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BURN BAN IN EFFECT, NO GROUND FIRES
by order of Presidio County

In the wake of local concerns and a staffing shortage, BBRMC says it is strategizing

By ALLEGRA HOBBS
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FAR WEST TEXAS — On Thursday of last week, the Big Bend Regional Hospital District Board of Directors met at the Marfa Public Library and discussed, among other things, reporting in The Big Bend Sentinel that raised concerns about internal operations at the tri-counties' only hospital — Big Bend Regional Medical Center in Alpine.

The Big Bend Sentinel had published two stories on the hospital in recent weeks — one covering the administration's decision to move the med-surg unit for general patient care into the emergency department, which prompted health and safety concerns from locals, and one on the concerns of former staffers, who say lack of sufficient pay and appreciation, safety concerns, and low morale were prompting an exodus. One former employee who spoke to The Big Bend Sentinel said the consolidation of med-surg with the ER had been the final straw for them.

J.D. Newsom, the hospital district's executive director, met with hospital CEO Rick Flores earlier in the week, along with Chairman Buddy Cavness, to discuss ongoing problems with staffing at BBRMC. "There's been a lot of press lately about the hospital and their operations, and I wanted us to be informed of what's going on and see what the hospital district can do," said Newsom at Thursday's meeting.

Newsom said that while Flores presented "great long-term strategies" to address the ongoing staffing crisis, "I feel like when asked about their short-term solutions, they didn't have a whole lot, and I think they're still trying to figure that out and it's really hard."

On Monday, Flores met with The Big Bend Sentinel for an approximately 45-minute interview, with Marketing Director Ruth Hucke present, to discuss those strategies along with the hospital's outlook in the shorter term.

Most immediately, the hospital on that day was beginning the process of separating the med-surg unit from the ER, said Flores, with the target date for officially re-opening med-surg slated for April 25. "That's official," said Flores. "There are no ifs, ands or buts."

The two departments have been combined since the end of January, cutting down available space for

(Continued on page 3)



Staff photo by Maisie Crow

A group of recently apprehended undocumented immigrants lineup at the U.S.-Mexico border as they prepare to walk back into Mexico after being expelled from the U.S. under Title 42.

CDC to suspend controversial Title 42

By MARY CANTRELL
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FAR WEST TEXAS — The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently announced Title 42, a controversial policy which allows for the immediate expulsion of undocumented migrants from the U.S.-Mexico border, will be suspended on May 23.

The CDC first authorized Title 42 under the Trump administration, during the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. The 1944 Public Health Service Act was created in order to allow the government to suspend entries from other countries to "prevent spread of communicable diseases."

Title 42's opponents have argued it supersedes U.S. asylum law and violates human rights. Under the public health order, migrants and asylum seekers are expelled swiftly, without the right to trial or the ability to make an asylum claim. Expulsions carried out under the order also carry no legal repercussions, as they are carried out without criminal proceedings. Since March 2020, DHS has carried out over 1.7 million migrant expulsions under Title 42, according to government statistics.

The CDC ordered the suspension of Title 42 last week, stating it was no longer needed in order to prioritize public health or prevent coronavirus.

"With CDC's assistance and guidance, DHS has and will implement additional COVID-19 mitigation procedures. These measures, along with the current public health landscape where 97.1% of the U.S. population lives in a county identified as having 'low' COVID-19 Community Level, will sufficiently mitigate the COVID-19 risk for U.S. communities," the CDC said in a press release.

Texas' Republican leaders, including senators John Cornyn, Ted Cruz and Rep. Tony Gonzalez of Texas' 23rd Congressional District, are urging the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Homeland Security to keep Title 42 in place. A letter signed by Cornyn, Cruz and Gonzalez argues the DHS appears unprepared to handle an increase in apprehensions along the U.S.-Mexico border that would likely follow the suspension of Title 42.

"At the current levels of cross-border migration, DHS currently lacks adequate capacity to process and detain all migrants apprehended along the southwest border … Furthermore, small border communities lack the appropriate housing, transportation, and healthcare infrastructure to manage the ongoing release of migrant

(Continued on page 2)

City council conducts property sale, approves HOT grants and engineering services for Marfa and Presidio County Museum

By MARY CANTRELL
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MARFA — Marfa City Council sat down last week for a routine meeting involving the sale of city property to a private citizen, to approve hotel occupancy tax (HOT) grant funding requests for the area's cultural goings-on, and to greenlight preliminary engineering services for the Marfa and Presidio County Museum.

Mayor Manny Baeza and all council members, with the exception of Councilmember Raul Lara, were present at the meeting. City Manager Mandy Roane and City Attorney Teresa Todd were in attendance.

After citizen comments, council held a public hearing in order to officially close on the sale of 270 square feet of East Lincoln Street to Marfa resident Concepcion Campos, to which there were no public comments or objections. At a previous meeting, councilmembers Yoseff Ben-Yehuda and Lara, along with Mayor Pro-Tem Irma Salgado, voted to sell Campos the land, on which her front porch is encroaching, so she could proceed with the sale of her home to an interested buyer.

The city received fair market value for the land — a total of $2,473 as determined by an appraisal — which will be funneled into the city's street improvement funds account. Campos will also pay a $500 administrative fee to the city. A replat of two lots will be performed by a surveyor before Campos' sale can close.

There are no city utility lines near the encroachment and due to the width of the street, the area is not affecting traffic, states the city's notice of the public hearing. The encroachment onto East Lincoln street was one of four total encroachments, one on each side of Campos' property, discovered during the survey process, states a city ordinance which outlines the terms and conditions of the sale.

Along with the properties of both of her neighbors, Campos' property lines were, in actuality, between 3 and 4 feet further west than believed. The neighboring properties agreed to the encroachment sale and to resurvey.

Homes which have been passed from generation to generation, avoiding routine surveys, and historically inaccurate measurements have contributed to local encroachment issues. City council, along with City Manager Roane, have spoken at previous meetings about the issue

(Continued on page 2)

Future of Presidio's hazmat ordinance in limbo as city seeks second legal opinion

By SAM KARAS
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PRESIDIO — At a council meeting on March 21, the passage of a hazmat ordinance banning the transloading of hazardous materials over 5,000 gallons within city limits was met with applause. Hot on the heels of a controversial proposed diesel transport operation, the ordinance provided some relief to locals concerned about the safety of the plan. But at Monday night's meeting, the mood in the Presidio Activities Center was tense as City Attorney Rod Ponton explained that not only would the ordinance require multiple public readings to be considered official, but that the ban on transloading was likely illegal.

The ordinance — which also provided a legal framework for someday restricting the transport of hazmat bound for the Presidio International Bridge to a designated route around the city — had been in the drafting stages for months, but came to a public vote at the March 21 meeting. The sudden intervention from Ponton — which was met with some backlash — pushed council members to revise the ordinance while seeking legal counsel on the matter.

Many local concerns about health and safety in response to the proposed diesel operation center around the process of transloading, or the transfer of materials from one form of transportation to another — in this case, the diesel will be sent from Houston to the Fort Worth area via pipeline, then via train to Presidio, where it will be transloaded onto tanker trucks and sent across the bridge to Chihuahua City. The plan — a collaboration between Strobel Energy Group, Texas Pacifico, and a yet unnamed trucking company — would see 75 to 150 trucks full of diesel fuel make their way through town each week.

The plan is a cost-saving measure: investors hope to save money and drive time by routing fuel bound for Chihuahua City through Presidio instead of El Paso. In return, Presidio is hoping to reinvigorate its rail corridor, dormant for almost 14 years. At Monday's meeting, City Administrator Brad Newton alluded to the fact that a rail inspection station allowing for cross-border trade could be complete by 2023. Until then, the transloading scheme could be a way for the city to see rail traffic return to Presidio before a complete international rail bridge.

But Ponton argued a transloading ban impeded railroad operations, and that attempts to restrict

(Continued on page 3)

Big Bend National Park mourns visitor fatality on Hot Springs Canyon Trail

By SAM KARAS
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BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK — Last Monday, first responders rushed to the scene of a hiker who had collapsed on Hot Springs Canyon Trail. Rangers attempted to resuscitate the woman, but after an hour their efforts proved unsuccessful.

The hiker was a 53-year-old woman from Michigan who was visiting the park with her family for the first time. "Big Bend National Park staff and partners are saddened by this loss," Deputy Superintendent David Elkowitz wrote in a press release. "Our entire park family extends sincere condolences to the hiker's family and friends."

The Hot Springs Canyon Trail is a six-mile round-trip hike that begins at Daniels Ranch and ends at the Hot Springs Historic District, where visitors typically cap off their hike with a visit to the famous Langford Hot Springs. The trail is very exposed, and the park's website warns visitors not to attempt the hike any time temperatures are over 90 degrees. Temperatures at nearby Rio Grande Village on the day of the fatality hovered around 87, just below the threshold.

As the weather gets hotter, park staff are seeing higher incidences of heat-related illnesses and injuries. "A lot of visitors come here and expect it to be a national park with trees and shade and things like that. It's not that at all, so it's a challenging environment," said Chief of Interpretation and Visitor Services Tom VandenBerg. "Being prepared is a very important part of having a successful experience here at the park."

Big Bend National Park is one of the National Park Service's most remote parks, and its ability to respond to emergencies can be hindered by its sheer size. Big Bend does have its own ambulance, but park staff and guides are quick to remind people that the nearest hospital is in Alpine, 100 miles away. Neighbors are few and far between but happy to lend a hand when they can. "We support Terlingua EMS and vice versa," VandenBerg said.

Throughout the pandemic, each hot season has coincided with record-smashing attendance in the park, bringing more and more first-time visitors from around the globe to Big Bend. "Our attendance has gone up, and we have experienced a fairly significant increase in search and rescues and emergency responses. I'd say the majority is related to heat," VandenBerg said.

Park staff has made it a priority in the past two years to spread awareness of just how dangerous Big Bend's heat can be — a project known in the park world as PSAR, or "preventative search and rescue." The park has been developing new permanent signs at trailheads particularly prone to heat, and has a fleet of temporary signs that roll out as temperatures rise at popular destinations in the park.

The signs warn visitors not to visit in the heat of the afternoon, and advise that all hikers be prepared to carry and drink a gallon of water throughout the day. "It is the season where we're starting to see an uptick in temperature, and it's just a really good reminder that it's not something to play around with. It's no joke," VandenBerg said.

INSIDE

NEWS P. 1 - 4
OPINIONS P. 5
COMMUNITY P. 6 - 9
CLASSIFIEDS P. 10

The West Texan Media Group, LLC

Title 42

(Continued from page 1)

populations into their jurisdictions," said the letter.

Under Title 42, undocumented migrants can be deported in as little as 15 minutes, according to government statistics, a process that otherwise lasts as long as 50 hours for an individual or 62 hours for a family unit.

"Not only does this take a toll on our agents, it creates a new incentive for migrants to make the life-threatening journey across the border and, with the hottest months of the year on the horizon, we're bound to see the already historic numbers double, leading to a record number of migrant deaths," said Rep. Gonzales in a press release following a briefing with Border Patrol agents.

Groups including the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and The Southern Border Communities Coalition (SBCC), who have been advocating for the suspension of Title 42, have released statements in support of the CDC's decision.

"The new order is a huge step forward in the fight to ensure that people fleeing violence and persecution will once again be able to seek safety in this country, as our laws require. Title 42 has been misused for over two years to illegally shut down asylum at the southern border and send thousands of people directly back into harm's way," said Jonathan Blazer, director of border strategies at the ACLU.

The SBCC issued a press release on Wednesday urging senators to vote against anti-immigrant amendments — aimed at keeping Title 42 in place — that the Senate's Republican leadership may attempt to tack on to a new COVID relief bill, which will be voted on soon.

"The United States has the capacity to face the challenges at the border that may result from ending an unethical use of Title 42," said Vicki B. Gaubeca, director, Southern Border Communities Coalition. "Now is the time for our nation to right those wrongs and implement infrastructure and policies that welcome people in a safe and dignified way, and connect them quickly to resources."

Litigation to stop the suspension of Title 42 is already underway, with Republican officials in Louisiana, Missouri and Arizona filing a lawsuit against the CDC, arguing the agency's decision is "arbitrary and capricious" and could spawn "catastrophe" at the border.

Big Bend Sector Public Affairs Officer for Customs and Border Protection Greg Davis said the region is currently well-staffed with over 600 agents, a historically large workforce for the sector and CBP is still actively recruiting new Border Patrol agents. Additionally, Davis said all agents were on mandatory overtime, serving 10-hour days.

New technology is further assisting capabilities of Border Patrol agents, said Davis, and initiatives like Operation Stonegarden, a federally-funded program which provides money for overtime and equipment to local police and sheriff's departments for Border Patrol assistance, are enabling local law enforcement agencies in the Big Bend region to offer support for CBP.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection Commissioner Chris Magnus said in a statement that as a result of CDC's termination of Title 42, CBP is expecting an increase in migrant border crossings above current high levels. He said they intend to utilize on-ground monitoring, drones and support personnel to free up Border Patrol agents from processing duties when possible.

"There are a significant number of individuals who were unable to access the asylum system for the past two years, and who may decide that now is the time to come," said Magnus. "We are doing everything we can to prepare for this increase, ensure we continue to process people humanely, and impose consequences on those who break the law. At the same time, we will continue to use all available resources to secure our borders."

Pilot who crashed plane outside Presidio arrested on human smuggling charges

By SAM KARAS
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PRESIDIO COUNTY — On March 25, the Presidio County Sheriff's Office arrested Tobias Penner Peters of Seminole, Texas, on multiple charges, including three counts of human smuggling, one count of evading arrest, and one count of deadly conduct. The arrest ended a three-month long manhunt after Peters crashed a plane with undocumented migrants onboard just past the Presidio-Lely Airport on December 30.

An eyewitness saw the plane crash from Highway 67, and rushed to help first responders render aid to the plane's five passengers, undocumented migrants who were found in the desert near the scene in various states of distress. The Presidio County Sheriff's Office speculated that the plane crashed because it had been deliberately under-fueled to counter the weight of those onboard — the plane, a Piper Cherokee 235 registered to Henry Neufeld of Seminole — only seats four.

Peters fled the scene, and remained at large until his arrest. Per court records, he is currently being held at Presidio County Jail as he awaits the filing of federal charges and an initial court appearance. On April 4, the U.S. Attorney's Office in Alpine filed a motion to issue a writ of habeas corpus requesting that the sheriff's office "surrender and deliver" Peters to a U.S. Marshal for his first appearance in federal court as soon as possible. The court order was issued the following day. After his initial court appearance, Peters will continue being held at the county jail.

The Presidio County Sheriff's Office did not respond to requests for comment, nor did they fulfill a public records request for arrest documents by press time.

City council

(Continued from page 1)

being recurring and city-wide. City Attorney Todd said she outlined many recitals — legal details and facts — in the ordinance in order to help future council and city officials address similar situations.

"We've sort of operated at a deficit of not really ever knowing what's been done before us, so I do go to the effort of putting in the recitals, what goes on when we close the street, or a portion of the street, and why things are being done and the reasoning," said Todd.

Next the governing body discussed the status of their request for qualifications for engineering services for the Marfa and Presidio County Museum. The only company that responded to the RFQ was INSIGHT Structures, said Roane. Councilmember Ben-Yehuda said he wasn't aware of the company but local adobe experts Joey Benton and MUDLAB were familiar with their work. INSIGHT Structures has previously worked on old adobe buildings in the area, said Ben-Yehuda. The city's plan is to work with an engineer to assess the aging adobe in order to develop a plan which will then be used to put out an RFP for construction services.

The engineering scope of the project is small, said Roane, and the company will likely spend only an afternoon reviewing the building. Council approved the RFQ, with the fees for the work yet to be determined and subject to negotiation. The city budgeted $218,556.51 for museum repairs this fiscal year.

Next up regarding the museum, council discussed the possibility of creating a long term lease in order to allow for the site to be a part of the forthcoming nationally-recognized Central Historic District designation, which would make it eligible for franchise tax credits on restoration projects. Because the building is city-owned it is currently ineligible for the historic register and the accompanying tax credit program. The matter first came up at a previous meeting in early March, and since then Councilmember Ben-Yehuda, who is spearheading the initiative, spoke with museum board members to introduce them to the idea.

Marfa and Presidio County Board Member Terry Norman, who was present at the city council meeting, said the museum's leadership was interested in the concept, but still on the fence and would hopefully have an answer as to whether they were on board by the next city council meeting. He said they were concerned a lease would put them on the hook for all repairs. While the city owns the historic structure, the museum's day to day operations are run by the board, creating confusion about who is responsible for the maintenance of the building and to what degree.

Ben-Yehuda said the city would self-certify the long-term lease, which would take pressure off of both entities regarding the specifics of the legal document. He said the franchise tax incentive program is meant to further help the museum, while not putting the financial responsibility solely on the city, which regardless will continue to assist with museum funding through HOT grants for operations and building maintenance.

"I think we have a special relationship with that organization — we already kind of fund them on a regular basis. So I don't know whether a less is more approach is better for the lease, or whether we want to include some details that the city is prepared to offer grants as needed for building repairs," said Ben-Yehuda.

The approval of HOT grant recommendations, generated by the HOT grant committee, was next up on the docket. The city's HOT grant program is meant to promote tourism and events that attract hotel and short-term rental guests, states the city's website. Under arts and culture, council voted to approve $2,750 for Ballroom Marfa, $8,000 for Marfa Invitational Art Fair, $5,000 to Agave Festival and $2,750 to Maintenant, Watershed Vol. 2.

Under historic preservation, council voted to approve $7,545 for the Marfa and Presidio County Museum and $10,000 for the Marfa Chamber of Commerce for the Marfa Light Festival. For advertising reimbursements, the city awarded $3,500 to Ballroom Marfa, $3,500 to Marfa Chamber of Commerce for the Marfa Lights Festival and $3,500 to the Marfa Invitational Art Fair.

With little back and forth about the recommendations and a unanimous, swift approval, "That might be the easiest HOT we've ever done," remarked Councilmember Buck Johnston.

In miscellaneous news, council voted to approve the purchase of a hydraulic excavator for the public utilities division and approved two street closures — one for Marfa ISD's graduation parade, which will follow the traditional route, on May 25 and another for the Chamber of Commerce's April 17 Easter event.

There were no updates on the ongoing issue of the $114,000 natural gas bill received in December from city provider West Texas Gas, which the council last discussed in early February before moving the issue out of discussion in public session into executive session. It was last stated publicly the council was working with the city's outside attorney to address the matter.

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Music Compilation, Arrangement & Editing RAMONA PANSEGRAU
Lighting Design JARED SAYEG
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Hazmat ordinance

(Continued from page 1)

railroad operations could run afoul of several legal precedents.

"Lots of places got started on the railroad, so the railroad has all sorts of power," Ponton explained. In 1995, Congress passed the ICC Termination Act (ICCTA), which established that modes of interstate ground transportation — chiefly, railways — ought to be regulated by the federal government. Since 1995, multiple court cases have cited the ICCTA to limit local and state governments' power to regulate the railroads that run through them.

Ponton referenced two court cases from the Fifth Circuit to explain how that might impact Presidio. In Elam v. Kansas City Southern Railroad Co, filed in 2011, the court ruled in the railroad's favor against a woman who had sought damages from Kansas City Southern after she was involved in a car accident with a train at a road crossing. She claimed that the train shouldn't have been there in the first place, due to her state's anti-blocking laws regulating the length of time rail cars can block a road. The court found otherwise, and the ruling has since been used to limit local anti-blocking and noise ordinances.

At Monday's meeting, members of council asked Ponton for clarification on why the transloading ban could be interpreted as impeding the railroad, when a company separate from the railroad oversees the process. "The law is so all-encompassing and clear cut," Ponton said. "In other words, smart cities don't even try. You can't regulate the railroad, and you can't regulate transloading."

Court rulings specifically regarding transloading are few, but in 2012, the Fifth Circuit ruled in Texas Central Business Lines v City of Midlothian to strike down a city's ordinances limiting a frac sand transloading operation. While this case found that this particular instance of transloading was an extension of the railroad's activities and couldn't be regulated by the city, the court's ruling made sure to note that "not all transloading involving rail cars and tractor-trailer rigs constitutes 'transportation by rail carriers.'" — in other words, there could be a legal gray area.

Councilmember Nancy Arevalo wanted more information on how the international nature of the plan could make things even more complicated. "Trucks coming in from Mexico are going to pick up the material," she said. "I don't understand how that has anything to do with our federal government or the railroad."

Vicky Carrasco, who has been tasked by the City of Presidio with leading a series of workshops mediating between diesel transloading stakeholders, agreed that many questions remained unanswered. "Presidio is in a very unique location and position, so there really isn't a precedent for this type of issue," she explained. "TxDOT's involved, the railroad's involved. Our port of entry is very different from any other in the state of Texas. I totally understand how this might make you feel blindsided, but we don't want to put ourselves in a situation where the city could be sued."

Multiple council members were upset that the intricacies of railroad law were not brought to their attention sooner by Ponton, the city's official legal counsel. "I have personally done a lot of research, and I have sent you information to see if I'm on the right path," said Councilmember Arian Velázquez-Ornelas. "I feel I have not gotten the right guidance. I hope that doesn't feel personal, because it's not."

"This has happened multiple times," said Mayor Pro Tempore John Razo. "This is hurting us, because our citizens are waiting for our response. If [Strobel and Texas Pacifico] get started, we can't stop them."

Presidio Municipal Development District Executive Director Jeran Stephens had preemptively hired outside counsel to help guide her organization's stance on the issue. "I've spoken with our attorneys, and they seem to think the transloading ban in and of itself is not a violation of federal law," she explained. "Though it involves the train, we're not telling the train they can't haul whatever they want to. We're telling outside companies that they can't transload hazmat from that train onto a truck within city limits and drive it through town."

Council ultimately voted to approve an edited version of the ordinance that adds "an enforcement date, supersedence and severability" and strikes language that explicitly mentions the railroad. The city must print the new ordinance in the newspaper and wait 30 days before it can formally take effect. In the meantime, Presidio City Council moved to seek secondary legal counsel "regarding future ordinances."

In the meantime, Ponton will assist the city in working with TxDOT to explore the possibility of a freight bypass for the city of Presidio. Council members hope that language in the existing ordinance limiting transport of hazardous materials on city streets will eventually be amended to relegate shipments of hazmat to a designated hazmat route.

Joaquin Rodriguez, who has family roots in Presidio, voiced his support for the ordinance over Zoom. "Let's not forget that the whole reason this issue has now come up for the council is because a company wants to save money, and to do that at the expense of the community," he said. "I would encourage the council to continue forward and then backtrack if needed. It's better to go forward than to fall short."

BBRMC

(Continued from page 1)

emergency patients and relegating some to gurneys in the hallway, with non-emergency patients downgraded to smaller rooms with fewer amenities.

The department's re-opening will be facilitated by a spate of new nurses who are beginning work at the hospital, said Flores — a combination of permanent employees, travel nurses, and independent contractors. Several of the nurses had finished orientation, and the last of the new nurses would be starting the week before the med-surg reopening, said Flores. Altogether, eight new nurses are starting at the hospital prior to April 25, said Hucke — of those, four are permanent employees.

Then there is the hospital's labor and delivery room, which has been intermittently on "diversion" — meaning closed, with staff directing obstetrics patients to other hospitals — since July of 2021 due to a nursing shortage. When asked about the status of the diversions, Flores said the hospital is averaging two to three days a week with L&D on diversion and is "going to have challenges for another month." OB nurses are "tough to come by," he said.

As for the hospital's outlook in the longer term, Flores explained it was working to establish job pipelines with local universities, and would be participating in a government-funded apprenticeship program with the Texas Workforce Commission — the goal, essentially, is to build a healthcare workforce from the ground up.

According to Flores, the hospital has established a relationship with Southwest University at El Paso, which is providing groups of students that will undergo training at the hospital for various roles. Students currently at the hospital are training to be operating room scrub techs, said Flores. In the future, groups of prospective medical lab technicians, stenographers and radiographers (or operators of CT scanning devices) will train at the hospital, he said. The hospital is in the process of trying to figure out how the pipeline could be used to bring in nurses, said Flores.

The hospital has also established a relationship with Sul Ross State University, which has funneled six nursing students into the hospital to participate in what Flores called the "patient care tech" program — the students will learn clinical skills that can be put to work in the hospital while in training, and the hope is that they will come on as nurses upon graduating.

Lastly, the hospital is in the process of securing a nursing apprenticeship project through Texas Workforce Solutions, a joint effort between the Texas Workforce Commission and regional boards across the state which partner with schools and other entities to help connect workers with jobs in a variety of industries. The apprenticeship project would be subsidized by Texas Workforce Solutions, said Flores, and would entail a mixture of academia and hands-on training within the hospital itself to cultivate a new workforce. The program will allow the hospital to bring in LVNs (licensed vocational nurses) and "get them to an RN [registered nurse] level," said Flores, "So it's a recruitment tool and a retention tool."

The curriculum for the program will be finalized in the first week of June, he said, with the goal of implementing it by the fall. Ultimately, said Flores, this kind of pipeline will "replace contract labor."

Of course, that is only the case if incoming students choose to stay at the hospital following their training and education. The hospital has struggled to retain staff — a chronic issue that led to the dearth of employees, ER restructuring and L&D diversions in the first place.

"We're looking at a variety of things," said Flores, when asked by The Big Bend Sentinel what he will do to retain staff moving forward. "We do have referral programs." He presented the educational components of his strategies as a retention tool. "One of the biggest things we see is, can we get additional education? I don't know how much more education I can get with this component."

Ultimately, said Flores, the hospital will work to better show employees they are valued.

"We are putting a lot of stuff together to say, 'Hey, look, we value you.' It's pretty simple," said Flores. "We do things now, but obviously we've not done a good enough job. I think we probably can do better."

When asked how the hospital will tackle the disparity in pay between full-time employees and travel nurses, he said the hospital is "developing strategies."

"It's a challenge, that I will say," he said. "We're not there yet. We're developing strategies, we really are."

Remember to Render!
Taxable property renditions are due April 15.

Does this apply to you?
If you own tangible personal property that is used to produce income, such as the equipment or inventory owned by a business, it does.

What is a rendition?
A rendition is a report to your county appraisal district that lists all of the taxable property that you owned or controlled on Jan. 1 of this year. This often applies to furniture, fixtures, equipment or inventory owned by a business.

What are the advantages of filing?
- You give your opinion of your property's value.
- You record your correct mailing address so your tax bills will go to the right address.
- If your property's value depreciated, you can file a report of decreased value.

What is the deadline?
- For most property types, renditions must be filed with the appraisal district after Jan. 1 and no later than April 15. Different deadlines apply in certain appraisal districts. A property owner may apply, in writing, for a mandatory extension to May 15.
- Different deadlines apply for regulated properties.
- The chief appraiser may extend the deadline another 15 days for good cause shown in writing by the property owner for each type of property.

REMEMBER!!
Filing is your responsibility. If you render late, don't render, or file an incomplete or false rendition, you may face a 10 to 50 percent penalty.

File renditions with your local appraisal district at:

Presidio County Appraisal District
P.O. Box 879 / 107 E. Texas Street
Marfa, Texas 79843
Marfa Office 432-729-3431
Presidio Office 432-229-3963
info@presidiocad.org

A public service announcement courtesy of your county appraisal district.

¡Recuerde a Rendir!
Las rendiciones de propiedades imponibles son debidas el 15 de abril.

¿Se aplica esto a usted?
Si usted posee bienes personales tangibles que se utilizan para producir ingresos, tales como el equipo o el inventario de un negocio, entonces sí.

¿Qué es una rendición?
Una rendición es un reporte a su distrito de tasaciones del condado que lista todas las propiedades imponibles que usted poseyó o controló el 1ro de enero de este año. Muchas veces esto se aplica a los muebles, elementos fijos, equipo o inventario de propiedad de un negocio.

¿Cuáles son las ventajas de declarar?
- Usted brinda su opinión sobre el valor de la propiedad.
- Registra la dirección exacta con el fin de recibir la factura de los impuestos a la dirección correcta.
- En caso de que el valor de la propiedad depreciara, usted puede presentar un informe del valor depreciado.

¿Cuál es la fecha de vencimiento?
- Para la mayoría de los tipos de propiedades, las rendiciones deben ser presentados en el distrito de tasaciones después del 1ro de enero y no más tarde del 15 de abril. Diversos plazos se aplican en ciertos distritos de tasaciones. El propietario de una propiedad puede solicitar, por escrito, para una extensión obligatoria para el 15 de mayo.
- Las fechas de límites diferentes aplican para las propiedades reguladas.
- El jefe de tasaciones podrá extender la fecha de limite por otros 15 días por una buena causa indicada por escrito por el dueño de la propiedad para cada tipo de propiedad.

¡RECUERDE!
La presentación es su responsabilidad. Si presenta una rendición tarde o nunca, o presenta una rendición incompleta o falsa, puede enfrentar una penalidad de 10 a 50 por ciento. Presenta sus rendiciones con su distrito de tasaciones local en:

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Center for Big Bend Studies receives $1 million in government funding

By MARY CANTRELL
mkcantrell@bigbendsentinel.com

ALPINE — Sul Ross University's Center for Big Bend Studies, a 1987-founded entity specializing in archeological and historical research of the Big Bend region of Texas and Northern Mexico, will soon receive $1 million in funding as a part of recently-passed government spending bill.

Dr. Bryon Schroeder, director at the Center for Big Bend Studies, said the government funds could sustain the center for up to five years, if their current donation and fundraising efforts continue to remain fruitful and stable.

"It's a big shot in the arm. It's huge. I'd like to say we routinely get millions of dollars, but we don't," Schroeder laughs.

The house passed the bill, which consisted of 12 fiscal year 2022 appropriations bills and funding for Ukraine relief efforts, in early March. The bill was signed into law on March 15 by President Joe Biden. Congressman Tony Gonzales, who represents Texas' 23rd congressional district, secured a total of $354 million in government funding for the region — $316 million for military bases and veterans' services in addition to over $38 million for community-based projects.

"During my first year on the House Appropriations Committee, I fought hard to make sure projects in our district were prioritized in the budget," said Congressman Gonzales in a press release.

The Big Bend region, which humans have inhabited for at least 13,000 years, contains thousands of archeological sites relating to early hunter-gatherers. The Center for Big Bend Studies conducts research projects across the Chihuahuan Desert, runs an archaeological site conservation program, and publishes a number of books and journals every year through their in-house publisher. They also host an annual conference where archeologists and historians working in the area share their recent research.

Schroeder said he has several ideas as to how the center might spend the government funds. While specifics have yet to be outlined, he said he'd like to earmark some money toward new programs and public outreach — getting the word out about what the center actually does and the value of their mission.

"I think with that much money, we can hopefully engage and show people the importance of cultural resources out here," said Schroeder.

New programs could take shape in the form of talks or events, said Schroeder. He said because the Center for Big Bend Studies is made up of a small team, they will aim to craft initiatives that hit all their goals as a research and education-focused organization.

"We have to be impacting science. We have to be impacting students. I'd like to impact the community and I'd like to impact the university," said Schroeder.

Another primary goal of the center that will be aided by the new funds is the effort to bring in and sustain more researchers and their projects, said Schroeder.

"One of our biggest problems is getting really quality researchers here to stay for a while," said Schroeder. "And I think it's because this place is pretty remote."

Schroeder is considering starting a research fellowship program or the like with the new funds. He said there is simply a lot to research in the Big Bend. Plus, funding and supporting more projects could be something they are now in a good position to do.

"What we have is a lot of access to places that these researchers can't get," said Schroeder.

Schroeder said his long term goal is to grow an endowment for the center, creating more stable research positions in the process.

"I'd really like to boost our notoriety of the quality of research that we're putting out because we have stuff here that's interesting on a national level," said Schroeder. "We can do research that is as good as any other university in the nation — right here. It just takes the right people."

The process of obtaining the funding started over a year ago, said Schroeder, who previously met Congressman Gonzales at an introductory meeting along with other Sul Ross faculty.

"We are extremely grateful for the hard work and commitment Congressman Gonzales has

shown Sul Ross," said Sul Ross University President Pete Gallego in a press release. "CBBS is doing amazing work and is just one of the many great departments across our campuses."



Photo courtesy of

City of Marfa homepage

City of Marfa launches new website

By MARY CANTRELL
mkcantrell@bigbendsentinel.com

MARFA — This Tuesday, the City of Marfa officially launched its new website, which boosts the city's online presence by making helpful resources and features available for both citizens and city officials.

Photos of iconic landmarks associated with the town — the Presidio County Courthouse, Godbold feed factory, water tower, and the PRADA Marfa installation — greet the website's visitors. Clickable buttons offer easy access to council agendas and minutes, forms and permits, bill pay, and the city calendar. A prominent informational box prompts users to sign up for TextMyGov to connect with the city via text message, or access food establishment permit applications.

In a city council meeting in early March, City Manager Mandy Roane presented the nearly-complete site to city council members, stating one of the main goals in redoing the site was to make information more accessible for community members. With the new site, citizens can pay Airbnb or hotel occupancy tax (HOT) fees online and access similar documents without coming into City Hall. There is also a section where the public can access city ordinances.

The site includes staff photos and a contact directory to help identify city employees and elected officials. The site is also ADA accessible and complete with Google translator assistance. The website redesign was completed by company Municode.

Roane said the city paid for the design and three years of web hosting with funding received from the CARES Act (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act). Costs were around $3,500 for set up and $600 for a yearly hosting fee.

The separate site, visitmarfa.com, which is also operated by the city, underwent a redesign and was paid for using HOT funds, said Roane. The "visit" button on the main site will automatically launch users into a new tab. The new visit site will look similar to the city's main site but contain different content. As of press time the new "visit" site was not yet up and running, but the preexisting site was still functional.

The city utilities portal is also undergoing a digital makeover, but is still in the works and will not go live until sometime later this summer, said City Secretary Kelly Perez. For now, residents who pay utility bills online will do so in the same manner as before, utilizing the marfautilities.org site.

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Opinions

HIGH DESERT SKETCHES

When politicians play doctor, everybody suffers

By GEORGE A. COVINGTON
gcovington@mac.com

Texas politicians have a unique ability to consider themselves members of the medical profession and proclaim their own remedy to cure any difficulty they find, no matter the symptoms or complexity. In many instances, their political base has been no closer to a medical education than when they last updated their personal rabies shots. Every large, reputable association within the medical profession has proclaimed that gender-affirming health care for transgender children is a delicate and often difficult medical situation. However, our Governer Greg Abbott (also known as the Guv) and the attorney general have decided that this care is to be criminally punished as child abuse. Once again, our Guv has managed to find a difficult situation and weaponize it to use in his political campaign and for campaign fundraising.

It started when the Guv decided that he knew best the way to slow the progress of COVID-19. Instead of relying on science, the medical profession, and local political leaders, he decided that he would determine when masking and social distancing would or would not be used, despite the fact that every group with a background in medicine proved that masking and social distancing could cut down on the number of COVID cases. The Guv instead decided once again to weaponize a medical condition and use it for his own benefit. To date, over 85,000 Texans have died, and nobody is certain how many thousands of these people could have been saved if the Guv had encouraged them to follow the advice of science and the medical profession.



Supported by his base, and the lieutenant governor, he charged the windmill of science like a rabid Don Quixote. Our attorney general will sue at the drop of a campaign contribution any individual, agency or state when he has the chance. He knows he will never have to pay the legal bills encountered. Even when slapped down by the United States Supreme Court for having no grounds for his frivolous pursuit, he will persist in suing every target he can find because he knows the cost will come out of the public coffers. Of course, he can't file legal documents as fast as he would because so many of his staff lawyers have resigned or filed charges against him. I'm certain that the lieutenant governor is foaming at the mouth because he has no role to play except as a sideline cheerleader in the latest fundraiser of the Guv and his favorite clown. The state of Texas could save millions if the Guv and his hungry pack of campaign fund chasers would leave medicine to the doctors.

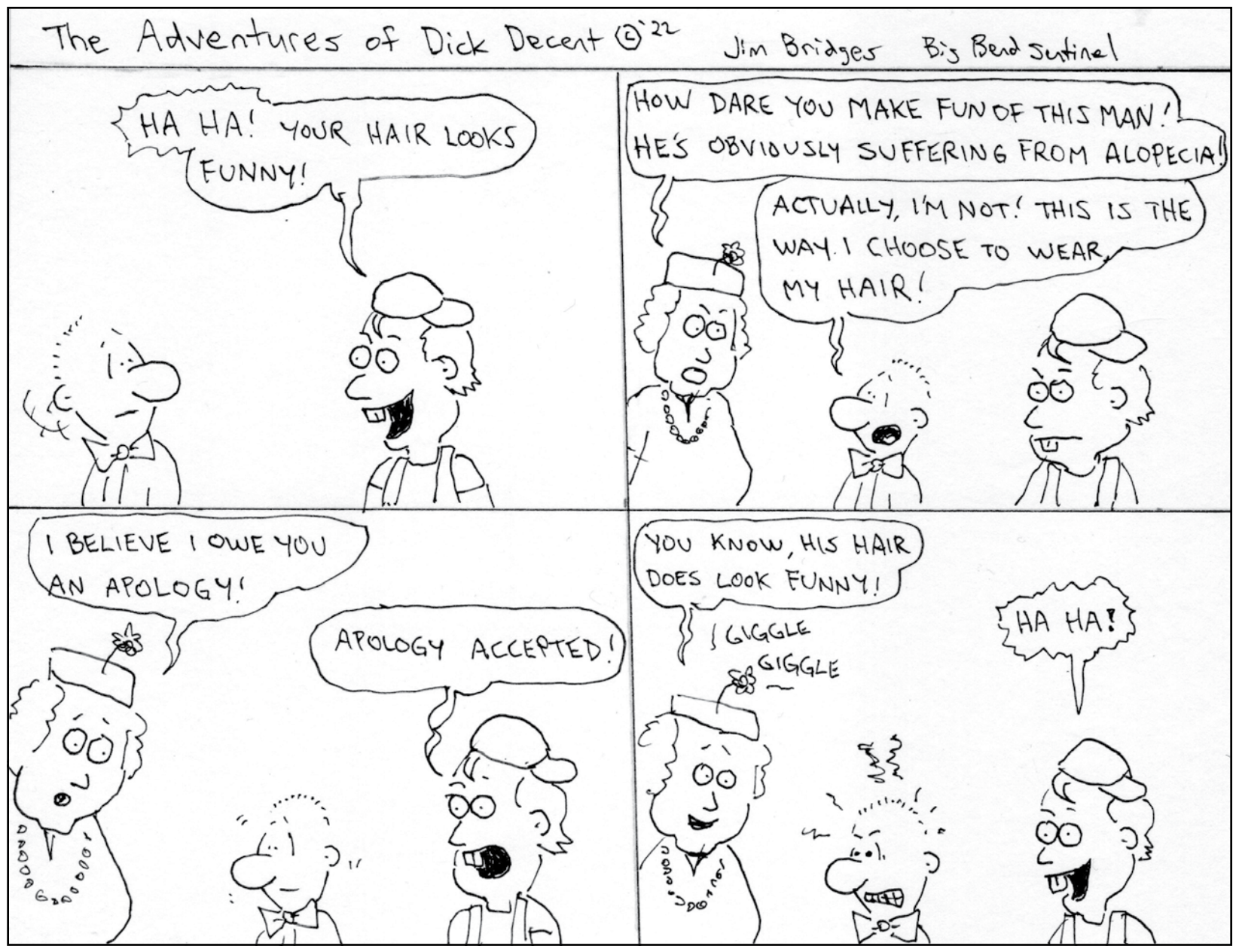
Unfortunately, even the National Republican Party has decided to enter the medical fray by announcing that when they win control of the House and the Senate the first item on their old agenda will be to abolish the Affordable Care Act. They don't seem to care that this will effectively deny affordable health insurance to 14.5 million Americans, most of them working poor and communities of color.

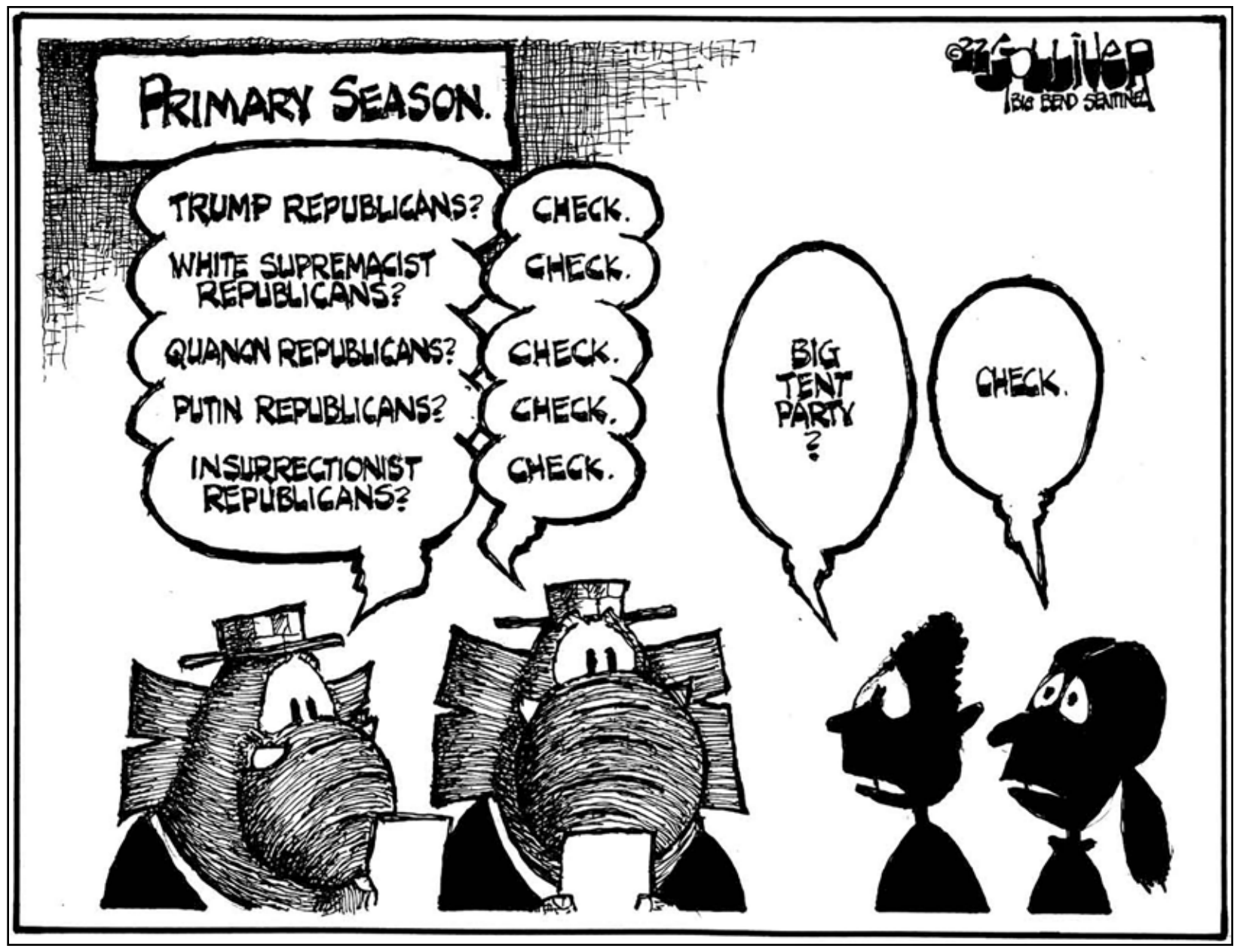
Our present president has always engendered an air like your beloved uncle. He is hard put to say crass words like "damn" and "hell" and might conjure more feelings of manhood if he did so. We should remember one politician whose profanity was so great that it can seldom appear in a family publication, but Lyndon Baines Johnson almost single-handedly pushed through the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. He was known to be a ruthless foul-talking politician who rewarded his friends and punished his enemies. Maybe our current president would remember a man who took on the entire South and won Civil Rights for millions of Americans.

Uncle Joe will never be a Lyndon Baines Johnson, but maybe we can spiff him up a bit. I would suggest we take up a collection or maybe start a GoFundMe and buy the president a bomber jacket and a fedora and feed him some lines from any of the Indiana Jones films, though we should leave out the bullwhip. Maybe we could call him Dover Joe and send him to save a historic Ukraine monastery full of beautiful Javelin anti-tank missiles.

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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Community



Photo by Cristian Ontiveros

Charlize Martinez places a crown on Odalys Chacon after she was announced prom queen at the 2022 MISD prom held over the weekend at the USO. Ian Marquez was named prom king.



Staff photo by Allegra Hobbs

A tiny Buc-ee's has appeared on private ranchland alongside Highway 90, roughly 20 miles East of Marathon. The miniature storefront of mysterious origin makes its debut over a year after a beloved tiny Target between Alpine and Marathon was demolished over liability concerns.

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THE SENTINEL

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Visit http://www.cityofalpine.com/auction for details.

Presidio River Rangers conduct first water quality tests on Río Grande

By SAM KARAS
sam@bigbendsentinel.com

BIG BEND RANCH STATE PARK — With a sample of murky Río Grande water taken from a bucket, Lucy Rede Franco Middle School seventh grader Clinette Garzon started the test. The steps were long and detailed, and the whole process took over half an hour. Presidio ISD teachers Belinda Dolino and Danica Romanban stood by her side, helping her make sure the results were consistent.

All their lab equipment was set up on a small camp table in the parking lot of the boat ramp for Colorado Canyon, about 30 miles from Presidio in Big Bend Ranch State Park. Dust swirled in the air as the occasional curious spring break tourist drove by. A few yards away, a small riffle in the river provided a calm soundtrack for the morning's activities.

First, Clinette added a few drops from a vial of manganese sulfate solution, and turned the bottle over in her hands a few times. She repeated the routine with potassium iodide and sulfuric acid until the river water appeared to turn orange. This process "fixed" the sample — in other words, chemically freezing the water in time so if Clinette's testing was delayed, her results would still reflect conditions on the river.

Clinette, Dolino and Romanban are three of thousands of Texans trained by the Texas Stream Team as citizen scientists helping the state monitor the quality of its waterways. The test for dissolved oxygen is the longest in the battery, but Clinette and Romanban achieved identical results. Their reading of 5.3 mg/L could be considered on the lower end for a major American river, but consistent with U.S. Geological Service gauge readings for the Rio Grande downstream in Big Bend National Park.

Dissolved oxygen is one of a few indicators that can help scientists determine the health of a river. "Do you know why oxygen is important in the river?" Dolino asked Clinette.

"It helps organisms to thrive," Clinette answered confidently.

Dolino, Romanban, and Big Bend Conservation Alliance program coordinator Elvira Hermosillo are still building out the interpretation side of the curriculum — teaching students how to figure out what their results mean. The four citizen scientists discussed how dissolved oxygen is higher in the river in the morning, and drops as the river heats up in the afternoon.

When the river is low and slow — as it has been for months — the dissolved oxygen count is lower, and that can affect aquatic life. Drops in the dissolved oxygen can result in fish kills — sudden mass death of the local fish population. Numerous species have already gone extinct from the Rio Grande, and more are threatened. The distinctive Big Bend slider — a turtle species more often heard plopping into the river than seen — is only adapted for swiftwater conditions, and may go extinct if average dissolved oxygen levels don't rise.

Clinette is one of a class of four middle school students helping relaunch the Presidio River Rangers program, a brainchild of the late naturalist and Presidio ISD teacher Patt Sims. While the program was still active, it produced some of Presidio ISD's brightest graduates, including scientist Cynthia Wright, who attended an early River Rangers meeting via Zoom to offer her wisdom on growing up in Presidio and going to college.

Dolino — a Presidio ISD STEM teacher who now focuses on special education — got involved with the program in order to help grow the middle school's extracurricular offerings. "After COVID, it seemed like the kids need it now more than ever," she said.

Presidio ISD has a national reputation for its success in STEM extracurriculars like rocketry, but the River Rangers program gives the kids a chance to explore the natural world. "Our environment is part of the curriculum, but it's all theories, it's all just talking about it," Dolino said. "Students will ask me questions in the lab like, 'When are we going to use this?' I thought: let's bring the classroom outside."

To cap off the day's experiments, Clinette, Romanban and Dolino worked together to lower a black-and-white striped disc into the water to measure its depth, during which they discussed the smell of the water and how many bubbles were present on its surface.

"There's bubbles in the river at home in the Philippines, but it's because that's where everyone does their laundry," Dolino joked.

The Stream Team battery includes chemistry tests that monitor qualities like dissolved oxygen and the pH of the water, but the qualitative tests encourage the students to closely observe the world around them. "I would say 99 percent of our kids who get involved with rocketry, robotics, River Rangers — they always do well after high school," she continued. "They get accepted to big universities, and they get scholarships. They don't always know what they want to be, but at least we help them decide along the way."

The Presidio River Rangers will repeat each test once a month on a Saturday and record the data. Next month, they'll test closer to home at the International Water and Boundary Commission gauge along Alamito Creek.

In her negotiations with the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) to access the testing site, Big Bend Conservation Alliance Program Coordinator Elvira Hermosillo was told to instruct the students to wear protective clothing and bring plenty of water. Rising summer temperatures won't be the biggest threat the River Rangers face next month. "They did also tell me there's a llama there that's kind of mean," she said.

After their tests, their families will be invited to join for a picnic. The community aspect of the River Rangers program is intrinsic to helping them spread the word and get Presidio families out to enjoy the natural splendor of their own backyard.

"We want them to see how important the river is," Dolino explained. "We want to pass it on, and then hopefully we can start something."



Staff photo by Sam Karas

Clinette Garzon (left) and Belinda Dolino test the water quality of the Rio Grande at Colorado Canyon.



Staff photo by Sam Karas

From left to right: Belinda Dolino, Clinette Garzon, Danica Romanban, and Elvira Hermosillo test the depth and clarity of the river at the mouth of Colorado Canyon in Big Bend Ranch State Park.





Photo courtesy of Caroline Travis, Alamito Foundation.

L-R: Lais Salcido, Brianna Sanchez, Evelyn Sanchez, Kiara Gonzales and Brianna Ramos looking through old Presidio County documents of registered ranch brands.



Photo courtesy of Caroline Travis, Alamito Foundation.

Abby Boyd, director of tourism for the City of Marfa discussed her role with students and shared insights about job titles and the meaning that they carry.



Photo courtesy of Caroline Travis, Alamito Foundation.

L-R: Zoey Salgado, Itzel Urrutia, Kayla Vasquez, Sara Salgado, Mary Fer Martinez and Natasha Labrado get to practice voting on voting machines provided by Florcita Zubia in her presentation about the County Clerk's Office.

Alamito Foundation partners with Marfa Junior High and High School to host career fair

By BIG BEND SENTINEL

MARFA — The Alamito Foundation, a local organization focusing on student education and land conservation, partnered with Marfa Independent School District last week to host a career fair for Marfa Junior High and High School students.

"The mission of Alamito Foundation is to help Marfa students create a vision for their life and connect them to resources to help them pursue that vision," said Caroline Travis, program director at the Alamito Foundation. "Our hope was that the presenters' passion for their careers would be contagious to the students."

The career fair introduced students to a variety of occupations and allowed them to choose their own schedule for the day, attending the presentations that most interested them. Representatives from the Marfa Police Department, Marfa EMS, Border Patrol, American Electric Power (AEP), Dixon Water Foundation, the City of Marfa, The Big Bend Sentinel, Presidio County, Ballroom Marfa, Mira Marfa as well as a funeral director, welders and other entrepreneurs gave presentations and answered student questions.

"We are extremely grateful for all of the presenters who took time out of their work day to share with Marfa students," said Travis.

There were even several Marfa ISD alumni who returned to share about their careers after high school, said Travis. Students were grateful for the opportunity to learn more about the various career paths and professional industries they might pursue after high school graduation.

"Everyone loved it and it is something that me and my classmates really needed as we are about to graduate," said senior Ethan Sainz.



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		7		8	4		5	9
	8		1	9		4		

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

Solution from last week's puzzle:

SOLUTION:

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

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Universal Crossword

Edited by David Steinberg March 28, 2022

ACROSS
1 Quick
6 Performed on "The Voice"
10 Frosty's is a carrot
14 Words to live by
15 Meal where you don't want to be a pig
16 It's underground at a 15-Across
17 Name that's often first alphabetically
18 "Madam, I'm ___" (palindrome)
19 Swim team's event
20 No-tech messaging platform?
23 Night before New Year's, e.g.
24 Director DuVernay
25 Company that makes Frisbees
28 Squid, in Italian cooking
33 Eerie effigy
35 Girl at a ball, in brief
36 Energy company in a 2001 scandal
37 Outback hopper, informally
38 "Humble" home
40 Small amount
41 Ring bearer?
43 Resign, as a political leader
46 Certain frozen drinks
47 Ad ___ committee
48 Reaction to fireworks
49 Plan to discuss a point later, or a hint to 20-, 33- and 41-Across
56 Cry profusely
57 Israeli airline
58 Cobra toxin
60 Word before "eye" or "grin"
61 "Eek!"
62 Bonus
63 Disavow
64 The sun, for one
65 Poker-faced

DOWN
1 Color TV pioneer
2 Horse that originated in the Middle East
3 Country known for alpacas
4 Pop sensation
5 CNN host whose surname is a fruit
6 List of candidates
7 A8 automaker
8 Indian bread
9 Round, machine-dispensed candy
10 Respectful refusal
11 Done with
12 "Everything" bagel morsel
13 Tolkien tree creature
21 Cooking acronym whose third letter stands for "olive"
22 They may be frozen for future use
25 Was victorious in
26 Large group on the move
27 Big fuss
28 Possess jointly
29 Succulent in many crosswords
30 Home material that's an anagram of 38-Across
31 Second takes
32 Mountain goat
33 Nov. honorees
34 Made an illustration of
38 Historical records
39 "Adios!"
41 Positions oneself to gain an edge
42 King of the jungle
44 Cheesesteak capital, informally
45 Grumpy co-worker?
48 Petroleum ship
49 Rescue
50 Romulus or Remus
51 Landed on a branch, say
52 Mama's mate, maybe
53 On deck
54 Stare ___ space
55 Unable to decide
56 King or queen, but not prince
59 Last full month of spring

PREVIOUS PUZZLE ANSWER

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

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☺MARFA SCHOOL LUNCH MENU☺

APR	Thu, Apr 7	Fri, Apr 8	Mon, Apr 11	Tue, Apr 12	Wed, Apr 13
BREAKFAST	CHICKEN-N-BISCUIT	BREAKFAST BREAD, YOGURT	SAUSAGE BISCUIT	PBJ	SAUSAGE KOLACHE, CHEESE STICK
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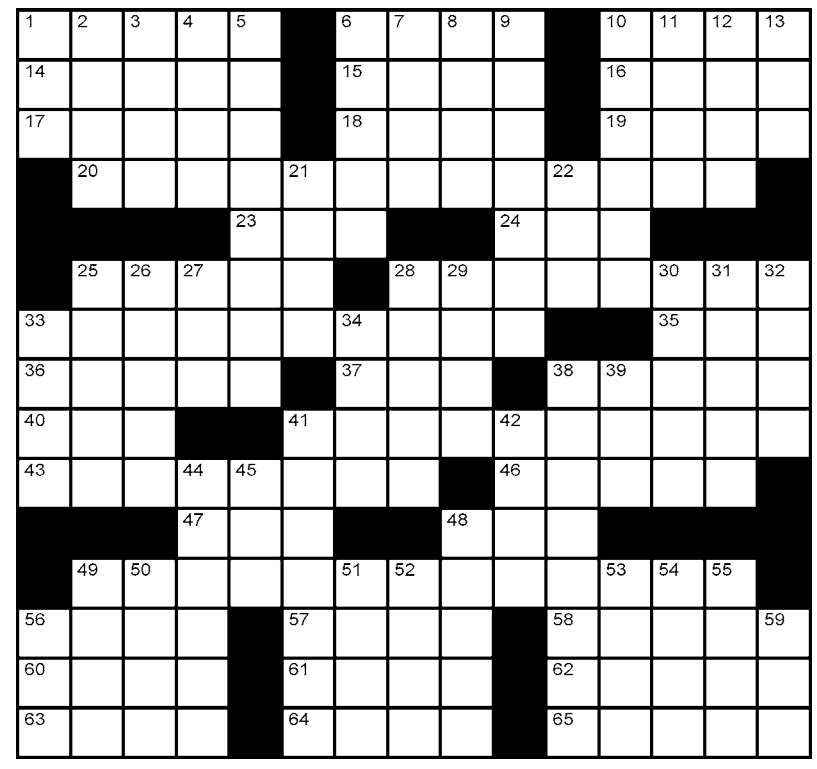
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MARFA SHORTHORNS SPORTS CALENDAR

FRI, APR 8: Varsity Softball vs Wink at Marfa, 5:30 pm
SAT, APR 9: Boys & Girls HS Area Track Meet at Van Horn
TUE, APR 12: Varsity Softball vs Wink at Wink, 5:30 pm

3/28 **Ouch!** *by Karen Steinberg and Paul Steinberg*



Terlingua School of Constructive Arts to host clean-up event and pizza party

By SAM KARAS
sam@bigbendsentinel.com

TERLINGUA RANCH — This Saturday, the board and volunteers of the School of Constructive Arts invite the public to join them for a clean-up event that will culminate in a pizza party at the school's Terlingua Ranch campus. The event marks the "final push" toward clearing away construction debris and personal belongings of the late Don Bryant, whose ideas served as the catalyst for the organization.

The School of Constructive Arts is a field school based in Bryant's former homestead. Bryant, a longtime Terlingua resident known for building distinctive domes out of rebar and ferrocement, attracted numerous formal and informal students to his property throughout his lifetime. "He was beloved by many," said Bob Estrin, director of the School for Constructive Arts. "He was a builder, a teacher, a farmer, kind of an eccentric guy."

Estrin and his board now use what's left of Bryant's homestead to help teach a new generation of earth builders ways to construct with the local environment in mind. Students at the school will learn to put concepts like passive cooling and water catchment into practice, all against the dramatic backdrop of the Christmas Mountains in South Brewster County.

The school currently hosts seasonal volunteers and hopes to expand their programming through collaborations with universities and local schools. In order to make those connections, they need to make the campus a hospitable place for visiting builders so that they can be housed on the school's remote property. "We're going to build our first livable facility," Estrin explained. "It's going to be a building that combines earth construction — using ancient techniques — with modern technology."

The facility will sleep eight to 10 students and include workshop and classroom spaces. A large part of the effort will go toward installing water infrastructure, including a solar-powered pump house and shower. The school's next class of volunteers will take on these projects, putting their newfound skills to the test as they go.

"We need a clean slate to move into the next phase of construction on our land," Estrin explained. He hopes that neighbors from around the Big Bend region will come out to help the effort and learn more about the school's mission.

The amount of effort Estrin and his volunteers have put in is tremendous. "I think it's important to note how much has already been done even though it's not very visible, because much of what we've done is remedial," he said. "I'll put it this way: we've removed over 3000 cubic feet of garbage."

To reward those who make the journey, the school will treat volunteers to pizza made in their wood-fired oven — itself originally a volunteer project aimed at teaching key concepts in earth building. "I wanted a project that would teach some of the core skills but was small and achievable within a timeframe," Estrin explained. "Plus, we wanted something that would lure people to our distant campus. It turns out pretty damn good pizza."



Photo by Voni Glaves

Students at Terlingua's School of Constructive Arts celebrate a long day of hard work around a campfire.

Volunteers are welcome to show up anytime in the afternoon and stay through the evening's festivities. They should be dressed for an afternoon moving around in the Terlingua sunshine — sun protection and plenty of water is a must. Some refreshments will be provided, but guests are encouraged to BYOB and are welcome to bring musical instruments to play around the campfire.

The School of Constructive Arts campus is newly Google Map-able, but to navigate the old-fashioned way, start heading east on Terlingua Ranch Road toward the lodge. At 4.8 miles in, take a right on Snake Road. The campus will have a sign posted 1.2 miles down Snake Road to mark the entrance.

"We're in the final stages of this major effort, and we want to celebrate it together," Estrin said.

OBITUARY



Brown

Betsy Lou Brown of Marfa, Texas passed away Saturday, April 2, 2022, at Big Bend Regional Medical Center in Alpine, Texas. She died of natural causes with her family by her side.

Betsy was born March 9, 1943, in San Angelo, Texas, to Jack E. and Mary Etta Baugh Brown. She grew up in San Angelo and graduated from San Angelo Central High School. She attended Trinity University in San Antonio, where she graduated with a degree in physical education and began a career as a teacher and coach in schools in Texas and New Mexico. Betsy later broadened her teaching skills by attending Sul Ross State University in Alpine, Texas, where she achieved a Master of Arts degree in history. In the mid-1980s, Betsy decided to move to the Marfa area and join her parents in the operations of the Ocotillo Ranches south of Marfa. The family ranching business in Presidio County was begun when her maternal grandfather, Milton Baugh, and great-uncle, Aubrey Baugh, purchased the first properties in the late 1930s and 40s. Betsy was a natural in the ranching business; she loved the animals and the land. She was an accomplished rider and came to know every plant and animal in the area. Horses, cats and dogs were always part of her life.

She and her sister Marjo continued the ranching operations into the third generation of the family until Betsy's retirement from the daily grind several years ago, after which Betsy moved to Marfa full time.

Betsy's life was anchored by her faith. She was a devoted and supportive member of the First Presbyterian Church of Marfa, and her church family was dear to her.

She is survived by her brother Leighton Baugh Brown and his wife Stephanie of Manassas, Virginia, and by her sister Marjo Etta Brown Skiles and her husband Larry of Marfa; by cousins Milton Baugh III, Beth Baugh, Aubrey Baugh, Squire Brown, Sue Brown Yackel, Max Brown, Katherine (Tafi) Brown, Beverly Brown Fisk, John Brown, and Robert Brown; and by numerous nieces, nephews, grand-nieces and grand-nephews. Betsy's sister Judith Kay Brown Bell preceded her in death.

The family wishes to express our profound gratitude to Hazel Martinez of Marfa for her loving care and assistance to Betsy over the past few years, and to Yolanda Venegas for her kindness and care, as well.

Funeral services will be held this Saturday, April 9, 2022, at 1 p.m., at the First Presbyterian Church in Marfa, Texas, followed by interment at the family ranch cemetery. Viewing and visitation with the family will be from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. The family asks that, in lieu of flowers, donations be made to the Marfa Public Library, or St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

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CDRI to host guest lecturer James Cornett on Thursday, April 14

MARFA — The Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute is excited to welcome author, biologist and naturalist James Cornett to the Crowley Theater on Thursday, April 14. Cornett will present "Can't Live Without You: Hummingbirds and Ocotillos."

James Cornett, who lives in Palm Springs, California, has traveled extensively throughout the North American deserts, including the Chihuahuan Desert. He holds B.S. and M.S. degrees in biology. During his career, Cornett has performed biological studies for California deserts since 1973 and served the Palm Springs Desert Museum from 1975 to 2004 as an instructor, curator and director. His 2011 book, The Chihuahuan Desert, is CDRI's best-selling book. Among his many books sold in the CDRI Gift Shop are The Greater Roadrunner, The Splendid Ocotillo, Indian Uses of Desert Plants, Wildlife of the North American Deserts, and The Chihuahuan Desert.

CDRI holds the Conant Distinguished Guest Lecturer Program twice annually, in April and October. The lecture program offers an array of exciting topics relating to nature.

The lecture will take place at the Crowley Theater in Marfa, Texas, Thursday, April 14, at 7 p.m., and the institute promises an informative and engaging evening. Guests are invited to stay after the program for a reception and an opportunity to visit with Cornett. Admission is free.

An assortment of Cornett's books will be available to purchase before and after the program.

Those seeking information can email programs@cdri.org or call 432-364-2499.

Alpine's talented stars fundraiser

ALPINE — Alpine Public Library's Alpine's Talented Stars fundraiser will be held on Saturday, April 9, at Kokernot Outdoor Theatre, at 5:00 p.m. Local talent and local food will highlight the library's first-ever talent show for kids and adults. Acts will include songs, dances, skits, musical ensembles, cartoonists, dramatic readings, mothers and daughters, husbands and wives, friends and more friends.

Tickets, which include Roux Alpine gumbo and dessert, are available now at the library. Tickets are $35.00/couple, $20/single, $7.00/child 11 and under. Beer, wine, and water will be available for a donation.

Kids will perform starting at 5:15 after an opening dance by Heather Plumberg; adults will perform starting at 7:00. Food service will run from 5:45 to 6:45.

The acts that win the most $5 votes will receive trophies. Online voting is available now through the library website.

Credit card sales will not be available at Kokernot Outdoor Theatre on the night of the event. All event tickets purchased at the door and all votes for talent must be paid by cash or check.

Alpine Public Library is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. Its mission is to build community, encourage literacy, and promote lifelong learning. It endeavors to create and maintain a welcoming facility with relevant and enriching resources that connect our diverse and geographically remote area to the world.

Those seeking more information can call Lee Smith at 432-837-2621.

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Reservations are required and space is limited.
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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.

READ ONLINE AT BIGBENDSENTINEL.COM

Classifieds & public notices

JOBS

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• JOB OPENING •

BREWSTER COUNTY TOURISM COUNCIL AND VISIT BIG BEND

PUBLIC RELATIONS ASSISTANT JOB DESCRIPTION

The Brewster County Tourism Council/Visit Big Bend is currently accepting applications for a full-time Public Relations Assistant. This position will require 40 hours per week in the BCTC office and will include extensive travel throughout the year including weekends and holidays.

Duties for the position include: attending trade shows representing Visit Big Bend and distributing information on the Big Bend region, overseeing Visit Big Bend's various social media channels, researching new avenues of online marketing, assisting visiting journalists to the area and researching potential journalists for tours as well as providing reports to the Board of Directors of Visit Big Bend along with other duties as assigned.

Applicants must be presentable, enthusiastic, have good communication skills, be a team player, have flexibility in work schedules, be able to travel extensively, have a dependable vehicle, lift at least 50 pounds, be able to lead hikes/tours through Big Bend and be well versed in all components of Microsoft Office with most reports requiring manipulation of Excel spreadsheets. A tourism industry background of some kind is required as well as a good knowledge of all areas and attractions in Brewster County.

Salary is negotiable depending on experience and includes a full County benefit package including paid vacation, sick leave, retirement and health insurance.

Email a resume with 3 references to: JOBS@VISITBIGBEND.COM.

This position will remain open until filled.

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CCAISD will be accepting applications for various teaching opportunities. Those positions and others that become available can be found on our district website under employment. All positions will remain open until filled.

- **Elementary Teaching Position** (various grade levels, 5 positions)
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- **Science Teacher** (9th – 12th, Chemistry AP/IB, Physics AP/IB, Etc.)
- **Band Director** (6th – 12th grade)
- **Nurse** (Pre-K – 12th grade)

Any questions regarding the positions available at CCAISD/VHS can be sent via an email to Charles Gonzalez, VHS Principal at cgonzalez@ccaisd.net, or call 432-283-2245 (main office)

- Go to www.ccaisd.net
- Click on District for the pull-down menu, under District Information click employment
- Click on Employment Opportunities (middle of the screen)
- You will need to register on Region 18 Consortium, to apply for the various job openings

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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.

• AUCTION NOTICE •

Marfa Parks Board is auctioning a 2006 Chevrolet 2500 HD regular cab pickup truck, white, with crossover toolbox and trailer hitch.

Minimum bid is $9,000.
Truck currently has 106,000 miles. VIN: 1GCHC24U66E230995.

Details and pictures available by texting Board President Trey Gerfers at 432.295.0891.

Interested parties must email highest bid with contact phone number to trey@stereoluz.net (with "Pickup bid" in the subject line).

Deadline: Thursday, April 7th at 5PM.



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