

COUNTY DECLARES LOCAL DISASTER

News delivery during a pandemic

County and city will close bars, limit restaurants and halt utility shut-offs during virus outbreak

With virus fears come misinformation, rumors

RESIDIO COUNTY — The Big Bend Sentinel/Presidio International is working to provide readers with timely coverage of the new coronavirus. We are posting daily news updates on www.bigbendsentinel.com. We will continue putting out a weekly print edition as long as the press and United States Postal Service are running and can be safely delivered.

We will continue to provide a PDF of the weekly paper through our website. Sign up for our newsletter on our website’s front page to receive the weekly PDF in your email.

If you don’t have the internet and live in Presidio County, let us know by calling 432-729-4342 and leaving a message. We will get you the news every Thursday.

Employers and employees are already struggling to cope with economic impact of coronavirus in Marfa

By **ABBIE PERRAULT**
abbie@bigbendsentinel.com

MARFA — The new coronavirus has not arrived in Marfa, but its presence in Texas is already rattling the Marfa economy. Many businesses have chosen to close their doors in hopes of preventing viral spread. Now, owners and employees are left wondering how long the closures will last, where they can get assistance and when, or if, they’ll be able to reopen their doors.

Krista Steinhauer, owner and chef at Stellina, decided to close her dining room last Wednesday, March 11, shifting to to-go food only. She and her staff had learned about nonsymptomatic transmission of coronavirus, and she worried that “the spring break hoards” would cause the virus to spread.

As to-go service began, Steinhauer noticed how much contact happens in a kitchen. “There’s really no way to make this a safe kind of thing to do,” she said. She chose to close Stellina’s doors the next day, and soon she discontinued making food for The Get Go.

“It’s hard. Every hour you make a new decision about how to deal with it, and it’s based on information or just doing the best I can,” she said.

As spring break approached, Steinhauer and many other business owners in Marfa prepared by stocking up on food, inventory and necessities to handle the influx of tourism.

“It’s a really barbaric kind of calculation you have to make too. I bought so much food. Everybody budgets for this time of year, this is your moneymaker,” she said. “And it’s a horrible thing thinking about public safety or money. It’s such a monstrous kind of debate you have in your mind every single hour.”

Steinhauer worried how her staff of 16 could weather the coronavirus’ arrival. During a bout of colds this winter, Stellina didn’t have enough healthy people to run the restaurant. She worried, if the cold could whip

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PRESIDIO COUNTY — The City of Marfa and Presidio County plan to close hotels, short-term rentals and RV parks beginning Monday, March 23. In Marfa city limits, closures will continue for seven days, and in the county, the order is for 15 days.

The City of Marfa is also ordering all bars to close and all restaurants to switch to take-out or delivery only, hoping to begin changes today. The city will not disconnect utilities, encompassing water, sewer, natural gas and trash pick-up services as long as the order is in effect. Price gouging is illegal, and the city will compare current prices to prices on March 13 to enforce the law.

The proclamation to be issued by Mayor Manny Baeza is effective for seven days and can be extended for weeks or more based on the rapidly changing situation around coronavirus. The city will meet virtually early next week to discuss extensions. The county will meet in person on Monday in Presidio at 10 a.m., limited to 10 attendees. They hope to broadcast the meeting.

The county will order the closure of the Riata, El Cosmico, the

Employers and employees are already struggling to cope with economic impact of coronavirus in Marfa

By **STEPHEN PAULSEN**
stephen@bigbendsentinel.com

ALPINE — In a teleconference with reporters on Wednesday, the Big Bend Regional Medical Center gave updates on the coronavirus, including on testing capacity and the hospital’s ability to handle a public health crisis.

In a presentation, Dr. Ekta Escovar, a doctor at the hospital, stressed that “containment has failed.”

She declined to comment on how the United States had gotten to this point, noting that such public policy decisions were “so far above my paygrade.” But she urged local businesses and residents to do their part to minimize the spread of the novel coronavirus, by following guidance for the general public (like frequent handwashing) and for business owners (like switching to to-go orders or limiting certain service hours to only the elderly).

At the time of Wednesday’s call, 1268 people in Texas had been tested for coronavirus, of which around 60 were positive, Escovar said. (As of press time, those figures have risen to 1,907 Texans tested, 83 positive results and two deaths in Texas from the virus, according to new figures released by the state on Wednesday.) But as the rate of coronavirus spread picks up nationwide, figures like that will change more and more frequently. Right now, the Texas Department of State Health Services is releasing by-county case counts of coronavirus cases in Texas every day at noon.

Protocol has also changed regarding

Public services available as tri-county prepares for coronavirus

By **STEPHEN PAULSEN**
stephen@bigbendsentinel.com

TRI-COUNTY — With or without the coronavirus, residents across the Big Bend region will still need help getting enough nutrition and meeting other essential needs.

Groups and officials across the region are stepping up to make sure vital nonprofits and assistance initiatives stay up-and-running. Here’s what residents should know about public services, from school lunches and panic buying to legal aid and court dates.

The city’s Meals on Wheels program switched to delivery-only on Monday, closing its dining room at the Nutrition Center in the MAC Building for at least a week. All dine-in patrons will instead be added to the Meals on Wheels delivery routes. Marfa Police Department is assisting in delivery, and Nutrition Center Director Ed Cobos said he could use an extra set of volunteer hands at 10:30 a.m. each morning, Monday through Friday, to assist in boxing up the food for delivery.

Federal and state authorities are working to ensure that low-income school kids still get no-



Photo by Maisie Crow
After declaring a local disaster Tuesday afternoon, Presidio County Judge Cinderela Guevara speaks to a gathering of health workers, government officials and business owners on Wednesday morning to discuss next steps.

Tumble In RV Park, the Apache Pines RV Park, Cibolo Creek, short-term rentals, Chinati Hot Springs and Loma Paloma RV Park for 15 days, subject to extension.

Presidio County Judge Cinderela Guevara declared a local disaster at 5 p.m. on Tuesday, citing the new coronavirus and the COVID-19 disease it causes. The city followed suit, and both actions expanded the powers of the local governments.

On Wednesday morning, Guevara gathered local health workers, city government officials, the emergency management coordinator and a group of business owners to discuss what should be done as COVID-19 spreads across the globe, the United States, Texas and in nearby El Paso-Juarez.

“We’re not here to say, ‘We need everybody to close all their businesses,’ or, ‘We want the hotels

closed,’” Guevara said as the meeting opened, “but it is important that we start communicating, and I do believe that there will be more occasions like this in the very near future.”

The meeting’s group of 25 attendees outstripped the White House’s recommendation to limit gatherings to be no more than 10 people. While some stood at a distance, others bumped elbows in greeting and stood around chatting before the meeting began. Judge Guevara said Shelley Bernstein has offered to train county and city officials to use Zoom, a software that is compliant with the Texas Open Meetings Act and would facilitate virtual meetings instead of in-person gatherings during the outbreak. The county commissioners court plans to meet on Monday, and Guevara hopes it will be a digital gathering.

Dr. John Paul Schwartz was appointed county health authority last year when Presidio County realized having an authority to weigh in on mass gathering applications was a necessity in Texas Code. At the Wednesday meeting, he spoke about other counties in Texas taking drastic measures, like ordering the closure

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Updates on coronavirus from Big Bend Regional Medical Center

“presumptive” versus “confirmed” coronavirus cases. Under the previous rules, a positive result for coronavirus from a hospital or lab was a “presumptive” case. Those samples were then sent to the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention. If the CDC also got a positive result, that case was then “confirmed.”

But with the CDC so far confirming all presumptive cases nationally, those rules have changed, and officials were now treating presumptive coronavirus cases as confirmed, Escovar said. That’s good news for reporters, officials and the general public, since it means statistics distributed by Texas will be more reliable and not days behind.

On testing, Escovar said that “clinicians would like to have more testing capabilities” and said the federal and state governments had promised to ramp up testing in the coming weeks. She also said the hospital’s current practice of first testing people for the flu — and then testing for coronavirus if they tested negative — was backed by science, which showed that less than two percent of coronavirus patients worldwide had co-infection with another illness like the flu.

The hospital is still urging West Texans to self-quarantine for 14 days if they’ve recently traveled to a “high-risk” area of the United States, which are places with confirmed community spread, Escovar said. At press time, those locations include: California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Washington, the Boston area, the Dallas area, the Houston area, the Las Vegas area and the New Orleans area. Escovar said BBRMC was working to provide

Public services available as tri-county prepares for coronavirus

up-to-date guidance on travel but said there “may be a delay” as new cases pop up hour-by-hour in the United States.

In general, Escovar said, it was a good idea to “stop traveling to big cities as much as possible.” As days go on, and caseloads pick up in populated places like El Paso, the risk of bringing a contagion back to the Big Bend will increase, Escovar said.

At press time, coronavirus has an estimated fatality rate of 1.8, with around 80 percent of deaths affecting people over 60. That rate is constantly changing, as more deaths and confirmed cases around the world cause public-health workers to adjust their estimates.

Still, Escovar said that fatality rates — though significantly worse than seasonal flu — were not “the main concern.” Instead, the hospital is concerned with hospitalization rates. About 10 percent of coronavirus patients need hospitalization, and the average stay is three to six weeks, she said. That’s significantly higher than the 0.05 percent hospitalization rate for seasonal flu and could put a strain on healthcare services.

BBRMC has 25 beds and two ventilators/respirators. Escovar said the hospital’s capacity would depend on the condition of incoming patients. Even with 25 beds, the hospital couldn’t necessarily care for 25 “very very very sick patients,” she said. It will also need to continue providing its non-coronavirus services, including childbirth and trauma care for car accident

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By **STEPHEN PAULSEN**
stephen@bigbendsentinel.com

TRI-COUNTY — Concerns over the novel coronavirus have spread quickly across the United States, with panic buying emptying store shelves and many Americans hunkered down at home.

But in the tri-county area, which had no confirmed cases of the coronavirus at press time, misinformation and scary-sounding rumors appear to be spreading even faster.

Take the case of the Judd and Chinati Foundation employees. Some employees at both organizations, which have ties to New York City, have been self-quarantining at home as a precautionary measure after visiting the Big Apple. That’s led to fears in Marfa that they could be infected with the virus — a rumor that both foundations have adamantly denied.

Instead, in statements to *The Big Bend Sentinel*, both the Chinati and Judd foundations stressed that they were simply taking precautions and listening to advice from local officials and the Big Bend Regional Medical Center. The hospital last week said that West Texans should self-quarantine for 14 days if they’ve visited New York.

In addition, one Chinati Foundation employee was tested for coronavirus after they came down with a cough, the group said in a statement. But that test came back negative, according to the statement.

Unfounded fears and speculation over two prominent Marfa arts foundations are just some of the harmful rumors to circulate in recent days. Other untrue rumors include:

- A rumor that the Presidio-Ojinaga Port of Entry has closed over coronavirus fears, which is false, according to a statement from the City of Presidio.
- Rumors that several Terlingua visitors are suspected to have coronavirus, or that there are currently confirmed cases at Big Bend Regional Medical Center, which are false, according to local law enforcement and the hospital. Again, at press time, there are no confirmed coronavirus cases in the tri-county area.
- Rumors that any number of Marfa ISD students are suspected to have coronavirus, which are false, MISD Superintendent Oscar Agüero and Dr. J.P. Schwartz said last week.
- Rumors that Hotel Saint George is under quarantine or has any suspected cases, which are false, according to the hotel and a statement from the City of Marfa regarding coronavirus.

Local officials, health workers and the staff at *The Big Bend Sentinel* and *Presidio International* are all working overtime to bring you accurate information on coronavirus in the area. The Presidio County Sheriff’s Office asks that locals and visitors please do their part by staying mindful of rumors and misinformation.

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Business owners

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of bars and forcing restaurants to use to-go only, to better control the virus’ spread.

Schwartz commended the “creative solutions to keep life going as good as it can,” but added, “It’s going to have disastrous results if people have to do things they don’t want to do.” He hoped the county could keep businesses alive, keep people safe and keep the spread down. Then he mentioned options like encouraging tourists to leave town or taking temperatures at all hotels, noting that Airbnb guests’ temperatures would be nearly impossible to successfully monitor.

The doctor also noted that some parts of the tri-county area are not taking the disease seriously thus far. “In West Texas you pull yourself up by your bootstraps, but that’s the way things go really bad really quick,” Schwartz said. “When people are still stubborn, more regulations will have to be put into place.”

Marfa City Manager John Washburn also weighed the decision, bringing up his concern over the economic impact in the short and long term. “Is it better to be really proactive and overreact and say, ‘Let’s see if this 15 days really works?’ The larger question from the health side is, if we don’t try that, we’re potentially taking a risk that it’s far longer.”

County Emergency Management Coordinator Gary Mitchke wanted to work with business owners, to hear their input and work out a plan. Mentioning that



Photo by Maisie Crow

Local business owners and managers gathered to meet with county and city officials on Tuesday morning to hear the latest information and recommendations about the new coronavirus that’s spreading across the United States. Left to right: Monika Bernstein of El Cosmico, Emily Williams and Tim Crowley of Hotel Saint George, Mark Scott and Kaki Aufdengarten of Convenience West and Ty Mitchell of the Lost Horse.

the local jurisdiction has authority “to do what has to be done to protect everybody,” Mitchke said that if the county isn’t seeing enough changes by business owners, “We may have to make it happen.”

That’s when local business owner Kaki Aufdengarten interjected. “I don’t mean to

we close and let’s say Ty [Mitchell of the Lost Horse] doesn’t because it is how he lives too, what’s the good of voluntarily closing if he doesn’t do it too?”

Mitchke said what the county would like is for owners to voluntarily close, and Mayor Baeza added that the county and city did not want to blindside businesses, restaurants and hoteliers with a decision that didn’t include their input. “Businesses here live on the margin and that could sink a business,” Dr. Schwartz added.

“None of us know what’s happening or have any authority,” Aufdengarten said. “You saying, ‘What should we do about it, guys?’ is kind of alarming because you’re supposed to know what’s happening.”

Hotel Saint George General Manager Emily Williams provided more context on the state of their hotel’s spring break tourism. Their occupancy dropped 30 percent from Tuesday night to Wednesday night, and hotel owner Tim Crowley said their occupancy will likely be down over 90 percent between last week and next week. Williams said it wasn’t sustainable for the long term, and a closure was possible simply due to operating margins. “If something was put into effect today, we’d deal with it today,” Crowley told officials who asked how much lead time would be needed if a hotel shutdown was put in place.

“Do we have all the answers? Absolutely not, but I don’t think anybody does. None of us know really where we’re going to

“Do we have all the answers? Absolutely not, but I don’t think anybody does. None of us know really where we’re going to end up with all of this.”

end up with all of this,” the emergency management coordinator told business owners. “We’re not asking you for permission, we’re not asking what to do. We just want to hear your input.”

The virus spreads through person-to-person interactions; it can spread even before an infected person shows symptoms, and social distancing is the recommended method of stopping it. What remains unclear is what sort of impact quarantines, lockdowns or closure will have on Presidio County’s public health and economics.

No directives were given to business owners at the meeting, but hours later, the city and county came out with their orders. The announced closures represent the city and county’s continued efforts to fight a virus that has not yet arrived.

Economic impact

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winter, Stellina didn’t have enough healthy people to run the restaurant. She worried, if the cold could whip through the community like wildfire, how bad would coronavirus get? “The main thing you have to think about is medical services. I’m not going to be the asshole that gets 200 people sick and shuts down Big Bend Regional [Medical Center],” she said.

“I have 16 people on staff. There are no safety nets for them. And I basically live week to week like they do. Until we all just agree that we’re going to take care of each other, it’s like when do you pull the plug? I just decided to pull it.”

Now that she has pulled the plug, Steinhauer is rushing to get employees information for unemployment. “I can float them for two weeks and then I’m out of money too. Hopefully everybody’s going to come back to an incarnation of the restaurant in this town, but there’s no guarantees, because everyone’s going to have to take care of themselves in the meantime.”

“You don’t know about the person next to you. They could be completely fragile and devastated. It’s a new way to think about social responsibility and how we all take care of each other,” Steinhauer said. “This town is full of wage earners, so everybody needs that information. It’s really pushing me to more radical politics, that’s for sure.”

Steinhauer hopes other businesses will join the social distancing efforts and close their doors too. But some are choosing to stay in operation. The Lost Horse on Tuesday announced their decision to remain open. “We are well stocked on sanitizer and cleaner,” the statement said. The local bar would be cleaning, utilizing their open air backyard and keeping customers’ “well being and health first and foremost in mind.”

In response to other closures, the saloon said they support all businesses who have chosen to

remain closed and support patrons choosing to stay home and wait out the virus. “We look forward to the next time we can all come together and enjoy each other’s company.”

While businesses wrestle with financial and public health decisions, employees are struggling with the rapidly changing economy in Marfa. Sara Ontiveroz is a Marfa native who makes a living cleaning short-term rentals in Marfa.

Though she’s afloat right now, she’s already getting calls that Airbnb renters are planning to cancel their April reservations. “I hear all these people saying, ‘Hey, we’re staying home,’ and I go, ‘No work, no pay.’”

She understands the cancellations and says she would love it if people just stayed home. “I would love to stay home myself, but how the hell am I going to pay my bills?” Adding to the stress, Ontiveroz says she takes medication for rheumatoid arthritis that leaves her immune system compromised. She’s part of the cohort of people particularly susceptible to coronavirus’ effects.

Ontiveroz is brainstorming other work that she could offer locals: house cleaning, yardwork or deliveries for restaurants that are shifting to to-go only.

“Because I work too hard to keep my bills good. I’m not going to go back. I’m not going to lose my house,” she says with exasperation. “I’m not panicking,” she pauses. “Yet.”

To her, all of this is just another test from God. “Are we going to kill people for toilet paper or say, ‘Here, have half of my toilet paper.’ That’s how I feel we should be: sharing with each other instead of fighting with each other.”

Though the timeline of coronavirus’ impact in Presidio County is a mystery, local officials are already working to share emergency assistance resources with local businesses.

The Workforce Solutions Borderplex, which operates in the tri-county area has released videos with up to date information for employers and

employees: <https://youtu.be/g6pNutriBos>

Tips for employers forced to lay off staff, options for laid off workers and information about getting help from the WSB are all discussed.

“We recognize that many businesses are closing indefinitely and so many people are facing the fact that they are simply out of work. Our job center doors will remain open and we are eager to assist the workforce and any individuals who are worried about loss of wages,” said Leila Melendez, CEO of WSB. “Our staff provides effective job search support and we can help navigate unemployment benefits.”

County Health Authority John Paul Schwartz urged business owners during a Wednesday morning meeting to allow employees to miss work if they are ill to avoid spreading the illness. He added, “If you can pay them while they’re off work, great. It would help the quarantine situation that needs to happen. People are going to have to get creative.”

The U.S. Small Business Administration is offering disaster assistance, but as of press time, businesses in the tri-county are not currently eligible to apply. The SBA provides loans to pay fixed debts, payroll, accounts payable and other bills that can’t be paid because of the disaster’s impact. According to their website, the interest rate is 3.75% for small businesses. The interest rate for nonprofits is 2.75%. Their webpage lists all counties currently eligible, and business owners are encouraged to monitor the page for changes. <https://www.sba.gov/disaster-assistance/coronavirus-covid-19>

Presidio County Judge Cinderela Guevara and Judge Eleazar Cano in Brewster County have declared local disasters this week, which helps open up more access to funding. “For small businesses there are SBA loans, and we’re ready to assist with that,” Guevara told business owners on Wednesday.

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The Blackwell School Alliance is cancelling our April Block Party and Community Charrette. Our first concern is always the health and safety of our elders. We thank the City of Marfa and all of our partners and neighbors for your continued support.

SHARING STORIES, HONORING MEMORIES CELEBRATING THE RICH HISPANIC CULTURE AND HISTORY OF MARFA

theblackwellschool.org

la fundación the CHINATI foundation

1 Cavalry Row/PO Box 1135
Marfa, Texas 79843
432 729 4362
www.chinati.org

The Chinati Foundation is a contemporary art museum founded by the artist Donald Judd. The collection includes work by thirteen artists and focuses on permanent, large-scale installations emphasizing the relationship between art, architecture, and the surrounding landscape.

NOTICE: CHINATI CLOSED MARCH 12 THROUGH MARCH 24

At the Chinati Foundation, the safety and well-being of our visitors and staff are among our highest priorities. We are aware of the health concerns surrounding the coronavirus (COVID-19), and upon the recommendation of local West Texas health officials, Chinati has been advised to close to the public through March 24, 2020. The tri-county region has limited health resources, so to be a good partner to our local community and community of visitors, we are taking the recommendation seriously.

For those visitors who have booked tours on the dates effected, please email aboyd@chinati.org or call 432.729.4362 ext.3 to reschedule or discuss other options.

Thank you for supporting the Chinati Foundation. As a public institution, we both rely on the public for support and believe it is our responsibility to be a good public partner in return. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause and we hope to welcome you in the future.

Please check www.chinati.org for further updates.

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We have joined with members of our community to ensure the safety of all.

Judd Foundation has temporarily suspended public programs and guided visits of our spaces in Texas.

As we receive new information, we will provide updates in the coming weeks.

Please contact marfa@juddfoundation.org for more information.

Judd Foundation
104 South Highland Avenue
Marfa, Texas 79843
432 729 4406

Coronavirus: the latest numbers

By STEPHEN PAULSEN
stephen@bigbendsentinel.com

MARFA — Last Wednesday, Marfa was packed, full of visitors here for the Big Bend’s peak tourist season and locals enjoying the warmer temperatures.

But on Wednesday and Thursday, local businesses started closing over concerns about the novel coronavirus. And by the weekend, Marfa seemed virtually shut down.

In recent days, the Big Bend region has been coming to terms with the grim realities of COVID-19, more commonly known as coronavirus — a reality that first upended daily life in China, then in South Korea and Italy and now is affecting daily life across Europe and the United States.

By press time, there were over 200,000 confirmed global cases of coronavirus and over 8,000 deaths — including over 7,000 confirmed cases and over 100 deaths in the United States, according to statistics maintained by Johns Hopkins University. San Francisco is under mandatory lockdown, while cities across the country — including Dallas, Houston and, most recently, El Paso — have all imposed restrictions on bars, restaurants and public gatherings.

At press time, there were at least two deaths and 83 cases of coronavirus in Texas, with almost 2,000 Texans tested. Those figures are up-to-date as of Wednesday at noon, with state health officials releasing new figures

on a daily basis.

At least six Texas counties are also reporting community spread, where people who have not traveled and have no known coronavirus contacts are contracting the virus. Those places include Brazoria, Dallas, Matagorda, Montgomery, Tarrant and Webb counties. There are still no known cases of coronavirus in the tri-county area, according to the latest state figures.

Big Bend Regional Medical Center has 25 beds and two ventilators/respirators. Like health officials across the world, they are urging people to help “flatten the curve” to minimize a spike in people who need medical treatment or hospitalization.

President Donald Trump asked that Americans avoid groups of more than 10 people for the next 15 days to help contain coronavirus, until March 31. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is recommending no events with 50 or more people in the United States for the next eight weeks (until May 10).

The Texas Department of State Health Services is also recommending Texans change plans to help protect themselves and other members of the public from coronavirus. Specific recommendations include: canceling large gatherings, avoiding all non-essential travel and practicing social distancing. For individuals, that could mean avoiding social gatherings and public spaces when possible. People with the coronavirus can spread the disease before they show symptoms.

Off-duty Border Patrol agent intervenes in stabbing incident

By STEPHEN PAULSEN
stephen@bigbendsentinel.com

MIDLAND — An off-duty Border Patrol agent on Saturday intervened to stop a stabbing incident in Midland.

Bernie Ramirez, an Border Patrol intel officer at the Big Bend Sector headquarters in Marfa, was visiting Midland over the weekend for his nephew’s birthday. Ramirez was shopping with his family at a Sam’s Club in Midland when pandemonium erupted.

Ramirez says he was getting ready to check out when he overheard a nearby argument. He initially assumed it was a pair of panic buyers “fighting over toilet paper,” he said in a phone interview on Monday. Then, he heard a baby crying and

a woman screaming. “Right then I knew, something is bad,” he said.

Approaching the melee, Ramirez saw a Sam’s Club employee holding a man in a chokehold. Ramirez identified himself and told the group to break it up.

The Sam’s Club employee told Ramirez that the man had just stabbed multiple people. Ramirez searched the man and restrained him until police arrived.

That man, who Midland police identified as Jose Gomez, remains in custody. He’s accused of stabbing at least three people, including a small child and a Sam’s Club employee who needed around 30 stitches.

Two victims remain in critical condition, U.S. Customs and Border Protection said in a news release on Saturday. A third is in stable

condition at a local medical facility. Some will likely attribute the attack to panic buying, but authorities said on Saturday they do not yet know what led to the stabbing.

In a statement, Big Bend Sector Chief Patrol Agent Matthew Hudak commended Ramirez for his bravery.

“The quick actions of our Agent ended this shocking situation and clearly saved multiple lives,” he said. “I’m proud of our agents as they are valuable members of our communities. This is another example of how we protect America.”

Ramirez, though, didn’t want to take all the thanks. The Sam’s Club employee had disarmed the attacker with his bare hands, he said.

“I want to give credit where credit’s due,” he said.

Presidio city adopts anti-transmigrante resolution

By STEPHEN PAULSEN
stephen@bigbendsentinel.com

PRESIDIO — At a city council meeting in Presidio last Wednesday, the council unanimously passed a non-binding resolution expressing its opposition to having a transmigrante route through the border city.

While the Mexican government still has released almost no new information on the proposed transmigrante route through Presidio, Mexican officials estimated before the ongoing coronavirus crisis that such a route could open as early as March or April.

In Presidio, residents and city officials have spent months debating transmigrantes and — perhaps more controversially — the logistics for managing them, including a citywide parking ordinance and a proposed municipal parking lot to accommodate transmigrantes.

The debate has put Presidio “on a real roller coaster ride,” Mayor John Ferguson, who introduced the anti-transmigrante resolution, said at the meeting last Wednesday.

He stressed that passing such a resolution “doesn’t mean we’re stopping it.” But he said the resolution was an effort to inform everyone — from the general public to federal officials in the United States and Mexico — that Presidio city leaders “oppose having transmigrante traffic cross our international bridge into Mexico.”

The resolution touches on a range of concerns that Presidio officials have brought up over the past few months. There is a “absence of federal processing” or “overnight accommodations” for the traffic, the resolution states. It notes that work on the international bridge expansion at the Presidio-Ojinaga Port of Entry “has been delayed and is presently unfinished” and that U.S. Highway 67 is not designed for the increased traffic and could see an “elevated risk for accidents on the mainly

Medical Center

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victims, she said.

Still, Escovar stressed that relationships with other hospitals in El Paso and elsewhere “are still intact” and that BBRMC could send critical patients elsewhere. It’s not yet clear what BBRMC’s back-up plan will be if those regional metro-area hospitals become overwhelmed by their own local patients.

In an interview with *The Big Bend Sentinel* last week, Ruth Hucke, a spokeswoman for BBRMC, outlined guidance for people who fear they may have coronavirus. Those same rules still apply:

- Like other healthcare facilities, BBRMC is asking people who worry they might have coronavirus (but are not suffering serious symptoms) to call ahead rather than visiting in person. The best way is for people to first contact their personal physician, she said. The hospital can also be reached at 432-837-3447 (for the ER/hospital) or 432-837-0430 (for the clinic).

two lane, curvy and hilly roadway.”

The resolution encourages Marfa and Presidio County to make similar resolutions and invites the U.S. federal government to take note of the local opposition to the proposed transmigrante route.

“Do with it what you like,” Mayor Ferguson told council members. “But this is how I feel, and I’m ready to go official on it and see if we can maybe get other entities to join us.”

After Ferguson finished reading the resolution, he opened the floor to questions. One council member asked whether Presidio County and Marfa felt the same way.

Yes, replied Rod Ponton, city attorney for Presidio and county attorney for Presidio County. “Marfa has big concerns also,” he said. And Presidio County “wants to go on the record to officials in Washington that they’re against it.”

Antonio Manriquez, a council member, asked whether federal officials (including those at the international port) could join in the resolution. “I don’t believe DHS [the Department of Homeland Security] would allow them to do that,” City Administrator Joe Portillo said. Mayor Ferguson nonetheless stressed that the resolution “might have some sway” with federal officials.

“I know we haven’t had much luck reaching out to them in the past,” Portillo conceded of the federal officials. “When we’ve told them, ‘These are our concerns, and this is what we’re worried about,’ we haven’t heard back from them.”

In the end, the resolution passed unanimously, 4-0. Alcee Tavarez, mayor pro tem, moved to accept the measure. Councilmember Rogelio Zubia seconded.

Ferguson thanked the council for doing “the right thing.”

“We’ll be able to look back at this action, and it will have been the right thing to have done,” he said.

- She urged people to not hesitate coming in IF they are experiencing severe symptoms like breathing difficulties, if they’re in older age groups and especially if they have reason to believe they might have coronavirus, such as travel to a high-risk area or contact with a confirmed patient. BBRMC has a special entrance for coronavirus patients and will minimize contact with the rest of the facility, she said. In the meantime, BBRMC is still taking regular patients and appointments. “If we happen to get a case locally, that may change,” she said.

In the call Friday, Hucke also said she was “very confident” BBRMC could handle a healthcare crisis even with its limited facilities. Tents and mobile units are “always in good repair” and “ready to go,” she said.

She cited preparations, drills and plans between BBRMC and the regional advisory council, which has already prepared for crises in the event of possible incidents like a mass shooting or a train accident.

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Tips for staying healthy during the coronavirus crisis

By STEPHEN PAULSEN
stephen@bigbendsentinel.com

TEXAS — As Texans adapt to a new normal and businesses shutter or reduce services across the state, health officials at the federal, state and local level are offering advice on how to stay healthy and reduce the spread of the coronavirus.

In guidance issued Monday, President Donald Trump asked that Americans avoid groups of more than 10 people for the next 15 days (until March 31) to help contain the virus.

At the state level, the Texas Department of State Health Services is now recommending Texans change plans to help protect themselves and other members of the public from the coronavirus. Specific recommendations include: canceling large gatherings, avoiding all non-essential travel and practicing social distancing. For individuals, that could mean avoiding social gatherings and public spaces when possible. People with the coronavirus can spread the disease before they show symptoms.

Local health authorities are advising that people avoid touching their face and wash their hands regularly for at least 20 seconds. A handwashing guide from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html>

Health authorities are also suggesting that people keep their surroundings, including their clothing, clean, as the coronavirus can also survive on surfaces. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has this guide on cleaning surfaces: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/cleaning-disinfection.html>

The American Chemistry Council has also released this guide of recommended cleaning products, available here: <https://www.americanchemistry.com/Novel-Coronavirus-Fighting-Products-List.pdf>

For individuals who worry they might have been exposed to the coronavirus, health officials ask that people contact hospitals and doctors by phone rather than visiting in person. Health care providers will evaluate on a case-by-case basis whether individuals should come in for care. Big Bend Regional Medical Center says it has a separate entrance for anyone suspected of having coronavirus. Preventative Care Health Services said the same about its clinics in Marfa, Alpine and Presidio city.

Dr. Ekta Escovar at the Big Bend Regional Medical Center is recommending West Texans self-quarantine for 14 days if they’ve recently traveled to high-risk areas in the United States. At press time, those areas are: California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Washington, Boston, the Chicago area, the Dallas/Fort Worth area, and the Houston area, the Las Vegas area and New Orleans. In a teleconference with reporters on Wednesday, Ekta Escovar, a doctor at the Big Bend Regional Medical Center, said the hospital was working to provide up-to-date guidance on travel but that there “may be a delay” as new cases pop up hour-by-hour in the United States.

Sul Ross State University is being even more stringent. On Monday, the school asked students to self-quarantine for 14 days if they’ve been through any of the following airports in the past week: John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK) in New York; Chicago O’Hare International Airport (ORD) in Illinois; San Francisco International Airport (SFO) in California; Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (SEA) in Washington; Daniel K. Inouye International Airport (HNL) in Hawaii; Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) in California; Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport (ATL) in Georgia; Washington-Dulles International Airport (IAD) in Virginia; Newark Liberty International Airport (EWR) in New Jersey; Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport (DFW) in Texas; Detroit Metropolitan Airport (DTW) in Michigan; Boston Logan International Airport (BOS) in Massachusetts; and Miami International Airport (MIA) in Florida.

The Presidio County Appraisal District will be “CLOSED” to the public until further notice.

We are taking extra precautions at this time for the safety of the DISTRICTS STAFF and the prevention of the spread of the CORONAVIRUS.

We WILL BE available by telephone or email during our regular working hours Monday thru Friday from 8:00am to 4:00pm.

Thank you for your understanding.

LOCAL BUSINESS CLOSURES AND HOUSE ADJUSTMENTS

These are the openings, closures and adjustments to hours and services for Marfa businesses as of press time Wednesday afternoon, March 18. The continually updated list is available on www.bigbendsentinel.com and business owners can submit their up-to-date information to editor@bigbendsentinel.com.

CLOSED

- **The Big Bend Sentinel** offices are closed to the public, but staff is actively working and can be reached at editor@bigbendsentinel.com
- **Marfa Public Radio’s** lobby is closed, but staff are working
- **The Chinati Foundation** is closed 3/12 - 3/24
- **Judd Foundation** is closed 3/13, for at least 4 weeks
- **Ballroom Marfa** is closed until 4/1
- **The Marfa and Presidio County Museum** is closed until further notice
- **The Book Bus** will be closed for 2 weeks, beginning 3/12
- **The Capri** closed 3/12 until further notice
- **Library film screenings** are canceled for two weeks, beginning 3/12
- **Stellina** is closed until further notice, and will no longer offer food in The Get Go cases
- **Big Bend Coffee Roasters** is closed to the public
- **exhibitions2d** gallery is closed indefinitely except by appointments, which can be made via email at x2d@exhibitions2d.com or on Instagram by messaging @exhibitions2d
- **The Well** has canceled all yoga and meditation classes from Saturday, March 14, through Saturday, March 21
- **The McDonald Observatory** in Fort Davis is closed through at least April 19
- **Mira Marfa** is closed, and online orders are available for skincare, wellness and beauty products.
- **Marfa Wine Co.** is closed until further notice
- **Communitie** is closed
- **The Desert Veil** opening is postponed until further notice
- **Ocotillo Botánica** and **Magic Hour Marfa** are closed, though they will be available on an appointment basis. Ocotillo Botánica will offer free local delivery and curbside pick-up
- **The Big Bend Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas** is rescheduling all remaining spring programs for the fall
- **The Presidio County Appraisal District** will be closed until further notice. The district will be reachable by phone or by email during regular business hours, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. until 4 p.m.
- **The Unitarian Universalists of the Big Bend church** in Alpine has suspended services until the end of March

- **Big Bend Telephone** is closing the lobby of each of its area offices but will continue to provide service, the company said on Monday night.
- **Wrong Marfa** is closed
- **Reckless Rings** at 213 S. Dean St. is closed
- **Farmstand Marfa** is closed
- **Jett’s dining room, patio and bar at the Hotel Paisano is closed.** Curbside pickup service runs from 5 - 9 pm
- **Do Your Thing** is closed until further notice
- **Esperanza Vintage** is closed
- **Planet Marfa** is closed for two weeks beginning 3/18
- **Shy Gallery** is closed but taking appointments by email at hello@shymarfa.com and by phone/text at 432-217-6060. The gallery also has an online store at shymarfa.com
- **Convenience West** is closed through at least the rest of March
- **Food Shark** is closed

OPEN

Open businesses are subject to city and county orders that could result in their closure. Visit www.bigbendsentinel.com to see the latest up-to-date list of businesses in Marfa.

- **The Sentinel coffee shop** is to-go only, order online at thesentinelmarfa.com/shop
- **The Get Go** is open
- **Porter’s** is open
- **The Lost Horse** is open
- **El Camino** is open
- **Restaurant Cochineal** has closed their dining room but will still do takeout and delivery
- **Al Campo** is to-go only
- **Aster** is delivery and to-go only
- **Marfa Maid** is open with extra precautions
- **Raba** is open by appointment
- **Hotel Saint George** is open but not serving food inside
- **Bar Nadar** is open
- **Frama** is to-go only
- **Pizza Foundation** is to-go only
- **Ashley Rowe** is open
- **El Cosmico** is open to guests, but its lobby and gift shop are closed
- **The Hotel Paisano, Paisano Gift Shop and Greasewood Gallery** will remain open with regular hours for now
- **Para Llevar** is open, to-go only

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MARFA AA and AL-ANON MEETINGS

Due to the coronavirus, meetings are now available online and by phone:

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6PM-7PM: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday
2PM-3PM (AL-ANON): Sunday

REMEMBER:
There are online meetings at intherooms.com
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Sober Grid is a mobile sober community.

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Opinions

This is a scary and uncertain time for us all. While we don't know what the future holds, we promise to you, our readers and our community, that we will continue to keep you informed throughout the duration of this pandemic to the best of our ability.

We believe the press is vital to the success of a democracy, and we believe our role is necessary in the dissemination of reliable, accurate information — now more than ever.

Our staff is working around the clock to make sure you are getting the news you need to remain informed, and we could not be more grateful for their dedication. Please thank them the next time you see them.

We are updating our website as new information becomes available, and we've removed our paywall to make sure this information is available to all.

We hope all of you will act with the community's best interests at heart. As you've been told time and time again: social distancing helps stop the spread. It is up to all of us to do our part.

We are in this together, and we will come out stronger.

Maisie Crow and Max Kabat
Owners of The Big Bend Sentinel

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

In a sign of the times, the Blackwell School Alliance canceled our April event last week. But not before we experienced a wonderful week of support: the City of Marfa awarded us a generous grant for our event (which we will now give back) and the Marfa Municipal Alliance of Dead Country and Folk Singers held a fundraising show at the Lost Horse for us (which we will re-route to our education program). Thank you to everyone for your kind words and actions, your talents, and your belief in our mission.

We will continue to work toward the goals of our Community Charrette in other ways, behind the scenes. And we can't wait to host a party for the community when we come out the other side of this strange and stressful time.

And then there is the bigger picture of uncertainty and fear. This is an unprecedented situation, and it's changing so fast. We are all doing our best to respond appropriately. I would invite us all to consider what skills we can offer the community to ease the anxiety: a central web-based message board? check-ins with neighbors? tech-based, faith-based, business-based solutions? We are community filled with idea people and doers. Let's find ways to practice physical distancing while maintaining our social networks. Maybe it's all in the works already, but I say: now is the time to get creative in all the ways we can take care of each other as the world seems crazy. If I can help you in any way, please call or text me at 432.295.3359.

For those who work and volunteer in service to our community, thank you.

Love and an elbow bump,
Gretel Enck
Marfa

...

Dear Editor,

Election corruption? The saga revolving around possible corruption in Brewster County's recent early-voting in February continues, and it looks like it will take a lot of public pressure, and perhaps a civil rights attorney to get to the bottom of the Brewster County's lack of cooperation; lack of transparency; failure to return my calls, texts and emails to the Brewster County Judge, Eleazar Cano; the lack of cooperation from Brewster County to provide the records that I have requested from the county, the issues around falsely addressed, pre-printed return envelopes to the county election administrator for application for mail-in ballots; the fact that a county elections administrator blamed the "Democrats" for the address error (for her failure to update contact information to the Texas Secretary of State's office. The election workers, including the election administrator, mistreated disabled voters and even refused to help or allow one disabled voter to vote when she presented herself to cast her vote during the early voting period. I hope that your reporter Stephen Paulsen will continue to follow the messy politics of Brewster County. It seems to be getting very smelly in Brewster County!

Terry Pelle
Alpine

...

Dear Editor,

I am extraordinarily grateful for Sul Ross State University, Alpine ISD, Alpine Montessori School, Alpine Christian School, Fort Davis ISD, Marfa ISD, and other schools in the region for temporarily closing in response to the spread of coronavirus in Texas. These actions were a brave and proactive measure to protect our communities.

The 1918 flu epidemic taught us that closing schools before an epidemic spikes is one of the best ways to save many lives. Thank you to our school leaders for following this lesson of history. As coronavirus continues to spread rapidly across our state, I trust they will work closely with local medical experts to extend school closures if needed.

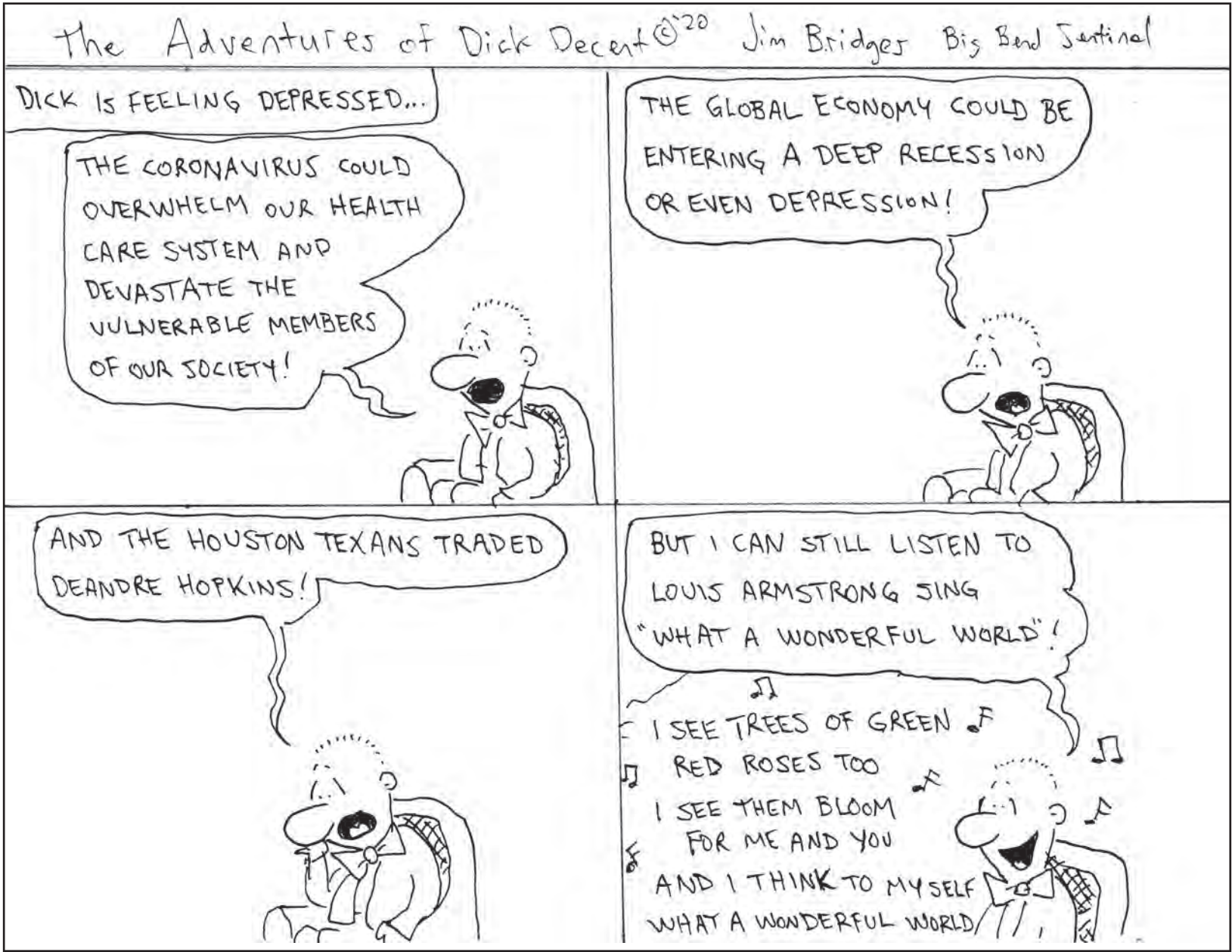
Closing schools comes with many complicated and difficult repercussions, so I appreciate how our local school and university leadership have navigated these challenging decisions as quickly as possible.

This pandemic is both a reminder and a test of our connectedness. I hope we pass this test by showing each other solidarity, support, and kindness. I urge everyone in our community to follow the lead of our schools in recognizing the seriousness of this viral threat and acting responsibly. By practicing social distancing, isolating ourselves when sick, limiting travel, and quarantining ourselves after trips, we can work together to protect our most vulnerable friends, family and neighbors.

The news unfolding around our country and world still seems very surreal. It is hard to react to a threat that feels so remote and impossible, especially when reacting requires sacrifice. But as we wait for coronavirus to hit our communities, remember what former U.S. secretary of health Michael Leavitt recently told Fox News: "Anything said in advance of a pandemic seems alarmist. After a pandemic begins, anything one has said or done is inadequate."

Thank you,
Megan Wilde

...





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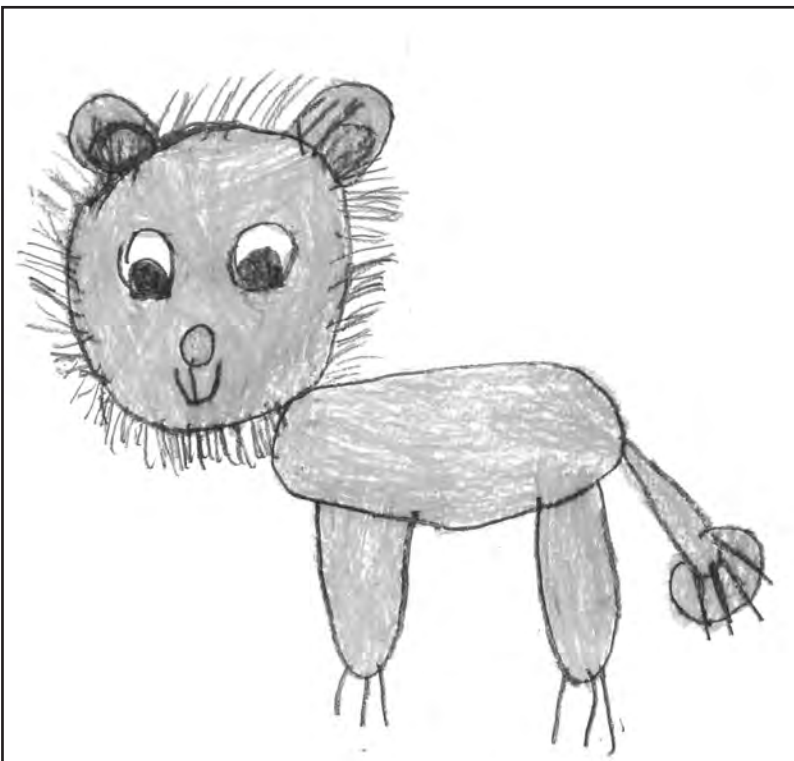
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Community

DRAWING OF THE WEEK



“Lion”
Emma Van Etten
Kindergarten
The Marfa Studio of Arts at Marfa Elementary School

City manager appoints Mandy Roane to position of director of community services

MARFA — Marfa City Manager John Washburn has appointed Marfa Library Director Mandy Roane to the newly created position of director of community services. Roane will take the lead role in management of library, senior nutrition and visitor & tourism services as well as oversee the city’s media and communications, grant writing and administration tasks. The change to the organizational chart of the city was approved unanimously by city council at the March 10 council meeting. Additionally, the position of assistant to the city manager will be removed from the city’s organization chart.

Roane, who has been at the library for seven years, is excited about the new position. “I’m looking forward to working more closely with the council, administration and staff as well as the community to enhance our outreach and provide the best services possible,” she said.

Washburn indicated that observing her skills and abilities over the last several months and then reviewing her experience and education made him realize she was likely capable of much more than the city was asking of her. He said, “I also then realized if I couple that with her knowledge of and experience in the community, we had a solid opportunity to improve our delivery of services to the citizens of Marfa.”

National, state parks brace for coronavirus

By STEPHEN PAULSEN
stephen@bigbendsentinel.com

TRI-COUNTY — As concerns over the coronavirus arrive in the Big Bend just in time for spring break, workers at state and national parks are taking precautions and watching their visitor numbers decline.

“We’ve seen lower numbers than other years,” Manuela Cataño, superintendent of the Fort Leaton State Historic Site at Big Bend Ranch State Park, said of her visitor numbers. She couldn’t immediately provide statistics on visitations but said that visits were down.

The historic site is also taking other precautions, she said. Exhibitions and tours are closed. And while visitors can still explore inside parts of the historic site, they’re being funneled in one person or one group at a time.

For now, at least, Cataño said she felt good with the new measures.

“It’s working pretty well,” she said. “We’re taking the advice that’s being sent to us from headquarters.”

Nathanael Gold, superintendent of Big Bend Ranch State Park, did not immediately respond to a request for comment. But a spokesperson for the park’s parent agency, the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, said that staff in parks across the state were taking extra precautions — including making sure soap and hand sanitizer are available in all buildings and regularly cleaning surfaces. Anyone who has a camping or day-use

reservation at a Texas park for March or April can also cancel without penalty by calling 512-389-8900.

Across the state, TPWD has so far closed two parks: the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center in Athens, Sea Center Texas in Lake Jackson. The Sea Center is in Brazoria County, which officials say has seen community spread of coronavirus.

The TPWD spokesperson said the parks had closed in part because they saw “large public gatherings in closed quarters” but declined to comment when asked whether other state parks could close.

“I couldn’t speculate as to what the future holds,” she said. “We’re doing our best to make sure we’re using the latest recommendations.”

Big Bend National Park did not immediately respond to a request for comment. According to a statement posted on its website, all visitors centers at the park are closed, whereas park gates, trails, roads, campgrounds and the Lodge are still open.

Several National Park Service locations have closed so far, including the Golden Gate National Recreation Area in San Francisco, which is currently under mandatory lockdown, and the Washington Monument in Washington, D.C.

Across all its parks, the National Park Service is asking visitors to take standard precautions against coronavirus, including avoiding touching the face and washing their hands and disinfecting surfaces regularly.

The time to fill out the 2020 Census is here

By ABBIE PERRAULT
abbie@bigbendsentinel.com

UNITED STATES — The 2020 Census is now available, and residents of the United States can choose to fill it out via mail, with a door-to-door census worker, by phone or, for the first time, online at www.2020census.gov.

Census workers will begin knocking doors in mid-May in hopes of getting a complete count of residents across the United States, but U.S. residents can fill out their census now online or by mail. The mail version has postage on the return envelope.

The Census Bureau is working with government entities to monitor the new coronavirus and make appropriate decisions regarding the plan to get census responses. “With respect to COVID-19, Census 2020 is moving ahead according to plan. The Census Bureau will follow the guidance of Federal, State and local health authorities,” they said in a statement.

The census has toll-free telephone numbers set up in English (844-330-2020) and Spanish (844-468-2020.) For households larger than 10, the Census Bureau recommends answering the census online or by phone, where up to 99 people can be included.

As of March 20, census self-response rates will be available to keep an eye on how many people in each community have responded. Visit 2020census.gov/en/response-rates.html for more information.

The Bureau is staffing census response representatives in areas predicted to have a low response rate, and later, in areas that are still low in response. Census takers will start arriving in early May to follow up with those who have not responded to the census.

OBITUARY



Orosco

Jose “Joe” Jacquez Orosco, age 75, of Marfa, Texas passed away suddenly and peacefully on Saturday, March 14, 2020. He was born January 10, 1945 in Marfa, Texas to Jesus V. and Eugenia J. Orosco.

He is survived by his beloved wife of 43

years, Catarina Quintanar Orosco, sons; Joseph “Yogi” Orosco and wife Lupe of Marfa, Texas, Joel Orosco currently residing in Pecos, Texas, daughter Delphi Orosco and boyfriend Alex of Horn Lake, MS, step-sons, Lionel “Leo” Salazar and wife Char, Roy Salazar and wife Angie, both from Albuquerque, NM, Robert Salazar, and Michael Salazar both from Marfa, Texas, step-daughters, Diana Lujan and husband Eddie, Sandra Salazar and husband Saul, Isabel Cash and husband Mark, Sophia Alvarez and husband Roger, all from Marfa, Texas. Also daughters, Esmeralda and Susie Orosco and son Rudy Orosco. Brothers, Jessie Orosco, Robert Orosco, Armando Orosco and Raynond Orosco. Sister Rosie (Orosco) Rivera, 34 grandchildren, 37 great-grandchildren and 1 great-great grandchild. Numerous nephews and nieces.

Joe is preceded in death by his parents Jesus and Eugenia, son Joseph Lee “Yogi” Orosco, grandson Jason Joey Orosco and his sister Emilia (Orosco) Espitia. Maternal grandparents Estanilado and Isabel (Lugar) Jacquez and

paternal grandparents Melquiades and Julianita (Valenzuela) Orosco.

Joe worked many years as a highly skilled concrete finisher. His favorite season was Fall, mainly because of his love for the Dallas Cowboys, college football and Thanksgiving (food). He never missed a good boxing match, and enjoyed watching wrestling back when they were real. His all-time favorite

show was Sanford and Son. He self-proclaimed himself “King of Dominoes”. He loved to play his music loudly (just ask his neighbors). They say you can’t have a favorite family member, but to Joe his grandson Christian Davis was his pride and joy. He will definitely be missed by all who knew and loved him dearly. Rest in peace Dad!

Funeral services will be held at the First Baptist Church in Marfa, Texas at 2:00 p.m., Saturday, March 21, 2020.

Alpine Memorial Funeral Home has been entrusted with his services. Online condolences maybesentto: www.alpinememorialfuneralhome.com.

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Education

Coronavirus concerns prompt school closures, e-learning

By **STEPHEN PAULSEN**
stephen@bigbendsentinel.com

TRI-COUNTY — As concerns over the coronavirus reached the Big Bend last week, schools across the region extended spring breaks, cancelled events and modified their teaching practices.

At Marfa ISD, where students are on spring break this week, school officials started the vacation a day early, canceling classes last Friday, March 13.

“There is no immediate danger,” MISD Superintendent Oscar Agüero wrote in an email to parents last week. Instead, he said the early break would give maintenance and custodial workers “an extra day of cleaning and disinfecting of all classrooms, desks and materials.”

Rumors that any number of Marfa ISD students are suspected to have coronavirus are false, Agüero and Dr. J.P. Schwartz said last week.

As of press time, Marfa students are currently set to return to school next Tuesday, March 24. Please check our website, bigbendsentinel.com, for timely updates as this situation is rapidly changing. If Marfa ISD does need to cancel classes for longer, Agüero said the school district is considering extending the school year rather than adopting online learning. He cited concerns that not all students would have reliable connectivity. Marfa ISD is also considering workbooks.

School officials like Agüero are staying in regular communication with officials from the Texas Education Agency. In areas where the coronavirus has already spread, the TEA has warned that schools could stay closed for the remainder of the year. So far, though, that doesn’t include Presidio County, which at press time on Wednesday had no cases.

Longer spring breaks aren’t the only changes. For students in the 2019-2020 school year, the TEA has already waived requirements for STAAR (State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness) testing.

In Presidio city, Presidio ISD is also on spring break this week. Students are set to return to school on Monday, March 23, and school officials there have not yet said what their plans are. The Big Bend Sentinel/Presidio International will provide more updates in Presidio as we get them.

Since Thursday, The Big Bend Sentinel/Presidio International has been working overtime to bring readers time-sensitive updates on issues like this — and we’ll provide updates as soon as we hear from Presidio ISD. Those updates are available on our live updates page, at: <https://bigbendsentinel.com/2020/03/12/coronavirus-live-updates-from-big-bend-sentinel-and-presidio-international/#schools>. Readers can also find a link to live coverage at the top of our webpage, <http://bigbendsentinel.com>.

In Alpine, Alpine ISD will be closed Monday, March 16, through Friday, March 20, as a precaution against coronavirus. The school will provide curbside lunch service to students from noon until 1 p.m. daily, the school district said last Friday.

Federal and state authorities are working to ensure that low-income students still get no-cost lunches like this amid school closures. Among other actions, the Texas Department of Agriculture requested — and

the USDA approved — a waiver suspending rules requiring that schoolchildren eat such lunches in a group setting.

At Alpine Montessori School, where students were set to return from spring break this week, school officials have said they will stay closed an additional two weeks. The move is a precaution at the recommendations of health officials, Alpine Montessori said. The school hopes to reopen on March 30, a school official said last Thursday.

Other grade schools have closed as well. Valentine ISD will be closed through at least Friday, March 27, Superintendent Debbie Engle said. The school district will monitor the coronavirus situation and is working to provide remote instruction, she said.

Terlingua CSD will be closed through Friday, March 20. The district is also developing systems for remote instruction, Superintendent Reagan Reed said on Saturday.

Fort Davis ISD will not have face-to-face instruction until at least Friday, March 20, at which point the district will reevaluate, Fort Davis ISD Superintendent Graydon Hicks said in a statement to parents last Friday.

The closures are also impacting extracurriculars. The University Interscholastic League has cancelled two upcoming events — the UIL CX Debate State Tournament and the UIL State Robotics FIRST Tech Challenge — until further notice. That guidance applies to schoolwide sports practices as well until further notice.

At the university level, Sul Ross State University is also experiencing disruptions. The school last week canceled in-person instruction through at least April 12. Then, on Monday, university president Bill Kibler said the school would likely have no face-to-face classes for the remainder of the semester.

Instead, the school said it would switch to remote-learning options like “Zoom” video conferencing, conference calls, email and chat rooms. The school — which was set to return to classes last Monday, March 16 — also extended spring break for an extra week.

The school is authorizing emergency paid leave for various categories of employees, including student workers. Department heads including directors, department chairs, and above were asked to report to work to strategize plans for remote course delivery and business operations.

All upcoming university events — including the alumni gala, Trappings of Texas, honors convocation, Sully Showcase, scholars luncheon, alumni ring ceremony and the May 2020 commencement exercises in Alpine and Eagle Pass — are canceled until further notice, President Kibler said on Monday. The dining hall is discontinuing self-service and will instead offer to-go meals to on-campus residents, who will not be allowed to gather in the dining hall.

The cancellations are extending to sports as well. The American and Southwest Conference is canceling ALL athletic championships and competitions for the remainder of the academic year. The cancellations will affect competitions for baseball, golf, softball, tennis and outdoor track and field, the organization said Friday.

Colleges will set their own rules regarding non-traditional practices

and competitions for cross-country, football, soccer and volleyball, the ASC said.

On Monday, Kibler also asked students to self-quarantine for 14 days if they’ve been through any of the following airports in the past week: John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK) in New York; Chicago O’Hare International Airport (ORD) in Illinois; San Francisco International Airport (SFO) in California; Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (SEA) in Washington; Daniel K. Inouye International Airport

(HNL) in Hawaii; Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) in California; Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport (ATL) in Georgia; Washington-Dulles International Airport (IAD) in Virginia; Newark Liberty International Airport (EWR) in New Jersey; Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport (DFW) in Texas; Detroit Metropolitan Airport (DTW) in Michigan; Boston Logan International Airport (BOS) in Massachusetts; and Miami International Airport (MIA) in Florida.



Presented by

FOOD SHARK

Weekly SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

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

Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ♦♦♦

♦ Moderate ♦♦ Challenging
♦♦♦ HOO BOY!

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King Crossword

ACROSS

1 Do arithmetic
4 Long tales
9 Stitch
12 Take to court
13 Treasure cache
14 Work with
15 Newlyweds' trip
17 Siesta
18 Chicken-king link
19 Waldorf salad ingredient
21 Floated on air
24 Remain
25 Ostrich's cousin
26 Blue
28 Ruhr Valley city
31 Tear
33 Cry loudly
35 Apiary structure
36 Boredom
38 Solidify
40 Morning moisture
41 Village People hit
43 Express sorrow for
45 Like a duck's feet
47 — Jima
48 Past
49 Wealthy one
54 Beer container

DOWN

1 Fire residue
2 Pair
3 Lair
4 Fashions
5 Fleets
6 Sticky stuff
7 Acknowledges
8 Washington group
9 Optimist's part of the street?
10 Jacob's brother
11 Cried
16 Dine
20 Whip
21 "The Way We —"
22 "So be it"
23 Sense of humor
27 Pooch
29 Tied
30 Mr. Gingrich

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1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12										
15										
21	22	23								
25										
31										
36										
45	46									
48										
54										
57										

32 Foolish
34 Accept as true
37 "The — Cometh"
39 Attorney
42 Pueblo brick
44 Unruly bunch
45 Texas city
46 "Zounds!"
50 Autumn mo.
51 Honest politician
52 Martini ingredient
53 Turf

Puzzle solutions for last week's issue

Weekly SUDOKU

Answer

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

King Crossword

Answers

Solution time: 24 mins.

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

MARCH	Thurs, March 19	Fri, March 20	Mon, March 23	Tues, March 24	Wed, March 25
BREAKFAST				breakfast strudel, cheese stick	breakfast pizza
LUNCH Menu courtesy of PORTER'S SINCE 1945 Celebrating 70+ years of serving our customers. 432-729-4375 www.myporters.net	SPRING BREAK	SPRING BREAK	TEACHER WORK DAY	chicken-n-waffles, hash browns, fresh veggie cup, rosy applesauce	chicken nuggets, mac & cheese, savory green beans, garden salad, pears

Come worship with us

First United Methodist Church
9am Sundays
Young Hoon Kang, Pastor
110 W Washington Street
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Raul Lara
City Council Member
Cell# 432-249-1189
councilmemberlara@cityofmarfa.com
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MARFA SHORTHORNS SPORTS CALENDAR
The University Interscholastic League has cancelled two upcoming events — the UIL CX Debate State Tournament and the UIL State Robotics FIRST Tech Challenge — until further notice. That guidance applies to schoolwide sports practices as well until further notice.
Check www.bigbendsentinel.com for live updates.

Classifieds & public notices

PUBLIC NOTICE

INVITATION TO BID

Marfa ISD is accepting sealed bids for the following items: 1975 Chevrolet Truck, 1998 Ford Windstar, 2008 Chevrolet Uplander Passenger Van, 1971 Ford Tractor and Misc. Workout Equipment. Individual bids accepted. Items may be inspected at the Marfa ISD bus barn during regular business hours.

Bids are to be marked "Sealed Bid" and delivered no later than 11:00 am, Monday, March 30, 2020 to: Marfa ISD, PO Box T, 401 N. Gonzales St., Marfa, TX 79843. Bids will be opened and reviewed at 3:00 pm, Monday, March 30th at the MISD Administration Building, 401 N. Gonzales St., Marfa, TX.

Questions may be directed to: Oscar Aguero, MISD Superintendent, 432-729-5500, oaguero@marfaisd.com or by mail, PO Box T, Marfa, TX 79843.

Marfa ISD reserves the right to accept or reject any and/or all bids.

FOR RENT

Office space Downtown Marfa

The Corner Building at Texas St. and Highland Ave. has a 264sf office space available for rent. This is a newly remodeled building in the heart of Marfa with bright and modern offices upstairs and retail downstairs. Please send any inquiries to thecornerbuilding125@gmail.com.

JOBS



Cibolo Creek Ranch is seeking a Dining Room Manager, Cooks and Servers.

Experience in restaurants and the Hospitality industry is required.

If interested please send resume to obotois@cibolocreekranch.com

The Fort Davis Chamber of Commerce is hiring for a part-time administrative assistant. Please contact director, Melissa Henderson at 432-426-3015 or email director@fortdavis.com.

JOB POSTING JEFF DAVIS COUNTY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

Legal Secretary/Victim Assistant

The Jeff Davis County Attorney's Office has an immediate opening for a full-time Legal Secretary and Victim Assistant. Duties include preparing legal documents, attending court, assisting victims of crime, research, writing, assisting in nuisance abatement, maintaining files, inputting online criminal case information, maintaining the law library, answering phones, working with people, and maintaining strict confidentiality. Experience with Microsoft Word, Excel, Power Point, and Google Docs required. Paralegal experience and/or bilingual in Spanish preferred, but not required.

Interested individuals should fill out the application found online at <http://www.co.jeff-davis.tx.us/page/jeffdavis.County>. Attorney and submit it along with a resume and letter of interest to Teresa.Todd@co.jeff-davis.tx.us. Position open until filled. Salary for 35 hours is \$25,837 with additional \$3,500 compensation possible for working 40 hours per week.



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AVISO PUBLICO DE PUERTAS ABIERTAS

TxDOT 2021-2024 Programa de Mejora del Transporte Rural en todo el Estado

La salud y la seguridad de nuestros empleados y la comunidad a la que servimos siguen siendo la máxima prioridad. Esta semana, el Centro de Control de Enfermedades (CDC) recomendó que los grupos cancelen o pospongan todas las reuniones de 50 personas más durante las próximas ocho semanas. Dicho esto, hemos decidido posponer el siguiente horario TxDOT 2021-2024 RSTIP Puertas Abiertas en el Oeste de Texas.

- Alpine Casa Abierta Publica - Martes, 24 de Marzo 2020, de 5:00 a 7:00 p.m
- Presidio Casa Abierta Publica – Miércoles, 25 de Marzo 2020, de 5:00 a 7:00 p.m
- Van Horn Casa Abierta Publica – Jueves, 26 de Marzo 2020, de 5:00 a 7:00 p.m

Una vez más, su salud y seguridad son nuestra principal prioridad. Continuamos monitoreando la situación y comunicaremos las nuevas reuniones programadas cuando se confirme. Para información adicional sobre las casas abiertas publicas, o para cualquier otra pregunta relacionada con el Proyecto, por favor contactar a Rebecca Reyes al (915) 790-4200 o Rebecca.Reyes@txdot.gov



PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE NOTICE

TxDOT 2021 – 2024 Rural Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (RSTIP)

The health and safety of our employees and the community that we serve continue to be our highest priority. This week the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended that groups cancel or postpone all gatherings of 50 or more people for the next eight weeks. With that said, we have decided to postpone the following scheduled TxDOT 2021-2024 RSTIP Public Open Houses in West Texas:

- Alpine Public Open House – Tuesday, March 24, 2020 @ 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.
- Presidio Public Open House – Wednesday, March 25, 2020 @ 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.
- Van Horn Public Open House – Thursday, March 26, 2020 @ 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Again, your health and safety are our top priority. We continue to monitor the situation and will communicate the newly scheduled meetings when confirmed. For additional information about the postponed public open house, or for any other project related questions, please contact Rebecca Reyes at (915) 790-4200 or Rebecca.Reyes@txdot.gov.

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Publisher
Managing Editor
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Office Manager
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Office: 209 1/2 W. El Paso St., Marfa, Texas
Mail: Drawer P, Marfa, TX 79843
Telephone: 432.729.4342
Contact: editor@bigbendsentinel.com
Advertising Inquiries: ads@bigbendsentinel.com
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The Big Bend Sentinel (ISSN 1076-1004 USPS 055-800) is published weekly, on Thursdays, 50 times a year by West Texan Media Group LLC, Drawer P, Marfa, TX 79843. Annual subscription rates are \$50 in Presidio, Brewster & Jeff Davis counties, and \$60 elsewhere in Texas and the United States. Special rates apply abroad. Periodicals class postage paid at Marfa, Texas 79843.
Postmaster: Send address changes to Drawer P, Marfa, TX 79843.