



Firefighting air tanker stationed at Kent Rominger Airport

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Ribbons of Courage recognizes law enforcement

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LOCAL NEWS... LOCAL VIEWS

May 9, 2024

\$1

Recovery and other health services offered at health fair



Acudetox acupuncture therapy provided by SLV Behavioral Health

By JOHN WATERS
Courier News Editor
ALAMOSA — The Alamosa County Public Health Department,

in partnership with San Luis Valley Health, hosted the Alamosa County Health Fair at the Colorado National Guard facility on April 27, numerous providers were available with representatives who were available to explain the services offered.

SLV Health, Valley-Wide Health, Eagle Air Med, SLV Home Health, American Red Cross, and others were at the fair,

and free health screenings were available.

Melissa Dominguez was ready to answer questions about Rural Recovery Network and Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT). The treatment according to Dominguez, is a safe and effective method to assist people with opioid use disorder and cease using prescription pain medications, heroin, and other

See HEALTH page 3

Lee Boatwright with Peer 128, a group that supports others on their recovery journey was at the Alamosa Health Fair on April 27. Boatwright is pictured here with acudetox needles in his ears which were provided by San Luis Valley Behavioral Health.

Courier photo by John Waters

SLV Today Survival is 'Good News'

ALAMOSA—This edition of the Valley Courier is being delivered today to more than 15,000 homes, businesses, and post office boxes in many of the communities we serve via U.S. mail. A special thanks to the mail carriers who make this happen for us every day. Why? Because our job is to keep the San Luis Valley area informed, and we would like more people to have access to it. So, for one day, thousands will! On top of that, this is our annual progress edition, appropriately titled "GOOD NEWS."

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— Keith R. Cerny
Publisher

'We're working the work'

By PRISCILLA WAGGONER
Courier Reporter

ALAMOSA — Two schools in the Alamosa School District (ASD) – Alamosa Elementary 3-5 (AES 3-5) and Ortega Middle School (OMS) – have been ranked among the 2024 Best Elementary and 2024 Best Middle Schools by the U.S. News & World Report. The rankings were determined after a review of data from more than 79,000 public elementary and middle schools across the country.

AES 3-5 is ranked No. 253, placing the school in the top third nationally. In Colorado, 253rd out of a total 1,412 public elementary schools puts the school in the top 18% statewide. Ortega is ranked No. 151, also in the top third nationally. In Colorado, out of 964 public middle schools in Colorado, Ortega places in the top 16%.

See SCHOOL page 2



Ortega Middle School students at work. OMS has been ranked among the 2024 Best Elementary Schools by U.S. News & World Report.

Photo courtesy of Luis Murrillo

Semillas de la Tierra performs May 11 at ASU



Semillas de la Tierra performs May 11 on the Adams State campus.

By ADAMS STATE UNIVERSITY

ALAMOSA – Founded in 1972 by Adams State Alumni Patsy and Herman Martinez, Semillas de la Tierra enjoys being one of the oldest clubs at Adams State University. Semillas has long prided itself in being a representative of Mexican culture, and its expression through the art of dance.

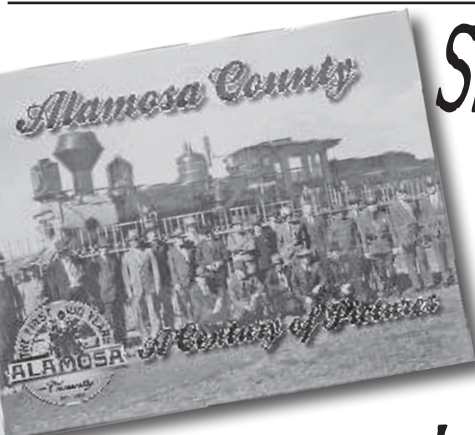
Semillas de la Tierra present the Eighth Annual Baile de Primavera at 6 p.m. Saturday, May 11, in Richardson Hall Auditorium. The event will showcase traditional, and non-

traditional dances from various Mexican states such as Tabasco, Jalisco, popurri de la Revolution, Chiapas, and San Luis Potosi.

In addition to the dances, Semillas will feature three guest singers: Courtney Espinoza, Angelica Mondragon, and past dancer, Aleece Herrera.

Tickets will be available for purchase at the door, \$15 for adults, \$5 for children 12 and under, and free to Associated Students and Faculty (AS&F) with Adams State I.D. If you need any ticket information, call or text 719-580-2891.

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Lifestyles

School

Continued from Page 1

"We're very excited about this news," says Dr. Diana Jones, ASD superintendent. "It's a reflection of all the hard work being done by our students and staff."

"This means a lot to us because this measures our ability to educate all students," says Dr. Luis Murillo, ASD's assistant superintendent.

But why the emphasis on "all"? WHAT DOES THE RANKING REALLY MEAN?

Truly great elementary and middle schools are considered great because they educate all of their students coming from all socioeconomic backgrounds and create conditions for all of those students to be successful.

Schools were ranked based on two areas, starting with how students scored on state assessments. What percentage of students were proficient or above proficient in math and in reading and language arts?

Both Jones and Murillo freely state that proficiency scores are not yet where they need to be and ASD is implementing new, far-reaching practices to address the situation. But they also stress that the scores mirror what is happening across the state.

The second factor related to socioeconomic background of the students, which is measured by how many students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches. The reasoning is simple: numerous studies have proven that students' socioeconomic background can have a significant im-

act on a student's academic success.

Since ranking a school's performance could not be made without taking socioeconomic into account, half of the ranking formula included the proficiency scores and the other half incorporated those test results in the context of socioeconomic demographics.

Socioeconomics is a big factor at ASD. In fact, of all students enrolled at ASD, three out of four are eligible for free or reduced lunch. That's significantly higher than many other districts in Colorado.

Taking all factors into consideration, there's a reason the two schools were ranked so high. Scores on state tests were not where educators want them to be, but they were largely the same as the rest of the state. Put those scores in the context of a district that has three out of four students who are economically disadvantaged, and the resiliency and determination to overcome obstacles and succeed becomes apparent.

The U.S. News & World Report put it best. "Schools ranked at the top are all performing well and are also successful at educating all their students."

That emphasis on reaching all of the students ("all means all" has become ASD's moniker) has been at the core of ASD's philosophy since Jones and Murillo stepped in as top administrators in the district. And it's that philosophy, which is actually incorporated in the district's strategic plan, that has helped set the stage for ranking assigned to AES 3-5 and OMS.



Alamosa Elementary 3-5 has been ranked among the 2024 Best Elementary Schools by U.S. New & World Report.

In the larger picture, perhaps the greatest indicator of the success experienced by ASD students is found in a different report called the District Performance Framework, a Colorado Department of Education report that does a much deeper dive into what's going on in a school district.

Of all the school districts in the state - which are many - that have similar student socioeconomic demographics as ASD, only one other district scores as high as Alamosa.

As Murillo says, "It's more difficult to educate kids who come from poverty." And, as their programs show, that only makes ASD staff more determined to do so.

DATA'S IMPORTANT. BUT WHAT IS ASD DOING

THAT MAKES THE RANKING MAKE SENSE?

In order for students to succeed, school districts need to be strong organizations. There are numerous indicators that illustrate the strength of ASD.

Teachers employed by ASD are experienced in their profession with an

average of twelve years spent in the classroom. Also, more than half of the teachers have their master's degree.

At first glance, it would also appear that ASD has implemented a plethora of "feel good" programs and practices, but all of these initiatives are put in place with deliberation - "deliberate practice", as Jones describes it - and are tied to specific outcomes.

A prime example relates to attendance.

Since teachers can't teach and students can't learn when students aren't in school, initiatives have been put in place to encourage attendance. One such addition is the Family Center. Located in the Shooting Stars Cultural and Leadership Center, the Family Center is a student/family-friendly location where parents - some of whom come from families that have experienced generational trauma in dealing with the school district in the past - can feel safe, comfortable and welcome.

It's also important for teachers to connect and create relationships with families, Murillo says, but not everyone is com-



Two ASD schools among best in the U.S. Photos courtesy of Luis Murrillo

fortable with someone from the school coming into their home. The creation of "Voice Visits" addresses that hesitation.

"Voice visits between teachers and parents can happen anywhere," he says. "Teachers can meet parents in the family center or the park or even in the grocery store, if they happen to see each other."

The result of these programs designed to build relationships? While other schools are reporting concerns over low attendance, ASD's attendance rate is steady at 93%.

ASD is also focused on "healthy students and staff". One approach to achieving this goal involves access to counselors for both students and teachers, with counseling staff located on all campuses.

Another key step implemented long overdue improvements in environments. Making much needed improvements to the environment at OMS is another example.

"There was old, dingy carpeting from the 1960s on the floor," Supt. Jones says. "There was dim lighting. And there was no air exchange - literally, the school failed an

inspection of air quality." That led to some crucial changes. "We ripped out all that old carpeting. We brought in some light. And we brought in fresh air. Common sense things but they all made such a big difference," she says.

ASD is also restructuring the way core competencies are taught. Groups of teachers are meeting to identify essential stands and priority skills by both subject and grade level. The result clarifies educational expectations for both teachers and students. ASD will then provide training for teachers that models how to implement the new methodology.

All of that is predicted to be put in place within the next school year with an expected positive, measurable impact on proficiency levels.

And all of that is just a glimpse of what ASD is doing to offset the effect socioeconomic has on student achievement.

"We have a lot of work to do but we know that this is what it's all about," Murillo says. "We're working the work. And the rankings show that it's having an impact."



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Valley News

Burnett to serve as first female mayor for Del Norte

By LYNDISIE FERRELL
DEL NORTE — In the April election for the Town of Del Norte, voters elected Shelly Burnett to the Mayoral seat, and she is the first female mayor for the Town of Del Norte.

Burnett won in a landslide race against incumbent Mayor Chris Trujillo and candidate

Shawn Goforth. Trujillo served as mayor for 14 years and trustee for four years before his position as mayor.

In an interview with Burnett, the new mayor of Del Norte made it abundantly clear that she plans to increase transparency with her constituents.

"I have served as trustee for four years.

I was sworn into office during 2020 and the COVID pandemic. It was a learning curve to say the least and the one thing I plan on right away, is being as transparent as I possibly can with my constituents. All too often I have been approached and asked why no one hears about plans from the town, well, my first goal is to fix that,"

she said. Burnett spoke about her fellow board members stating, "I think we have a great board and I think we all have some wonderful ideas to bring to the table. Del Norte is growing, and we need to embrace it. We need to focus on the future and close the book on the past one way or another."

When asked what she plans to do to increase transparency in the town, Burnett laughed and said that she would start with the simple things.

"We need to keep things simple. It's really not that hard," she said. "I plan to get the Zoom meetings up and going and to work on making the website more user friendly. We want the community to come and share ideas with us and to hear what the people have to say."

Some of the things that Burnett is looking forward to is creating more opportunities to show how great a community Del Norte is.

"We have so many wonderful things here. For instance, the Music in the Park program. We can really boost that up and partner with other events like the Mercado and Rhythms on the Rio," she said.

Burnett would also like to see about bringing businesses in to fill some of the vacant buildings along Main Street.

"We have the downtown revitalization project starting this summer and I think we can work with organizations around the Valley to offer an incentive to new



Photo by Lyndsie Ferrell

Del Norte Town Trustee Shelly Burnett will be sworn in as the new Mayor of Del Norte on May 8 and will be the first female mayor for the town. Burnett's focus is to increase transparency for the town and looks forward to working with the community.

business owners to come here," she said. "We need some kind of retail store, like hardware or something similar. We have a great community and so much potential."

Other projects Burnett has on her list of things to do include affordable housing, the 9th Street project, and fixing the roads around town.

"We have to look at things that are a priori-

ty and I realize that, but we can start the conversation. We can look at our options some more and again, we can hear what the people would like to see," she said.

Burnett will be sworn in on May 8 alongside the new trustees. A celebration for outgoing Mayor Chirs Trujillo will be held at Los Chavalos Mexican Restaurant on May 3.

Health

Continued from Page 1
 opioids. Several protocols are available through the network, including Naltrexone, Suboxone, and Methadone.

In 2019, Valley-Wide Health Systems partnered with SLV Health, Rio Grande Hospital, Crossroads' Turning Points, and Solvista to create SLV Medication Assisted Treatment. The purpose of the partnership was to expand access to opioid treatment for the San Luis Valley., Crossroads' Turning Points, and Solvista to create SLV Medication Assisted Treatment. The purpose of the partnership was to expand access to opioid treatment for the San Luis Valley.

According to the Rural Recovery website, "Together, we secured a grant to create a network of providers and community support agencies to give patients more places to seek treatment. It can be confusing to know where to start with the MAT process. To solve this issue, SLVMAT created a Case Management and Care Coordination office (CMCC). The CMCC staff will help potential clients navigate their treatment options more easily."

The services of the Rural Recovery Network are available by calling 719-588-2786 or at their website rrnco.org

Lee Boatwright with Peer 128 in Alamosa at the fair and said "Myself and my partner Tony Fernandez, run Peer 128 through Valley-Wide Health. We provide a safe, comfortable place for adults in the community to receive support from others who have faced similar struggles. We can help people through a bad day and help it not turn into a really bad day and a relapse." Peer 128 can assist with reducing stress, isolation, and recovery. Boatwright is a recovering addict with over 20 years of sobriety, and said, "I have lived this experience od drug use and mental health and have come out on the other side."

Pier 128 is located at 128 Market St. in Alamosa and 719-587-5964.

A team from San Luis Valley Behavioral Health Group was at the fair offering free sessions of acudetox, a form of acupuncture.

Acudetox reduces stress, flushes out toxins, and promotes relaxation. This harried reporter was excited to participate in a free session of the ther-



Courier photo by John Waters

Melissa Dominguez with the Rural Recovery Network provided information on services provided to those experiencing addiction and recovery from addiction.

apy. Leah Romero with SLV Behavioral Health placed five acupuncture needles into each of my ears. The first was the ShenMen (heavenly Gate) needle, which is calming and also decreases anxiety. The next was a Sympathetic needle that balances the nervous system and calms the fight or flight response. A Kidney needle was deployed to reduce fear. The essential Liver needle was inserted with the goal of detoxification and unblocking stuck energy — both emotional and physical. This also is said to reduce anger. The fifth and last needle is the Lung that assists with "letting go," and is associated with grief and sadness.

Within about five minutes of the 30-minute session, a feeling of calmness, relaxation, and contentment came over me. As I relaxed during the session the calmness was so acute, I experienced a transcendental centering similar to that during meditation. I only felt a slight pinch when the acupuncture needles were inserted. For most of the day after my acudetox treatment, I enjoyed a feeling of calmness I experienced during the treatment. After about 30-minutes the acupunc-

ture needles are removed and discarded in a safe manner.

The purpose of acudetox treatment is to recalibrate the central nervous system by quieting the sympathetic response while simultaneously promoting the parasympathetic response. This enables the body to rest and digest. The therapy is offered to those in recovery from addiction to reduce cravings for alcohol, drugs, nicotine and sugar. It is also used to reduce stress, anxiety, depression and insomnia. It is used in conjunction with other therapy methods.

Romero said acudetox is available to the clients of SLV Behavioral Health and with also be available at other public events in Cole Park in Alamosa this summer.

Also at the fair was Kimberly Bryant with myslvconnect.com, a health website. The free resource can help users find health and human services resources in the Valley. The site can help people find information on government programs, non-profit community groups, transportation services, job assistance, and more. The website is www.myslvconnect.com.

Important Notice for Landowners: Opportunity to Sell Water Rights to the Rio Grande Water Conservation District


What's Happening?
 Many areas in Colorado rely on groundwater from wells for their irrigation needs. Through Groundwater Management Subdistricts here in the San Luis Valley there have been efforts to reduce the reliance on groundwater, but there's still work to be done!

What's Funding is Available?
 The state created the "Groundwater Compact Compliance and Sustainability Fund," to help us address our sustainability issues. With these funds, the Rio Grande Water Conservation District created a program and is offering money to landowners who are willing to reduce their use of their groundwater rights either completely or partially.

How Can You Participate?
 The Rio Grande Water Conservation District is taking applications from landowners who meet program criteria and are willing to sell their groundwater rights to the District. Successful applicants will receive payment from this Fund.

- Details and Application:**
- You can find out more and get the program criteria and application form on the District's website at rgwcd.org. You can also visit the District's office at 8805 Independence Way, Alamosa, CO, 81101, or by call the office at (719) 589-6301.
 - Applications can be submitted beginning on April 22, 2024, at 8:00 a.m. and will end on May 31, 2024, at 4:30 p.m.
 - Completed applications can be emailed to wylie@rgwcd.org or dropped off at the District's Office.

Don't miss this limited opportunity if you're interested in getting paid for conserving groundwater!



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Website: <https://www.mvheadstart.org>

Keith R Cerny
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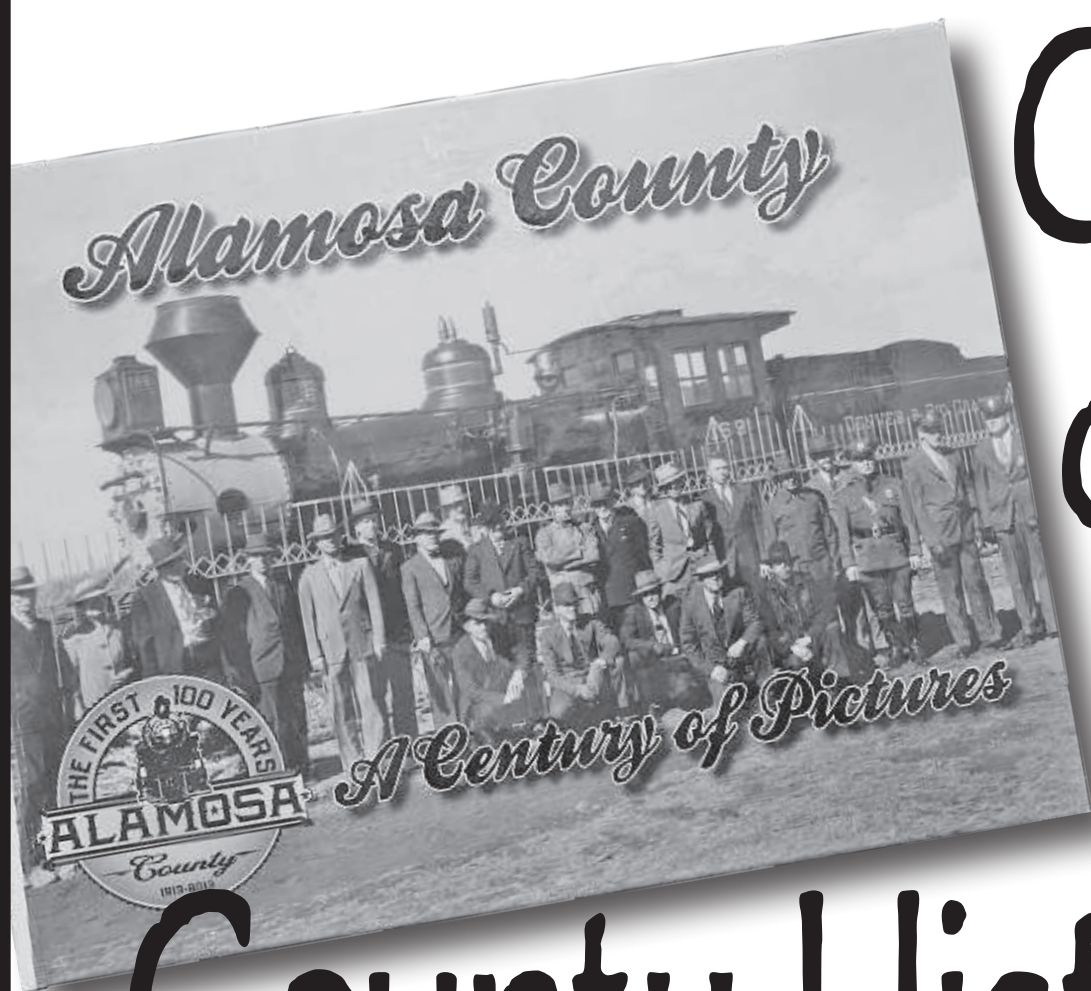
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Lifestyles

Firefighting air tanker stationed at Kent Rominger Airport

By LYNDSIE FERRELL

DEL NORTE — Rio Grande County Airport and Emergency Manager Brian Burrell recently announced that the Kent Rominger Airport will be the temporary home to an Air Tractor 802 Single Engine Air Tanker that will be available to fight wildland fires in surrounding areas.



Photo courtesy of RGC Emergency Manager Brian Burrell

An 802 Single Engine Air Tanker is stationed at the Kent Rominger Airport in Del Norte and will help fight wildland fires. Rio Grande County Emergency and Airport Manager Brian Burrell announced that CO Fire Aviation, a Colorado-based wildland firefighting aircraft company, plans to have the aircraft in the area for at least a year.

The San Luis valley is known for its high winds and as spring quickly approaches, the wind becomes a threat for fire danger in the Valley. According to Burrell, he had been planning to bring a firefighting aircraft to the airport and after going through the emergency plans for the airport, decided it was time to find a company to do that.

“These aircraft are strategically positioned throughout the state of Colorado. The aircraft sits until they are needed, and a contract has to be created once a need for this type of aircraft is required but the process goes really smooth once it is initiated. We live in an area where if a wild land fire does occur, we have to wait up to six hours or more to receive help. Having an aircraft like this stationed here would be a huge help,” explained Burrell.

CO Fire Aviation is the company that is stationing the 802 Single Engine Air Tanker at the airport in Del Norte and is one of the major companies that provide these types of aircraft during fire emergencies throughout the state.

According to CO Fire’s mission statement, “As a state of Colorado company engaged in wildland fire suppression operations, we are challenged with working in high-risk and

dynamic environments that are not always predictable. It is the responsibility of each employee, cooperater and contractor to conduct aviation operations that have been planned properly, approved by management, that utilize the correct equipment and personnel, and are carefully executed per company Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to minimize risk. Safety is CO Fire Aviation’s first priority, and CO Fire Aviation’s corporate leadership will always foster a culture that encourages employees to communicate unsafe conditions, policies or acts that could lead to accidents without fear of reprisal. All CO Fire Aviation’s employees will embrace the four components of a Safety Management System (SMS) which are identified as policy, risk management, assurance, and promotion, are critical to the success of safe operations.

Each CO Fire Aviation unit will staff all exclusive

use, as well as, all Call When Needed/On Call contracted aircraft, assigned to any suppression missions, with fully trained and experienced personnel throughout the entire contract period. Additionally, CO Fire Aviation will ensure that any required support functions such as air tanker base reloading support, and fueling operations will be filled with trained and experienced personnel.”

Burrell explained that fire danger this time of year is high and that it is important to be prepared.

“We never want to use the aircraft, but to have it accessible. That is the thing that matters. It will also help economically. A pilot would be stationed here as well as a crew while firefighting operations are underway. They will be using community resources and bringing money to the area. It really is a good thing for the San Luis Valley,” he said.

The aircraft will be at the airport for the foreseeable future.

Piedra Bowhunters set to begin 3-D shoot season

CONTRIBUTED

Piedra Bowhunters, one of the oldest bow hunting clubs in Colorado, is preparing to kick off its 2024 3-D shoot season.

The club leases land from the Forest Service on Rock Creek Road (southwest of Monte Vista) where it maintains an archery range consisting of over 35 targets. It lies in a beautiful mountain basin where deer, elk, turkey and bear are common sights.

The club is starting off the season with a Meet and Greet at the Colorado Farm Brewery, 2070 County Rd. 12 S, Alamosa, on Saturday May 11, starting at 5 p.m. Come on out, meet the club’s board members, ask questions and learn about



Courtesy photo

Piedra Bowhunters, one of the oldest bow hunting clubs in Colorado, is preparing to kick off its 2024 3-D shoot season.

archery. Anyone buying a membership during this event will receive a voucher for a free brat sandwich, with all the trimmings, from Gosar Sausage, who will be the food truck on sight. Voucher is good for this night only.

The club will be hosting shoots at the Rock Creek range on the following days:

- June 9, ASA Series No. 4 (ASA membership is not required to participate)
- Aug. 11, third leg of the S. Colorado Triple Crown.

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Lifestyles

CHS seniors receive info from tax professional

By MARIE MCCOLM CENTER – Center High School seniors received information on taxes from Master Tax Advisor Tara McCarrroll of H&R Block. Katrina Ruggles organized the Senior Seminar for the senior class to help them for life after graduation.

“I was asked by Katrina to teach the class and I was actually excited to be able to provide instruction to the class,” McCarrroll said. “I am a mother of five children, two that have graduated, I feel strongly about seeing students succeed. My kids have always had a lot of questions about taxes, so if I am able to help calm other’s children’s minds with regards to taxes, that makes me feel good. I love kids and love to see them succeed.”

McCarrroll’s presentation began with five specific tax documents. She joked that she was just out of tax season which ended on April 15, and she was glad to survive another season and provide instruction to the students.

“I am here to speak with all of you about some basic tax documents that you will encounter or may have already encountered if you are already working while in or out of high school,” she said. “Depending on the type of work you are doing, you will either be given a W4 or W7 to fill out when you first start working.”

The W4 is a form that an employee receives to fill out, if the employee will be getting paid with taxes that are automatically withheld by the employer, she explained. “The W4 will ask how

much you would like withheld, and also ask if you are married, single, or have children,” she said. “The W7 is a form you will fill out if you are being paid cash or by check, with no taxes withheld. Both forms are pertinent to any type of work you are given. The W7 ensures that you know that you are being paid cash or check with no withholdings, so that you can pay your own taxes, on the money that you earn, so that your employer is not responsible for the tax.”

A few students stated that they were already working. One student asked if there was a way to deduct items they had to purchase for a job, and use them as expenses, if an employer is paying them cash or by check with no taxes withheld.

McCarrroll presented the class with a list of expenses that were allowed to be deducted while receiving cash or check from an employer with no taxes withheld.

“You can deduct anything you have to buy for your business,” she said. “For instance, if you work at a tire shop, and are being paid cash or check with no deductions, you can deduct supplies you buy for the shop. You can also deduct gas that you use to commute and purchase supplies with. You can deduct mileage traveling to and from work. You can deduct uniform expense for clothing that you wear every day, there are many deductions you can use.”

McCarrroll also showed students a W2. A W2 is a form issued by an employer at the end of the year, to allow the em-

ployee to file taxes. A W2 shows the amount of money earned by the employee and the amount of any taxes withheld.

McCarrroll also showed the class a 1099 Non-Employee Compensation form. The 1099 NEC is a form an employer issues to an employee at the end of the year, showing what the employee made and that there have been no taxes withheld for them.

McCarrroll explained that one of these two forms would be what the students would receive at the end of any work year. The form would be used to file their taxes.

One student asked if everyone pays the same amount of taxes. McCarrroll replied by stating that the amount of taxes paid depends on the amount of income a person has and the amount of deductions the tax return.

The final document McCarrroll showed the students was a 1040 form, the basic form for filing a tax return. McCarrroll explained that almost anyone that works a regular job would file with a 1040 form when they file a tax return.

McCarrroll stated it is important to know that a person must file taxes, “once you begin working, so that you never get in trouble with the government for non-filing.”

A student in the classroom stated that learning the different forms to use to file taxes was helpful because she planned to apply for a few different jobs after she graduated.

The class thanked McCarrroll for coming after her presentation, and McCarrroll thanked the class, too.



Oncologist Dr. Bill Harrer has joined the SLV Health Oncology/Infusion Center in the Regional Medical Center in Alamosa.

His undergraduate Bachelor of Science in Biology and Campus Ministry degree is from St. Joseph’s University in Philadelphia. His M.D. was earned at Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia. His postgraduate internship, residency, and fellowship were from Cooper University Medical Center, Camden, New Jersey, where he focused on internal medicine, hematology, and oncology. He brings vast work experience on his journey to Alamosa, Colorado. “There are very few people who have not been touched by cancer. Alongside this caring staff, our goal is to treat all patients from all walks of life at whatever stage they are in with exceptional and professional care and empathy,” stated Harrer. During his free time, Harrer loves exploring, traveling, and working his farm.

Bill Harrer, MD
Oncology/Infusion Clinic
SLVH RMC 719-589-8153

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Lifestyle



Photo courtesy of Marie Pollard

The Moffat Archery Team at the National Archery in the Schools Program 2024 National Western Tournament, April 27, Sandy, Utah: top row, left to right, Coach Jack Sciacca, and Coach Megan Shellabarger, and bottom row, left to right, Shelby Morley, Alexandra Cuellar Alvarez, Romeo Eisenhauer, Chase Shellabarger, Tanner Shellabarger, Caiden Cross, and Kandra Pollard.

Moffat archers travel to national tournaments

By JACK SCIACCA
Moffat Pk-12 Archery Coach

MOFFAT — Moffat Pk-12 Schools recently competed in the National Archery in the Schools Program 2024 National Western Tournaments in Sandy, Utah, representing Moffat and Colorado.

Archers from across the country and several provinces turned in a total of 5,831 individual scores across three separate shooting venues. The tournaments began on April 25 and continued through April 28.

Moffat traveled with seven competitors, all securing positions in the tournament by finish-

ing in the top 10 in their respective divisions in the 2024 NASP Colorado State Tournament. Moffat archers participated in a Bullseye round on the morning of April 27 and a 3-D (animal targets) the same afternoon. Most archers submitted scores above their averages with a few notable standouts.

Kandra Pollard, eighth grade, and Tanner Shellabarger, seventh grade, both qualified in the Bullseye competition to compete in the NASP National Open Tournament in Daytona Beach, Fla., in June. Kandra placed 22nd out of 374 middle school girls and Tanner

placed 35th out of 417 middle school boys.

“Coach Shellabarger and I are very proud of Moffat archery and the cumulative performances of the team. It is an honor to represent our state in a tournament of this caliber,” said Jack Sciacca, Moffat archery coach.

Moffat coaches, Sciacca and Megan Shellabarger plan to take Tanner Shellabarger and Pollard to the 2024 NASP National Open Tournament in Daytona Beach, Fla., in June. Donations to offset travel expenses are appreciated and can be made by emailing jacksciacca@moffatschools.org.

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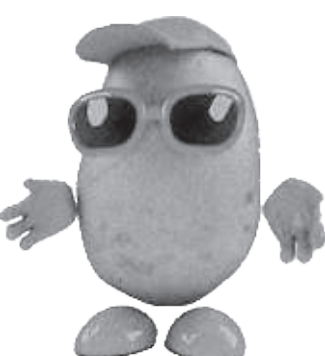


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Lifestyle

Monte Vista shows appreciation for Chief Dingfelder

He is moving on to be next Alamosa Police Department chief

By MARIE MCCOLM
MONTE VISTA — A farewell party was held for Monte Vista Police Department Chief George Dingfelder on Wednesday April 24, at City Hall. Dingfelder will be the next Alamosa Police Department Chief.

At least 40 people attended the event, including city staff and MVPD officers. The party was laid out with a special table that had a picture of Dingfelder, along with refreshments including cookies, and drinks for attendees to enjoy.

There was also a long oblong table with a white cover, just inside the entrance of one of the rooms. The cover on the table had a message and a picture on it — “George Dingfelder, with appreciation and best wishes, The City of Monte Vista.” People could sign and or leave a message for Dingfelder on the cover as he moves to APD.

City Manager Gigi Dennis spoke at the event.

“I just want to thank you all for coming on behalf of Chief Dingfelder. Chief you probably have one of the most difficult positions in the city. You and your team

are really the face of the city. If there is a conflict, the good, the bad, and the ugly, you guys are there,” she said, adding that Chief Dingfelder has brought so much “class” to the city.

“Your officers have all elevated to the standards that you have set, and Monte Vista is better for it. It has been a real pleasure to work with you. The warmth that you have brought to the community, has been much appreciated,” she said.

Chief Dingfelder took a moment and with a heartfelt voice expressed his sincere appreciation to the city, his officers, and the community.

“Obviously, this is kind of bittersweet for me. First off, I want to thank the council. Most important,” Dingfelder said, motioning to the group of police officers in attendance, “I want to thank this group right over here. They are a phenomenal group of officers. For whatever reason it is, I did 25 years as a state patrol, I came here four years ago, but this group right here I am going to miss them a lot more. I think it’s because we have been so close. We have been through a lot. We have had some real tragedies that we have been through together for the last few years. It took us awhile to get this

group together being short-handed and what not, but this group of officers is phenomenal.”

Dingfelder thanked Public Works. He appreciated that Public Works has always been a team with the city and worked hard together with the city. Dingfelder also thanked Dennis for being such a wonderful boss.

“I will say this, I have had some really great bosses over the years, between military and state patrol, and I would say that Gigi is one of the top two. Gigi is one of the two best bosses I have ever had, and just a phenomenal person. I know the city is going to be in a good spot no matter

who the chief is.”

Chief Dingfelder also thanked Records and Evidence Manager Irene Arellano for helping run the department so well.

“She really runs everything,” he said. “I just sign stuff.”

Dingfelder expressed his gratitude by saying there were so many people he wanted to thank from the city. He also gave a special thank you to Mayor Dale Becker.

“He’s been a great friend, and always willing to listen. When I was thinking about this way back four or five years ago. I called him a few times. I knew Dale pretty well. He’s like yeah, I think you should do it, so

thank you Mayor for taking the chance on me,” he said.

Dingfelder also thanked his wife, Stephanie Dingfelder stating that she expressed that this would be another “adventure,” for them. “I hope this will be my last job,” Dingfelder said with a chuckle.

Dingfelder also gave a special thank you to Bobby Pino, father of two Monte Vista police officers.

“When I started here in 1995 as a brand-new trooper, Bobby was the Jail Administrator, and he absolutely became one of my closest friends. Bobby thank you for all you do

and allowing me to work with your sons,” he said.

Pino smiled and said, “Thank you for building what you have built this far, and I know that it will carry on because you have a good group of guys and gals here. I appreciate you.”

Dingfelder also thanked the community for thinking of him and attending his farewell.

“It’s not like I am dying or leaving, I am only going 17 miles away,” he said with a smile. “If you’re in Alamosa, you know I like to talk, and I like coffee. So, if you’re in Alamosa, come by the PD and stop in and visit.”



Monte Vista Mayor Dale Becker signs the cover at the farewell party for Monte Vista Police Department Chief George Dingfelder.



Monte Vista Police Department Chief George Dingfelder speaks with Monte Vista City Councilman Loren Howard and his wife during the farewell party for Dingfelder, who is moving to be the Alamosa Police Department chief.

Photos by Marie Mccolm

St. Francis of Assisi Church seeking donations for restoration

By MARIE MCCOLM

7 MILE PLAZA — The 7 Mile Plaza community elders along with other people, are asking for the public’s help to restore the historic St. Francis of Assisi Mission Church. The church needs a new roof and adobe walls.

The church was founded in 1881. The church is nestled on a green hill in 7 Mile Plaza and is also near a historic cemetery. In 1881, Juan Pio Valdez donated property to put the church on it. A cemetery and school were also added to the property, in collaboration with Pio Valdez and the community.

According to the website, in the 1930s the church was standing room only, with many people in attendance for

the grand services held there.

Over the years, there have been many religious groups and leaders that have visited the church while it was open. There was also a grand altar that was brought in from Spain in the 1940s and installed in the church. Although many people do not know this, Juan Pio Valdez and his wife Nestora are buried under the church’s grand altar.

The church is also commonly known as Los Valdez’s, due to the generous donation by Pio Valdez, of the property.

The church enjoyed many years of worship, but over the years the little church has been forgotten as people who lived in 7 Mile Plaza have grown and moved

away. Due to the lack of attention and attendance, the church needs attention to remain a church.

There are steps currently being taken to restore the church. Virginia Simmons and a group of professionals have requested that the church be registered as a Colorado historical place. The request was approved, and the church is being listed as a Colorado Historical site.

As a historical site, many people see how the church was used for many years for masses, baptisms, gatherings, and communion. Though closed, the church is still used for funerals, but upon request only.

Elders of the 7 Mile community, and others are reaching out to the sur-

rounding communities and all organizations who would be willing to donate money to help restore the church.

Contributions will help restore and reopen the church for the community and preserve a historical landmark.

To make a donation, email Deborah Romero at armarolo@hotmail.com or call 303-552-8321, or mail donations to PO Box 590, Monte Vista, CO 81144. Sign check or money order to the San Juan Catholic Community and reference in the memo line, St. Francis of Assisi Mission Church.

To donate with a credit card, visit the church’s GoFundme page at Please Help Repair Our Mission Church Los Valdeses.

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Lifestyle

Ribbons of Courage recognizes law enforcement

Organization donated ribbons to MVPD during National Crime Victims' Right Week

By MARIE MCCOLM MONTE VISTA — On April 17, Lani Welch, director of the organization Ribbons of Courage, and Ribbons of Courage volunteer Larry Garner donated ribbons created in support of the National Crime Victims' Rights Week campaign to the Monte Vista Police Department. Monte Vista Police officers thanked Welch and

Garner for the donation. Welch thanked the MVPD for helping victims and doing what they do for their community.

"It means a lot to gain the support of law enforcement around the Valley, showing their support for Crime Victims' Rights Week," Welch said. "We have been able to gain the support of the majority of law enforcement throughout the Valley this year. We look forward to continuing to grow these relationships all over the Valley. We are a crime victim support organization. Our goal is to be able to help victims of all different types of crime. We have a lot of different organiza-

tions that help victims of specific crimes. We still have other victims that fall through the cracks, that need support also."

Garner added, "This was pretty new to me when I first started with it. I am starting to do some research and talk to different people about this cause. I am glad to be involved and helping with this."

Welch's goal is to have an office in Monte Vista and to start support groups. Welch said she hopes to obtain volunteers who will help with assisting victims in court cases and with the support groups. Welch plans to create support groups

to help adults, teens, and children.

Welch thanked the following agencies for supporting Ribbons of Courage and the National Crime Victims' Rights Week campaign - the Mineral County Sheriff's Office, Rio Grande County Sheriff's Office, South Fork Police Department, Del Norte Police Department, Saguache County Sheriff's Office, Center Police Department, Alamosa Police Department, Alamosa County Sheriff's Office, Manassa Police Department, Conejos County Sheriff's Office, Costilla County Sheriff's Office, Blanca Police Department, 12 Judicial District Judges, 12th Judicial District At-



Photo by Marie Mccolm

Lani Welch, director of the organization Ribbons of Courage, and Ribbons of Courage volunteer Larry Garner donated ribbons created in support of the National Crime Victims' Rights Week campaign to the Monte Vista Police Department.

torney's Office and Rocky Mountain Victim Law Center.

For more information on Ribbons of Courage, contact Welch lani.ribbonsofcourage@gmail.com or 719-480-1588.



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