



Returning to campus

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VanWinkle takes the reins for CCA

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LOCAL NEWS... LOCAL VIEWS

JULY 10, 2020

\$1

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SLV Today

Alamosa Farmers Market

ALAMOSA—The Alamosa Farmers Market welcomes locals and visitors to downtown Alamosa, Saturdays at the corner of 6th and State. From 8 am to 8:30 am, all immune compromised members of the community are welcome.

From 8:30 AM to 1:30 PM for all other patrons.

We will be enforcing social distancing so please wear and mask, limit the number of members of your household coming to the market, and be prepared to be efficient with your time at the market.

SDC BOE Meeting

MOSCA — The Sangre de Cristo School Board of Education regular monthly meeting will be on Tuesday July 14th, 2020 in the school library at 8751 Lane 7 North, Mosca CO with an Executive Session from 6:00 to 6:30 p.m. and an Open Session starting at 6:30 p.m.

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SLV WEATHER



Mostly Sunny 93/ 47

Sat: Sunny 92 / 51

Sun: Sunny/Cloudy 89 / 51

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Tickets on sale for Round-UP

ALAMOSA – The 2020 Alamosa Round-UP is “Taking the Leap!” The Round-UP will go on, August 27-30, 2020 as scheduled.

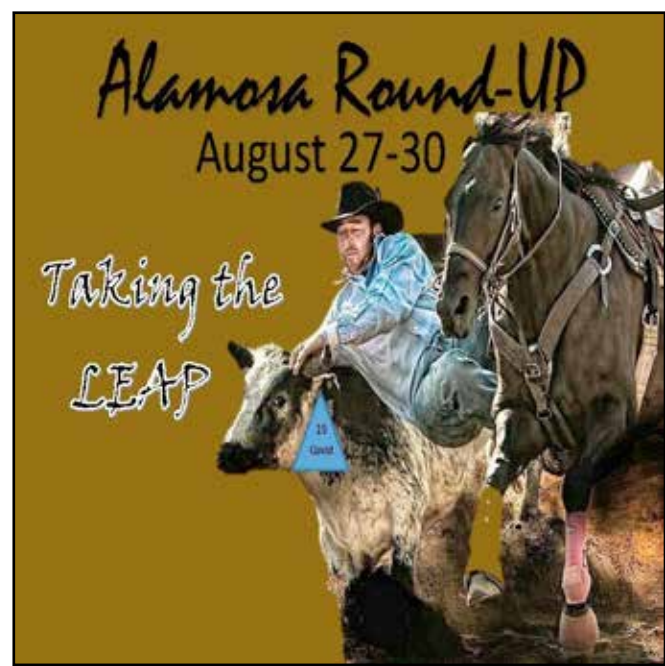
The coronavirus has stolen a lot from the community this year already, the Alamosa Round-UP is committed to not being one of those stolen things. “This community and the people that live here mean a lot to us, this is home and this event is

important,” said Dawn Honeycutt. “Our Western Heritage is important, and having a fun, family friendly, community event is important.”

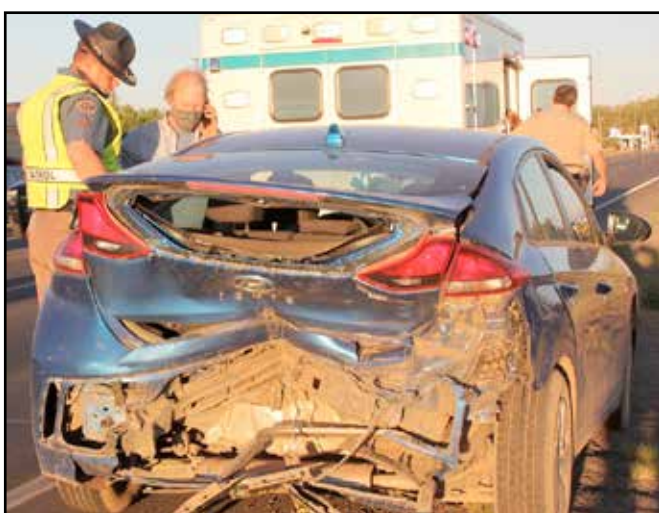
The crowd size and ticket sales will be very limited, so that the Governor’s guidelines can be adhered to. (less than 15% of normal capacity) The Round-UP is working with the Health Dept. to ensure the safety of all involved. Social distancing and the

wearing of masks are recommended.

Tickets are on sale now, online only. Visit the Alamosa Round-UP website (www.alamosa-roundup.com) for tickets to the PRCA Rodeos, the Chancey Williams and the Younger Brothers Band Concert, the demolition derbies and to sign up for the mutton busting. No tickets will be sold at the events, and the tickets are expected to go fast and



Rear-end accident at Victoria and Main



Courier photos by Keith R. Cerny
An Alamosa County Sheriff's Department vehicle was involved in a rear end collision about 7:45 p.m. Thursday at the corner of Main and Victoria. Details were not available but there were no apparent injuries from drivers of either vehicle. Alamosa Police Department, ACSO, Colorado State Patrol and Alamosa Fire responded to the scene to deal with the investigation and traffic control.

SLV Physicians bring mask issue to Board of County Commissioners

By STEPHEN JIRON
Interim Courier Editor
ALAMOSA — The Alamosa Board of County Commissioners elected to make a lateral step, ‘strongly’ recommending the use of masks in public spaces following a presentation from Dr. Kris Steinberg and Dr. Lauren Sonderegger regarding a mask mandate in Alamosa County.

Ultimately the presentation would not achieve it’s intended goal as the Board elected instead to move forward with another recommendation much like the recommendation from March.

Doctors Steinberg and Sonderegger presented to the Alamosa City Council last Wednesday and were referred to the County Public Health Department. This

week they brought the issue before the Alamosa Board of County Commissioners.

Steinberg began the presentation saying, “We are officially representing Valley-Wide Health Systems and come before you to ask that you consider passing a municipal order for Alamosa County mask-wearing in public spaces to help control the spread of the novel coronavirus.” Steinberg used materials from various sources to make her case including the Center for Disease Control (CDC), The Colorado Department of Health and Environment (CDPHE) The medical journal The Lancet, the Dean of the Colorado School of Public Health (Jonathan M. Samet M.D.) the Hospital Association, the Medical Association and

the Nurses Association. “In the last two weeks, Alamosa and Adams County share the highest infection rate in Colorado.” Steinberg attributed the large rates to an influx of travelers from Arizona and Texas, both states with large infection numbers. According to The Lancet study, masks reduce transmission by 85%.

Sonderegger began by acknowledging the suffering of the economy nationwide and within the San Luis Valley before going on to say “We believe as public health stewards that it’s all of our jobs to protect local business workers their employees and contribute to everybody’s community health by wearing masks while being in businesses so that we can safely reopen.” ■ See MASK page 3

COVID FAQ



SAN LUIS VALLEY — Four new cases for the SLV were identified on Thursday: 1 each from Alamosa and Conejos Counties, and 2 from Mineral County. The total number of cumulative cases is now 450. As of Thursday, there were currently 39 known active cases in our region. Numbers are updated weekdays at slvemergency.org/slv-covid-19/.

A few more answers to frequently asked questions:

Q. I am asymptomatic. I was tested for COVID after close contact with someone who tested positive, and my test came back negative, when can I get tested again?

A. If you have been instructed to quarantine, you should continue to quarantine even if you have a negative test. If you develop symptoms later within the 14-day quarantine period, check with your doctor or one of the nurse lines about whether you should be tested again.

Q. Why can't everyone who wants a test get a test?

A. In general, a test is not necessary unless you have had close contact with a known positive case or are symptomatic. For more information, see <https://covid19.colorado.gov/covid-19-in-colorado/about-covid-19/testing-for-covid-19>.

Q. What is the status of hospitalizations?

A. There have been 41 SLV patients hospitalized with COVID-19 since the beginning of the pandemic.* Hospitalization rates lag behind reported cases by 1-3 weeks. We have seen peaks in positive cases in late May and mid-June. During the last two weeks of June, the average number of COVID patients in the

SLVH RMC hospital on any given day was 6. The number of COVID-19 patients in the hospital have been trending down over the past week. (*The jump from 31 to 41 total hospitalizations that we reported earlier this week was a reflection of data tracking delays, not an actual jump on that date. We are looking at better ways to communicate that piece of information in the future.)

If you wish to pursue testing, there are several testing clinics scheduled for July around the Valley. You must call the day before to schedule an appointment:

Tuesday, July 14 from 9-11 at Guadalupe Health Center in Antonito. Call 719-587-2874 on July 13th starting at 8am to schedule an appointment.

Tuesday, July 21 from 8-11 at Mountain Valley School parking lot in Saguache, need to call 719-587-2901 on July 20th starting at 8 am

You may also contact your primary care provider or one of the numbers listed below to begin the screening process:

For symptomatic individuals only, call:
Rio Grande Hospital 719-657-4990
SLV Health Respiratory Clinic 719-589-2511 ext. 9

For asymptomatic and symptomatic individuals who have had contact with a confirmed COVID-19 positive individual, call:
Valley-Wide Health Systems 719-589-3658 ext. 9 (M-F), 719-589-2562 (Sat/Su)

For general (non-medical) SLV COVID-19 related questions: slevepr@alamosacounty.org, 719-480-8719

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Record

OBITUARIES

Maurice Weir Smith

SANFORD – Maurice Weir Smith, 94 of Glendale, passed away peacefully, Saturday, July 4, 2020, at home with his family by his side. He was born in Sanford CO on Oct. 24, 1925.

His early years were spent on The V Heart Ranch near Sanford. He talked of those years and putting up hay with teams of horses and the Mormon hay derricks that use to be a common sight around the southern part of the Valley. In 1939 his father bought the McKelvey Farm west of La Jara on the Capulin highway. He was very fond of those years, a much more mechanized period he and his siblings welcomed. He loved the farm and the life that it offered into his teen years. He also developed a passion for airplanes. His brother Thales talked about the many airplane models hanging from the ceiling in the bedroom they shared. Thales joked about how many times he got tangled up in "Those d—n Airplanes".

When he started driving and saved enough money he took flight instruction at Bergman Field in Alamosa and received his private pilot license in his late teens. After the war broke out and he graduated from high school in La Jara he enlisted in The Army Air Corps with dreams "like so many young men of the time" of becoming a fighter pilot. He spoke of the challenge of how many friends in the program got "washed out" and the constant threat of being next. Any minor slip up and you were gone!

He graduated from Advanced Fighter School and received his Wings Sept. 8, 1945. He had orders to a P51 Squadron in his hands, went on leave for a week after graduation and when he got back from leave all orders were cancelled. The war ended and they didn't need fighter pilots any longer. He never



got to fly a P51.

While on military active duty for two more years he continued to ferry military planes across the United States. He enrolled at Northern Arizona College into a Military Program to continue his education. While he was stationed at Williams Air Field in Mesa, AZ he met his future wife Sylvia Jean Hancock of Mesa AZ. He was discharged and they were married on June 5, 1947. After being discharged from active duty he continued to serve in the Air Force Reserve for 27 years when he retired as a Lt. Colonel.

Maurice and Sylvia made their home on the family farm partnering with his father. Four children were born to this union. After 14 years on the family farm, needing more production for their survival, Maurice bought a farm in the Carmel District where they farmed until the children finished school. They sold the Carmel farm in 1975 and moved to Alamosa. He began selling and appraising real estate until 1994 at which point he and Sylvia retired and moved to Glendale AZ. While in the valley he flew charter flights for the Alamosa airport. He had a commercial license with an instrument rating and flew for Coors for the weather modification program. During this time some farmers in the area gave him a lot of grief about how he was changing the

Sylvia Cook

BLANCA — Sylvia Cook, 79, went to her eternal rest on June 2, 2020, at her home with her loving friend by her side. Sylvia was born on May 3, 1941, in Louisiana. Sylvia was a kind, generous and loving person. A friend to all. Some of her hobbies included going shopping, going on drives, going gambling and being with her husband's friends.

Sylvia is survived by her husband Palmer



Book of Canon City, CO; her special friend whom she loved like a daughter



weather. He retained his pilot's license and passed flight physicals into his early 70's.

Preceding him in death wife Sylvia, his father Weir, mother Annie, brother Thales, brother Kelly, sister JoAnne and son Michael. He is survived by his children, Vianne (Richard) Coleman of Council Bluffs IA, Michelle Smith of Glendale AZ, and Mark (Markie) Smith of Alamosa CO. His Grandchildren Cari (Jordan) Harger of Overland Park KS, Andrew (Dana) Coleman of Papillon NE, Zachary (Aimee) Smith of Lakewood CO, Cheyenne (Tim) Whipple of Phoenix AZ. There are nine great-grandchildren. The family requests no flowers or donations, please. For those who would like to share a memory of offer condolences to the Smith Family, you can go to <https://www.meldrummortuary.com/obituaries/maurice-smith-16/>. A celebration of life in Alamosa will be held at a later date. To send flowers or a memorial gift to the family of Maurice Weir Smith please visit our Sympathy Store.

Hoping there are airplanes in Heaven

Mary Ortega of Alamosa, CO. She is also survived by many cousins and friends.

Sylvia was preceded in death by her parents.

Cremation was chosen, and per her wishes, Sylvia's ashes will be spread in Blanca at a later date. To leave online condolences please visit romerofuneralhomes.com. The care of arrangements has been entrusted to Romero Funeral Home of Alamosa.

Southern Colorado office at 719-544-5720, ext. 304.

ALAMOSA — TOPS (Taking Off Pounds Sensibly) CO 568, Alamosa, a non-profit weight loss organization, meets every Tuesday evening at the College Heights Baptist Church at 2035 Church Avenue in Alamosa. Weigh-in is at 5:30 p.m. with an informative meeting at 6:15. Anyone interested in having weight loss support is welcome to attend a free meeting or call Doris at 589-6396 for more information.

ALAMOSA — Search and Rescue meetings are the fourth Tuesday at the Alamosa County Sheriff Office, 1315 17th St., at 6 p.m. Anyone interested in becoming a volunteer is welcome. Call Suzi at 719-588-9236.

ALAMOSA — The San Luis Valley Photography Club meets the first Wednesday at the Alamosa Public Library at 6:30 p.m. Contact Stephen Jensen at 379-0001 or slv-

Jack Gilbert Carmichael 86

MOSCA — Jack Carmichael was born July 17, 1933, in Indianapolis, Indiana to Gilbert William Carmichael and Mildred Imo Sett. Jack was an Army Veteran. Married his wife Mary Lou Carmichael 11 years ago. Survived by his wife Mary Lou Carmichael, Son Jack (Misty) Carmichael, Sister Janice (Bruce) Roberts and Brother Dick Carmichael. Grandkids are Karley, Paton, Cindy and Kristy Carmichael.



Jack is preceded in death by mother and father, sister Mildred Carmichael, brother Bob



Carmichael, daughters Jacklyn Carmichael and Misty Dawn Carmichael.

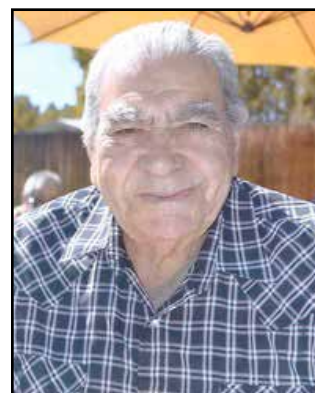
Cremation was chosen. Service will be held on July 13, 2020, at 1 pm at the Hooper Baptist Church.

Levi J Romero

MONTEVISTA — Levi J Romero 89 passed away July 4, 2020, at the Colorado State Veterans Center in Monte Vista, Colorado. He was born August 28, 1930, to Bravlio Romero and Cleotilde Manchego. Levi married his beloved wife, Helen Mascarenas, on August 26, 1953.

Levi belonged to the Monte Vista VFW an American Legion in Cheyenne, Wyoming. He was an Army Veteran in the Korean War. He was a cement finisher for C & W Construction for many years. He enjoyed fishing, listening, and dancing to Spanish music, shooting pool and going for walks, but most of all he loved spending time with his family.

Levi is survived by his sister Clorinda Mascarenas, his children Manual (Toni) Romero, Leonard (Linda) Romero, Leroy (Olivia) Romero, Yvonne (Andres) Arrendondo, and



Ralph (Rosie) Romero.

Levi was preceded in death by his parents and his siblings Edith Gold, Fred Inez Romero, Mary Martinez, Adam Romero, Reuben Romero, Emma Romero, and Lucy Lobato.

Levi was very well known and loved by everyone who came across his path. He was a genuinely nice, gentle soul and will be missed by everyone who knew him.

A Memorial Service will be held at Strohmayer's Funeral Home on Satur-



day, July 11, 2020, at 10:00 a.m. Due to the COVID pandemic, a graveside service with only the immediate family will follow.

Arrangements in care of Strohmayer's Funeral Home.

Joseph Agapito "Pete" Ortega

SAN LUIS — Joseph Agapito "Pete" Ortega, 92, went to his eternal rest on July 8, 2020, under Hospice Care with his loving family by his side. Pete came into the world on October 19, 1927, in San Luis, Colorado the son of Jose B. Ortega and Cedula Roybal Ortega. Pete served and was a veteran of the United States Navy. After completing his duties and time in the service he was Honorably discharged and went on to marry the love of his life, Ida Serna on August 29, 1949. He was a member of the UCC of San Pedro and the V.F.W. Post #6101. Pete was a loving husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, brother, uncle, cousin and friend who enjoyed gardening, being outdoors, watching baseball and spend-



ing time with his family and friends.

Survivors include his wife Ida Ortega of San Luis, CO; daughter Katherine Ortega of San Pedro, CO; Larry Ortega of Alamosa, CO; 4 grandchildren, 9 great-grandchildren, sister Donna Medina of Albuquerque, NM. He is also survived by many nieces, nephews, cousins and friends.

Pete was preceded in

death by his parents Jose and Cedula Ortega, daughter Evelyn Ortega, great-grandson Carlitos Romero, daughter-in-law Priscilla Ortega, three sisters Margaret Sanchez, Ellen Abeyta, Dorris Rogers, two brothers Eppie Ortega and Eddie Ortega.

Cremation was chosen and services will be held at a later date. To leave online condolences please visit romerofuneralhomes.com. The care of arrangements has been entrusted to Romero Funeral Home of Alamosa.

ONGOING VALLEY MEETINGS

ALAMOSA — The San Luis Valley Military Family Support Group meets the fourth Tuesday at 7 p.m. in Alamosa. For more info call Vicki Jones at 852-3123.

ALAMOSA — Sierra Blanca Chapter #43, Order of The Eastern Star, meets on the first and third Mondays, at 7:30 p.m. at the Alamosa Masonic Hall, 512 San Juan Ave. Call Sharon at 589-4320.

ALAMOSA — La Leche League of the San Luis Valley holds its monthly meetings on the fourth Saturday at 11 a.m. at Hospice del Valle, 524 Main St. in Alamosa. Pregnant and nursing women are welcome to attend with their children and babies. Please call 587-3657.

ALAMOSA — The Alamosa Kiwanis Club meets on the second, third and fourth Thursdays at noon at IHOP. Contact: Amanda Wilkinson, 719-589-2564 or email amanda@alamosastatebank.com

ALAMOSA — The Optimist Club of Alamosa meets at Nino's Restaurant in Alamosa the first and third Tuesdays at noon. Contact the club at alamosaoptimistclub@gmail.com or President Dawn Melgares at 719-580-0178. Visitors and new members are welcome.

ALAMOSA — The Alamosa Rotary Club meets every Monday at noon at Juanitos in Alamosa. Contact Dean Swift, 589-3499 or dean@deanswiftseed.com

SOUTH FORK — Kiwanis meets every Thursday at 8 a.m. at the Feelin' Good Coffeehouse in South Fork. Contact: Karen Miller, 719-873-5466 or email mkmiller@aol.com

ALAMOSA — The Alzheimer's Caregiver's Support Group meets on the second Thursday from 11 a.m. to noon, at the Alamosa Public Library, 300 Hunt Ave. Call the

VALLEY COURIER POLICY ON OBITUARIES

The Valley Courier charges a flat fee of \$30 for each obituary published. Pending arrangements or death notices are run at no charge.

This charge affects funeral homes, as well as family or other representatives, that directly place obituaries. All paid obituaries are published on our web site, www.alamosanews.com, for no additional fee.

In the event the newspaper errors in publishing an obit, corrections will be made and the obit will be rerun. If the errors are on the part of the submitting party, an additional fee will be assessed.

PENDING OBITUARIES

John Colin Murphree

CRESTONE — John Colin Murphree, passed away July 8, 2020. Arrangements are pending and will be announced through Romero Funeral Home of Monte Vista.

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Valley News

SLV AAB discusses spending entitlement funds

STAFF REPORT
ALAMOSA — The Alamosa County Airport Advisory Board met at 8:15 a.m. on July 9, to share updates and plans for the future. Big items on the agenda included the airport's upcoming September inspection and achieving a record 10,000 enplanements this past year.

Will Hickman, Airport Manager, stated: "This is a huge milestone for this airport, as it is the first time in history we've reached this number." With this achievement comes eligibility for a whopping \$1 million dollar grant and partnership with a larger airline. The Department of Transportation ap-

proval is pending and should be decided on by August 1, 2020.

The Board spent much of the June 9 meeting discussing what should be done with the grant money. There are still questions surrounding whether or not there are spending rules and deadlines for this money. These questions hope

to be answered by the Board's next meeting. Until then, possible actions include, spending the money on — more seating inside the airport, repaving airport hangars, informational highway signs, snow and ice removal equipment, and a building to store that equipment in.

The Board also spent

time preparing for September's routine inspection, which Hickman believes the airport will pass "with flying colors."

In other news, the airport is looking to hire a part-time aircraft refueler. Chris Martinez thanked Jessica Taylor, Airport Operations Manager, and Hickman for their exceptional

implementation of social distancing measures. Advisory Chairwoman, Donna Wehe, encouraged airport staff and employees to reach out regarding preparation for the inspection and how to spend the grant money.

The Board's next meeting will be on September 10, at 8:15 a.m.

US 160 asphalt overlay job to begin west of South Fork in south-central Colorado

MINERAL & RIO GRANDE COUNTIES

— The Colorado Department of Transportation announces improvements to US Highway 160 beginning the week of July 13. The project will improve approximately 11 miles of US 160 in Mineral and Rio Grande Counties, beginning west of South Fork at Mile Point 185 and ending at near the Wolf Creek Tunnel, MP 174.

The work consists of milling and overlaying old worn asphalt, improving shoulders, replacing guardrail, and replacing faded sign panels. The project was contracted to Oldcastle SW Group, and is expected to be completed by the end of October 2020.

The project will greatly enhance safety for travelers on this narrow two-lane highway. When completed motorists will experience a smoother roadway with improved safety. Busy highways must bear heavy commercial truck traffic as well as passenger vehicles. About every 10-15 years asphalt roads need to have their top layers milled and resurfaced. Periodic resurfacing of the top layer of asphalt and timely repairs can greatly extend the life of the highway pavement.

TRAVEL IMPACTS
During work hours motorists are asked to use caution when approaching and driving through the work zone. Travelers are urged to check COtrip for updated traffic impacts, possible width restrictions,



and speed reductions. Currently, impacts for the project include:

Crews will begin work at the east end of the project limits, MP 185, near South Fork, with operations advancing west toward the Wolf Creek Tunnel.

Project work hours are daylight hours, Monday through Friday. No weekend work is currently anticipated. Expect travel delays of up to 15 minutes.

Motorists will encounter brief stops with single-lane alternating traffic, guided by flagging personnel.

The speed limit is reduced to 40 mph through the work zone.

Flagging personnel will be on sight to direct travelers through the area as construction equipment enters and exits the work

zone. Drive with extreme caution.

PROJECT AND TRAVEL INFORMATION

For additional information about this project, contact the project team. Project Hotline: 970-426-5795

Project email: us160overlay2020@gmail.com

Project web page: www.codot.gov/projects/us160-resurfacing-ewolfcreek

Travel conditions visit: COtrip.org, sign up for alerts, or call 511

Connect with us on social media: Twitter @coloradodot and Facebook facebook.com/coloradodot

REMEMBER: SLOW FOR THE CONE ZONE

The following tips are to help you stay safe while traveling through maintenance and construction

work zones.

Do not speed in work zones. Obey the posted speed limits.

Stay Alert! Expect the unexpected.

Watch for workers. Drive with caution.

Anticipate guidance from flagging personnel and merge when directed to do so.

Avoid using mobile devices such as phones while driving in work zones.

Allow ample space between you and the car in front of you.

Expect delays, especially during peak travel times.

Don't change lanes unnecessarily.

Turn on headlights so that workers and other drivers can see you.

Be especially alert at night while driving in work zones.

Be patient! COVID-19

Safe transportation infrastructure is essential for emergency first responders and freight drivers as Colorado navigates the COVID-19 pandemic. With that in mind, road maintenance and construction continue on CDOT projects with social distancing and other health safety measures to reduce COVID-19 exposure on the worksite. The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment announced guidelines for construction activities. The public is urged to join the campaign for #DoingMyPartCO by practicing social distancing, wearing face masks, staying at home

when possible, and avoiding nonessential travel. With fewer vehicles on the

roads, CDOT crews will be able to work more efficiently and safely.

CSFP to hand out food boxes

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) works to improve the health of low income persons at least 60 years of age by supplementing their diets with nutritious USDA Foods. Individuals must be at or below 130% of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines.

Food packages include a variety of foods, such as nonfat dry milk, UHT 1% low fat milk, juice, farina, oats, ready-to-eat cereal, rice, pasta, peanut butter, dry beans, canned meat, poultry, or fish, and canned fruits and vegetables.

This food box is free to those who meet the income guidelines.

Costilla County Commodity Program will be in Alamosa on Tuesday, July 28th, from 10:00am to 12:00pm, at the Knights of Columbus Hall, 1112 8th Street, Alamosa.

Please bring a picture ID. Remain in your vehicles. The food package will be delivered to your vehicle.

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Pueblo foundation grants 10 SLV groups

PUEBLO— The Robert Hoag Rawlings Foundation Board of Directors recently approved 36 grants for a total of \$652,425 and awarded \$50,000 in college scholarships to various nonprofit organizations and higher education institutions throughout Southeastern Colorado.

Through the Foundation's grant application process, the following San Luis Valley organizations were awarded grants:

- Monte Vista Ski Hi Event Center to help remodel new multi-use event and conference center that serves the entire San Luis Valley
- San Luis Valley Theatre Company to rebuild the stage
- Land Rights Council (San Luis) to inform community of land rights
- Alamosa Live Music Association to support live music performances throughout the Valley
- Boys and Girls Club of the

San Luis Valley for program support

- Tu Casa (Monte Vista) to provide medical equipment for sexual assault victims

- Tri-County Senior Center (Monte Vista) for elevator replacement in their senior housing facility and commercial kitchen upgrades to support their valley-wide senior meal program

- Costilla County Library (San Luis & Blanca) for new computers for library patrons

- La Puente Home (Alamosa) to help remodel kitchen unit in Adelante Family Resource Center

- Creede Repertory Theater to support their Young Audience Outreach program to underserved communities throughout southern Colorado

The Rawlings Foundation gives yearly scholarships to the following institutions to help students residing in the 18-county area including Adams State University

and Trinidad State College.

The Robert Hoag Rawlings Foundation is a private family foundation with a mission to enhance Southeastern Colorado and the San Luis Valley through arts, education and culture. The foundation was created in 1988 to find ways to give help in the communities in Southeastern Colorado whose citizens were loyal subscribers to The Pueblo Chieftain/Star-Journal Publishing Corporation, which was owned by the family for over 100 years.

Nonprofits that are in the following counties are eligible for funding: Pueblo, Mineral, Chaffee, Sagua-che, Rio Grande, Conejos, Fremont, Custer, Alamosa, Costilla, Huerfano, Las Animas, Crowley, Otero, Kiowa, Bent, Prowers and Baca.

Grant requests for the fall cycle will be accepted on August 1, 2020, with a deadline of September 15, 2020. For more information, please visit www.RHRfoundation.org

Mask

Continued from Page 1

She then said that Arizona and Texas were examples of what could happen if a state reopens too soon. She went on to say that some local businesses expressed the desire for a mandate so there would be teeth behind a 'masks required' sign.

Sonderregger also agreed that she, like many others, does not like being told what to do by anyone much less the government but contrasted that mindset, "no one ever minds being asked to help their neighbor, no one minds being asked to help their community — a place that they would like to see remain healthy... it is I wear a mask because I respect you, I respect your health."

The presentation swayed Public Health Director Della Cox-Viera who felt a mandate could be a helpful measure for the local schools within the county as a new season approaches. "We are actively working with our educational partners to reopen so kids can get back to school. And all of that conversation

is truly dependent on our ability as a community to keep transmission on a low enough level so that it's safe for kids to stay in school, so it's safe for parents to stay at work, so it's safe for all of the functions of a community to be possible. A mask order would greatly support that."

Commissioner Darius Allen was not in agreement with making the mask order mandatory and also questioned the enforcement of such an order, "I don't have a problem with going with the information we have here and making a recommendation... what I do have a problem with is making it an order to where you're going 'ok you must wear a mask but there will be no enforcement'."

Della-Cox addressed the enforcement question likening the issue to smoking in public, "There was no expectation that people would be criminalized or even fined for every infraction". The Public Health Director continued on to draw a

parallel to the stay at home order from months ago, "I, unfortunately, had to ask the city police department to follow up on a handful of those situations, and everybody got used to it."

Commissioner Michael Yohn cast doubt on the efficacy of masks, "You can have these masks on 24 hours a day, take it off for one hour and that may be the one hour you get your infection."

With numbers in Alamosa flattening out from the recent outbreaks, Yohn and Allen were unwilling to move forward with any mandate, instead businesses were encouraged to self-manage any restrictions they place on their customers. "They have the authority to put on their front door, just like 'No Shoes, No Shirt, No Service'" said Allen.

The end result was a strong recommendation to visitors and residents of Alamosa to wear a mask passing with Commissioner Helen Sigmond in dissent.

Opinion

God Bless America...

HOLLYWOOD— God Bless America, and how's everybody?

Arizona and Texas reported huge spikes in Covid infections Tuesday, setting off a panic south of the border. Mexican citizens lined up their cars across the roads entering Mexico, blocking Americans from entering. So, Trump finally got Mexico to pay for building the wall, Buick by Buick.

President Trump told reporters Wednesday that he'll warn state governors to re-open schools this September and he will cut off their federal funding for education if they don't do it. Trump is lobbying hard to re-open the schools. He's determined to prove he could have passed the SAT himself.



Argus Hamilton

The Justice Department ordered extra security for Jeffrey Epstein's pimp Ghislane Maxwell after she was transferred to a Brooklyn federal jail following her arrest last Friday. Last year, Epstein died in federal custody after his arrest. For a switch, HE was the one taken too early in life.

L.A. health officials advised residents to stay indoors if possible due to poor air quality because of the summer heat. July always marks the start of smog season. The Los Angeles air quality this week is so bad, that whenever Snoop Dogg rolls down his window, the smoke actually pours INTO the car.

The Weather Channel reported a brutal heat wave in the Desert Southwest Wednesday that sent areas into triple-digit temperatures. Arizona is boiling under one hundred and twenty degree heat. Phoenix is so hot that street vandals are putting the copper wiring back into the air conditioners.

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse released a study showing that twenty-five percent of Americans engaged in binge-drinking in the last year. It also shows the richer you are, the more likely you are to binge-drink. This could explain why Joel Osteen has been slurring his words lately.

Mary Trump just wrote a book about uncle Donald titled Too Much and Never Enough: How My Family Created the World's Most Dangerous Man. She claims that Donald paid a guy to take his SAT test for him. No, he didn't wind up going to USC, but he always made it a point to use Trojans.

President Trump in his last two speeches ripped the academia cartel in American colleges for indoctrinating students. The dislike is mutual. According to one poll, President Trump's support from college professors is at zero percent, but that's up fifteen points from where he was a month ago.

Mexico's President López Obrador arrived at the White House Wednesday to sign a trade deal with the United States. It's part of an annual exchange program. Once a year the U.S. president goes to Mexico to visit our jobs and once a year Mexico's president comes to the U.S. to visit his people.

Boeing vice president Niel Golightly resigned after the Cancel Culture discovered an article he wrote 30 years ago opposing the use of women in combat. This is insane. The good news is, if I ever get my talk show on the air, they won't know WHICH jokes I gave Richard Pryor in the late Seventies.

A White House advisor compared people protesting police brutality to civil rights icon Rosa Parks. It so happens I was jogging down the street Sunday a week ago and saw a billboard advertising a Showtime movie about Rosa Parks. With God as my witness, the billboard was on the back of a bus.

The Federal Election Commission forecasted a huge election turnout in November. The FEC revealed that the number-one recipient of write-in votes in the 2016 Trump-Clinton presidential election was Mickey Mouse. And now four years later, it seems like either way, Goofy is going to win.

The New York Times told Joe Biden to



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Letters policy

Letters are welcome and encouraged. All letters submitted for publication in the Valley Courier must be typewritten, signed by the author, and must include a phone number and address where the author can be reached. Letters must not be libelous. The Courier will not run letters that are negative to specific businesses. The Courier's editorial board reserves the right to reject a letter for reasons it believes are appropriate. Letters may be subject to editing to fit available space, or exclusion from the Opinion Page. Please, no poetry. Please send signed letters to P.O. Box 1099, Alamosa, CO 81101 or email them to news@alamosanews.com. Letters to staff, not for publication, should be marked "personal."

Common Sense should be in control

July 4 didn't seem like the anniversary of the nation's birthday.

An impromptu parade was nice, but many people didn't know it was going to happen.

There was no pancake breakfast, no fireworks and emotions downtown weren't exactly celebratory.

I agree the coronavirus calls for widespread concern, but we need to know more about how it's spread before too many more financial losses are felt by the general public.

In addition, we have "Black Lives Matter" causing problems with law enforcement.

It goes on and on and TV doesn't make it better.

The printed news does, to a degree, but there are still tensions.

To me, all lives matter and I don't see them in colors.

A friend who has retired as a clinical psychologist agrees, but says, "ethnic people of color."

We are all of color, going all the way from, as an old recording once sang, "A Whiter Shade of Pale" to all shades of people in rap and hip hop.

Hatred is uncomfortable for me. I

make it a habit of not judging people by what they're wearing or their skin color.

Multiple experiences can tell a lot. That's how I feel about the latest televised gloom and doom.

Native Writes



Sylvia Lobato

I have questions.

If talcum powder causes cancer in females, why doesn't it begin in those baby days when small bodies are covered in talc, and why does it occur when grown women suffer uterine cancer and how does the powder get that deep in the body?

People litigate over almost anything and some attorneys want to sue.

No one deserves permanent, life-threatening injuries over political differences.

If someone is armed, he or she should be trained to use that firearm. County sheriffs offer classes teaching them how.

Firearm enthusiasts decry this, countering that it's just another way for the government to take away guns.

Several years ago, the anti-gun message was shared by people who didn't

like Obama.

"He's coming for your guns," I was warned.

I was prepared, with green chili in the freezer, along with hamburger and corn taco shells. I kept a bottle of Samuel Adams in the back of the fridge.

They exceeded their shelf life and no one came.

Conspiracy theories and false reporting are abundant. One needs to employ common sense. Think about it.

The Coronavirus is bad, but a worldwide depression would be worse. No one knows and punishing John Q. Public for the pandemic is to blame for the psychological depression that besets us all. The restrictions seem like punishment.

Wear a mask, wash your hands regularly and don't go out if you're feeling sick.

And PLEASE, please, let medical science do what it needs to do to cure and control it.

I am asking the governor to lessen restrictions on places people, eat, educate and recreate. Common sense will help a great deal. Stay home if you're feeling sick.

All lives matter. Think.

LETTERS

Risk and reward

Dear Editor,
The following letter is one we had hoped would be published prior to July 4. We have revised it to reflect past tense in hopes that it will appear in a future edition of the Valley Courier.

Risks. Every day we face situations that require us to assess their risk, be they physical, psychological, social, or financial.

Some situations have minimal risk. Some have great risk.

Those 56 delegates to the Continental Congress in those early days of July 1776, faced huge risks in what they were about to do. One can only imagine what went through their minds as they contemplated the risks associated with what they were about to do.

Yet, on July 4, they unanimously voted to sign the Declaration of Independence knowing full well that by signing they were committing an act of treason, punishable by death, against the most powerful sovereign on earth. Yet, as they did this, they made the claim that they were acting according to certain laws, higher laws,

"the laws of nature and of nature's God." Alexander Hamilton further expounded that these laws were written "as with a sunbeam, in the whole volume of human nature, by the hand of divinity itself."

With regard to the parade/protest that occurred in Alamosa on July 4, we also assessed a risk, the risk of attending. Given that we would be out in the Colorado sunshine and fresh air and standing at a safe distance from others, our chances of falling victims to the current virus were very, very low. We took precautions to care for our safety and that of others in attendance. The risk of participating in this event certainly paled in comparison to those taken by the signers of the Declaration of Independence. We chose to attend. We chose to honor those who began a course of events that would forever change the way men and women could formulate and construct the way they were governed.

By our attendance, we honored and stood with those who had the courage to write these words: "And for the sup-

port of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor."

Jay and Susan Robinson, Alamosa

Write them

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Women's Conference Cancelled

The 33rd Annual Women's Conference sponsored by Calvary

Bible Chapel that was scheduled for October 22, 23 and 24 has been postponed due to the concerns of the Corona Virus. We are in the process of rescheduling the conference in the fall of 2021 and have every hope that Kim Meeder of Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch in Bend, Oregon will be able to reschedule with us. Kim rescues abused horses and pairs them with neglected and abused children and their families at no charge. Kim is also a featured speaker on Focus on the Family and has been instrumental in helping start ranches in the Colorado Springs and Denver areas. Watch for an announcement of the new conference date in the Valley Courier and SLV Lifestyles.

Kay Jones for Calvary Bible Chapel

Keith R Cerny
Publisher

Valley Courier

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Lifestyle

How college students can confront returning to campus

The world's response to the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus left no aspect of life untouched. People from all walks of life had to make sacrifices to prevent the spread of the potentially deadly virus, and college students were no exception. Many colleges and universities abruptly canceled in-person classes in mid-March 2020, forcing students to finish their coursework via remote learning. That response had a significant impact on the 2019-20 school year, and the virus figures to affect the upcoming school year just as much. In fact, many colleges and universities are beginning the coming school year early in the hopes that students can

continue their educations on campus but be safely back home by late November, when many scientists are anticipating a second wave of COVID-19 infections will arrive. Schools that are reopening this summer insist that it is safe to do so, and have even indicated their intentions to implement new practices to ensure their campuses are safe and healthy environments in which to learn. For example, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is reconfiguring in-person course instruction to include physical distancing provisions. Small classes will meet in larger spaces, while lectures may be delivered remotely.

Despite such measures, some students may still be hesitant to return to campus at a time when so much about the COVID-19 virus remains a mystery. The following are some ways students can confront any nervous feelings they may have about returning to campus for a new school year.

- Determine your options. While many colleges and universities are returning to campus, some may be allowing students to learn remotely. For instance, students with preexisting conditions that make them vulnerable to COVID-19 may be allowed to continue learning from home. Many schools' roadmaps to returning are fluid, so students concerned about

returning to campus likely have options that do not require them to sit out the semester.

- Learn about residential life. Many college students live in dorms that feature double or even triple occupancy rooms. Such an environment will compromise students' ability to practice social distancing. Some schools, including Binghamton University in New York, are converting triple occupancy rooms into double occupancy. Both Binghamton and UNC Chapel Hill also are designating one residential hall as temporary housing for students who test positive for COVID-19. In addition, some schools may be designating certain residential

facilities for at-risk students. Students who want to avoid the dorms should inquire about off-campus, single-person housing.

- Ask about testing. Students have a right to know about COVID-19 testing protocols and should not hesitate to ask what those protocols will be. Due to the fluid nature of schools' roadmaps to return, testing policies may not yet be set in stone, and are likely to evolve as the school year progresses. Students should look into the testing policy specifics and ask if they have any recourse if they feel the testing policy is inadequate.

Students who are hesitant to return to campus this summer or fall can do



People from all walks of life had to make sacrifices to prevent the spread of the potentially deadly virus, and college students were no exception.

their due diligence to determine if they're comfortable going back to campus. BS208206

Community colleges: A better alternative than a gap year

BY LIZ KAPSNER
COVID-19 has disrupted many of our lives, especially high school seniors who were excited to graduate and begin a new chapter at a university in the fall. Much of the four-year experience is about exploring an extensive campus, living in the dorms, attending large lectures, enjoying big events and eating with hundreds of students in the cafeteria. But in the midst of a pandemic, this type of environment may cause more anxiety than excitement for incoming freshman.

Surveys have shown that graduating high school seniors are considering a gap year — delaying their plans to attend a four-year university. But a gap year in 2020 looks much different than it has prior to COVID-19. A traditional gap year typically consists of domestic or world travel and volunteering, gaining real-life experience with an internship, or taking on a full-time job while living at home and saving money for college expenses. Due to the pandemic, travel has been restricted, human interaction limited and increased unemployment has caused economic vulnerability.

But amidst times of uncertainty — whether it's high unemployment and financial instability or not knowing what field to consider for a career — community colleges have been the solution for many young adults.

Below are five reasons to choose a community college over a gap year.

1. Get a head start
If you're not comfortable heading straight into a university just yet, and a gap year no longer seems promising, take the opportunity to check those required general education courses off your list at a community college this summer and fall. Community colleges such as NorthWest Arkansas Community College (NWACC) offers these as well as major-specific courses that can transfer to numerous four-year institutions. And if you decide to only take a few courses over the summer, you'll start your freshman year a few credits ahead, saving you time and money.

2. Closer to home
Leaving home to travel or volunteer for a gap year, or packing up and moving your belongings to a university out of state, may limit your ability to easily get home to your family in case of possible shelter-in-place orders. Community colleges are located within your community and easily accessible with a short drive or if you need to remain home, by a click of a mouse. Being closer to home also gives you assurance that you'll be able to take care of yourself or a loved one if they were to become ill.

3. Quality education at

an affordable price
COVID-19 has caused economic insecurity for many of us, and you, as well as your parents, may not be ready for the financial burden of a high tuition bill. While a normal gap year would offer more job opportunities and time to save up money, the current pandemic has decreased job openings and increased competition.

Community colleges are known for their affordability due to no campus housing fees, food plans and other overhead costs associated with a larger university, as well as more opportunities for students to qualify for financial aid like scholarships and grants. And affordability doesn't mean low quality. NWACC's academic standards are accredited by the Higher Learning Commission, so you can be rest assured that you're earning highly valued credits, certificate or degree.

4. Adaptive and accommodating
Due to their smaller sizes, community colleges can shift and adapt quickly, whether it's to offer new in-demand academic programs or career training, or if it's to swiftly accommodate students and offer different modes of instruction during a pandemic. While you may feel uncertain about the next year, community colleges like NWACC can offer you individual attention and a variety of options — day and evening classes, online, and this fall, a hybrid of in-person and online courses — all to fit fluid life circumstances.

5. Your safety is priority
Choosing a gap year may feel like the safest alternative to living in the dorms or sitting in large lecture halls, but lessening your human contact doesn't have to mean placing your college dreams on hold. Community colleges are able to really tap into students' concerns and provide answers and reassurance when it comes to their safety and academic experience.

With student feedback, NWACC has made plans to welcome students back to campus in the fall while having numerous safety measures in place and contingency plans on hand. NWACC's response to COVID-19 is easily accessible to students, employees and the community online: www.nwacc.edu/coronavirus

It's possible
Life may feel unsettled and your future unclear, but be assured, community colleges continue to make higher education attainable. NWACC and the nation's other community colleges can be your pathway to a bright future with a four-year degree or trade skills and a career that you've envisioned.

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Lifestyle

CDOT launches new seat belt campaign to coincide with Click It or Ticket enforcement beginning July 12

STATEWIDE — Starting Sunday, July 12, the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), the Colorado State Patrol (CSP) and local law enforcement agencies statewide will begin a weeklong Click It or Ticket seat belt enforcement period.

The summer enforcement period also marks the launch of CDOT's latest seat belt safety campaign, Common Bond. The campaign features a variety of contrasting images to underscore that, even though Coloradans hold passionate opinions and may not agree on everything, we can all get behind seat belts. The Common Bond campaign underscores that despite our differences, the majority of Coloradans do buckle up.

As a state, Colorado's seat belt use rate currently sits at 88% — slightly below the national average of 90%.

CDOT's campaign is featured on billboards, posters, bus tails, social media, and radio PSAs.

In 2019, 196 unbuckled drivers and passengers were killed in crashes in the state, accounting for more than half of the 377 total passenger vehicle deaths. The counties that had the most unbuckled deaths in 2019 were Adams (25), Weld (23) and El Paso (15).

In 2018, eight unrestrained fatalities involved children ages 14 or younger.

"Choosing to wear a seat belt can be a life-saving decision. Drivers and passengers wearing seat belts are much more likely to survive a crash. It's an easy choice," said CDOT Executive Director Shoshana Lew. "Please remember to

buckle up and remind fellow drivers and passengers to do the same."

During the statewide Click It or Ticket enforcement last year, 775 unrestrained drivers and passengers were issued citations in communities across Colorado.

"Unfortunately, there are people who continue to believe they do not need to fasten their seat belt. Some drivers think that because there is less traffic or they are only traveling a short distance that seat belts are not always necessary," said Col. Matthew Packard, chief of the CSP. "That couldn't be further from the truth. The reality is, 52% of collisions occur within a 5-mile radius from home, and 69% occur within a 10-mile radius of home. We hope every citation issued is a reminder to always buckle up every time you enter a vehicle."

In 2019, the top five counties with the lowest seat belt use in Colorado were all rural, according to a CDOT study. Those counties include:

- Moffat (71%)
- Cheyenne (74%)
- Pueblo (80%)
- Delta (81%)
- Weld (81%)

COLORADO'S SEAT BELT LAWS

Adults — Colorado has a secondary enforcement law for adult drivers and front seat passengers. Drivers can be ticketed for violating the seat belt law if they are stopped for another traffic violation.

Teens — Colorado's Graduated Drivers Licensing (GDL) law requires all drivers under 18 and their passengers, regardless of their age, to wear seat

belts. This is a primary enforcement, meaning teens can be pulled over simply for not wearing a seat belt or having passengers without seat belts.

Children — Colorado's Child Passenger Safety law is a primary enforcement, meaning the driver can be stopped and ticketed if an officer sees an unrestrained or improperly restrained child under age 16 in the vehicle.

Fines for not buckling up in Colorado start at \$65, and parents or caregivers caught with an improperly restrained child can receive a minimum fine of \$82.

From 2013 to 2017, 30 children aged 0 to 8 were killed in passenger vehicle crashes in Colorado. Among these, more than half were in an improperly used or installed car seat — or no car seat at all. Parents and caregivers can learn more about Colorado child passenger safety laws, recommendations and recalls at CarSeatColorado.com.

WHOLE SYSTEM. WHOLE SAFETY.

To heighten safety awareness, CDOT recently announced its Whole System — Whole Safety initiative. This project takes a systematic statewide approach to safety combining the benefits of CDOT's programs that address driving behaviors, our built environment and the organization's operations. The goal is to improve the safety of Colorado's transportation network by reducing the rate and severity of crashes and improving the safety of all transportation modes. The program has one simple mission—to get everyone home safely.

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VanWinkle in as CCA's Next President

Janie VanWinkle was elected as Colorado Cattlemen's Association's (CCA) 115th President during CCA's Leadership Election and Social Hour on Wednesday, July 1. VanWinkle has served on CCA's Board of Directors for over six years, and has spent countless hours promoting and advocating on behalf of the beef industry. Janie follows Steve



Photo courtesy of CCA
Janie VanWinkle

Wooten, outgoing CCA President, from Kim, Colo.

Janie and her husband, Howard, own and operate VanWinkle Ranch, LLC, located in Mesa County just outside of Fruita, Colo.

Janie has a diverse background, including working in a corporate environment as well as a small-business owner. The VanWinkle family have been active members of CCA for over 30 years.

Janie, Howard, and their son Dean, the fifth generation on the ranch, proudly provide safe and nutritious beef for consumers in their local community and beyond.

"Thank you to CCA's membership for having the confidence in me and allowing me the opportunity to serve as your President. It's certainly very humbling. One of my intentions as President is to focus on our connection to the consumer. I believe that this could help us with a myriad of issues, particularly the

wolf ballot initiative, which is imperative to defeat this November," said VanWinkle. "We need to connect better with our consumers and build trust, because our consumers are the reason we are in business," VanWinkle continued.

As the industry continues to face unprecedented challenges in the coming year, the Colorado Cattlemen's Association will benefit from its strong leadership and its grassroots connectivity to individual beef producers. "I am looking forward to advocating for CCA and its membership throughout Colorado and our country on issues and opportunities pertinent to producer sustainability. I firmly believe we must find new and engaging ways to promote our way of life," said VanWinkle.

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 - 16 Itinerary word
 - 17 Hockey score
 - 18 Unfreeze
 - 20 Pipe unclogger
 - 22 Small amount
 - 23 Bear's refuge
 - 24 Supergirl's horse
 - 27 Like rising bread
 - 30 Sheep's cry
 - 31 Branch
 - 32 "The Winter of — Discontent"
- DOWN**
- 1 007, for one
 - 2 Cultivated, as soil
 - 3 Gawk at
 - 34 Farm enclosure
 - 35 Each
 - 37 To and —
 - 38 Danger
 - 40 Ogre
 - 42 Seine moorage
 - 43 Old-style cry of disgust
 - 44 Cortes foe
 - 46 Carthage neighbor
 - 49 Delhi nursemaid
 - 50 Decimal base
 - 52 Stick together
 - 54 Cellar contents
 - 55 Startled cry
 - 56 Ibsen heroine
 - 57 Smirk's kin
 - 58 Parched
 - 59 Train for boxing

A	N	G	E	L	A		Q	U	O	T	E	S	
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G	N	O	M	E	S		E	N	D	U	R	O	
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- 4 Courteous
- 5 Fast-talked
- 6 Spinks defeater
- 7 Happier
- 8 Human herbivores
- 9 Press
- 10 Breezy greeting
- 11 Moray
- 19 Domestic animal
- 21 Squeeze oranges
- 24 TV network
- 25 Court ritual
- 26 Empire builder
- 27 Textile measure
- 28 Bean curd
- 29 Round tent
- 33 Unhatched fish
- 35 Ashen
- 36 Built
- 39 Dulcimer's kin
- 40 Small amount
- 41 Rules
- 43 Musty-smelling
- 44 Gigi's friend
- 45 Western writer
- 47 Filly's footfall
- 48 Subtle glow
- 49 Pointed tool
- 51 Always, to Poe
- 53 Auditory organ

SUDOKU

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

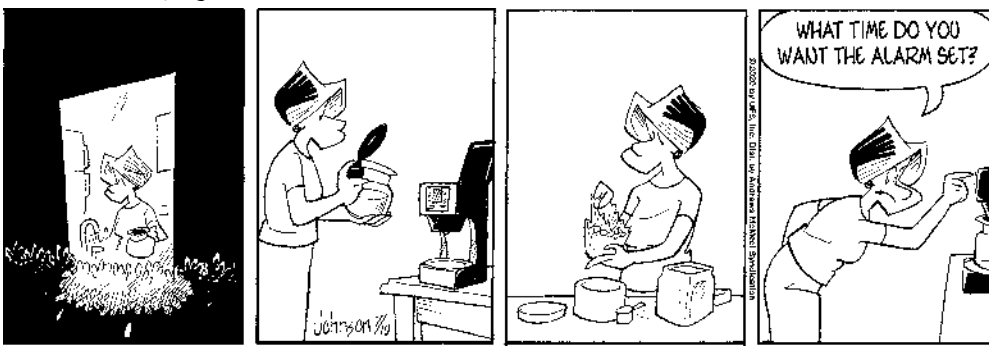
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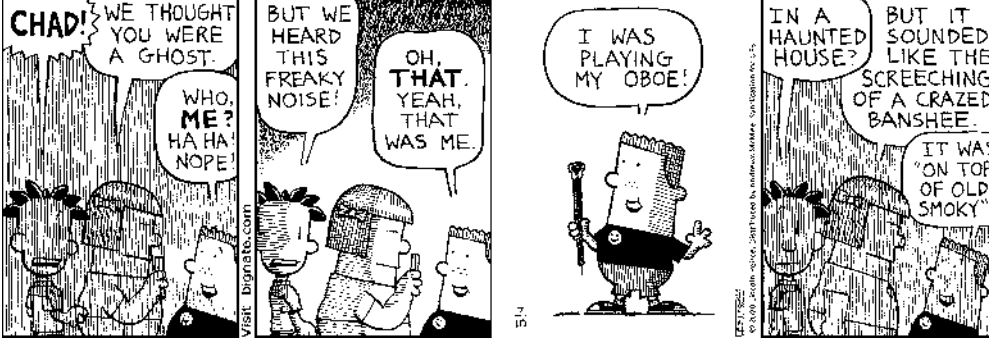
ALLEY OOP



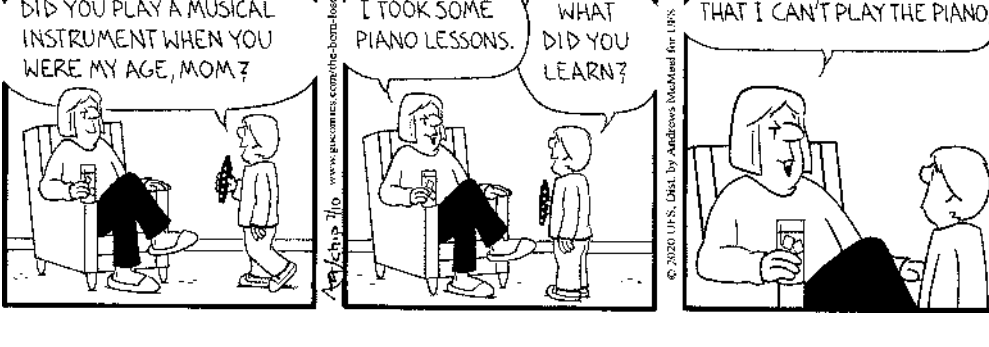
ARLO & JANIS



BIG NATE



THE BORN LOSER



FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE



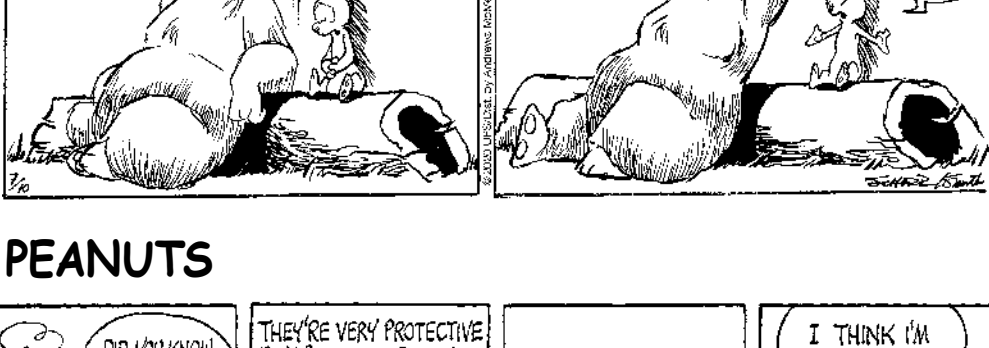
FRANK & ERNEST



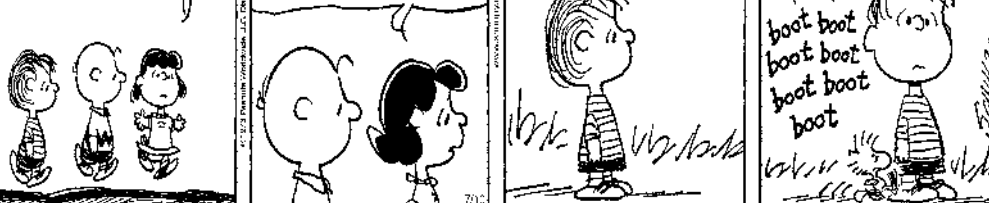
GARFIELD



THE GRIZZWELLS



PEANUTS



Cross-country relationship is kept a secret from mom

DEAR ABBY: I'm in high school. My boyfriend lives across the country in a different state. He is a teenager, too. I have asked people for advice about this before and mostly gotten the same answer. They say, "Wait 'til you're older," or, "Your mom is just looking out for you." I don't believe it.

So I'm asking for advice on how to tell my mom that I'm in a long-distance relationship, and I would like to meet him in person. We met on a game about a year and a half ago. We've dated twice before for about a month or two. But now we have been dating for almost five months. When I told my mom about him, she didn't like him. She doesn't even know him! How can I convince her that he's a good person and she just has to get to know him so she'll let me see him? I'm afraid to tell her because the idea makes me nervous. She refuses to understand that he is good to me, and he loves me and I love him. Although we're only teenagers, we have talked about forever. Do you have any advice for me? -- STRUGGLING IN PENNSYLVANIA

DEAR STRUGGLING: Yes, I do, and I hope you will take to heart what I am about to say because I am not patronizing you. Look at this from your mother's perspective. This young man is someone she has never met in person

and neither have you. Yes, you have been talking, but there is no guarantee that he is everything he has represented himself to be in those conversations.

It is a mother's JOB to protect her child. There is truth to the statement that she is "just looking out for you." I believe the feelings you have for this young man are valid, but I also feel that if he lived close by and your mother could meet him, things might be different.

For the time being, continue communicating with him and perhaps a more serious relationship will develop. However, consider this: What would you do if you finally found yourself in the same room with him and the chemistry wasn't what you expected it would be? This has been known to happen. (Trust me on that!) Time will tell if this is the real thing.

DEAR ABBY: My girlfriend and I have been separated for nearly a year. Prior to this we dated for nearly four years. After her mom passed, she fell into a depression and was grieving deeply. I went to see her and she said it was over. We've had some contact, but it has dwindled to nothing. I brought my cat into the relationship, and now she won't give it back. She isn't answering my phone calls or texts. I'm blocked.

I've tried letters and had friends try to talk to her.



ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

It's just mind-boggling. She's 57 years old. She's not a spring chicken. I will have to go to small claims court to get my cat back. I'd like to salvage the relationship and try to avoid all this. -- CAT PROBLEMS IN FLORIDA

DEAR CAT PROBLEMS: You seem like a nice person, and I sympathize, so I will offer this observation. You deserve an apology from that woman for her behavior. Do not try to salvage the relationship, which appears to have ended when her mother died. In time, you will find a lady friend who will reciprocate your feelings. DO take her to small claims court to get your cat back because, as it stands, it is the safest and most legal way you are going to have your furry family member returned.