

**Spring Agriculture**  
in the San Luis Valley

April 17, 2024

We salute the dedicated men and women of the agriculture industry, who play such an important role in keeping our Valley's economy strong. Their commitment to producing a thriving variety of crops and livestock requires long hours, risk and hard work. For all of their contributions and for all the fruits of their labor, we thank our farmers and ranchers for bringing so much to the table.

Valley Publishing  
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Monte Vista

# CENTER POST-DISPATCH

Volume 123, Number 16

Thursday, April 18, 2024

75¢

## Inside Today's Center Post Dispatch

### Shorts

#### Sharon Adams Memorial Dedication

**MONTE VISTA** — The Sharon Adams Memorial Dedication ceremony is planned for 5:30 p.m. on May 1 at the west main entrance of Sargent High School.

A community baked potato dinner will follow in the school cafeteria from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Suggested donation is \$10 per person and supports Sargent Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA). Live music will be provided by Celtic Knotz, including Kerry Adams.

#### Mental Health Fair in Moffat

**SAGUACHE COUNTY** — The Baca Grande Ambulance Department will hold a Mental Health Fair at the Moffat Consolidated School on April 18 from 6 to 8 p.m. Are you, or do you know someone who is struggling? Need guidance on maintaining mental health? There is help. Learn about resources, financial aid, counseling programs, treatment for substance use disorders, and more.

#### Del Norte Food Bank distribution is April 20

**DEL NORTE** — The Del Norte Food Bank will be open for its April distribution on Saturday, April 20, from 10 a.m. until noon. Anyone in need of food assistance is welcome. If you are unable to attend during distribution hours and need food assistance, call 719-850-2643.

#### Bird migration walk April 20

**ALAMOSA** — Join the Friends of the SLV National Wildlife Refuges for a free bird walk on Saturday, April 20. Meet at 8 a.m., in the parking lot at the Alamosa Visitor Center at 9383 El Rancho Lane. Dress for the weather with shoes suitable for hiking. Bring binoculars if you have them, water and snacks, sun protection and insect repellent. The walk will end around noon. Call 307-315-8003, for more information.

## Town of Center seeking beautification project submissions

By MARIE MCCOLM

**CENTER** — Center's Economic Development Coordinator Keith Brockhurst recently announced the town is seeking all types of artists, young, old, amateur, or professional to submit community art project proposals as part of a beautification

effort underway by the town.

People can fill out an application and submit their ideas. Online there are guidelines for submitting proposal applications. Some of the guidelines include providing a proposal perspective. Applicants are encouraged to provide a complete

and concise description of their intended art project, including where they would like it to be placed, and why it fits with the community of Center.

People can submit more than one proposal, or submit more than one artistic project, in their proposal.

An additional guideline for the project is applicants are asked to submit visual aids for their projects. This can be in the form of a photo, a sketch, or anything that would provide a visual aid of the artwork, project, or idea.

Please see PROJECT on Page 6A

## Groups come together for Saguache County Business Coffee Hour

STAFF REPORT

**SAGUACHE** — Saguache County Sustainable Environment and Economic Development (ScSEED), in collaboration with the Saguache County Chamber of Commerce and the San Luis Valley Small Business Development Center are hosting Saguache County Business Coffee Hour.

Coffee Hour is to help local businesses network and share ideas. The next Coffee Hour is on May 9, from 9 to 10:30 a.m. at the Fourth Street Diner in Saguache. There are plans to move the hour around to different parts of Saguache every month. The Coffee Hour is currently being held the second Thursday of every month.

Each Coffee Hour gathering will  
Please see COFFEE on Page 2A



Courtesy photo

Saguache County Sustainable Environment and Economic Development (ScSEED), in collaboration with the Saguache County Chamber of Commerce and the San Luis Valley Small Business Development Center are hosting Saguache County Business Coffee Hour. The next Coffee Hour is May 9.

## Tree pruning workshop in Center

By COLORADO STATE FOREST SERVICE

**CENTER** — The Colorado State Forest Service will be offering a tree pruning workshop on Monday, April 29, in Center. This workshop will be held at the Kiwanis Building at South Broadway Street and East 5th Street. The primary focus of the workshop will be the pruning of young trees from the ground without the use of a ladder. By using basic tools such as pruning shears and small pruning saws, participants will gain hands-on experience in basic

and structural tree pruning techniques.

Trees add value to a property by accentuating a home's architecture, enhancing aesthetics, providing summer shade and offering protection from winter winds. Trees benefits can be improved through pruning young trees to provide clearance over sidewalks and streets will help to minimize the number of large-diameter limbs removed in the future.

"It is better practice to remove branches while they are smaller," says Sam Scavo, Forester at the CSFS Alamosa

Field Office. It is much easier for a tree to heal over a 1- to 2-inch diameter wound versus a 5- to 6-inch diameter wound, the latter caused by removing a larger branch later in a tree's life. It also is much more cost-effective to remove smaller branches than it is to remove larger ones.

The following pruning topics will be covered:

- Developing and maintaining one dominant vertical stem.
- Branch spacing.
- Where to prune.
- How much to prune?

• Basic fruit tree pruning.

Kamie Long, Western Slope Urban and Community Forestry Specialist with the CSFS, will be the guest instructor for the workshop.

The workshop will be offered from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on April 26 in the Center Kiwanis Building. The morning session will be classroom-based, with an afternoon field session. The cost of the workshop is \$20, which includes lunch. Space is limited to 20 participants so be sure to register early. Call 719-587-0915, for reservations.

## Mexican dinner to help Moffat resident after tragic fire

By MARIE MCCOLM

**MOFFAT** — A benefit Mexican dinner is being held for Melinda Myers, a Moffat resident who lost her home in a fire. The non-profit, Neighbors Helping Neighbors is organizing the dinner for Myers from 5 to 9 p.m. on Cinco De Mayo, Sunday, May 5, at the Moffat Town Hall, 401 Lincoln Ave.

Vice President of Neighbors Helping Neighbors Mary Lowers spoke about the event.

"Melinda Myers has lived in Moffat since 1994, in one of the oldest houses in town," Lowers said. "Her house was built on or before 1910. Her house burnt down. There was absolutely

nothing left of her house but the two brick chimneys."

Lowers said that Myers lost everything in the fire, including her two beloved house cats.

"Melinda is a longtime Moffat resident and well known in both the Moffat and Crestone community. She worked for the county. She is very active in the community. She has milk goats and does the farmer's markets. She's a good person. We wanted to help her," Lowers said. "We will be serving tamales, enchiladas, rice, beans, tortillas, chips, and banana bread. We will charge per plate for that. There will be a lesser price for kids under 10."

Lowers said that they are planning to

make it fun. There will be a live auction and a dessert auction.

"Along with all the great items up for auction, you can also purchase a dessert," Lowers said. "The dessert auction will be of course dessert made by local people and auctioned off. You can buy a dessert, and go home with a dessert, it's such a good deal. I think it will be a fun event. We are hoping to have a good turnout for Melinda."

Lowers said that Myers would also be at the dinner. People can meet and speak with Myers at the event.

Lowers said that if people cannot make it to the dinner, Neighbors Helping Neighbors does have an account at Aventa Credit Union in

Crestone.

"Everyone is welcome to walk into that credit union and let them know that they would like to donate to Neighbors Helping Neighbors, and in the memo check line they can reference the donation to Melinda Myers, for any amount they would like to contribute to help her. All contributions for her are very much appreciated, definitely going to a good cause," Lowers said.

"You know, we pull together. We are country enough that we still pull together when someone has a disaster like this. Neighbors Helping Neighbors is all about helping people in crisis. We are happy to be able to do this for Melinda."

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Chad Spearman



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# OBITUARY

## Shawna Rae (Varner) Jones

On April 1, 2024, Shawna Rae (Varner) Jones passed from this world into her heavenly home where she will now watch over all those she loved and treasured. Shawna had a personal relationship with Jesus and this brings much comfort to us all as we know we will be together again.

Shawna was born in Monte Vista, Colo., on May 25, 1975, to John and Sandra (Bryant) Varner, where she was welcomed home by her sister, Christy (Varner) Brady (Bert).

Her maternal Grandparents were Pete and Becky Bryant and her paternal Grandparents were Warren and Julia Varner.

Shawna was married to Mark Edward Jones, who remained her friend. Shawna was the very, very proud mother, friend, and confidant of her children, Tucker Lee Jones and Payton Makenzie Jones. They were the pride and joy of her life. Shawna also had a special relationship with Ethan, Emily, and Avery Ellithorpe and Baylor Phenix. All of whom she loved dearly. Her home was always open to kids who needed a little chill time, a little encouragement, a lot of fun, and unconditional acceptance.

Shawna also leaves behind her aunts and uncles, Tom and Sallie Hibbs; Virgil and Doris Varner; Elaine Varner; and Charles Bryant Jr., many adored nephews and nieces, cousins, a great family of in-laws, a slew of friends and her very loved Great Dane, Maddie.

Shawna was fun loving and full of energy from the start and would make friends wherever she went. She marched to the beat of her own drums while always reaching out to help others however she could. What she and her sister, Christy, could not think of to do, she and her friends certainly did.

Shawna would defend and stand behind those she loved, even when no one else did. Anyone who knew Shawna quickly learned that she was a hard worker, genuine, friendly and openly welcoming to others, sincere, very mischievous and ornery. Even her nurses and doctors got to experience the twinkle in her eye, a wink, and an ornery little smile as she teased them about something, even in the last days of her life.

Shawna excelled in gymnastics in school. She loved riding horses, especially her horse, Mr. Tibbs. She was always strong and could out wrestle many of the boys in her classes. Her love for sports was passed on to her children and one of their greatest pleasures was in watching and cheering on their favorite teams.

Shawna was a fighter and overcame many challenges throughout her life and then recently conquered cancer. She valiantly fought a genetic disease, hemochromatosis for the past several years that eventually destroyed her liver. In December Shawna learned

that she needed a liver transplant and she was first in line at Anshutz Hospital. While at Anshutz Shawna found that she had contracted a drug resistant bacteria that caused her body to go into sepsis. She was known for



being stubborn and continued to be so through the end, fighting to not pass away on Easter but to wait until April Fools Day.

Shawna worked at Mountain Meadows Nursing Home as a teenager. As an adult, she worked as a nanny in Denver, Colo., at San Luis Valley Regional Medical Center as a Dialysis Technician, at the Monte Vista Animal Clinic as a Vet Tech, at Rocky Mountain Homes in charge of warranty and maintenance, Sargent Schools as a beloved substitute teacher and secretary, at Miller Coors as a Barley Purchaser, all in Monte Vista, Colo., and then at Golden Plains Insurance in Springfield, Colo.

Shawna's cousin Charles Bryant III, summed it up perfectly: "The only comfort we have in sorrow is knowing that such a powerful feeling was only made possible by the joy that we have experienced. While immense, the gorge of sorrow is in direct proportion to the bounty of joy and love that Shawna selflessly gave. What feels like a void in our hearts with her departure is actually the inverse; she gave us so much that we struggle to carry forward or contain the weight of the love that was hers. As we regain our strength, we must carry this love and joy on to others. Sustaining that flame of love is one of the few tributes that would be worthy enough for such an angel as Shawna. Thank you for being the embodiment of sunshine, my dear cousin. I love you."

Shawna did not want a funeral service. Instead, she wanted a celebration of life party, not only celebrating her life but each other and life itself. She lived life to the fullest, as should we in her honor. The party will be held April 27, 2024, at the Ski Hi Stampede Complex from 4 to 8 p.m. Shawna left a legacy of love. Please come and share your memories and stories of this most special soul.

In Lieu of flowers, a memorial fund has been set up to help Shawna's kids with expenses. If you would like to donate, please make checks out to Christy Brady with the memo of Shawna Memorial Fund and mail or bring to Frontier Bank at 808 Main Street or to Christy Brady at 209 West 4th Ave., Springfield, CO 81073. You can also Venmo a donation to @Christy-Brady-15.

# 2024 Free Trash Dump Day

Saturday, April 20th from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Location: North 90 Property (at the North end of Hurt St. past the Valley Wide Cesar Chavez clinic)

Who Can Participate?

Center residents can bring most large items, debris, and recyclables to the dumpsters AT NO CHARGE on this day.

NO BATTERIES OR ELECTRONICS (computers, monitors, TVs, etc.) are accepted at the dump; NO PAINTS OR OILS

are accepted.

All Burnable, (untreated wood, branches, etc.) Tires, and Metals must be separated from other debris; Washers, driers, fridges, ovens, etc. are all acceptable but must be separated.

ABSOLUTELY NO HAZARDOUS MATERIALS (any item or agent - biological, chemical, radiological, and/or physical that has the ability to cause harm to humans, animals, or the environment.)

All loads are subject to inspection;

All loads must be covered and secured for transport.

Free Dump Day Location:

The dumpsters will be located on the edge of Center's North 90 property. This is located at the North end of Hurt St. past the Cesar E. Chavez Family Health Clinic.

For more information please contact Town Hall by calling 719-754-3497 or visiting our office.

# COFFEE

Continued from Page 1A

feature a special guest who can provide information and questions on certain topics.

ScSEED understands the importance of bringing business owners together to support one and other. At Coffee Hour business owners can share invaluable perspectives and gain different insights that can help each other's businesses run more successfully and smoothly.

ScSEED is a non-profit

organization that helps communities and residents of Saguache County work together for a joint benefit. ScSEED supports small business development and cooperative enterprises. ScSEED also works to help preserve and protect rural agricultural convergence, in health and nature. ScSeed also works to increase educational, recreational, and group opportunities for everyone.

Mark your calendars for May 9, and plan to attend the Saguache County Coffee Hour. You are encouraged to bring friends and colleagues with you. Open participation from business owners and interested people is the key to the ultimate success of the Coffee Hour.

For more information, visit the Saguache County Business Coffee Hour Facebook page or the ScSEED website at [scseedco.org](http://scseedco.org)

# PLEASE JOIN US FOR A GOING AWAY CELEBRATION Honoring the Outstanding Service of Chief George Dingfelder



**Wednesday, April 24, 2024  
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# OPINION & EDITORIAL

## Should have prayed first

During World War II, Ernie Pyle, a famous war correspondent, traveled to and from the battlefields to report what was happening. He was quite famous and won a Pulitzer Prize before losing his life during the battle for Okinawa in the Pacific theater.

One of the most famous quotes attributed to him is "there are no atheists in a foxhole," which means that when a person is under stress of war they tend to get up front and personal with God. Even the most hardened of men and women turn to a higher power for comfort and help.

Now personally I do not care what flavor — or no flavor — religion you may observe but it's hard for me to look around this world and Universe and conclude there is no God. So Ol' Dutch follows Him along to the best of my ability and, so far, it's been a great ride.

There is not one of us who has not tried to make a deal with God if faced with a horrible circumstance. Sometimes things are so pressing that we even promise to go to Africa and convert the native people there if only He will get us out of this scrape we have found ourselves in.

And I have to admit somewhat reluctantly that I too have made a few "battlefield" promises if only God will just this once" rescue my foolish self. Of late, though, I have had quite a different thing going on with the Big Guy in the sky. And it all involves being in a bind, of course, as needing Him becomes more pressing in a situation we cannot control.

This all started some years ago when one of my cows had a calf who would not or could not nurse. Now to you that may not be an emergency but Ol' Dutch has a tender heart and it looked bleak. I remember sitting on a bucket in the dark after many attempts to put the calf on a spigot and finally just gave up. In that "foxhole" when all hope was gone, I reached out to God and prayed "if you don't help this little calf she is gonna die." And in that moment the calf took one look at me and hooked up on her mamma for that life-saving milk.

Shortly after that I lost something in the barn. I looked high and low and finally in a moment of desperation I asked for heavenly help once again and I swear that it appeared in plain sight right in front of me the next time I glanced down.

You may again ask if there is a moral to this story and I am so glad you did so I can finish this column on time. So I was telling these experiences to the granddaughters and they listened intently and of course from the mouth of babes comes great wisdom if we only take the time to hear.



**Trout Republic**  
by Kevin Kirkpatrick

Grand #1 in her no nonsense, plain spoken and matter of fact manner simply said "Grandpa, you should have prayed first." It was like a lightbulb suddenly turned on in my old noggin and I got to thinking that maybe, just maybe, God is interested in even the smallest things we need so I began to test Him on that premise.

Every time I "lost" something I would pray and just like clockwork it would appear and I began to get such confidence that I began to "pray first" even before I looked. And so far it's working perfectly unless Ol' Dutch lets himself get in a tizzy and forgets to pray. At that point I have to call in Miss Trixie and, while not as good as God, nor as patient, she finds what I am missing.

So, when you can't find that nut or bolt, pliers or saw, spatula or casserole pan, say a little prayer and you will find that you suddenly remember where you put it. All except the casserole dish which Old Mrs Mcillicuddy stole from the last church social.

*Kevin Kirkpatrick and his Yorkie, Cooper, fish, hunt, ATV or hike daily. His email is Kevin@TroutRepublic.com. Additional news can be found at www.troutrepublic.com.*

## Progressive gun control bills defy common sense

By MARK HILLMAN  
*Capitol Review*

Although I am less optimistic, I still hold out hope that Colorado isn't irretrievably doomed to follow California, Oregon and Washington into the hopeless abyss of Progressivism.

A few key indicators will soon reveal if we have passed the point of no return, including whether enough common-sense Democrats remain to stand with Republicans against the Far Left's relentless assault on our Second Amendment rights.

Senate Bill 131 would prohibit licensed concealed-carry permit holders from carrying their guns in "sensitive spaces," which sponsors Sen. Sonya Jaquez-Lewis (D-Boulder) and Chris Kolker (D-Centennial) defined as most places outside your home.

The bill would ban legal possession in these gun-free zones by licensed permit-holders. It would, of course, do nothing to deter criminals whom Progressives prefer to coddle (for example, by killing a bill to increase the penalty for stealing a firearm).

Facts presented by David Kopel of Independence Institute reveal, based on a Washington Post analysis, 86% of mass shootings nationally occurred within these supposed gun-free zones. Even after amendments, the bill would multiply opportunities available for mass shooters to target unarmed and vulnerable men, women and children.

Meanwhile, House Bill 1348 would implement an absolutely ridiculous "safe storage" mandate for guns in vehicles. Reps. Elizabeth Velasco (D-Glenwood Springs) and Lorena Garcia (D-Adams County), along with Sen. Jaquez-Lewis, would require gun owners who leave a firearm in a vehicle to store

it in a "locked hard-sided container." OK, so you could put it in your locking glove box, console or trunk, right? No, because the locked hard-sided container must be "out of plain view."

This isn't firearm safety; it's "because we say so" harassment by Progressives who seem to believe lawful gun owners are more dangerous than drug dealers.

Sponsors clearly know little about responsible concealed-carry or gun safety because the interplay of these two bills, as writer Ari Armstrong points out, amounts to requiring permit holders to "frequently take the gun off of their person, where it is at almost no risk of theft, and place it in a vehicle where it is at higher risk of theft."

Next, consider the recklessly named "assault weapon" ban by uber leftist Reps. Elizabeth Epps and Tim Hernandez, both D-Denver.

"Assault weapon" is a politically-biased term which falsely implies that machine guns are readily available at your local gun store. In reality, "assault weapons" as defined by HB 1292 are ordinary guns with cosmetic features that may look – but do not function – like military guns.

The bill purportedly addresses "certain firearms used in mass shootings." Again, Kopel reveals the facts: Less than 10% of mass shootings involve a so-called "assault weapon." The bill declares, "assault weapons are not suitable for self-defense," yet it allows police officers to use these same guns. Why do police officers choose their firearms? "For only one reason: lawful defense of self and others."

Other "assault weapon" characteristics (pistol grip, grip for the non-trigger hand, adjustable stock, barrel "shroud" or handguard)

improve stability and accuracy.

"When law-abiding Colorado citizens are defending themselves against violent criminal attackers," Kopel reasons, "the bill sponsors want victims to be forced to use firearms that are difficult to use."

Other bills in the Progressive agenda of harassing lawful gunowners:

- Force all gun owners to purchase liability insurance (HB 1270) or else petition a court to decree they cannot afford it. Think criminals will comply?

- Impose an 11% sales tax (HB 1349) on gun sales. Guns sold illegally remain untaxed.

- Require eight hours of in-person instruction to obtain or renew a concealed-carry permit (HB 1174). Lawbreakers avoid the training requirement.

- Impose separate state licensing for legal firearms sellers (HB 1353), who are already subject to rigorous federal licensing.

Now consider that our state's concealed-carry permit holders are 39 times less likely to be arrested than the general public, based on reports county sheriffs submit annually to the legislature.

To anyone persuaded by facts or logic, these bills do not make Colorado safer. Instead, they amount to arbitrary harassment of law-abiding gun owners to satisfy Progressive dogma.

Colorado voters handed Democrats super-majorities in the Legislature. We will soon learn whether enough common-sense Democrats remain to protect the rights of honest citizens.

*Mark Hillman served as Senate Majority Leader and State Treasurer. To read more or comment, go to www.MarkHillman.com.*

## LETTER

### Continued discussion of the proposed National Conservation Area in Conejos County requested

Editor,  
Meetings and news articles regarding a proposed National Conservation Area in Conejos County will continue for the foreseeable future. The Town of Romeo looks forward to continued discussion and receiving additional information about the proposed Conservation Area. These discussions will hopefully provide a gauge of the community support and desire for

the Conservation Area.  
An article from Dec. 20, 2023, in the SLV Lifestyles lists Romeo as a community that supports the conservation area.

The Board of Trustees of the Town of Romeo would like to clarify that at this time they do not support the creation of a National Conservation Area in Conejos County. Without further information of the impact on the local

community, including area ranchers and residents, the Town will not take a stance in support of the creation of the Conservation Area. The impact on the community may be a mix of positive and negative outcomes. Hopefully, the planned discussions will provide the Town Board with the answers they need to voice an opinion on the Conservation Area, either in support of or opposition to.

The potential benefit to the Town and community has not been demonstrated to the Town. The Town anticipates working with community members, multiple agencies, organizations, and panels to define what the benefit may be to our Town and neighbors.

The Town welcomes feedback from residents and neighbors near and far.

*The Board of Trustees of the Town of Romeo*

# CENTER POST-DISPATCH

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# Firefighting air tanker stationed at Kent Rominger Airport

By LYNDIE 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.

A single engine airtanker, or SEAT, is the smallest airtanker. These aircraft can deliver up to 800 gallons fire retardant or water to wildland firefighters on the ground. They are ideal for wildfires in lighter fuels like grasses and sagebrush.

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, cooperators and contractors 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



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.**

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.

## Week has been a blast

By HIGH VALLEY COMMUNITY CENTER

**DEL NORTE** — Soccer is in full swing, and the kids are having so much fun learning to play as a team on the field. Games are every Saturday at Chapman Park in Monte Vista. We would love to see you there in support of our

their math and science skills in an engaging way! From combining the right ingredients to create slime to calculating angles and circles to build paper rollercoasters, they had so much fun learning in a way that they enjoyed.

We also took an invigorating trip to the Gator Farm on Friday! We got to see the cool reptiles and throw food to the gators. The kids were thrilled to be able to interact with the animals and learn about their ecology.

Make sure to check our website to see the updates on activities for this week! We can’t wait to jump back into all the fun.



## Saguache County Landfill FREE Landfill Dump Day!

**2024 Free Landfill Dump Day Schedule:**

• Saturday, April 20th from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

**Who Can Participate**

Saguache County residents can bring most large items, debris, and recyclables to the Saguache County Landfill AT NO CHARGE on this day.

- **IMPORTANT:** Be ready with valid identification to show proof of residency to the cashier (picture ID or utility bill);
- **NO ELECTRONICS** (computers, monitors, TVs, etc.) are accepted at the landfill;
- **APPLIANCES** will only be accepted with proof or certification that Freon has been removed;
- **All Burnable**, (untreated wood, branches, etc.) Tires\*, and Metals must be separated from other debris;
- **ABSOLUTELY NO HAZARDOUS MATERIALS;**
- All loads are subject to inspection;
- All loads must be covered and secured for transport.

\*CRS 30-20-1408 – Saguache County Residents will be permitted to dump NO MORE than 6 tires per load on this day – ALL COMMERCIAL HAULERS will be charged at the regular per tire rate.

**Saguache County Landfill Location**

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# SLVH offers specialty care in Pediatrics from visiting Children's Hospital

By SAN LUIS VALLEY HEALTH

ALAMOSA — San Luis Valley Health is thrilled to announce a significant enhancement in pediatric healthcare in the Pediatrics Clinic, thanks to a collaboration with Children's Hospital. This initiative brings specialized care teams directly to the patients in Alamosa, making advanced and highly specialized healthcare accessible right where it's needed.

In early April, SLVH welcomed Dr. Joyce Oleszek and the Pediatric Rehabilitation Medicine team, along with Dr. Seema Bansal's Neurology team from Children's Hospital. This effort provided families the convenience of specialized care in the familiar setting of their pediatrician's office, demonstrating SLVH's ongoing commitment to healthcare excellence within the San Luis Valley.

A special acknowledgment to Kelly Gurule, SLVH Foundation Director, who played a pivotal role in securing

funding for two new hydraulic patient beds, significantly enhancing the care experience for the young patients. These beds were made possible by the generous donations from SLVH employees through their annual giving campaign, underscoring the collective effort and spirit of the organization.

SLV Health looks forward to hosting the Pediatric Cardiology and Pediatric Development teams from Children's Hospital in the coming months. These specialists (along with the Rehab and Neurology teams) will visit on a rotating basis, further ensuring that children from this community have access to the care they need, when they need it.

For inquiries or further details, please reach out to the SLV Health Pediatric office at 719-589-8004. This collaboration with Children's Hospital, supported by the dedication and generosity of our staff, marks a step forward in providing comprehensive, specialized pediatric care closer to home for the families of the San Luis Valley.



Courtesy photo

The picture is of SLVH's Pediatrician, Dr. Jason Kalan, inspecting the new bed that raises and lowers in the clinic setting.

# Alamosa named nation's 'Best Small Town Cultural Scene' by USA TODAY

By PRISCILLA WAGGONER

ALAMOSA — After a month of community involvement in casting daily votes preceded by a rather stunning and highly competitive nomination process, USA TODAY announced that Alamosa has been named the winner of the "2024 USA Today 10BEST Readers' Choice award for Best Small Town Cultural Scene."

"We're definitely excited," says Kale Mortensen, executive director of Visit Alamosa who was informed of the victory. "We're also not surprised. We're proud of our website and proud of our team and what we're able to accomplish. But we're also given such great resources with the community that we're able to showcase — all these partners and the non-profits, like Society Hall and the Rio Grande Farm Park and too many others to name. This really is a community win. And that's why we think this is really the best category — Best Small Town Cultural Scene. It's everyone in the community who creates this sense of place and this culture."

Winning this award was far from an easy accomplishment, starting with the fact that towns played no role in being nominated.

Instead, 20 nominees were selected by a panel of journalists, editors from USA TODAY and 10Best.com, expert contributors and sources from other Gannett properties.

Criteria used to nominate towns included a population of under 25,000 and outstanding examples of cultural attractions such as museums, art galleries, performing arts and a strong collection of local events.

Once the panel finalized the nominees, towns were notified.

"Sometime around March, we just got an email from USA TODAY that said, 'hey you've been nominated in this category for this award' and when the voting started," Mortensen says. "We found out that USA TODAY's journalists and editors put up the nominations. So, I'm not exactly sure how that happened but we certainly felt it was well-deserved for the community.

We were excited and thought about how can we make the best of this? We definitely wanted to win, so we pulled in the community and started a campaign."

Once notified of the nomination, voting started and lasted over the next 30 days.

"This campaign was truly a team effort," says Samantha Bogle, Visit Alamosa Communications Specialist. "We all pulled together to make it possible. Beth (Sumner, destination development) and Savannah (Schlaufman, director of marketing) are rock stars and their insights, passion, and commitment to the team are truly valuable."

"It was wire to wire," Mortensen says, "and we watched the leader board every day. But then they took it down the last week and that's when we got kind of anxious."

All the work paid off. While the top 10 nominees are allowed to call themselves winners by virtue of the fact that they were nominees, Alamosa actually came in with the highest number of votes. The final tally has not been shared with Mortensen.

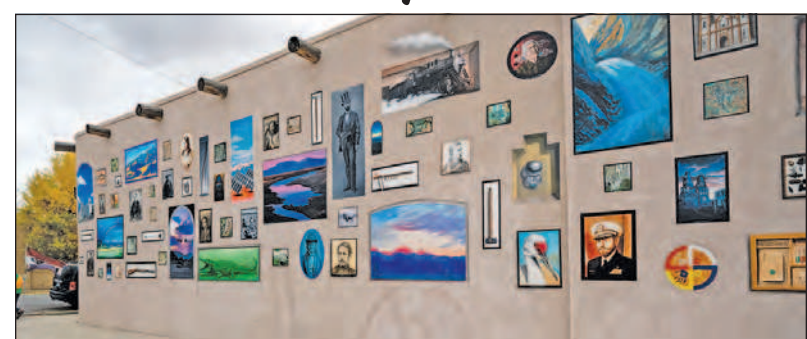
When it comes to what he thinks makes Alamosa so worthy of the honor, Mortensen says, "I can't really showcase one thing over another because it's really a collection of everything. There's the Heritage Area and Cinco de Mayo but also just the people who are here. We always get comments on google or

yelp, it's about the warm hospitality. It's the people. There isn't just one thing we can point to and say, 'this is why we're so great.' It's a million little things that truly make this such a great place."

"As a Valley Native, I feel pride and excitement and I hope others do too," says Bogle. "I think that sometimes Alamosa gets the cold shoulder in the media so to be recognized on such a big platform for such a special reason warms my heart. We wouldn't have been able to do this without the community's voice."

"I feel so grateful to be a part of such a vibrant and dynamic community," says Elizabeth Sumner. "This recognition, on this scale, is something I hope the entire community is incredibly proud of. Community is what makes the culture and we have a truly amazing community."

"This is such a big win for the community, to have a national spotlight on the rich culture of Alamosa," says Schlaufman. "Our team at Visit Alamosa is so lucky that we get to see and experience how unique and special the culture here is every day. It's moving to see how many more people also recognize



Courtesy of Visit Alamosa

Alamosa was named the nation's 'Best Small Town Cultural Scene' by USA TODAY. Criteria used to nominate towns included a population of under 25,000 and outstanding examples of cultural attractions such as museums, art galleries, performing arts and a strong collection of local events.

how special Alamosa truly is. "You can bet on the fact that Visit Alamosa will be making the most of this incredible opportunity! We are already such huge proponents of Alamosa's culture and heritage, so this win aligns beautifully with our marketing plans for 2024."

"Growing up here...I know the younger mentality," Mortensen says. "You can't wait to get out and see what the rest of the world has, but you find yourself always wanting to come back here. This is the community where I grew up. This is where I met my wife who has come to love Alamosa. The sense of community you have — you just don't get it anywhere else."

"Unfortunately, sometimes it takes someone from outside of here to make us realize what we have, which really comes down to the diversity of people — those who have lived here for generations and those who come here from someplace else...all come to love Alamosa. And there's a lot here to love."

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# 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



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.**

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 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 priority 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.

## PROJECT

Continued from Page 1A

The city would also like applicants to outline the estimated cost for their project, including materials and what the applicant is charging for the project.

A timeline of how long it will take to complete the project is also being requested.

The city is also asking interested parties to state why they would be a good person to choose for the selected project.

The deadline for applications is 5 p.m. on Friday, April 26. Applications are available at Center Town Hall. Completed applications can be emailed to

keith@centerco.gov with the subject downtown beautification project. A hard copy of the completed application can also be taken to Center Town Hall, 294 S. Worth St.

A selection committee will review the applications and contact the people behind the top proposals. The committee is hoping to discuss and contact artists no later than May 10. The committee is hoping to have projects begun by May 15, and completed by Sept. 1.

For more information, call 719-754-3497.

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## Are You Wearing Your Armor?

When I read the Bible, I am always fascinated by how many times the Lord tells us to “put on” or “put off” different things. Ephesians 6 is a perfect example—and it’s one of the most well-known passages in the New Testament.

Ephesians 6:11 (AMPC) tells us to “Put on God’s whole armor [the armor of a heavy-armed soldier which God supplies], that you be able successfully to stand up against [all] the strategies and the deceits of the devil.”

The words “put on” are very important. I have never walked into my closet and had my clothes or shoes jump onto my body. I have always had to put them on—it’s a choice. So, what does God tell us to put on?

**The Belt of Truth:** Ephesians 6:14 says, “Stand therefore [hold your ground], having tightened the belt of truth...”

The belt of truth is the Word of God. And just like a physical belt holds everything together, God’s Word is our support and foundation. This means when trouble comes and you’re tempted to give up or blow up—that’s when you want to tighten your belt and trust the Word of God more than ever!

**The Breastplate of Righteousness:** Ephesians 6:14 (NKJV) says to “...put on the breastplate of righteousness.”

It’s sad how many Christians walk around feeling like something is wrong with them. For years, I was one of them. If I sinned, I would torment myself by allowing myself to feel guilty and condemned.

However, the Bible says we have been made right with God through Jesus’ death on the cross (2 Corinthians 5:21). This means we can have the mindset that says, “I am a child of God—He loves me, and I am forgiven.”

This doesn’t mean we can just sin and do whatever we want. But it means when we make mistakes, we can go to God, sincerely confess our sins, then receive His gift of forgiveness—no strings attached (1 John 1:9).

**Shoes of Peace:** Ephesians 6:15 (NLT) says, “For shoes, put on the peace that

comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared.”

As a believer, one of the most important things you can do is stay in peace. Peace is your position of power! I encourage you to keep your peace at any cost. If someone upsets you, take a few moments to walk away and ask God for His help. Talk to Him and say, “Help me to stay calm, Lord. Help me to keep the peace.” Because in your battles against the enemy, peace is power.

**Shield of Faith:** Ephesians 6:16 (AMPC) says, “Lift up over all the [covering] shield of saving faith, upon which you can quench all the flaming missiles of the wicked [one].”

Faith is something that God has given us, but it must be released in our lives—through *praying*, through *saying*, and through *doing*.

During a crisis, it’s easy to run to a friend for help, and sometimes we need to talk to other people. However, our first reaction to a problem should be to run to God and *pray* for His strength, guidance, and deliverance.

Our words are also extremely powerful. In fact, the Bible says, “The tongue has the power of life and death...” (Proverbs 18:21 NIV). When we line up what we *say* with the Word of God and declare His promises over our lives, we are speaking faith-filled words that improve our situation.

Finally, what we *do* makes all the difference. Sometimes our circumstances can feel pretty scary. But those are the times when it’s most important to step out in faith and do what God has placed in our heart to do.

**Helmet of Salvation:** Ephesians 6:17 tells us to put on “the helmet of salvation.” I believe God is saying that we should think like a child of God.

First Corinthians 2:16 (AMPC) says “we have the mind of Christ.” This means we can line up our thoughts with God’s Word and think like God thinks—good, positive, hopeful, believing thoughts.

Don’t be a garbage dump for the enemy’s thoughts. Keep your helmet on...and keep believing!

Moving Up Higher with **Joyce Meyer**

**Sword of the Spirit:** The Sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17) is the Word of God, and it’s our primary offensive weapon against the enemy. As I mentioned, our words carry tremendous power; and when we speak God’s words out of our mouths, we are combatting the enemy and helping to bring to pass God’s good plan for our lives.

When you’re under attack, speak out God’s Word. When you’re overwhelmed and feel like giving up, declare, “I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13 NKJV).

When it looks like things aren’t going well, purposely choose to say what God says about you—things like, “God has a good plan for my life—plans for me to prosper...plans to give me hope and a great future!” (Jeremiah 29:11.)

As you do, you will be clothed and ready to meet every single battle that comes your way. You will go out with God’s full armor and be dressed for battle.

For more on this topic, order Joyce’s four-part teaching resource **Winning Life’s Battles** You can also contact us to receive our free magazine, *Enjoying Everyday Life*, by calling (800) 727-9673 or visiting [www.joycemeyer.org](http://www.joycemeyer.org).

Joyce Meyer is a New York Times bestselling author and founder of Joyce Meyer Ministries, Inc. She has authored more than 140 books, including **BATTLEFIELD OF THE MIND** and **OVERCOMING EVERY PROBLEM (FaithWords)**. She hosts the *Enjoying Everyday Life* radio and TV programs, which air on hundreds of stations worldwide. For more information, visit [www.joycemeyer.org](http://www.joycemeyer.org).

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# Tu Casa, Inc. SANE Program

By KHRYSTYNN CANO  
SANE Nurse

Tu Casa, Inc. is proud to announce that its Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) program is steadily growing and expanding. The program's main purpose is to provide compassionate and customized services to victims of sexual assault here in the San Luis Valley. Without this local service, survivors would need to travel outside of the valley for care.

Tu Casa, Inc. is staffed with two sexual assault nurses currently, Sarah Herrera and Khrystynn Cano, who are on call and available 24 hours a day. These nurses have specialized training in forensic, psychosocial, and medical treatment of patients after a sexual assault. They can treat patients' medical needs and gather forensic evidence for patients who have been sexually assaulted using trauma informed care. Trauma informed care focuses on the patient as a whole and cares for patients with compassion. This care considers both the survivors' acute care needs and the possible long-term effects of a sexual assault to guide treatment and evidence collection.

The SANE program at Tu Casa, Inc. enables sexual assault survivors to get treatment customized and tailored to them with discussions between them and the nurse present. Many people are not aware that there are several options to report sexual assault crimes, which include reporting to law enforcement, forensics, or not reporting and just focusing on medical needs. There are also options for delayed reporting with evidence

collection. Some patients might only want a medical exam or medication to prevent pregnancy or a sexually transmitted infection. Other patients may opt for a full head-to-toe physical examination while some might want to collect complete forensic evidence with supportive documentation for prosecution. The beauty of this customized care is that it is patient driven and can include whatever the patient is seeking as we are here to support them in this time of crisis. The SANE nurses are trained to guide and assist survivors through this very tough process.

After an exam is completed by our SANE nurse, our team at the Tu Casa Program and the SLV CAC continue care by ensuring the patients have the resources and follow-up care they require. The beauty in this collaboration for continued care is that together, our staff can care for victims of sexual assault from the beginning onward using a multi-disciplinary team approach.

If you or someone you know is a victim of sexual assault or abuse, please reach out to Tu Casa, Inc. for support. We offer a 24/7 hotline, 719-589-2465. A person will answer, speak to you about your situation, and reach out to the necessary resources in the event of sexual assault or child sexual abuse.

Tu Casa, Inc. is here to serve people who have experienced sexual assault and child sexual abuse. All services offered at Tu Casa, Inc. are confidential and free to anyone who has experienced domestic violence, sexual assault, child sexual abuse, stalking, and human trafficking.



Courtesy photo

Lorraine and Amy will be sharing their music ministry at 7 p.m. on April 19, at the Valley Church of the Nazarene in Monte Vista.

## Lorraine and Amy performing April 19 in MV

CONTRIBUTED

MONTE VISTA — Lorraine and Amy will be sharing their music ministry at 7 p.m. on April 19, at the Valley Church of the Nazarene in Monte Vista.

The local duo has been writing and sharing their original music since 2017. Their third album is currently in production.

"We are so blessed to be able to share the hope and love found in

Jesus Christ in such a fun way," the duo stated.

They contribute their lasting friendship and ministry to having God in it.

"When you put God first and give Him the glory in all that you do, He blesses it," they stated. "This is a lifelong learning process, any imperfect servant of God would agree."

Lorraine and Amy will be joined

by friends and local musicians Kathy Herrera and Heather Hefner on bass guitar and flute.

Elaine Meyer will be traveling from Colorado Springs to join the group for this special evening of worship and praise.

The concert is free and open to the public. The Valley Church of the Nazarene is at 228 Madisen St., Monte Vista.

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# Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area receives grant to enhance youth programs

CONTRIBUTED

ALAMOSA — The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area (SdCNHA) has received a grant from the National Park Foundation's ParkVentures program to provide new supplies and equipment for both of its annual youth programs and to enhance the activities and sites students will be taken to in each program.

These programs include their Caminos del Valle Youth Walking Tours and the SdCNHA Heritage Camp. Both of SdCNHA's programs take place in the spring and early summer every year. The organization will be expanding their numbers to ten students for the Youth Walking Tours this year.

Applications are still open for students interested in participating in the Heritage Camp. The organization hopes that these increased funds will be able to provide more students with access to the history in their home communities and get them interested in a possible future career in historical

and environmental preservation.

The National Park Foundation's ParkVentures program awards grants to equity-focused outdoor leaders and organizations for projects and activities that promote access, eliminate barriers, and offer positive, memorable experiences to engage individuals and communities that have historically been excluded from national parks and outdoor recreation. The program's goal is to help people create and strengthen life-long relationships and national parks.

SdCNHA was designated to promote, rehabilitate, and interpret unique historical, geographic, cultural, and natural resources. They endeavor to preserve and protect the integrity of our area and encourage stewardship for all generations through community collaboration.

To learn more about the work SdCNHA does, follow them on social media or visit their website at [www.sangreheritage.org](http://www.sangreheritage.org).



Photo courtesy of Alina Marquez with Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area

The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area (SdCNHA) has received a grant from the National Park Foundation's ParkVentures program to provide new supplies and equipment for both of its annual youth programs.

# Society Hall hosts powerhouse double bill of Bonneville and Walker

By SOCIETY HALL

ALAMOSA — Society Hall is thrilled to welcome Ray Bonneville and Seth Walker — two headliner-worthy artists sharing the stage on the same night at 7:30 p.m. on Sunday, April 21.

Bonneville and Walker will each do their own set and will also play together on some songs. Doors at 400 Ross Ave., Alamosa, open at 6:30 p.m. with the show beginning at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$20 and are available online at [www.societyhall.org](http://www.societyhall.org) and in Alamosa at The Green Spot, 711 State Ave. The concert will also stream live on both the Society Hall Facebook page and YouTube channel.

The Society Hall board is so excited to have these two amazing artists sharing a show at Society Hall.

Bonneville is described as "Bluesy Americana stripped down to its essentials and steeped in a humid southern vibe" which sort of covers it but does not describe the power of the deep groove he delivers through that bluesy grit. An amazing talent on guitar, harp, and vocals, he will transport you to many compelling places along his musical journeys. He also contributed a harp track on the song "Safety Zone" from Eliza Gilkyson's latest CD "Home."

Whether performing solo or fronting a band, playing electric or acoustic guitar, Bonneville allows space between notes that adds potency to every chord, lick, and lyric. Often called a "song and groove man," he began writing his own music after two decades working as a studio musician, playing rowdy rooms with blues bands, and living hard. He's since released nine albums, won Canada's Juno award and other prestigious honors, earned wide critical acclaim, and garnered an enthusiastic following in the U.S., Canada, and Europe.

Walker has been collecting rabid fans since he appeared on the Americana scene many years ago. Says Society Hall board member and area musician and producer Don Richmond, "I had the opportunity to see Seth and his trio a couple years ago at the Four Corners Folk Fest, and I have to say it was the coolest and most engaging set of music I've seen in a long time — effortless and fluid, cruising through and across stylistic boundaries like they never existed, seemingly focused on one thing — connecting with the people and lifting them up. Don't miss this guy!"

Over the last decade, Walker has become recognized as one of the most

revered Americana artists in the United States; a three-dimensional talent who combines a gift for melody and lyric alongside a rich, Gospel-drenched, Southern-inflected voice with a true-blue knack for getting around on the guitar.

In 2022, Walker released, "I Hope I Know," his eleventh studio album. Produced by Jano Rix of The Wood Brothers, the collection is a beacon of light, written and recorded during

the dark times of the pandemic. Each song burns bright with what fans have come to love about Walker: stylistically diverse influences, pure soul in his delivery, contemplative lyrics, and musical movement both geographic and spiritual.

Don't miss one of the most amazing evenings of music Society Hall has ever hosted — Bonneville and Walker sharing the stage at Society Hall, on Sunday, April 21.



Courtesy photos

Two headliner worthy artists — Ray Bonneville, left, and Seth Walker, right — will be sharing the Society Hall stage for a concert on April 21.

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# Lifestyles

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Supplement to The Monte Vista Journal, Center Post-Dispatch, The Conejos County Citizen, The Mineral County Miner, The South Fork Times, and The Del Norte Prospector.

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## 2024 Summerfest on the Rio – seeking food and craft vendors

CONTRIBUTED

ALAMOSA — Alamosa’s iconic “Welcome to summer in the San Luis Valley” is back for 2024 from Friday, May 31, to Sunday, June 2. Yes, Sunday is back.

This annual festival provides extensive arts and craft talents, food, musical entertainment for the entire family and many activities for kids. Situated along the winding Rio Grande in the beautiful and spacious Cole Park,

the festival is known for its music, family fun, and culinary delights.

Arts and crafts as well as food vendor applications are being accepted now. The deadline for vendors to apply is Monday, April 15, for food and Saturday, May 25, for arts, crafts and information booths.

“Summerfest is a great way to show off your goods and have fun with your business,” organizers stated.

**Please see FEST on Page 2**

## Saguache County Museum to celebrate 65 years

By MARIE MCCOLM

SAGUACHE — The Saguache County Museum is proud to announce 65 years of service to the community. The museum is kicking off the celebration on Sunday, May 26, Memorial Day.

The museum will be open with free admission beginning at 9 a.m. that day. There will also be a traditional parade beginning at 11 a.m., with the theme “Just Like We Used To.” The Mountain Valley School Lifestyles Class has chosen to direct the parade. They will be providing the emcee for the parade and putting together all the fine details for it. The Grand Marshall for the parade will be Judy Bunker.

The excitement does not stop there. There will also be vendors in Otto Mears Park all day, along with a car and antique tractor show all day. There will also be barrel train rides for the kids following the parade. The antique tractor club will be hosting the rides for the children.

Awards will be handed out to

winners in various categories of the parade, car show, and other events that will be taking place that day, including vehicles, float entries into the parade, dancing, and a children’s bike decorating contest.

Food will be chosen, and lunch will be served at noon, along with a community play. Both will be held at the Community Building in Otto Mears Park with the play beginning at 1:30 p.m., after lunch. The play is titled “Valley Echoes.” The play will portray historical people of Saguache County and is under the direction of Virginia Drake.

The Saguache County Museum began in 1959 as a municipal improvement venture, in celebration of Colorado’s Centennial Anniversary. Saguache County had just finished building a new jail, and the old one was set to be demolished. Members of three different clubs who collaborated on the idea for the museum, asked Saguache County not to demolish the jail, so that the site could be used as a “historical place.”

The establishment was saved

and became the Saguache County Museum. It was collaboratively decided that the little museum would be opened as a celebrated display of history, in Saguache Town Hall.

The museum is celebrating 65 years this year. There are volunteers who make up the board of directors for the museum. The museum is completely non-profit and is also separate from the Saguache County government.

The museum opens annually on Memorial Day and closes for the season on Labor Day.

Everyone is invited to enjoy the fun events and partake in all the festivities that are planned to honor the 65 years that the museum has been opened, the anniversary of the Saguache County Museum.

There is also still time to sign up to be a part of the parade. The last day to sign up will be May 15.

For more information on the parade, contact Laura Abeyta, Chair of the Parade Committee at [lauraabeyta01@gmail.com](mailto:lauraabeyta01@gmail.com).

## Teddy Bear Clinic: positive associations for foster kids and doc visits

CONTRIBUTED

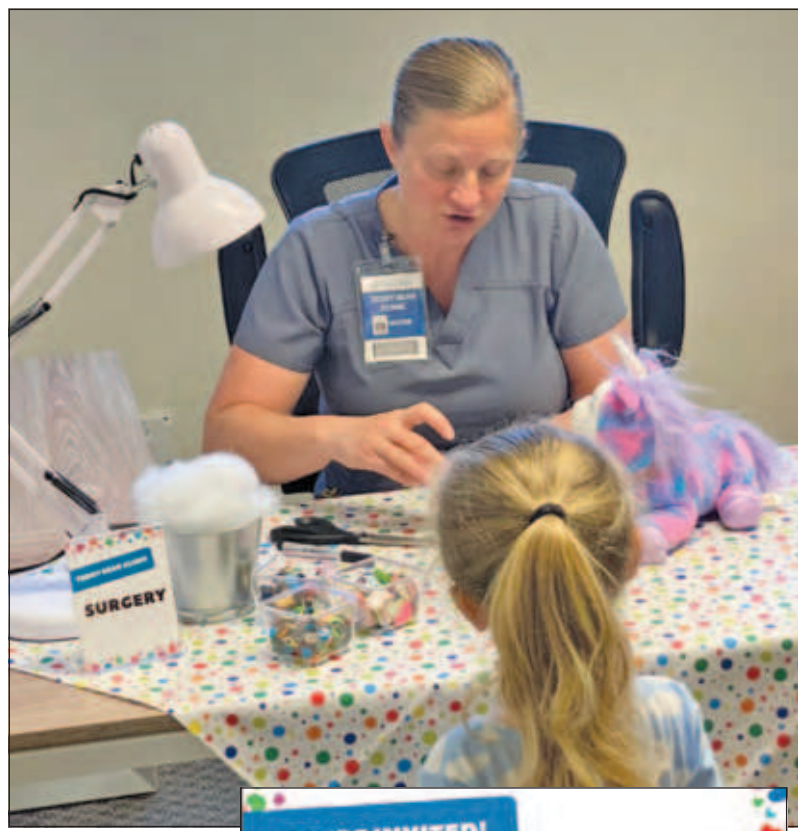
ALAMOSA — Did you know that stuffed animals get boo-boos too? When they do, they go to the Hope and Home Teddy Bear Clinic.

When children enter the foster care system, they do so with a history of hurt, brokenness, and distrust of people. Many children in foster care can recall the day they had to visit a doctor to have their health and wellbeing assessed — sometimes including documentation of injuries or evidence of neglect. Can you imagine how traumatic this would be to a young child who feels alone in the world? Enter, the Teddy Bear Clinic.

Hope and Home’s “Teddy Bear Clinic” is all about helping children create positive associations with the medical community. Foster children bring their favorite stuffed animal in for a wellness check, which includes a general workup, an eye exam and a dental cleaning. In some cases, a “stuffy” in really bad shape may require a visit to the triage unit for MRI’s, X-ray’s, and surgery.

We are happy to sew up a bear in need of more stuffing, glue on a new eyeball, or provide a bandage or two for a “scraped knee.” While all this may be make-believe, the healing and catharsis a child experiences is real.

Getting to meet real doctors and nurses and comfort their stuffed animal through each station of the Teddy Bear Clinic is deeply therapeutic for children who have only known fear and confusion in the context of a doctor’s visit. We would like to say a huge thanks to SLV Health



Courtesy photo

A Teddy Bear Clinic is scheduled for April 20 at Hope and Home in Alamosa.



for sponsoring this transformative event both financially and through volunteerism.

While The Teddy Bear Clinic is designed for children in foster care, any child can come. It will take place on Saturday, April 20, from 10 a.m.-12 p.m.

at Hope and Home, 605 3rd St., Alamosa.

If you have ever considered becoming a foster parent, this event would be a great opportunity to meet some local professionals and get more information. To RSVP, email Annie Reed, at [areed@hopeandhome.org](mailto:areed@hopeandhome.org).

## Eligible Coloradans encouraged to apply for Colorado’s Low-income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP) by April 30 deadline

By COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

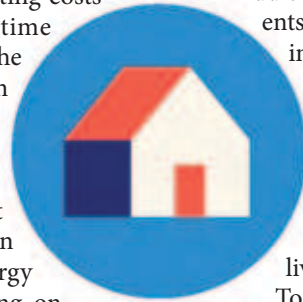
DENVER — April 30 is the last day to apply for Colorado’s Low-income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP). LEAP helps eligible individuals and families pay a portion of winter home heating costs by making a one-time payment directly to the utility company on behalf of each LEAP-eligible household. This season, eligible families can expect to receive between \$200 to \$1,000 in energy assistance, depending on the type of heating fuel, household income and other factors.

“It’s not too late for Coloradans to apply for LEAP,” says Theresa Kullen, LEAP manager. “The extra money that LEAP provides to help pay home energy bills can make a difference for the nearly 500,000 Coloradans who have reported finding it very difficult to pay basic

household expenses recently.”

To qualify for LEAP, Coloradans may have an income of up to 60 percent of the state median income. This equates to a household income of less than \$71,112 a year for a family of four. For a further breakdown of income requirements, visit the LEAP website.

Additionally, LEAP recipients must pay home heating costs directly to a utility company or landlord as part of their rent and have at least one U.S. citizen or permanent legal resident of the U.S. living in the household. To access the LEAP application,



# LEAP

visit [cdhs.colorado.gov/leap](http://cdhs.colorado.gov/leap). Online applications

are processed through the Colorado PEAK system. You can also call the HEAT HELP line at 1-866-HEAT-HELP (1-866-432-8435) to receive an application via mail or email or visit your local county department of human services office to pick up or drop off an application.

# State Troopers cracking down on impaired drivers

## Surge enforcement set for San Luis Valley Region

CONTRIBUTED

**COLORADO**— The Colorado State Patrol will conduct saturation patrols through the San Luis Valley area, which includes the counties of Alamosa, Costilla, Conejos, Rio Grande, and Saguache. The enforcement event will occur from Friday, April 12, through Sunday, April 14.

This region has experienced 65 fatal crashes and an additional 235 serious injury crashes over the past five years. Most of these incidents occurred late Friday and into Saturday nights. The leading causal factor for these crashes is impaired driving.

State troopers will be dedicated to the detection and apprehension

of drivers who may be impaired by or otherwise under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or a combination of these substances.

“We will also be increasing enforcement on excessive speed and a lower tolerance on those driving over the limit; both regarding alcohol and speed,” officials stated.

The agencies participating in the surge of enforcement include the statewide DUI team with the Colorado State Patrol and Troop 5B.

If you encounter a suspected impaired driver, the driver should be avoided by getting out of the way. Contact the Colorado State Patrol after you pull over by calling \*CSP (\*277), 9-1-1 or 719-589-5807. Be prepared to provide the following information: vehicle description, license plate number, location and direction of travel, driver description, and the driving behavior being demonstrated. All emergency calls can be made to 9-1-1.



Trooper stands on the side of the road.

Photo courtesy CDPS

## Gear Head Gala to host car show in Center April 27

By MARIE MCCOLM

**CENTER** — High school students Mario Jaymz Varo, Max Almanza, and Angel Rios are part of the group called Gear Head Gala and will be hosting a car show at the end of April.

Varo is excited about bringing this event to Center.

“We are planning on having two food vendor trucks at the show,” Varo said. “One of food, and one with different drinks. We are going to be holding a raffle. We have different companies donating different things, including auto cleaning bundles for raffle give aways. Auto Zone will be donating to us, and we have also talked to O’Reilly’s. We have other giveaways for our raffles too. It’s going to be a really great time and we hope everyone will come out and join us.”

The car show will be taking place in front of Town Hall in Center on April 27 and will begin at 10 a.m. Varo believes that the show will help businesses in the area.

“It will bring some popularity there, and it will definitely benefit the town by bringing people in,” Varo said.

Varo said that there will be plaques given away, and other prizes for more than one of the winners.

“We will be giving out a few plaques,” Varo said. “Number one, of course, will get best of show. We will also be giving out 10 other plaques though. So, if you get involved with the car show, there is a high chance of you earning something for sure. We want people to be happy and know we haven’t wasted their time. We are going to make people feel welcome and like it was worth it for sure.”

Varo stated that people from all over the Valley and elsewhere are invited to attend. “We aren’t charging an admission fee,” Varo said. “We want everyone to come

out and have a good time and enjoy the show. We are only charging the actual participants in the car show, and it’s only a \$25 fee.”

Varo stated that they also plan to have music at the car show.

Varo stated that the car show is a collaboration between himself and his friends, Angel, and Max.

“For me, the inspiration behind it is I am very into car culture,” Varo said. “I am very into cars. With Angel and Max, the passion is there too. We all thought this would be a cool thing to do together, to carry on the car show tradition. We wanted to bring a car show to Center for people to enjoy.”

Varo said they will try hard to make it a great event for everyone who attends and participates.

“We want to make this as cool and big as possible,” Varo said.

Preregistration is recommended by texting 719-849-8252, but people can also register on the day of the car show. There are also local posters with QR codes available to use to register.

**17<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL**

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## FEST

Continued from Page 1

Reasonable sponsorship opportunities are available as well. Go to [www.summerfestontherio.com](http://www.summerfestontherio.com), for more information.

We are also looking for community-minded people to volunteer for a couple of hours during the festival to help sell and pour beverages. This small but valuable commitment helps keep the festival free to attendees by avoiding staffing costs.

“Plus, giving back to the community feels good too; you may even get a few drink tickets,” organizers stated.

To sign up or for more information, contact [info@summerfestontherio.org](mailto:info@summerfestontherio.org).

# Business Showcase

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# CSU Extension grateful for CPAC's support

Donations still being accepted

**CONTRIBUTED**

**MONTEVISTA** — On March 21 at the monthly Colorado Potato Administrative Committee (CPAC) meeting led by the executive director Jim Ehrlich, the San Luis Valley Colorado State University Extension Foundation was gifted \$25,000. This donation is going toward the Endowment Fund being used for the hiring of the second 4-H youth specialist and 4-H programming.

"CPAC is a huge supporter of the SLV 4-H program that helps promote leadership and life skills education for our SLV youth," officials stated.

Beginning in 2021, the SLV Extension office has been in a rebuilding period. After years of instability and a reduction of staff, Larry Brown has stepped into the leadership role to rebuild the extension in the San Luis Valley.

In just two short years, the full-time staff has

doubled, now operating with a Director/Ag Specialist, a Youth Development/4-H Specialist, a Family and Consumer Science Specialist, a Juntos 4-H Specialist, and office administrator. The newest addition, made possible by 3 years of funding from the Outcalt Foundation, is a second 4-H Specialist.

The team's focus now is to secure permanent funding for a second 4-H agent. Historically in the San Luis Valley Area Extension Program there have been two full-time Youth Development/4-H Specialists on staff.

Serving the youth of six counties can be overwhelming for even two Specialists. Because of limited funding, it has been twelve years since we had two Youth Development/4-H Specialists. In those 12 years they have had a single specialist on staff for six years and the other six years they did not have a Youth Development/4-H Specialist, at all. The enrollment and quality of the program has suffered due to inadequate staffing.



Photo courtesy of Mollie Wells, Area Specialist 4-H Youth Development

**Staff at SLV CSU Extension accepting \$25,000 donation from CPAC.**

"We are extremely grateful and appreciative of all who have generously jumped on board and contributed to the project. Once our funding in the endowment fund is secured, this community driven project will leave a lasting legacy for our youth," officials stated.

Donations are still being accepted at the SLV CSU Extension Office. You can drop them off at 1899 E Highway 160, Monte Vista, or mail donations to: PO Box 30 Monte Vista, Co 81144. For more information, contact the Extension Office at 719-852-7381.

## Governor Polis, Colorado Energy Office announce \$21M to expand EV charging network

*Awardees include locations in Alamosa, Ft. Garland, South Fork and Monte Vista*

**By COLORADO ENERGY OFFICE**

**DENVER** — Governor Jared Polis and the Colorado Energy Office (CEO) announced \$21 million in grant awards Thursday through the Direct-Current Fast-Charging (DCFC) Plazas program. Funded through the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) Program, part of President Biden's Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, and the state's Community Access Enterprise (CAE), these grants create 290 new fast charger ports at 46 different sites across the state, expanding Coloradans access to fast, affordable, and reliable EV chargers. This will increase Colorado's existing public fast-charger network of more than 1,000 ports by about 28%.

"Colorado is leading the way in the shift to electric vehicles by making them more affordable and ensuring that driving them across our beautiful state is just as easy as driving a gas-powered car," said Gov. Polis. "We're grateful to have additional dollars to pair with state funds to accelerate our efforts to become the number one state for electric cars, bikes, and buses."

"Addressing greenhouse gas pollution from transportation is a top priority in our efforts to meet the state's climate goals," said CEO Executive Director Will Toor. "This grant program is a key piece of that puzzle, ensuring Colorado builds enough public electric vehicle charging infrastructure to support 940,000 light-duty EVs on Colorado roads by 2030."

Awardees will install chargers in locations across the state, including Cañon City, Littleton, Dolores, Silverton, Yuma, and Fort Garland. Like the first round of NEVI-supported grant awards, announced in August 2023, these awards aim to fill charging gaps along Colorado's federally designated alternative fuel corridors — a requirement for NEVI funding. CEO also awarded CAE funding for projects in communities without adequate electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure.

To ensure the air quality benefits of electric transportation reach those who are most affected by transportation-related air pollution, CEO prioritized projects in disproportionately impacted communities. These investments will not only facilitate statewide travel in an electric vehicle, but will also help improve air quality and meet charging needs in communities that currently lack access to fast and reliable EV charging.

"Colorado is building one of the most comprehensive EV charging networks in the country," said Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) Executive Director Shoshana Lew. "We believe that nearly every Coloradan will have access to DC fast-charging within a matter of years."

With more than 100,000 EVs registered in Colorado, and the pace of adoption growing, the expansion of the charging network is necessary to meet consumer demand. As of February, there were direct-current (DC) fast chargers located within 30 miles of 78% of the state's geographic area.

Grant awardees include charging station operators, fuel providers, convenience stores, and local governments. CEO will provide funding to support the following EV-charging

infrastructure projects:

- 7-Eleven: Aurora, Colorado Springs
- Apro LLC. (dba United Pacific): Colorado Springs, Littleton
- Circle K Stores, Inc.: Brighton, Denver, Durango, Greenwood Village, Pueblo
- EvGateway: Alamosa, Clifton, Dolores, Lakewood, South Fork
- Francis Energy Charging, LLC: Montrose
- Helios Charging Inc.: Monte Vista,

Silverton

- Jule (dba eCAMION USA Inc.): Fort Garland, Holyoke, Yuma
- Love's Travel Stops & Country Stores, Inc: Burlington, Cañon City, Fountain, Pueblo, Walsenburg
- Phillips 66 Company: Colorado Springs (X2), Grand Junction
- Pilot Travel Centers LLC: Limon
- Tesla, Inc.: Arvada, Aurora, Bennett, Brush, Carbondale, Denver, Frisco,

Glenwood Springs, Greeley, Gunnison, La Junta, Lakewood, Longmont, Parker, Sterling, Wheat Ridge

- Town of Avon: Avon

CEO expects many of the chargers supported by the current round of DCFC Plazas awards to become available by the end of 2025, and anticipates continuing to offer two DCFC Plazas funding rounds per year, with the next opportunity expected to open later this year.

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

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Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

**Solution to last week's puzzle**

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

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## CLASSIFIED INDEX

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01 TICKETS  
02 CARD OF THANKS  
03 MEMORIALS  
04 LOST & FOUND  
05 NOTICES/BAZAARS  
06 PERSONALS  
**EMPLOYMENT**  
07 HELP WANTED  
08 WORK WANTED  
09 EMPLOYMENT SERVICES  
**FOR RENT**  
10 APARTMENTS  
11 ROOMS  
12 HOUSES  
13 MOBILE HOMES  
14 BUSINESS PROPERTY  
15 WANTED TO RENT  
16 VACATION  
**REAL ESTATE**  
17 REAL ESTATE  
18 LOTS & ACREAGE  
19 FARM & FARMLAND  
20 BUSINESS PROPERTY  
21 MOBILE HOMES  
22 PROPERTY WANTED

**MERCHANDISE**  
23 LAWN & GARDEN  
24 GARAGE SALES  
25 AUCTIONS  
26 ANTIQUES  
27 APPLIANCES  
28 HOUSEHOLD GOODS  
29 MUSICAL ITEMS  
30 ELECTRONICS/COMPUTERS  
31 HEALTH  
32 FUEL & HEATING  
33 BUILDING MATERIALS  
34 OFFICE EQUIPMENT  
35 HEAVY EQUIPMENT  
36 MISCELLANEOUS  
37 WANTED  
38 MACHINERY, TOOLS & EQUIPMENT  
39 SPORTING GOODS  
40 AUTO PARTS  
**FARMER MARKET**  
41 FARM EQUIPMENT  
42 FEED & SEED  
43 FARM PRODUCTS  
44 FARM SERVICES

**ANIMALS**  
45 ANIMAL BREEDING  
46 PASTURE FOR RENT  
47 HORSES & CATTLE  
48 PETS & SUPPLIES  
49 ANIMAL CARE  
50 LIVESTOCK  
**RECREATIONAL**  
51 BOATS & EQUIPMENT  
52 CAMPING EQUIPMENT  
53 TRAILERS  
54 SNOWMOBILES/ATV'S  
55 R.V.'S/CAMPERS  
**FINANCIAL**  
56 BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY  
57 INVESTMENTS  
**TRANSPORTATION**  
58 MOTORCYCLES  
59 VEHICLES WANTED  
60 CLASSIC CARS  
61 4X4'S  
62 VANS  
63 TRUCKS  
64 AUTOS FOR SALE  
**SERVICES**  
65 PROFESSIONAL SERVICES  
66 CHILD CARE

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### 05 Notices

**For information on meetings for ALANON NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS AND ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS** Please visit slvaa.org or call 719-937-5083.

### 07 Help Wanted

**San Luis Valley Local Foods Coalition seeks an LFLP Outreach Coordinator.** Strong communication and computer skills are required. Submit your resume and cover letter to opportunity.slvlocalfoods@gmail.com. Additional requirements can be found at www.slvlocalfoods.org/jobs/.

**The SLV Local Foods Coalition seeks an Accountant** to oversee finances for our local nonprofit. Send resume and cover letter to opportunity.slvlocalfoods@gmail.com. Additional requirements can be found at www.slvlocalfoods.org/jobs/. (4-24)

**The City of Monte Vista is accepting applications for a seasonal Parks Maintenance Worker.** This posi-

tion is approximately 16 weeks, 40 hours/wk. Duties include mowing, trimming, watering parks and trash pickup. Wage is \$16.00-\$17.00 per hour. Applications and job description are available at www.cityofmontevista.colorado.gov or pickup/return applications to the City of Monte Vista, Human Resources, 95 West First Ave. Monte Vista, CO. 81144. Open until filled. (5-29)

**Del Norte Bank is seeking a candidate to fill a permanent position for a Teller at our Creede Branch.** Duties will be to accept deposits, loan payments and process withdrawals while maintaining a balanced cash drawer. Must be personable and pleasant answering the phone and greeting customers. Many other duties will be assigned as needed. The position is full time in the summer and part time in the winter, with an end of season bonus and an hourly rate range of \$14.42 to \$17.00. Please send your resume or application to postmaster@truelocalbank.com by April 30, 2024.

Application is available at TrueLocalBank.com/careers or call 719-657-3376 and ask for Dawn. EOE.

### Water/Sewer Operator Part-Time Pay based on experience Job Title:

**Water and Sewer Operator** Job Description: The Water and Sewer Operator plays a vital role in ensuring the efficient and safe operation of the town's water and sewer systems. Responsibilities include monitoring, maintaining, and repairing water treatment and distribution systems, as well as sewer collection and treatment facilities. To apply, submit a resume to townofromeo@gmail.com or come in during office hours Tuesday or Thursday 9 to 3 for application. You can call 719-843-5785 for more information.

### Job Title: Part-Time Maintenance Technician/Parks and Recreation Technician Part-Time Hourly 15-20 hours Pay rate: \$14.42/hour

Job Description: We are seeking a skilled and dedicated Part-Time Maintenance Technician/Parks and Recreation Technician to join our

team in maintaining and enhancing the beauty and functionality of our town's parks and recreational areas. As a vital member of our community, you will be responsible for ensuring the upkeep, safety, and cleanliness of our parks, playgrounds, and town buildings and facilities. To apply, submit a resume to townofromeo@gmail.com or come in during office hours Tuesday or Thursday 9 to 3 for application. You can call 719-843-5785 for more information. (4-17)

### Deputy Clerk Part-Time Hourly

**15-20 hours Tuesday-Thursday and some Fridays Pay Rate: \$14.42** Position Overview/ Job Description: We are seeking a diligent and organized individual to join our team as a Part-Time Deputy Clerk for our small town. The Deputy Clerk will work closely with the Town Clerk and other municipal staff to ensure the efficient operation of administrative tasks and provide support in various municipal functions. This position offers an excellent opportunity for someone

## FULL-TIME SALES

**Valley Publishing has an immediate need in advertising sales (full-time). Any sales experience is appreciated but will train. Email resume to General Manager Brian Williams at bwilliams@valleypublishinginc.com**

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### 0254 Timberline Trail • South Fork

Discover The Essence of Excellence Mountain Living in this custom-built Masterpiece! Situated on 1.84 sloping acres within the prestigious Rio Grande Club, this 4,466 sq ft home offers unparalleled vistas and modern elegance. Key Features: Inspiring Views: Unsurpassed panoramas stretch north, east, and south, capturing the rugged beauty of the San Juan Mountains. Architectural Marvel: A two-level design seamlessly blends contemporary finishes with a mountain aesthetic. Grand Entryway: Step into the vaulted ceiling living room adorned with Swedish Cope logs and a striking rock gas fireplace. Expansive Deck: Access the large stone rock deck from the living area, where you'll soak in views of the golf course, mountains, and valley below. Gourmet Kitchen: Culinary enthusiasts will appreciate custom cabinets, granite countertops, and top-of-the-line Wolf appliances. Master Suite: The upper-level primary suite boasts a spa-like bathroom and an adjacent study. Lower-Level Comfort: Three additional bedrooms with 9-foot ceilings offer Alderwood doorways and magnificent vistas. Entertainment Haven: The lower level features a spacious game room with a pool table, TV, and workout equipment. Year-Round Comfort: Radiant floor heat and an extra-large 1000-gallon propane tank ensure warmth during chilly days. Outdoor Delight: Enjoy ever-changing mountain views from the adjacent deck or cozy up by the stone mantel gas fireplace. Gas-Burning Fireplace: The lower level sitting area with a mini bar and stunning views is perfect for relaxation and entertaining family and friends. This home includes an adjacent parcel allowing direct access to the national forest from the front of the property so enjoying your favorite outdoor activities are just steps away. The 2-car garage has workshop hot & cold sink an extra - large 76-gallon water heater, water softener. Programmable hot water throughout the home, hot & cold water outside faucet and plenty of room for storage and a workbench. There is a security system monitored by Valley Lock and Security. Land lines in most every room. Century-Link phone highspeed internet and Direct TV. Managed lighting and surround sound throughout the home and the Smart Home allows you to control from anywhere. This home is a Hole in One! One of a kind, designed and built providing that sense of hospitality, openness, beauty, and tranquility. Location Highlights: Rio Grande Club: Overlooking the 11th hole, this exclusive community offers golf, recreation, and natural beauty. Outdoor Paradise: Explore nearby trails, fishing spots, the Rio Grande River, the South Fork River and Wolf Creek Ski area. Doesn't get any more epitome than this! Check out the Video. Call and schedule your private showing today! MLS#811509 - \$2,750,000



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# Valley Wide Classifieds

who is detail-oriented, community-focused, and eager to contribute to the smooth functioning of local government. To apply, submit a resume to townofromeo@gmail.com or come in during office hours Tuesday or Thursday 9 to 3 for application. You can call 719-843-5785 for more information.

**Mechanic: JT Timber Falling is hiring a full-time** heavy equipment and truck mechanic in Blanca, CO. \$25-\$45/hr depending on experience. Monday - Friday schedule. Benefits are available. Call 719-379-4066 or visit jttimber.com to apply. (5-1)

**The City of Monte Vista is accepting applications for Kids Connection Summer Program Leaders.** Duties include, planning, scheduling, and implementing youth program activities. \$15 per hour. Job Description and applications are available at <http://www.cityofmontevista.colorado.gov> or City of Monte Vista, Human Resources, 95 West First Ave, Monte Vista, Co. 81144 (4-17)

**CSU-San Luis Valley Research Center is seeking temporary hourly employees** to work M-F 8:00am to 4:30pm 30 to 40 hours per week. Aids in the preparation of research field experiments and crops. Provides planting, irrigating, cultivating, harvesting, storing crops and various tasks important to the research initiatives at this station. Please apply at <https://jobs.colostate.edu/postings/141377> or contact Sharon at (719) 754-3594 x17 (4-24)

## 11 Rooms

**For rent two-bedroom, 1-bath downstairs** \$550. 1145 French St., Del Norte. No pets. 719-849-1942

## 12 Houses for Rent

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## 17 Real Estate For Sale

**For sale 31 acres 2 houses, out buildings** 1 share of Romero water located 4 miles north of Antonito on 285. Call 719-843-0182. (5-8)

**Thinking of buying or selling your home** or land this year, call Yvonne Hoffman, 719-580-1901, Broker Associate Steffens & Co Realty Inc.

## 24 Garage/Yard Sales

**5th annual 3 family sale 56 Meadow LN Monte,** Friday May 3, Saturday May 4, 7am. Everything you can expect plus a black kitchen sink and red couch.

## 32 Fuel & Heating

**Firewood For Sale.** Call or text Mark 662-361-7530 Located in Saguache.

## 36 Miscellaneous

**For sale Cherokee men's boots,** size 12, hiking-working, leather upper. Almost like new. \$50. 719-256-4058.

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# San Luis Valley Area Real Estate

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23 Fairway Drive South Fork, CO

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M: 719-873-5605

**Approx. 6 Acres, Beautiful Views in Bear Creek**  
\$99,000 | MLS #803984  
61 Red Tail Court South Fork, CO

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**28 Acres on the Rio Grande River in South Fork**  
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27000 US HWY 160 South Fork, CO

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**Approx. 2,349 Sq.Ft. and 42 Acres**  
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**Rito Hondo Estates- 18 Rural Mountain Lots**  
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**Lots 11 & 12 in Riviere Estates in Quiet Neighborhood**  
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**Two Adjacent Commercial Lots in South Fork**  
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All Dee's properties are detailed in her blog.

# Valley Wide Classifieds

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**38 Machinery, Tools, Equipment**  
Wanted - **Shopsmith woodworking machine.** 2-inch-thick hardwood planks - cherry, walnut, maple, etc. 719-256-5663. (5-1)

**40 Auto Part**  
Chevy 4-speed transmission. 719-850-2027 (4-17)

**42 Feed & Seed**  
For Sale: **Small Alfalfa bales \$10.** Covered—local. Call: 719-480-2089

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# Cold water presents danger, life jackets can help save lives

By COLORADO PARKS AND WILDLIFE

RIDGWAY, Colo. — Colorado's lakes and reservoirs are opening to more recreation with the arrival of spring, but cold water temperatures can present a serious risk. Wearing a personal flotation device can save lives.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife rangers have already responded to multiple incidents this spring involving paddlesports recreationists falling into the water.

One kayaker died and another was hospitalized last Saturday after they fell into the water at Chatfield Reservoir. Two kayakers who fell into the water at Ridgway Reservoir the weekend before were rescued after they spent 15 minutes in the water.

In both cases, water temperatures were in the low 40 degrees, and all four kayakers in these two incidents were not wearing life jackets at the time they went into the water.

"Our lakes and reservoirs, while especially inviting in the spring after a long winter, can quickly become perilous without the proper precautions," said Ridgway State Park Manager Johnathon Freeborn. "The recent incidents on our waters serve as a stern reminder of nature's unpredictability and the vital importance of wearing a personal flotation device. A PFD is more than a piece of safety equipment; it's what stands between you and tragedy. Wear a life jacket — it could save your life."

The instinctive reaction when a person hits cold water is to gasp, which can lead to inhalation of water. Hypothermia can set in quickly, and use



Photo by Dustin Dorskocil/CPW

A paddler wisely wears a life jacket while kayaking at State Forest State Park.

of arms and legs to swim can be quickly impaired as blood flow is directed to a person's core. This can all lead to unconsciousness or swimming failures as muscles become numb.

Wearing a life jacket will keep your head above water and support your body should your swimming ability fail or you become unconscious.

"It can be deceiving when we start getting warm-weather days and it's nice outside, but everyone recreating on the water should be aware the water is still really cold and remains cold until at least mid-summer here in Colorado," said Scott Rist, Park Manager of Crawford, Paonia and Sweitzer Lake State Parks. "Having the proper gear and a life jacket on is imperative for anyone recreating

on the water."

Windy conditions can exacerbate danger on the water for paddlers. Getting blown off course can happen quickly, and returning to shore can be difficult going into a headwind or when facing waves. That can lead to paddlers expending a lot of energy to navigate and maintain balance. When a paddler loses balance and goes into the water, it can also be easy to become separated from a kayak or paddleboard. "There are several cell phone apps that will tell you hourly wind predictions," Rist said. "Knowing when conditions are going to change can be the difference between life and death. The user has a responsibility to know before you go."

## Ribbon cutting for Genesis Wellspring April 18

MONTE VISTA — The Monte Vista Chamber of Commerce is having a ribbon cutting for Genesis Wellspring at 12 p.m. on April 18, at 133 Adams St.

Genesis Wellspring Ltd is an alternative and holistic health wellness center.

The nonprofit provides board certified (ANMCB) natural health

care, education, testing, bulk herbal apothecary, homeopathics, supplements and tools for wellness for adults and children.

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 2825 Sherman Ave. • Monte Vista

*We would like to express our deepest gratitude and appreciation to all those who have contributed to the success of the Upper Rio Grande Animal Society by contributions, donations, volunteering and general support at Conour Animal Shelter.*

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# Rio Grande County Museum to open new exhibit May 3

## STAFF REPORT

**DEL NORTE** — The Rio Grande County Museum is pleased to announce that they will be opening a new exhibit on May 3 that will feature a one-hundred-year-old time capsule. The museum will welcome local resident Ed Baker who found a treasure trove of artifacts behind a false wall in his Del Norte home.

“This is a wonderful donation from resident Ed Baker. We are very excited to be able to share this exhibit with the public and encourage everyone to come and hear Ed speak about his discovery on May 3 beginning at 5 p.m. The museum has worked very hard alongside Ed and others to identify and catalog this collection over the winter, and we are so happy to share it with all of you,” said Rio Grande County Museum Director Lyndsie Ferrell.

The collection is comprised of several different artifacts ranging from photographs, clothing, trunks and more that were housed in a hidden room inside the Baker house for over 100 years. Baker came across the room while remodeling his house and after some consideration, felt the safest place for the collection would be at the Rio Grande County Museum.

Last fall, during the Cabinets of Curiosity event, Baker spoke about his discovery, but the collection had not been cataloged. During January



Photo by Lyndsie Ferrell

The Rio Grande County Museum is pleased to announce the opening of the Baker House Exhibit on May 3. This exhibit features artifacts that were hidden behind a false wall in a home in Del Norte for over 100 years.

through February, Baker, alongside Rio Grande County Assistant Director Kathy Ellithorpe, worked countless hours to put the collection together and set up a display for all to enjoy.

The collection is from the Egan and Schaffer families that resided in Del

Norte in the late 1800s and offers a view of what life was like during that period. “The Egan and the Schaffers were some of our founding families that came to Del Norte. They were entrepreneurs, claim stakers and everything in between. It was interesting to get to know someone

who lived over 100 years ago and to get a glimpse into what life was like for two families here in Del Norte,” said Ferrell.

Baker will be present on the night of the exhibit opening to speak about his discovery and to share some of the things he has learned about the two families

while working through the collection. The opening will be at 5 p.m. on May 3 at the Rio Grande County Museum. It is free and open to the public. For more information, please visit [www.riograndecountymuseum.org](http://www.riograndecountymuseum.org) or call 719-657-2847.

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# At Hutchings ranch patience, consistency are keys to success

By MARIE MCCOLM

LA JARA — In the small town of La Jara, the Hutchings are working on their little ranch and making it bigger.

This year, the Hutchings have had 5 calves, and they are hoping for more to expand their little farm.

They currently have a small farm complete with four horses and a few cattle, but they are really hoping for expansion. They have all agreed though that they are headed in the right direction.

Kenneth, Taylor, and Amber Hutchings are excited and dedicated to their small ranching business. They have been working on growing their farm for the past 6 years.

Taylor, 15, came up with the idea to start it due to her love of farm animals.

Taylor stated, "I can remember being like 9 and just loving calves. I thought they were the cutest animals ever. I begged my dad to let me get a calf. We have always had horses, we have always had dogs and cats, but we never had cows. My dad gave in to me and let me get a calf, and that's really where it all started."

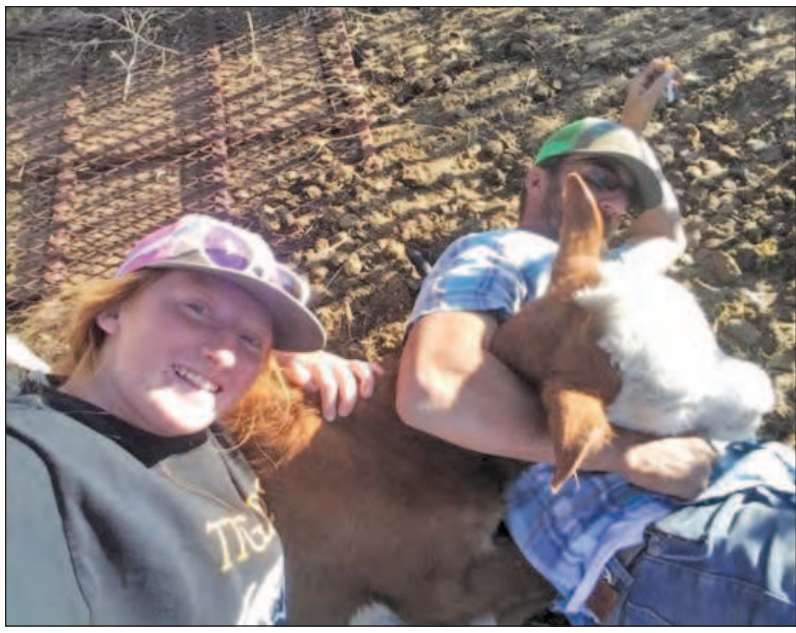
The trio love to ranch, their two other children, Colby, and Elizabeth are not as involved with the farm as Taylor, but they all enjoy it.

When asked what a day in the life of a rancher entails Kenneth stated with a chuckle, "There are some days that are good, and some days that just plain suck. That's the life of farming, but I guess it's like any other job. We do our feeding once a day, generally in the evening, the days can get so hot. We do calving in the morning. There's always a lot to do on the farm. You have to feed, you have to clean, you have to keep up after your animals. During calving season, you really have to watch your cows. Sometimes those babies come, and they are sideways, they have to be twisted, and we have to help those mommas pull out those calves. It's a lot of work, but it pays off. If you want to have a good season, your success really depends on you."

Taylor spoke of helping her dad with the birthing of the calves, and her calf Baby Red.

"It's a lot of work, but I love calves," Taylor said. "One thing about cows, they are not on a schedule. Whether it's freezing, raining, no matter what kind of weather you have, if that baby is coming, you have to be ready. Dad and I do so much of that together. I actually have a calf that I have been raising and my dad is going to let me keep named Baby Red. When cows give birth it's a lot of work. If you aren't there watching and paying attention every minute, you can lose one. If you lose a baby, you lose potential money that you could have later. Farming is all about production. We are hoping to make our farm bigger, and we are working hard towards that too."

When asked what his favorite part of farming is Kenneth stated, "Taking the calves to market is my favorite part, making that money is my favorite part. It's a big job, that's really hard but it pays off and is rewarding. We help feed people by producing animals to sell. I think it's neat to see my daughter so in-



Kenneth and Taylor Hutchings with Baby Red.

involved with the animals too. She and I enjoy taking rides on our horses together over the mountains after a hard day's work. I tell you what, after a hard day's work, it's the best way to spend the end of the day as a farmer, riding a horse with your daughter. Seeing my daughter smile because she puts that hard work into raising a calf and then being able to sell it makes it all worth it too. We don't have a lot of cows, we don't have a huge farm yet, but we will get there. Slow and steady gets it done."



A bull owned by the Hutchings eats from a trailer.

Kenneth also spoke of how the family gets together and does haying for other farms.

"Another thing we do is haying. We help other farms with haying, for extra income and in exchange for hay. We sell hay, and of course use it for feed too," Kenneth said.

He explained that vet bills are a big part of it all too.

"We watch our animals, we have to make sure that everything around them is good, fresh water at all times. We don't need our animals to get sick. Vet bills can get hard. When we have to have C-Sections and when birthing gets hard, things can add up quick. It's all part of being a farmer, taking care of things to keep everything going," Kenneth said.

Amber spoke about being a farmer's wife, and how long the days and nights can be.

"I have another job that I work 40 hours a week. When I get home, I have to help with our farm, sometimes too. I have a little potbelly pig. My pig is my pet, not raising it to sell it," she said with a chuckle. "The days and nights are very unpredictable and can get long. I don't think anyone knows how hard the job is of raising and selling cattle. Being a farmer's wife, I have grown to understand and appreciate how that meat makes its way to our table. It's not an easy job, but I am proud of my husband and kids and really proud of Taylor. Hoping to bring more calves in and expand our little farm. Farmer's feed the Calley and America. We enjoy what we do."



Feeding time is a busy time for the Hutchings, especially during calving season. Courtesy photos



A horse is seen on the Hutchings ranch in La Jara.

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# Center's Roger Mix honored as 2023 CFVGA Member of the Year

CONTRIBUTED

WESTMINSTER — The 2023-24 Colorado Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association (CFVGA) President Roger Mix was recognized as CFVGA's 2023 Robert Sakata Member of the Year, during the CFVGA 10th Annual Conference, Feb. 28 in Westminster.

Mix and his wife, Rosalie, operate Mix Farms in Center, growing potatoes and barley. Roger Mix was first appointed to the CFVGA Board in 2015 and later elected by the membership, ultimately serving as a board member for three terms. In February 2023, Mix was elected by the CFVGA Board to serve as its president for 12 months, ending after the Feb. 27-28 conference, due to his being term-limited.

Established in 2017, the first award was presented to then CFVGA President Robert Sakata and is named after him for his excellence in Colorado produce production and his tireless work to start CFVGA.

"I am honored to be named winner of the Sakata award. It is amazing to see how far CFVGA has come since it was founded in 2014," said Roger Mix. "We currently serve our members through political advocacy, by exploring automated and other options to the ag labor challenges we face, and by putting potential buyers in front of grower members. In addition, CFVGA voting members get free membership in Western Growers and have representation in Washington, D.C. on the issues impacting our operations. I also mention the many avenues CFVGA uses to promote Colorado produce to everyone from consumers to commercial buyers. I couldn't be prouder of what we have accomplished the last decade as a unified organization."

Mix was born and raised in the San



Courtesy photo

**Roger Mix and his wife, Rosalie, operate Mix Farms in Center, growing potatoes and barley. Roger Mix was honored as the 2023 CFVGA Member of the Year.**



**Roger Mix**

Luis Valley and grew up on his family farm. He has represented CFVGA and helped strengthen its partnership with Western Growers. He also is a valued member of the Colorado Potato Administrative Committee and has served as chair of its Industry and Community Committee.

On a national level, Mix has served in multiple leadership roles on the

National Potato Council including serving as its president. He is active in many capacities at the regional and local levels and has represented the San Luis Valley on numerous water and labor issues.

According to one of the people nominating him, Mix "has been instrumental in representing the San Luis Valley and has helped unify and

direct the shared interests of the potato industry and other produce sectors. He is a clear and conscientious voice for agriculture. His sense of friendliness, humor, and thoughtfulness has made the organization more effective and welcoming for all those around him."

The CFVGA is comprised of some 280 members, including growers of all

sizes and types of production throughout the state, as well as representatives of allied industries. The Colorado fruit and vegetable growing sector contributes nearly \$485 million to Colorado at the farm gate and is multiplied as it goes through the distribution chain. Over 90,000 Colorado acres are in fruit and vegetable production. Learn more at [coloradoproduce.org](http://coloradoproduce.org).

## Results of ag worker, farm owners survey

By DIANE DREKMANN

SAN LUIS VALLEY — In the fall of 2023, agricultural workers, farmers, ranchers, and migrant workers participated in a survey designed to assess their well-being and mental health after concern expressed by residents in the San Luis Valley about the ag workers in their communities.

Funding was for that purpose only. The survey was done through the Colorado School of Public Health and the Center for Health Work and Environment by Nicholas Stoll and Dr. Katherine A. James, who has been conducting studies on the water health of San Luis Valley for many years.

All six counties in the San Luis Valley were involved — Costilla, Conejos, Saguache, Alamosa, Rio Grande and Mineral. Anna Vargas was "boots on the ground" for Conejos County. She helped recruit for the ag study through San Luis Valley Ecosystem Council (SLVEC). She presented the findings to an ag coalition and at an ag conference earlier this year.

The survey spanned 9 months with 221 ag workers participating — 53 were owner-operators and 168 were field workers. Eighty-one percent completed the survey — 58% were women and 40% men. The majority of the participants were between 18 and 64 years old.

The survey looked at several factors, like workplace safety, mental

health of workers, and areas of stress. Owner-operators of farms and ranches cited drought as the main stressor in their lives. Field workers felt lack of nutritious food was the main source of stress in their lives. Ag workers felt for the most part that their work was meaningful, and they felt good about their work. About one-third of the workers expressed feeling fatigued sometimes. They don't feel discriminated against. Most felt they were in good health but had at least one chronic condition, like diabetes, heart disease, or cancer. Most did not experience insomnia. One third of the participants did not feel stress because of health, financial, family or work concerns, and experienced little anxiety and low instances of depression. The majority of the ag workers did not use tobacco or marijuana and low alcohol consumption, although one third did engage in "risky drinking" consuming three or more alcoholic drinks in a day.

Ninety percent of the ag workers experienced work-related injuries with half losing time at work and requiring first aid. Half of the participants felt they could pay their bills, they were generally satisfied with their life and received emotional support from their family and friends. Most ag workers spend their time socializing with family and friends and maintaining their home. Organi-

zations that help ag workers primarily assist 75% of field workers and only 38% of owner-operators. Half of the participants felt partnerships were helpful, yet financial and trust issues hinder partnerships. Half also felt community connections were the

best way to get resources. Most go to meetings to network. There were questions about client referrals.

Half of the participants felt the survey provided an exchange of resources. One third felt services improved and their relationships

have been very informative.

At the end of the survey, Stoll and James wrote "Thank you for your continued support in our efforts on worker health."

There is a 24/7 crisis hotline Agri Stress Helpline 833-897-2474.

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# RGC Noxious Weed Department presents 2024 scholarships

By LYNDISIE FERRELL

RIO GRANDE COUNTY — Noxious Weed Director Armando Ross presented four students from Monte Vista High School with \$500 scholarships as part of a program Ross started three years ago. The program has helped several students with scholarship opportunities and a chance to render 3D models of noxious weeds that are used for educational purposes.

The students that participated in this year's program were Analicette Arroyo, Aniya Torres, Jackson Oberrick, and Zariah Archuleta.

Rio Grande County Commissioners supported the program from its inception and have raised the amount of the scholarship as the years progressed and more students became interested in the program. Students work throughout the year to design the models from the ground up (pun intended) and learn about each of the noxious weeds they are sculpting with a 3D computer program as they move along.

Students spend considerable time on each project learning new skills and advancing their talents, sometimes spending time in the classroom during breaks. Ross and Monte Vista High School Science and STEM (Science Technology Engineering Mathematics) teacher Chris Vance work side by side with students, helping them design the plants on the computer before rendering the actual model through the 3D printer.

Ross uses the results as educational tools that travel around to different events and conferences to show people what specific species of noxious weeds look like and what traits to look for in identifying the plant. Students can choose the noxious weed they will learn about and design throughout the program.

The other benefit that is a result of the program is that it helps secure grant funding for the department which Ross uses to create other educational propaganda such as educational brochures and other materials he uses to share information on the dangers of noxious weeds and tips on how to get rid of them.

Now that the weather is beginning to warm up, Ross and his crew will be heading out to treat noxious weeds



Courtesy photos

Rio Grande County Commissioners along with Monte Vista High School Science and STEM teacher Chris Vance and Rio Grande County Noxious Weed Director Armando Ross presented Analicette Arroyo, Aniya Torres, Jackson Oberrick, and Zariah Archuleta with scholarships for the 2024 noxious weed program.

throughout Rio Grande County. Ross hopes other schools will gain interest in the program so it can help more students, reach more of the public and raise awareness about noxious plants.

Noxious weeds such as Puncture Vine can be found all over the county and thanks to the efforts of Ross and his team, plants such as these are identified and controlled. Puncture Vine produces seeds that are referred to as "Goat Heads" and can cause serious issues in livestock and domestic animals if the seeds are stepped on.

Another common noxious weed that is often considered a flower is the Russian Knapweed. According to the Department of Agriculture "Russian knapweed is a non-native, deep-rooted perennial that spreads by aggressive, creeping, horizontal roots (rhizomes) and seeds. The roots are brown to black with a scaly appearance. Russian knapweed can grow up to 3 feet in height. The stems and leaves are covered with short gray hairs. The flowers are urn-shaped, pink to purple in color, and are solitary at the tips of the upper branches.

Russian knapweed can be distinguished from other knapweeds by the smooth, papery, rounded bracts that surround the flowers. Russian knapweed emerges in early spring after soil temperatures remain above freezing. It produces flowers from June to August



and sets seeds in late summer to early fall. The seeds are viable for two to three years. Russian knapweed reproduces primarily from its root system. Buds on the horizontal roots can form adventitious shoots, August through the winter, that can grow to become independent plants. Once rosettes

emerge in the spring, the remaining root buds slough off until they develop again in late summer. Additionally, root fragments can develop into new plants."

A list of all noxious weeds throughout Colorado can be found at <https://ag.colorado.gov/conservation/noxious-weeds/noxious-weed-species-id>

Each plant is pictured and includes a description and tips on how to control or remove the noxious plants completely. Ross can also be reached for help or to answer questions through the Noxious Weed Department at [rgweed@riograndecounty.org](mailto:rgweed@riograndecounty.org) or by calling 719-852-4804.



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# Ag conference in Monte Vista supports local economy

By JOHN WATERS

MONTE VISTA — For the Past 42 years, the Southern Rocky Mountain Agricultural Conference has brought farmers, ranchers, educators, and vendors to Monte Vista.

The conference is unique among agricultural shows in that it began as an educational event and while it remains an agricultural event, it has grown and now incorporates trade show elements into the gathering.

True to the origins of the show, attendees can learn from educational topics at the conference on water-saving production practices, research practices, updates on legislative and market updates, financial management, soil health, and farm family health.

Last year, agricultural economists and other staff from Colorado State University (CSU) extension set out to study the economic benefits the show has on the region. The authors, Rebecca Hill, Matt Burkard, Larry Brown, and Jim Clare, published their findings in a report, Economic Impacts of the Southern Rocky Mountain Agricultural Conference 2023.

According to the report, non-local attendees to the annual conference had an economic impact on the region of \$181,216 in 2023 and 2.1 jobs. The economic benefit to Monte Vista in 2023 was \$39,118.

The group size of people coming to the region was on average, two persons, and groups varied in sized from one to 15 travelers.



Photo by Brian Williams

James Henderson, a fifth-generation farmer and rancher and Vice President of the Colorado Farm Bureau, gives the Colorado Legislative Update on Feb. 6, the opening day, of the 2024 Southern Rocky Mountain Agriculture Conference and Trade Show at the Outcall Event and Conference at SLV Ski-Hi Complex in Monte Vista.

Over 40 % of conference attendees sampled for the report were directly involved in production agriculture, over 25% were in agriculture support, 15% were general public, about 7% CSU students, and about 3%, were Adams State University students or staff.

About 70% of the conference attendees from out of the area spent the night in Alamosa, 20%, Monte Vista, and 10% spent the night elsewhere.

These stays contributed to the local economy by the amount paid for hospitality, sales tax, hotel tax, and meal expenditures.

The study, not surprisingly, found that the agriculture conference contributes significantly to the economy of the San Luis Valley, particularly to the economy of Monte Vista. The study analyzed the economic benefit the conference had on the region in 2023. The 2024 conference had a total

registration of about 675 attendees versus 380 in 2023 and should have a comparable increase in the economic contributions to the Valley.

In a March interview with the Valley Courier, Larry Brown with CSU Extension and Co-chair of the conference attributed part of the spike in attendance to having CSU Distinguished professor Dr. Temple Grandin at the gathering and give the keynote address: Visual Thinking: The hidden gifts of people who think in pictures, patterns, and abstractions.

“A large portion of that increase

is having Grandin give the keynote and the two other education sessions. I think we also had an increase in registrations given the breadth of the education sessions that we offered,” said Brown who added that he doubled the size of the education committee this year.

“We had the goal of getting better geographic representation throughout the Valley and better representation of the different types of crops, livestock, and agricultural enterprises in the variety of sessions we offered. There are still some people who call it the potato and grain conference but it is way beyond that now,” Brown said.

## Honoring the ‘face of Colorado potatoes’ — Jim Ehrlich

By CHRISTINA HERRICK

The Packer

WASHINGTON — When presented the award as the 2024 Potato Person of the Year, Jim Ehrlich was speechless — well, almost.

“I’m extremely humbled,” he told The Packer, which presented the award Feb. 26 in conjunction with the National Potato Council during the 2024 NPC Washington Summit. “I have been so blessed to work for the potato industry and the wonderful people in the industry. I’ve made great friends from all across the country. There’s nothing more noble than producing food for people to eat.”

Potato Person of the Year recognizes an individual who has gone above and beyond the call of duty during the past year to further the potato industry. Award winners have devoted a significant amount of time promoting potatoes to consumers and representing the industry on trade missions and in front of regulatory agencies.

Ehrlich, dubbed the “face of Colorado potatoes,” has served as the executive director of the Colorado Potato Administrative Committee for the past 18 years after the late Tom Ford approached him to take over the post. Ehrlich announced his plan to retire this year.

While he plans to step back, Ehrlich said he intends to stay connected to the industry.

“My roots are in agriculture deep,” he said.

Bob Mattive, NPC’s incoming president, said he’s known Ehrlich for a long time, having somewhat similar paths to a career with potatoes. Mattive said Ehrlich is a selfless person whom many consult about for anything from marketing to legislative issues on state and national levels.

“He’s worked hard for our potato industry in Colorado and also on the



Photo courtesy of National Potato Council

Christina Herrick, produce editor for The Packer, presented Jim Ehrlich, at left, with the 2024 Potato Person of the Year award at the National Potato Council’s 2024 Washington Summit. Outgoing NPC President RJ Andrus, right, thanked Ehrlich for his nearly two decades of service to the potato industry.

national scene,” Mattive said. “He’s been very proactive. ... People look to him as a resource if they need to find out something about potatoes in Colorado. Jim is their go-to person.”

Mattive said Ehrlich was instrumental in organizing a tour of Colorado packing facilities for a delegation from Mexico, which was a critical moment to build relationships as U.S. potato exports to Mexico grew. Ehrlich also helped organize tours for the EPA and Colorado legislators to help them better understand the concerns and needs of the potato industry, Mattive said.

“Jim has really been good about bringing those people to the [San Luis Valley in Colorado] to get a firsthand view of some of the things that we do to produce potatoes,” he said.

Ehrlich held previous roles with Coors Brewing Co. and JDE Farms. He also gives back to the community

as vice president of San Luis Valley Health Hospital’s board of directors and as the current president of the San Luis Valley Overall Extension Advisory Board, where he has served as a board member for more than 20 years.

When asked what his favorite memory of his time with the Colorado Potato Administrative Committee, Ehrlich said he fondly enjoyed his time in Washington, D.C., over the years at NPC’s Washington Summit, as well as some of the things he and his fellow Colorado delegates experienced.

“We actually left one of our fellow growers at the airport one day on our flight back. And then we had another grower that was sick on the plane, and we kept downplaying it, and he had to have his gallbladder removed the next day,” he said. “It’s just the friendships you make and the experiences you have. They’ve been awesome.”

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# Court case stalls implementation of sustainable management of water in aquifer for 2 years

By PRISCILLA WAGGONER

**ALAMOSA** — As a result of three objections filed in water court that has resulted in the need to schedule a trial estimated to last five weeks, implementation of the plan that would restore water in the Rio Grande Water Conservation District's (RGWCD) Subdistrict No. 1's unconfined aquifer and ensure its viability long into the future has been delayed by at least two years. According to Taylor Chick, Rio Grande Water Conservation District (RGWCD) Program Manager for Subdistrict No. 1, the reason for not setting the trial until January 2026 was to accommodate "the lawyers' schedules."

In the meantime — as temperatures rise, the amount of moisture received in the area decreases and levels in the unconfined aquifer continue to decline at a concerning rate — producers with access to finances substantial enough to pay current fees charged for "overpumping" water can continue with business as usual and the result will be a further decline in the aquifer.

The unconfined aquifer, the shallow aquifer in the San Luis Valley with water that is closest to the surface and the most easily accessed by groundwater wells, is managed by RGWCD's Subdistrict No. 1. According to Chick, as of April, 2024, there are 3,617 groundwater wells in Subdistrict No. 1.

Starting back in 2002, in the midst of one of the worst droughts on record, the subdistrict was formed by an unusually progressive, forward-thinking group of ranchers and farmers who realized that unlimited pumping of groundwater without deliberate attempts to replace what was taken out was simply not sustainable in the long term.

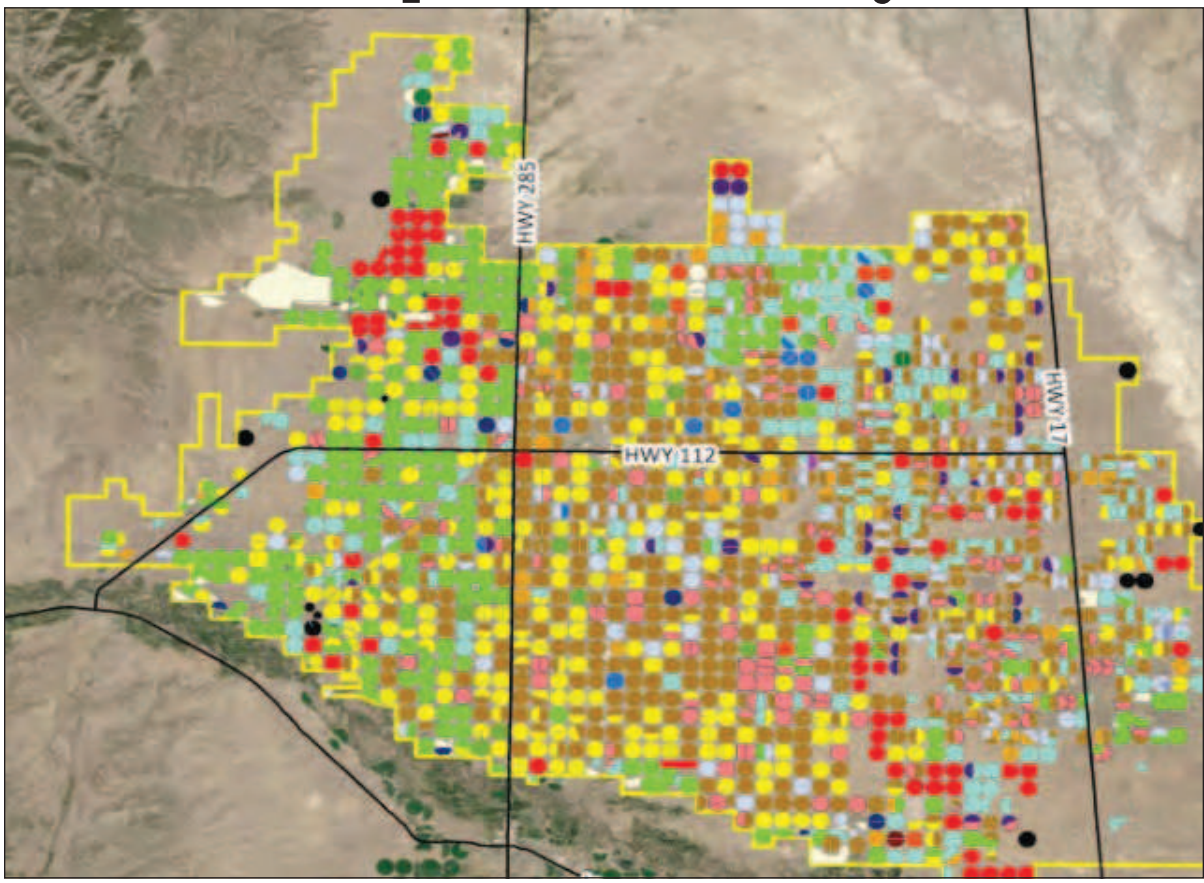
Since the approval of the 1st Annual Replacement Plan by the state legislature in 2012, Subdistrict No. 1 has taken increasingly aggressive steps to reduce depletion of the aquifer, as required by state law. Some of those steps included incentives to producers to use less water or retire their land in production while others were designed to disincentivize the withdrawal of water that wasn't replaced. Part of that disincentive involved assessing a fee for every acre foot of water not replaced to the aquifer. The amounts of those fees have increased from, in the first year, \$45 to the current \$150 per acre foot of water.

A growing number of farmers have employed practices that are saving water and reducing usage, such as improving soil health and regenerative farming techniques. But there are other farm operations that are willing pay the fees for "overpumping" presumably because the revenue generated in the current economy by the crops they're growing more than offsets the fees payable to RGWCD. As the former program manager for Subdistrict No. 1, told the Valley Courier in 2022, some operations were paying over \$150,000 in a single growing season.

Meanwhile, persistent drought, climate change and excessive pumping have caused levels in the aquifer to continue to decline at an alarming rate, prompting Subdistrict No. 1's creation of the (4th) Amended Plan of Water Management (POWM).

## PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Developed over the course of several years with extensive input from hydrologists, the Division 3 engineer with Colorado's Division of Water Resources (DWR), the State Engineer, members and board members of



Subdistrict No. 1 and board members of the RGWCD, the POWM is a 41-page document that outlines the most aggressive plan yet.

Under the new POWM, for those who continue to "overpump", the fee is raised to \$500 an acre foot. Should reduced pumping not be accomplished with a \$500 fee, Subdistrict No. 1 reserves the right to increase it until water usage matches replacement.

That fee is at the heart of the complaint filed in court by three groups: Sustainable Water Augmentation Group (SWAG), Northeastern Water Users Association (NEWUA) and Farming Tech.

In June of 2023, the State Engineer approved the groundwater management plan included in the POWM.

He did not — nor was he asked to — approve the increase to a \$500 fee, as that was outside the scope of his approval.

In July, both the Subdistrict No. 1 board, comprised of farmers, and the RGWCD board approved the plan.

At that point, the last step prior to implementation involved going to water court where it's ultimately up to Judge Gonzales, presiding, to approve.

That "last step" was prevented from being taken because the three groups — SWAG, NEWUA and Farming Tech — filed objections against both RGWCD for the \$500 fee and the Division of Water Resources for approving the groundwater management plan.

At a status hearing in January, Judge Gonzales agreed to delay the trial for two years because of "lawyers' schedules". As a consequence, for the next 21 months, farmers in those groups will be able to continue to use water as they have been and paying the \$150 fees they've been paying for depleting the aquifer before any action can possibly be taken.

When asked for his response to the delay, Craig Cotton, Division Engineer for Division 3 of Colorado's Division of Water Resources, said, "We will be defending our approval of the plan. We believe that the new plan is appropriate, and the sooner that new plan is in place, the better. I'm concerned that the level of water in the aquifer continues to drop."

# Challenging year ahead for SLV potato growers

By JIM EHRLICH  
CPAC President

**MONTE VISTA** — 2024 will be a very challenging year for San Luis Valley potato growers. Besides the normal risks of producing a potato crop, there are three daunting challenges facing them this season; market prices, Potato Virus Y, and irrigation water supplies.

What a difference a year makes! Last year potato growers experienced some of the best potato prices ever. Today prices are down 57 percent with growers barely breaking even. Growers in Idaho planted an additional 35,000 acres in 2023, and they had good yields for the first time in three years. This resulted in approximately a 10 percent increase in potato supplies for 2024 and crashed prices.

On Feb. 1, national fresh potato stocks were up 12 percent compared to 2022. This was the largest February supply inventory since 2001. This is bad news for prices and this large inventory will carry over into the 2024 new crop harvest. The outlook is tough at best.

Keeping your potato crop healthy is the top priority for growers. A critical input, maybe the most important input, is the seed that growers plant. In the San Luis Valley, potato growers have traditionally purchased high-quality certified seed to plant and retained a portion of their crop at harvest to plant the following year. Because the local

growing environment normally does not have high levels of disease pressure this has worked well.

Growers have saved money compared to other states where planting certified seed every year is the standard practice. But now San Luis Valley potato growers are facing an epidemic of Potato Virus Y.

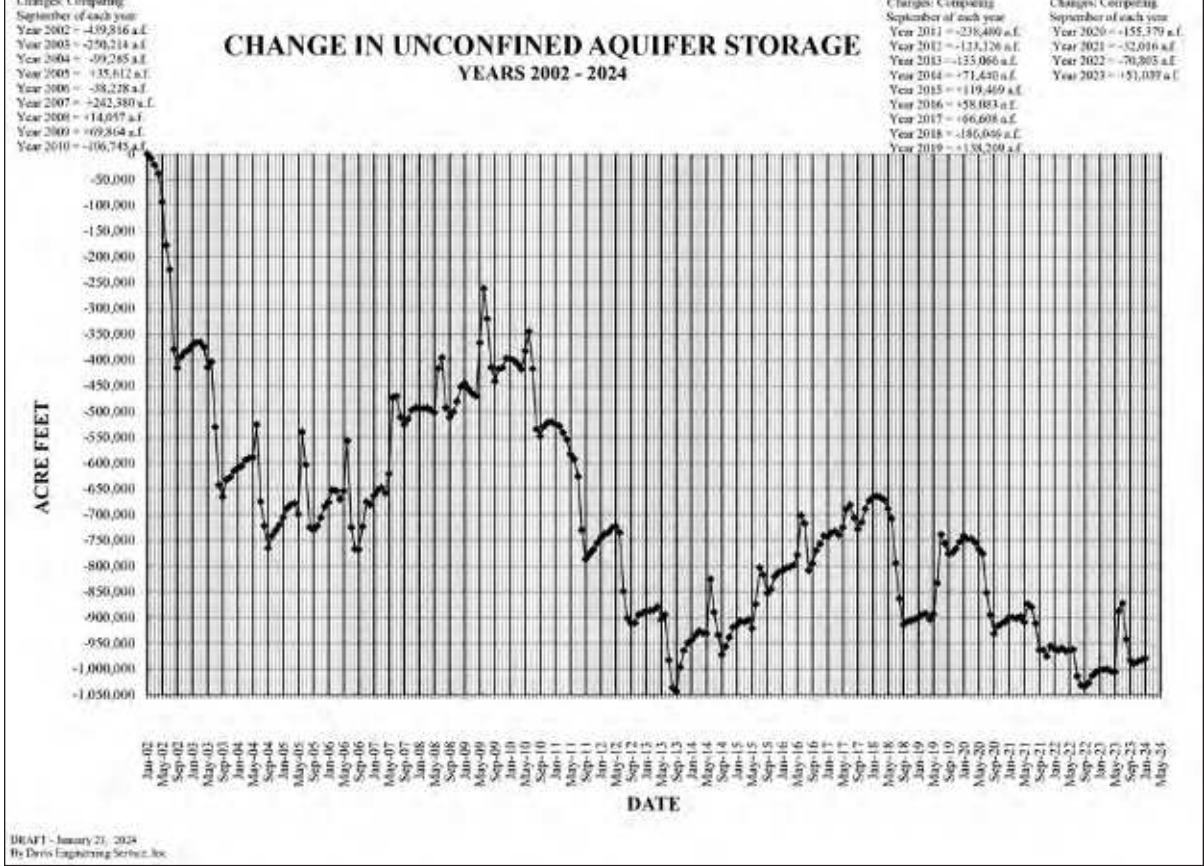
Potato virus Y (PVY) was first recognized in 1931 as an aphid-transmitted member within a group of viruses associated with potato degeneration, a disorder known since the eighteenth century. It was first reported in the Valley in the late 1970's.

PVY is important because it causes economic damage to the crop by reducing yields, affecting the size profile of tubers, and may cause necrotic blemishes to tubers preventing them from being marketable. PVY is seed borne making it particularly hard to control unless you can plant certified seed with very low levels of PVY.

Over the last decade, PVY levels within the San Luis Valley have escalated out of control. Producing high-quality certified seed has become very difficult and has resulted in a very tight seed supply for growers.

PVY is a problem worldwide. It was estimated that over \$100 million was being spent in the Pacific Northwest to control viruses 15 years ago.

A 2014 research study in Idaho determined that PVY was costing growers \$19.5 million annually, and



this spring Wisconsin potato growers are currently unable to purchase crop insurance for a portion of their potential crop due to a shortage of certified seed.

Local research has confirmed that PVY is costing our growers economically by reducing yields and quality. Valley growers are debating how to address this problem. How growers can attempt to solve the issue with

the least economic and regulatory impact possible is very challenging. It will require creative ideas and cooperation as we continue to work on potential solutions.

Today the Rio Grande basin snowpack is hovering in the 84 percent of average range. The unconfined aquifer level is nearly 600,000 acre-feet below the minimum sustainability target set by the state water engineer

and the clock is ticking toward the deadline to meet the sustainability target. Very hard decisions are coming fast for all farmers in sub-district No. 1.

These challenges will be met because farmers are some of the most resilient and toughest people on earth and the San Luis Valley has some of the best and most progressive farmers you will ever meet.

# Mattive of Monte Vista elected National Potato Council President

**Council installs 2024 Executive Committee during NPC Washington Summit**

CONTRIBUTED

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The National Potato Council (NPC) installed its 2024 roster of Executive Committee members this week at the organization's annual Washington Summit. During the Annual Meeting of the Voting Delegates, Bob Mattive, of Monte Vista, was elected to serve as the Council's President for the next 12 months.

Having grown up on a small farm in Brighton, Mattive began taking on leadership roles in high school — as class president and president of the 4-H Club. Now, the partner of Worley Family Farms, LLLP, in Monte Vista, will continue to serve the industry in his newly appointed role as President of the National Potato Council. Mattive, who most recently served as NPC's First Vice President and Vice President of Environmental Affairs, was elected to a one-year term on Feb. 26.

"I've always been interested in environmental issues and legislative affairs," said Mattive, who was initially introduced to NPC as a delegate from Colorado. His involvement with the federal policy-focused organization brought about a national perspective and he served on different NPC committees throughout the years. Mattive



**Bob Mattive**

also serves on several Colorado agricultural committees and boards. "I've learned a lot and I know we have to work hard and work together to keep relevant, educate the next generation, and continue advocating on behalf of our growers and industry partners."

Mattive became a part of the fourth-generation Worley Family Farms when he and his wife Gail (Worley) were invited by her father to join the operation in 1982. When he started farming with his father-in-law, the operation raised about 500 acres of potatoes. Today, the farm raises around 1,800-1,900 acres of potatoes and 2,000 acres of other crops. The business is now also co-managed by their sons Grant



Photo courtesy of the National Potato Council / Bill Schaefer Photography

**Bob Mattive, of Monte Vista, was elected to serve as the National Potato Council's President for the next 12 months.**

and Reid and nephew Matthew Smartt.

For Mattive, environmental stewardship is second nature. "As with most industries, technology has become a large part of our organization. We irrigate all of our acreage with computerized center pivot irrigation systems and utilize GPS operating systems in most of our tractors and other equipment," said Mattive.

The full NPC Executive Committee roster

includes:

- President – Bob Mattive, Monte Vista
- First Vice President and Vice President, Trade Affairs – Ted Tschirky, Pasco, Wash.
- Vice President, Legislative Affairs – Dean Gibson, Paul, Idaho
- Vice President, Environmental Affairs – Ben Sklarczyk, Johannesburg, Mich.
- Vice President, Finance and Office Procedures – TJ Hall, Hoople, N.D.
- Vice President, Grower Outreach and Industry Relations – Chris Olsen, Othello, Wash.
- Immediate Past President – RJ Andrus, Idaho Falls, Idaho

As a grower-led organization, NPC is managed by an Executive Committee and Board of Directors, which oversees its operations and provides guidance on its policy activities. Board members are appointed by the Executive Committee from recommendations submitted by state potato grower organizations and hold office for one calendar year.

NPC is the voice of U.S. potato growers and industry members in our nation's capital. NPC protects potato growers' interests in Washington, D.C. by addressing issues that affect the potato industry, from policy issues debated in Congress to regulatory issues proposed by federal agencies.

The NPC 2024 Washington Summit is a forum for potato industry members to discuss, define, and advocate for the policy priorities impacting their businesses and protecting their ability to farm. From Feb. 26 – March 1, growers and industry stakeholders took the results from its latest economic impact study, "The Current and Potential Impact of Expanded Potato Exports," to Members of Congress and the administration to advocate for issues such as keeping potatoes in federal nutrition programs, promoting free and fair-trade agreements, and protecting tax policies that support the long-term health of family-owned farming operations.

## Growing season begins in the SLV



Photo by Brian Williams

An irrigation pivot moves across a field north of Monte Vista.

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# Spring comes to the Valley



Photos by Brian Williams  
Cattle are fed from a tractor on April 11 a couple of miles north of the Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge on Highway 15.

Left: A tractor works a field on April 11 north-east of Monte Vista on Twomile Lane.

## San Luis Valley farmers paid \$27 million for purchase of water rights

### One step in reducing groundwater usage

By PRISCILLA WAGGONER

ALAMOSA — Senate bill SB22-028, sponsored by Colorado Senator Cleave Simpson (R-D6), accomplished something few bills do: it was passed by unanimous vote in all committees who reviewed the bill and both houses of Colorado's state legislature, largely due to a growing acknowledgement among legislators regarding the importance of reducing water usage in Colorado.

Titled the "Groundwater Compact Compliance and Sustainability Fund", the bill called on the state legislature to allocate \$60 million to help finance groundwater use reduction and sustainability efforts in the Rio Grande and the Republican River Basins with each basin receiving \$30 million toward that effort. The funding was made available through President Biden's American Rescue Plan Act.

The river basins were responsible for developing their own procedures in selecting and allocating funding.

In the San Luis Valley, that involved the Rio Grande Water Conservation District (RGWCD) coming up with criteria of eligibility that would be applicable to producers equally across the Valley while also making sure that any funding provided to farmers or ranchers would result in clearly definable reduction of water usage. In a sign of how seriously they took the project, board members spent significant time in determining criteria that would deliver the maximum amount of benefit while also including eligibility requirements that were fair and equitable. They finally settled on a relatively straightforward program where, after a determination of how much water was being used for irrigation in previous years, water rights were purchased for around \$2,500-\$3,000 per acre-foot.

The Valley Courier reached out to Amber Pacheco, deputy general manager of the Rio Grande Water Conservation District, for an update.

Approximately 25 applications submitted to the board for consideration met the requirements set by the RGWCD Board of Directors.

According to Pacheco, \$26.9 million (90%) has been allocated with \$3.1 million remaining. Of that \$26.9 mil-



File photo

**San Luis Valley farmers took advantage of a groundwater use reduction program that purchased water rights. According to officials, \$26.9 million (90%) has been allocated with \$3.1 million remaining from the funding pool.**

lion, \$13 million has been approved by the Colorado Water Conservation Board and the office of the State Engineer, both of whom have served in oversight roles related to distribution of funds. A total of \$6 million in funding has been "closed on" with the pur-

chase of water rights. The water rights were associated with wells irrigating 10,500 acres of land, which translates into a reduction of 10,500 acre-feet of groundwater usage annually.

When asked if there are plans for the remaining \$3.1 million, Pacheco

said they will likely go through all the applications they've received to make sure that none remaining are eligible. After that, they will probably reopen up the program and begin taking new applications until the remaining money is gone.



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