

IN BRIEF

Property taxes head for a ‘very large increase’ this year

PRESIDIO COUNTY — The State Comptroller Property Value Study continues to be a problem for the Presidio County Appraisal District and the citizens of Marfa. Results of the 2019 value study were recently released showing that Marfa ISD failed the study again. This issue continues to be a contentious one, with local taxpayers continuing to express outrage at the high values, while local sales indicate that the appraisal district is still not up to the required values of law. State law requires the standard of “market value,” and each school district in Texas must appraise within five percent of that calculated number or the local school loses state funding. Because Marfa is considered a “rich district” due to high home values, Marfa actually pays recapture amounts back to the Texas Education Agency.

Richard Petree, a consultant hired by the board to try to fix the problems of the district five years ago, is proposing a very large increase for 2020 to meet the market value standard. The average home value is increasing 58 percent, and small tracts of land and town lots are increasing almost 50 percent due to the sales data that was discovered by the state. The only positive part of this news is that homesteads in Marfa are protected from any increase greater than 10 percent, so those taxes will only rise that amount. Over 65 homesteads are “capped” for school taxes, protecting them from any increase.

Of the \$83 million increase, almost \$43 million is protected from taxation by the cap on homesteads. Three-hundred-seventeen homesteads are also protected from any increase because of the freeze on school taxes for the disabled and elderly.

Petree stated, “I know this is going to be really difficult, especially considering that the virus issue may negatively impact values going forward, but we are required to use the assessment date of January 1 as the value date. The disaster provision in the tax code does not allow us to consider how this epidemic will impact value in Marfa according to Attorney General Paxton.”

Presidio ISD will also see an increase in value due to reclassification on most homes and on land values.

Taxpayers who have evidence that their values are not at the level estimated are asked to submit that evidence by email. An employee of the district will call each person who protests to share information about the property. If an agreement on value can be reached, no further action will be necessary. If an agreement is not reached, then the appraisal review board will hear the case later in the spring or early summer. It has not been determined at this point whether or not those meetings will be held in person or remotely.

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Photo by Maisie Crow

Though officials initially said symptoms were required for testing, on Saturday morning local health officials in Marfa encouraged all interested residents to get tested regardless of whether they had symptoms. In effort to reflect the testing experience to readers without infringing on patient privacy, newspaper Editor-in-Chief Maisie Crow took the opportunity to get tested herself — and documented the experience. Even though Crow and others who were tested were promised results within 72 hours at most, no results have been received.

Local coronavirus testing yields smooth operations, modest turnout and still-pending results

By ABBIE PERRAULT
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MARFA — When the governor announced a program of temporary drive-through testing sites across Texas and dispatched 1,200 members of the Texas National Guard to carry out the mission last week, some were glad to see Marfa, Presidio, Alpine and Terlingua included. Local doctors and government officials have often cited the lack of available testing when talking about the zero confirmed cases of coronavirus in the tri-county; it is why they presume there may be undiagnosed cases in the area.

Judge Cinderela Guevara called the local testing a “proactive defense of public health for the entire community” when she announced last weekend’s testing dates. She had heard about it

from the governor’s office late Tuesday night, giving the local counties just over three days to set up and let residents know when, where and how to get tested.

A hotline soon sprung up, and residents were told to call it and provide information about symptoms in order to get an appointment. But as the *Big Bend Gazette* first reported, those on the other end of the line were providing inaccurate information to some, confusing an already rapid roll out.

Judge Guevara was told there would be somewhere around 75 tests at each of the four sites. On Saturday, 64 residents in Marfa were tested and 51 in Alpine. The next day, with fewer hours of testing, 42 were tested in Presidio and 26 in Terlingua.

“This is a good turnout,” Major John Hughes

remarked last Saturday morning outside the USO in Marfa. Their group of guardsmen had been in Van Horn the day before, and from noon to five, they had 18 people turn out. In Marfa, they had already tested 20 residents by 11 a.m. The leftover tests from Van Horn had been brought to Marfa, increasing their total available tests from the 75 tests previously announced.

Though the guardsmen that *The Big Bend Sentinel* spoke to had never performed medical operations, they were glad to be able to contribute and ran their operation tidily. They drove to West Texas from their base in Fort Worth, coming from various roles in aircraft maintenance, piloting, transportation and dental services. “This is totally out of our job description, but we’re

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Officials banned rentals to visitors — but not all complied

By STEPHEN PAULSEN
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TRI-COUNTY — Local orders limiting short-term rentals were meant to keep visitors from flocking to this sparsely-populated region during the coronavirus pandemic. But talk to many in Marfa, and they’ll tell you they’re still seeing new faces in town.

Take Melly Payan, an assistant manager at the Stripes on East San Antonio Street in the heart of Marfa, who says she’s still seeing a steady stream of non-locals coming into the store.

“Actually, there’s been more out of town people,” she says. “It’s crazy.”

Out of curiosity, Payan and her co-workers have started asking new customers where they’re coming from. They get answers from all over the state and country, including Austin and California.

For Payan, an essential worker, the number of visitors has been striking — especially while

many Marfa residents have closed businesses, lost jobs and are sheltering at home.

“I don’t even think they care,” she said of visitors defying local orders and arriving during the coronavirus pandemic. “I don’t think they take it seriously.”

Across the country, bars, restaurants and other service businesses have closed or switched to to-go service to comply with local orders meant to slow the spread of coronavirus. And leaders in the tri-county have gone further than most, imposing rules that ban rentals to most visitors.

In a region that runs on tourism, those rules have caused tensions between public officials and business owners. In Brewster County, the owner of the Gage Hotel in Marathon sued after officials ordered his hotel to temporarily close.

And in Marfa, public officials expanded the rules to also halt the letting of long-term rentals to out-of-towners, after they said hosts were continuing to solicit renters from outside the tri-county.

Testing, unemployment and more: The latest coronavirus stats for Texas and the US

By STEPHEN PAULSEN
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Number of confirmed coronavirus cases in the tri-county: Zero, according to Wednesday figures from the Texas Department of State Health Services.

Number of presumed cases: Nobody knows. Since not all patients meet qualifications for testing, local doctors are now “presuming” that some patients are positive for coronavirus without testing them, as *The Big Bend Sentinel* and Marfa Public Radio previously reported. Ekta Escovar, a member of the local COVID-19 task force and the local health authority for Brewster County, previously told *The Big Bend Sentinel* there is “no way” to determine an accurate count of local presumed-positive

cases, since these numbers depend on the recommendations of individual doctors.

Number of people tested in the tri-county: At least 223. The tri-county got a huge bump in testing figures this weekend after Texas set up temporary testing sites. Sixty-four people were tested at the Marfa facility, as were 42 in Presidio, 51 in Alpine and 26 in Terlingua. At press time, it’s unclear how many of the tests completed this weekend are still pending results.

Testing per capita: With an estimated population of around 18,500 people, the tri-county’s local testing figures mean that about 12 in every 1,000 people have been tested for the coronavirus. Those figures are slightly higher than the state in general, where around 10 in every 1,000 people have been tested, but lower than the United States in general, where around

18 in every 1,000 people have been tested.

Number of unemployment claims in the tri-county area: Since the end of March, around 31,500 people have filed for unemployment in the Borderplex region — which includes Presidio, Brewster, Jeff Davis, Culberson, Hudspeth and El Paso counties — Workforce Solutions Borderplex said in a report this week.

Percentage of unemployed people in the tri-county area: In an expanded report from last week, the group pegged the unemployment rate at 10.2 percent for Presidio County, more than double the average state unemployment rate of 4.7 percent. For comparison, the unemployment rates in Brewster and Jeff Davis counties were 3.9 percent and 4.2 percent, respectively.

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Ready or not, Texas reopens Friday

By ABBIE PERRAULT
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TEXAS — Governor Greg Abbott announced Monday that he would allow his stay-at-home order to expire April 30, introducing a phased reopening plan that begins Friday, May 1.

The reopening plan has called into question the powers of counties and cities to use emergency orders to limit activity during coronavirus. The new mandate also revealed that while the governor said individuals have the “ultimate control” in their choice to continue to stay home or go out, many will risk losing unemployment if they decide not to immediately return to work at reopened businesses.

Notably, the governor said his order supersedes all local orders, putting an end to regulations like those in the City of Presidio that have required residents to wear masks.

In the tri-county, officials have implemented harsher regulations during coronavirus than the state has. Marfa and Presidio County restricted hotels and rentals in emergency orders this April, and now the governments question whether they will be allowed to extend those orders.

When coronavirus concerns began, Texas’ cities and counties took action, ordering residents to stay-at-home in a patchwork of local ordinances, rather than a state mandate. The governor issued a stay-at-home after that, and now, that local power is dissipating as the governor supersedes local control with his order.

Hotels and motels are not explicitly mentioned in the governor’s new orders, something local officials think might still allow them the power to choose to restrict them if needed.

On Tuesday, the governor’s office provided a statement to Presidio County’s attorney, Rod Ponton, saying, “Hotels and motels have been an essential service, which (per the Governor’s Executive Orders) means that local governments cannot restrict them.” The Texas attorney general’s office additionally said that restricting short-term rentals like Airbnbs is a violation of private property rights and that hotels can not be lawfully closed.

In a memorandum to county commissioners, Ponton shared this information and recommended county officials let their local orders expire on April 30.

Commissioner Brenda Bentley disagreed, saying “I feel that allowing the orders to expire would give people the impression that because there are no orders, it’s safe, and they’re free to just go back to life as usual.” She called the move dangerous at this point, and hoped to implement some orders that do not contradict the governor’s, in order to “let people know we’re not out of the woods yet.”

Presidio County Judge Cinderela Guevara said on Tuesday that she no longer sees a reason for the hotel, motel and short-term rental restrictions. “At first we had all this fear and didn’t know about the virus or how to prevent it,” Guevara said. With more information available now, she said people just need to be responsible.

“I don’t know if we can continue to hurt them economically that way,” speaking of the economic hit the local hotel industry has taken during the closure. “I know a lot of people are going to be upset and confused, but I’ll go back to the governor’s orders that if people want to shelter in place and don’t want to go out, they don’t have to.”

As of press time, the county has not formally set a meeting to discuss the expiring orders. The

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Testing

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loving every minute of it,” said Chief Master Sergeant Trey McKinney.

Even with smooth operations from the guard, the hangup was in getting the word out. “We’re getting better at this, we’re streamlining processes,” Hughes said, but, “It’s a small community. People are nervous, people don’t know what it is, people don’t know where to call. It’s a lot of barriers to entry, so we want to knock down those barriers.”

Presidio County Emergency Management Coordinator and Marfa Fire Chief Gary Mitschke and Marfa EMS Director Bert Lagarde were on the sidewalk, soliciting residents to take advantage of the opportunity to be tested. “They were pretty lenient here in Marfa, because anyone who wanted to get tested got tested,” Lagarde said after the event. “The fire chief and myself were standing out there saying, ‘Hey, go get tested.’” Lagarde and Mitschke also encouraged their own emergency response staff to get tested, even without symptoms, due to their regular contact with local residents and the infirm. There were plenty of tests available, and a good number were left over when the drive-through site closed down Saturday evening.

For those who did take the chance, it started with a call: those who wanted to be tested provided personal information and answered a series of questions on the hotline about whether or not they had various symptoms. While the state had said two symptoms should be exhibited, in Marfa, none were required. Callers were then given an appointment, though if the line was empty, there was no need to wait for that appointment time.

“We need you to have an appointment so we can put you in the system,” Major Hughes explained. “If we were rolling heavy through here, that system would work. But our throughput in small towns – we just want whatever’s beneficial for the people,” he said. They

adjusted operations to let callers proceed through even before appointment times.

After calling, the person getting tested pulled into the alley north of the USO. Pressing their Texas ID or driver’s license to the window, an officer read off their details into a walkie talkie. The car windows stayed up, and a guardswoman gestured the patient on to the second station. Another guardsman, in full body personal protective equipment, had the patient crack a window, pushing a COVID-19 pamphlet through. Folded inside was a kleenex and a facemask. The patient being tested was instructed to blow their nose and put on the mask.

At the last station, the patient’s nostrils were swabbed, reaching all the way back to scrape against the tissue between the nose and mouth. “It’s ten seconds out of your entire day, so I promise it’s not bad,” the last guardsman said before administering the test.

The guardsman swiped one swab in the left nostril, then another in the right as the patient tilted their head far back, still seated in their vehicle. That was it. From there, tests were kept in coolers, later whisked away by highway patrol or game wardens who could carry them swiftly to state labs.

The paper the patient received explains, “You have been swabbed for the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). Complete test results are expected 24-48 hours from the time your specimen was taken. In some cases, the wait can be up to 72 hours.”

Lagarde said he attended a Zoom discussion with Dr. Ekta Escovar this week, who said test results might take a little bit longer because of the sheer number of tests arriving at labs.

The EMS director hasn’t received his results as of Wednesday, four days — or over 96 hours — since his test. Neither has his staff, or other patients with whom *The Big Bend Sentinel* spoke.

In addition to the state providing results to individuals, Judge Guevara said she will be immediately notified by the Texas Department of State Health Services if any positive tests come up. Thus far, she has not heard anything.

Rentals

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— a company with ties to a major Dallas-area investor, named Marfa Property Group, LLC.

Headquartered in a house in Fort Worth, Marfa Property Group owns at least two properties in the Marfa area: one in Marfa proper, the other in south Presidio County.

Airbnb listings for both properties have shown bookings in April, when all rentals in the area were ostensibly closed to all except essential workers.

The properties have three reviews from this month. “Great and quiet location,” wrote Gretchen from Austin — adding that the property was perfect for “a last-minute stay.”

The house where Gretchen stayed, near East 1st Street and North Spring Street, is described as a “perfect Marfa retreat” on Airbnb. It’s owned by Marfa Property Group, according to Presidio County property records.

State business records, meanwhile, show the company is headquartered in Fort Worth and is registered by Michael Barnard. And though business registration doesn’t always show who runs a company — businesses can, for example, hire a lawyer to register for them — in this case that name matches Airbnb listings, where the host is named as Michael.

Both the name and photo match up with a prominent investor in the Dallas area — a man *Fort Worth Weekly* described in 2009 as a “wealthy Fort Worth real estate developer who owns property all over town.”

He owns so much property that by 2018 he and another investor owned “a big chunk” of an entire neighborhood in Fort Worth, the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* reported that year.

Barnard did not respond to a request for comment. Using Airbnb profile photos, *The Big Bend Sentinel* was able to link one renter — Gretchen — to other social media accounts.

When reached for comment, Gretchen was apologetic. Although she’d heard about Marfa’s visitor ban, she said she didn’t know the rules were still in effect.

“I had no idea the orders were still in place,” she said. “I wouldn’t have looked into booking anything otherwise.”

Neither Airbnb nor her host told her about the rules, she said. She visited Marfa from April 19 to April 21.

Airbnb says it sent out notices to both hosts and prospective renters in Marfa, warning them their holiday plans could run afoul of local emergency rules.

Reopens

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City of Marfa held a meeting at 6 p.m. Wednesday after press time to discuss actions going forward. They will meet again tonight, Thursday, with details for the digital meeting available on the city’s website.

As for the governor’s phased reopening plan, phase one begins on Friday, May 1. In that phase, the governor emphasizes that vulnerable populations, especially those over age 65, should stay home “if at all possible.”

“All retail stores, restaurants, movie theaters and malls can reopen May 1,” Abbott said of the first phase on Friday. The order also allows museums and libraries to reopen, as long as hands-on exhibits are closed.

“This is permission to open, not a requirement,” Abbott said, suggesting businesses can stay closed on their own convictions. With individuals no longer required to stay at home, Abbott said they still have “ultimate control” over their own safety, adding that those who are concerned “should use that control.” But as businesses reopen, workers will be offered their jobs back, and that comes with consequences.

TWC spokesperson Cisco Gamez confirmed that those who choose to continue to exercise their “ultimate control” and stay home will lose their unemployment if they do not return to their reopened job. “If your business is safe and meeting those guidelines and you do not go back to work, you will not be eligible for unemployment insurance,” Gamez told multiple press outlets.

Texas residents, even those who are older or are immunocompromised, may have to choose between personal health and paying the bills. Without the security of unemployment payments, many will return to work.

For all businesses in phase one, Abbott said, “On the advice of doctors, occupancy is limited to no more than 25 percent.” He called that limitation a proven business strategy, noting that HEB and Home Depot have used it.

But in communities like each of the three tri-counties, the state will potentially allow even more capacity to open in businesses. For counties in Texas with fewer than five cases recorded, 50 percent capacity is permitted at businesses.

Presidio, Brewster and Jeff Davis counties meet that provision, and may submit a form to the state for approval to open at 50 percent capacity. On the subject of the more relaxed rules for counties with fewer than five cases, Abbott said, “If there is an outbreak, it could cause them to revert back to a more limited capacity.”

“We are contacting you because you have an Airbnb listing in Marfa, Texas,” read one message to hosts, which the company shared with *The Big Bend Sentinel*. “We sincerely apologize for the inconvenience, but appreciate your support in ensuring compliance with these regulations as local governments address COVID-19 public health concerns.”

By press time, Airbnb did not provide documentation that it had sent a notice to Barnard or Marfa Property Group specifically. Still, a spokesperson stressed that the message was sent to all local hosts.

When asked what the company was doing about hosts that didn’t comply, the spokesperson said Airbnb preferred working with cities “on a one-on-one basis” to find solutions, as opposed to taking more unilateral measures, including temporarily suspending listings or shutting down rental calendars.

In part, the spokesperson said, that’s because the “patchwork” of local, state and federal rules have made it “harder to generalize” what exactly officials expect of the online rentals company.

In some places, like Quebec and the United Kingdom, Airbnb has “calendar blocked” listings to prevent renters from booking rooms in violation of emergency orders. But in those places, top-down orders have made it “100 percent” clearer what officials expect from the company, the spokesperson said.

In an interview on Monday, Steve Marquez, Marfa police chief, said that while authorities have had to contact some property owners about the emergency rental rules, locals have followed the rules after getting a warning.

So far, “nobody’s taken it to the point where they’ve been repeat offenders,” he said. “We give them a warning, and then we never see them again.”

When *The Big Bend Sentinel* told Marquez about Marfa Property Group, on Monday, he drove over to check out the unit. But he didn’t see any apparent visitors — and Airbnb calendars suggested that no one was renting at that time.

Even before the coronavirus, Marfa had been taking steps to better regulate and tax the city’s many Airbnbs — even going so far as hiring a company last year to help with the process. But in Barnard’s case, his rental appears to have flown under the radar and isn’t on city lists of Airbnbs, Marquez said.

“As far as I know, those are supposed to be apartments,” Marquez said of the property. “Whoever owns it now may not have registered.”

Phase one allows doctors, nurses and dentists to return to regular operations with general advice to social distance and take precautions. It allows essential businesses to continue as they have and also expands infectious disease protocols for senior living communities.

The first phase does not allow for barbershops, hair salons, bars or gyms to reopen, though the governor said he hoped to have those up and running by mid-May.

That will all depend on the success of phase one. If the state sees a bounce in cases after phase one is in effect, that’s not enough by itself. “Just because there may be an increase in the number of people who test positive, that’s not a decisive criteria,” Abbott said. The governor said hospitalization rates and death rates also weigh into the calculation of moving to phase two.

Phase two opens more businesses and is scheduled for May 18, pending any flare up of cases, hospitalizations and deaths that would cause the state to reconsider.

“There’s a reason that not all businesses in Texas can open all at once,” Abbott said. He cited “precautionary tales” like a new growth in cases in certain parts of China and Singapore experiencing a second wave that is bigger than its first.

Defending his decision to reopen at this time, the governor pointed to his recently deployed mobile testing units run by the National Guard, a new contact-tracing effort and an aspirational goal to test 26,000 Texans a day as reasons it is now safer to reopen businesses in the state.

“It’s hard to get rid of this virus because it is so contagious,” Abbott said. “We’re not just going to open up and hope for the best.” He told the press the phases were put in place so “we don’t have to reopen and have to close down” again, and mentioned again that present and future decisions rely on “doctors and data.”

The governor also signed a new executive order Monday that states, “Every person who enters the State of Texas as the final destination through an airport, from a point of origin or point of last departure in the following — State of California; State of Connecticut; State of New York; State of New Jersey; State of Washington; City of Atlanta, Georgia; City of Chicago, Illinois; City of Detroit, Michigan; or City of Miami, Florida — shall be subject to mandatory self-quarantine for a period of 14 days from the time of entry into Texas or the duration of the person’s presence in Texas, whichever is shorter.”

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To weather coronavirus, local restaurants turn to creativity, collaboration

By STEPHEN PAULSEN
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MARFA — Stephen Treviño was worried about El Camino. After starting the casual eatery last year, he had recently moved his kitchen from a building near Dollar General into the back of the Lost Horse Saloon. He knew not having a storefront was a big drawback, but he figured he could rely on a steady stream of drunk and hungry drinkers. And then coronavirus concerns hit the region, prompting emergency orders and disruptions to daily life.

Lost Horse soon temporarily closed to comply with local orders. Treviño tried to keep his restaurant going out of a nondescript door in the back — but sales took a nosedive.

Treviño was standing outside El Camino one day, brainstorming ways to save his business, when an idea hit him: What if he tried making Chinese food?

“It was a spur-of-the-moment ‘Hail Mary’ when orders were at their lowest,” he said.

For Treviño, cooking American-Chinese food wasn’t exactly a new idea. “I grew up with a lot of ginger and soy,” said Treviño, who’s part Filipino on his mother’s side. When the Marfa resident was setting up his restaurant last year, Chinese-American food was “a huge contender for what the prevailing concept would be.” But he decided to go with American diner grub instead.

He’d always loved what he calls “mall Chinese,” that distinctly American cuisine that leans heavily on sweet and fried flavors. And sure enough, Marfa loved it too.

When Treviño did the first Chinese food special last month, he could barely keep up with the orders.

“It was a nice surprise,” he said. “It was really kind of this ‘oasis in the desert’ moment.”

It’s no surprise that restaurants are hurting right now, in Marfa and across the country. As emergency orders have reduced restaurants to takeout-only and worried would-be diners have sheltered at home, tens of thousands of restaurants across the United States have already permanently closed, according to the National Restaurant Association. UBS, an investment bank, has predicted that one in five restaurants could close permanently by the time the coronavirus pandemic is over.

But amidst the pain, there are glimmers of hope, as Marfa restaurants carve out redemption stories in the face of an international health crisis. Long-standing restaurants are finding ways to adapt, whether through online ordering or revamped menus. And with a new collaboration, “A Taste of Normal,” local restaurants and food businesses are working together to serve free meals to struggling community members.

As local restaurateurs have adapted to the coronavirus, not all have gone as far as Treviño in offering whole new genres of food. But almost all of the still-open Marfa eateries are making changes.

Convenience West, the beloved local barbeque joint, has set up an online storefront. Fans might not be able to stop in for a tray of brisket and pickles, but they can place bulk orders of both

online.

Bad Hombres, a popular spot for burgers and beers, has set up an online ordering system after years of resisting the trend to go digital, said owner David Beebe.

The coronavirus “pushed us to make something we should have already had: an online system for orders,” he said. “We didn’t have that. Now we do.”

At Aster, the popular lunch and brunch eatery, owner Sabine Blaese is thinking about pared-down menus and simpler dishes as she navigates a reopening with limited staff.

“The röstis might be a casualty for the time being,” she said. “They require a lot of prep.”

Marfa restaurateurs interviewed for this story agreed that the Marfa service industry runs on tourists. Even with adaptations and outpourings of local support, the business from Marfa residents isn’t always enough to sustain operations.

That was the situation Sabine Blaese found herself in during the start of the coronavirus scare last month. She tried pick-up and delivery for a week or so, but there weren’t enough customers. Aster closed.

Blaese worried about her staff. “I think they’re holding up okay,” she said. “They’re not great. They’re out of work.” She checked in on them, in part to “make sure they’re getting their unemployment checks, which they are.”

Even if she could start hiring workers again, not all would be able to work right now, she said. “We don’t even know when the schools are going to reopen,” she said. “They’re 24/7 parenting.”

Marfa coffee shop Frama and its sister store Plaine in Alpine have switched to an “online ordering system that allows customizable drinks and everything,” said owner Daniel Browning. But as Browning grappled with changes at his own businesses, he also worried about all the other people in Marfa who were hurting and wanted to do something more to help.

“Obviously, any one business makes a powerful statement when they help out,” Browning said. But he was thinking bigger than Frama or Plaine. He wanted local restaurants to “stand arm-in-arm and say, ‘We’re here for you.’”

Browning started talking to friends in the restaurant world about the idea, including Bad Hombres owner David Beebe. Beebe loved the idea and thought it spoke to Marfa’s collaborative ethos.

“It’s cool to have a few restaurants band together and do this thing,” Beebe said. “We’re not in competition.”

Like that, “A Taste of Normal” was born. So far, at least seven local restaurants have joined in: Aster, Bad Hombres, Convenience West, Frama, Para Llevar, Plaine and The Waterstop.

Under the initiative, participating restaurants have agreed to donate \$1,000 in food to locals in need through gift certificates. The Big Bend Coffee Roasters and The Get Go are donating food and money to help offset the costs.

Aster has reopened to serve BLTs and other specials for the initiative. The Get Go is donating fruit to the restaurant, which Aster is turning into pies.

Joe Williams, owner of Big Bend Coffee Roasters, said he contributed \$1,000 to “A Taste of Normal.”

“It was the right thing to do,” he said. “That’s all I’ll say.”

When The Big Bend Sentinel interviewed restaurant owners for this story this past week, Marfa still seemed in a more-or-less indefinite limbo. But the situation changed dramatically on Monday.

In a news conference that day, Governor Greg Abbott said he would let his emergency orders “expire as scheduled” on Thursday night. Businesses like restaurants will be able open at 25 percent capacity, though the rules are even more lax in rural counties with less than five cases — like the tri-county — where businesses can serve up to 50 percent capacity if they file the right paperwork.

Tomorrow, restaurants and bars in the area will have to decide how they will respond to the new rules. In his news conference, Abbott stressed his order was “permission to open — not a requirement.” But the more the tri-county opens back up, the tougher it may seem for some small businesses to stay closed. If no one else is taking precautions, some struggling small business owners might wonder, then why should I?

By Tuesday, restaurateurs in Marfa were reacting to the news — with many saying they would continue to remain closed to dine-in service.

In a follow-up interview, Treviño said Lost Horse would not reopen. El Camino would continue serving to-go orders, he said.

In an Instagram post, Convenience West said it was making the “tuff decision” not to reopen service at its restaurant.

“We can’t wait to have you dine in with us again,” the company wrote. “When that day comes it will be the BEST DAY EVER!”

In the same post, Bad Hombres owner David Beebe said he made the same decision.

“The right call,” he wrote. “Hombres right there with you.”

Sabine Blaese, owner of Aster, likewise said she will not reopen to dining-in service — calling it “way too soon.” But Aster will keep cooking “A Taste of Normal” meals on Saturdays and Sundays, she said.

For Blaese — like restaurateurs across the city and country — keeping her restaurant doors closed for weeks and into the future is a heartbreaking decision.

“We’re strange people,” she said of culinary workers in an interview on Monday, before Abbott’s new rules were announced. “We just want to feed people. If we aren’t allowed to do that, that’s pretty harsh.”

As Blaese changes up her menu and remodels her restaurant, she’s thrilled about reopening Aster’s doors someday. She will be looking to hotels, she said, as a barometer for whether life is normal again. She hopes visitors will start returning by mid-May or so, but “if there’s a stampede of people coming out of the cities, that’s not going to be good, either.” She hopes for a perfect visitor count: not too many and not too few.

Stats

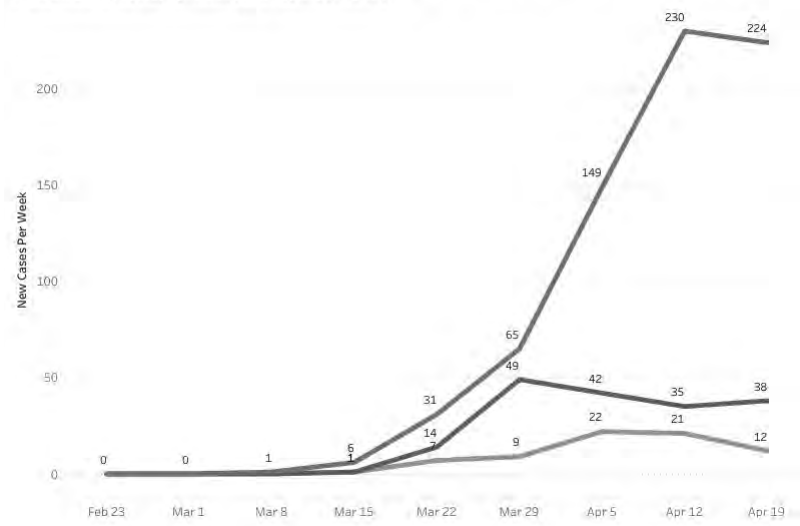
(Continued from page 1)

Local Paycheck Protection Payment (PPP) loans: Marfa National Bank has approved \$1,051,000 in loans, of which around 25 percent (around \$263,000) have already been paid out, bank president Chip Love said on Wednesday. Those numbers represent 22 businesses with around 153 employees, the vast majority of which are in-county, he said.

Case counts in the Far West Texas region: So far, at least seven counties in the region have confirmed coronavirus cases, according to the latest state figures on Wednesday. Those counties are El Paso (with 857 cases), Ector (78), Midland (75), Pecos (9), Winkler (3) and Crane (2). Reeves County also has at least three cases, according to the county’s hospital — though those numbers are not included in state figures, likely because the patients split their time between Reeves County and another place, and were instead counted elsewhere.

How the coronavirus has grown in West Texas: Even with state health authorities releasing new figures every day, it can be hard to conceptualize how coronavirus has grown in the region. Relying on data from Johns Hopkins University, Adrienne Humblet and Marfa City Councilmember Yoseff Ben-Yehuda have created this helpful graph showing counts of new cases in the region beginning April 19 and ending April 26.

West Texas: New Cases Per Week, Grouped by Rural, Medium, and Metro Counties
All data and analysis copyright 2020 Johns Hopkins University.



The top line represents El Paso, while the middle line represents counties in the region with more than 50,000 people (Midland, Ector and Tom Green). The bottom line represents all counties with less than 50,000 people — though all new cases have come from just three counties: Pecos (with three new cases), Dawson (6) and Howard (3). More graphs like this are available at westtexasmap.com.

Case counts for Texas: Seven hundred thirty-two Texans have died of coronavirus, and 27,054 are known to have the virus, according to the latest state figures on Wednesday. In good news, 12,507 Texans have recovered.

Case counts for the United States: Over one million Americans are known to have coronavirus — by far the highest confirmed case-count in the world. Almost 59,000 Americans have died from the virus, and around 116,000 Americans have recovered from it.

Solitaire Homes: We’re paying sheltered workers

By STEPHEN PAULSEN
stephen@bigbendsentinel.com

OJINAGA — The City of Presidio has been hit hard by concerns over coronavirus. With little to no cash reserves, city leaders worry they could max out their budget, as *The Big Bend Sentinel* reported last week.

But it’s not all bad news for the Presidio-Ojinaga area. With some big institutional employers like Border Patrol in the area, many local workers have held onto essential jobs. And in Ojinaga, around 300 employees at local Solitaire Homes facilities are receiving full pay while they shelter-at-home, Solitaire Homes representative H. Cowan said in an interview last week.

Like much of the United States, Mexico has imposed emergency orders limiting nonessential activity and closing some workplaces. Those rules applied to most maquiladoras except for some considered essential.

Those essential designations might have applied to Solitaire Homes — but the company decided to take the safe route, Cowan said.

“Not knowing, we took the position that the decree from the federal government was to send everyone home,” he said. The workers are on furlough, with pay.

Coronavirus lockdowns have posed unique challenges to maquiladoras like Solitaire. With most of its employees in Ojinaga and facilities on both sides of the border, workers need to regularly cross the border in a time of restrictions on movement. The United States and Mexico closed their ports to nonessential travel last month.

And while it can be hard enough to keep track of the patchwork of local, state and federal coronavirus guidance, companies like Solitaire must also worry about the rules in another country.

Coronavirus lockdowns are still a reality in Mexico, while in Texas Governor Greg Abbott announced he would start easing health restrictions on Friday. Cowan could not be immediately reached for comment on the impact of the revised state guidance.

In the meantime, all the company can do is “reassess every month,” Cowan said. He said Solitaire will continue to pay workers even if they can’t return by mid-May but acknowledged, “I’m not sure it’ll be full pay.”

Going forward, though, Cowan was certain of one thing: Solitaire Homes will weather the coronavirus storm.

“This is a temporary blip for us and thousands of factories of all kinds,” he said. “We’re fortunate that we have the ability to hang on here, look for the turn and be ready to crank back up.”

Part of that is the mobile home business. While “demand has dampened for a while,” he thinks there will continue to be a market for the company’s product.

“People haven’t said they’re not going to buy [a mobile home],” he said, citing recent stats from the industry. “They’re just not going to buy one right now.”

Brewster County residents can apply for second round of aid

BREWSTER COUNTY — The Big Bend COVID-19 Pandemic Relief Fund is now ready for round two of providing aid to locals. Applications for the new funding can be found at bigbendaid.org, and the deadline is May 15.

The fund was set up to help Brewster County residents deal with hardships caused by the pandemic, and volunteers from Alpine and Terlingua started the fund through Big Bend Citizens Alliance — a Terlingua-based nonprofit organization.

The first round of applications has been processed and awards are going out. The organization gives special thanks to Porter’s, West Texas National Bank, Out West Feed & Supply and the Big Bend Chamber of Commerce, and offers their sincerest gratitude to everyone who so generously donated. The first round issued funds to 54 qualified individuals and three local nonprofits. The Salvation Army’s Alpine Unit made an offer to pay electric, water and gas bills for the applicants up to \$150 each.

The Marathon post office, Terlingua Crisis Center, WesTex Community Credit Union, and Alpine Community Credit Union are serving as pickup and drop-off locations for printed applications.

On Saturday and Sunday, May 2 and 3, the Big Bend Citizens Alliance and the City of Alpine will present the 1 on 1 on 1 Livestream Music Festival, a free two-day fundraising event. The festival highlights both the isolation and the online intimacy that we are all experiencing as artists share their music with listeners around the region, the state or even the world. More information can be found at <http://bigbendaid.org/1-on-1-on-1-livestream-music-festival/>.

To donate online, visit bigbendaid.org. Checks made payable to Big Bend Citizens Alliance with “pandemic relief fund” in the memo field can be mailed to PO Box 202, Terlingua, TX 79852 or deposited at West Texas National Bank in Alpine and Terlingua.

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Opinions

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I would like to thank the team behind Marfa Steps Up for organizing the Marfa Steps Up response — what an incredible project. I’d also like to thank the donors, near and far, who donated so much (and so fast), and the Get Go and Porter’s for making it a reality. Thank you all for your immense kindness and generosity.

**Nicki Ittner
Marfa**

...

Dear Editor,

I was saddened and concerned to read in *The Big Bend Sentinel* (April 9, 2020) the story about worker furloughs and the parent company of the Big Bend Regional Medical Center (BBRMC) filing for chapter 11.

This story brought back vividly to my mind the debates that happened years ago when we first considered turning over hospital administration to a for-profit company. Many asked at the time what was to prevent a for-profit company to do this very thing, to cut staff or, God forbid, to even close down the hospital, if “we” weren’t profitable enough for them or the company suffered a hit to their bottom line? We were assured that would never happen but, it seems now otherwise.

In light of this, I want to take this opportunity to express my truly heartfelt appreciation for everyone who works at the hospital from the doctors to nurses to all the support staff.

A few months ago I had to go to the emergency room for excruciating pain I was experiencing from, what I later found out, passing a kidney stone. I was in pain for twelve hours, from 1 a.m. to 1 p.m. It was unbelievable pain and everyone at the hospital was at their utmost professionalism. From the staff that did the initial intake and had to listen to my screams to the nurse who took care of me through my entire time there to the radiology tech who wheeled me around the hospital. I could not have endured it without all of them.

(As an aside, one of the nurses told me that she heard the pain of passing a stone was the same as the pain from childbirth, to which I can only say, if what I suffered was in any infinitely small percentage of what actual childbirth feels like, I honestly don’t know how women are still having babies. I’m surprised women didn’t organize many, many, many millennia ago and beat every man within a mile radius of them with a stick!)

Six years ago prior to that, I suffered a serious shoulder injury that took two years to heal and I know that I would not have recovered full mobility of my shoulder without the excellent therapy I received from their physical therapy department.

To say I’m grateful to BBRMC is an understatement. I know how much this hospital means both to me and countless others living in our tri-county area who’ve depended on it.

But, with the threat hanging over our collective heads, is this really the time to cut supportive staff?

Further, I’m troubled by a remark from a member of the local COVID-19 task force who said, in reference to local health authorities being hesitant to set up higher tier guidelines for rationing equipment and from a psychological standpoint, “she wants doctors and residents to approach the coronavirus crisis ‘from as optimistic a viewpoint as possible.’”

I can understand optimism as a comfortable mental viewpoint but, is that what’s needed now?

“The wave” is coming and it will hit us. COVID-19 doesn’t care about our optimism. It’s not a bacteria or a parasite. It’s a thing. It’s not alive. It doesn’t know that it sickens the people it infects or that roughly 1%-2% of those it infects, die.

It’s a machine that’s sole purpose is to infect a healthy cell by injecting a small piece of a DNA strand (called RNA) into the cell. The RNA is like a computer program that reprograms the cell, turning it into a factory that’s dedicated to nothing else than building as many copies of the virus that it can before they burst out of the cell and spread to other cells, repeating the process over and over and over and over till the infected person either recovers or not.

From what I read in the article, I understand now why we can’t stockpile PPEs and ventilators but, why can’t we start building out more bed spaces in a gym or building?

Coronavirus cases double about every two days. BBRMC has 25 beds. If you get two COVID-19 cases on Monday, by the following week those 25 beds will be left long behind.

If the BBRMC and the county are actively working on a plan, then I support their efforts wholeheartedly.

A friend of mine said that seeing a building built out with extra hospital beds might scare people. What scares me is seeing what is happening in New York repeated here: hospital lobbies crowded with COVID-19 patients on stretchers because the rooms are full.

Optimism is not what is needed. It’s eyes wide open pragmatism and practical planning for the worst case. “Hope for the best, plan for the worst.”

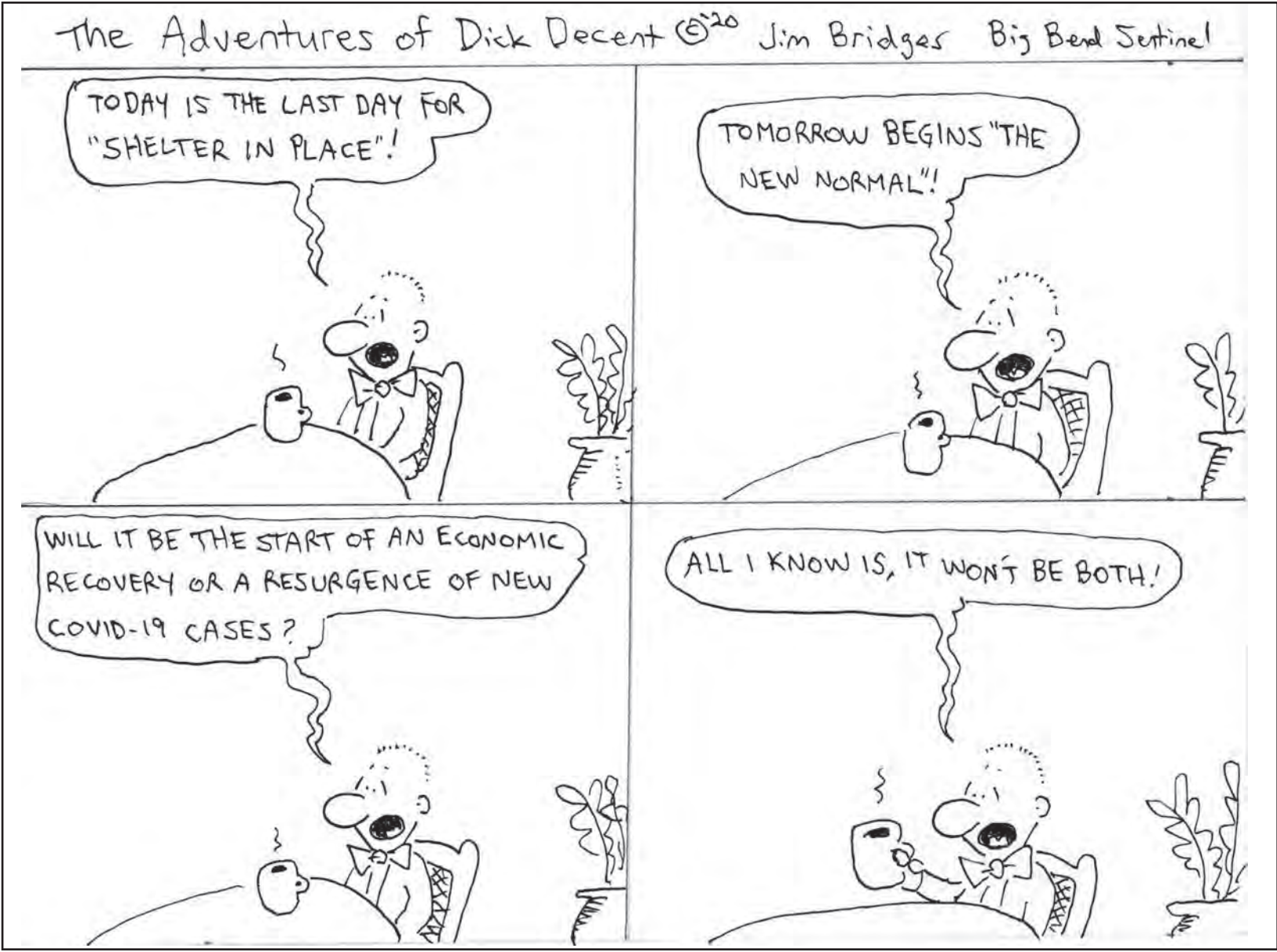
A year from now, I hope to say the tri-county was one of a few rare oases in the world that escaped the deluge of “the wave” that circumnavigated the globe.

That’s “hope for the best...” But, without the second part of the phrase, my future hope is no better than a child’s wish.

We have to face what’s happening, here and now, in our country and the world. If we continue to ignore the true magnitude of COVID-19 and forsake scientific guidance for gut feelings, for optimism without follow up, are we not all children wishing in the dark?

Sincerely,
**Amit Rangra
Alpine**

...



Dear Editor,

To Judge Cano, Judge Cinderella Guevara and Judge Kerith Sproul,

I am a current resident of Jeff Davis County and a past resident of Presidio County and I have heard rumors that instead of 25% you all may be considering reopening to 50% occupancy! I believe that 25% is putting the cart before the proverbial horse and that 50% is a possible death sentence for many. We have had no testing and do not know where we stand! The testing that was done is a farce and was only done on those presenting symptoms, so it does not consider carriers or those who are infected who have no symptoms. There is not enough known to make the dangerous move of re-opening at all, much less to 50% of occupancy.

I believe that if you take this step, you will be culpable in the illnesses and possible deaths of many county residents. This is a time to be smart and abide by science and the advice of health professionals, not politicians. Please take this thing as slowly and as cautiously as possible. Please!

Sincerely,
**Garrick Stephens
Jeff Davis County**

...

Dear Editor,

The choice is always ours!

Is it Taps or Star-Spangled Banner? Read *The Atlantic’s*, “From Access Hollywood to Disinfectant,” connecting our pandemic-related problems directly to President Trump. Then contact the offices of GOP senators and representatives.

Facilitating, they had numerous opportunities over 3 years – preceded by the Republican campaign – to know exactly who Trump was. They are worse than head-in-the-sand Sgt. Schultz’s, “I know nuh-thing, nuh-thing,” failing to act responsibly when it mattered.

His supporters are complicit too, for the ashen smoke rising from the stacks. That’s a metaphor for our Constitution, though not beyond the realm of possibility for those targeted.

Observe Trump’s nativist, Tweet-encouraging, radical rightwing-funded, mirroring their Brown Shirt predecessors. Responding, armed white supremacist street thugs manifest the worst impulses among us! We forget and ignore; at recorded history’s peril, Charlottesville, “Zero Tolerance,” and now these immature, armed protests against common sense preventive pandemic health measures.

It is also where the original parchment of the Constitution went. Shredded first by hypocrisy and a greed-based lust for power and money, it didn’t receive the last rites due to the true patriots for the service given by those who came before us.

Make your voice known about which patriotic music sounds. What’s your decision? The choice is always ours!

**Rev. Barry Abraham Zavah
Alpine**

...



NOW MORE THAN EVER IT IS IMPORTANT TO RESPOND TO THE 2020 CENSUS.

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EL PASO 50% JEFF DAVIS: 11.8%
HUDSPETH: 8.3% PRESIDIO: 4.9%
CULBERSON: 9.2% BREWSTER: 23.4%

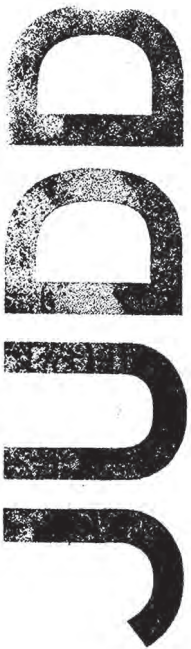
REMEMBER: AN ACCURATE COUNT MEANS FUNDING FOR SCHOOLS, FOOD, MEDICAL ASSISTANCE AND MORE.



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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.

Please contact
marfa@juddfoundation.org
for more information.

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We want to hear from YOU!

Write a letter to the Editor at
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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.

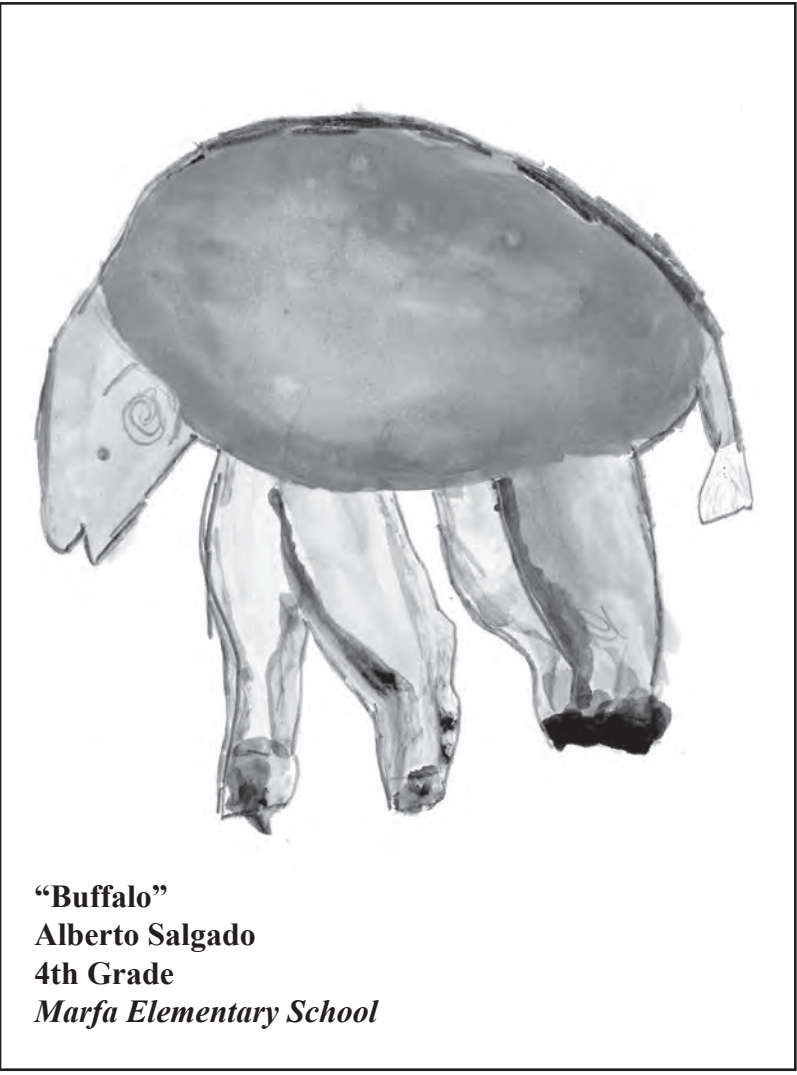
For those visitors who have booked tours on the dates effected, please email Visitor Services Manager, Abby Boyd, at aboyd@chinati.org or call 432.729.4362 ext.3 to reschedule or discuss other options.

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.

Arts & Community

DRAWING OF THE WEEK



A livestream music festival will benefit Big Bend residents this weekend

ALPINE — On May 2 and 3, the Big Bend Citizens Alliance and the City of Alpine are presenting the 1 on 1 on 1 Livestream Music Festival!

The festival will feature more than 36 musicians with a personal or professional connection to the Big Bend and Brewster County, with a particular focus on players who live and work here. Each participating musician will play a 15-20 minute solo set on Facebook Live from their own location, and listeners can enjoy the show through a central Facebook page for the festival (<https://www.facebook.com/1on1on1/>).

The event will also raise money for the musicians and others who have been left without work during the coronavirus pandemic. Half of the proceeds from donations to the festival at fundr.r.com/BigBendMusic will benefit the Big Bend COVID-19 Pandemic Relief Fund (bigbendaid.org), and the remaining half will be earmarked for the musicians, who can donate their portion back into the fund if they choose.

The Big Bend COVID-19 Pandemic Relief Fund just completed its first round of applications for April and is now receiving requests for their May distribution. So far, 54 individuals and families in Brewster County have been approved for cash assistance. They will use these much needed funds for things such as rent and mortgages, medical bills, phone bills, prescriptions, groceries, vehicle necessities and other small, important purchases such as denture cream, diapers and cleaning supplies.

Event details, including the schedule for the 1 on 1 on 1 Livestream Music Festival, can be found at: <http://bigbendaid.org/1-on-1-on-1-livestream-music-festival>.

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Marfa

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93.5 Marfa/Ft. Davis 91.7 Alpine 91.5 Marathon 91.3 Odessa/Midland

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Marfa runner goes the social-distance



Photo by Ann Marie Nafziger
Peter Stanley runs through Pinto Canyon on mile 14 of his solo marathon this weekend.

By ABBIE PERRAULT
abbie@bigbendsentinel.com

MARFA — Marfa local Peter Stanley placed first in a marathon in Marfa this Sunday, finishing with a time of 3:57:19. Stanley crossed the finish line between the pillars of the Presidio County Courthouse with no other racers in sight. In truth, there were no second or third place finishers at all, as Stanley ran 26.2 miles alone this weekend.

The race began at 7 a.m. at the courthouse. Stanley took Highland Avenue, passed the old fort and was off down Pinto Canyon Road. He ran 13.1 miles out, turned around and took the same path back.

The terrain, views, elevation and climate of Marfa, while stunning, are a far cry from Eugene, Oregon, where Stanley would have been running Sunday if the coronavirus had not caused the cancellations of marathons across the globe this season.

Still, Stanley had followed his training program faithfully in the months leading up to the race, and he decided the setback wouldn't keep him from running. In training, he'd run somewhere between 400 and 500 miles. Why not add 26.1 more?

It just wouldn't be among the cheering crowds, the aid stations supplying hydration and the camaraderie of his fellow runners, all spiked with the adrenaline that comes with a race day.

Still, there were pros to this adjusted marathon: he got to sleep in his own bed the night before, he noted, and he was very familiar with the route. But

the familiar landscape's sheer scale can be daunting for a long distance runner. Running in cities, and even forests, there are many landmarks to strive toward. A building up ahead, a tree, a variety of stages that make progress feel tangible.

On Pinto Canyon, the same mountain is off in the distance, remaining in view for long stretches of time. "When you run out here, there's something kind of relentless and somewhat beguiling," Stanley described. "The landscape is amazing, but when you have to move through it at a certain pace, it's hard to get a sense that you're making a whole lot of progress."

He ran with a baseball cap, and at the toughest points, Stanley pulled the hat down low, gazing only a few strides ahead of his feet.

At the halfway point where he turned around, his wife Ann Marie Nafziger met him to refill his water bottle. A little further on, his Chinati Foundation coworker and friend Michael Roch joined him, biking alongside him for almost ten miles.

As he made his way back to Highland Avenue, Nafziger invited some friends to cheer him to the finish. Buck Johnston, Camp Bosworth, Jennie Lynn Hamilton, Gretel Enck, Mark Scott, Kaki Aufdengarten and Sterry Butcher lined the road, keeping their distance along the way, cheering, banging pots and pans and encouraging him. "Go Peter!" they yelled. Running it alone, the final stretch of support and cheers was almost like a real marathon finish line. It was a sweet conclusion, Stanley said.

Snap shot

“Front Porch Covid la Coupe de cheveux”
Vaughn Grisham and son Henry Grisham of Alpine take turns giving each other haircuts on their front porch.

Mary Schwartz-Grisham
Alpine, Texas

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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Weekly SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

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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 Easter treat
- 4 Wager
- 7 Retain
- 11 Metric mea-
sure
- 13 Rowboat need
- 14 Sleeping
- 15 Flow like
molasses
- 16 Chum, nowa-
days
- 17 Actor Brad
- 18 Grassland
- 20 Opening
course, often
- 22 Erstwhile gar-
ment
- 24 Hitchcock
classic
- 28 Spotted insect
- 32 Radiant
- 33 Champing at
the bit
- 34 Bathroom fix-
ture
- 36 Yorkshire river
- 37 Narc's mea-
sures
- 39 Croquet
equipment
- 41 Catch
- 43 Second per-
son
- 44 Related to
5-Down
- 46 Use a Brillo
pad
- 50 Ballerina's frill
- 53 Cauldron

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59					60					61			

- 6 Army unit
- 7 Carefree
- 8 Sapporo sash
- 9 Allow
- 10 Banned
- 12 Carousel
- 19 Light touch
- 21 Portion of N.A.
- 23 Eviscerate
- 25 Hint
- 26 Emcee
- 27 Hasn't paid
yet
- 28 Michigan, for
one
- 29 Not "fer"
- 30 Nincompoop
- 35 Reddish-
brown horse
- 38 Perched
- 40 — Angeles
- 42 They're calling
Danny Boy
- 45 Prolonged
sleep
- 47 Fawns'
mothers
- 48 Hexagonal
state
- 49 Induce ennui
- 50 Gratitude
- 51 Web address
- 52 Excessively
- 54 Monkey suit

DOWN

- 1 lds' counter-
parts
- 2 Get bigger
- 3 Middle East
strip
- 4 Go up and
down

Puzzle solutions for last week's issue

Weekly SUDOKU

King Crossword

Answer

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

Solution time: 24 mins.

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New Capri cookbook showcases flavors of Marfa

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

MARFA — When the Capri restaurant opened a few years back, it didn’t take long for photographer Douglas Friedman to become a regular.

“It’s no secret that I’m a huge, huge fan of the Capri,” Friedman said in an interview this week. Friedman, who has a background in architecture and portrait photography — he’s photographed the likes of Hillary Clinton — was determined to give the Capri’s fashionable and farm-to-table meals the art-photo treatment. “I said, ‘Please, let’s do a book. We have to do a book. The food here is too beautiful.’”

Virginia Lebermann and Rocky Barnette, the husband-and-wife duo behind the Capri, agreed with the plan. With a crew of around 10 people, they soon began the multi-year and painstaking process of making the cookbook — a process made harder not only by the seasonality of the Capri menu but by Marfa’s remote location, where photo crews aren’t always in plentiful supply.

The result — “Cooking in Marfa” — is now available for preorder from Phaidon, the art-centric publishing house that’s releasing the book.

“Welcome,” the cover reads, practically oozing with down-home charm. “We’ve been expecting you.”

As art-lovers and foodies surely know, getting a publishing deal with Phaidon is no small feat. The glamorous publishing house is known for its meticulously designed guides to food and art, including “The Silver Spoon,” Phaidon’s massive encyclopedia of Italian cooking.

More remarkable still is the fact

that Phaidon would choose an individual restaurant to showcase in a cookbook. Most of the company’s books instead showcase broader genres or themes, from Thai food to modern architecture.

These facts were surely on the mind of Capri co-owner Virginia Lebermann when Friedman approached her about the prospect of making a Phaidon cookbook. “I thought he was wonderfully crazy,” she said. “I was totally onboard.”

But the group nonetheless decided to put together a proposal — and then Phaidon said yes.

“They called right away, to our astonishment,” Lebermann said.

For Friedman, who was determined from the outset to get the book published with Phaidon, the pairing made sense. Phaidon is known, among other things, for its full-page color photos, which Friedman thought could do justice to the elegant plating at Capri.

And while some cookbook publishers stick to recipes, Phaidon’s books are known for having long narrative passages — another detail that Friedman thought just made sense for Capri. After all, he said, Lebermann is a natural storyteller.

“You can literally sit transfixed by Virginia as you watch the ash on her cigarette get longer and longer,” he said. “Talk with her and Rocky about food — about something as mundane as salt — and the conversation becomes so interesting.”

Friedman got a good share of fun photoshoots out of the book. He flew in a helicopter to capture an aerial shot of Marfa. He took photos of Lebermann and Barnette on a ranch outside of town.

For photos of the food itself, the group built a makeshift photo studio at the Capri, where Friedman leaned heavily on natural light.

“We’d chase the light around

*Watermelon Gazpacho
photographed by Douglas
Friedman for the new
cookbook, “Cooking in
Marfa.”*



that room,” Friedman recalled. “In the morning, we’d be on one end. By the afternoon, we’d be in the farthest corner away.”

Lebermann, who helped found Ballroom Marfa, first met Barnette after he moved to Marfa in 2008. A chef with a history of working at Michelin-starred restaurants, Barnette started cooking at Ballroom dinners and opened a restaurant, the Miniature Rooster, where the Water Stop is today.

Surrounded by the landscape of the Chihuahuan desert, Barnette was fascinated with the question of how people in the region had fed themselves thousands of years ago — and the pair soon decided to open a restaurant exploring those themes.

In the years since, Capri has become known for cooking with indigenous ingredients, from mesquite and yucca blossoms to agarita berries. They harvest wild yeast from Mexican elderberry trees to make fermented soda. A botanist from Sul Ross State University helped them set up a

wildflower garden.

In an interview on Tuesday, Lebermann had conflicting emotions about the book release. She was excited, she said, but also nervous.

She also had mixed feelings about releasing a cookbook while Capri and other restaurants are struggling with coronavirus concerns and emergency orders. But “it’s also such a nice story,” she said, “and I think people are craving some access to nice stories at the moment.”

Watermelon Gazpacho with Tequila, Sal de Gusano and Aged Balsamico (serves six)

Ingredients:

- 1 generous cup coarsely chopped heirloom tomato
- 2 tbsp chopped serrano pepper
- 2lb watermelon, peeled and chopped
- 3 tbsp red wine vinegar
- 1 cup chopped red onion
- 2 cups chopped peeled cucumber
- ½ tsp xanthan gum
- Kosher (flaked) salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- ½ cup cilantro, tied into cheesecloth for steeping

For serving: 6 2-inch cubes watermelon; ¼ cup tequila blanco; 1 lime, quartered; sal de chapulín (cricket salt) or sal de gusano (worm salt), to taste; an aged balsamic vinegar, such as Balsamico Villa Manadori; 12 garlic chives

To cook: In a high-powered blender, combine the tomato, serrano, watermelon, red wine vinegar, red onion, cucumber and xanthan gum and puree. Season with salt and pepper. Pass through a chinois or fine-mesh sieve. Add the cilantro sachet and refrigerate for 1-4 hours. Remove the sachet and pour the mixture into the canister of an ISI whip and charge 2 times. Chill for an additional 2 hours. (Alternatively, serve the gazpacho without charging and additional chilling.)

To serve: Make a divot in each watermelon cube with a medium melon baller. Dress each cube with tequila, lime juice and sal de chapulín (cricket salt) or sal de gusano (worm salt) to taste. Fill the divot in each cube with balsamic. Attach 2 garlic chives like rabbit ears to the sides of each cube. Place a watermelon cube in each of 6 chilled bowls, and divide the gazpacho among the bowls. Serve immediately.

OBITUARIES



Donaldson

Alan W. Donaldson, formerly of Marfa, has passed on to our Lord above. His death is due to heart complications brought on by the coronavirus while hospitalized in Chula Vista, California. He was a graduate of Marfa High School, served a tour for the U.S. Army, worked for his father, Bobby Donaldson at ABC Pump and retired after 29 years with the Border Patrol at Brown Field Station in San Diego.

He was a loving son, husband, father and grandfather and is

survived by his wife, Cheryl, and grandson, Kearston, in Chula Vista, California and his daughters, April and Kally, and seven grandchildren in the Houston area. He is also survived by his mother, Mary Ann, a sister, Cheryl, two brothers, Lee and Chuck, all of Marfa, and numerous nieces and nephews in California, Marfa and the Houston area.

Help is needed for hospital and burial expenses and his family wishes that any good wishes and donations be sent to this web address: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/retired-spa-alan-donaldson>

Facing losses, Sul Ross and its students will split \$1.8 million in federal funds

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

ALPINE — Texas received a staggering \$1 billion out of the \$14 billion Congress allocated to higher education in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. For local Sul Ross State University, their share of the Texas pie will amount to \$1.8 million.

These federal funds will be a lifeline for schools to survive the revenue losses that occurred when the pandemic closed down higher education institutions suddenly this March. When Sul Ross shut its doors, students needed housing refunds, distance learning fees mounted, fundraising events and sports games were canceled and the school was left to figure out the bill, according to Chris Clifford, the school’s vice president for Budget and Finance.

In a call early last week, Clifford said the \$1.8 million will be divided in half, with roughly \$900,000 going to emergency student aid and the other half to institutional recovery.

A committee with representation from student life, student accounting and financial aid was formed, with the hopes of getting funds into students’ hands as soon as they can to help with their immediate needs due to the coronavirus.

Clifford said seniors who had to leave campus will be refunded for housing and meal plans. For the majority of students, a credit will be applied for future dining and housing when they hopefully, eventually return to campus.

At least part of the other half, the institutional recovery funds, will be used to offset the distance learning fee that is charged for online courses. The school has also lost money due

to study abroad cancellations and income from softball and baseball season.

“As far as tuition, classes continued, so there were no refunds for coursework or fees,” Clifford said. Students have continued their education through the turbulent changes, with many hoping to still graduate on time.

Speaking of losses, Clifford said, “The biggest one is the loss of graduation. We’ve felt that personally and feel so much empathy for students that aren’t getting to walk in a normal ceremony.” The school is devising alternate celebrations, like having students submit photos to be featured in some way.

Beyond this semester’s losses, the school is forecasting a negative trend in terms of higher education enrollment overall. Clifford said that those losses are not going to be covered by the \$900,000 that the institution has from the federal government.

“We’re part of the Texas State University System and all the institutions are expecting impact from this. Enrollment, and possible state appropriation impact. The state is going to be looking at its resources,” he said. “Given what’s happened with oil too and a slowdown of the economy as we’ve shut down, it’s certainly not going to be helping our state funding.”

Higher education institutions in Texas are waiting on word from the state about when and how to safely reopen campuses. “We miss everyone and can’t wait to get back to normal operations. It’ll probably be a phased opening over time as things ease up and we can do it safely with everyone’s best interest in mind.”

In the meantime, the university

announced a new relief fund to assist students who are currently struggling financially due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Students who have lost work during the outbreak are eligible for the funding, which can be used to purchase basic necessities.

The funds cover essential items like toilet paper, soap, food, meals for students staying in the dorms and apartments, personal protective equipment for those who need to leave their dorms and other items that may be necessary to complete the semester.

Lack of transportation has been problematic for some remaining students who may need help getting home at the end of the semester, and Kara O’Shaughnessy, director of Advancement and Donor Relations said monies raised from the fund will help alleviate some of those issues.

“They’re not able to get essential items in town or go home with the travel restrictions in place throughout the U.S.,” she said. “That’s where the fund can play a huge role in making sure these students won’t lack the basic living items and they will still be able to concentrate on their studies.”

“The Sul Ross Relief Fund is one way that we can help address their immediate needs,” said Dr. Yvonne Realivasquez, assistant vice president for Administration and Development. “Your gift will help Sul Ross students finish the semester and show them how much we all care about their success.” Currently, the university has \$5,000 in matching funds.

For more information or to make a donation to the Sul Ross Relief Fund, visit https://secure.touchnet.com/C20202_ustores/web/product_detail.jsp?PRODUCTID=753.



Leatherwood

Longtime Terlingua author, resident and newspaperman **Carlton Leatherwood** died at



Lorette

Beloved son, brother, uncle, cherished cousin, and one-of-a-kind friend, **Lineaus Hooper Lorette**, passed away on April 21, 2020 surrounded by his “traveling team” of beloved dogs after a short battle with cancer. Family and friends of

The Big Bend Sentinel will have a story about Lineaus’ life in a forthcoming issue.

Rosedale Adult House in El Paso, Texas on April 17. He was 78.

He authored five books, *Why Terlingua: Adventure on the Edge of Texas*; *Big Bend People: Terlingua Edition*; *Big Bend People, Terlingua, A Desert Oasis*; *Journey to the Edge of Texas: A Memoir of Love, Travel, Natural Beauty, Writing, and One Man’s Battle With Bipolar Disorder*; and *Codette, Joey and Friends*.

Carl was an only child who was raised in Beaumont, Texas. He graduated from South Park High School. Upon graduation, he attended and graduated from the University of North Texas in Denton, where he was a journalism major. After Denton, he began his

Lineaus have heavy hearts and are thankful he shared his life with each and every one of us.

He had many talents and passions. He read the classics, promoted social justice, played the tuba, collected art and mid-20th century lamps, made medicine balls, was a lifelong CPA — but most of all he loved his dogs. As an accomplished historian with a strong political ideology, his storytelling was mesmerizing. His blend of a “rant” and a “mantra” formed his “rantras,” which can be viewed at rantras.com. He said “they are a stream of consciousness and only allowed to be a single page, without edits, written in less than an hour.”

Lineaus was born in Donaldsonville, Louisiana on July 19, 1945 to Willard Lineaus Lorette and Richey Hooper Lorette. He was preceded in death by his parents. Lineaus is survived by his sister,

daily newspaper career working for the *Lubbock Avalanche Journal*, the *Paducah Post*, *Texas City Sun*, and *Galveston Daily News*. Later, he worked for the *Houston Post*.

Carl loved to travel. He had a tremendous appreciation for nature and the outdoors, and fell in love with the heart and soul of Terlingua and the Big Bend area of Far West Texas. His books captured the beauty of his beloved desert town.

Carl’s remains will be interred in Lampasas, Texas next to his parents, Carl Emmett Leatherwood, Sr., and Gladys Maxine Leatherwood. No funeral services will be held.

As you gaze into the skies of the Big Bend, you will see Carl smiling down on you.

Carol Glee Greenwood and husband Bob of Montana; his niece Laura Powers (Sam), his nephew Jack Carley (Katie) and great nieces and great nephews along with beloved cousins, Patricia F. Burkhardt (Harold), Jonathan Handy (Leah), Glee Handy, Jeremiah and Jessica Wilson.

Lineaus’ ashes, along with the ashes of his many beloved dogs, will be interred in the Rio Grande River. A Quaker-style memorial will be held at a future date.

In honor and memory of Lin and the countless number of dogs he saved with the help of George at the Marfa Animal Shelter, please consider promoting his legacy by donating to the shelter by check made to George Gonzales.

Mail to: George Gonzales
c/o Marfa Animal Shelter
PO Box 787
Marfa, TX 79843

Raul Lara City Council Member

Cell# 432-249-1189
councilmemberlara@cityofmarfa.com

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There is a \$1,000 signing bonus for new hires (terms and conditions apply) and long-term career potential for the right motivated person. Applicant may be required to work overtime or on weekends and holidays as needed and may be required to attend out-of-town training and/or meetings requiring travel by car, bus, plane or other means of transportation and overnight stays. Competitive Compensation and Benefits Package are included. This company participates in E-Verify.

Please mail a current resume to
BBT, Attn: HR
808 N. 5th St.
Alpine, TX 79830
Or email resume to: HR@bbtco.com
Please no phone calls.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC SALE

Pursuant to chapter 59, Texas Property Code, Twin Peaks Self Storage will hold a public auction of property being sold to satisfy a landlord’s lien. Auction will be: **SATURDAY, May 16, 2020 at Twin Peaks Self Storage 10:00 AM at 2609 West Highway 90 in Alpine, Texas.**

Unit 65- Chris Sanderfur

Property will be sold to the highest bidder for CASH. Seller has the right not to accept any bid and to withdraw property from sale. Property in each space will be sold as a lot. Tenant may redeem property up until bids are accepted, if tenant pays all sums due. Property being sold includes contents in the units of the following tenants.



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MARFA 12 STEP MEETINGS

JOIN ONLINE:
Go to zoom.us or download the app:

ACA - Thursday 5:30 PM
<https://tinyurl.com/y7qyghga>

Al Anon. - Sunday 2:00 PM
<https://tinyurl.com/yd78lsa6>

AA - Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday 6:00 PM
<https://tinyurl.com/y7uxgrcy>

AA - Saturday 12:00 Noon
<https://tinyurl.com/yd7opqwu>

The City of Marfa is accepting applications for the position of Programming Librarian.

An application and job description detailing duties and responsibilities can be obtained at the Marfa City Hall at 113 S. Highland Ave or online at cityofmarfa.com/employment. Compensation will depend upon qualifications and experience. The position will remain open and posted on the City’s website until filled.

The City of Marfa is accepting applications for the position of Code Enforcement Officer.

An application and job description detailing duties and responsibilities can be obtained at the Marfa City Hall at 113 S Highland Ave. or online at cityofmarfa.com/employment. Compensation will depend upon qualifications and experience. The position will remain open and posted on the City’s website until filled.



DESTRUCTION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION RECORDS

In accordance with applicable state and federal regulations, the 588 Educational Cooperative does hereby notify you of its intent to destroy student special education records. All special education records, prior to **July 1, 2013**, will be destroyed. The 588 Educational Cooperative will destroy special education records for the following school districts:

- Alpine Independent School District
- Balmorhea Independent School District
- Culberson County-Allamore Independent School District
- Fort Davis Independent School District
- Marathon Independent School District
- Marfa Independent School District
- Presidio Independent School District
- Terlingua Common School District
- Terrell County Independent School District
- San Vicente Independent School District
- Sierra Blanca Independent School District
- Valentine Independent School District

If you would like to be provided with a copy of the records to be destroyed, please contact the 588 Educational Cooperative by telephone at 432-837-3315, by fax at 432-837-3573, or via mail at 704 W. Sul Ross Ave, Alpine, Texas, 79830.

Records will be destroyed within 90 days of the date of this notice.



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*Do not fear, for I am with you,
do not be afraid,
for I am your God;
I will strengthen you,
I will help you,
I will uphold you with my
victorious right hand.*
Isaiah 41:10

Sundays 9 am
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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. <i>Please be on the look out 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> 



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