

Shorts



Photo by Patrick Shea

After three hours of testing in Center, Saguache County health officials moved operations to Moffat for two more hours of COVID-19 testing on Nov. 17.

Saguache County conducted free COVID-19 tests

BY PATRICK SHEA

SAGUACHE — After Saguache County public health officials took a crash course in COVID-19 testing following an outbreak at the jail in early October, they were ready for their testing blitz this week.

On the first day (Nov. 17) Janet

Please see TESTS on Page 2A

Saguache County meeting highlights

- Housing Director Evan Samora indicated two vacancies and a transfer, and the department continues to maintain a waiting list for potential renters. He remains on-budget, although year-end utility costs remain unknown. Samora said the bears that had raided dumpsters nightly have left the area.

- County Administrator Wendi Maez relayed a request to place a 40-foot promotional solar unit display along the county right of way outside of Crestone. The display now sits on the PowerZone site (Highway 285 and County Road E), but the requested promotion would run continuously for three weeks at the Crestone Kiosk where the road forks between Baca Grande and Crestone.

- Currently, vendors sell pizza and share information at the informal hub for hubbub. But no overnight parking and commerce is allowed. Following advice from County Attorney Ben Gibbons, commissioners agreed to discuss permitting, precedence and other considerations at a later date before responding to the request.

Center Conservation District annual meeting

CENTER - The Center Conservation District will be holding their annual meeting via Zoom on Dec. 1, 2020 at 6 p.m. During this meeting, the District will hold their 2021 Budget Hearing, Long Range Plan Approval and will be reviewing the District's activities for 2020, along with general business. If you are interested in attending the annual meeting, please contact Nikita Christensen, District Manager at centercd1@gmail.com.

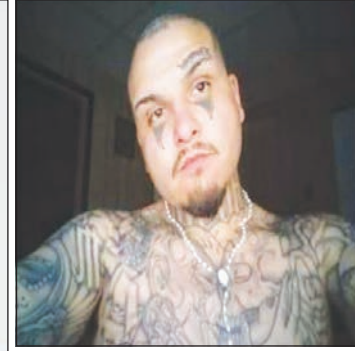
Forensic Anthropologist confirms three human remains

BY REBECCA COPLEY

CONEJOS COUNTY - On Nov. 10 the Conejos County Sheriff's office requested assistance from the Colorado Bureau of Investigation to assist them in executing a search warrant for a property near Las Sauces in Conejos County. The search warrant was for an unrelated matter having to do with stolen equipment and stolen vehicles. During this search they discovered human remains on the property.

On Nov. 13, a local law enforcement task force was formed and a second search warrant was issued for a second property in close proximity to the first property they had previously searched. Additional human remains were also found on

Please see BODIES on Page 11A



Adre Jordan "Psycho" Baroz



CDPHE will meet with Saguache County regarding "orange" status

BY LYNDIE FERRELL

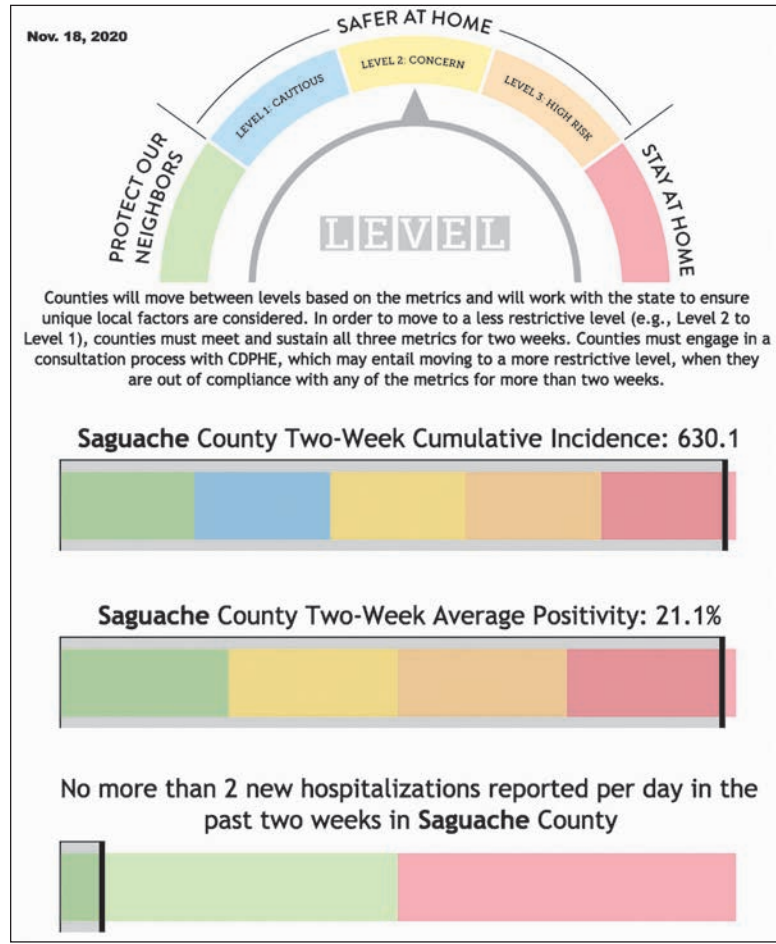
SAN LUIS VALLEY- Like other San Luis Valley communities, and out of precaution, Saguache County officials announced Tuesday, Nov. 18 that County officials are meeting with Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) Friday, Nov. 20, to discuss the possible COVID-19 status change to "Level Orange Safer at Home High Risk."

Monday, Nov. 17, Conejos and Alamosa counties moved to Stage 3 "Level Orange Safer at Home High Risk" status on the State COVID-19 Dial. Costilla County will move to "Level Orange" at 5 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 18. Rio Grande and Saguache county officials are meeting with Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) again later this week to continue the conversation about their status.

Hospitalizations are up, both here and around the state. The rapid rise in COVID-19 cases has made effective contact tracing very difficult. There is a high level of illness in the community, with a large number of people isolated and quarantined.

Tuesday, Nov. 17, Linda Smith with San Luis Valley Public Health

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Tuesday, Nov. 17, Alamosa, Conejos, and Costilla counties made firm decisions and moved to a 'Level Orange Safer at Home High Risk' status. Rio Grande and Saguache counties are meeting with CDPHE again later this week to continue the conversation about their possible status change.

Commissioners to assess COVID-19 risk-level

BY PATRICK SHEA

SAGUACHE — Nov. 17, 2020 As many of the counties in the San Luis Valley moved to the fourth highest level of COVID-19 risk designation, Saguache County Commissioners agreed to await results from testing this week before announcing a risk-level change.

Fortified with 1,000 test kits, county public officials conducted three hours of testing in Center and two hours in Moffat on Nov. 17, followed by more testing in Saguache and Crestone the next day. Results are available 48-72 hours after the lab receives samples, so commissioners will make a determination once they hear the results.

Five days into her new Social Services Director position, Ruth Horn updated commissioners during their Nov. 17 meeting. In addition to reaching out to other directors in the Valley for introductions, Horn looked at how Gunnison County and Custer County approach social services.

"I tried to get a different point of view," Horn explained, noting scheduled meetings with other directors. "Costilla County mirrors us more than any other county in the Valley," Horn said.

Horn also discussed finances, grants, department policies and

Please see ASSESS on Page 10A

SLV COVID-19 cases increasing vertically

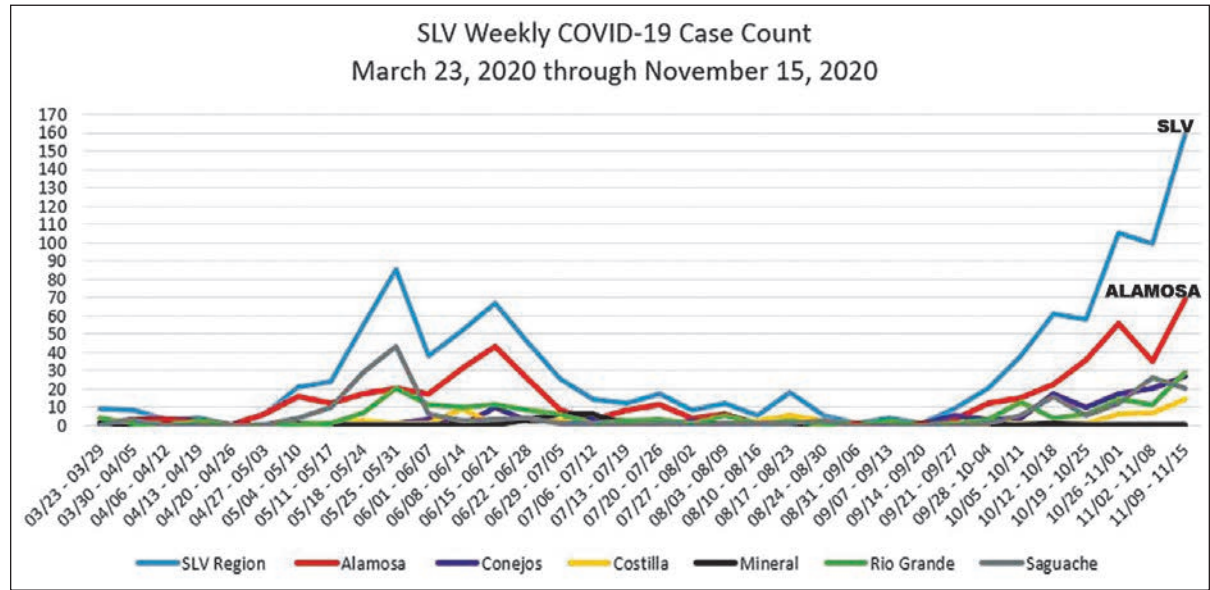
Saguache County has highest COVID-19 positivity rate in state
 Three SLV counties move to "Level Orange Safer at Home High Risk" status

BY TREY SPAULDING

SAN LUIS VALLEY - Nov. 16. San Luis Valley (SLV) positive known active cases grew by 99 the past week - an increase of 61.4%. As of Tuesday, Nov. 17 there were 257 active cases in the SLV and the Valley has continued to have a record number of positive cases since the beginning of the pandemic.

The two-week SLV positivity rate

Please see COVID on Page 11A





During their working meeting on Nov. 10, commissioners heard Ray Newmyer describe what he discovered while tracking subsurface flow along Saguache Creek. Newmyer requested \$5,000 for more data collection on behalf of the Saguache Creek Water Users group. Commissioners agreed to add it to the Nov. 17 agenda, and Tim Lovato and Ken Anderson voted in favor of the request. The next round of exploration beneath the surface will reveal more about the creek's flow.

TESTS

Continued from Page 1A

Beiriger directed teams of at least eight staff members at two sites. Starting with three full hours of drive-thru testing in Center, they conducted well over 100 swabs. Cars snaked through the school parking lot at a steady rate. After filling out contact information, drivers rolled forward for a simple procedure — cough, swab around mouth, stick the stick in the biohazard tube and drive away. Results will be available 48 hours after the lab receives samples.

Beiriger and core staff headed to Moffat for two more hours of testing, using roughly 300 of 1,000 kits by the end of the day. In Center and Moffat, local medical professionals joined the team. All of the Moffat teachers took the test. Subsequent testing in Saguache and Crestone followed on Wednesday, all for free and free of deep nasal swabs. Formed in January 2020, Curative, Inc. developed the mouth-swab test to distribute for free until Dec. 31. The company works with public health departments across the country to make the tests available for free. With help from the state and Curative, Beiriger said they learned at the procedure at the jail and appreciate defrayed mail costs and support now. Another testing blitz is likely as resurgent spikes occur.

Starting Nov. 20, Colorado's risk pyramid will include six categories that counties can move between according to three key metrics. These measures include the number of new cases

reported in the county, the rise or fall of hospitalization and the robustness of testing capability. To move to a less restrictive level, counties must meet and sustain all three metrics for two weeks.

Levels rise according to risk, starting with green, which is sometimes called, "Protect our Neighbors." "Safer at Home" includes blue for caution, yellow for concern and orange for high risk. Red and purple designate "Stay at Home" status (severe risk and extreme risk).

As counties in the San Luis Valley moved to Orange this week (the fourth highest level), Saguache County Commissioners agreed to await results before announcing a risk-level change.

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CLIPS FROM THE CLERK

By TRISH GILBERT

A Hearty Thanks to Election Judges and Staff

An election cannot be successful without people who devote their time and resources just to make sure everything is perfect.

We will always be **thankful** for having election judges like you! **We appreciate** your enthusiasm and genuine dedication in assisting us in "everything elections".

At the same time, voters are still very much a big part of its success. We were also pleased to have a reporter from the Center Post-Dispatch, Patrick Shea, in attendance on Election Day.

Election Judges for the 2020 Saguache County General Election:
 Randy Arredondo (Audit Board)
 Richard Drake (Audit Board)
 Bill Hazard (Social Media Advisor)
 Annette Archuleta
 Karen Cowan

Betonya O'Malley (New)
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To each and every one of you, Thank You! Keep up the great work! We look forward to working with you next year in the Coordinated Election. . . . and a Very Heartfelt Thanks to: **THE-AWE-SOME-ONES!**

Jane
 Desiree
 Ben
 Dominique
 Rebecca
 Another successful election - thanks to this incredible team. I am so



proud of them for their dedication and teamwork! They pushed on through these trying times of COVID-19 and never once wavered from their responsibilities. Your rare qualities make you genuine assets to Saguache County!

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OPINION & EDITORIAL

LETTERS

In consideration of others

To the editor,
 Although the San Luis Valley is far from any significant population center, current data from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) clearly demonstrate that the SLV is not immune to the increasingly rapid spread of COVID-19.

It is now well known that this highly contagious coronavirus is transmissible via respiratory aerosols. Further, since by definition this is a novel virus, there exists no immunity in the host (i.e., human) population. Absent innate immunity and an effective vaccine, the virus will continue to spread exponentially throughout the host population as a basic and inevitable biological phenomenon limited only by transmission rate.

Therefore, effective management of public health is currently reliant entirely upon appropriate measures to mitigate transmission. Yet whenever we venture out from home for essentials we encounter far too many, including employees in retail establishments, who defy CDC recommendations rather than accept this societal responsibility.

It is indefensible that, at this late stage of a global pandemic, the only appropriate mitigation measures available for moderating viral transmission have been resisted by many as an absurd badge of political tribalism - to the very significant detriment of public health.

Recently it has been asserted by

some that a governmental mandate of mitigation measures constitutes an infringement on personal liberty and is tantamount to tyranny. Although this is indeed a "free country," as a society we have determined that our liberties are not without limit. Our right to assemble is not without limit; buildings have occupancy limits expressly in order to ensure the safety of those assembled within. We are not free to wander about without pants. We are not free to drive drunk or smoke cigarettes in public places. Simply put, our liberties do not extend to those actions having the potential to harm others, as expressed in the adage "Your right to swing your arms ends where my nose begins."

It has been well established that the virus may be unknowingly transmitted by pre-symptomatic or asymptomatic carriers. Therefore, wearing a mask, maintaining physical distance, and limiting gatherings is not only about protecting oneself - it is equally about not endangering others. Importantly, these mitigation measures are only effective if everyone complies. A governmental mandate to adhere to CDC guidelines during a pandemic is not an infringement of our liberties. Rather, it is a minor shared inconvenience, and an act of collective patriotism in consideration of the welfare of our fellow citizens and the common good. And that shouldn't require a mandate at all.

Brent Ybarrondo
 Monte Vista

COVID-19 has put a strain on emergency organizations

To the editor,
 We the undersigned medical professionals care about you and your health. In recent days, the rapid rise in COVID-19 has put a strain on emergency departments, clinics and hospitals in the San Luis Valley, across the state of Colorado, and in our neighboring states as well. There is a high level of this contagious disease spreading within our community, mostly within social settings. Public Health's "Level Orange" allows businesses to remain open but with limited capacity. Please use this time to shop online, pick up groceries or other items "curbside" and do your best to protect the vulnerable populations among us. Together we can safely get through these winter months, but now is the time to help bring down the positive rate.

- When you are ill, please stay home unless you have an emergency.

- Use video chat or the telephone to visit with your primary care provider.

- Be sure to get your flu shot.
- Cover your face when around others and keep your distance.

- Keep your contacts to a minimum and avoid non-essential outings. Please avoid gatherings that are not limited to people you live with every day.

- Wash your hands thoroughly and frequently. Please follow instructions if you are told to isolate or quarantine.

Carmelo Hernandez, MD, Chief Medical Officer, San Luis Valley Health

Emelin Martinez, FNP, MSN, Chief Medical Officer, Valley-Wide Health Systems, Inc.

Heidi Helgeson, MD, Chief Medical Officer, Rio Grande Hospital and Clinics

Republican Party once a 'shining light on the hill'

To the editor,
 I turned 20, in 1976, voting for President for the first time. I voted for Jimmy Carter, not because of his politics, but because of his character, he was (and is) a good man.

In 1980 I again voted for President Carter and was dismayed that Ronald Reagan won. I feared for America's future.

As it turned out my fears were baseless and Regan became one of the greatest Presidents. He was a devout Christian like Carter, and like Carter his love for America was second only

to his love for his wife.

I became a proud Reagan Republican, voting straight Republican until 2016. I had reservations about the decency and integrity of Donald Trump. So, I voted Johnson for President, and Republican for all other races.

Sadly, I was proven right about Trump. He is a divider and not uniter. His administration is rife with corruption. I was most concerned about his constant lying. Every time he spoke, I was embarrassed to be an American and I love this country.

Even worse, the Republican Party once a "shining light on the hill" led by Reagan, has become a racist, hate-filled party. It drove me to vote for a Democrat for the first time since 1980. In fact, I voted straight Democrat.

I now pray every night that the Republican Party will return to the innate goodness of Ronald Reagan and away from the Party of hate led by Donald Trump.

Until they do, this proud Regan Republican will vote straight Democrat. God bless America and Joe Biden.

Wayne Edelman, South Fork, CO

Please wear a mask in public

To the editor,
 A disappointing photo appeared in the Nov. 11, Monte Vista Journal and the Nov. 14 Valley Courier. Why disappointing? Because the photo showed 10 Monte Vista Rotary Club members wearing no face coverings while standing close together. These Rotary Club members didn't appear to be spring chickens. The Veteran's Center Director of Admissions, Pam Self, was the only person in

the photo wise enough to wear a face covering. Thank you, Pam. The current (Nov. 16) count of positive cases for the San Luis Valley is 258. A certain percentage of that number will likely result in death. Schools, events, shopping, and much more are being disrupted by COVID-19 on a daily basis. Wearing a mask and good hand-washing practices are two simple actions we can all engage in. Though it may now be too late,

we can try to shorten the COVID-19 trajectory by following public health and scientific guidance. Monte Vista Rotary members - I'm glad you are not permitted on the grounds of the Veteran's Center at Home Lake. My parents (90 and 91 years old) live there, and both have co-morbidities that make them more susceptible to COVID-19.

Marianna Young
 Monte Vista

Creek Elks donate \$5,500 to locals

To the editor,
 The Creede Elks Lodge #506 has received two Elks National Foundation Grants. The Beacon Grant in the amount of \$3,500 and the Gratitude Grant in the amount of \$2,000. We donated the Beacon Grant directly to the Food Bank in Creede and the Gratitude Grant to the Creede Baptist Church and the Ladies Aid Society. Each received \$1,000 and then distributed funds to

individuals and also to the Food Bank.

Our Creede Elks have donated \$2,500 from our own funds for Gift Certificates to individuals for groceries, propane and rent.

Secretary, Henry Hosselkus reported that since 2012 the lodge has received Grants from the Elks National Foundation in excess of \$60,000 to help our community. We have also received \$25,000 for scholarships for

Creede students.

Ove the years we have helped with the After Prom, Fairgrounds, Ladies Aid Society, Christmas Community Dinner, LAS Creede Sewing Sisters, Mineral County Health Food Bank and scholarships.

Our members donate to the Elks National Foundation and in return we can apply for these grants.

Henry Hosselkis, Creede



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ScSEED Film Festival takes local focus

By PATRICK SHEA
SAGUACHE — Originally from California, the 2020 Wild & Scenic Film Festival took a turn to Saguache on Nov. 14 for a live online showing through headquarters at the Historic Ute Theater. Water health in the San Luis Valley was the theme throughout many of the films and presentations.

Local farmers, ranchers and water managers presented historic and current challenges in the Valley, interspersed with comments from event hosts representing the Saguache County Sustainable Environmental and Economic Development (ScSeed) board.

Newly elected Saguache County Commissioner Tom McCracken described changes to the aquifer that he has witnessed during his 33 years of organic farming in the county.

Newly elected District 35 state representative Cleave Simpson, Jr. joined Heather Dutton from the San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District to repudiate another attempt to export San Luis Valley water upstream to reach the Arkansas River Valley and communities along the Interstate 25 corridor. Simpson urged people to learn more at protectsanluisvalleywater.com.

A nominal donation covered access to the 10 films and half-dozen presentations. The “doors” opened at 6:30 with a graphic, musical loop running for 30 minutes while guests shared chat comments. A couple dozen viewers watched the films together until 9:15, and registration provided

access from Nov. 14 to 19. One clarifying comment from the ScSeed moderator explained that “SYRCL” is the Southern Yuba River Citizens League, a community organization formed to keep dams off the river in California. Their success raising money with the festival in the past prompted them to expand to Colorado this year.

A local, tasty twist allowed film enthusiasts to support local restaurants by buying a “Dinner and a Movie” package. Five northern Valley eateries included Villa Grove Trade, Our Food is Art (Crestone), Village Pub (Saguache), Leonardo’s (Center) and the Windsor Hotel in Del Norte.

The 10 movies started at 7:00 with “Invisible Thread,” a film from local videographer Christi Bode of MoxieCran Media. Like distilleries switching production to hand sanitizer, San Luis Valley sewing masters combined efforts to produce thousands of quality masks. By mixing seamstress skills with impromptu production crew at formerly idle Kristi Mountain Sports in Alamosa, the project quickly connected Valley citizens eager to help.

The second film, “Mi Mama,” showed two generations of Dominican Republic immigrants who loved being outdoors in Florida and elsewhere.

“Dream Ride” teetered between dream and reality for a mountain bikersnaking along ridges and routes.

“The Brotherhood of Skiing” showed the history of black skiers meeting at ski resorts once a year,

starting in 1973 with a trip to Aspen. A couple ski clubs from California and four from Chicago sent a press release a week before they arrived in Colorado. Local officials requested the Army National Guard. In 2018, the annual event drew 50–60 black ski clubs from across the country.

“Herd Impact,” a Peter Byck film, showed how a husband-wife team with 14,000 acres in Texas can manage their soil and grasslands by keeping their cows in constant motion, much like bison roaming the prairie.

“Green Gone” preceded a 15-minute break with youthful sarcasm about harmful agents in cleaning supplies.

An animated overview of the Green New Deal narrated by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez outlined a look ahead for the planet.

The final two films described poor project planning in Nevada and Louisiana (the Great Basin Water Network and the Bayou Bridge Pipeline).

Although the Wild & Scenic Film Festival originated in California, the 2020 version was Colorado-based. Local sponsors responsible for the event include Joyful Journey Hot Springs, Kristi Mountain Sports, The Orient Land Trust, Archaic Orchards (Lillian and Tom McCracken), San Luis Valley Local Foods Coalition, 1st SouthWest Bank, San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District, The Colorado Trust, Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust, The Historic Ute Theatre, Doug Bishop and Lynne Thompson.

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YOUR NIGHT SKY

Andromeda the Princess

BY DARLENE DANKO

Currently the Andromeda constellation is high overhead. Her stars form a skinny "A" shape. She contains 7 stars with the top of her head being the bright star Alpheratz which is a large blue white star that's 97 LY from us. Alpheratz is Arabic that means "the Navel of the Mare."

It not only marks the Princess's head, but it is also one corner of the Great Square of Pegasus. Pegasus is the Winged Horse, and is directly overhead on the SW side of the Milky Way. The Andromeda Galaxy is also part of her, and sits just between her and the Milky Way.

Currently her leg stars point down to the NE horizon. She's next to the Milky Way on its SE side. Amazingly, the stars on her left side are brighter than the stars on her right side. In December, January and February, she will be in the western sky with her head lower in the sky pointing toward the horizon. So for those three months, she'll be upside down.

Currently the Moon forms a triangle with Jupiter and Saturn. They're getting lower in the SW. Since the New Moon was on the Nov. 15, it's still small. It'll be larger on the Nov. 22, and a Full Moon Nov. 30. The first quarter is on the Nov. 25 making it half size. On the Nov. 23 it passes south of Neptune.

My favorite constellation Orion rises in the east now around 9 p.m. It climbs highest 1-2 a.m., and then sits low in the west by 5 a.m. The Aymara people of Bolivia, Peru and Chile called his belt "the Celestial Bridge," because where they look from, his belt sits along the celestial equator. Those 3 stars are very bright and easy to see.

Those 3 stars of his belt are visible worldwide. They rise in the east and set in the west. They also remain in the sky for 12 hours. The western most star of the belt is Mintaka. When those stars are directly overhead, you are at the equator. If it shines in the southern sky, you are north of the equator, and if it shines in the northern sky you are south of the equator. Obviously we're in the north.



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Editorial - Wednesday, Nov. 25 @ 5 p.m.

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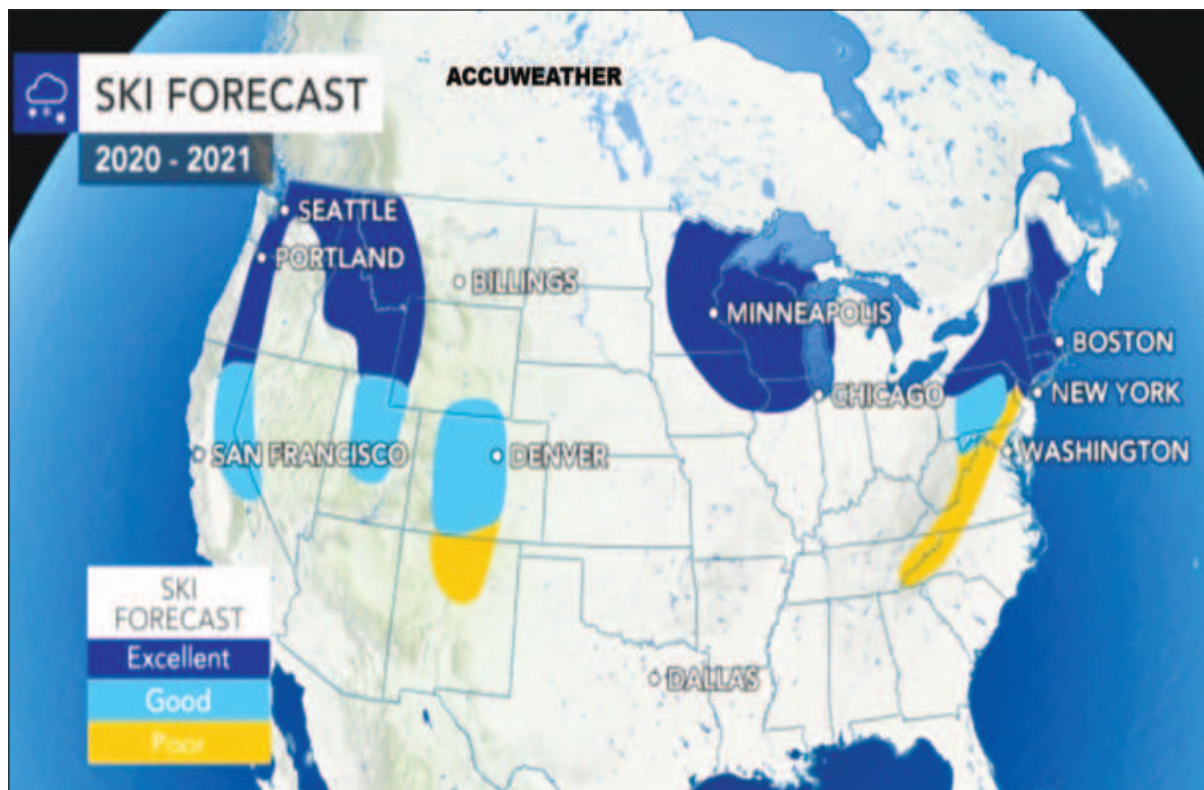
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Accuweather's ski snow forecast

AccuWeather Lead Long-Range Forecaster Paul Pastelok and his team have been analyzing weather patterns for the season ahead, and he offered up some early insights into the weather conditions that may influence conditions for the upcoming ski season. For a solid ski season to occur, cold air, which was lacking last season, is a must, he said. This year, however, the forecast suggests that many places across the United States will have amply snowy ski slopes to turn to when people need a break from the stuffy indoors.

Colorado and Utah, two states often recognized for idyllic, powdery

conditions, are not expected to experience the best set of weather factors this season. Despite an early start with skiers already taking advantage of snowy slopes, "massive" warmups from the Southwest could lead to big temperature swings at times during the season, resulting in melting and icy conditions that are less than ideal for plunging down a mountain. The frequency of storms for the two states will also be much more of a miss than other years. Central and northern Colorado should experience a relatively normal season, but southern Colorado down into New Mexico is where the problems will arise.



Phones and Homophones

This past week was not without its challenges and I guess it's just a continuation to the mass mess we have seen (scene) in 2020 with the Covid-19.

Miss Trixie has been sorting her Aunt and Uncle's household and farm stuff for (four) about the past two (to, too) months and this past week ended with a huge estate sale (sail). So, Ol' Dutch got roped into helping with that and all in all, it was a huge success albeit a huge effort.

This causes what is commonly known as frustration on Ol' Dutch's part as he is like most men and does not (knot) want to be (bee) volunteered for (four) any extra work. But as most men know (no,) it seems to be a part of being in a relationship with any woman (vixen) to get roped into helping some poor (pour) helpless soul (sole.)

Ol' Dutch made (maid) countless trips through (threw) the Dallas traffic back and forth to (too, two) the sale (sail) site (cite) and even suffered a blowout on my trailer one (won) day which is always a treat.

I thought I had pretty much escaped today from having to make that hell trip but (butt) as soon as I awoke, I discovered that my phone was dead. Now I don't mean (mien) like dead as in no (know) battery life but (butt) the other kind of dead where there (their) is nothing on the screen even when plugged in.

Knowing that I needed to (two, too) write this column today and I used my phone for (four) Wi-Fi, I scrambled around and left the house at the butt (but) crack of dawn to try and rectify the issue. I also knew (new) that Miss Trixie would soon try to (two, too) contact me with instructions for (four) the day and panic if I did not (knot) answer so (sew) I made (maid) a real (reel) effort to (two, too) get the phone up and running.

This is where the fork in the road (rode) is usually inserted but (butt) instead I think the fork was stuck into my head. For (four) it was at this time that Ol' Dutch made (maid) an executive decision and decided to go back to the estate sale site (sight) and touch base (bass) with Miss Trixie and then go to (too, two) the Verizon store in the town near that place.

Of course Miss Trixie was not (knot) there (their) when I arrived and add (ad) another fork in the road and Ol' Dutch (idiot) decided to drive the additional 20 miles to a cell (sell) phone store.

At every juncture of this trip I was constantly reaching for (four)



Trout Republic
by Kevin Kirkpatrick

my phone as I had no (know) idea where a Verizon store might (mite) be and I needed the GPS to (two, too) find it. Finally Ol' Dutch found some Wi-Fi at The Walmart and was able to (two, too) log on just enough to tell Miss Trixie what happened.

Luckily I found a Verizon store by chance and pulling up to (two, too) the front at 8:30 am and found out they do not (knot) open until 11.

It was at that point that Ol' Dutch seriously considered seeing a shrink and getting on strong meds.

I still do not (knot) have a phone at the time of this writing but this has sure made me realize just how much we depend on that marvelous device. I use mine for everything from texting, selling online, maps, finding stores, a calculator, to (two, too) play games, keep in touch with my family and friends, banking, email, business, pictures, movies, wasting time and once in a while I even use it to (two, too) make an actual phone call.

So it appears that this day is pretty well shot to (two, too) hell (marriage) and back as I will have to drive all over hell's (marriages) half acre to (two, too) find a corporate store only to (two, too) be (bee) told they cannot help me.

Such is the case with anything we become too (two, to) dependent upon I guess and it may be time to cut the cords a little bit between that infernal device and my soul (sole.)

Oh and by (bye) the way (weigh,) a homophone is a word that is spelled different but (butt) sounds the same as another word. I may have one (won) or more mistakes in the above column but (butt) you get my drift.

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 or on Twitter at TroutRepublic

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Donald was born and raised in Alamosa. He is a US Army veteran who has been deployed twice. He is also a proud single father. In his second deployment, Donald was stationed at the Macedonian/Serbian border. The traumatic conditions those people were living through stuck with him after his deployment ended. He decided to pursue a Master's degree in counseling and work towards helping people through their behavioral health needs. Donald graduated from Adams State University and has basic training in EMDR.

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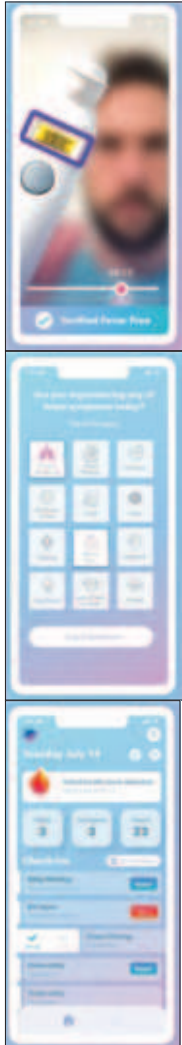
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Valley-Wide Counseling & Support Center provides person-centered longer-term counseling needs that may include anxiety, depression, trauma, substance use or other concerns like parenting, youth/adolescent issues, relationship issues, and grief.

Creede School implements new symptom check WeeCare app

By LYNSIE FERRELL
CREEDE-According to a report from the Creede School District, the school will be using a new smart app to help parents determine their child's health before they even leave their home and head to school. The new application is through the company WeeCare that has created a symptom checker called Fever Free.

According to the product's description, "Fever Free stops symptomatic individuals from ever arriving at their location and helps to stop the spread of sickness and keep our community safe. Fever Free is easy to use and takes less than 30 seconds each day. Fever Free allows for individuals to conduct their required health checks before leaving the house each morning, minimizing the risk of exposure from in-person checks and ensuring complete privacy. Fever Free is the only technology available that is fully compliant, secure and accurate. Fever Free does not rely on self-report."



The artificial intelligence of the application uses the video to identify the person, read the digital reading of the thermometer and issues a pass, fail or resubmit result for the symptom check.

The Creede School District has been checking symptoms of students before they enter the school per their district's COVID response plan but decided to be even more cautious by implementing a way for parents, teachers and staff could monitor their symptoms from their homes. This minimizes the chances of exposure and the safety of everyone at the Creede School.

"We have been checking symptoms at three entrances to the school in the mornings but it started getting cold and it is kind of time consuming," said school Receptionist Kelsey Evans who helped implement the Fever Free app. "It also eliminates any misunderstanding for parents when they check their own student's symptoms. It just adds that additional layer of accountability."

Mineral County remains at zero active cases as of Tuesday, Nov. 10, and the school has not seen any cases so far this year. The WeeCare company also helped with costs associated with using the app and the Creede School District is willing to share information as well as feedback on the app to any other schools that may be interested in using the Fever Free Application.

The app basically uses the selfie camera on a smartphone, computer or other smart device and takes a short video of the person taking their temperature on a digital thermometer. The artificial intelligence of the application uses the video to identify the person, read the digital reading of the thermometer and issues a pass, fail or resubmit result for the symptom check.

The school stated that they have issued the application to teachers and staff this week and hope to have it ready for families soon. For more information about the Fever Free application please visit www.weecare.co/fever-free

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The Mountain Valley School District Board of Education shared reports and updated policies during their monthly meeting Nov. 17.

Mountain Valley Schools continue in-person learning

BY PATRICK SHEA SAGUACHE — Despite increases in COVID-19 cases in the San Luis Valley, Mountain Valley Schools in Saguache continues to be virus-free with students in the building and another football game on the schedule.

Superintendent Travis Garoutte credited staff and student discipline as well as diligent facilities crew members for keeping the building clean and safe. Garoutte described seeing school walls scrubbed for the first time in his career, which accounts for staff using 23 gallons of cleaning solutions so far this school year.

Principal Kathy Hill said, “10 days of in-person learning has gone extremely well.” Hill noted changes to spacing for students eating lunch. Classrooms became hard to maintain with food consumed in a confined space. Using parts of the gym for lunch allows students to spread 12 feet apart.

Hill noted a few outdoor field trips on the calendar, including a visit to Russell Lakes this week.

The Mountain Valley football team will host Cotopaxi at 1:00 p.m. on Saturday. Weather forecasters predict a 40% chance of snow, and Athletic Director Larry Hunt is still working with public health officials to determine a safe crowd size for the game.

Hill praised staff members in all departments for attending two four-hour training sessions last week. Capturing Kids Hearts concentrated on relationship-building, and the second workshop identified changes in behavior that can change dynamics with other people.

Garoutte also praised the sessions, which play into his daily interactions greeting the children each morning. Instead of blazing through the COVID-19 screen questions, Garoutte tosses in off-topic questions and brain-teasers to lighten the moment and strengthen the bond.

Board members added three old sinks, three garbage disposals and a few wooden folding tables to “surplus.” The board also approved 28 policy changes, including flexibility for shifting between remote, in-person and hybrid models.

Earlier in the day, board member Mona Lovato helped Saguache County conduct COVID-19 tests in Center and Moffat. The test results do not require special refrigeration, and results can be available 48 hours after the lab receives samples. Additional testing in Crestone and Saguache will yield results from the four largest communities in the county, valuable data for adjusting restraints according to risk level.

As of Nov. 18, the Saguache County Commissioners awaited test results before announcing a risk-level change.

Rio Grande County hires new County Administrator

According to Klusmire, she began her career in school as a landscape architect, but it wasn't long before she found her passion in other areas of expertise. Klusmire is a career planner, community development director and City/County Manager. She is a Certified City/County Manager with the International City/County Manager's Association. She has also managed large transportation infrastructure projects and worked as a developer's representative for residential, commercial, industrial and ski resort development.

Klusmire also has an undergraduate degree in Landscape Architecture and she has an MBA and a MA in Ministry. She loves working in smaller rural communities and is currently on the board of directors of the Community Matters Institute, an economic resiliency nonprofit working with small towns. Her former jobs include Community Development Director of Glenwood Springs and Planning Director for Inyo County, California.

“I have three grown children that are here in Colorado as well as other family that will be close by. I really enjoy hiking in the backcountry, backpacking, camping and plan on doing the Colorado Trail as soon as I can with my children. I had taken some time off to figure out what I wanted to do when this offer came up and I decided that this was my answer. It felt like the right fit and I think it will be a good fit,” said Klusmire.

In her off time when she is not out in the backcountry enjoying a hike, Klusmire also enjoys painting in several different mediums including oil painting, fiber painting and enjoying the occasional writing.

“I work at the pleasure of the county commissioners and will be working on a plan for the county administrative office at the beginning of the year. I really love working in rural areas and look forward to working for Rio Grande County,” said Klusmire.

County officials also announced that they will be welcoming an interim county attorney.

Rio Grande County hires new County Administrator Leslie Klusmire. Leslie will be starting with the county soon and comes to her position with an extensive and unique background.



“I love my family, but I can't tell who has COVID. I step up by wearing a mask and keeping my distance even around them.”



Photo by Rebecca Copley

(left to right) Gary Johnson, Art Wittner, Wayne Wittner, Don Noland, Janet Noland and Dick Ramstetter. (not pictured) Debbie Palmgren and Christi Arnett also came out and helped.

Veterans still honored on Veteran's day

BY REBECCA COPLEY

MONTE VISTA - Around 100 flags were hung in Monte Vista on Veterans Day. They were placed up and down Adams Street and along Highway 160 starting at Dairy Queen and ending at the Shell Station. For the last 40 years the Monte Vista Kiwanis Club has been putting the flags out. However, they recently disbanded the Monte Vista Kiwanis Club after 91 years due to a dwindling number of members. The Kiwanis Club in Center has taken over the project and made sure that it happened again this year. A group of eight people got up early and put the flags out for Veterans Day Nov. 11. The COVID-19 pandemic restrictions have made large gatherings difficult this year. Many regular ceremonies and parades have either been canceled or look different in 2020. But the flag placement was able to still be the same and held special significance this year. Allowing the community to still show their appreciation and honor for

veterans amid the difficulty of 2020. The Kiwanis Club has put out the flags every year for Veterans Day, Memorial Day, Flag Day, 4th of July, Labor Day and 9/11. They also put the flags out during Stampede. "This is something that we have done for a long time and we just feel good setting out the flags to honor our veterans and to honor our town. For people coming through they see these flags and it means a lot. We've been doing this for years and we don't think this is a job we just see it as an honor to put up the flags," said Wayne Wittner who is a veteran himself and came out to help. Wittner served in the U.S. Marine Corps for three years. Serving in the Philippines and Hawaii. During that time, he also served as a field radio operator. Wittner's son Art Wittner is also a veteran and came to help place the flags for veteran's day. He served in the Navy for six years. He started out as a search and rescue swimmer, went to Warrant Officer school and then started flying helicopters.

Dick Ramstetter is another veteran who came out to help. Ramstetter served at Fort Campbell Kentucky with the U.S. Army 101st Airborne. During his time, he made 54 paratrooper jumps. Ramstetter served there for almost four years. "There were 12,000 of us living on the airfield all ready to go. In less than two hours we all would have been in Cuba. There were 400 aircraft sitting on the Fort Campbell strip. Just lined up ready to go," remembered Ramstetter. The 100 flags hung in Monte Vista are owned by the Kiwanis Club and they also store and maintain all of the flags. The Center Kiwanis club currently has around 18 members. Many members from the Monte Vista Kiwanis Club having joined after theirs disbanded. When they place the flags, they also often receive a lot of help from 4-H members from clubs around the Valley. None of them were able to come Wednesday however since it was a school day.

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Teenager missing from Costilla County since November 15

COSTILLA COUNTY—Thomas Curtis, age 15, has been missing from Costilla County since Sunday, Nov. 15. He was last seen on his bike near Rio Grande Ranches near Road G in Costilla County. He was supposed to go down to the river, but he never arrived and his bike was later found in an abandoned trailer on Road G. Thomas was last seen wearing a short sleeve blue/gray button up shirt underneath a brown hoodie and blue jeans. If you see him or know his whereabouts, please contact his mother, Courtney Hutton, at 412-757-5817 or the Costilla County Sheriff's Office at 719-672-0673.

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ASSESS

Continued from Page 1A

plans for sharing turkeys for Thanksgiving.

Emergency Manager Robert Woelz fielded questions about his 170-page Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) drafted for 2019. In addition to a separate five-year hazard mitigation plan, the EOP details daily logistics for present and future reference. Commissioners approved changes to the plan.

Considering a new COVID-19 risk designation for the county, Woelz encouraged commissioners to "move in unison with other counties in the Valley to keep everyone on the same level."

Following his update, Woelz headed to Center and Moffat to assist Saguache County Public Health officials with COVID-19 testing (roughly 300 total).



New Director of Social Services Ruth Horn updates Saguache County Commissioners after five days on the job.

STATUS

Continued from Page 1A

Partnership stated that, "Alamosa, Conejos, Rio Grande and Costilla counties made firm decisions about moving to a 'Level Orange Safer at Home High Risk' status. Rio Grande County is meeting with CDPHE again later this week to continue the conversation about their status, as is Saguache County."

General guidelines for Level Orange are summarized below. There may be additional guidelines for specific sectors.

Mitigation Strategies:
1. We will move all our activities from the Level 2 ("Yellow" Safer at Home - Concern) to Level 3 ("Orange" Level Safer at Home High Risk).

General guidelines for Level Orange are summarized below (and with specific additional guidelines for specific sectors).

Public and private gatherings are limited to no more than 10 individuals from no more than 2 households.

Face Coverings. Face coverings are required for all individuals in public indoor settings unless the individual is 2 years of age or younger or cannot medically tolerate a face covering.

Capacity. Most businesses, offices, and places of worship that have been operating at 50% capacity will shift down to 25% of capacity, or 50 persons per room, whichever is less and while maintaining proper distancing.

Specific Areas to be impacted by this Mitigation Plan:

Capacity Restriction County-wide Parameters: To address Level Orange - Safer at Home High Risk

Personal Gathering Size: Up to 10 from no more than 2 households

P-12 Schools: In-person, hybrid or remote as appropriate

Higher Education: Remote or hybrid suggested, limited in person as appropriate, and other major strategies to increase social distancing

Places of worship and Life Rites:

Indoors Unseated Functions: 25% capacity or 50 (whichever is less)

Indoor seated Functions: 25%, 50 person capacity (whichever is less)

Outdoors: 6ft between parties outdoors, per local zoning

Restaurants:

Indoors: 25% capacity, 50 people (whichever is less)

Outdoors: 6 feet between parties outdoors, per local zoning

Non-Critical Manufacturing: 25% capacity or 50 people (whichever is less)

Offices: 25% capacity (Here, remote work is highly encouraged)

Bars: Closed
Gyms/Fitness: 25% capacity, 25 indoors, or outdoors in groups less than 10

Group sports and Camps: Virtual, or outdoors in groups less than 10

Retail: 25% capacity

Personal services: 25% capacity or 25 people (whichever is less)

Limited Health Care Settings: 25% capacity or 25 people (whichever is less)

Events:
Indoor Unseated: 25%, 50 person capacity (whichever is less)

Indoor Seated: 25%, 50 person capacity (6ft distancing between parties)

Outdoor Unseated: 25%, 75 person capacity (whichever is less)

Outdoor Seated: 25%, 75 person capacity (6ft distancing between parties)

Outdoor Guided Services 25% capacity or 10 people

General Education: Providing County employees and community with education on COVID-19 is critical to the health and safety of all county employees and community members. The RGC COVID-19 Lead staff and public health shall connect with restaurants, businesses, and stores on the above capacity restriction and general expectations for compliance. The COVID-19 Lead staff (Public Health Department/Human Resources Department) shall ensure that all existing, new and returning employees are educated on the new COVID-19 job site requirements. This can be done as a site safety meeting as long as the employees are able to distance during the meeting or conduct a series with each county departments. The site COVID-19 lead shall ensure that:

On-site employees are educated on COVID-19 to include:

General information about COVID-19.

How COVID-19 is contracted and transmitted to other people.

How to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Hygiene procedures specific to COVID-19.

Company policies, procedures and protocols developed in response to COVID-19.

Customer requirements regarding COVID-19.

Reporting procedures if the employee feels they are sick, have been exposed or tests positive.

Education and policy documents shall be available and displayed, when able, on the RG County website to include:

Site Safety Plan
Infectious Disease Preparedness and Response Plan

COVID-19 Supervisors Kit and Binder

Hand-washing practices established by the CDC, DOH or WHO.

Fact sheets regarding COVID-19.

Signs and Symptom fact sheet regarding COVID-19.

Recordkeeping shall be completed by the supervisor. Attendance shall be communicated verbally and the supervisor shall document attendance on the roster.

ELECTION OF THE SAN LUIS VALLEY IRRIGATION DISTRICT
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that an election will be held on Tuesday, the 8th day of December, 2020.
NOTICE IS FURTHER GIVEN that due to Covid-19 and ongoing government restrictions, the District will be voting by mail in ballot only.
 At said election, the electors of the District shall vote for Director(s) to serve the following term(s) of office on the Board of Directors of the District:
 One Director for Division III for a 3-Year Term
 The name(s) of person(s) nominated and term(s) of office for which nominated are as follows:
 Tuck Slane, Director for Division III for a 3-year term
NOTICE IS FURTHER GIVEN that an elector of said District for the purpose of said election is a person who (1) owns taxable real property within the District, and (2) is over the age of twenty-one years.
NOTICE IS FURTHER GIVEN that affidavits of intent to be a write-in candidate must be filed no later than 4:00 o'clock p.m. on Friday, the 13th of November, 2020).
 To request a mail in ballot, please contact Amy S. Dean, District Secretary by email: amy@slvid.org or by phone: 719-754-2254.
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 By: /s/ Amy S. Dean
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No. 1581 published in the Center Post Dispatch, Thursday, November 5, 12 and 19, 2020.

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MKT-P0108



One of the homesteads where local law enforcement found human remains.

BODIES

Continued from Page 1A

the second property. The property owners are not currently living at these properties.

A virtual press briefing concerning the investigation was held Wednesday, Nov. 18, with representatives from agencies assisting with this investigation. They include Conejos County Sheriff's Office, Saguache County Sheriff's Office, Alamosa Police Department, Monte Vista Police Department, and the Colorado Bureau of Investigation.

Monte Vista Police Chief George Dingfelder was one of the first to share during the news conference.

"Over the course of the last several months several of our agencies within the San Luis Valley have been investigating missing persons reports," said Chief Dingfelder making it clear that at this time they are not associating the human remains found with any of their missing persons investigations as it would be "irresponsible and complete speculation."

Dingfelder shared that the remains are being analyzed by a forensic anthropologist. "We have consulted with a forensic anthropologist who has confirmed that the remains are human. Please be patient with us. There is a lot to be done on identifying these remains," said Dingfelder. Sharing that due to the condition that they were in, it could take several weeks or months to identify the victims. At this point however the forensic anthropologist has been able

to confirm that they have the remains of three victims. The cause of death is unknown at this time.

Alamosa Police Chief Ken Anderson also shared that the Alamosa Police department has clearly identified a suspect in this case. "He is still currently on the run and his name is Adre Jordan Baroz. His date of birth is 10/28/1994. This individual is from the Sanford Colorado area which is the same area we're kind of talking about," said Chief Anderson. Chief Anderson also shared that they currently have an active warrant for Baroz for homicide.

"I would say that he should be considered at this time armed and dangerous. Should not be contacted by the public. We are encouraging people to please contact 911 if they see Mr. Baroz. But I also want to point something out that although Mr. Baroz currently is our suspect in this homicide investigation all suspects are clearly innocent until proven guilty," said Chief Anderson adding, "My main goal right now, is working with all these other law enforcement agencies from the Valley including CBI. Our main goal is to get him off the street. He is a danger to the community right now."

Chief Anderson said they are asking that if anyone has any information about Baroz's whereabouts or about the discovered bodies to contact them. Chief Anderson also shared that people in the community may know Baroz by

his widely used nickname "Psycho."

Conejos Sheriff Garth Crowther also shared at the briefing. Sheriff Crowther stated that investigators plan to continue searching the second site as it is imperative that they exhaust the search of that area to ensure that all remains and evidence have been found.

Deputy Director of Investigations for CBI Chris Schaefer echoed the statements of Chief Anderson. Schaefer saying, "Our priority for now is to get Mr. Baroz into custody and to identify the remains of the individuals that we have found. However as Chief Dingfelder has said this will take a long time."

Schaefer also sharing that at this time they do not have any indication that this case is connected to the Suzanne Morphew missing person investigation. He shared that at this point there is no information to indicate that these cases are connected. However, he shared that they are actively investigating and will go wherever the information takes them.

The investigation is ongoing and a "tip line" has been established to help gather information related to this investigation. If you have any information you are asked to please call (719) 270-0210.

COVID

Continued from Page 1A

ending Nov. 16 grew from 7.36% to 11.35% over the past week. Statewide the positivity rate was 11.6% on the same date.

According to the Colorado COVID-19 "dashboard," on Nov. 16, Saguache County continued to have the highest two-week positivity rate in the state with 22% of tests coming back positive. Alamosa County rose from third to second highest test rate in the state with 20.9% of tests coming back positive— an increase of 4.2% from the previous week. Rio Grande County's two-week positivity rate rose from 2.3% to 4.2% in the past seven days. Conejos County had its positivity rate increase from 9.8% to 13.7% while Costilla County's positivity rate continued to increase from 12.3% to 18.9%.

In the early stages of the pandemic Governor Polis wanted to have 6,000 tests conducted statewide each day. On Nov. 16 Colorado had over 6,000 positive COVID-19 tests statewide.

San Luis Valley Public Health Partnership reported Nov. 16, "Alamosa County was the first of SLV counties to start seeing a severe increase in COVID-19 over the past several weeks.

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Tuesday, Nov. 17, Linda Smith with San Luis Valley Public Health Partnership stated that, "Alamosa, Conejos, Rio Grande and Costilla counties made firm decisions about moving to a 'Level Orange Safer at Home High Risk' status.

Rio Grande County is meeting with CDPHE again later this week to continue the conversation about their status, as is Saguache County."

CDPHE reserves the right to move the county to a more restrictive level at any point, should circumstances warrant more aggressive restrictions. Rio Grande and Saguache counties have also exceeded one or more COVID thresholds for Level Yellow. Their Boards of Health have met or will meet soon with CDPHE to discuss specifics in each county. Where possible and reasonable, CDPHE officials see value in keeping SLV on one level, given that the health care system functions to serve the entire region, and the county residents frequently move between counties for work and other reasons."

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The Colorado and World Health Organization two-week positivity goal is 5% or lower. According to the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center on Nov. 16, Colorado had a seven-day positivity moving average test rate of 11.6% - an increase of 1.6% from a week ago. For Colorado's neighboring states the seven-day positivity rates continue to be higher than Colorado. On Nov. 16 Kansas was at 58.7%, Wyoming 44.6%, Utah 19.4%, Arizona 15.9%, Nebraska 14.7% and Oklahoma 17.8%.

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SLV COVID-19 cases increasing vertically

Saguache County has highest COVID-19 positivity rate in state

Alamosa County second highest positivity rate in state

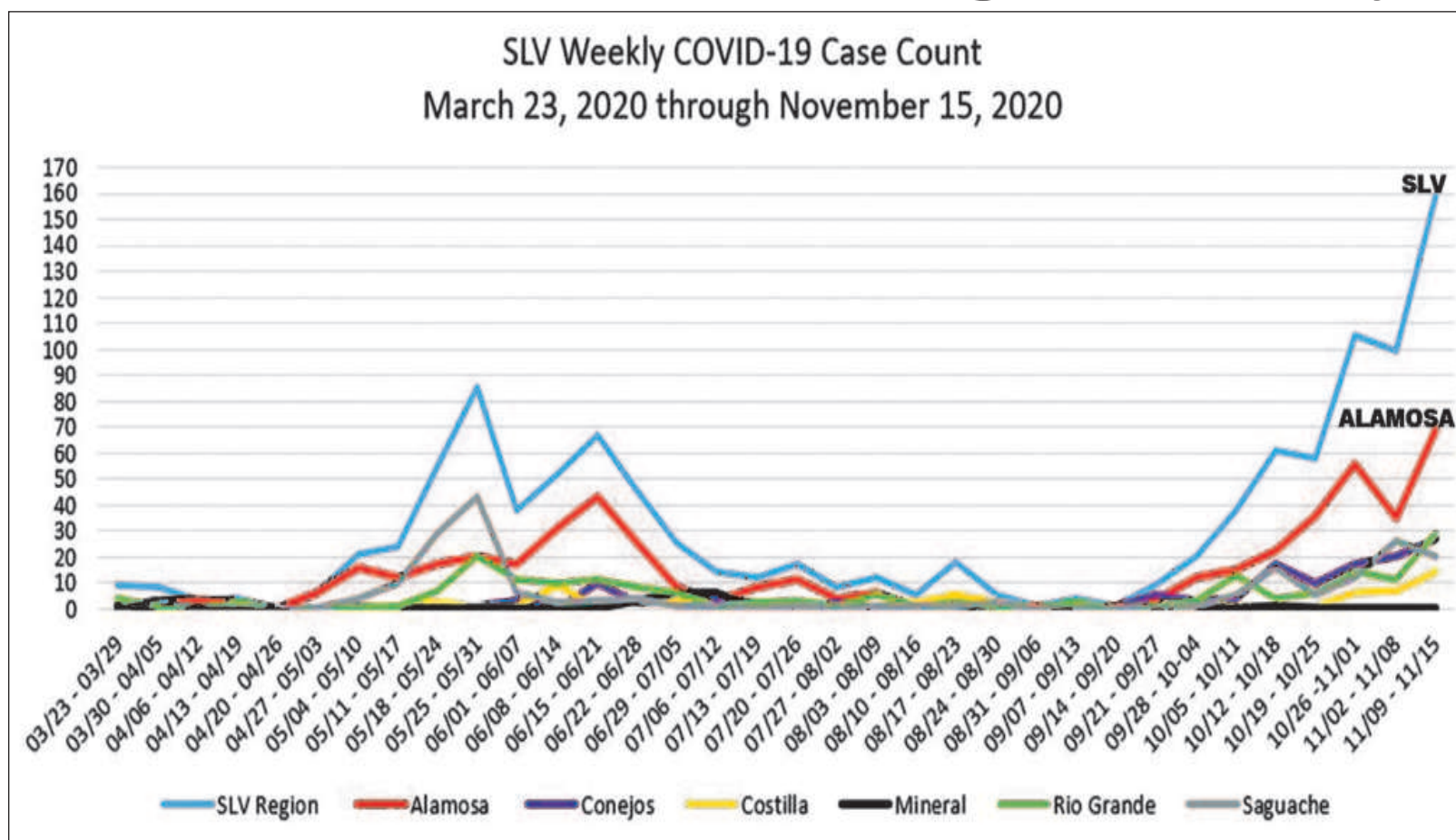
By TREY SPAULDING

SAN LUIS VALLEY – Nov. 16. San Luis Valley (SLV) positive known active cases grew by 99 the past week – an increase of 61.4%. As of Monday, Nov. 16 there were 257 active cases in the SLV and the Valley has continued to have a record number of positive cases since the beginning of the pandemic.

The two-week SLV positivity rate ending Nov. 16 grew from 7.36% to 11.35% over the past week. Statewide the positivity rate was 11.6% as of Nov. 16.

According to the Colorado COVID-19 “dashboard,” on Nov. 16, Saguache County continued to have the highest two-week positivity rate in the state with 21.7% of tests coming back positive. Alamosa County rose from third to second highest test rate in the state with 20.9% of tests coming back positive— an increase of 4.2% from the previous week. Rio Grande County’s two-week positivity rate rose from 2.3% to 4.2% in the past seven days. Conejos County had its positivity rate increase from 9.8% to 13.7% while Costilla County’s positivity rate continued to increase from 12.3% to 18.9%.

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statewide each day. On Nov. 16 Colorado had over 6,000 positive COVID-19 tests statewide.

San Luis Valley Public Health Partnership reported Nov. 16, “Alamosa County was the first of SLV counties to start seeing a severe increase in COVID-19 over the past several weeks. After reviewing the situation with the Alamosa County Board of Health, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) sent a letter of notification Friday, Nov. 13. The letter stated that while Alamosa County’s illness levels are actually aligned with COVID-19 Dial Level Red, CDPHE has agreed

that a gradual implementation of restrictions is suitable at this time. Alamosa County is moving to Orange, rather than to Red, but this makes it even more important that county residents reduce the spread of COVID-19. CDPHE reserves the right to move the county to a more restrictive level at any point, should circumstances warrant more aggressive restrictions. Conejos, Costilla and Rio Grande, and Saguache counties have also exceeded one or more COVID thresholds for Level Yellow. Their Boards of Health have met or will meet soon with CDPHE to discuss specifics in each county. Where possible and

reasonable, CDPHE officials see value in keeping SLV on one level, given that the health care system functions to serve the entire region, and the county residents frequently move between counties for work and other reasons.”

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‘Kinda Makes a Feller Soft’

They stood in the back of the room lookin’ like two Oakland Raider linebackers at a preppie quiche-tasting party. They had on unblocked hats with flat brims and each man wore a neck scarf and new Wrangler’s. Steve ambled over and asked where they were from. “Nevada,” they said, “We ranch.”

They discussed the cattle business and bad-mouthed the government, as usual. Pretty soon they got to discussin’ mutual acquaintances. Steve had a friend named Pat from way up around Brothers, Oregon.

“Quite a character,” Steve said. “Pat would trade out vet work with his neighbors. One day, one of his ranching neighbors who was an ex-mechanic came over. Pat asked him to walk around his ol’ beat-up tractor to see if it needed

anything. The neighbor took a professional stroll around the rusting and dented piece of antique farm machinery and said, ‘Pat, if you’d pump up that right front tire, it’d steer better.’”

Pat lived and ranched twelve miles from the tiny town of Brothers but the wife and kids lived in the nearest big town sixty miles away. Four years ago he finally got a radio telephone. He rings through a big transmitter on a mountain top and patches into the Portland exchange two hundred miles away.

“We know Pat,” said the Nevada boys, “He’s been down our way lookin’ to buy a place. Seemed like a nice enough guy but we’re worried about him. See, we don’t have no phone. Turns out he spends weekends in town with his wife and kids. That ain’t the best

way to run a ranch, ya know. Livin’ that close to town kinda makes a feller soft.”

Steve asked, “How far out are you?” “Wull,” said the buckaroo, “My ranch is seventy-two miles from Fallon but the one he is lookin’ at was a ways off the road.”

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



Put a ‘paws’ on hunting:

Keep Your Cat Safe From Rodent-Carried Disease

The image of a cat hunting mice is as classic as their love of milk and yarn or their dislike of water and dogs. While we may be familiar with this archetype, in practice, the hunting of rodents can expose our feline friends to harmful diseases and parasites that can even pose risks to their human owners.

Dr. Lori Teller, an associate professor in the Texas A&M College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences, says that cat owners should ideally discourage their pets from hunting rodents.

“Because cats are natural predators and hunting is instinctive to them, this can be easier said than done,” Teller said. “Cat owners can place a bell on the cat’s collar to warn the prey and give it time to escape. Since cats are nocturnal and rodents are more prevalent after dark, keeping a cat indoors overnight may also limit hunting opportunities.”

This is important because there are

several diseases cats can contract from mice, including the plague, leptospirosis, hantavirus—which humans cannot contract from cats, but can contract from rodents brought home by a cat—and toxoplasmosis, which can be problematic for pregnant women.

Mice can also transmit roundworms, an intestinal parasite that can cause vomiting, diarrhea, and weight loss in cats and can lead to a condition called visceral larval migrans in humans.

“Indoor cats also can get fleas and ticks from rodents that come into the home,” Teller said. “These parasites can make your cat itchy and they can also bite you, spreading potential disease, such as the plague, Lyme disease, and others, to you and your family members.”

If a cat owner has rodents in their home, they should take precautions in their pest-control efforts, as most rodenticides are extremely toxic to cats and some traps carry the risk of injuring both pet and pest indiscriminately.

“There are different types of rat poison—such as anticoagulants, neurotoxins, and agents—that cause a life-threatening increase in calcium levels,” Teller said. “If treated quickly

enough, there are some antidotes for the anticoagulant-type of rat poisons. There are no good treatments for the agents that increase calcium levels or the neurotoxic rodenticides once they’ve been systemically absorbed.

“A couple of pet-safe pest control options are ‘rat zappers’ that electrocute the rodents, but are too small for a pet to access and bucket traps that rodents can fall into and then drown and, again, are too small for pets to access. There are also specific types of bait boxes, called Tier 1 boxes, that adult cats cannot get into but rats can. Traditional mouse traps can definitely cause pain and trauma to a pet but are rarely fatal.”

Teller recommends that, depending



on how severe the rodent infestation is, pet owners consult with a professional exterminator to discuss pet-friendly ways to remove the rodents and ensure that the only animals in their homes are the pets they choose!

LEAP helps Coloradans pay to heat homes

With more than 13 million Americans unemployed and the surge in medical expenses continually rising, there is a greater need than ever for home heating bill payment assistance, especially as the cold season draws closer.

November marks the kick off the 2021 Colorado Low-income Energy Assistance Program (www.colorado.gov/cdhs/leap). LEAP helps families, individuals and older adults pay a portion of home heating costs through a federally-funded, one-time heating assistance benefit.

“We provided more than 76,000 households with heating assistance last year,” said Theresa Kullen, LEAP manager “By easing the strain of heating bills on households, families and individuals don’t have to make a choice between buying groceries or critical medications.”

Applications and assistance are available Nov. 1 through April 30 for qualifying households in all 64 Colorado counties. Individuals can apply for assistance at local county

offices, online at Colorado PEAK or by calling 1-866-HEAT-HELP (1-866-432-8435). The added options have increased access for individuals, seniors and low-income families.

To qualify, a household’s monthly income must fall within 60% of the state median income level. Single resident households with a monthly income of \$2,619 or less and households of 4 with a monthly income of \$5,038 or less may qualify for assistance.

Applicants must pay home heating costs directly to a utility company or landlord. Payments are usually made directly to the primary heating vendor. The household must contain a resident of Colorado and at least one U.S. citizen or permanent legal resident of the U.S.

Other benefits can include repairs and replacement of a home’s primary heating system.

For application questions, information about eligibility or the LEAP program, visit www.colorado.gov/cdhs/leap.

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Ginger is a 3 year old, lab/retriever/Doberman mix. She has lots of energy and needs to exercise a lot. She does dig so a large yard with dig proof lining is recommended. She doesn’t do too well with other dogs but has some potential. She loves all people and kids, and even loves to hug!

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Early Deadlines due to Thanksgiving

November 25 & 26 issues:
 Display, Legal, Classified Advertising - Wednesday, Nov. 18 @ 5 p.m.
 Editorial - Thursday, Nov. 19 @ 5 p.m.

December 2 & 3 issues:
 Display, Legal, Classified Advertising - Wednesday, Nov. 25 @ 12 p.m. (noon)
 Editorial - Wednesday, Nov. 25 @ 5 p.m.

Our office will be closed on November 26.

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Chocolate Festival still on the calendar for end of November

By **LYNDSIE FERRELL**

CREEDE- The annual Chocolate Festival in Creede will still be taking place Friday, Nov. 27, and Saturday, Nov. 28. The Chocolate Festival has a long history in Creede and is a great opportunity to support local businesses in Creede. Not only does it offer delicious treats homemade by local participants, but it affords the chance to do some holiday shopping outside of the Black Friday deals.

According to the Creede and Mineral County Chamber of Commerce, the event will see little change this year due to COVID-19. Creede has been fortunate enough to have zero active cases in the last several weeks and hopes to remain that way. The city and chamber are asking everyone to practice social distancing, wear face coverings and to stay home if experiencing symptoms.

Here is what to expect during this year's event, "The Creede Chocolate Festival is an annual two-day event beginning the Friday & Saturday after Thanksgiving. This event showcases luscious samples of chocolate specialties created by local business owners and individuals. All participants must abide by a few simple regulations concerning their chocolate delicacies: samples must contain chocolate, carob, cocoa, or white chocolate and cannot be commercially made or prepared from a box. Wonderful, yet sometimes unusual, chocolate delights range from tiramisu, tortes and chocolate covered pretzels, to jalapeno bean fudge and chocolate-dipped bacon. Eating your way around Creede will be easy—but casting your vote for the People's Choice award can be challenging.



Often, Santa and Mrs. Claus can be found around town! Live music can often be found in the late afternoon and evening. Many of Creede's businesses will also be holding sales and offering specials during the festival weekend. Several businesses will be open for Black Friday Shopping, offering deep discounts from 7:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

Creede's Chocolate Festival originated as an interesting and fun way to begin the holiday season while enticing people to explore Creede's unique business district. This mountain town is home to several well-known artists, jewelers, writers and actors. An array of galleries, gift shops, specialty stores and restaurants fill the Victorian-era buildings.

While busy in the summer months, winter brings tranquility and a slower pace to Creede that is appreciated by locals and visitors alike. Surrounded by 96% public lands, Creede provides great opportunities for sledding, ice skating, cross-county and backcountry skiing, snowshoeing and snowmobiling. Local clubs groom ski trails close to town, and miles upon miles of GPS-mapped snowmobile trails traverse peaks, valleys and plateaus. Winter sports equipment can be rented or purchased through local merchants."

For more information or to purchase tickets in advance, please visit www.creede.com.

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- Roll-Off "Construction Site" Dumpsters (20YD-30YD)
- Curbside, single-stream recycling available

Services available for residents and commercial pick-up in and around Creede, South Fork, Del Norte and Monte Vista



For a full list of recyclable items see www.mds-wasteandrecycle.com/services/recycling-services/

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www.mds-wasteandrecycle.com

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www.delnorteprospector.com

THE SOUTH FORK TIMES
www.southforktimes.com

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No Cost Consultation: Know what's possible for You! Includes preliminary evaluation and CBCT image. \$500 value. Expires: 11/30/2020.

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

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



04 Lost and Found
Lost Phone: Black Flip Phone: Verizon Wireless. Contains important medical information, need returned. Bring to 111 Bronk in Monte Vista if found. (11/25)

05 Notices
U.S. Government Property for Sale
62 Rio Grande Ave., Alamosa, CO 6128 Road 6 South, Alamosa, CO <https://realestatesales.gov> For more information contact **Veronica Vorva** at **817-978-4246**. U.S. GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION. (11/18)
WE BUY ANTLERS: 5 miles west of Del Norte on HWY 160. 719-657-0942 (11/18)TFN

07 Help Wanted
Rio Grande County Treasurer is seeking a full time Clerk. Requirements include **High School diploma or GED.** Computer and Bookkeeping skills a plus. Pre-employment drug screening, including testing for marijuana, will be required. Position starts 1/4/2021. \$15.40-\$15.70 DOE. Applications and additional information available online at www.riograndecounty.org or pick up and submit to Human Resources, 925 6th Street, Room 200, Del Norte, CO 81132. Close date is 12/7/2020. (12-02)
Rio Grande County is seeking a Dispatch/Detention Officer. High School Diploma or GED, or one to three months related experience and/or training or equivalent combination of education and experience. Interaction with inmates required. Must be 21 years of age, pass back-

ground investigation and 5 panel drug test, including testing for marijuana required. **Inmate interaction required.** \$14.57/per hour. Pick up and submit applications to Human Resources 925 6th Street, Room 200, Del Norte, CO

81132. Applications also available online at www.riograndecounty.org. (11/25)

Rio Grande County is seeking a full-time jail cook. High school diploma or GED required. Must be 21 years of

age, pass background investigation and pre-employment drug test, including screening for marijuana. \$12.31/per hour, 40 hours a week, full county benefits. Pick up and submit applications to Human Resources, 925 6th Street,

Room 200, Del Norte, CO 81132. Applications and job description available online at www.riograndecounty.org. (11-25)

Wolf Creek Ski Area is accepting applications for all departments:

Business Showcase

Snoozie slippers have arrived right along with winter! Keep your tootsies warm and cover up with a beautiful fleece throw!



Please wear a mask.

The Holy Moses 658-2848
NEW HOURS 121 N. Main
Mon.-Sat. 10:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Creede

This Week's Feature



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San Luis Valley Area Real Estate

Everything you could want from mountain living!
4 bedrooms • 4.5 baths • 4,504 sq. ft. • 6 acres • \$888,000
Custom-built home in River Island Ranch with a built in theater, 5 car heated garage and 2 car separate garage, screened-in porch, safe room, wet bar and much more! The yard has a sprinkler system and a fire pit, perfect for entertaining! POA includes access to fishing on the Rio Grande, road maintenance and snow removal. MLS #765728
104 Explorer Way • South Fork
Bernadette Gingrass Steffens & CO. Realty
(719)850-1993
bernadette@steffenscorealty.com

Fantastic Home on 40 Acres with Water!
5 bedroom • 2.5 bath • 3,216 sq. ft. • \$630,000
Remodeled in 2016, the home has large, double-pane windows to enjoy the views, quartz counter tops, new stainless steel appliances, a private master suite with amazing features and so many more unique details. Heated 3-car attached garage plus addtl. detached garage/tack room. Established hay-meadow with surface water rights and 1.5 shares of Rio Grande Piedra ditch.
MLS# 769101
Porter Realty, 503 Main St. Alamosa
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PRICE REDUCED!
Beautiful Home on 35 Acres SW of Monte Vista!
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SOLD
New Listing! Golf Course Living at its finest!
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Stunning views in all directions with huge windows, luxurious master suite, rock propane fireplace, high-end Jenn Air appliances, custom cabinetry, large stone patio for entertaining, 2-car garage and so much more! Rio Grande Club Membership and Home Furnishings negotiable. MLS #767109
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www.bernadettegingrassrealestate.com

SOLD
New Listing! Charming Family Home, Priced to Sell!
4 bedroom • 2 bath • 1,850 sq. ft. • \$215,000
Comfortable family home with large balcony to enjoy your mountain views! Nice kitchen, stone fireplace, wood-burning stove and beautiful bathrooms! MLS #758665
198 Elm Drive • South Fork
Bernadette Gingrass • Steffens & CO. Realty
(719)850-1993 • bernadette@steffenscorealty.com

SOLD
Price Just Reduced!!
• 1 bedroom • 1 bathroom • \$74,900
Adorable Park Model home in the River's Edge Mountain View RV Resort! Everything is included, all it needs is you! All furniture, appliances and pots and pans come with this cozy home that includes an enclosed sun room, storage shed and work bench! MLS#760432
57 Dennette Lane • South Fork
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(719)850-1993 • bernadette@steffenscorealty.com

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Jackets \$20 OFF!**



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- MJK42BH77
- MJK43BK
- MJK41NV
- 3W785CB
- 3W785GH
- 3W785BH
- RWV3BK
- RWV3QH
- 3W186NV
- 3W186CH

**Selected
Women's Jeans \$30**



- EL81532
- WUT34RD
- WUT34GB
- WUT74CL
- WUT34AG
- W79516
- W8M4139

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MEN'S BOOT SALE



GB00164

RR3354

10031501

\$85

\$75

10031504

10027280

\$95

Valley Wide

Classifieds

retail, ski school, lifts, ski patrol, base operations, ticket office, food and beverage, rental, vehicle maintenance and snow reporting. Please see details of job descriptions on **Wolf Creek's employment page.** Applications can be downloaded from WolfCreekSki.com employment page. Send resumes and applications to wolfcreekski@wolfcreekski.com or P.O. Box 2800, Pagosa Springs, CO 81147. All jobs are winter seasonal (November - April) with competitive wages. (11-25)

Rio Grande County Department of Social Services is seeking an Employment Benefits Unit Case Manager. Position provides a full range of ongoing case management services to clients. Requirements are a High School Diploma or GED, in addition to one to three months related experience and/or training, or equivalent combination of education and experience. Must have computer skills, including word processing, spreadsheet applications, and various data entry programs. \$15.36-15.96/hour DOE. Background check and pre-employment drug testing, including testing for marijuana is required. Applications are available online at www.riograndecounty.org or pick up and submit to Human Resources, 925 6th Street, Room 200, Del Norte, CO 81132. (11/18)

Rio Grande County Department of Social Services is accepting applications for a Child Protection Caseworker. Full time position with County benefits. \$14.26-\$14.82 DOE, Pre-employment drug screening, including testing for marijuana, will be required. Full job description and application available at www.riograndecounty.org or at Human Resources, 925 6th Street, Room 200, Del Norte, CO 81132. Until Filled (11/18)

Seeking Construction Supervisor for Nonprofit company, CRHDC, F/T 40 hrs per week, to assist families with new home construction in Alamosa includes weekends. Construction exp. required. \$20 p/h+benefits. Resume and cover letter to melanie@crhdc.org (11/11)

HOUSEKEEPERS WANTED! Apply in person at TWIN RIVERS CABINS AND RV PARK, west of Antonito. 719-376-5710 (11/18)

10 Apartments for Rent
1-bedroom fully furnished apartment in downtown Del Norte all utilities included plus wi-fi and washer/dryer. No smoking No pets. \$650.00 per month Call 657-2850. (11/25)

12 House for Rent
House for rent on Swede Lane. Must have refereces. \$650 per month. No Pets and only two residents allowed. Call (719)588-4711 (11/18)

17 Real Estate For Sale
Home For Sale: 311 Stallo Craftsman Style. \$125,000.00. (12/02)

PERFECT SMALL FARM: 59 acres with center pivot, new 60X120 steel shop, 2 1/2 shares of Rio Grande Canal, 2000 GPM well, 2 miles from Center. Priced to Sell, Call Bruce at Steffens & Company Realty, Inc. 719-580-0770. (TFN)

11 circles in Center area with excellent potato ground, excellent wells and water rights, high production, sandy soil, 2 homes, shop, potato storage, first time ever on market and sold as full unit. Call Bruce at Steffens & Company Realty, LLC 719-580-0770. Serious inquires only (TFN)

125-150 cow/calf ranch 1154 acres with top water rights, production, 1.2 miles of Rio Grande River and 1/2

mile of Conejos River. \$1,750,000. Call Bruce at Steffens & Company Realty, Inc 719-580-0770 (TFN)

Pastureland, 397 acres in north of Monte Vista Airport on County Line Road with good grass and location. Also contains a huge amount of gravel on the property \$525,000.00 call Bruce at Steffens & Company Realty, Inc 719-580-0770. (TFN)

23 Lawn and Garden
For Sale: Yard Art-Old Farm Equipment Call 850-0491. (12/2)

Sprinkler installation, and winterization Done at reasonable rates. Quick Service. Call anytime, weekdays, weekends, evenings. 719-376-2593 or 719-580-0033. (11/25)

27 Appliances
For Sale: Kohler Double Kitchen Sink \$75.00. Maytag Electric Dryer Works Good \$50.00 719-754-3363 or 719-480-2102. (12/2)

36 Miscellaneous
Propane Refrigerators Sold Here. Call For Options and Prices. We Also Stock Solar Powered Refrigerators and Freezers. Bontrager's Variety Store, 9726 S. County Road 3E, Monte Vista. (719)852-0500 (11/12/23)

BIDS FOR REAL PROPERTY IN SAGUACHE

The Town of Saguache is currently accepting bids from those interested in purchasing real property located at 305 9th Street, Saguache Colorado 81149. The property includes lots 1 and 2 in block 30. The property will be sold on an "as-is" basis, without any warranties of any kind and has a minimum bid reserve.

For information and full bid information please contact Iris Garcia, Administrator at 719-655-2232 or by email at townclerk@townofsaguache.org.

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slvbhg.org/mobile

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CLUES ACROSS

1. Cyprinids
6. Icelandic literary works
10. Break in half
14. Japanese mushroom
15. Have offspring
17. Not feeling well
19. A very large body of water
20. Witch
21. Behemoth
22. Speak negatively of
23. Absence of difficulty
24. Pampering places
26. Drives
29. Truck that delivers beer
31. Makes
32. A team's best pitcher
34. ___ Carvey, comedian
35. Seas
37. S. American plants
38. Time zone
39. Deviate
40. No longer are
41. Moving in slowly
43. Patrick and Glover are two
45. Living quarters
46. Taxi
47. Pancake made of buckwheat flour
49. Swiss river
50. Not happy
53. Have surgery
57. Formal withdrawal
58. Give way to anxiety
59. Greek war god
60. 2K lbs.
61. Word of farewell

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			

CLUES DOWN

1. ___ ex Machina
2. WWII diarist Frank
3. Concluding passage
4. Supplement with difficulty
5. Title of respect
6. Cubic measures
7. Remnant
8. ___ Jones
9. Salts of acetic acid
10. Long, upholstered seat
11. Capital of Okinawa Prefecture
12. A one-time aspect of Egyptian sun god Ra
13. Prefix denoting "in a"
16. Propels upward
18. What we are talking about
22. Prosecutor
23. Employee stock ownership plan
24. He brings kids presents
25. Burmese monetary unit
27. Hurries
28. Injury remnant
29. Tooth caregiver
30. Elvis backup singer Betty Jane
31. "The Partridge Family" actress Susan
33. Midway between east and southeast
35. Most excellent
36. Heat units
37. Possess legally
39. Food items
42. Skeletal structures
43. Challenge to do something bold
44. Blood type
46. Sammy __, songwriter
47. Farmer (Dutch)
48. Clare Booth __, American writer
49. Piers Anthony's protagonist
50. Malaysian coastal city
51. Hairstyle
52. NY-based department store
53. Geosciences organization (abbr.)
54. Brazilian city
55. Niger-Congo languages
56. Gesture

Solution to last week's puzzle

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

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Wanted: small utility trailer Call Derek 719-580-7846. (12/25)

FALL SALE! 240 Watt Solar Panels Only \$59 Per Watt! Bontragers Variety Store 9726 S. County Road 3 E Monte Vista Co 81144. (12/04)

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39 Sporting Goods
WANTED TO BUY: Black powder firearms, working or not. Will repair. Join SLV Renegades (480)236-6727. (12/02)

41 Farm Equipment
For Sale: Hay & Tillage Equipment Call 657-2472 (12/2)

50 Livestock
HERITAGE BREED TURKEY - Bourbon Reds from free range parents. \$25 for 1 - \$20 each additional. 10+weeks - ready to butcher at 28 weeks (toms average 30 lbs, hens 15 lbs.) Straight run only. 719-850-2832 (12/02)

High Altitude HEREFORD BULL SALE: Sat. Dec 12, 2020, 1pm. at Valley Livestock Auction, Monte Vista, CO. Selling 26 Horned Coming 2 Yr. Old Bulls. PAP, Fert, Trich, PI-BVD Tested, and 18 Comm. Replacement Heifer Calves. Videos of Bulls online at mikefuchsherefords.com. Mike Fuchs Herefords 719-657-2519. (12/09)

59 Vehicles Wanted
CASH ON THE SPOT FOR JUNK CARS & TRUCKS: We pickup, no title ok. 719-937-7935. (TFN2-21)

2 Vans
For Sale: 2011 Dodge Caravan runs well 230k needs transmission work. Good Winter Tires. \$1000.00 OBO 970-531-3232. (11/11)

65 Professional Services
LICENSED PLUMBER does all types of plumbing repairs and plumbing remodels at reasonable rates. Quick service. Call anytime, available weekends and evenings. 719-580-0033 or 719-376-2593. (11/25)TFN)

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2020 US Capitol Christmas tree brings joy to all

A Christmas gift from Colorado is on its way to Washington, DC. An approximately 60 ft. Engelmann Spruce from the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison (GMUG) National Forests is set to serve as the 2020 US Capitol Christmas tree. After a year of planning and a careful selection process, the tree was harvested Nov. 5 from the largest Administrative Unit in the Forest Service's Rocky Mountain Region. Upon completion of the harvest, the tree was sent to Montrose for wrapping and is now in the process of making a small, modified tour across the state before arriving at its final destination where it will grace the West Lawn of the U.S. Capitol Building for the duration of the holiday season. Once in front of the Capitol Building, the magnificent Spruce will be decorated with dozens of handmade ornaments sent in to the GMUG headquarters in Delta by hundreds of proud Coloradoans. The theme for 2020 is "Experience Your Nature."

On Thursday, Nov. 12, the Tree's motorcade made a one-hour stop in Gunnison at the Gunnison Community School. There was tangible excitement in the air when the motorcade made its way down the street and began to turn into the school parking lot. Pictures were being taken everywhere by eager onlookers and the squeals of delighted children could be heard. Once stopped, the magnificent truck's horn was blown to announce the tree's arrival. The atmosphere was one of cheer and festivity. Eager spectators took in the glorious sight that had just arrived and children and adults alike were captivated. Those who were in attendance included locals, students, plenty of Forest Service personnel and representatives from the National Wild Turkey Federation. Dozens of pictures were being taken, and a small choral of students could be heard softly singing carols (albeit through masks.) Participants also had the opportunity to take a Sharpie and sign the brightly colored banners that lined the carefully arranged trailer.

The 2020 tree is the fourth to come from Colorado. The first came from the Routt National Forest in 1990, the second from the Pike National Forest in 2000, the third from the White River National Forest in 2012. This year's tree is also special because 2020 marks the 50th anniversary of the U.S. Capitol Christmas tree. Many will recall that the Denver Broncos won Super Bowl 50 in 2016.

Land, Water and People

BY HELEN SMITH

Hence, it would seem that 50 is a good number for the state.

The treasured tradition of sending a tree to the Nations' Capitol dates back to 1964 when the Speaker of the House John W. McCormack (D-MA) had a live tree planted on the Capitol lawn. The tree lived for three years before succumbing to wind and root damage. In 1970, the U.S. Forest Service was commissioned to provide a tree to serve as a national symbol of the Christmas spirit known as "The People's Tree." Every year since that time, trees from National Forests across the nation have traveled to Washington. In addition, the Forest Service partners with the respective state forest agencies to provide approximately 70 companion trees that decorate the many Federal offices throughout Washington, DC.

The tree is set to travel on to Salida, then on to Denver. From Denver, it will then make its way across the nation. A stop is also scheduled in Asheville, North Carolina. Lastly, the motorcade will travel to Joint Base Andrews and then go to its final place of displayed splendor. A tree lighting ceremony in early December will mark the official end of the journey.

While a little outside of the boundaries of the San Luis Valley and the Rio Grande National Forest, this event is still a worthy occasion to celebrate the season and also what makes this part of the world special. The U.S. Capitol Christmas tree serves as a symbol of "Peace on Earth." It offers a bit of hope and happiness to those who have an opportunity to view it. In this year where so many hard and often sad things have occurred, it would seem that perhaps everyone could use a little more joy in their lives. Arguably, this tree really is a symbol of the very meaning of Christmas. It is a reminder to pause and remember what the season is truly all about.

To view the Harvest Ceremony video, visit the GMUG Facebook page. For live tracking of the journey, visit www.capitoltreetracker.com.

Helen Smith is the San Juan Mountains Association Visitor Information Specialist at the Rio Grande National Forest in Monte Vista. She is a native of the San Luis valley.



Photo courtesy NFS

This year's Capitol Christmas tree comes from outside of Montrose, in the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests. It will travel through Colorado through Sunday before heading to Washington, D.C.

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