

BURN BAN IN EFFECT, NO GROUND FIRES

by order of Presidio County

“Mammos on the move” mobile mammogram service returns to the Big Bend

By SAM KARAS
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TRI-COUNTY — The Big Bend Regional Hospital District is once again partnering with El Paso’s Desert Imaging to bring a mobile mammogram unit to the region. The Mayo Clinic recommends that women begin yearly mammogram screenings for breast cancer at age 40. “Prevention is the key word here,” said Maria Urias, senior patient advocate at the Presidio County Medical Clinic. “When cancer is detected at an early stage—that can save a life.”

Though the mobile unit can only assist one or two patients at a time, it’s a relatively speedy procedure. “I’ve heard that you’re in and out in 20 to 30 minutes,” she said. Desert Imaging’s team is bilingual and ready to assist first-timers who may not be familiar with the mammogram process. Patients with abnormal results will be sent to Midland or El Paso for further testing.

Mammogram screenings are covered under most types of insurance as a preventative healthcare service, but patients worried about covering the \$145 out-of-pocket cost are encouraged to reach out to their local branch of the Big Bend Regional Hospital District for assistance. In Presidio, that number is (432) 229-2151 and in Alpine, it’s (432) 837-7051. “We can do lots of things to assist,” Urias said. “If you can’t come to the office, we’ll find a way to get you an application.”

Desert Imaging does not require a referral from a physician in order to see a patient, so those interested can call and “self refer” for an exam. To make an appointment, call Desert Imaging at (915) 577-0100. At that number, those interested can also be pre-screened to see if you qualify for a non-insured program or a grant from Desert Imaging.

South county residents should be advised that there will be only one day for local testing—high demand in Alpine led the Mammos on the Move team to reschedule one of their previously announced Presidio dates. Testing will be held at the Presidio Activity Center (PAC) on December 6 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Alpine residents can sign up for appointments held on December 7 to December 9, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Big Bend Regional Medical Center. Marfa screenings will be held outside the Presidio county courthouse from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on December 10.

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The West Texan Media Group, LLC



Photo by Sam Karas
Brendan Leyva helps return a sacred sentinela, or sentinel stone, to a gravesite in the Lipan Apache cemetery. READ MORE ON PAGE 6.

Big Bend area highway construction to stretch into 2022, 2023

By SAM KARAS
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TRI-COUNTY — The stoplights popping up on rural highways all around the Big Bend have been the talk of the town—or at least local social media pages, where residents have expressed confusion and displeasure about the presence of the lights. The stoplights that have recently cropped up on Highway 67 between Marfa and Alpine and FM170 between Redford and Lajitas are the only true tricolor stop lights in the Big Bend. Most residents are much more familiar with jockeying for right-of-way around a four-way stop.

The stoplights and the road construction projects they protect are part of the US 67 master plan, a long-term Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT) project to improve safety on rural highways between Fort Stockton

and Presidio. According to TXDOT, the US 67 corridor experiences more crashes than comparable roadways in the state, with 878 crashes recorded between 2010 to 2018.

There are currently three major TXDOT projects underway on highways in the Big Bend area. Drivers making trips between Marfa and Alpine in the past few weeks have taken note of the spotlight near the western edge of Paisano Pass. This project is a hazard elimination and safety project to install a new guardrail with retrofit rail. “After completion of the current location, they will be relocating to SH 17 in Fort Davis to perform the same operations,” explained Lauren Macias-Cervantes, a public outreach officer for TXDOT in El Paso. She estimates both phases of this project will be completed by July 15, 2023.

Between Marfa and Presidio, crews have been hard at work near Cibolo Creek Ranch,

occasionally directing traffic through a one-way stretch of highway. This particular stretch is part of a passing lane improvement project that aims to improve safety and mobility in the section of Highway 67 near Shafter, where crashes are common. After an additional passing lane is added, the project should be completed on January 21, 2022.

On FM 170, or the River Road, tourists and locals alike have encountered a pair of stoplights on the remote stretch of road between Redford and Lajitas. They are currently located at Tapado and Panther Canyons. “The project is currently in phase 1 which consists of the demolition and reconstruction of Tapado and Panther bridges,” Macias-Cervantes said. Phase 2 will include the same bridge project on the other side of the Big Hill, at Madera and Contrabando Canyons. This project’s estimated completion date is March 10, 2023.

Workforce Solutions Borderplex releases labor market review

By SAM KARAS
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TRI-COUNTY — Workforce Solutions Borderplex, a nonprofit dedicated to helping people find quality jobs, released a labor market review to examine employment and performance in the area in October 2021. “We are incorporating unemployment insurance claimant data to provide perspective on the ongoing pandemic effect on the workforce and economy,” the organization wrote in the introduction to their report.

Workforce Solutions Borderplex defines their area as the city of El Paso and its environs, as well as Brewster, Culberson, Hudspeth, Jeff Davis, and Presidio counties. The organization has been active for over 20 years, and over that span of time has held mobile workshops

for Marfa and Presidio residents seeking jobs. Recently, they’ve partnered with the Rio Grande Council of Governments, strengthening ties with local communities and businesses.

Overall, unemployment has dropped 2 points in the region over the past year, but that may be in part due to the end of federal unemployment protections that ended in September. In Presidio county, the unemployment rate was 9.1% in October 2021; in Jeff Davis, that figure was 4.3%, and in Brewster county, 4.1%. Among the rural areas, the biggest losses were in Presidio and Brewster County, disproportionately represented with 265 new unemployment claims in Presidio County in October 2021 and 166 in Brewster County.

In the Borderplex’s rural counties—Brewster, Culberson, Jeff Davis, Hudspeth and Presidio—

the labor force decreased by 113 from September to October 2021. Employed individuals decreased by 95, and unemployed individuals decreased by 18. These trends could reflect broader population decreases throughout the region, reflected in the 2020 federal Census.

In October 2020, the unemployment rate in Jeff Davis County was 4.3% (the same as this year’s figure), and 7.3% for Brewster County. There was no data for Presidio County. As a whole, the Borderplex region has lost 1,194 individuals in the labor force in the past year.

Growing industry sectors included trade and transportation, professional business services, and government. The top postings in the region were seeking registered nurses, customer service representatives and retail salespeople. Sectors

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“People should probably be worried”: Texas hasn’t done enough to prevent another winter blackout, experts say

By MITCHELL FERMAN
The Texas Tribune and
By JON SCHUPPE
NBC News

MIDLOTHIAN — After last winter’s freeze hamstrung power giant Vistra Corp.’s ability to keep electricity flowing for its millions of customers, CEO Curt Morgan said he’d never seen anything like it in his 40 years in the energy industry.

During the peak days of the storm, Vistra, Texas’ largest power generator, sent as much energy as it could to power the state’s failing grid, “often at the expense of making money,” he told lawmakers shortly after the storm.

But it wasn’t enough. The state’s grid neared complete collapse, millions lost power for days

in subfreezing temperatures and more than 200 people died.

Since the storm, Texas lawmakers have passed legislation aimed at making the grid more resilient during freezing weather. Signing the bill, Governor Greg Abbott said, “Everything that needed to be done was done to fix the power grid.”

But Morgan isn’t so sure. His company has spent \$50 million this year preparing more than a dozen of its plants for winter. At the company’s plant in Midlothian, workers have wrapped electric cables with three inches of rubber insulation and built enclosures to help shield valves, pumps and metal pipes.

No matter what Morgan does, though, it won’t be enough to prevent another disaster if there is another severe freeze, he said.

That’s because the state still hasn’t fixed the critical problem that paralyzed his plants: maintaining a sufficient supply of natural gas, Morgan said.

Natural gas slowed to a trickle during the storm, leaving the Midlothian facility and 13 other Vistra power plants that run on gas without enough fuel. The shortage forced Vistra to pay more than \$1.5 billion on the spot market for whatever gas was available, costing the company in a matter of days more than twice the amount it usually spends in an entire year. Even then, plants were able to operate at only a fraction of their capacity; the Midlothian facility ran at 30% of full strength during the height of the storm.

“Why couldn’t we get it?” Morgan said recently. “Because the gas system was not weatherized.

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Local COVID-19 booster shot availability, an overview

By MARY CANTRELL
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TRI-COUNTY — Those due for their COVID-19 booster shots have many options in the tri-county area, though clinics vary in days and times they offer the immunization. The Big Bend Sentinel has compiled this non-exhaustive list of current booster availability, which is subject to change.

To be eligible to receive the booster shot, individuals must have received their first two doses of either the Moderna or Pfizer vaccine, with the second dose being administered at least six months ago. For those who received the single dose Johnson and Johnson vaccine, they are eligible for the booster two months after their initial vaccination. While there are booster shots available for Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson and Johnson vaccines, local clinics may not have all three available. The CDC allows for the mixing of different brands of the vaccine.

While COVID-19 vaccinations have recently been approved by the CDC for children ages five to 11, booster doses have not yet been approved for anyone under the age of 18. All booster shots are free to receive, regardless of the location, but some locations may ask for proof of insurance or a form of ID for reporting purposes.

The authorizations and availability of each booster has come at a time when the world is once again facing a new variant of the coronavirus, which the World Health Organization dubbed “Omicron” on Friday. VThe vaccine and bits boosters are key preventatives against contracting and spreading the virus whichthat has been impacting the world since early 2020.

The Marfa Country Clinic will be administering both the Pfizer and Moderna boosters this Friday December 3 from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at their location on 105 E Oak Street. Moderna boosters will be given in the morning and Pfizer in the afternoon. Patients must have an appointment to receive a booster. To schedule a booster shot, call (432) 729-3000. The clinic asks that people wear masks and bring their proof of vaccination cards.

The Texas Department of State Health Services is offering Moderna and Pfizer booster shots in Alpine, Marfa and Presidio. The Alpine clinic, located at 205 N Cockrell Street, will have boosters available Mondays from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Proof of vaccination cards are required. Making an appointment is recommended, but walk-ins are also welcome. Call (432) 837-3877 to schedule an appointment. To get the booster in Marfa, visit 205 E El Paso Street Thursdays from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Call (432) 729-5045 to make an appointment in Marfa. Presidio residents can get the booster Tuesdays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at 701 Bomar Avenue. To schedule an appointment in Presidio, call (432) 229-1540.

Preventative Care Health Services (PCHS) is offering the Moderna booster shot in Alpine at its Family Health Services of Alpine location at 1605 Fort Davis Hwy on Tuesdays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Appointments, proof of vaccination cards and masks are required. The clinic is also offering the Pfizer vaccine for children ages five to 11 Tuesdays from 3 to 5 p.m. To schedule an appointment, call (432) 837-4555.

PCHS’s Marfa location, also called the Marfa Community Health Clinic, is also offering the Moderna booster Tuesdays from 3 to 4:30 p.m. at their location on 406 South

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Booster shot

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Summer Street. Vaccination cards are required and making an appointment ahead of time is preferred and can be made by calling (432) 837-4555 x302. The PCHS Presidio location, or Presidio County Medical Clinic, is offering the Moderna booster Mondays from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. They are also offering the Pfizer vaccination for kids Fridays from 3 to 5 p.m. Appointments are recommended, call (432) 229-3030.

Highland Drug in Alpine has all three brands of the booster available every day. No appointment is needed. They are open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday, but offer boosters up until 5 p.m. most days. They are open Saturday from 9 a.m. to noon and stop offering boosters around 11:30 a.m. Children’s Pfizer vaccines will be available Saturdays. Proof of vaccination card is recommended but not required. Call (432) 837-3931 to get available times.

Prescription Shop Alpine has both Pfizer and Moderna booster shots available every Friday from 9 a.m. to noon, then 1:30 to 5:45 p.m. They are closed for lunch. Calling ahead to book a time slot is preferred but not required. Proof of vaccination card is required. Proof of insurance or some form of ID may be requested for reporting purposes. Call (432) 837-3498

USDA sets agricultural conservation easement program funding date

TEXAS — USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in Texas is accepting applications for the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). While NRCS accepts easement applications on a continuous basis, applications for the next funding consideration must be submitted by December 31, 2021.

“Easements are sometimes a perfect fit for a landowner who is looking to protect their land from future development or to protect and improve wetlands or provide critical habitat for wildlife,” said Kristy Oates, NRCS state conservationist for Texas. “We encourage Indian tribes, state and local governments, nongovernmental organizations and private landowners to call their local NRCS office to find out how to apply.”

ACEP Agricultural Land Easements provide financial assistance to eligible partners for purchasing easements that protect the agricultural use and conservation values of eligible land. In the case of working farms, the program helps farmers and ranchers keep their land in agriculture.

ACEP Wetlands Reserve Easements allow landowners to successfully restore, enhance and protect habitat for wildlife on their lands, reduce damage from flooding, recharge groundwater and provide outdoor recreational and educational opportunities. Tribal landowners also have the option of enrolling in 30-year contracts.

To learn about ACEP and other technical and financial assistance available through NRCS, call your local USDA Service Center or visit www.nrcs.usda.gov.

Borderplex

(Continued from page 1)

that lost jobs included mining, logging, construction and hospitality.

Of unemployment seekers in the Borderplex, 55% were male and 45% were female. The largest single age group of unemployed individuals were 25 to 31 years old, and their most frequently reported occupations were in sales, construction and office support. 46% of unemployed individuals were high school graduates, and 24% had completed some college but no degree. 15% had achieved a Bachelor’s or an Associate’s degree.

Workforce Solutions Borderplex also offers subsidized childcare for low-income families. “Today, many families with young children must choose between spending a significant portion of their income on childcare, finding

McDonald Observatory astronomers discover strangely massive black hole in Milky Way satellite galaxy

FORT DAVIS — Astronomers at The University of Texas at Austin’s McDonald Observatory have discovered an unusually massive black hole at the heart of one of the Milky Way’s dwarf satellite galaxies, called Leo I. Almost as massive as the black hole in our own galaxy, the finding could redefine our understanding of how all galaxies — the building blocks of the universe — evolve. The work is published in a recent issue of The Astrophysical Journal.

The team decided to study Leo I because of its peculiarity. Unlike most dwarf galaxies orbiting the Milky Way, Leo I does not contain much dark matter. Researchers measured Leo I’s dark matter profile — that is, how the density of dark matter changes from the outer edges of the galaxy all the way into its center. They did this by measuring its gravitational pull on the stars: The faster the stars are moving, the more matter there is enclosed in their orbits. In particular, the team wanted to know whether dark matter density increases toward the galaxy’s center. They also wanted to know whether their profile measurement would match previous ones made using older telescope data combined with computer models.

Led by recent UT Austin doctoral graduate María José Bustamante, the team includes UT astronomers Eva Noyola, Karl Gebhardt and Greg Zeimann, as well as colleagues from Germany’s Max Planck Institute for Extraterrestrial Physics (MPE).

For their observations, they used a unique instrument called VIRUS-W on McDonald Observatory’s 2.7-meter Harlan J. Smith Telescope.

When the team fed their improved data and sophisticated models into a supercomputer at UT Austin’s Texas Advanced Computing Center, they got a startling result.

“The models are screaming that you need a black hole at the center; you don’t really need a lot of dark matter,” Gebhardt said. “You have a very small galaxy that is falling into the Milky Way, and its black hole is about as massive as the Milky Way’s. The mass ratio is absolutely huge. The Milky Way is dominant; the Leo I black hole is almost comparable.” The result is unprecedented.

The researchers said the result was different from the past studies of Leo I due to a combination of better data and the supercomputer simulations. The central, dense region of the galaxy was mostly unexplored in previous studies, which concentrated on the velocities of individual stars. The current study showed that for those few velocities that were taken in the past, there was a bias toward low velocities. This, in turn, decreased the inferred amount of matter enclosed within their orbits.

The new data is concentrated in the central region and is unaffected by this bias. The amount of inferred matter enclosed within the stars’ orbits skyrocketed.

The finding could shake up astronomers’ understanding of galaxy evolution, as “there is no explanation for this kind of black hole in dwarf spheroidal galaxies,” Bustamante said.

The result is all the more important as astronomers have used galaxies

a cheaper but potentially lower-quality care option, or leaving the workforce altogether,” the report explained.

In the last year, Workforce Solutions Borderplex supported 4,068 parents with an average of 7,930 children served per month. Most of the parents needing support were in a one-parent family, with 97% of those one-parent families headed by women. “Workforce Borderplex Solutions will further support the needs of families with the recently passed Build Back Better plan,” the report continued. “For working parents, the plan provides as many as four weeks of paid leave for eligible workers, allowing parents to care for their children or family members with serious health conditions and remain financially stable while doing so.”

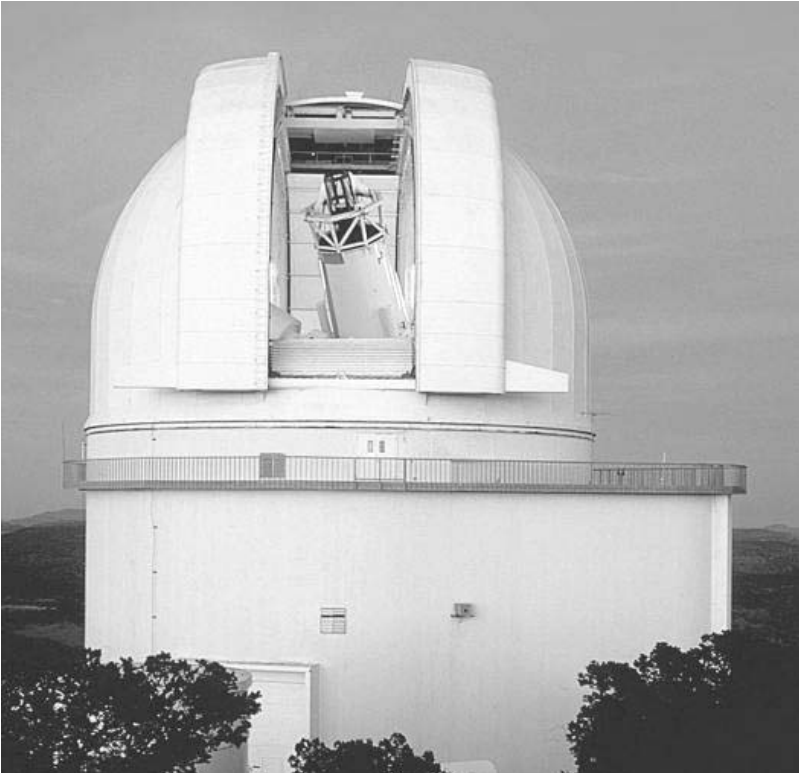


Photo by Marty Harris/McDonald Observatory
The 2.7-meter (107-inch) Harlan J. Smith Telescope at the University of Texas McDonald Observatory in Fort Davis was used by astronomers to discover startling news about a black hole in a nearby galaxy.

such as Leo I, called “dwarf spheroidal galaxies,” for 20 years to understand how dark matter is distributed within galaxies, Gebhardt added. This new type of black hole merger also gives gravitational wave observatories a new signal to search for.

“If the mass of Leo I’s black hole is high, that may explain how black holes grow in massive galaxies,” Gebhardt said. That’s because over time, as small galaxies like Leo I fall into larger galaxies, the smaller galaxy’s black hole merges with that of the larger galaxy, increasing its mass.

Built by a team at MPE in Germany, VIRUS-W is the only instrument in the world now that can do this type of dark matter profile study. Noyola pointed out that many southern hemisphere dwarf galaxies are good targets for it, but no southern hemisphere telescope is equipped for it. However, the Giant Magellan Telescope (GMT) now under construction in Chile was, in part, designed for this type of work. UT Austin is a founding partner of the GMT.

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24 Kislev - 2 Tevet 5775

The Feast of Dedication commemorates the victory of the Macabees over the Greek-Syrian armies in 165 B.C.E. and the liberation and "rededication" of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem.

The servant candle, or Shammash, is lighted first and kindles the other lights added successively each night.

The eight nights

The first light tells of Adonai whose first command was "Let there be light." The darkness of idol worship was scattered when Israel brought the radiant knowledge of the one God.

The second is the light of the Torah.
The third is the light of justice.
The fourth is the light of mercy.
The fifth is the light of holiness.
The sixth is the light of love.
The seventh is the light of patience.
The eighth is the light of courage.

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Winter blackout

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And so we had natural gas producers that weren’t producing.”
If another major freeze hits Texas this winter, “the same thing could happen,” Morgan said in an interview.
The predicament in Midlothian reflects a glaring shortcoming in Texas’ efforts to prevent a repeat of February, when a combination of freezing temperatures across the state and skyrocketing demand shut down natural gas facilities and power plants, which rely on each other to keep electricity flowing. The cycle of failures sent economic ripples across the country that cost hundreds of billions of dollars.
The power and gas industries say they are working to make their systems more reliable during winter storms, and the Public Utility Commission, the state agency that regulates the state’s power industry, finally acted on recommendations made by federal regulators a decade ago after another severe winter storm.

But energy experts say Texas’ grid remains vulnerable, largely because newly written regulations allowed too much wiggle room for companies to avoid weatherization improvements that can take months or years. More than nine months after February’s storm — which could exceed Hurricane Harvey as the costliest natural disaster in state history — a lack of data from regulators and industry groups makes it impossible to know how many power and gas facilities are properly weatherized.
For millions of Texans, that means there is no assurance that they will have electricity and heat if another major freeze strikes the state.
“If we see a recurrence of the storm we saw last year, people should probably be worried,” said Adrian Shelley, director of the Texas office of Public Citizen, a consumer-advocacy nonprofit group.
The stakes are high, and not just for Texas, the nation’s top energy-producing state. Its winter preparedness affects customers as far away as California and Minnesota and is a test of America’s ability to deal with climate change, which is making weather more extreme, more unpredictable and more deadly.

“Extreme weather events, such as the one in February 2021, are unfortunately becoming more commonplace and the electricity ecosystem needs to come together to plan for and prepare to operate under more extreme, longer duration, and wide area weather events,” Jim Robb, president and CEO of the North American Electric Reliability Corporation, said in a statement.
His organization published a joint report with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission this month that detailed the failures of both the power and natural gas industries to protect against February’s storm, despite recommendations by federal agencies after a similar disaster in 2011. That storm caused rolling blackouts — but no deaths — across much of the state over three days as then-Governor Rick Perry asked Texans to conserve electricity.
Although the natural gas industry has blamed electricity generators for the February blackouts — claiming that gas slowed only after power was cut to their facilities — the report said that freezing temperatures were the main cause of a sharp decline in natural gas in Texas and neighboring states in the early days of the storm that triggered a cascade of outages.
But federal regulators have little say in how the Texas grid operates.
The main Texas grid is an island, not connected to the country’s two major power grids. This is by design, the result of actions by state leaders decades

ago to avoid federal regulation and encourage free-market competition. Multiple state agencies, as well as a nonprofit organization — the Electric Reliability Council of Texas, or ERCOT — govern the grid’s operations, writing rules based on laws passed by state lawmakers.
The lawmakers responded to February’s disaster by passing legislation aimed at improving the power system’s preparedness for winter. It established weatherization mandates but left it to state regulators to implement them.
The Public Utility Commission followed with a rule enacting the weatherization requirements. But the rule allows power plants to request an exception if they document their efforts to comply, explain why they couldn’t and submit a plan to do so later.
The Texas Railroad Commission, which regulates the natural gas industry, is working more slowly. A proposal published in September — and expected to be finalized December 1 — lays out a timeline that would identify, map and impose weatherization mandates by early 2023 for gas producers that supply power plants. It also seeks to prevent a repeat of a major paperwork error that resulted in dozens of natural gas providers having their power cut off during February’s rolling blackouts because they failed to declare themselves “critical infrastructure.”
But the proposed rule, which the Railroad Commission said was written to reflect the language in the new state law, allows gas companies to opt out of that classification and avoid having to weatherize their equipment. That infuriated many legislators, despite the fact they’d voted for the law that allowed it after lobbying by the natural gas industry.
The result is that Texas has done “next to nothing” to weatherize its natural gas supply, said Doug Lewin, an Austin-based energy consultant.
“We don’t have a regulatory system in place that holds the industry accountable. That is the problem,” Lewin said. “It’s not a technology or engineering problem. It’s a regulatory problem.”
Natural gas fuels a majority of power generation in Texas, especially in winter. At one point during February’s storm, more than half of the state’s natural gas supply was shut down due to power outages, frozen equipment and weather conditions, ERCOT said, adding that at least 20% of the total outages during the week of the storm was due to power plants not getting enough gas.
The natural gas industry has been among the most politically powerful in Texas for generations and has donated generously to the campaigns of governors, lawmakers and the Railroad Commission. That contributes to a culture in which gas companies have escaped strict weatherization mandates, energy experts and consumer advocates say.
The Texas Oil and Gas Association, one of the most prominent energy lobbyist groups in Texas, defended the gas industry’s image in a public relations campaign after the storm. It also has had a heavy hand in deciding who sits on an informal advisory council that lawmakers codified after the storm, intended to ensure energy and electricity operations continue during extreme weather.
Todd Staples, president of the Texas Oil and Gas Association, said gas companies already weatherize to varying degrees and “are working with a sense of urgency.”
The best thing that can be done to avoid a repeat of February is for power companies to get access to larger amounts of stored gas ahead of a storm,

he said in an interview this month.
Staples said more than 1,000 facilities — out of more than 250,000 statewide — have filled out paperwork to be added to the list of “critical” facilities that won’t have their power cut off. That’s up from just 60 before the storm, Staples said.
The number will continue to rise after the Railroad Commission enacts its weatherization rule, Staples said. Because not all gas facilities immediately need emergency power during storms, Staples said the Railroad Commission should set up a system prioritizing which get power before others.
He said the industry would be prepared for winter, including having more gas in storage. “If the power is kept on, natural gas will continue at a reasonable level,” Staples said.
Oncor, Texas’ largest electricity transmission and distribution company, which delivers power to 3.8 million homes and businesses, said since the February storm it has received 1,061 forms from gas companies declaring their infrastructure as critical, a sign those companies are likely to be weatherized and prepared to operate during a grid emergency. AEP Texas and CenterPoint Energy, which together service more than 3.6 million Texas households and businesses, said they have received another 278 forms from gas companies registering their facilities as critical.
Several of Texas’ largest natural gas producers, including XTO Energy and Apache Corp., did not return calls or emails seeking comment on their weatherization efforts. Spokespeople for BP and Devon Energy declined to comment.

And the Railroad Commission said it did not know how many natural gas companies are actually prepared for winter. An agency spokesperson said ERCOT would have this information.
An ERCOT spokesperson declined to comment.
As the Railroad Commission works on its weatherization rule, electricity companies — including Oncor, AEP Texas, CenterPoint and Texas-New Mexico Power Company — have already begun criticizing the proposal. The companies filed a comment with the commission arguing that the proposed rule was too vague and “does not provide information electric utilities will need in order to efficiently and effectively incorporate natural gas facilities into their respective” emergency plans.
Virginia Palacios, executive director of Commission Shift, an organization that researches the Railroad Commission’s ties to the oil and gas industry, said the long process of creating new weatherization rules has prevented Texas from preparing for this winter.
“We are not going to have any assurances that operators are weatherizing for this winter,” Palacios said. “And probably not for the next one.”

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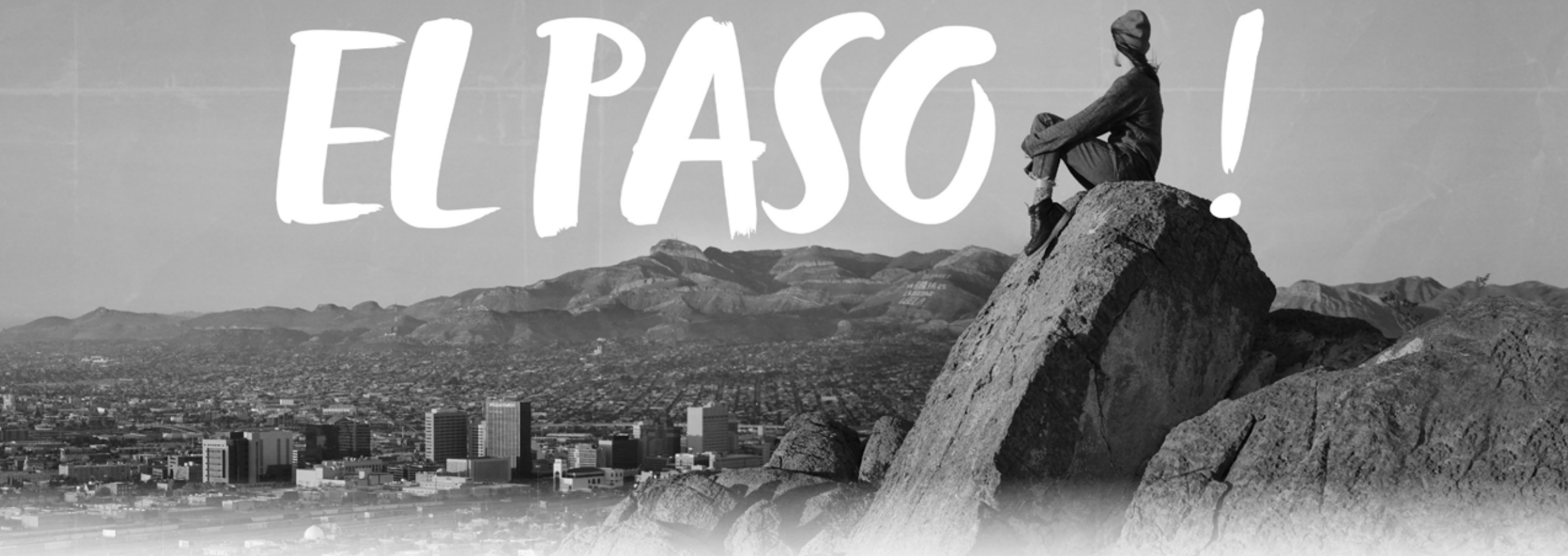
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Opinions

HIGH DESERT SKETCHES

There are many factors in the realm of increased inflation

By GEORGE A. COVINGTON

Everybody has their own theory about why inflation has increased at a higher rate than it has in thirty years. The answer isn't simple because there are so many factors. In Texas, we recognize the fact that the large and powerful petroleum industry faces little or no regulation from the mythically-named Texas Railroad Commission. For over a hundred years the energy industry has been able to control prices with the simple expediency of withholding production.

I remember an interview with the Chief Executive Officer of Exxon around 2008, during our greatest economic catastrophe since the Great Depression. He said, "Exxon doesn't make much money off gasoline." He retired a few years later with a retirement package of more than \$425 million. My only thought was, how many generations of Paris Hiltons do the rich need?

Last February, an estimated 200 people died from the weather and its effects. Electricity producers first claimed that the natural gas they used for generating power was all frozen. Then they claimed the age-old "our generators were down for maintenance." Then the Guv Greg Abbott said the cause was wind power failure, an accusation he later dropped.

The Lords of Oil and their minions in the state government have done little to guarantee we won't face the same problems this winter.

This comes after the Guv signed HB 1520 into law in June, essentially allowing gas utility providers who incurred significant losses during the storm to "issue bonds and impose fees and assessments," according to the bill, to be able to pay back natural gas wholesalers. It is incredible that the Guv did nothing to improve conditions similar to those that happened last February. Instead, he devoted his powers of persuasion toward limiting the actions of transgender children and banning certain school books.

Recently, the US labor department announced that the consumer price index – a basket of products ranging from gasoline and health care to groceries and rents – rose 6.2% from a year ago. That's the nation's highest annual inflation rate since November 1990.

Viewed this way, the underlying problem isn't inflation per se. It's a lack of competition. Corporations are using the excuse of inflation to raise prices and make fatter profits.

In April, Procter & Gamble (P&G) announced it would start charging more for consumer staples ranging from diapers to toilet paper, citing "rising costs for raw materials...and higher expenses to transport goods".

But P&G is making huge profits. In the quarter ending September 30th, after some of its price increases went into effect, it reported a whopping 24.7% profit margin. It even spent \$3 billion during the quarter buying back its own stock.

It could raise prices and rake in more money because P&G faces almost no competition. The lion's share of the market for diapers, to take one example, is controlled by just two companies – P&G and Kimberly-Clark – which seem to coordinate their prices and production. It was hardly a coincidence that Kimberly-Clark announced price increases similar to P&G's at the same time P&G announced its own price increases.

Or consider another consumer product duopoly – PepsiCo and Coca-Cola. In April, PepsiCo announced it was increasing prices, blaming "higher costs for some ingredients, freight and labor." The company didn't have to raise prices. It recorded \$3 billion in operating profits through September.

If PepsiCo faced tough competition, it could never have gotten away with this. To the contrary, it appears to have colluded with Coca-Cola – which, oddly, announced price increases at about the same time as PepsiCo, and has increased its profit margins to 28.9%. Consider that most grocery chains are more than happy to make between 4 and 3 percent profit while the companies that face little competition are unhappy unless they can secure enormous profits.

You can see a similar pattern in energy prices. If energy markets were competitive, producers would have quickly ramped up production to create more supply, once it became clear that demand was growing. But they didn't.

Simply put, inflation isn't driving most of these price increases. It is just good old-fashioned corporate greed.

After the government dropped the antitrust charges against Microsoft in the early 1990s, two-thirds of all American industries have become more concentrated. Microsoft, Amazon, Apple, Facebook (now Meta) and Google (now Alphabet) virtually control the internet. New York's five largest banks control a great deal of the finance in this country. The airlines have dwindled to only four major lines, and the pharmacy industry has purchased so many politicians that they almost have a monopoly on Washington, D.C. My readers may wonder why everybody in the world seems to be getting richer and the rest of us appear to be paying more.

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.

Crowcrumbs is a Houston-based illustrator. Follow her on Instagram @crowcrumbs.

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I'M NOT INTERESTED IN THE LEAST IN DISCOVERING WHAT ELSE LIFE HAS TO OFFER!

I WONDER IF I SHOULD TRY TO BE A ROCK STAR?



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Chinati follows COVID-19 precautions. Masks and social distancing are required.

Visit chinati.org for more information and to book reservations.

Christmas lights, music and Sul Ross tree lighting on Saturday in Alpine

ALPINE — Revel in the holiday spirit this Saturday, December 4, as the Alpine Historical Association hosts its first ever East Sul Ross Avenue Walking Light Stroll and Music event in conjunction with the lighting of Sul Ross State University’s Christmas Tree in Alpine.

The fun starts with a meet-and-greet photo opportunity with Santa Claus and his helpers on the Brewster County Courthouse lawn at 4:30 p.m., sponsored by Morrison True Value. From there, folks will head to the recently renovated 128-year-old Alpine school house for kid’s crafts and hot cocoa provided by Porter’s with the City of Alpine.

From 5:30 p.m. to 9 p.m., there will be Individual performances by local bands and choirs — organized by Dr. Andrew D. Alegria, SRSU Director of Choral Activities and Vocal Studies — at various locations along East Sul Ross Avenue, ending at Sul Ross State University’s Lawrence Hall for the tree lighting and photos with Santa.

Musicians from Alpine, Marfa, Ft. Stockton and Presidio, including many of the local high school choirs, will serenade visitors as they visit the beautiful, historic homes and lights on Sul Ross Avenue. Chisos Brewing will also offer tastings of their cider and beer. East Sul Ross Avenue will be closed to promote walking.

Hayrides provided by In and Out Rental and hay provided by Out West Feed & Supply will be offered. The organization is encouraging all spectators and performers to bundle up and wear comfortable shoes as they stroll the streets of Alpine this Saturday.

Here’s the full schedule of events for Saturday, December 4:

4:30 pm - A meet and greet with Santa Claus (Brewster County Courthouse,) followed by kid’s crafts and hot cocoa (Old school house.)

5:45 pm - Sul Ross Choir and Band directed by Dr. Andrew D. Alegria, with hot cocoa and apple cider served in the Fellowship Hall (208 E Sul Ross Ave., Methodist Church)

6:00 pm - Marfa HS Choir led by Director Beth Kerzee (402 E Sul Ross Ave., Church of Christ)

6:15 pm - Presidio HS Band led by Director Ronfled Espinoza (608 E Sul Ross Ave.)

6:30 pm - Fort Stockton HS Choir led by Director Omar Guerrero (701 E Sul Ross Ave., McFarland family home)

6:45 pm - Alpine High School Band led by Director Chuck Wilson (803 E Sul Ross Ave., Hancock-Quiett family home)

7:00 pm – Santa will make his way from the East Sul Ross Porter’s location up East Sul Ross to Lawrence Hall

7:30 pm – SRSU Lawrence Hall - All bands and choirs to perform together for SRSU’s Tree Lighting event, led by Dr. Andrew D. Alegria. SRSU President Pete Gallego will speak.

8:15 pm - Ross Fleming performs (301 E. Sul Ross, The Vajdos family home)

8:30 pm The Swifts perform (208 N. Cockrell , The Vaquero, Branch family home)



Photo courtesy of Alpine Historical Association

The Vaquero house is one of the stops that will be open to visitors along the Light Stroll route this Saturday. Those strolling through town will be serenaded by local musicians and many of the area’s high school choirs before reaching the Sul Ross State University’s tree lighting ceremony.

USPS helps Santa and his many helpers find and send presents to kids in need

TEXAS — Times are hard and the holidays can be stressful. Every day can be a struggle for some families simply trying to make ends meet. Everyone deserves to experience the magic of the holiday season. This is where the United States Postal Service’s Operation Santa program comes in.

During the holiday season, children are invited to write to Santa. Those letters are anonymized and shared on a USPS website, where generous strangers are able to “adopt” a letter writer, purchase requested gifts and make someone’s holiday a little bit brighter.

USPS Operation Santa has been making wishes come true for 109 years. This year, letters have been streaming in since November 1, but there is still time to get your wishes to the big guy this season. USPS Operation Santa is accepting letters until December 10 this year.

To participate, simply write a physical letter to Santa, put it in an envelope, include a complete return address — full name, street address, apartment number, city, state and ZIP Code — add a postage stamp and put it in the mail. Letters need to be postmarked by December 10. These letters populate USPSOperationSanta.com. Envelopes without full names and complete return addresses will not be posted. Envelopes without postage stamps will not arrive at the location.

Writing the personal letter just takes a little bit of time. Including specific information — sizes, styles and colors for clothes and shoes, titles of books and names of toys — makes it easier for the letter adopter to fulfill wishes.

USPS Operation Santa was established by the Postal Service to help those in need during the holidays. Whether you believe in Santa or not, the nondenominational program is intended to help as many deserving families as possible experience a happy holiday season.

The letters arrive at Santa’s satellite workshop in the U.S., they are reviewed, all personal information is redacted to protect the writers and the letters are posted for generous people to adopt. Letter adoption began November 29.

Those interested in letter adoption must first create an account on the



Image courtesy of USPS

Kids can send letters to Santa by following the instructions above. If their letter is adopted by a generous stranger, they may end up getting their Christmas wishes fulfilled by Santa and his helpers.

website and get their identities verified — just follow the prompts. Letter writers do not need to create accounts.

While there is no guarantee a letter will be adopted or a gift will be provided, this program helps get many holiday presents into children’s hands, solely through the generosity of strangers and their random acts of kindness.

All the information you need can be found at USPSOperationSanta.com.

Decades-long holiday tradition continues on in Marathon

MARATHON — Marathon will celebrate Fiesta de Noche Buena from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Saturday December 4. The annual event rings in the holidays along main street the first Saturday of December each year.

This year, Santa and Mrs. Claus will lead a parade into town at 5:15 p.m. Afterwards, Mr. and Mrs. Claus will greet children in the lobby of Trans Pecos Bank. Then, Marathon ISD students will begin a caroling performance at 5:30 p.m.

Shops and galleries will stay open late, and artists will display their work on the street. Food options include burgers and hot dogs grilled by Marathon Volunteer Fire Department and brisket prepared by Marathon ISD PTO, in addition to local restaurant fare. There will be street music

and live music at multiple venues, including French Co. Grocer, Gage Hotel and more.

In addition to live music, French Co. Grocer will offer hot spiced rum, churros and s’mores by the fire pits on their patio.

Special guests include McDonald Observatory, with a scale model lighting demonstration, observatory programs and other night sky information and displays. Marathon Sky Park will bring a telescope for viewing on site.

The Chamber of Commerce is sponsoring a luminaria display to help lead the way from vendor to vendor. Chamber board members will greet visitors and discuss chamber projects, including a planned night sky festival set for April 29 to 30, 2022.

Fort Davis Chamber hosts ‘Miracle on State Street’ event this Saturday

FORT DAVIS — Santa Claus is coming to Fort Davis! The annual Miracle on State Street event in Fort Davis promises live music, pictures with Santa and a cookie bake-off this Saturday, December 4.

The Fort Davis Chamber of Commerce is hosting a full day of shopping and events to celebrate the holiday season, and Fort Davis businesses will be offering shopping opportunities throughout town with special promotions and pop-up vendors. Vendors will be located at J.Davis Emporium, and Stone Village Market will be hosting the first Davis Mountains Wine, Beer & Spirits festival.

“Consider purchasing your holiday gifts at local businesses this year,” said Melissa Henderson, Director of the Chamber of Commerce. “This is an easy way to support and build our community.”

Afternoon festivities kick off with the annual holiday parade at 3 p.m., with Santa leading the way atop of a fire truck. The parade will proceed down State Street and end at the Jeff Davis County Courthouse, followed by photos with Santa, a cookie bake-off, hot cocoa and tree lighting all located on the south side of the courthouse.

Line-up will begin at the elementary school at 2:45 p.m. for those who want to participate in the parade. A trophy will be awarded to the best

holiday float.

As soon as Santa arrives, he will set up on the courthouse porch to hear all the children’s Christmas desires. Parents are encouraged to snap a picture and use #FortDavis on social media.

The annual cookie bake-off returns this year after last year’s hiatus. Competitors are encouraged to whip up one dozen cookies from their favorite recipe and deliver them to the courthouse lawn between 3 and 3:30 p.m. to be entered into the competition. Judging will begin at 4 p.m.

Events will coincide with a live radio, ‘drive-in and tune-in’ event. The radio show hosted by Al Haney of Fort Stockton begins immediately following the parade and will feature Haney and local musicians Stephen Bright and friends and then Doug Moreland. The radio show will air on channel FM 104.7.

The big finale will be a Christmas lighting where a dedicated tree on the lawn will be lit up at 6 p.m. Kids are encouraged to craft an ornament to decorate the tree which will be available during the festivities.

All events are free and open to the public. In the event of rain or snow, events will be relocated to the Kelly Pavilion located behind the Chamber of Commerce at the historic Union Mercantile building.

Big Bend Community Chorale presents: ‘Around the World It’s Christmas’

MARFA — The Big Bend Community Chorale is performing this weekend in Marfa, presenting a musical medley of singers from across the region on Sunday, December 5, 2021. The performance will begin at 3 p.m. at the First Presbyterian Church – Marfa.

The chorale is composed of community members from Alpine, Marathon, Ft. Davis, Marfa and Terlingua, and the group will be singing songs of the Christmas Season.

Dr. Andrew Alegria, Director of Choral Music at Sul Ross State University, is the conductor for the BBCC, assisted by Omar Guerrero. Ellen Boyd is the accompanist.

Admission is free and open to the public. Big Bend Community Chorale welcomes all on Sunday, December 5th at 3 p.m. at First Presbyterian Church, 110 E. Columbia Street, Marfa.

Presidio Posada on Friday will bring free food, gifts and lots of merriment

PRESIDIO — Holiday cheer arrives to Presidio on Friday, December 3 with an event for the whole community. The Presidio Posada begins at 7 p.m. and will have a parade, tree lighting, live music, free food and even a special visitor from the North Pole.

Events kick off with a parade from the city pool at 1144 E O'Reilly, proceeding through town and finishing at UETA Duty Free at 2403 O'Reilly.

Festivities then move on to the St. Francis Plaza, where an 8 p.m. tree lighting is followed by an 8:30 p.m. performance by the children’s choir.

Later, a special guest will arrive. Santa Claus will be at the plaza for a meet and greet photo opportunity at 9 p.m. and there will be free gifts.

Tasty food and drinks will be provided free of charge, including buñuelos, champurrado, hot chocolate, coffee, tamales and pan dulce for all.

The event is sponsored by the City of Presidio Convention and Visitor Bureau, with support from local businesses.

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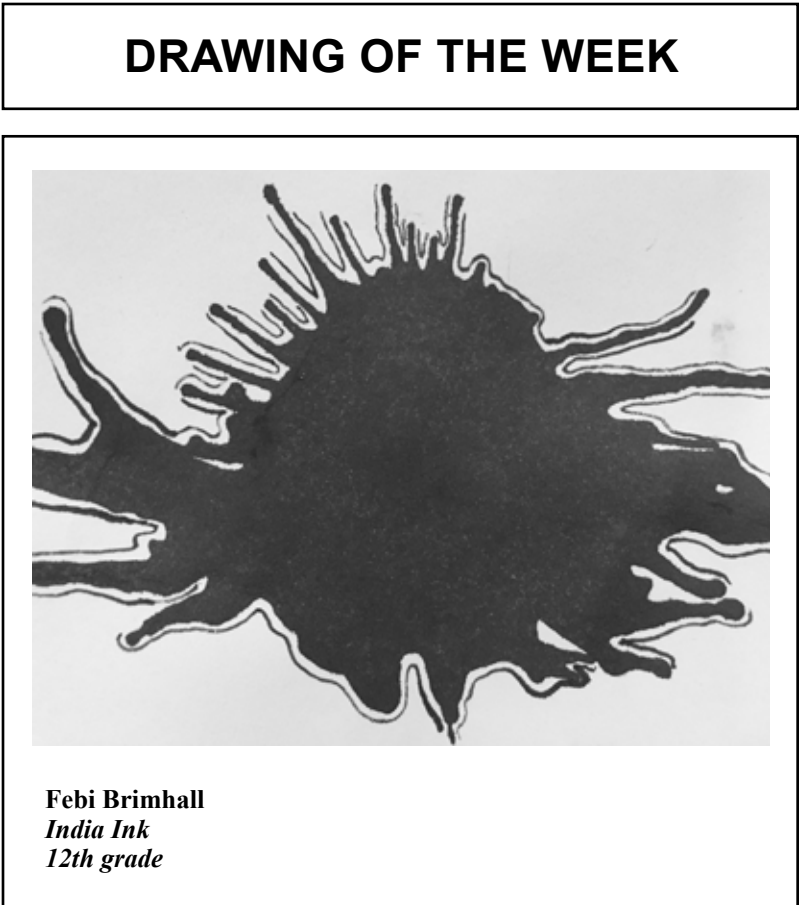
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Universal Crossword

Edited by David Steinberg November 15, 2021

ACROSS

1 Let in
6 "Dancing Queen" group
10 Swarm around
13 "Time in a Bottle" singer Jim
14 It doesn't make news when it bites a dog
15 Pacific or Atlantic, e.g., in Monopoly: Abbr.
16 Get the basic notion (In this answer, notice letters 10-13)
19 Rams' counterparts
20 Couple's pronoun
21 Showing chutzpah
23 Cancel, as a story
25 Said "y'all," say
26 Break free
29 They make a living from bills
31 Dampen future events (... letters 3-7)
33 Baby's boo-boo
34 Longtime quarterback Manning
35 Pile of compost
39 Deteriorates (... letters 4-7)
43 What "Izzy" may be for
47 Penn's partner

28 Weaken with water
49 One takes orders
50 Handle properly
51 Castaway's home, perhaps
53 Sound heard at a kennel
57 Makes sense (... letters 6-10)
60 Color of a camel's hair
61 "Now, doctor!"
62 Ordinary Joe
63 Animal in "Tarzan"
64 Play group?
65 Sport with clay targets

DOWN

1 Advil target
2 Word before "a blank" or "the line"
3 "Outta my way!"
4 Piece of hockey footwear
5 Oolong, for one
6 In conflict with, with "of"
7 Picture imperfection
8 Pleads
9 "How relaxing!"
10 Arrived at last
11 Take too far
12 "Busy" animal
17 Parts for actresses
18 Acquired relative
22 Drapes' length units: Abbr.

24 Beer with a West Coast variety, briefly
25 Brian of ambient music
26 Prefix for "friendly"
27 Tool used on a log
28 "... Vegas" (CBS show)
29 Chip dip
30 Cut a paragraph from, maybe
32 Command to a tugging dog
35 Football rusher
36 Subj. that builds fluency
37 Had scallion pancakes, e.g.
38 The "p" in mpg
39 Board, as a streetcar

40 "Bravo," in Mexico
41 Broad, vague category
42 Small
43 Driver's license and others, briefly
44 Afternoon nap
45 British keg attachment
46 Lighter fuel
49 Coagulates
51 Analogy words
52 "Don't go!"
54 "A Hard Road to Glory" author
55 Colosseum's city
56 Shoelace
58 It ended on Nov. 7 in 2021
59 Double curve

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Celebration, reunion as Lipan Apache tribal council travels to Presidio from McAllen for special ceremony

By SAM KARAS
sam@bigbendsentinel.com

PRESIDIO — Representatives from the Lipan Apache tribal council traveled to Presidio from McAllen last weekend for a special ceremony in the cemetery on Market Street. In the month since the deeds to the cemetery were signed over to the tribe on November 2, the Big Bend Conservation Alliance and the City of Presidio worked together to reclaim stones that had been taken from gravesites over the years. The graves are marked by sentinel stones, or sentinelas, that were used instead of traditional Western crosses or engraved markers. Their purpose was both spiritual and practical: the stones would keep watch over the grave in a metaphysical sense and also deterred animals from digging them up.

The cemetery’s history dates back to the 18th century, when the Lipan Apache were granted a reservation in the Presidio-Ojinaga area as part of a peace settlement with the Spanish government. Members of the Ornelas and Aguilar families — whose descendants number in the hundreds in the area today — can definitively trace their ancestry to the burial mound, but there may be other families interred there, too. It’s hard to say, as many of the graves are unmarked and the cemetery has been threatened for decades by city development. In the past few decades, a number of homes and an alleyway were built over existing graves.

Elvira Hermosillo, Presidio’s community liaison for the Big Bend Conservation Alliance, walked the streets with Mayor John Ferguson to spread awareness. Many people in the neighborhood had taken rocks from the cemetery without realizing it was a cemetery. “We handed out informational flyers to explain the meaning of the rocks,” she said. “We told people, ‘If you or someone you know took rocks from the cemetery, we ask that you just please return them. You don’t have to tell anyone, just go drop them off.’”

City administrator Brad Newton was personally responsible for the reclamation of a large number of rocks from a neighbor. A new police recruit had bought a house on the same block as the cemetery, and a rock wall was preventing him from receiving propane deliveries to his new home. Many of those rocks were suspected to have come from the cemetery. “It was a win-win,” Newton said. “He wasn’t in love with the fence. It was on [a city] easement, so it was really easy to get a front-loader in there and scoop up all the rocks and create a new driveway for him that wasn’t in the cemetery.”

At Saturday’s event, tribal members and the cemetery’s neighbors were invited to a small ceremony to bless the rocks and return them to the burial mound. It was the first time many tribal members, most of whom are based in South Texas, had been to the site. A few members of the council had visited the cemetery back in 2013, when the cemetery had been threatened by a paving project on Market Street. “When we came, there were bike trails and ATV trails up here,” recalled Robert Soto, vice chairman of the Lipan Apache tribe. “There were definitely parties out here, a lot of broken bottles.”

In light of the long struggle for formal recognition and protection, the mood on Saturday was one of optimism and celebration. “We don’t come here to worship the graves,” tribal chairman Bernard Barcena explained. “We come here to honor them in a good way, which is to preserve this place and the memories of those who are buried here.”

Barcena, Soto and other representatives from the tribe performed traditional songs around a large drum. They invited Nakai Flotte, who has family roots in Presidio-Ojinaga and in Manuel Benavides, Chihuahua, to bless the ceremony with a prayer in the Lipan language. Flotte made smoke in a small bowl and dusted her hands with mesquite pollen, forms of protection from spiritual influences.

Flotte holds a PhD in anthropology from Harvard and is currently a postdoctoral fellow in Latino and Native American Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. She’s used her high-powered academic background to spearhead efforts to restore the Lipan language, long considered extinct. “I was the first to pray in the language in hundreds of years,” she explained. “We lost our language. But spirituality involves language—you can’t learn about our spirituality without learning the language.”

Flotte’s work to reconstruct the Lipan language centers around the oral history of Augustina Zuazua, a Lipan woman who was forcibly removed

from her home in Zaragoza, Coahuila by the Mexican army and eventually came to land at the Mescalero Apache reservation in 1903. The Mescalero and Lipan Apache have long been neighbors in the Big Bend — the Spanish granted them reservations across the river from each other as part of the peace settlements that led the cemetery’s Lipan families to permanently settle in the area. Despite keeping close quarters, their cultures and languages are related, but distinct.

When the linguist Henry Hoijer interviewed Zuazua in 1939, he was amazed to learn just how distinct. Thanks to Zuazua, we know that the Lipan word for “rock” is tsí, and that their name for the Rio Grande was gonitséi, roughly translated to “big river” like its Spanish counterpart. “We haven’t talked in so long, people don’t know how to make the sounds,” Flotte explained. “They aren’t common in Spanish or English. So that’s the first initial part, teaching people how the vocabulary works. And then later reconstructing the language.”

For Flotte, reconstructing the Lipan language is part of a larger project to honor the importance of indigenous identity in the culture and history of the borderlands. Enrique Madrid — a Jumano historian from Redford who was present at Saturday’s ceremony — is fond of reminding people about a 1999 DNA study from Sul Ross State University and Texas A&M that suggested that the average Ojinaga resident is 91% Native American by ancestry. That 91% isn’t always part of the narrative. “At one point, it was illegal to be Native here,” Flotte explained. “We’re so invested in looking to the south — Mexico, Mexico, Mexico — we forget that our [Lipan] ancestors came from the north, from Canada. Let’s move beyond that, beyond our nationality.”

Darcie Little Badger is another academic with Lipan roots who was invited to speak at Saturday’s ceremony. She and her mother, Hermelinda Walking Woman, are advisors to the tribal council. “My degree in geoscience can attest that rocks tell stories — their composition, their grain size, their color, their shape. Everything about them speaks to the world that created them,” she said. “And just like we impact the land, the land impacts us. And just looking at this land here, and the rocks and the people, I see a story of endurance and strength.”

As a geoscientist, Little Badger is especially interested in the origin of the sentinelas — their diversity suggests that Lipan people generations ago carried them considerable distances from different sources. “What really surprised me are the number of rocks that have been returned,” she said. “It just shows that there is a desire to make this land whole again.”

For many of the tribal council members visiting from South Texas, the project to reclaim the cemetery led them to reconnect with other communities of Lipan Apache they didn’t know existed. For tribal chairman Barcena, it was especially personal. “Christina [Hernandez] had written me an email about the things she’d seen out here, about trying to protect this site,” he recalled. “When I found out about that, I didn’t realize that I had family ties out here, in Shafter.” He discovered that his great-grandfather’s sister was married to one of the original investors in the Shafter mines.

For Barcena, the natural beauty of the Big Bend mirrors traditional Lipan cosmology. Elders had long spoken of Lipans “crossing the river” after death, a river of stars in the Milky Way galaxy. “What makes this land so special? I’ve often seen photos of the Milky Way taken out here at McDonald Observatory,” he said. “It really brings home that point, of our people making that journey.”

He spoke at length for the small audience gathered in the cemetery on Saturday about the importance of the land being transferred to the Lipan Tribe. “We don’t have a blood quantum, our tribe is by descendancy,” he explained. “Blood quantum” refers to the US government’s policy of restricting tribal membership based on how directly an individual is related to other registered tribal members. For the Lipan—who are not a federally recognized tribe—that practice has limited their political power, especially in Presidio, over 600 miles away from the tribal office. “Now our people have a voice,” he said. “Now the remains that have been scattered will have a voice and a home to be returned to. Hopefully other states will have the same consideration our people have had and see that their sites are returned.”

“This is a very emotional time for me,” he added. “This is huge for a little town in a big county in Texas.”

OBITUARY



Chappell

Recollections about loyalty, pushing for the “right thing to be done,” and finding solutions in the details abounded in conversations after **David F. Chappell**, 78, Fort Worth attorney and civic leader, died November 18, following surgery in Dallas. He was born April 18, 1943.

Reflecting on the life of their family’s patriarch, daughter Paige Pritchett and son Wade Chappell agreed their father’s integrity was among the greatest reasons for his successes in public and private life.

The 1967 graduate of the University of Texas Law School was a “fierce and formidable litigator” who proudly represented corporations like Bell Helicopter Textron, Price Waterhouse and Warner Bros over the decades. For 35 years, he was recognized as “an attorney of excellence” by the prestigious national Martindale Hubbell Legal Directory.

Elected to the Fort Worth City Council in 1989, David chaired the Council’s Economic Development Committee and Economic Development Task Force, becoming a strong advocate for economic sustainability and growth in North Central Texas. Other leadership positions in this sector included serving as chair of numerous innovation-oriented organizations including the National Advisory Council of the U.S. Small Business Administration; North Texas Regional Council on Innovation and Commercialization, and Center for Public Policy Priorities. At the time of his death, he was serving on the Dean’s Advisory Committee, College of Natural Sciences, University of Texas at Austin; and President’s Advisory Committee, Texas Wesleyan University.

David recognized the importance of quality healthcare, serving as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Medical City Fort Worth Hospital. His experience included service on the prestigious Code Red Study of Access to Care in Texas commissioned by the Medical Schools of Texas. The fact-based

study culminated in comprehensive recommendations for reform in the state’s healthcare industry.

Education was also a passion of his. For many years David served as legal counsel for the Fort Worth ISD, learning firsthand the importance of nurturing students’ reading skills. Through his leadership, the Fort Worth Library Foundation was established to support the growing demands of the City’s public library system. So committed was he to encouraging reading, that every time he made a personal contribution to the nonprofit, he designated it for the purchase of books and more books.

A loyalty to his alma mater and a natural curiosity led him to the University of Texas McDonald Observatory in the Davis Mountains of West Texas, one of the world’s leading centers for astronomical research and teaching. The observatory is a leader in the study of ‘dark energy’ and a partner in the Giant Magellan Telescope under construction in Chile. Having served as chair of the observatory’s Board of Visitors, David continually built support for the institution’s phenomenal studies and public education programs.

The beauty and tranquility of the mountains and skies in and around the Observatory captured not only David’s wanderlust but also the imagination of his wife Ann. Their life together over more than 50 years had been punctuated with numerous community endeavors, Ann’s commitment to Habitat for Humanity and David’s support for entrepreneurship. More recently, they chose to seek tranquility and provide generous hospitality at their second home with striking views of the Observatory, Mount Locke and the Davis Mountains.

The Fort Davis area’s Grand Companions Humane Society pulled at their hearts to volunteer, which they did while also adopting a mixed-breed rescue dog, Katie, who now lives at the Pritchett household.

David was preceded in death by Ann who died in February 2020. He is survived by Paige Pritchett, her husband John and their two children, Lillian and John Murrin; and Wade Chappell, his wife Blair and their two children, Caroline and Sutherland.

Gifts in memory of David F. Chappell may be made to:

The Fort Worth Public Library Foundation, fwlibraryfoundation.org
Grand Companions Humane Society, grandcompanions.org
Friends of McDonald Observatory, mcdonaldobservatory.org

McDonald Observatory plans Dark Skies Festival for April 2022

By SAM KARAS
sam@bigbendsentinel.com

FORT DAVIS — The McDonald Observatory is currently organizing programming for a Dark Skies Festival to be held at the Frank N. Bash Visitor’s Center outside Fort Davis on April 29 and 30, 2022. Details have yet to be finalized, but Observatory staff is asking locals and dark skies enthusiasts of all stripes to mark their calendars for the event.

The festival will feature daytime and evening events including tours of the observatory, telescope viewing, speakers, food and live music. The programming is billed as “family friendly” and welcoming to budding astronomers of all ages. April’s festival will also mark the opening of a new exhibit, sponsored by the Apache Corporation, that explores dark sky protections through interactive content that encourages visitors to think about light and how it affects the night sky.

The McDonald Observatory, opened in 1933, is a facility of the University of Texas at Austin’s College of Natural Sciences. It’s home to the Hobby-Eberly telescope, one of the largest optical reflecting telescopes in the world. The Big Bend region’s famously dark skies allow for optimum stargazing and fuel the important research conducted at the Observatory. Observatory staff hope next spring’s festival will help spark public interest in keeping dark skies dark.

“We hope the Dark Skies Festival will raise appreciation of the exceptional night skies in our region, and raise awareness of easy solutions to mitigate light pollution,” said Stephen Hummel, a dark skies specialist at the Observatory. “Light pollution impacts not only research at McDonald Observatory, but also nocturnal wildlife, our culture, the health and safety of residents, and the local economy. We hope both residents and visitors to the region will join us in our celebration of the night sky.”

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PUBLIC NOTICES

The Marfa Parks and Recreation Board meets every third
Thursday of the month at 6:00pm in the Casner Room at City
Hall. The public is invited to attend.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice of Public Meeting to Discuss the Presidio ISD State
Financial Accountability Rating.

Presidio ISD will hold a public meeting at **6:30 p.m. on
December 14, 2021**, in the Board Room at the Presidio
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The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the Presidio ISD
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