

IN BRIEF

Chihuahua to set up “sanitary fence” to slow spread of coronavirus

By STEPHEN PAULSEN
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MEXICO — As Mexico ramps up its response to the coronavirus, including by limiting nonessential travel across the U.S.-Mexico border, one Mexican state is going even further.

Chihuahua State, which borders West Texas, has set up 14 checkpoints to screen people for coronavirus, including at ports of entry into the United States. One of them is at the port in Presidio-Ojinaga.

The news came out in a press release Friday, which was posted to the Chihuahua State government website.

In the release, Javier Corral Jurado, governor of Chihuahua, said the state is setting up 14 “care and support modules” to review people who are entering through the ports of entry.

The checkpoints are one approach Chihuahua is taking to slow the spread of coronavirus and mitigate its impacts, Corral said. A hospital in Delicias near Chihuahua City is also being converted into a “specialized unit” focused on coronavirus.

Health officials in Chihuahua are also coordinating with their counterparts elsewhere in the country, including in the states of Sonora, Coahuila and Nuevo León, according to the news release. All four states border the United States, which now has the world’s highest number of confirmed coronavirus cases.

Some details on the checkpoints are still unclear. Mexican customs officials could not be reached for comment, and the Mexican consulate in Presidio did not respond to a request for comment by press time.

Border officials in the United States said they are aware of the checkpoints but could not provide specifics, instead referring questions to their counterparts in Mexico.

Dear readers,

As many public places close this coming week and the CDC recommends against bigger gatherings, we are asking you to write in to the Big Bend Sentinel with text and/or photos showing and telling us how you are creatively entertaining yourself during social distancing and isolation.

Send your writing and images to editor@bigbendsentinel.com

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Becky and Rowdy Dugan, with their sons Ranger and Wyld, entertain themselves in bed at their Marfa home during the stay-at-home order. Marfa schools have closed, and The City of Marfa — and later Presidio County — ordered residents to remain at home except for essential business and activities.

Photo by Rowdy Dugan

Continue reading about how Marfa locals are staying busy during this time. Page 8.

Marfa steps up with over \$35,000 for service worker relief

By ABBIE PERRAULT
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MARFA — When a group of Marfans pulled together a crowdfunding campaign to support service industry workers with an ambitious \$20,000 fundraising mark this weekend, it took fewer than 24 hours for Marfa residents and supporters to smash the goal. The fund, which launched on Saturday to support those who have lost jobs due to coronavirus, now sits at just over \$35,000 at press time.

But the service worker relief fund is just the first

initiative of Marfa Steps Up, a newly organized group aimed at “helping our town during the COVID-19 crisis” according to their website.

When Marfa resident Shelley Bernstein began organizing a fund for Marfa service workers, volunteers came together (virtually) to support the effort.

“I’ve had a lot of close partners,” says Bernstein. “Rainer Judd, Ian Lewis, Caroline Kanner, Susan Kirr, Neil Chavigny have been just in lockstep.” The group now has a list of over 30 volunteers and has organized outreach to make sure service workers are applying, that their former employers

are helping get the word out to them and that donors are opening their checkbooks to support an industry that has suffered under the strains of quarantine.

It was Judd who encouraged Bernstein to create a broader effort, beyond a one-time fundraiser, to keep supporting Marfa as the situation here changes daily. Bernstein talked to city of Marfa officials and coordinated with the city’s Director of Community Services Mandy Roane

As Bernstein worried about the logistics of distributing tens of thousands of dollars and

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Local doctor answers residents’ questions on coronavirus

By STEPHEN PAULSEN
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MARFA — Dr. Ekta Escovar, a doctor at the Big Bend Regional Medical Center and member of the local COVID-19 task force, called in to a virtual Marfa City Council meeting last week to brief locals on the deadly pandemic.

Escovar started on a dire note. “Statistically speaking,” she said, it’s “very likely” that coronavirus is already in the tri-county.

“It’s a matter of time before we catch our first case” through testing, she said. “That doesn’t mean we’re case-free in our area.”

Coronavirus, she said, has “slowly crept over the West Texas area” from San Antonio and Austin to places like Midland and Odessa, which

are now reporting cases. And spring break travel likely accelerated its spread, she said.

After localized outbreaks in New York and Washington State, the coronavirus has been gaining a foothold in Texas over the past weeks, with virtually every major Texas city — including El Paso — now reporting a steady rise in cases. On Saturday, Houston’s confirmed coronavirus tally more than tripled from 69 to 232 cases, the *Houston Chronicle* reported. As of press time Houston’s Harris County is reporting 563 cases.

As coronavirus gets closer, locals will need to take more precautions, especially when it comes to weekend trips to cities like El Paso, she said. “The chances of doing a quick run for the weekend and coming back with COVID is a lot higher” and will continue to grow.

Escovar also addressed issues with the limited supply of tests, which *The Big Bend Sentinel* reported on last week. She said BBRMC has been testing for coronavirus for weeks and was “ramping up.” But she acknowledged testing capacity is still “limited” and that the process is “not perfect.”

But accessing tests is not the only problem. As testing sites deal with a steady rise in demand, the average turnaround to get results has gone from around two to four days to around six to eight, she said.

“In my ideal world, I would love it if we could test everybody,” Escovar said. Having “something locally on-site” that would allow

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Marfa adopts disaster, shelter-in-place ordinances

By STEPHEN PAULSEN
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MARFA — At a city council meeting on Thursday, Marfa city officials adopted emergency measures in response to the global coronavirus pandemic, including an ordinance to continue a local disaster declaration and a shelter-in-place order.

The disaster ordinance continues and expands on rules adopted by Marfa and Presidio County on March 23. But while those rules were initially put in place for just 15 days, this new ordinance — which went into effect “immediately” upon publication on Friday — expands them for 30 days, until April 24.

Under the new rules, hotels and other short-term rentals will remain closed with a couple exceptions, including for locals who are in self-quarantine or their caregivers.

City officials will continue to meet via Zoom video conferencing, non-essential city personnel will work from home, and city buildings like the library will be closed.

Parks will remain open but are limited to 10 visitors. Residents are “permitted and

encouraged” to continue exercising outdoors while practicing social distancing but are “strongly discouraged” to engage in group sports like basketball.

Bars will remain closed under the ordinance. Restaurants can continue offering takeout and delivery options but must sanitize surfaces at least once per hour and adopt a “screening policy” for employees and exclude anyone who has a high fever, coughing or any other symptoms of COVID-19.

The city will provide an additional two weeks of paid sick leave for employees who have COVID-19, experience coronavirus-like symptoms or are caring for someone with coronavirus. The city will also not disconnect utilities like water and is waiving late fees and penalties. Residents can call Marfa City Hall at 432-729-4315 to set up a payment plan.

The city is also recommending that all evictions stop — though it’s just a recommendation, since evictions are handled at the county level. But at the city council meeting, David Beebe, a Presidio County justice of the peace, said he was not currently considering eviction requests.

Prices on groceries, medicine and other

essential supplies must remain the same price as on or before March 13. Anyone who violates the ordinance could face a maximum of \$1,000 in fines or up to 180 days in jail.

Marfa City Council also adopted a stricter shelter-in-place order, which went into effect Friday and lasts until April 10, unless city council rescinds or modifies it sooner. Councilmembers have said they will continue meeting regularly to reevaluate.

Under that order, Marfa residents must shelter in place at their residence for 14 days. The order says that “all public and private gatherings of any number of people...outside a household or living unit are prohibited” but stresses that family members can still gather at residences.

Still, the order has a number of exemptions for “essential” businesses and activities. People will be able to engage in outdoor activities like biking and running, so long as they comply with social distancing rules. Restaurants can also continue to serve to-go food, so long as they cease operations by 10 p.m.

Residents will still be able to take care of critical needs like grocery shopping and trips to seek healthcare.

Tri-county judges order residents to stay at home, Presidio and Brewster enact curfew

By ABBIE PERRAULT
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TRI-COUNTY — Presidio County Judge Cinderela Guevara signed an order late Tuesday night that directs county residents to stay at home except to carry out specific essential activities and continue essential business and government functions. It echoes orders from Jeff Davis and Brewster counties, which also went into effect Tuesday night.

The Presidio and Brewster county orders also initiate a curfew from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m., and Presidio County changed some rules around hotel occupancy.

Even though confirmed cases have not reached the tri-county area, the three judges worked together to release stay-at-home or shelter-in-place orders that will largely keep residents in their homes for the next few weeks. The coordinated effort is intended to stop coronavirus from arriving in the area and inundating the one hospital, Big Bend Regional Medical Center, that the region shares among its over 18,000 residents.

All of the orders allow for critical businesses like gas stations, grocery stores, the media and more to continue operations. The orders allow for continued infrastructure construction, including housing.

Judge Guevara said she worked with the other tri-county judges, the mayor of Marfa, the mayor of Presidio and the city administrators, “because whatever happens in one town affects another.”

“What happens in Alpine affects us, and what happens in Marfa affects Fort Davis,” she said. “It’s been nice to work that way and share information.”

Presidio County also amended a previous order that shuttered hotels completely. Hotels, motels and short term rentals will now be allowed to open only for guests who have established the rental as their primary place of residence, or if the customer is active military, law enforcement, national reserve, emergency service personnel to support city, county, state and school district operations or healthcare professionals and employees.

Judge Guevara’s order went into effect Tuesday night and will extend to the end of April 7. On April 8, commissioners will meet via Zoom to discuss continuing the order further. Those who knowingly violate the order can face up to \$1,000 in fines.

On Monday, Jeff Davis County Judge Kerith Sproul-Hurley was the first of the tri-county judges to implement a mandatory shelter-in-place order. It also began Tuesday night and will last through the end of April 24, since it was simultaneously approved unanimously by Jeff Davis commissioners. It dictates that Jeff Davis County residents must shelter in their current place of residence, and public and private gatherings are prohibited. Single households or “living units” are allowed to congregate together in their home.

In the orders, restaurants are limited to take-out and delivery. Religious services must occur by video or teleconference, and their staff gatherings cannot exceed 10 people and must maintain six-foot distances. Medical and veterinary clinics in the area can only perform surgeries that are not elective, or surgeries that cannot be delayed beyond the COVID crisis.

Residents may travel to get medicine, groceries, exercise and supplies to maintain their safety and sanitation. They may travel to care

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Porter’s addresses higher prices after city raises questions

By STEPHEN PAULSEN
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FAR WEST TEXAS — Porter’s is defending itself from criticisms after Marfa officials noted the regional grocery-store chain had raised prices on some goods during the coronavirus pandemic. Porter’s says any price increases at its stores reflect higher prices from suppliers — and the company has the receipts to prove it.

In a city council meeting on Thursday, Marfa officials discussed the town’s response to the coronavirus, including an ordinance extending a local disaster declaration and a shelter-in-place order. On the packed agenda were proposed local rules against price gouging, even as rules against the practice already exist at the state level.

During the discussion, Councilmember Irma Salgado noted that egg prices at the Porter’s store in Marfa have doubled from around \$4 to around \$8. Other council people, including Raul Lara, also raised concerns about recent price changes at the store.

Councilmember Yoseff Ben-Yehuda pushed back. He said he’d spoken to stores in Marfa and that some were experiencing price increases from their suppliers, resulting in higher prices. He “absolutely” believed that local businesses were doing their best to provide for the community in a time of crisis, he said.

Salgado, who works at local The Get Go grocery store, countered that The Get Go hadn’t seen distributors “raise the price on anything.” The council briefly floated the idea of contacting the Texas attorney general’s office, which investigates price-gouging complaints during state disasters, but ultimately decided against it.

In an interview on Friday, Ky Ellison, a spokesman for Porter’s, acknowledged the store

“That’s not who we are. Anyone who knows Porter’s knows what we stand for...There’s never a situation where we think we can take advantage of customers.”

has raised prices on some commodities, including eggs. But he stressed the price increases reflect those from suppliers, who he said were also struggling to keep up as the coronavirus pandemic disrupts supply chains and some customers hoard goods.

Porter’s has adopted purchase limits at some of its stores, he said — including in Marfa, which last week saw limits on toilet paper, hand sanitizer and other household items.

Porter’s still gets regular deliveries at all of its stores and expects to see its supply chains return to normal, Ellison said. In the meantime, he urged customers to be patient and not buy more than they need.

But Ellison emphatically denied that Porter’s is taking advantage of the situation, saying: “That’s not who we are.”

“Anyone who knows Porter’s knows what we stand for,” he said. “There’s never a situation where we think we can take advantage of customers.”

To prove its point, Porter’s even offered to voluntarily share its invoices with *The Big Bend Sentinel*.

Those records do indeed show that Porter’s is dealing with its own price increases. From March 16 to March 27, for example, the unit price for a 30-count package of grade-A Sunups eggs went

up from around \$4.17 to \$8.83. On some items, the store is even losing money, Ellison said.

Asked about supply-chain price increases, Ellison said he thinks suppliers are also acting in good faith. Porter’s has not filed price-gouging complaints against any suppliers, he said.

A spokesperson for the Texas attorney general’s office on Friday could not immediately comment on concerns of price gouging in the area. Complaints are handled on a case-by-case basis, she said.

Unlike some states, like California, Texas doesn’t specify how much prices can increase during disasters. Rather, Texas law just says the price increases can’t be “exorbitant or excessive.”

Porter’s could still be running afoul of local price-gouging rules, though. At the city council meeting on Thursday, Marfa adopted pricing rules on many essential items, including groceries, that were stricter than the state’s rules.

The city capped prices on goods at their price on or before March 13. It’s unclear if or how local authorities will enforce those rules on Porter’s, though local and state law enforcement will be enforcing a related shelter-in-place order. The ordinance says that violators could face up to 180 days in jail and a \$1,000 fine.

Asked about the local rules, Ellison, the Porter’s spokesman, said the company is working to contact Marfa City Council about the rules.

Still, he stressed that the city’s and Porter’s goals are the same: to “take care of the community of Marfa as best we can.”

The Big Bend Sentinel has asked the Texas attorney general’s office for records on all price-gouging complaints filed in Presidio, Brewster and Jeff Davis counties, including the status of any such investigations. A response is pending.

Worker relief

(Continued from page 1)

almost threw in the towel, it was Emily Williams who gave her the idea to distribute grocery store gift cards instead — the group could avoid cutting checks and also make sure the money was going straight back into local businesses like The Get Go and Porter’s.

Bernstein isn’t an organizer by trade, but her experience comes from working with digital engagement and technology for art institutions. “Spinning up tech really quickly, using platforms readily available to do it and finding a structure” are some of the talents she says she is able to contribute. She launched a website www.marfastepsup.org and set up a structure for applying to the fund.

At press time, 118 service workers have applied to the fund, including workers from El Cosmico, the Hotel St. George, The Paisano Hotel, The Well, Cochineal, Stellina, the Chinati Foundation, The Lost Horse, Do Your Thing and many more. Layoffs across Marfa began in early March when local establishments began to close voluntarily. After orders from the city and county, even more locals were out of work and facing mounting bills.

El Cosmico front desk manager Dione Acosta was laid off on March 19, after six and a half years working at the hotel and campground. She told the campaign organizers that anything was appreciated to help her family of nine. Speaking to *The Big Bend Sentinel*, Acosta says she worries about her finances. Bills are coming due, she recently traded in her car for a bigger one to fit her family and her monthly property tax payment is nearing.

“All together we’re a blended family of seven kids plus me and my boyfriend,” she says. Her

boyfriend is unable to work due to disability and his underlying health issues have made Acosta extra cautious when it comes to social distancing. Still, Acosta says she’s making the most of it, spending time with the kids and helping with their school now that they are all at home.

The fund is a “bridge,” not a solution, according to the group’s website. “Our hope is that the fund will provide quick relief to those most vulnerable, helping get bills at the checkout line reduced and keeping food on the table. Unemployment checks and stimulus packages are on the way, but help with groceries provides short-term relief until these measures arrive.”

For Acosta, “Any little bit helps for me and my family. I thought it was cool that it’s specifically for groceries,” she says. “I know there’s a lot of families that are struggling and you know, whatever can help us. We don’t know how long this is going to last.”

Asked about when she expects a return to normalcy, Acosta says, “I don’t know. I don’t think anyone really knows. I only hope that it just goes away.”

On the GoFundMe, people from outside of town have donated and so have some of the very workers who could be eligible to benefit from the fund. “People in service are giving, people who aren’t in a great situation are contributing,” says Bernstein.

The deadline to donate and to apply to be a beneficiary of the fund is April 10. The group plans to distribute the funds on or around April 17. They are encouraging people to apply online: <https://airtable.com/shrXZKwm1OKG11zs2>, but there will be hard copies of the public notice handed out Thursday morning at the school, in English and in Spanish. There will be hard copies of the application available (in English and in

“Our hope is that the fund will provide quick relief to those most vulnerable, helping get bills at the checkout line reduced and keeping food on the table. Unemployment checks and stimulus packages are on the way, but help with groceries provides short-term relief until these measures arrive.”

Spanish) inside envelopes taped to the front door of the library.

Hard-copy applications may be submitted into the library drop box (the big green box out front), and applications should be submitted inside an envelope if possible.

All applications, whether online or via hard copy, must be submitted by 11:59 p.m. on April 10.

Marfa Steps Up is keeping an eye on the needs they see in the community. Their next effort might not take the shape of another fundraiser as locals continue to be out of work. “Rainer [Judd] came up with the Marfa Steps Up name. It was about our community stepping up for each other. Of course it’s broader than that, but so many locals have given that I really think it has resonated.”

“As we understand what these needs are, and as a group what we can do, we can respond,” Bernstein says of their next step. “We’ll keep our eyes open for the community needs and evolve from there as best we can.”

The Marfa Steps Up GoFundMe can be found at: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/marfa-steps-up-service-worker-relief-fund>

Gage Hotel sues over emergency hotel closures

By STEPHEN PAULSEN
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MARATHON — The owner of Gage Hotel in Marathon is suing Brewster County over what its lawyers argue are unlawful hotel closures in response to the coronavirus.

In addition to suing Brewster County officials for the hotel closures, the lawsuit also takes aim at the local medical establishment — arguing that an area doctor and member of the local COVID-19 task force “should not be regarded as an expert.”

Brewster County last Monday ordered short-term rentals and hotels in the county to close through April 2 with a few exceptions, including for people who use such rentals as their primary residence.

The order mirrors similar moves adopted across the tri-county, which has no known cases of coronavirus at press time but where officials say proactive measures are necessary to prevent the region’s already taxed healthcare system from becoming overwhelmed. The Big Bend Regional Medical Center, which serves the area’s medical needs, has just 25 beds and two ventilators.

The lawsuit was filed last Wednesday by J.P. Bryan, a Houston-based oilman and owner of the Gage. It names Brewster County and multiple local officials as defendants.

Among them are Brewster County Judge Eleazar Cano and all members of the Brewster County Commissioner’s Court except for Ruben Ortega — the only county commissioner to vote against the closures. The lawsuit argues these officials acted outside their legal duties and therefore should be held “personally liable” for lost income at the Gage.

The lawsuit asks for a temporary restraining order and a permanent injunction preventing Brewster County officials from temporarily closing the hotel. It also asks for court fees and monetary damages for lost business.

The damages have not yet been determined but are expected to be \$100,000 or less, court filings state.

The same day the lawsuit was filed, Judge Roy Ferguson denied the Gage’s request for the temporary restraining order that could keep it in business through April 2. The Gage must stay closed for now, but the legal fight isn’t over just yet.

Bryan’s lawyers declined to comment for this story. Eric Magee, who is representing Brewster County, did not respond to a request for comment by press time.

Bryan’s lawsuit cites multiple reasons why Brewster’s hotel-closure order should be overturned. First, it argues that an emergency commissioner’s court meeting last Monday to discuss the order was

not properly posted.

Bryan’s lawyers did not learn about the meeting, which took place at 2 p.m., “until approximately 9:15 p.m.,” the court filing states. Meanwhile, an amended declaration of the order was reportedly not included on the county website until “an unknown point in time” after that day.

The lawsuit also argues that hotel closures are unnecessary, at least when compared to lost business at the Gage Hotel. Bryan’s lawyers describe the Gage as an “oasis in a remote part of West Texas” and a “principal source of income for Marathon.” And if the Gage was forced to close, its employees might “find other jobs and be permanently lost to the hotel workforce,” they warn.

At the same time, the lawsuit argues that Brewster County has not identified “the emergency or urgent public necessity” to require hotel closures and other emergency actions. The Gage and other local hotels already have “almost no guests at this time,” the lawsuit argues.

The suit notes that Governor Greg Abbott, who earlier this month issued a disaster proclamation over coronavirus, did not require or recommend that hotels be closed. It stresses that there are still no known cases of coronavirus in Brewster County, and there is therefore “no factual or legal basis” for the closures.

The suit also takes aim at Ekta Escovar, a doctor at Big Bend Regional Medical Center and a member of the local COVID-19 task force who has repeatedly spoken with journalists, officials and residents about the dangers of widespread coronavirus infections in the area.

Noting that Escovar is not a epidemiologist and does not specialize in infectious diseases, the lawsuit argues she has “expressed her personal fears...without any scientific support” and “should not be regarded as an expert.”

With or without more lawsuits, there will likely be more disagreements like this in the tri-county area as businesses and officials try to balance concerns for local safety against the region’s tourism-dominated economy.

The region’s remoteness — normally a draw for other reasons — has left some locals and officials worried it will attract visitors looking to escape from New York and other hard-hit areas.

Spring break, which is typically peak tourist season for the Big Bend, was a bust in Marfa this year as many local businesses shuttered or switched to to-go or appointment-only business. Presidio County soon after ordered hotels and bars closed. As of Saturday, the city’s residents are under a shelter-in-place.



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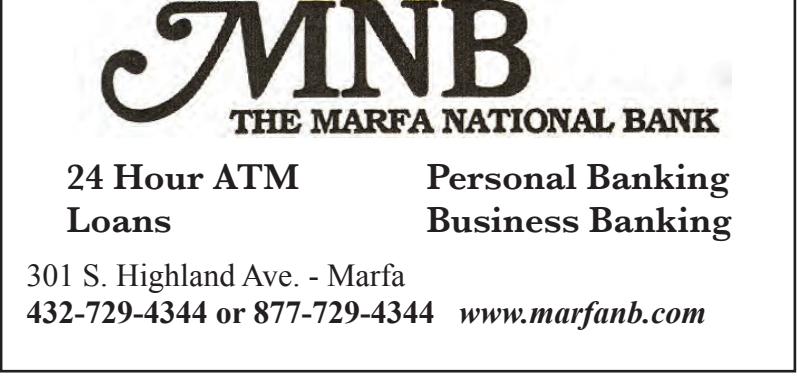
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Opinions

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

During my nearly 27 years of experience with the Austin/Travis County Health Department, we often encountered misunderstanding as to what “public health” actually is. Many equate it with “primary care,” which is the doctors, nurses, hospitals, clinics and other caregivers that directly treat us for diseases and injuries. The “public health system” is different from, yet intertwined with the primary care system. While the primary care system resides primarily in private and nonprofit clinics and hospitals, the public health system resides primarily within government at all levels. Primary care is focused on directly treating individuals while public health is focused on diseases, conditions and injuries as they affect populations, i.e. groups of people.

The public health system is something “We, the People” do for ourselves through government. It is taxpayer funded. It’s often overlooked, but, while the pandemic of COVID-19 is a huge painful challenge, it also provides an opportunity for us to see and understand the workings of the public health system. One responsibility of public health is research and investigations. When a disease or condition arises that might affect groups of people or the public at large we have to quickly learn what it is, who it will affect, and what we can do to prevent it or mitigate its effects.

As a retired public health worker, I still read the “Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report” put out by the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Today, I’m reading an article titled “Asymptomatic and Presymptomatic SARS-CoV-2 Infections in Residents of a Long-Term Care Skilled Nursing Facility – King County, Washington, March 2020.” I don’t recommend this reading to everyone, but the report documents the ease with which COVID-19 is spread by those who have no symptoms of illness at all. Research like this tells us why, without testing and vaccines, we must rely on social separation to reduce the spread of the disease. At the bottom of the article it acknowledges 19 members of the Federal CDC investigation team, many investigators from the local public health department in Seattle-King County and lab analysis by the State of Washington Public Health Lab. This research was done by the government while the primary care professionals cared for the patients.

Aside from its investigations, the U.S. government can play a key role in financially and logistically helping states and primary care providers obtain the equipment and personnel they need to directly combat the spread of diseases like COVID-19. These are things like test kits, ventilators and personal protective gear that clinics and hospitals don’t ordinarily stock in large quantities. We are even seeing how the Army Corp of Engineers builds hospital facilities and the U.S. military sends ships to bolster local hospitals.

Another feature of the public health system is laws and regulations at all levels from the feds down to local county, even city, officials. At the federal level there are standards for hospital operations, environmental protection laws, food, drug and product safety standards, to name just a few. States carry professional licensing standards and have their own environmental protection standards. Then, as we have recently seen, local government performs its role in the public health system with restraints on businesses, schools and individual behavior. The public health system has a feedback loop in which the research and investigation findings flow to all levels for government officials to deal with the spread of disease and to primary care providers to determine how they treat individual patients. Now that we know more about it, perhaps we will think twice about defunding the public health system. A few years back, the Trump administration defunded and disbanded the office dealing with the national security issue of pandemics. Now we’re struggling to catch up; too many will needlessly die. Doing this we endanger ourselves; that isn’t even penny-wise, but it’s definitely pound-foolish.

Mary Bell Lockhart
Alpine

...

Dear Editor,

I would like to comment briefly on two articles in last week’s Alpine Avalanche (March 26, 2020) paper: “Hotel owner sues commissioners and county,” and, “Big Bend not so friendly anymore.”

Both articles cited the fact that as of last week there were no reported cases of COVID-19 in the tri-county. One article used this to infer last week’s actions by the City of Alpine and Brewster County to shut down all hotels, motels, RV parks, and campgrounds, as well as issuing deadlines for visitors to vacate, was questionable.

The other article, “Hotel owner sues ...” cited this fact as a part of a lawsuit questioning the county’s authority to shut down the Gage Hotel. The other allegations cited in the lawsuit are:

- Neither the governor’s March 13 proclamation declaring a state of disaster for all counties nor his March 19 executive order regarding preparedness and mitigation mandated or required hotels to be closed.
- Insufficient public notice of the meeting.
- No evidence presented to justify closing hotels, and the only lawful basis for doing so would be expert testimony that leaving them open would constitute a disaster.
- And, along with the previously cited fact of no reported COVID-19 cases, the lawsuit also questioned a local pediatrician’s qualifications for giving her personal opinion for the need to close hotels and motels.

Now, I think we can all agree that a lot has changed in our country since last week. Dr. Deborah Brix, the White House coronavirus response coordinator, Sunday on CNN, citing 13 different statistical models, painted a grim picture for our country in the coming months. The models predict, among other things, that when the COVID-19 peak hits New York by mid-April, the state may find itself 60,000 to 70,000 hospital beds short of what they’ll need. In fact, as “the peak” spreads across the country in the following weeks and months, many states and counties may find themselves short of hospital beds too.

Brewster County should be working closely with our hospital board, if it isn’t already, addressing our future hospital bed needs, in light of the fact our hospital serves Marathon, Presidio, Marfa, Ft. Davis and the Big Bend, beside us.

That we haven’t had a COVID-19 case in the Tri-County area, as of last week, should be seen as both a blessing and much needed buffer for us to build up our hospital bed capacity and stockpile needed medical protective equipment and respirators.

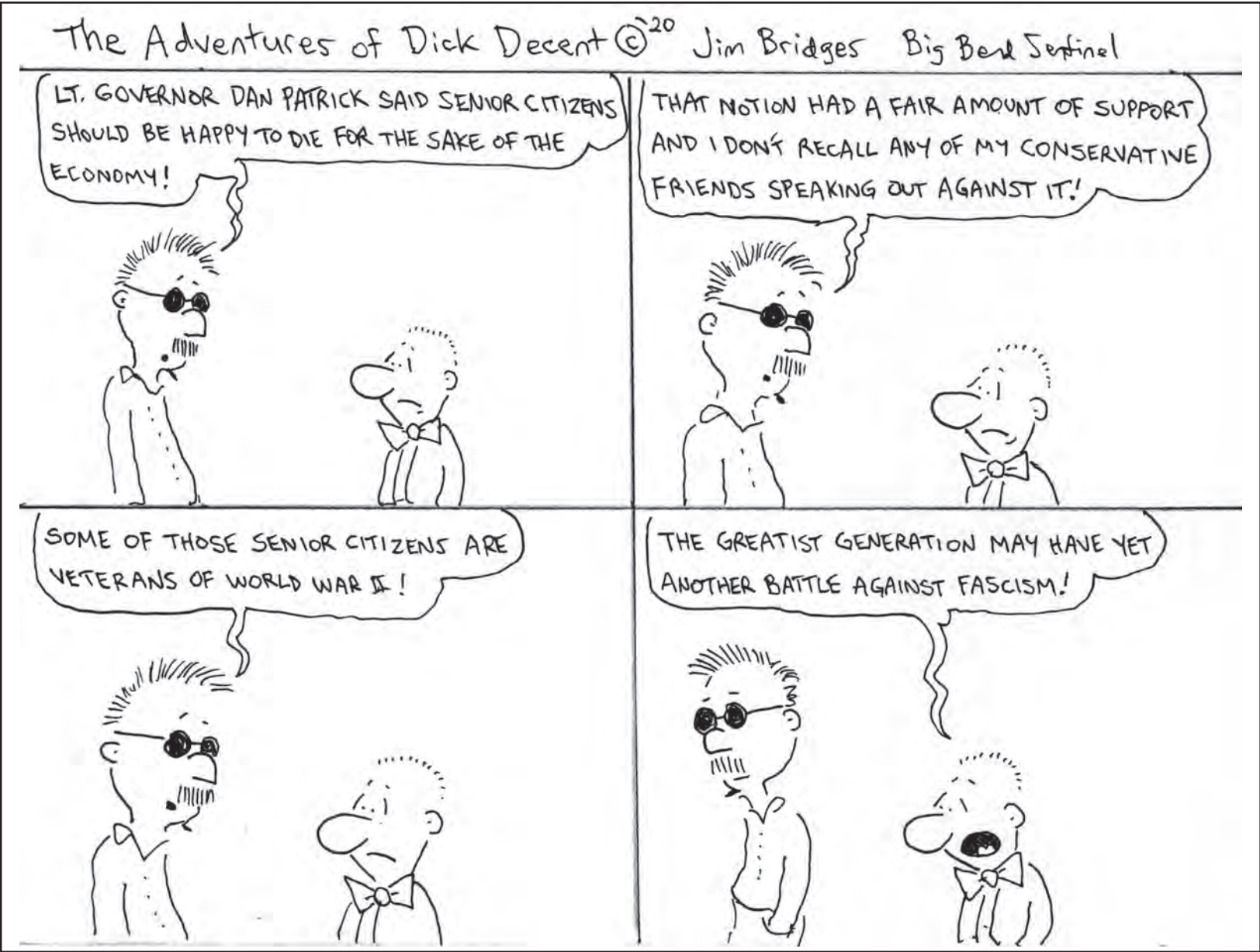
Consider that as of March 11th, 1,301 Americans were infected and 38 dead. Yesterday, March 30th, 155,141 Americans were infected and 3,141 dead. And today, March 31st, 180,000 are infected and our country exceeded 700 deaths from COVID-19 in one day.

I feel for every business that has had to close during this lockdown. My family business is closed and, like everyone else, I look forward to reopening as soon as possible. I miss my patrons but, this is not a matter of business. As President Trump has said, “... It’s a matter of life and death.”

We’re facing something that has painted a target on all our backs. We must work together, sacrificing now so that we may all live our lives in the future.

I believe history will prove our county judge and commissioners court’s decision to close those businesses was necessary, albeit painful, in face of the threat to us all.

Sincerely,
Amit Rangra
Alpine



URANUS IS AFOOT

Capricorn Stellium: Redux

By JACK COPELAND

In January’s column (1/9/20), we made acquaintance with the 2020 Capricorn Stellium — that rare concoction of three outer planets (Jupiter/Saturn/Pluto) all conjoining in a single zodiac sign (Capricorn) in a single calendar year (2020). We focused first on the dominant transit of this fateful celestial stew: Saturn conjunct Pluto. So what’s happened since? No bueno. It ushered in the new year with Australian wildfires, U.S. impeachment proceedings, swapping murder for missiles with Iran and a nasty global pandemic. Not to mention the swift erosion of more than three million jobs and at least three trillion buckeroos in stock market capitalization (as of this writing).

Saturn symbolizes fear, worry and a sense of loss. These emotions double down in the sign of Capricorn, which is ruled by the planet Saturn. The best way to endure this intense transit is a head down, chop wood/carry water approach. Granted, social distancing and sheltering in place are not much fun. But the silver lining is that by working with this saturnine energy, we can be more successful sooner at overcoming our problems.

Come April 4 (and again on June 30 and November 12), Jupiter applies its conjunction to Pluto to begin the second of the three major outer planet alignments of the 2020 Capricorn Stellium. This transit, whose terrestrial effects are already well underway, amps up the drama that the Saturn-Pluto conjunction initiated. Jupiter thinks big, and it’s no accident that the Federal Reserve and Congress needed to be all in with respect to the monetary and fiscal fixes directed at our current crises. And it’s not just the government that’s thinking big — individuals, corporations and nonprofits are also stepping up with generous donations of time and money. A new local website, www.marfastepsup.org, is doing just that.

Little rocky Pluto likes to pop big gassy Jupiterian bubbles, which reflects the wild, irrational market fluctuations we’ve encountered. Financial astrologer Ray Merriman notes that, historically, when Pluto transits between 22 - 27 degrees in a cardinal sign (Capricorn is a cardinal sign), the U.S. has experienced some of its greatest depressions and market crashes. These transits coincided with the severe depression in the early 1840s (in the aftermath of President Andrew Jackson’s termination of the U.S Central Bank), and again in the 1930s during the Great Depression. Let’s not kid ourselves — Pluto is plenty dark. It is 3.67 billion miles from the sun. This ancient Roman god of death rules the underworld; its favorite movie is *Monty Python and The Holy Grail* — minus the humor. So yes, we are currently having a worldwide “bring out your dead” moment. You get the picture.

But that’s not the *whole* picture. After all, what kind of self-respecting astromancer would I be if I didn’t offer you the flip side? Evolutionary astrologer Maurice Fernandez reminds us

that Jupiter-Pluto cycles reflect a remarkable ability to transform difficulty into opportunity, both individually and collectively. Pluto symbolizes death. But it also represents rebirth, transformation and empowerment. We eventually come through these crises stronger and smarter, but not before enduring great pain.

There are two astrological principles in play that give us a glimmer of hope. First, when a planet moves into a new zodiac sign, known as an *ingress*, the study of geocosmics suggests that there is a corresponding change in human activity and perspective. This effect is more pronounced when the ingress involves an outer planet. Saturn in Capricorn, representing contraction (as in the economy), just *ingressed* into the sign of Aquarius on March 21. It will remain there until July 1, before retrograding back into Capricorn. Aquarius is ruled by Uranus and symbolizes scientific breakthroughs. This change of alignment strongly supports the discovery of successful treatments for, and prevention of, COVID-19 infection. We won’t be out of the woods just yet, but the climate of fear and hysteria will subside and allow the country to gradually get back to work.

The second principle that may signal a shift in the global psyche has to do with the concept of planetary conjunctions. A conjunction is when two planets appear close together, as viewed from Earth, in their orbit around the sun. Conjunctions represent both the end of and the beginning of cycles. As two planets get closer to one another, they are in what is known as the *balsamic*, or ending phase of the current cycle. Sounds appetizing, but we’re not talking vinaigrette here. Like any good Hollywood script writer knows, the ending is the most difficult and challenging part of any [cycle] story. As the planets separate, they move into the first stage of a new cycle, and initiate a new trend and perspective in human activity and understanding. After April 4th, Jupiter and Pluto will begin a little social distancing of their own, giving rise to some cautious optimism.

That said, we’re still up to our necks in this powerful 2020 Capricorn Stellium. There’s a reason that the January column concluded with a quote from Woody Allen quoting Groucho Marx: “I’d like to leave you with something positive. I can’t. Would you settle for two negatives?” But do hang in there. 2020 concludes with Jupiter conjunct Saturn on December 21, the winter solstice, after both planets leave Capricorn and ingress into Aquarius. As the fabulous Marilyn McCoo and the Fifth Dimension proclaim, this is the dawning of the Age of Aquarius.

Jack Copeland is a retired busboy radiologist and Judd Foundation tour guide.

Sources for this column include: (1) “The Powerful Astrological Cycles of 2020” by Maurice Fernandez (article published in the Dec 2015 edition of *The Mountain Astrologer*; see also his website <https://mauricefernandez.com>) (2) *Forecast 2020* by Raymond Merriman.



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PATRIOTIC MILLIONAIRES

Renters need a bailout too

By FRANKLIN ARTHUR

As the COVID-19 crisis escalates, numerous states are moving to close public gathering spaces and businesses in order to limit the outbreak, and many hourly and low-wage Americans are suddenly stuck wondering how they will pay their rent. This disaster has widened the existing gaps in our society, and is already letting those who were struggling fall through the cracks — and there is a clear gap between those who will come out of this crisis with scratches and those who will be maimed.

With the pandemic unlikely to end in the next few weeks, the millions of Americans who are currently unemployed due to the crisis are going to be without any income for the foreseeable future. Right now we need leadership that considers them, not just stock owners. Renters are also particularly vulnerable during this time as unemployment skyrockets. Even the most cynical person should agree that the last thing anyone should have to worry about during a health crisis is whether or not they’re going to be kicked out of their home.

Before this crisis started, many of those who are currently unemployed were already falling behind in an economy that favors tax cuts for wealthy individuals and corporations over raising depressed wages and funding safety net programs. Previously, upwards of 40% of Americans couldn’t afford a \$400 emergency expense, and 40% of Americans were one missed paycheck away from becoming homeless.

Now, due to factors completely out of their control, many of these people face months without any guaranteed income and debt on a couple months of rent and utilities. It is really unclear how much and how quickly the stimulus bill will help those in this kind of urgent need.

Further, the economic fallout of this pandemic will not be wrapped up in the weeks after it ends. It’s very likely that when workers are able to return to the job market, we will be in the midst of a recession, or worse. That’s why we need forward-thinking policy, targeted to our most vulnerable citizens, right now.

While there are numerous moratoriums currently being issued by states and cities across the nation, none of them freeze payments completely. They generally only delay evictions for coronavirus related financial problems, allowing tenants and homeowners to pay back their outstanding fees over the course of six months after the crisis ends. But with 4 in 5 Americans currently working paycheck-to-paycheck, it’s unlikely that many will be able to find work after things settle down, let alone pay back the debt that they’ve taken on through no fault of their own.

We are all going to hurt, but it’s those who work for a living that are going to suffer the most. Wealthy individuals like myself will be fine during this crisis. Of course money cannot shield me from the virus, but I have the ability to work from home to reduce my risk of receiving the disease while still receiving a paycheck. My finances will take a large hit, but I won’t have to worry about being evicted or not making my mortgage payments.

I’m glad that our states and localities are working to find solutions in these uncertain times, but, for these at-risk groups who will be devastated by this, it’s simply not enough. We are the richest nation in the world and we can do so much more if we have the will to do so.

In the immediate moment, we need to issue an indefinite, nationwide moratorium on evictions, mortgage payments, utilities, and foreclosures. Without it, I fear that many Americans will continue to live in turmoil long after we solve the current health crisis.

But it is also my sincere hope that one positive of this crisis will be a focus on the truly unnecessary inequities in our society, and serve to require changes in livable wages, reasonable health care, homelessness and meaningful unemployment insurance. We need to rethink the system that brought us here in the first place. It’s time our national government started protecting the millions of Americans who work for a living, rather than the select few who base their income off the market.

This is way past time for change.

Frank Arthur is a Navy veteran and worked in the U.S. Justice Department. He currently is a real estate developer in California specializing in transit-oriented development and affordable housing. He recently joined as a member of the Patriotic Millionaires. Proud “traitors to their class,” members of the Patriotic Millionaires are high-net worth Americans, business leaders, and investors who are united in their concern about the destabilizing concentration of wealth and power in America.

Got something to say?
Write a letter to the Editor at
editor@bigbendsentinel.com



MARFA MEANDERTHAL

Shelter-in-place perks

By ELLEN KIMBLE

So here we are, all sheltered — or is it just trapped at home? Either way, you can look at the problems it presents or at some of the benefits such a situation offers. Who is going to care (or even know) if you just decide to wear your pajamas all day? Maybe you’ll decide not to shave for a week; who is going to complain (besides your wife)? And ladies, will it make any real big difference if you decide to let your face have a vacation from makeup? After all, nobody’s likely to drop by to visit. You feel like sleeping in an extra hour? Want to eat a meal at three in the afternoon — or morning? This is your chance. Now you have time to spoil yourself a little. And to spoil your mate. And have a little family home fun!

Kids, this is your golden opportunity! Want a little chuckle? How about this: your parents have been grounded! No going out to play, no partying with friends, no just hanging out in the park or at DQ or somewhere; just staying at home for days with nobody but family! Haven’t you at least once wished it upon them? They’re not sick, and they’re stuck at home! Believe me, they are getting just as bored as you are. So let’s invent some fun for everyone. Mom still has housework and cooking and stuff, and Dad can putter about in the yard or garage, and you still have your schoolwork. Maybe you could experiment with some trading. Can you cook? It might be time to learn. Let Dad do some dishes and make the beds for a couple of days. Mom could read your lesson in math or history and then explain it to you. (But you’d better read it yourself, too, just to make sure she got it right.) Does anybody in your family play dominoes? It’s a neat game, and it does wonders for math skills. Get them to play with you! And then surprise them with a few unexpected favors; their gratitude can be sooo useful and so much fun.

As for the frustrations that are bound to arise from this enforced lifestyle modification, my advice is, “Write them down.” Then every few days, let everybody read each other’s lists. You’d be surprised how much better it can make you feel. Nobody has to do anything about any of it, just knowing, and knowing that they all know, is enough. Also, don’t just settle for regular, already established games; make up some of your own. Word games are fun. Have you ever had a specific word declared “prohibited” for an entire afternoon? For example, while talking to one another, ban the word “work” until dark. Whatever you do and whatever you say, don’t say “work.” I’d be willing to bet that the first person to say that word will be a parent.

Students may find it difficult to suddenly switch their learning and study routines from classroom to online or home. It can feel scary, I know. I did it, and I found chemistry in particular to be hard. Therefore, I have established an email account just to give help to anyone who needs it. Just send your questions to Ellen at learnmezr@gmail.com. I will either answer you by email or call you on the telephone, whichever you choose. I’m not too good at math beyond algebra and geometry, however I can consult my tutor who got me through statistics online. But I do understand a lot of other subjects, and I really care about the students of Marfa ISD. Anything discussed will be kept strictly confidential. And you don’t have to be a student; parents are encouraged to contact me with questions regarding homeschooling problems too. I haven’t forgotten the joy and tears of having my own son being out of the classroom but still having to keep up with his studies. If I can do this, anyone can, I promise. And of course there is no charge.

Finally, when it starts to seem like overkill to follow all of these social distancing and isolation-type rules, remember how far it is to a city. In our THREE county area, we have only ONE hospital, with only TWENTY-FIVE beds and TWO ventilators. It takes a couple of hours to be transferred to a major facility. We can’t afford to deal with the problems that New York and Los Angeles are facing. Stay home and stay well!

HIGH DESERT SKETCHES

A Tale of Three Countries

By GEORGE A. COVINGTON

“If anything kills over 10 million people in the next few decades, it’s likely to be a highly infectious virus rather than a war — not missiles but microbes,” Bill Gates of Microsoft said in a well-publicized speech in 2015. Two years later, at an international economic conference in Davos, Switzerland, he said, “It’s pretty surprising how little preparedness there is for it.”

Bill Gates is not one of my favorite people because of his company’s monopolistic tendencies, but his prophecies on preparedness have proven too true. Circumstances have proven that no country was prepared for COVID-19, but some countries were better than others in kicking to action to counter this new virus.

South Korea and the United States confirmed their first victims on January 20, but each country reacted very differently. Within two weeks, South Korea was testing 10,000 citizens a day. The following week, they were testing 15,000 citizens a day. Nationwide on March 17, we had just passed Korea’s first day of testing.

On March 23, the director general of health in France, Jérôme Salomon, announced that France was now completing 9,000 tests per day. He said the country was aiming to reach 10,000 by the end of this week, and reach as many as 29,000 by the end of next week. Compared to the South Koreans, the French look like the tortoise or the hare, but compared to the United states, we haven’t even found a tortoise to put in the race. The French pandemic began in the eastern part of France and is slowly moving toward its west coast. As the French hospitals began to fill in the east, they loaded the COVID-19 patients on high speed trains and moved them to empty beds in the western part of France. Looking at the United States’ speed, if we had to move large segments of our populations, we would still be looking for the horses and mules.



The United States has surpassed the rest of the world in the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19, with 85,762, as of March 27. That came as no surprise to most experts, as it took seven weeks after the first case of the disease was identified in the U.S. for the country to start testing en masse — plenty of time for the SARS-CoV-2 virus to spread, undetected.

Now, 10 weeks after the country’s first case, testing in the U.S. is beginning to ramp up significantly, but not uniformly. As of March 26, 20 states were only up to a testing rate of 1 per 1,000 people, and six states had tested fewer than 1,000 people. That means it’s difficult to know, based on reported numbers alone, how widely the coronavirus is circulating in a given state or community.

While many questions are still unanswered, one fact is clear: we who live in what are called rural areas are going to be in the biggest danger. In the last decade, 168 rural hospitals across the country have closed. Many, if not most, closed because Republicans refused to enact the expansion of Medicaid for the poor. Well before the COVID-19 threat, rural health care’s profitability had collapsed nationwide due to a combination of narrowing Medicare reimbursements, a larger share of patients lacking high-paying private insurance, and the hollowing out of rural America. Texas is one of the mostly southern states that did not expand Medicaid for the poor. And our local hospital has only 25 beds, so start praying or hitchhiking to El Paso.

The management and staff of our two local Porter’s grocery stores should be lauded for their actions to keep the groceries and toilet paper flowing. The checkout clerks have maintained their sense of humor and their air of competency, and I would give each one of them a big hug if it were not an arrest-able offense. I feel it will be even more appropriate if they were paid a living wage, and maybe even a bonus, for being our first line of defense against COVID-19 in the battle to keep the rest of us going.

The Big Bend Sentinel is a weekly newspaper, but it is providing daily updates on the pandemic affecting our region at their website www.bigbendsentinel.com. I also recommend that you tune into Marfa Public Radio KRTS 93.5 FM or KRTP 91.7 FM. Our local National Public Radio station has won more awards for news coverage than any other small station in the country. Their staff and interns are doing a magnificent job of both informing and entertaining us.

George A. Covington has worked in the fields of law, education, journalism and disability rights. He considers himself retired from every one of them with the possible exception of journalism. He is a graduate of the University of Texas schools of Journalism and Law. He moved to West Texas – Alpine - in 1997 after a 20-year career in Washington, D.C. where he once served on the staff of the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives (Democrat) and shortly thereafter served as Special Assistant to the Vice President of the United States (Republican) 1989 to 1993.

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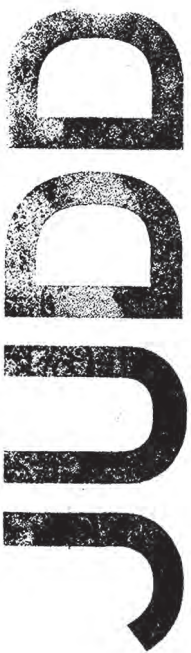
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Community

DRAWING OF THE WEEK



“Egyptian Cat Mask”
Tallulah Anders
Second Grade
The Marfa Studio of Arts at Marfa Elementary School



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.

Please contact
marfa@juddfoundation.org
for more information.

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



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.

CHINATI CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

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 until further notice. 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 Visitor Services Manager, Abby Boyd, at 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 look forward to welcoming you to Chinati in the future.

Please check www.chinati.org for further updates.



Observing native plants around Marfa

By JIM FISSEL, MARY LOU SAXON,
MARTHA HUGHES and JIM MARTINEZ
Photography by MARY LOU SAXON

MARFA — Physical distancing in this beautiful spring weather can provide an opportunity to enjoy and celebrate many of the incredible native plants in our surroundings. The Chihuahuan Desert has over 3,500 unique

species of native plants, the largest diversity of any desert in the Western Hemisphere. Sometimes we miss the beauty of what comes naturally in our own environment, but now is an opportunity to take notice.

So here a few plants to start looking for while walking outdoors. Some are just beginning to sprout in this warmer weather. You can also get more information and photos of these plants on Instagram @marfagarden, which is being updated every week as new plants are growing and blooming.



Woolly paperflower (*Psilostrophe tagetina*) – Found along the shoulders of many dirt roads in town and throughout the ranch land surrounding town, this member of the sunflower family dots the desert with bright yellow masses that stand out against the dried grasses. Right now you will see the plant as a small three to four-inch floret of fuzzy leaves, maybe with a bundle of dried stalks from last year’s blooms. The narrow fuzzy leaves reach upward from a little twist at the base. If you see this floret in your yard or garden now, consider leaving it because it will grow into a large (12 to 18-inch) yellow bouquet that will bloom continuously all summer and into the fall.



Davis Mountain mock vervain (*Glandularia bipinnatifida*) – These purple clusters of blooms are appearing everywhere in Marfa right now. It looks like a groundcover of deep green foliage with multiple clusters of vivid purple flowers. Extremely drought tolerant, it is common throughout the landscape of the Chihuahuan Desert. Most likely you will see volunteers of this plant throughout your yard, alleys or dirt roads. It survives with the natural rainfall of the area, but if you give it a little extra water it continues to grow much larger and flower all through spring and then again in the fall.



Stemmy four-nerve daisy (*Tetraneuris scaposa* var. *scaposa*) – These clusters of tall slender stalks are topped with yellow flowers and are appearing everywhere in the area. They have been blooming throughout winter in warmer sunny locations, but now are sending up new blooms everywhere. The leaves of the plants grow close to the ground and the stalks can extend up to 12 inches above the leaves. There are several yellow flowering plants appearing along the roadsides, but this one is unique because of its tall skinny stems. And if you look closely at the back of the yellow flower you will see the four nerves that appear between the three lobes of each petal.

These are just a few plants you can look for on your walks. You can also get more information about 65 plants and how they could be used in your garden in the book, *Marfa Garden, The Wonders of Dry Desert Plants*. The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center website is another great resource for more information on native plants at www.wildflower.org. And if you are

considering creating a native plant garden, search online for “USDA NRCS Soils” and you can find volumes of information about the soils in your neighborhood. Start with understanding your yard’s soils and nutrients before preparing your garden.

MARFA ISD BREAKFAST INFO DURING CLOSURE	9:00 am - 9:20 am	9:20 am - 9:40 am	9:40 am - 10:00 am
Marfa ISD provides free breakfast and lunch for all children 18 years and younger. Students must be present to be provided their meals. <i>Please be on the look at for a Marfa vehicle for deliveries at the following locations and times:</i>	Mando's Restaurant Parking lot or Apartments on Spring and Columbia	Porter's Field or USDA on Ave D <i>Robertson Cafeteria will be open for drive-by pick up from 9:00-10:00</i>	Blackwell Playground or Marfa Villa <i>presented by</i> PORTER'S SINCE 1945

Presented by

FOOD SHARK

Weekly SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

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

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 Uncategor- ized (Abbr.)
- 5 Web address
- 8 Portent
- 12 Maleficence
- 13 Menagerie
- 14 Scruff
- 15 Reading material
- 17 Matures
- 18 World- weariness
- 19 Salty solu- tions
- 21 Fix, in a way
- 24 Raw rock
- 25 Knighted woman
- 28 Nuisance
- 30 Kennedy or Koppel

- 33 Carte lead-in abbr.
- 34 Newton or Stern
- 35 Anger
- 36 Gasoline stat
- 37 Dilbert's workplace
- 38 Check bar codes
- 39 Born
- 41 Fourth dimen- sion
- 43 Marketplaces of old
- 46 Got up
- 50 Story
- 51 Belgian surre- alist Rene
- 54 Ear-related
- 55 Individual

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	11
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43	44				45			46		47	48	49
50					51	52	53					
54					55				56			
57					58				59			

- 56 List-ending abbr.
- 57 — moss
- 58 Workout venue
- 59 Sources for sauces
- DOWN
- 1 Viral Internet phenom
- 2 Terrible guy?
- 3 Autograph of old
- 4 Contract sec- tion
- 5 Submachine gun
- 6 Reagan or Howard
- 7 Leopold's

- co-defendant
- 8 Broadcasting
- 9 Attractive
- 10 Duel tool
- 11 Loch — Monster
- 16 Speed along
- 20 Campus mil. org.
- 22 Church sec- tion
- 23 Leavening agent
- 25 Water barrier
- 26 Jungfrau, for one
- 27 Mississippi bloom
- 29 Munro pseud- onym
- 31 Historic peri- od
- 32 Hideaway
- 34 Concept
- 38 Episodic TV show
- 40 Put up
- 42 Scratch
- 43 On
- 44 Fence open- ing
- 45 Urban pall
- 47 Maestro
- 48 Go no farther
- 49 Congers, e.g.
- 52 Whatever number
- 53 Jewel

Puzzle solutions for last week's issue

— Weekly SUDOKU —
Answer

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

— King Crossword —
Answers

S	I	B	I	S	A	P	T	D	A	S	H
M	A	D	E	L	E	A	I	N	C	A	
P	H	O	N	E	T	A	G	S	T	A	R
				T	W	O		A	N	O	I
A	W	A	R	E	B	L	E	W			
C	A	G	Y	B	R	O	W	N	B	A	G
E	D	O	S	A	I	N	T	A	L	E	
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Chinati Foundation launches “Making Together”



Photos courtesy of Chinati Foundation

Examples of “Making Together” projects found on [instagram.com/chinatieducation](https://www.instagram.com/chinatieducation)

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

MARFA — While the Chinati Foundation remains closed to the public due to orders from the City of Marfa and Presidio County over the coronavirus, the art institution’s education department is stepping up to help adults and children alike get through the self-isolating going on locally and across the country.

“Making Together” is a new, online education program that brings longform projects and daily art-making prompts to people in Marfa, the Big Bend and beyond. Each project is designed so that it can be made with materials already found at home. The foundation is utilizing Instagram to share the prompts each day and can be found at the handle [@chinatieducation](https://www.instagram.com/chinatieducation). Lesson plans and videos will be posted daily.

“If you are a student, your school is most likely closed right now and maybe you are missing your friends and instructors. If you are a parent or a caregiver you might

be searching for ways to keep your child engaged and learning. Perhaps you are a teacher, seeking online learning tools for your classroom,” the account’s inaugural post reads.

The education department hopes users will share their creations on Instagram, and the account plans to repost photos of completed projects as they go. “We encourage your families, friends, children, and students to join us on this adventure,” wrote Education Director Michael Roch.

On Wednesday, the first longform project — Monuments! — was posted. According to Roch, “The longform projects will take our online visitors on a virtual tour of a specific work at Chinati and follow with an art making project.” Through longform and daily projects, Chinati is hoping to bring a little connection in a socially distanced world. “We believe that making and sharing art together will help us to feel connected,” the Instagram post reads. “Art allows us to play, to explore, to experiment and to look at the world in a new way. Art can change the way we think.”

OBITUARIES



Beesinger

Husband, dad, granddad and friend, **Richard Leon Beesinger**, completed his earthly journey on March 22, 2020. He is survived by his wife Loeva Beesinger and his two children: Rick Beesinger and his wife Jana of Silverton, TX, and Rhonda Jones and her husband Kevin of Whitesboro, TX. He had 10 grandchildren: Skyler Beesinger and his wife Allison, Haley Hyden and her husband Curt, Amber Snook and her husband Patrick, Joel Jones and his wife Katie, Audrey Binion, Jeremy Binion, Hannah Jones, Hope Jones, Mary Faith Jones and

Selena Jones. He also had five great-grandchildren: Liam Beesinger, Daniel Beesinger, Hailey Jones, Amelia Jones and Cameron Jones. He is also survived by three siblings: Carol Beesinger, Thelia Jeffreys and her husband David, and Travis Beesinger. He was preceded in death by his parents, Dick and Oleta Beesinger, and siblings Barbara Jo Beesinger, Jackie Watson and Darlyn Easterling.

Leon never met a stranger. Everywhere he went he had friends. If you knew him you loved him! He was born in the Panhandle of Texas and later moved to El Paso. The first time he retired, he moved to Alpine, TX and built his home on the Double Diamond Ranch overlooking the hills that he loved! He faithfully served his God, his family, his friends and his country. Leon was a hard worker and did everything as if he was working for the Lord — because he was! Once his house in Alpine was established, he built a business of which he was the owner and operator, Big Bend Paper Company. This was certainly his livelihood! He could be seen

making calls on customers up to a 100-mile radius of Alpine. In 2019, he retired for the second time and sold his business. This gave him the opportunity to immerse himself into his favorite hobby — stamp collecting! If you ever came to visit, he would proudly show you his collection and tell a story about each stamp.

He will be greatly missed by all who knew him. He was an amazing husband, a loving dad, an encouraging granddad, and a supportive friend.

Graveside service was held at Elm Grove Cemetery on Saturday, March 28, 2020 at 10 a.m. with Pastor Clark Nussbaum.

Those serving as honorary pallbearers were Kevin Jones, Jeremy Binion, Curt Hyden, Skyler Beesinger, Patrick Snook and Joe Esparza.

Online condolences may be left at www.alpinememorialfuneralhome.com.

Services have been entrusted to Alpine Memorial Funeral Home.



Melendez

Caesar Melendez passed away on February 29, 2020, at the Scenic Mountain Medical Center in Big Springs, Texas.

Caesar was born on December 16, 1971 in Alpine and grew up in Marfa. He received his education at St. Mary’s Catholic Church until the eighth grade and then attended Marfa High School. He served in the U.S. Navy for four years.

He got his first job as a Presidio County sheriff’s deputy in 1997 in

Presidio and worked in different law enforcement positions until 2017. He was also the City of Marfa Code Enforcement officer.

He is survived by his wife, Debbie Melendez of Marfa, and his three daughters, Mercedes Melendez, Chailyn Melendez and Katana Melendez of Marfa, and his brother, Charles Melendez of San Angelo.

His services were at 10 a.m. on March 14 at St. Mary’s Catholic Church in Marfa.



Ornelas

Mariano Ornelas, 72, of Marfa, Texas, a great husband, father, grandfather, cowboy and friend, closed his eyes to his final sunset and opened them to his eternal reward in heaven on February 29, 2020 at Big Bend Medical Center in Alpine, Texas with his beloved family by his side.

Praying of the Most Holy Rosary was held on Thursday, March 5, 2020, and Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Friday, March 6, 2020 with Fr. Beto Lopez serving as celebrant. Burial followed at St. Joseph’s Cemetery in Fort Davis, Texas.

Mr. Ornelas was born on April 18, 1947 in San Antonio del Bravo, Mexico, to Gonzalo Ornelas and Crispina (Martinez) Ornelas. He married his beloved Irma Ornelas and they had four wonderful sons.

Mr. Ornelas was a ranch hand by trade and worked for many ranches in Texas and New Mexico. He was a loyal and hardworking man. He always taught his family right from wrong and to work hard for what they wanted in life.

He enjoyed spending time with his family, working cattle, riding horses and being in the great

outdoors. He will be missed for love of family, friends and his work ethic.

Surviving Mr. Ornelas is his wife Irma Fabiola Ornelas of Marfa, Texas; sons Gerardo Ornelas, Mariano Ornelas, Jr., Federico Ornelas and Eusebio Ornelas; his sisters Esperanza Lopez, Elena Ornelas, Lucia Carrasco and Juana Sanchez; and his brothers Domingo Ornelas, Tito Ornelas, Gonzalo Ornelas and Jesus Ornelas. He also leaves behind 18 grandchildren, three great-grandchildren and several nieces and nephews.

Online condolences as well as signing the register book may be done at: www.alpinememorialfuneralhome.com.

Alpine Memorial Funeral Home was entrusted with his services.



MARFA EDUCATION FOUNDATION

The Marfa Education Foundation would like to sincerely thank all of our supporters -- the numerous foundations, businesses, and individuals who have supported our efforts in the 2019-20 school year. Thanks to you, we have met our goal for this year -- \$151,000 which goes toward our mission of supporting and enhancing the work of the Marfa ISD, facilitating enrichment projects, and augmenting the education of the district’s students. Our revamped website shows all of the programs we have been able to support this year: marfaeducationfoundation.org.

Furthermore, Marfa Education Foundation is here to support the school — ALL students (pre-school, elementary, middle school and high school students), administrators, teachers and staff -- during this difficult time. We are standing by for any additional needs that may arise as the school navigates the continuing education of our students during this public health crisis. Also big thanks to Superintendent Oscar Aguero, who helps us determine how to fulfill the school’s most urgent needs.

We truly couldn’t do it without our generous supporters.
We salute you – from a safe distance!

Gratefully,
The Marfa Education Foundation Board
Jenny Moore
Susan Kirr
Marilyn Sanders
Scott May
Katie Price Fowlkes
Vince Fuentez
Annette Mendoza

MARFA AA and AL-ANON MEETINGS

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

NOON-1PM: Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday
6PM-7PM: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday
2PM-3PM (AL-ANON): Sunday

REMEMBER:
There are online meetings at intherooms.com
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Classifieds & public notices

Locals keep busy as stay-at-home order sets in

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

MARFA — During a usually busy season for Marfa, locals are coming up with new ways to stay productive as layoffs, closures and county orders keep them out of work and stuck at home to prevent the arrival or spread of coronavirus. Some have come up with ways to contribute to public health, some are digging into hobbies, and others are suddenly thrust into the roles of round-the-clock childcare provider and educator.

Clara Williams had to put her Workshops Marfa program on hold when the local governments advised social distancing. Her hands-on workshops that teach various crafts and endeavors happen in close quarters usually. Unable to work, Williams says, “It seemed much more productive to actually try to focus on helping others than to spend time on other projects for myself.”



Photo by Clara Williams

Clara Williams is producing face masks for healthcare providers and vulnerable individuals as the country rapidly approaches a shortage of personal protective equipment.

Almost two weeks ago, she began sewing face masks to send to healthcare workers in New Orleans and Odessa and to high-risk individuals. Williams designed her own simple pattern, which is now being used by Nurse for Nurses. The masks have a pocket for workers to insert additional filtration if desired. “Ideally, these masks would not be needed. Ideally everybody would have as many N95 masks as they would want, but that’s not the case,” Williams says. She’s seen some flack from commenters as she’s shared her project online. “At various times people have posted, or I’ve seen different studies about

how cloth masks are not as good as N95s, and everyone knows that. But they are still so much better than not having a mask.”

She adds, “This is not an ideal world we’re living in right now.” On Tuesday night, she was making masks for a local woman’s sister who is a nurse in Odessa. In the mutual aid groups she is a part of, hospitals are providing their preferred mask styles and making requests for what they need.

Marfans have donated fabric, and Williams is able to produce six to eight masks per large t-shirt. Williams said she was happy to coach others interested in making masks, saying they could contact her at clarawilliamshq@gmail.com.

At Cactus Liquors, Faith Gay is able to stay open since her business is deemed essential. When coronavirus concerns began and hand sanitizer shortages became prevalent, Gay sprung into action – with 151 proof rum. Done properly, the rum can be turned into a hand sanitizer that meets the over 70% alcohol guidelines recommended by the CDC. But as more studies came out, she shifted her advice on how to make homemade hand sanitizer with the high proof alcohol, instead suggesting buyers use it without dilution.

“What I’m doing is I’m using it straight in squirt bottles to sanitize and that works perfectly well,” Gay says. “I got a squirt bottle from the dollar store and I spray off my [point of sales] screens, keypads, telephone, my cell phone, my hands, surfaces that are metal or plastic and any bottle [of alcohol] I sell.”

Customers can order the 151 proof rum, which the liquor store is offering at cost for \$10 a liter, either by phone or at the liquor store’s drive through window.

The rum is technically drinkable as well, though Gay says she wouldn’t “unless you’re going to a frat party.” However, aside from the sanitizing, “You can make some really nice essential oils or fragrances with it,” she says.

Other locals are digging into activities that might fall by the wayside during the normal workday. Marfa Public Radio employee Lisa Kettyle says that her new work-from-home situation is ideal for tending to baby chicks. Kettyle bought 30 chicks on the internet after collecting orders for residents all over town. Days later, the *New York Times* published a story about a national shortage of chicks due to a high volume of orders during the pandemic.



Photo by Faith Gay

Cactus Liquors is selling high proof rum at-cost that can be used as a cleaner.

“Everywhere in the tri-county area was sold out of chicks. I tried to order online, but there were order minimums. That’s when I put out the call for chicks,” she recounts.

As the chicks are in the mail, her partner Phoenix Navidson got busy turning an old shed into what they call a “chicken mansion,” adding ventilation windows, nesting boxes, reinforced flooring and a new place to roost.

“Hopefully by the time they’re old enough to be in the coop I can be back at work,” Kettyle says. Musing about why so many are getting chicks in these strange times, Kettyle says, “I wonder if some people have end-times fear of having to provide for themselves or are wanting companionship.” Locally though, she says, “It’s really fun watching everyone getting their coops ready, and it’s fun to have camaraderie around chickens.”

Rowdy and Becky Dugan, like many others in town, have had their kids at home ever since Marfa ISD closed its doors. The parents have set up schedules to structure their day, breaking up school work sessions with fun activities and kids’ yoga lessons.

“For us, we are really trying to use this time to work with our children and enjoy them as they learn,” Rowdy Dugan says of their new routine. “Although challenging at times, we are happy to be able to be with our children and guide them and us through these unpredictable times.”

As Marfa residents adjust to a new normal with no definite end in sight, locals are looking to help others, expand their horizons and learn to live in new ways. Share your quarantine stories and photos with us at editor@bigbendsentinel.com.

Filling out the 2020 Census could help bring COVID-19 relief funds

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

Far West Texas — The United States Census comes once every 10 years — and this time, it’s during a global pandemic. As the U.S. Census Bureau rapidly adjusts its strategy to get residents to fill out the census, local organizations are emphasizing how getting counted could affect funding for COVID-19 relief.

The Rio Grande Council of Governments is urging Far West Texans to get counted, saying, “Counties and municipalities will need federal resources to recover from COVID-19 aftermath, and since funding is based on population, an accurate census count is essential.”

The pandemic has shuttered businesses and forced area residents to practice “social distancing,” staying six feet apart, or being altogether ordered to stay at home. But traditionally, census outreach has involved workers going door-to-door to track down residents who haven’t filled out their information.

Many of those census outreach events are now postponed for residents’ health and safety, and with no clear end in sight, it is uncertain when census workers can begin their gatherings or door-to-door visits.



PUBLIC NOTICE

Application has been made with the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission for a BG Wine and Beer Retailer’s Permit by Stars AFS, LLC dba Para Llevar to be located at 113 South Dean Street, Marfa, Presidio County, Texas 79843. Jacqueline Northcut, owner/member and Seth Siegel-Gardner, manager.

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