dependable Monday-Friday. Some Saturdays and can include 1 weekend of 2 overnight stays Fri.& Sat. Transfers are required, light housekeeping, meal prep and feeding are some duties. Serious inquires please. Contact 719-588-9430 (05/12)

Tri-County Senior Citizens has an immediate opening for experienced permanent full time Maintenance/Custodial/Grounds worker. Qualified applicant must have general knowledge of electrical, carpentry plumbing painting. Will be responsible for making vacant apartments ready for re-renting, and general maintenance/custodial care of building and grounds Will do snow removal in winter, mowing lawn and other yard work in summer. Clean driver's license a must. Application may be picked up at 311 Washington Street, Monte Vista Co. No phone calls. (05/12)

Higher Ground Fence in Monte Vista is looking for a hired hand. Please contact Tyler Loewen at 719-588-0759. For details. (05/12)

Large Potato Warehouse has an immediate opening for experienced Bagger and baler operators. Pay is based on experience and will be reevaluated after 60 days based on review. Great work environment, as well as paid vacation after 1 year. Send resume and references to PO Box 432 Monte Vista, Co 81144. (4/28)

"Proximity Malt is looking for a PACKAGING TECHNICIAN to join our team. Grain handling including computerized and manual equipment operation. Emphasis on safety and product quality including cleaning and sanitation. Must be able to drive a forklift, routinely lift and carry 60 pounds and work flexible shifts. Other duties as assigned. Competitive pay, full benefit package and room to advance. 1001 N CR 3 East, Monte Vista, 719-628-0220"(05-12)

Sargent School District is accepting applications for the High School Science Teacher position. Initial salary \$30,500 (BA, Step 1), new teachers may be granted up to 10 years for appropriate experience (Step 10, BA \$36,500) educational steps also may apply. Must possess or be eligible for Colorado teaching license with secondary science endorsement and CTE authorization in Health Science. Benefits include: Health insurance, dental insurance, vision insurance, life insurance, PERA retirement, paid time off, as well as other optional benefit elections. Please visit the website for application information www.sargent.k12.co.us or call 719-852-4023. EOE (04/21)

FT SHIPPING CLERK Packing UPS boxes, customer service, retail clerking, inventory control, some light & interesting ranch chores. Must work a 10-hour 4 day/week flexible schedule, sometimes including weekends. Com-

puter and/or telephone skills a plus. Wages commensurate. Send detailed resume' with wage history to: GrandeMeats@gmail.com or P.O. Box 10, Del Norte. CO 81132 (05/05)

The Monte Vista Coop Equipment Division is currently hiring for the position of Shop Mechanic. Job Duties include inspect, maintain, repairs, assemblies and overhauls farm machinery, equipment and vehicles such as tractors, harvesters, pumps, tilling equipment, trucks and other mechanized equipment. Wages between \$12.32 and \$15.00 per hour depending on experience. To apply you may apply online via Indeed, Facebook, in person or send resume to s david@mvcoop.com. For further information please call Stan at 719-852-5565. (05/5)

Seasonal Openings

The Rio Grande Club and Resort is also looking for outstanding individuals for seasonal opportunities. If you would like to be part of our exciting growth please consider the following positions:

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If these positions sound like a fit for you, then request an application at info@rgcresort.com or apply in person Tuesday - Friday between 10 am and 3 pm. 0285 Rio Grande Club Trail, South Fork, CO
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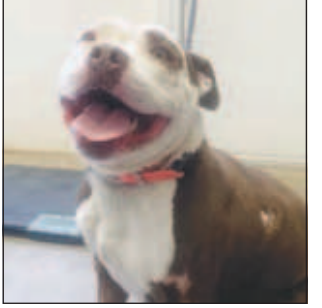
We would like to express our deepest gratitude and appreciation to all those who have contributed to the success of the Upper Rio Grande Animal Society by contributions, donations, volunteering and general support at Conour Animal Shelter.

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Beau is a sweet Border Collie mix who is not quite a year old. He is playful, energetic and submissive. He is smart and very treat motivated and thus will be very easy to train. He has not been socialized much, but in his time at the shelter he has been introduced to multiple other dogs and is learning how to be a good canine citizen. He loves to get attention and be taken for walks.

Much like the character who shares her name, Ms. Piggy is quite the diva. She loves to be the center of attention. She is energetic, friendly and affectionate with people. She doesn't do well with other dogs though so is looking for an only dog home. She has ongoing medical needs so please call the shelter for details.



Maya is a spunky and energetic little 5-month-old Chihuahua/mix. She loves attention and to be held. Being in your arms is her natural state. She is a young puppy so potential adopters should be ready for puppy behaviors such as chewing and potty training. She is playful and loveable and if you don't pay attention to her she will let you know about it!



Penny is 2 and a half months old and came in with two brothers, but don't think that makes her a dainty little lady, she is energetic and loves to wrestle with her siblings and usually pins them. She is brave and curious and loves to look for new adventure. As she is a very young puppy, please prepare for basic training to make her a good canine citizen.



Leonard is a brave and loyal 2-and-a-half-month-old Border Collie/Lab mix. He likes to cuddle and play with his brother and sister, but is adventurous to go exploring on his own. He loves to play with toys and wrestle. He is quick to bark at new and scary things but also loves to give kisses. Leonard is still a puppy so be prepared for basic training and help him learn to be a good citizen!



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Springtime in the Rockies



Photo by Lyndsie Ferrell

Spring is slowly making its way through the San Luis Valley as snow melts and small plants are awakening after a long winter slumber.

BLM planning spring prescribed burn near Squaw Creek in Saguache County

STAFF REPORT

MONTE VISTA — The Bureau of Land Management-Rocky Mountain District Fire and the Rio Grande National Forest are preparing to conduct a prescribed burn in the Squaw Creek area, approximately 17 miles west of Saguache.

Implementation of the prescribed fire project could take place between mid-April and mid-May 2021, depending on favorable weather and fuel moisture conditions. Once started, the burn is expected to take several days to complete. Firefighters will be on scene for the duration of the burn.

“We will not initiate the prescribed

burn until the conditions are right to achieve the objectives of the project,” said John Markalunas, Rocky Mountain District Assistant Fire Management Officer. “Reducing hazardous fuels and achieving resource benefits in the project area are priorities for the operation.”

The burn will treat approximately 297 acres of BLM land and 252 acres of US Forest Service land to reduce accumulated fuels and improve resiliency of the timber stand. Targeted fuels include diseased or infected Douglas fir, decadent grasses, and other ground fuels that have accumulated since previous treatments.

Smoke may be visible in the area both during and after the burn operations. Smoke will be most visible during the warmest part of the day. With cooler temperatures in the evening, smoke may linger and accumulate in low-lying areas. Fire managers have developed a detailed prescribed fire plan and have obtained smoke permits from the State of Colorado for the planned burn.

Prescribed fire smoke may affect your health. For more information, visit the Colorado Air Pollution Control Division’s website www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/wood-smoke-and-health.

OptiMystics plan Cinco De Mayo celebration

BY REBECCA COPLEY

MONTE VISTA — After the success of their St. Patrick’s Day Parade in March, the OptiMystics are putting together a Cinco De Mayo celebration.

Organizers are hoping to have something for everyone to enjoy and promise fun for the entire family. The celebration will be an all-day event on Wednesday, May 5, starting at 11 a.m. and ending at 8 p.m. They plan to have a car show, kids games, historic presentations, food, a parade, local vendors, and more.

The vendors, kids activities, food, and more will be located on the 100 block of Adams Street. The car show will be on the 200 block of Adams Street. Along with the local restaurants on Adams Street, there will also be food trucks parked for the event.

If you are interested in participating in the parade you must be registered by April 28. Forms to register can be found on the OptiMystics website.

On the website people will also find forms to register a vendor booth or food booth, and to enter a vehicle in the car show. These forms must also be turned in by April 28. The OptiMystics are asking for a \$15 donation for vendors including food vendors, and a \$10 donation to participate in the car show. For parade participants, a \$10 donation is appreciated. All donations will be used for beautification and revitalization projects in town.

The OptiMystics are also in need of volunteers to help with the event. Anyone who is interested in helping with the celebration is asked to contact

the OptiMystics by calling 719-239-1811 or emailing optimysticscag@gmail.com.

More information, registration forms, and updates as the plans finalize

can be found at the OptiMystic’s website <https://optimystics.org/cinco-de-mayo/>. The event plans to follow all current COVID-19 health guidelines at the time of the celebration.

SLV REC maintenance project to begin

STAFF REPORT

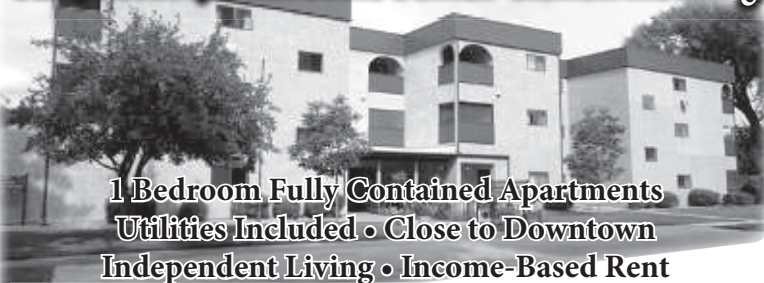
SAN LUIS VALLEY — SLV Rural Electric Cooperative will be conducting a maintenance project in the southern part of the San Luis Valley beginning in mid to late-April.

National Powerline, a contractor from Arizona, will be changing out all transmission insulators from Waverly Substation to Stockade Substation, then from Stockade to San Acacio Substation. They will need access along all transmission lines in the area.

Residents in this area are asked to contact SLV REC if they have a locked gate or anything impeding access for the crews. Call or email Chief Operations Officer Shawn McKibbon to discuss at 719-852-3538 or smckibbon@slvrec.com.

Updating the infrastructure will continue for approximately three months. JKL Associates, Inc. will also be doing some work, adding fiber on the same lines for the next six-eight weeks. Contact SLV REC with any concerns.

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REPORTS

Continued from Page 1

Healthy Rivers Fund and the Colorado Water Conservation Board.

For the past 23 years, the Willow Creek Reclamation Committee and now, Headwaters Alliance (HWA), have been working to address water quality and legacy mining impacts in the Willow Creek Watershed. However, the water itself isn't the whole story of the watershed; for there are animals, plants, forests, people, history, culture and inevitable change.

Over the course of those years, many reports, summaries, maps and documents have been written and created, describing the challenges of the watershed. Resulting actions and projects have addressed many of these challenges. Unfortunately, reports, projects and actions have been confined in silos, susceptible to missing key information and data sharing.

For example, in the aftermath of the 2019 snowmelt runoff that caused damage to the recently reclaimed Lower Willow Creek Floodplain, HWA began asking "how could we have handled runoff better? Can a better understanding of and expanded access to information about the watershed lead to better outcomes?"

HWA set out to answer those questions and more. In 2020, HWA was awarded funding by Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB), for the Comprehensive Willow Creek Watershed Planning Project. HWA is working with many partners and stakeholders to complete the Willow Creek Watershed Planning Project, including the Willow Creek Inventory, engineered designs for stream stability and restoration, flood control and habitat enhancements for key reaches of Willow Creek, and ultimately create a Willow Creek Watershed Plan to meet the State Water Plan guidelines.

The Inventory piece of that plan aims to bridge the information gap. It brings together the past 25-plus years of reports, studies, maps and more created by the multitude of stakeholders involved in addressing the water quality issues caused

by legacy mining impacts in the Willow Creek Watershed. The Inventory is an online library of resources, including many of the past reports and documents in digital form, interactive story maps about the history of mining and complexities of the Nelson Tunnel/Commodore Waste Rock Superfund Site, summary of current conditions in the Willow Creek Watershed, and a summary of current projects.

The Inventory outcomes will enable people to better protect water,

lands and resources within the watershed and beyond, while also protecting life, property, and wellbeing.

The intent of the Inventory is to:

- Compile existing reports, documents and maps, making them readily accessible and visible to partners, stakeholders and the public.
- Share key watershed data between and across partners and stakeholders.
- Facilitate integration and collaboration of data, resources

and infrastructure across projects as a standard practice.

- Identify gaps in the body of work, including identifying and prioritizing future needs.

- Facilitate a reflexive practice on past findings so to invite new questions and research.

- Promote holistic thinking, collaboration, and long-term solutions.

The Inventory is both a tool for boots-on-the-ground projects and also a philosophical manifesto

encouraging readers to perceive the watershed with a holistic mindset.

Visit headwatersalliance.com to access the Inventory: explore maps, find the latest data, learn about mining history and the Nelson Tunnel Superfund Site, discover the many challenges and how they are connected, and more.

For more information, contact the Development and Engagement Coordinator, Alex Handloff, at the HeadwatersAllianceatcoordinator@headwatersalliance.org.

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HOOKTEN

Continued from Page 1

to make a living out of what I love," Keeley said.

Coming up at the end of the month, Hookten Harmony will be hosting a community-wide event that will feature a short lesson in two-step dance moves and provide an evening of music and community fun. Community Night is coming up on Saturday April 24. The free event will start at 7 p.m. David and Keeley will teach a short two-step lesson for couples who would like to hit the dance floor.

Don't dance? Don't worry. There is plenty of seating, so come to talk with friends and enjoy the free snacks provided by the South Fork Friends Foundation and cookies provided by Frosted Off the Top. If you have kids, they have you covered. Free childcare is available. Kids have their own area indoors or outdoors, with games and plenty of activities to keep them busy or they can join in on the dancing.

Coming up Hookten Harmony will be hosting summer music and arts camp called "Around the World" and ballet beginner camps as well. For more details, email Keeley at hooktenharmony@gmail.com.

New Little Free Library in South Fork

STAFF REPORT

SOUTH FORK — There is a new Little Free Library, a place to take a book or share a book, in South Fork. The Stadtlers, new residents since September 2020, have erected a book depository at 419 Aspen Dr. in the Ponderosa subdivision. Little Free Library is a nonprofit group that fosters a love for reading and sparked a movement for individuals, businesses, schools and coffee shops to provide a box for a free book

exchange.

Book sharing boxes provide 24/7 access to books, often in book deserts and underserved communities.

“For my birthday in February, I asked my son and husband to build a box for us to start a Little Free Library, and now that the ground has thawed, it’s been installed,” Holly Stadtler said. “It’s registered online with the Little Free Library nonprofit so travelers, neighbors and anyone can search the website and take advantage

of the free book exchange if they’re in the area. Website viewers can find a free library from the 100,000 worldwide in over 100 countries! We filled our box with 14 books to start with and have already received an additional book.”

Depending on the size of the books, this box should hold about 30 books. People can add to the collection or take a book by dropping by the box that is by the road on Aspen Drive.

“Please make sure any additions will fit inside the box rather than leaving outside or around the post, so they aren’t damaged by weather,”

Stadtler said.

Currently, some of the books the Stadtlers have enjoyed in the library include “The Double Bind” by Chris Bohjalian, “Ireland” by Frank Delaney, “Dog Songs” a poetry collection by Mary Oliver, “The Sweet Hereafter” by Russell Banks, and “The Last Child” by John Hart, among others.

In the US, more than 36 million adults cannot read or write above a third-grade level, but studies show that books in the hands of children have a meaningful impact on improving literacy, Stadtler stated.

According to Little Free Library, two out of three children living in poverty have no books to call their own. A Little Free Library box that caters to children — established by Camp Chicka Chicka Boom Boom — can be found at Rickel Park on Park Drive in South Fork.

For more information about purchasing a box built by the Amish carpenters or learning how to build a box, or just more about where to find libraries, visit littlefreelibrary.org and type in zip code 81154 on this webpage <https://littlefreelibrary.org/ourmap/>.



Courtesy photos



Soccer and circus season at High Valley Community Center

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

Hello everyone! We hope you have been enjoying the warm weather as much as we have. Soccer has been going well. Beginning on Thursday, April 8, soccer practices will be outside at the soccer fields south of the school near the Church of Latter-Day Saints, weather permitting. If the weather is not pleasant, we will notify parents and practice will be held at the HVCC gym. As of now, we are not sure when games will begin, but we will post updates on our website and notify the parents when we hear more information.

The HVCC circus is going well. We are very lucky to have a couple of additional helpers, Brade and Christina who have agreed to share their talents with the kids. The children will work on their circus skills every Friday in April building up to the final performance on May 13. More information to come.

Our college and exploration series had a great start at the Wolf Creek Ski Area. The kids had a great time learning about jobs at the ski resort while also enjoying some runs down the slopes. We are so grateful for their support and generosity. This week the kids are touring various businesses in Del Norte. If your child is in sixth grade or older and are interested in joining, they are more than welcome to join us for future excursions. Give us a call at 719-657-2172, for more information.

In closing, our theme of the week was, “teamwork.” Children built marshmallow towers, participated in partner painting, played parachute games, and completed a minefield

obstacle course. In the spirit of teamwork, we would like to acknowledge the breaking news kiddos who demonstrated teamwork this week. Finley T., Archer, Mikael, Finley H., Isaac, Max, and Gracelynn all helped to clean up after activities and helped the other kiddos during activities. Keep up the great work, kiddos. We are very proud of you!

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~ B.Gullette

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Courtesy photo

Public invited to provide input on the Colorado State Hemp Plan

STAFF REPORT

In keeping with the state of Colorado's efforts to develop a robust hemp industry since the Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA) launched a hemp pilot program in 2014, stakeholder feedback is now being sought for the continued development of Colorado's State Hemp Plan.

In January, USDA responded to public comments, including extensive comments submitted by CDA, by publishing a vastly improved and revised Final Hemp Rule. While CDA continues to advocate for additional rule revisions to create even more flexibility for producers, Colorado is also developing a revised state plan to be submitted to USDA for approval to allow the state to continue operating its industrial hemp program in compliance with federal regulations.

CDA believes that stakeholder engagement is central to the success of a comprehensive state plan, and is inviting the public to participate in a virtual meeting

to hear an overview of the plan and provide input to areas where the Final Rule has provided room for flexibility:

Colorado Hemp State Plan - Public Stakeholder Meeting

Date: April 29
Time: 1-4 p.m.
Program: Planned agenda
Access: Register in advance

Additionally, the CDA Hemp Advisory Committee will convene virtually for a consultation meeting about the state plan. The public is invited to listen and provide comment following the meeting:

Colorado Hemp State Plan - Hemp Advisory Committee Consultation

Date: April 28
Time: 1-3 p.m.
Program: Planned agenda
Access: Join via Zoom Link with passcode sqwmC1

Contact CDA's Industrial Help Program at industrialhemp@state.co.us with questions or for more information.

CDOR released Average Market Rates for retail marijuana effective April 1, 2021

DENVER — The Colorado Department of Revenue (CDOR) today released the Average Market Rates (AMR) for retail marijuana effective April 1 until June 30.

Three of the seven AMR categories decreased this quarter, specifically bud (\$1,308), trim (\$354), and trim allocated for extraction (\$225). Three of the seven AMR categories increased this quarter, specifically bud allocated for extraction (\$525), seed (\$8), and wet, whole plant (\$197). Immature plant (\$10) stayed the same.

The AMR is the median market price of each category of unprocessed retail marijuana that is sold or transferred from retail marijuana cultivation facilities to retail marijuana product manufacturing facilities or retail marijuana stores. CDOR's Office of Research and Analysis, in coordination with the Taxation Division and the Marijuana Enforcement Division (MED), calculates AMRs quarterly for use in levying the excise tax as required by Colorado statute.

The April 1 AMR was calculated based on retail marijuana transactions

from December 1, 2020 through February 28, 2021 in MED's marijuana inventory tracking system. AMR is an estimate of the typical prices of each category of unprocessed retail marijuana that is sold or transferred from marijuana grows to product manufacturers or stores.

Visit the Taxation Division's website for more information, including the methodology of the AMR calculations and current and prior AMRs: Average Market Rate for Unprocessed Retail Marijuana | Department of Revenue - Taxation.

CSU president commits to jump-starting re-investment in SLV

BY PRISCILLA WAGGONER

MONTE VISTA — Plans for increased investment in the San Luis Valley alongside continued existing support and greater focus on agricultural economic development were at the heart of Colorado State University President Joyce McConnell's comments in February.

Citing the importance of the "highly valued, long-standing relationship" between the SLV and the land grant college that goes back more than a century, McConnell said CSU is committed "to jump starting re-investment in the Valley."

CSU wants to see the local extension service fully staffed, to add positions at the research center and "to convene important conversations about issues that are so critical to the region."

In terms of ongoing efforts, McConnell also pledged CSU's continued support in existing areas, including the Valley's emphasis on lower water use cropping systems, new crop development, congregation strategies that improve soil health and sending off crop tests and pathogens. Live-

stock is also in the mix as McConnell referenced CSU's recently added capacity on sustainable livestock systems to improve resilience and profitability of the animal industry.

"We understand how critical agriculture is in this area to the economic development of the community," she said.

McConnell touched on the land grant college's commitment to direct service and community support, pointing to the "Grow and Give" project, launched by CSU Extension during the pandemic, which encouraged Coloradoans to plant and grow vegetables to give to local food banks. CSU's research center in the SLV, which is the second largest in the state, specifically grew and donated a total of 48,000 pounds of potatoes for donation to the Care and Share Food Bank of Southern Colorado.

With an eye toward the future, McConnell discussed CSU's involvement in ongoing conversations between producers and buyers as part of the Colorado Blueprint for Agriculture and Food, including identify-

ing opportunities to increase access and prosperity for food producers.

Through community grants in the Valley, CSU will also seek ways to foster economic development with particular focus on investment in food systems. As an example of how ongoing efforts could portend potential programs in the future, McConnell highlighted current projects related to food asset mapping, in trad-

ing community modeling to evaluate trade-offs as well as planning and technical support.

McConnell pledged for the extension and experimentation teams to be more visible in the region and to serve as a bridge to CSU and CSU's resources. Toward that end, two positions have been created: one devoted to Agricultural Business, to focus on economic development

opportunities, and one for 4-H development in a nod to strengthening the transition from high school to post-secondary education with those students interested in a future in agriculture. Those two positions are fully funded for this year and next, and CSU will be reaching out to local county commissioners for support in extending those positions into the future.

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Droughts longer, rainfall more erratic over the last five decades in most of the West

Dry periods between rainstorms have become longer and annual rainfall has become more erratic across most of the western United States during the past 50 years, according to a study published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service and the University of Arizona.

Against the backdrop of steadily warming temperatures and decreasing total yearly rainfall, rain has been falling in fewer and sometimes larger storms, with longer dry intervals between. Total yearly rainfall has decreased by an average of 0.4 inches over the last half century, while the longest dry period in each year increased from 20 to 32 days across the West, explained co-senior author Joel Biederman, a research hydrologist with the ARS Southwest Watershed Research Center in Tucson, Arizona.

"The greatest changes in drought length have taken place in the desert Southwest. The average dry period between storms in the 1970s was about 30 days; now that has grown to 45 days," Biederman said.

Extreme droughts are also occur-

ring more often in the majority of the West according to historical weather data as there has been an increase in the year-to-year variation of both total rainfall amounts and the duration of dry periods.

Biederman emphasized the growing fluctuations in drought and rain patterns as the most significant change.

"Consistency of rainfall, or the lack of it, is often more important than the total amount of rain when it comes to forage continuing to grow for livestock and wildlife, for dryland farmers to produce crops, and for the mitigation of wildfire risks," Biederman said.

The rate of increasing variability of rainfall within each year and between years also appears to be accelerating, with greater portions of the West showing longer drought intervals since 2000 compared to previous years.

Notable exceptions to these drought patterns were seen in Washington, Oregon and Idaho and the Northern Plains region of Montana, Wyoming, and the most western parts of North

and South Dakota. In these regions, the researchers found some increases in total annual rainfall and decreases in drought intervals. Together, these changes support what models have predicted as a consequence of climate change: a northward shift in the mid-latitude jet stream, which brings moisture from the Pacific Ocean to the western United States, according to Biederman.

A critical aspect of this study is the use of actual rainfall data from 337 weather stations spread across the western United States. Biederman contrasted this with the more common use of "gridded" data, which relies on interpolations between reporting stations and tends to smooth out some of the variability revealed by this work.

"Fangyue Zhang, lead author of the manuscript and a post-doctoral researcher on our team, did the hard, painstaking work of compiling and analyzing data from more than 300 weather stations with complete daily records to reveal these changing drought and rainfall patterns," Biederman said.



Courtesy photo

"We were surprised to find widespread changes in precipitation have already occurred across large regions of the West. For regions such as the desert Southwest, where changes clearly indicate a trend towards longer, more erratic droughts, research is urgently needed to help mitigate detrimental impacts on ecosystem carbon uptake, forage availability, wildfire activity, and water availability for people," said co-senior

author William K. Smith, assistant professor, University of Arizona.

This research was published in Geophysical Research Letters.

The Agricultural Research Service is the U.S. Department of Agriculture's chief scientific in-house research agency. Daily, ARS focuses on solutions to agricultural problems affecting America. Each dollar invested in agricultural research results in \$20 of economic impact.

The role of technology in agriculture

Modern industry is driven by technology. Advancements in technology have changed how business is conducted, with some in-

dustries undergoing dramatic changes since the dawn of the 21st century.

While agriculture might not be the first

industry people think of when reflecting on the changing nature of industry, The National Institute of Food and Agriculture notes that modern farms are vastly different than those from a few decades ago.

Farmers have long relied on technology to make their operations as efficient, productive and profitable as possible. Precision agriculture, which refers to technological advances designed to propel agriculture into the modern, computerized and information-based world, is helping the agricultural sector become more profitable and efficient while also improving safety and making agriculture more eco-friendly. In addition, the NIFA notes that the modern agricultural industry employs technology such as robots, temperature and moisture sensors, aerial images, and global positioning systems.

If it sounds complicated, that's because it is. For example, modern sensors can detect soil conditions, potentially producing hundreds of readings per second. These sensors help farmers know the best pos-

sible time to plant seeds so they can reach their full potential. That improves both the efficiency of modern farms as well as their output.

The NIFA also notes that agricultural technology has reduced waste. For instance, thanks to agricultural technology, farmers no longer have to apply water, fertilizers and pesticides uniformly across entire fields. Technology has shown that farmers can simply target specific areas or even treat individual plants differently. That saves time and allows farmers to use only minimal quantities of water, fertilizer and pesticides. In addition, according to the NIFA, employing agricultural technology in this fashion leads to higher crop productivity and reduces runoff of chemicals into rivers and groundwater, thereby reducing the farm's impact on local ecosystems.

Modern farms are technological marvels where various technologies are being employed to produce crops more efficiently and safely than ever before.



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Valley counties support livestock producers

By **KEITH R. CERNY**

Regional Publisher

SAN LUIS VALLEY — At least five of the six counties in the San Luis Valley passed resolutions recently decrying the move of Governor Jared Polis' declaration of March 20 as "Meat-OUT Day," asking the state's residents to avoid eating animal products on that day.

County commissioners in Alamosa, Rio Grande, Saguache, Conejos and Mineral counties joined more than 25 counties across the state passing resolutions opposing Polis' move. The resolutions ranged from declaring March 20 "MEAT-IN" day in Alamosa County to "Know Your Local Producer" day in Saguache County.

Conejos County commissioners proclaimed the day as the annual "Cattlemen's, Ranchers and Farmers" day.

Ben Doon, county administrator for Costilla County, said his commissioners continue to support local agriculture through direct action, such as leasing the 1,200-acre Carpenter Ranch for grazing for local ranchers every April.

The county provides in-kind support to local acequias (irrigation ditches) by supporting infrastructure projects with equipment and operators, and the county provides high protein canola feed to local ranchers, a by-product of the county's biodiesel

production.

With \$2 billion in livestock sales in 2018, Weld County in the northeast quarter of the state, was the first to pass a resolution.

Various counties across the state have passed resolutions recognizing the "contributions of cattlemen and other livestock producers" in their areas.

Alamosa's resolution proclaims March 20, 2021 as Alamosa County Ranching and Agricultural Day, and Alamosa County "MEAT-IN" day, and encourages the community to continue to support local businesses by celebrating "MEAT-IN" day at your local restaurant of choice.

The statement goes on to say, "the Board of County Commissioners expresses its concern that the Governor of Colorado would call for the boycott, even for one day, of an industry that is so vital to our local and state economy."

The commission also supports Senate Bill 21-079 concerning deregulation of direct to customer meat sales in support of ranch to table private enterprise and for all other legislative actions that support strengthening Colorado agriculture.

Alamosa County's resolution quotes dietary guidelines issued by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration recognizing "that a variety of animal and plant proteins is important to a healthy diet. Cattle,



Photo by Rebecca Copley

In response to Colorado Gov. Jared Polis' 'Meat-Out Day' proclamation encouraging Coloradans to go meatless for a day, thousands answered by having a 'Meat-In Day.' Many enjoyed barbecue and steak dinners in response to the governor's vegan request and supported the livestock industry in the state. The Monte Vista Coop hosted a hamburger fry on March 20 to support Colorado ag and livestock industries.

livestock, and the production of crops supporting the livestock industry has historically been, and continues to be, one of the key economic drivers in Alamosa County."

Statistics quoted in the resolution show, "in 2016, the North American Meat Institute reported a direct economic impact to the state of Colorado of \$3.7 billion, and a total economic impact of \$13.2 billion. This generated nearly \$32 million in taxes to the State of Colorado."

The USDA 2017 Census of Agriculture reported all animal sales in the San Luis Valley totaled nearly

\$57 million, of which approximately \$39 million was the result of cattle sales. According to the USDA, the San Luis Valley has a current cattle inventory of 85,300 head.

Additional documentation shown is the number of jobs in agribusiness in the San Luis Valley is 4,984, which represents 25.6% of all traditional base jobs and is the largest traditional base industry employer of the San Luis Valley.

Alamosa County is declared a "Right to Farm and Ranch" county and fully supports the agriculture community by its support of Colo-

rado State University Extension Services, youth 4-H programs, and the San Luis Valley Fair Board.

According to statistics from the Colorado Department of Agriculture, Alamosa County ranked 18th of the state's 63 counties in 2018 in total agricultural production at \$89.3 million. Saguache County ranked 13th at \$105.4 million, followed by Rio Grande County at \$99 million. Conejos was 35th at \$53.9 million, followed by Costilla at 39th with \$22.1 million. Mineral County did not report.

The total ag production of the SLV in 2018 was nearly \$370 million.



Courtesy photo by Caleigh Payne

San Luis Valley livestock producers donated 500 pounds of ground beef to La Puente Homeless Shelter on Friday in recognition of Colorado "Meat-IN" day. Pictured are, from left, local livestock producer Chad Cochran, Katy Dickey, president of the SLV Cattlemen's Association, Graham Hunt, case manager with La Puente, Caleigh Payne with Alamosa County Farm Bureau, and local producer Jeb Stoltzfus.

SLV producers donate 500 pounds of beef

By **KEITH R. CERNY**

Regional Publisher

ALAMOSA — In recognition of Colorado "Meat-IN" day, San Luis Valley livestock producers donated 500 pounds of ground beef to La Puente Homeless Shelter on March 19.

"We appreciate the livestock industry in the San Luis Valley," said Chad Cochran, livestock producer and Rio Grande County director for the association. "We are proud to produce sustainable and nutritious beef."

"Meat-IN" day was declared by county commissioners in more than 20 Colorado counties in reaction to Gov. Jared Polis' declaration of "Meat-Out" day, discouraging the consumption of meat on March 20.

Among the donors were Shane and Beth Temple with the T Heart Ranch,

Timberline Cattle, Jeb and Marilyn Stoltzfus, Darius and Judy Allen, Senator Cleave Simpson, Chad and Amy Cochran, Blue and Jeannie Allen, Caleigh Payne and Alamosa County Farm Bureau.

In an email to the Valley Courier, Payne said the governor's move "greatly upset many in the farming and ranching community, as the livestock industry contributes more than \$6 billion to the Colorado economy each year."

Payne added later, "Two-thirds of agricultural land in the world is deemed as marginal. This means we can't grow crops on much of this land or if we choose to, leads to increased use of tillage or fertilizer.

"We can, however, graze cattle on this type of land. Cattle can graze in

such a way as to be a tool to fertilize and rebuild topsoil, allowing for excess carbon dioxide in the air to be converted to carbon and stored as organic matter.

"Livestock integration is one of the five major tools used to increase soil health. As a byproduct, cattle provide us with a nutrient dense, lean beef, a high-quality protein that provides many micronutrients essential to good health as well as over 400 different products like insulin and band aids."

The burger donated Friday to La Puente came from the T Heart Ranch in La Garita, as well as Simpson-Allen Beef near Alamosa.

Graham Hunt, a case manager with La Puente, said the beef will be used at the shelter as well as the SLV Food Bank.



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Potato sales saw good growth in 2020 during pandemic

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

MONTE VISTA — Potatoes USA says potatoes were a powerhouse during 2020.

John Toaspern, Potatoes USA Chief Marketing Officer, gave an overview of potato sales from March to December of last year during a 30-minute Zoom session in February. His report was mostly positive.

Retail sales soared and continue to do so as people stayed home during the pandemic.

“The thing that was exciting for our industry was that potatoes were the pandemic powerhouse,” Toaspern said. “We saw a significant increase in potato purchases. And this was for a number of reasons — comfort, familiarity, storability. Potatoes were the leading vegetable in terms of increases during that period.”

Toaspern said there was good growth across the core potatoes led by — russets, reds and yellows.

“Ultimately, Americans still love potatoes,” Toaspern said. “The number one vegetable sold in America, potatoes are on 84 percent of all food service menus and when surveyed Americans say that the potato is their

favorite vegetable. So, we are in a great place. We need to try to lock in those retail gains but then also regain at foodservice.”

Record potato retail sales continued from October to December 2020, Toaspern said. All three months saw an increase in both dollar and volume sales, with the largest growth in December. Total store potato sales grew 9.3% in volume and 12.3% in value.

The fresh potato category at retail also showed a record growth of 12% in dollar sales and 8.2% in volume sales. Russets, reds, and yellow potatoes made up most fresh potato sales at retail, which all increased in dollars and volume. Five-pound bags of potatoes continued to make up the majority of volume sales and increased by almost 7%.

Foodservice, which includes sales to restaurants, were the hardest hit sectors for the industry. According to Toaspern, 87,500 restaurants in the U.S. closed permanently between March and December.

While the international market was off overall by 4%, Toaspern pointed out that some significant gains were made in China and Japan.



Courtesy photo

“We are not in a terrible position and I think we can recover quite quickly this year,” he said. “We are already seeing exports recover so that is positive. Things are trending in the right direction.”

Potato growers excited about 2021

BY JIM EHRLICH

CPAC Executive Director

Colorado potato growers are excited that 2021 will result in health improvement from the pandemic and increased human interaction, but apprehensive about the pandemic has affected potato markets. Because San Luis Valley growers focus on fresh market potatoes the negative impact on the frozen foodservice potato market has not been a major negative impact for our growers.

In fact, at retail total potato sales are up 14% in dollar sales and 11% in volume over the previous year. Conversely, food service restaurants have suffered greatly due to the pandemic with frozen potato product sales down significantly. Some estimates have predicted that 35 percent of foodservice establishments will not survive the pandemic. How will our growers understand what is going to happen and how they should limit the risk they face in 2021?

What this will mean to the potato market as planting begins this spring is challenging. Will other states plant more potatoes for the fresh market or rely on processors to increase their contract volumes in hope of foodservice recovery? Will other states plant fewer potatoes because of improved commodity crop prices that will limit their risk? Will our growers plant less because of the drought last summer and the high cost of sub-district fees

as growers struggle to meet sustainability goals?

Prices are decent this year, but not as strong as 2019. Our crop last year was high quality and yields higher than in 2019. But will the market demand stay strong because of the increase in consumers cooking at home, or will vaccines and the desire to return to restaurant meals change how consumers adapt to the lifestyle changes they have made in 2020?

Most experts are predicting that consumers will continue to cook more meals at home and benefit from purchasing groceries on-line. If this proves true, then fresh potato sales will benefit and our growers will be thrilled, especially because fresh potatoes are an excellent source of nutrition and have wonderful dietary impacts for consumers. Fresh potatoes are nutrient-dense, of great economic value, versatile and convenient for consumers to prepare for their family’s meals.

Our growers are hoping that consumers realize the value of our potatoes in their dietary needs. Potato growers in the San Luis Valley are great at producing quality potatoes every year. Despite all their knowledge and skill, the impact Mother Nature has on the weather is always an annual risk our growers face. We need to thank them for their work, pray for favorable weather, and share their story with others.

Colorado Proud launches Growing, Evolving and Thriving Colorado Agriculture

Roundtable series with key learnings and productive ways to flourish

STAFF REPORT

DENVER — Colorado Proud, a program of the Colorado Department of Agriculture, is launching a series of online roundtable events, Growing, Evolving and Thriving Colorado Agriculture, for industry professionals and consumers who are craving new ideas and important dialog during this innovative time in agriculture. The seasonal roundtables will focus on Colorado ag’s growth and development after a complex year, featuring a mix of food experts, growers, retailers, business owners and leaders who are applying last year’s learnings — and discomforts — and finding productive ways to flourish.

“The roundtable series will address the vulnerability we are still experiencing after 2020 disruptions, while balancing this year’s expectations with practical takeaways for ‘growing, evolving and thriving,’” said Danielle Trotta, Colorado Proud program manager. “While the pandemic has affected all areas of our lives, and Colorado’s agriculture is no different, we are experiencing new physical,



Courtesy photo

operational and cultural growth. And that’s good news for all of us.”

Growing, Evolving and Thriving Colorado Agriculture will capture the progress and lessons in four honest conversations among Colorado Proud members and panelists who will share their stories, experiences and best practices around agriculture’s evolution. Each roundtable is free for the agriculture industry and general public.

“More than ever, with an even stronger appreciation for community, health and local food, Colorado farmers and ranchers continue to feed consumers’ cravings for locally-sourced foods and products,” added Trotta. “As we continue to grow together, it’s

important that we also learn together. The Growing, Evolving and Thriving Colorado Agriculture Roundtable Series will help us do both.”

The first roundtable is scheduled for mid-May, and panelists and details will be announced next week. Additional roundtables will take place throughout the year, using the theme of “growing, evolving and thriving” as a springboard for rotating topics and issues, including the following: small-business strategies, rural and urban collaboration, mental health, food instability, first- and multiple-generation farming, food systems, trends and other relevant subjects. Dates, details and RSVP links will be provided prior to each event.

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Explore a career in agriculture

The agricultural industry provides a variety of opportunities to professionals interested in this often misunderstood field.

According to the employment resource AGCareers.com, more than 250 career profiles are available to people interested in a career in agriculture. And while jobs in agriculture may not be as prevalent as they were a few centuries ago, when 72 percent of the workforce was employed in farm occupations in the United States, agriculture remains a booming industry that greatly affects the nation's economy. Today, one in 12 American jobs is depends on agriculture, according to the career resource Payscale.

The following are some potential professions for those considering careers in agriculture.

- **Agricultural business manager:** This person oversees the business operations of a farm by providing organization and leadership during the production process. He or she contacts creditors, selects seeds, buys new equipment, and ensures the distribution of product.

- **Agricultural lawyer:** Attorneys who specialize in agriculture deal with water and environmental issues, represent agricultural labor in disputes, ensure proper marketing techniques are followed, handle real estate and land use issues, and much more.

- **Animal control officer:** These officers enforce local and regional laws that pertain to the treatment and care of animals. They patrol for distressed animals and ensure cruelty-free practices are adhered to.

- **Grain buyer:** Grain buyers build relationships with producers so they can purchase grain for their particular companies. They negotiate purchase agreements, source grain supplies and issue purchase orders.

- **Poultry hatchery manager:** Hatchery managers oversee all of the aspects involved in poultry hatching. These can include management of personnel, handling and sorting of eggs, maintenance of equipment, coordination of pickups and deliveries, and overseeing quality control.

- **Soil scientist:** Among the many tasks they might perform, scientists in the field of agriculture test soil samples for minerals and contaminants. By studying the soil, scientists can recommend which crops the land can support, how much livestock can feed in an area and the implications of agriculture on the area as it pertains to managing natural resources.

A career in agriculture presents many exciting opportunities in a number of different applications. It's a vast industry that utilizes professionals with an array of skillsets.

Common sustainable agriculture practices

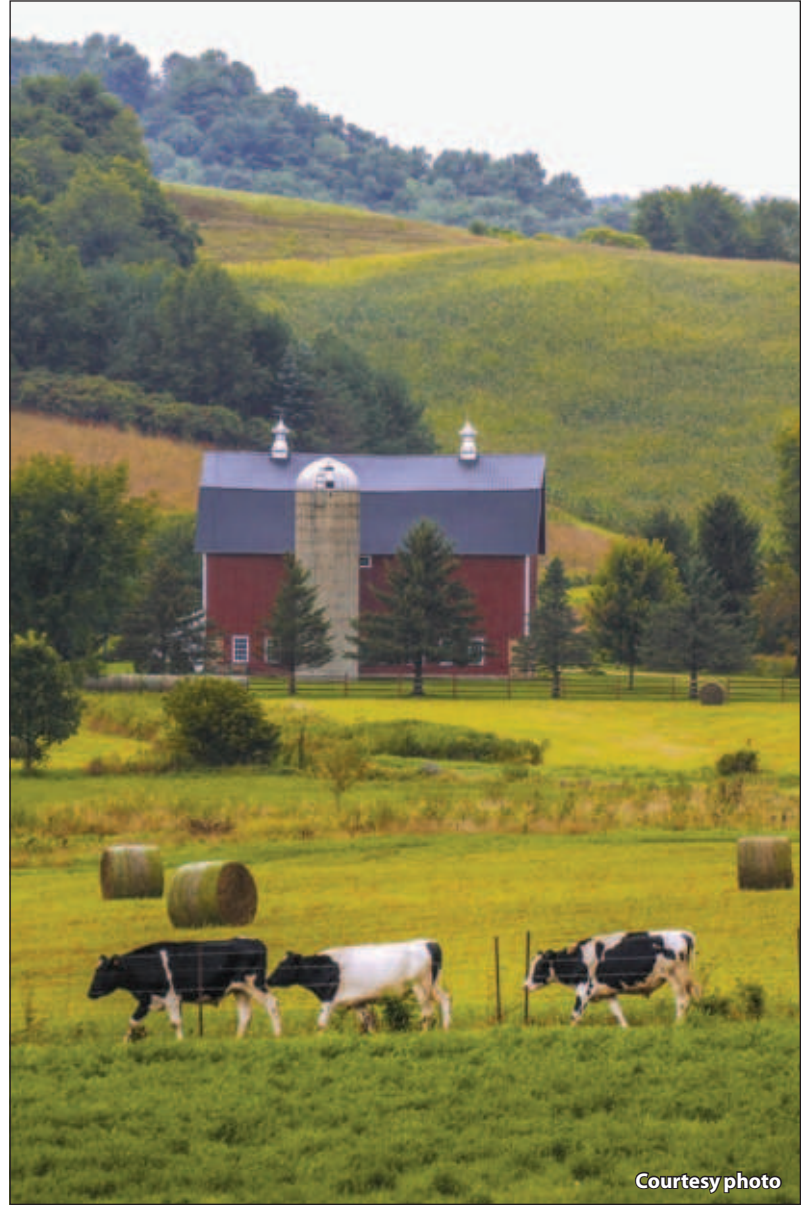
The concept of sustainability varies by industry. Within the agricultural industry, sustainability is a multifaceted concept that has become increasingly popular in recent decades.

According to the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, sustainable agriculture seeks to increase profitable farm income, promote environmental stewardship, enhance quality of life for farm families and communities, and increase production for human food and fiber needs. In an attempt to reach those goals, farmers who embrace sustainable agriculture may look to various practices.

- **Cover crops:** The Union of Concerned Scientists, a nonprofit organization that aims to employ independent science to address the planet's most pressing problems, notes that cover crops are planted during the offseason when soils have traditionally been left bare. Cover crops can help prevent soil erosion and replenish the nutrients in the soil. Cover crops also can limit weed growth, reducing the need for herbicides that can prove harmful to the environment.

- **Reduce or eliminate tillage:** According to the UCS, traditional plowing, or tillage, can cause a significant amount of soil loss, even as it prepares fields for planting and reduces the likelihood of weed problems. Eliminating or reducing tillage involves inserting seeds directly into undisturbed soil, which can reduce erosion and improve the health of the soil.

- **Integrated pest management:** Integrated pest management techniques aim to minimize the use of chemical pesticides that can prove harmful to the environment and local wildlife. According to the University of California Statewide Integrated Pest Management Program, IPM strategies like habitat manipulation and the planting



Courtesy photo

of disease-resistant plants are designed to promote long-term prevention of pests and the damage such pests can cause.

- **Agroforestry:** The Association for Temperate Agroforestry defines agroforestry as an intensive land management system that incorporates trees and/or shrubs to optimize the benefits they provide when deliberately combined with crops and/or livestock. The shade and shelter provided by trees and

shrubs can protect plants, animals and water resources.

- **Crop/livestock integration:** The UCS notes that there is growing evidence to suggest that the careful integration of crop and animal production can help farmers make their farms more efficient and profitable.

Sustainable agriculture is a complex concept that can benefit farmers, their local communities and the environment in myriad ways.

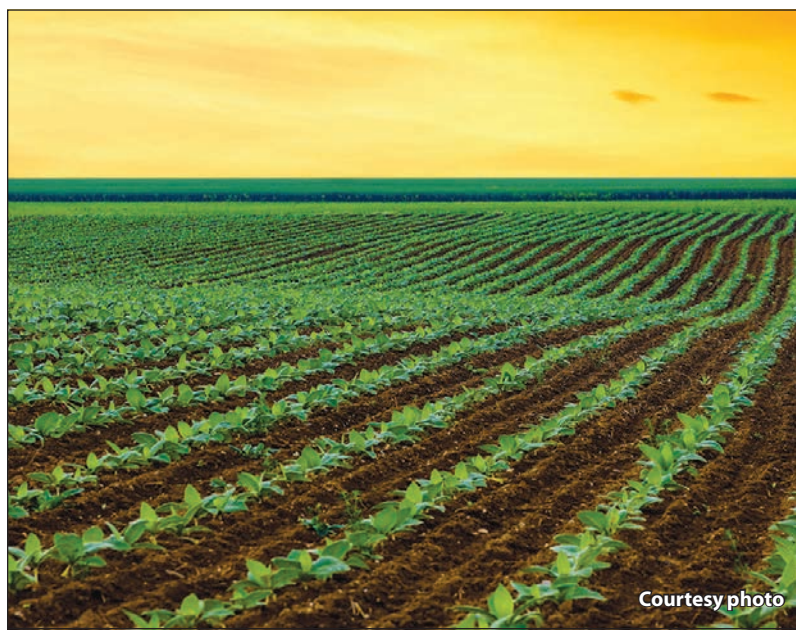
Agriculture and the economy

Though it's easy to look at the tech industry and think this increasingly influential sector is what makes the world go round, something closer to the very core of the Earth may be what's driving your economy.

The agricultural sector plays a strategic role in a nation's economic development and prosperity. From the earliest days, agriculture has been heralded as playing a crucial role in North American culture. Farmers who grow produce and raise livestock for meats and other products have long exemplified what it means to work hard and take initiatives to be self-sufficient.

The symbiotic nature of agriculture and the economy is noticeable when examining the ups and downs of each. This is because food production and the potential of agriculture extends beyond the fields and local food stands. These resources impact supply chains and other markets. A strong agriculture base influences other employment sectors like food manufacturing, biotechnology, hospitality, machinery building, and much more, while a weak agriculture can adversely affect those sectors.

While it can be difficult for resi-



Courtesy photo

dents of developed nations to visualize agriculture's effect, one only needs to turn to impoverished and developing nations to see just how big an impact agriculture can have on an economy. Agriculture provides food and raw materials, eventually creating demand for goods produced in non-agricultural sectors. Also, food provides nutrition that can serve as the foundation of a healthy nation. Earning a living in agriculture

strengthens purchasing power, which fuels other markets. Eventually, farming can pave the way for development, including roads, markets, shipping services, exporting, and many other sectors.

Agriculture is an important economic building block. An especially important sector, the agricultural industry, when supported, can contribute greatly to sustained economic growth.



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Safety tips for parents of young farmers

People who live in cities, exurbs or suburbs may not come across farms very frequently. But millions of people, including children, still live on farms. In fact, in 2009 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention noted that more than one million children under the age of 20 lived, worked or had a regular presence on farms in the United States.

Protecting children from injury on farms, especially those who perform work on farms, is of paramount importance. The American Society of Safety Engineers offers the following safety tips to parents of children who will be spending time on farms.

- Know and obey the laws. Various state and federal laws are in place to protect young children from farm-related accidents and injuries. Age requirements dictate which jobs children can perform on a farm, and parents should adhere to those requirements. Asking children to do more than they're physically capable of can lead to accident, injury or even death.

- Review equipment operation instructions. Before assigning children a task on the farm, parents should review the equipment operation instructions. Doing so can help parents reacquaint themselves with tools and equipment they may not have used in awhile, and that can make it easier for them to teach

kids how to use such equipment. In addition, reviewing equipment instructions may provide insight to parents unsure if their children are old enough to use certain tools.

- Inspect equipment. Before children perform any tasks on the farm, parents should inspect the equipment their children are likely to use to make sure each tool is safe. Make sure tools are in proper working order, as broken or poorly working equipment increases the risk of accident or injury.

- Enroll children in farm safety camps. The ASSE recommends that parents contact their local Cooperative Extension and Farm Bureau offices to enroll children in farm safety camps. Such camps can teach kids safe farming techniques and the proper ways to use age-appropriate tools.

- Set a positive example. Another way for parents to protect their children on the farm is to set a positive example. Parents can do so in various ways. Using equipment properly, removing tractor keys from ignitions when tractors are not in use and exercising caution when using hazardous materials shows kids the importance of caution when working on farms.

Hundreds of thousands of children perform jobs on farms across the country. Parents who want to teach their kids to farm should always do so with safety in mind.

Are backyard chickens right for you?

Raising backyard chickens has been a growing phenomenon for several years. Many cities have passed laws legalizing backyard chickens, encouraging many to raise chickens as a rewarding hobby.

One of the biggest benefits to raising backyard chickens is that their eggs are fresher and often tastier than store-bought varieties. Hens can lay one egg per day. Multiply that egg per hen, and breakfast is always available.

Another benefit to chickens is they produce a natural fertilizer that can be used in gardens. "The Old Farmer's Almanac" says chicken manure can be composted, aged and eventually added to the garden. In about six months, a person will accumulate about one cubic foot of manure per chicken. Egg shells and other compostable material can be added to create an even richer formula.

Chickens also can help control bugs around the yard, offers the experts at Tractor Supply Company.

Before investing in backyard chickens, people should determine if chickens will fit with their lifestyle. Costs and care are a big consideration.

Each chick will cost anywhere between \$3 to \$5 a bird. Then there's feed to consider. The most expensive item will likely be the coop. The experts at The Happy Chicken Coop, a resource for raising chickens and starting coops, says handy men and women can build homemade coops, but ready-made ones will cost a few hundred dollars. The coop will need to offer around four square feet of space per chicken (or what's recommended for the breed).

Despite being seemingly independent birds, chickens need people to be active caregivers. They require feed and water daily. The chickens will need a caregiver while you vacation. People who are frequently away from home should reconsider chickens.

Chickens also are prone to worms, parasites and lice. They need to have rear feathers trimmed to stay clean and sanitary, and they will require an area where they can "dust" and self-groom. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advises not to cuddle and kiss chickens like pets because they can carry salmonella. Not every coop is completely varmint-proof, and some chickens may succumb to predators. Squeamish or sentimental folks may find chickens aren't the right fit.

Chickens require commitment and care that many people can provide. It is essential to do one's homework to ensure that backyard chickens are a sound investment.



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Spud harvest at Alamosa High School

STAFF REPORT

ALAMOSA — Alamosa High School Agriculture Science Classes, in collaboration with local potato grower Brendan Rocky recently harvested their largest seed potato crop ever. Rocky provides the starter seeds which are grown over the winter months by AHS Ag Ed students in Justin Tedford's classes in the AHS greenhouse. Plants are inspected by the Colorado State Potato Inspector and grown in a rigorous process. Once mature, the crop, consisting of several different varieties, is harvested by students at AHS. Rocky then buys the certified seed potato crop back from Tedford's classes and the proceeds go to AHS Ag Ed. This has been a tremendously successful partnership and AHS is thankful for the generosity, expertise and partnership with Brendan Rocky and Rocky Farms.



Courtesy photos

The benefits of organic agriculture

Modern consumers have more choices than ever before. Whether they're buying appliances, books, clothing, or any of the myriad necessities of daily life, consumers have a wealth of products to choose from.

An abundance of options also is available at the grocery store. That's especially true in the produce aisle, where many stores have expanded their fresh fruit and vegetable offerings. That expansion reflects a growing preference among consumers for fresh products, including fresh

produce. A 2018 report from the market research firm IRI and the Food Marketing Institute found that sales of fresh foods comprised just under 31 percent of food industry sales in 2017.

Customers who prefer fresh fruits and vegetables to frozen alternatives may wonder if they should be even more selective when purchasing their favorite foods in the produce aisle. That decision may come down to whether or not to purchase organic produce.

Organic produce can be significantly

more expensive than non-organic fruits and vegetables, so it's understandable if budget-conscious consumers cannot afford to go entirely organic. However, it's important that consumers recognize the many ways that organic agriculture is having a positive impact on the health of humans and the planet they call home.

Organic produce reduces exposure to pesticides and antibiotics. UC Davis Health notes that organic produce has been proven to reduce consumers' exposure to pesticides and antibiotics. That's a significant benefit, as pesticide exposure has been shown to lead to neurodevelopmental issues and has been linked to higher cancer risk. Consumers shopping on budgets can pick and choose which organic foods they purchase, as UC Davis Health notes that certain foods have been shown to have higher pesticide residues than others. Apples, celery, grapes, spinach, strawberries, and tomatoes have high levels of pesticide residues, so choosing organic versions of these foods may be a wise choice. Avocados, broccoli, cabbage, and


cantaloupe are some of the foods that typically have low levels of pesticide residue.

Organic agriculture reduces environmental degradation. The Organic Trade Association notes that synthetic pesticides and fertilizers used on some conventional farms can deplete the soil of valuable nutrients and increase environmental degradation. Organic farmers do not use such pesticides or fertilizers, instead utilizing such practices as composting, cover cropping and crop rotation, each of which can have positive, long-term effects on soil quality.

Organic agriculture benefits local wildlife. A 2015 study from researchers in Argentina that was published in the journal *Agriculture, Ecosystems & Environment* found that small mammals were more abundant around organic farms than conventional farms. That's not just good for those mammals, but also the farmers, as small mammals can feed on insects that would otherwise adversely affect crops.

Many grocery stores are increasing the availability of organic fruits and vegetables. Such foods can benefit human health as well as the health of the planet.





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