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

Presidio bridge expansion to move forward, says state senator

By SAM KARAS
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PRESIDIO — State Senator César Blanco, Presidio's representative in Austin, announced on Wednesday that there had been some movement in the prolonged battle to re-initiate stalled construction on the Presidio International Bridge — Governor Abbott has given the Texas Department of Transportation the green light to initiate a Memo of Understanding (MOU) so the construction can move forward, per Senator Blanco's office, with TxDOT expecting to restart construction this summer and wrap up by the end of the year.

Construction on the American side of the bridge has been stalled for months, resulting in delays and headaches for travelers and customs officials alike.

The Memo of Understanding — an agreement between the U.S., Texas, and Mexican officials — will allow the Texas Department of Transportation to carry out an expansion project on the U.S. side of the bridge, putting in an extra lane for both the northbound and southbound side. According to Senator Blanco's office, TxDOT is working on finalizing the MOU so it can be signed by officials.

Presidio city officials were under the impression that an MOU had already been drafted and was simply waiting for Abbott's signature.

Back in February, Port Director Jesus Luis Chavez attended a city council meeting to address public concerns about the state of the bridge, which currently funnels traffic into one lane for a few hundred yards on the Mexican side. In Chavez's year-long tenure, he's seen wait times to cross into the United States reach 10 hours or more on holiday weekends.

"It's been the same song and dance," he said. "I have not received a response [from the governor's office]. We need to push forward as one voice. Because if y'all don't, the bridge won't be done by Thanksgiving or Christmas."

At that meeting, Presidio City Council moved to write a letter to the governor's office as a push to prioritize the Memo of Understanding. The Presidio bridge is unique among international bridges in that it is owned by the Texas Department of Transportation — the state's other international bridges are all owned by private investors or the city or county they are located in. Mexican authorities had mostly completed their half of the bridge, and the missing piece was Abbott's approval.

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Staff photo byMaisie Crow

Amina Gonzales, MISD kindergartner, gets some help from her dad, Tony Gonzales, at the Easter egg hunt on the Presidio County Courthouse lawn Sunday. The Marfa Chamber of Commerce organized a trio of egg hunts and a burger fundraiser by Mando's to help support future community events hosted by the chamber. READ MORE ON PAGE 5.

Amidst region-wide EMS turnover, longtime Jeff Davis County EMS Director Vickie Fowler announces retirement

By MARY CANTRELL
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FAR WEST TEXAS — Jeff Davis County Emergency Services Director Vickie Fowler, who has been in the role for over 13 years, is set to retire from the volunteer-run service this June, causing the county to seek out a replacement in earnest and even assess the option of partnering with a private company.

Jeff Davis County isn't alone in its predicament. Much of the tri-county area — in which few emergency service providers struggle to meet the needs of residents spread across a vast region — is undergoing a period of turnover when it comes to critical EMS leadership positions.

In South Brewster County, Terlingua Fire and EMS Chief Greg Hennington has begun a search for his replacement. County officials representing North Brewster County recently voted to contract private company Emergent Air to fill the void left by the sudden death of Alpine EMS Director and Fire Chief Michael Scudder. Emergent Air is set to take over the 911 service from Terlingua Fire and EMS, who stepped in to prevent a lapse in service, in early May and is working to build up its staff, which will include a director.

Presidio Emergency Services received a new EMS director this February, Troy Sparks, an EMT who moved up into the role after his predecessor Malynda Richardson moved on from the job after four years. Richardson declined to comment on her time as EMS director for Presidio EMS. Sparks did not respond to requests for comment.

Jeff Davis County EMS is the only remaining service in the tri-county area operating on a volunteer basis — all other EMS departments operate with paid medics. Fowler's position as EMS director is the only role paid for by the county. While Fowler gets paid to run the administrative side of the EMS service, she does not get paid to go out on 911 calls, which she does in addition to a variety of other essential duties.

"Running the books, the building, keeping track of all the narcotics, the drugs, what can be had on the ambulance, keeping everything in compliance, making sure your medics are in compliance with their certifications and scheduling everyone to make sure the shifts are all covered," said Jeff Davis County Judge Curtis Evans of the job description.

In addition to competing with Terlingua Fire and EMS and Emergent Air for a new EMS director, whoever fills Fowler's role will need to run the volunteer-service while bringing the department into the next phase of operating with paid EMTs.

"Volunteer services are dying because people

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Marfa's fire station sees movement on long-awaited expansion project

By MARY CANTRELL
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MARFA — Marfa's Volunteer Fire Department station, which has been slated for a much-needed expansion for a handful years, may soon see the reality of a new-and-improved station, with the city recently approving the solicitation of requests for bids from contractors.

"It's just crowded in here — it's crazy," said Fire Chief Gary Mitschke of the station's current cramped space, which is entirely maintained by volunteer firefighters. "It's just hard to function, hard to keep anything up."

The proposed expansion will primarily involve building onto the back of the metal building where trucks, vehicles and equipment are currently stored, allowing the department to double their weatherized storage space. The project also involves constructing a new ADA-accessible bathroom with a shower, laundry room and kitchen. The overall design prioritizes simplicity and economic viability, said Councilmember Yoseff Ben-Yehuda, who is also a member of the volunteer fire department, in a recent city council meeting.

The additional space should allow for the relocation of lockers and improvement of training space, said Mitschke. The way he sees it, the expansion will be a gradual process.

"Hopefully, it'll give us enough room to do everything we need to do," said Mitschke. "It'll be what it is, then we'll figure out how we're going to utilize it the most."

MUDLAB, a local architecture firm run by Elizabeth Farrell and Zeke Raney, donated their time to render architectural plans, which were also reviewed by a number of contractors. Raney is a member of the volunteer fire department.

The fire department will essentially be taking up the remainder of their lot's available space in order to extend the metal structure, which was originally built in the 1970s and was designed to be expanded upon. Fire engines and hoses sitting outside deteriorate at faster rates, said Mitschke, due to sun exposure. Storing the emergency vehicles outdoors also poses problems in the winter, when water has to be drained from fire engines to prevent valves from freezing.

"You can't really have [fire engines] ready to go when they're sitting outside during the winter," said Mitschke.

The fire department also recently secured an

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Former Marfa and Valentine ISD teacher indicted by grand jury on child pornography charges as DPS investigates possible victims

By ALLEGRA HOBBS
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PECOS — A grand jury last week indicted Albert Ackley, a Valentine ISD teacher of 19 years who previously taught in Marfa, on one count of possession of child pornography and one count of distribution of child pornography.

In addition to the existing child pornography charges, Ackley has confessed to having sexual contact with children in the past, and those instances are under investigation by the Texas Department of Public Safety. At a preliminary hearing for Ackley, at a Pecos federal courthouse on March 31, Texas DPS Special Agent Adam Patterson testified that the department was able to identify "four possible juvenile victims" through interviews with Ackley.

Ackley, when between 30 and 33 years in age, had told a victim in Marfa who was a minor at the time to "completely undress" in front of him, said Patterson. The victim has been identified and interviewed by Patterson, but has not yet provided a victim's statement, he said. Ackley also spoke of another, younger victim in Marfa he had contact with while in his early 30s, said Patterson, who noted he had spoken to that victim but that she said she does not recall the offense.

According to a criminal complaint filed upon Ackley's arrest, which was based on a sworn affidavit by Special Agent Patterson, Ackley told DPS he had sexual contact with two female children when he was around 20 years old — one victim was 8 years old and the other was 12 years old.

A Texas DPS spokesperson said that the investigation is ongoing, and no further details were available as of press time.

At the time of his arrest, Ackley was a high school math teacher for Valentine ISD, where he had been employed for 19 years. Prior to that, he had worked at Marfa ISD as a math, science and computer teacher, and eventually as the school district's technology coordinator.

Ackley was detained on March 15 when Special Agent Patterson executed a search warrant at his Valentine home and asked Ackley whether he knew who had used the internet on the property to look at child pornography — Ackley openly admitted that he had, then waived his Miranda

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Second COVID boosters available at some tri-county locations

By ALLEGRA HOBBS
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TRI-COUNTY — At the end of March, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration authorized a second booster dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna COVID-19 vaccines for those 50 years of age and older, and for certain immunocompromised individuals. The second boosters are meant to protect those who are at a higher risk for severe illness, hospitalization and death, per the FDA.

Tri-county residents who meet the eligibility requirements and received their first booster at least four months ago can get their second boosters at a variety of locations throughout the region, though hours and stipulations vary. The CDC has authorized mixing or matching when it comes to selecting boosters. The Big Bend Sentinel has compiled a non-exhaustive list below of places offering second boosters.

For the time being, second booster shots are not available in Marfa, at either the Marfa Country Clinic or at the Preventative Care Health Services (PCHS) Marfa clinic. Dr. Christie Alexander of the Marfa Country Clinic said they would like to start offering it in the future, though she isn't sure yet whether there are enough people interested in getting their second boosters at the moment. She has fielded inquiries from patients, and refers them to locations in Alpine.

"In general, if they're 50 and older, and it's been 4 months or more, and they are at risk, if they're going to be traveling, or in a part of our country where the case rates are high, then yeah, I'm saying go for it," she said. "There have been no major problems shown with that second booster, so why not get it?"

Booster shots are free to receive, but some locations may ask for proof of insurance or a form of ID for reporting purposes.

Preventative Care Health Services (PCHS) is offering second boosters only at its Family Health Services of Alpine location at 1605 Fort Davis Hwy on Tuesdays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Appointments only. Call ahead to make an appointment by dialing (432) 837-4555.

Prescription Shop Alpine has second booster shots available only on Fridays during regular business hours, from 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Patients need to call ahead to book an appointment, and should arrive early. Proof of vaccination card is required. Proof of insurance or some form of ID may be requested for reporting purposes. Call (432) 837-3498 to learn more.

Highland Drug in Alpine has second boosters available on most days, but the availability varies by week based on staffing. Those interested are encouraged to check the pharmacy's Facebook page, where vaccine schedules are posted each week, for the most up-do-date information. Proof of vaccination card is recommended but not required. Call (432) 837-3931 to get available times.

The Texas Department of State Health Services is offering Moderna and Pfizer booster shots in Alpine, Marfa and Presidio during clinic hours. Patients should call ahead to make an appointment. To make an appointment at the Alpine clinic, located at 205 N Cockrell Street, call (432) 837-3877. To get the booster in Marfa, located at 205 E El Paso Street, call (432) 729-5045. Presidio residents can get the booster at 701 Bomar Avenue, and can call (432) 229-1540 to schedule an appointment.

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EMS turnover

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are aging out, and that's certainly true for our service," said Fowler. "The only way volunteer services, especially in the rural areas, are going to survive is by becoming hybrid and eventually transitioning to fully-paid service."

As local EMS directors like Fowler move on from their physically and emotionally demanding roles, counties and municipalities are tasked with coming up with quick, viable solutions to ensure there are no gaps in ambulance service. But retiring old-timers are difficult to replace and there is not an abundance of young people ready to step in, said Fowler. Attracting candidates to remote areas like Fort Davis poses special challenges, she said.

"It's hard to attract young families here. We really don't have much industry except for the school, the observatory or the state park. When kids graduate, if they want to make a living, they really need to leave the area," said Fowler.

At the March 31 Big Bend Regional Hospital District meeting, Hennington spoke to the problem succinctly: "It's all of us old people, so to speak, and not a lot of backfill on that."

In light of the region-wide issue, there have been recent ongoing discussions amongst county and city officials as well as Big Bend Regional Hospital District, which serves Presidio and Brewster counties, regarding the long-term need to establish a regional EMS solution in order to centralize operations.

At the recent hospital district meeting, Hennington advised the board to prepare to revisit a discussion about that concept, noting there would be "some logic" to joining forces and that it "could be a pretty good operation." But the reality of orchestrating an emergency response operation on such a scale is no easy feat, and would hardly come together overnight.

"The regional EMS concept may still be on the table down the road, but that will take a tremendous amount of work," said Hennington in an interview with The Big Bend Sentinel.

With a potential streamlined, regional solution years down the road, Jeff Davis County is facing the immediate problem of replacing Fowler as she exits the role of EMS director this summer. The hope is to find a replacement that can serve the community as well as Fowler has, said Judge Curtis Evans.

"We're used to a certain type of service from what Vickie has created. It's a personable service and they know the people in the community and they take care of them," said Evans.

But while the preference may be to hire a local director, the county hasn't ruled out the option of going with a private company — this is largely a matter of practicality, noted Fowler, as there are limited locally-based options. Jeff Davis County Ambulance Service is in continued, preliminary talks with Emergent Air, the company soon to be servicing North Brewster County, but is still accepting applications for the EMS director position, and has fielded some promising candidates.

"We don't want to hand off to a company, just because these are our people, our community, we want to be the ones taking care of them," said Fowler. "But realistically, we don't have the staffing and management experience."

Hennington originally retired from his position as chief of Terlingua Fire and EMS a couple of years ago, but resumed the role this past May after his successor didn't quite work out. He said they are beginning the search for someone to take his place as he seeks to move on to his next phase of life, potentially serving as Brewster County judge, a race in which voters will soon elect the Republican and Democratic candidates in a runoff election in May.

Hennington will focus on finding an individual with past EMS management experience to replace him, he said, and is not currently considering partnering with a private company in any capacity. The ultimate goal would be for Hennington to train his replacement for six months to a year, he said, in order to have adequate time to cover the job's varied responsibilities.

"It's everything from working with the politicians, to talking to the press, to knowing the community, knowing all of the 3,000 square miles of land down here," said Hennington. "Working with the park service, Border Patrol, there's a lot of nuances that just take time to learn."

Fowler said she wanted to retire in order to make room for new leadership which could better serve Jeff Davis County EMS moving forward. But her reasons for stepping down are also personal — being over the age of 60, she said she didn't want to work up until the end of her life. Sharon Falkner, who previously served as Jeff Davis County's EMS director before Fowler took over, died in 2010 in a plane crash on route to the Midland International Airport with a patient. Michael Scudder, of Alpine EMS, died of a cardiac emergency while responding to a 911 call this past December at age 61.

"I didn't want to be on the ambulance when I was 55. I figured that's too long, I'm too old at that point. I should be doing other things and let the younger people treat the patients. And then I turned 60 in December, and I'm still treating patients on the ambulance," said Fowler.

The job has also become increasingly demanding, with the volume of 911 calls coming into the service steadily rising each year — this year, that volume spiked 21 percent from the year before, said Fowler, and before that the volume has increased at least 10 percent year to year. On average, the service receives around 25 emergency calls a month. (Hennington, too, reported Terlingua Fire and EMS call volumes were increasing at a rate of 8 to 10 percent each year.) Because the region is so vast, and locations of callers can be remote, response times can range anywhere from 30 minutes to two and a half hours, said Fowler. The service also provides mutual aid to Marfa and Presidio EMS.

Fowler said she gave six months notice that she'd been moving on from Jeff Davis County Ambulance Service, also referred to as the Mountain Medics, in order to spend more time with her grandchildren and on her hobbies of quilting and gardening. This coming November will mark her 34th year in EMS. She moved to Fort Davis from Cloudcroft, New Mexico, in 1997 when her husband got a job at the University of Texas McDonald Observatory. Before becoming director she served as a volunteer for the service for years.



Staff photo by Mary Cantrell

Jeff Davis County EMS Director Vickie Fowler, who is retiring from the role this summer after serving for over 13 years, is stepping down so that the volunteer-run service can come under new management, ideally evolving into a hybrid or fully-paid service in order to keep up with an increase in annual call volumes and industry changes.

Fowler will be leaving the department in good standing, with a solid crew of dedicated volunteer paramedics and EMTs, she said. Most of the Mountain Medics have full time jobs, said Fowler. Their team includes a veterinarian, pastor and business owner. The majority of their volunteers have been involved for 10 plus years, she said, and the median age of the volunteers is upper 50s, with a couple in their mid-70s still serving on the EMS force. Ambulance drivers are often spouses of on-call medics.

Jeff Davis County provides some funding for the service — it pays Fowler's salary, and contributes accounting services, as well as funding for the facility and utilities. Money Jeff Davis County EMS receives comes, in part, from a half-cent sales tax, plus money the service brings in by billing insurance companies and Medicare.

One of the benefits of being a volunteer service is that Jeff Davis County Ambulance Service more readily qualifies for grants, said Fowler. Their service has been funded for the past 10 years by both the FMH and Yarborough Foundations, both based out of Midland.

"Those are the main two that we have worked with over the last couple of years, and they've been instrumental in helping to fund our state of the art ambulances," said Fowler.

In addition to funding for ambulances, training equipment and a Raizer lift that helps medics with lift assistance, FMH also awarded Jeff Davis County Ambulance Service a grant to commission architectural renderings for a potential bunkhouse for the facility. Fowler said the designs for the structure, complete with simple bedrooms, bathroom and kitchen have recently been finalized and they intend to apply for additional funding to get the bunkhouse constructed in the next grant cycle this summer. The new build will likely cost around $300,000.

"Even though some of my former medics who come back and help us out are happy sleeping on a cot upstairs in a classroom, new guys we're going to be hiring are not going to be happy doing that," said Fowler. "We realized that what we really needed in order to be able to attract people would be a place for them to sleep and hang out, so we decided to go with a bunk house."

Fowler wears a gold necklace with a star of life charm, the EMS symbol, and a radio which monitors local police and fire traffic strapped to her hip. She said she never imagined she'd become so involved with EMS, but she fell into it and over time realized it was what she was meant to do.

"I never looked at it like, 'Oh, I get to save lives,'" said Fowler. "But making a difference in somebody else's life, to me, that's what it's all about," said Fowler. "Just being there for somebody else when they're having the worst day of their life."

For older medics, decades of being on call and moving patients take a toll on the body, and continued exposure to emergency medical events can cause mental health issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), said Fowler.

"It gets very difficult on the psyche, it's hard to sleep at night," said Fowler.

EMTs can also be easy targets, said Fowler, and are subject to being assaulted by their patients. The role requires a lot of resilience, said Fowler.

"Now with the pandemic, there's a lot more mental illness, people are just a lot angrier, and they're a lot more willing to just take it out on the first person they see. It's not their typical personality, it's just their way of coping with what's happened to them," said Fowler.

Mountain Medics try to treat their patients at home whenever possible, Fowler said, to prevent burdening them with the financial cost of an ambulance ride. A trip to the hospital also takes around three hours round trip, taking medics out of commission to help with any other calls that might come in during that time. The majority of the 911 calls Jeff Davis County Ambulance receives are medical as opposed to reports of major trauma, like a car accident or shooting. Serving the elderly and low-income populations often requires performing patient education, said Fowler.

"We become primary medical care for a lot of people because they can't afford a doctor or they don't have a way to get to a doctor. Or they just don't know they need to be going," said Fowler.

Because Medicare does not pay for a 911 call unless it results in a patient being transported to a hospital, Jeff Davis County Ambulance does not charge patients for "treat and release" visits. While the job is mostly thankless, said Fowler, there are occasions where a small act of kindness from a community member, like a freshly-brewed cup of coffee for their EMTs upon arrival at a 2 a.m. emergency call, goes a long way.

The Texas Department of Safety awarded Jeff Davis County Ambulance Service a Regional Commander's Award in 2014 for their work performing a 30-hour rescue of a hiker in Hell's Canyon in the Davis Mountains, where the crew cared for and stayed overnight with the patient because a helicopter ran out of fuel. Fowler and a team recovered the distressed individual from down in the canyon just before heavy rainfall flooded the area.

Another standout memory was that of an emergency call involving a young girl, around seven or eight years old, that suffered a seizure while in a church service. Fowler hadn't realized what an impact she'd made on the child, who recovered without needing to be taken to the hospital, until her mother dropped off a framed drawing the girl had made for Fowler, describing her experience, saying she made her feel safe and secure.

"That is among my prized possessions from this business," said Fowler.



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STREET TAX RE-AUTHORIZATION FAQ

The City of Marfa is asking voters to re-authorize a one-quarter of one-percent sales tax. What does that mean?

WHAT IS A STREET MAINTENANCE SALES TAX?
A sales tax that is approved by voters that is used for roadway improvements.

WHAT CAN THE TAX BE USED ON?
The tax is used exclusively for maintaining existing streets and alleys.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THE TAX IS NOT RE-AUTHORIZED BY VOTERS?
If the City loses the ability to assess and collect this one-fourth of one percent sales tax, it will lapse and not be available for street maintenance purposes.

HOW MUCH HAS THE CITY OF MARFA COLLECTED IN STREET MAINTENANCE TAX?
Since 2002 the City has collected $991,000 for street maintenance.

WHEN DID THE CITY OF MARFA IMPLEMENT THIS SALES TAX?
The tax was first approved by voters in 2002. It expires every four years and must be re-approved.

HOW IS THE TAX PAID?
The tax is paid by consumers, both resident and non-resident, on taxable sales from local businesses. It is part of the local sales tax.

HOW HAS THE TAX BEEN USED RECENTLY?
Last year, the City of Marfa used the street maintenance sales tax to Seal Coat N. Spring, S. Hill/Gonzales, E. Dallas, W. Texas, S. Summer, Hartford and Edinburg Streets and repave S. Yale, S. Hoover, S. Ridge, S. Austin , S. Dean and S. Spring streets

Sales Tax Re-authorization election will be held April 25-May 3, 2022 (early voting) and May 7, 2022 (election day).

Marfa's fire station

(Continued from page 1)

easement from the appraisal district for a permanent fire lane which will allow them to run a one way system in and out of the facility with their emergency vehicles.

The construction will be broken up into two phases: phase one will focus on the construction of the insulated metal building, and phase two will focus on the additional facilities like the bathroom, laundry room and kitchen. The distinction was made in the event the department only has enough funds for phase one, said Councilmember Ben-Yehuda.

There is around $175,000 currently budgeted for the project, $50,000 of which has been provided by Presidio County and $122,000 from the city. The city owns the fire station and has budgeted for the expansion for a number of years. In an earlier budget-focused meeting this fall, Ben-Yehuda advocated to increase the existing funds allocated from $82,500 to $122,000 for the fire house revamp, with Mayor Manny Baeza urging the department to get moving on spending the money already budgeted.

But the fire department has argued their reasoning for continually rolling over funds was necessary in order to beef up the project's budget to a feasible amount.

"How do you start a project that you don't have enough money to pay for?" said Mitschke. "You can't start something like this and stop in the middle of it because you run out of money. You really need to have the funding available to do it."

At a city council meeting last week, Ben-Yehuda presented the plans for the expansion project and stated it was now up to the city to decide whether they wanted to proceed with the project or not.

"This is the city's building. The city has allocated funds to it. You've got a group of 20 to 25 dedicated volunteers that runs this department that shows up weekly, and for incidents, to take care of the building, to take care of the equipment," said Ben-Yehuda. "We've gone through the process to try to bring a proposal."



Photo by Cody Bjornson

The Marfa Volunteer Fire Department recently received approval on their formal plans to expand their facilities from the city, who owns the building. The project now enters into the next phase of attracting a contractor in order to begin construction.

Council members and the mayor were excited to see the plans for the expansion and voted to approve putting out requests for bids, although some expressed concerns regarding their ability to attract the right contractor.

Marfa's fire station is also designated as the go-to the Emergency Operation Center for Presidio County, meaning the building serves as an emergency management site for local officials in the case of a major incident. Mitschke said the space last served as an EOC in 2011 during the Rock House Fire. Mitschke also serves as emergency management coordinator for Presidio County.

The fire station's original 1938 Art Deco-style, pink-hued building is an iconic structure with a lot of history, said Mitschke. Marfa's volunteer fire department can trace their roots back to the year 1910, said Mitschke, who has researched the service. He said he wanted to hold onto the existing site and work on making it as functional as possible, as opposed to building from scratch.

"I don't want to give up the history of the old station here," said Mitschke.

The original station, which has been expanded on with additional structures, is complete with an upstairs living quarters where firefighters used to live, and an old-fashioned fireman's pole. Mitschke hopes to declutter the area, which is currently a miscellaneous storage space, and turn it into a mapping area. He said he'd also like to better display some of the old archival images and artifacts from the station.

Mitschke is currently operating with a crew of around 25 volunteer firefighters, he said. Their bylaws allow them to have up to 34 members. He said the expansion project will better support their crew and let them know their hard work is appreciated.

"Anybody who hasn't been in fire, doesn't really understand how much work it really takes to do this and what everybody gives up to do this. We have pagers, we're on call 24/7, we don't get a day off," said Mitschke.

Valentine ISD teacher indicted

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rights to continue cooperating with authorities after being taken to the Jeff Davis County Sheriff's Office, according to a criminal complaint.

Texas DPS had been acting on a cybercrime tip notifying the agency that someone with Ackley's IP address was uploading child pornography, inculding videos depicting female children between the ages of 9 and 12, via a smartphone application called KIK Messenger. The search of Ackley's home uncovered a memory card with three videos of child pornography, one depicting a female child approximately three or four years old and the other two depicted female children approximately 11 to 12 years old.

Other electronic devices taken from the home are still being investigated, said Patterson, who said devices had been sent to a Homeland Security Investigations lab in El Paso. Texas DPS is also still combing through files uploaded via KIK, he said.

While being questioned by DPS, per the criminal complaint, Ackley confessed that, in addition to sending and receiving child pornography upwards of 50 times, he had used the application to engage in inappropriate exchanges with underage girls. Patterson noted in his testimony that Ackley admitted to speaking with three children via the app, and that those children had not been identified.

Authorities also searched the Valentine school, where Ackley worked, on March 15. Valentine ISD Superintendent and Principal Debbie Engle told The Big Bend Sentinel following the search that nothing criminal had been discovered on school devices, and no victims associated with the school had been identified. Engle described the disturbing revelation as a shock to those at the school. "I have ex-students that have called, and they don't believe it," she said. "There has been nobody that has come forward with so much as a whisper." The school obtained Ackley's resignation on March 17, she said.

At the March 31 hearing, Ackley's younger brother also spoke as a witness, and was questioned both by Matthew Ellis of the U.S. Attorney's Office in Alpine and by Jack Meredith, the public defender assigned to represent Ackley. His questioning focused mostly on the relationship between Albert Ackley and his longtime romantic partner in Valentine, who was in poor health and, by the brother's understanding, dependent upon Ackley as her sole caregiver.

Meredith asked the court to consider granting bond, while acknowledging that bond in such a case was a rarity, so that Ackley could ensure his partner was taken care of — she suffers from kidney failure, requiring dialysis, suffers chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and requires insulin for her diabetes, he said. "She told me if Mr. Ackley does not get out that she thinks that she'll be dead soon," he said. He noted that all electronic devices had been removed from the home.

Ellis argued on behalf of the government that Ackley presented a danger to the community and should not be granted bond. "The government would just like to note that the defendant has admitted to years of engaging in these types of activities, and there has been even an admission of him acting on them with children," said Ellis. "He held a position of trust, a position of responsibility in the community."

The government's concern was that Ackley would harm children if released, Ellis continued. "The government does not believe there is an amount of money that can be paid to ensure a child is not harmed in this situation," he said.

Judge David B. Fannin acknowledged the unfortunate reality that Ackley's partner, an innocent bystander, was suffering as a result of his detainment, but said that the court could not overlook the danger Ackley posed, and ordered him detained without bond.

The grand jury indictment was filed on April 14. The U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Texas, which is prosecuting the case, declined to comment, citing pending litigation. Public defender Jack Meredith did not return a request for comment by press time.

Presidio bridge

(Continued from page 1)

Things were quiet for a few months, though rumors swirled at a Presidio Municipal Development District (PMDD) meeting on April 15 that construction materials for the bridge were starting to pile up in town once again.

Now, per Senator Blanco, Presidio can expect to see work on the bridge start back up in the coming months.

"The Governor giving the go ahead on the new agreement for the Presidio Bridge is huge news for our district," Senator Blanco said in a press release. "Improvements to the bridge will improve the movement of both personal and commercial traffic, reduce congestion and bridge wait times, facilitate the continued free flow of commodities between the United States and Mexico, and improve pedestrian safety."

TxDOT did not return a request for comment on the bridge construction by press time.

Editor's note: An earlier version of this story, based on an earlier press release from Senator Blanco's office, ran in the April 21, 2022 issue of the Presidio International, stating that the Memo of Understanding for the Presidio International Bridge had been signed by Governor Abbott. The Big Bend Sentinel received updated information from the senator's office before going to press. A correction will run in the upcoming issue of the Presidio International. We regret the error.

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Opinions

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

In an opinion piece I wrote in The Big Bend Sentinel last week, I argued against the construction of the Chisos Brewery on Alpine's historic Murphy Street.

Because the piece was rushed, I did not discuss the backstory, including a potential conflict of interest: that I am a part-owner of the historic Hotel Ritchey on Murphy Street, just a block away from the planned brewery. Although the brewery could be seen as unwanted competition, in reality the opposite is true: I expect that the brewery would be good for all the businesses on Murphy Street, at least in the short term. My opinion piece focused instead on the long view, the long-term effects it would have on the area's historical integrity in general and on Murphy Street's eligibility for the National Register specifically.

What I did not say — but should have — is that I'm not against the idea of a brewery in Alpine, or even on Murphy Street. And in many particulars, I commend the Fielders: the outdoor space created, the use of native plants, recognition of dark skies, the onsite use of gray water, etc. What I take exception to is the scale of the project and the modern design which is completely out of touch with the local architecture. If the Fielders decided to build something that harmonized in scale or style with the rest of the neighborhood, then I would absolutely support it.

But another salient fact is this: the beloved Ritchey Wine Saloon and Beer Garden, as it was called, was forced to close during COVID, leading to bankruptcy. The Fielders purchased the property and had plans to demolish it because it did not fit with their plans. Fortunately, public outcry led them to change their minds and they sold it to a partner and me, for which they deserve credit. We, in turn, created an LLC with the sole purpose of restoring and maintaining the Ritchey in perpetuity for the people of Alpine. After repairs are complete, we plan to lease the space for a bar, not run it ourselves. Our primary interest is in maintaining the property as a historical community asset.

I have only co-owned the Ritchey for a short while, but I have lived in the neighborhood for almost 20 years, and have long championed historic preservation. My reservations about the brewery relate to its impacts on the neighborhood and to broader concerns about gentrification. It is not competition I fear, but too much success: a quantum leap in the commercialization of Murphy Street and long-term changes to its character. My opinion piece was not meant to sow division but to spark honest conversations about community and development, about striking the right balance between businesses and neighbors, the old and the new, while honoring that intangible sense of place that makes Alpine and the greater Big Bend special.

Thanks,

David W. Keller
Alpine

• • •

Dear Editor,

Thanks to all who aided in the support and response to the residential fire on Columbia Street early in the morning of April 9.

In this particular incident, it was neighbors who were on scene first. Had it not been for the quick action of these neighbors, our community's loss would have been far greater.

We deeply appreciate the Marfa Police Department and Marfa EMS, Presidio County Sheriff's Department, and the U.S. Border Patrol, who kept everyone safe at the site.

As always, our friends and neighbors rallied to keep us firefighters hydrated, nourished and caffeinated. Our gratitude to the thoughtful and very welcome donations of food and drink.

The members of Marfa Volunteer Fire Department are honored to serve our community. We are repeatedly humbled by its generosity.

Sincerely,

MVFD

• • •

Dear Editor,

Yesterday my husband and I visited the small park across the street from the Marfa courthouse. My mother, Mary Belle Mitchell, was involved with the construction of this park, and we've always enjoyed brief visits through the years. Yesterday, we were disappointed to see how much the park has been neglected and is in decline. I think the clean up and restoration of the park would make an excellent community service project for a scout group, Lions Club, history club, any high school service club, like National Honor Society. It has become an eyesore on a beautiful street. Thank you.

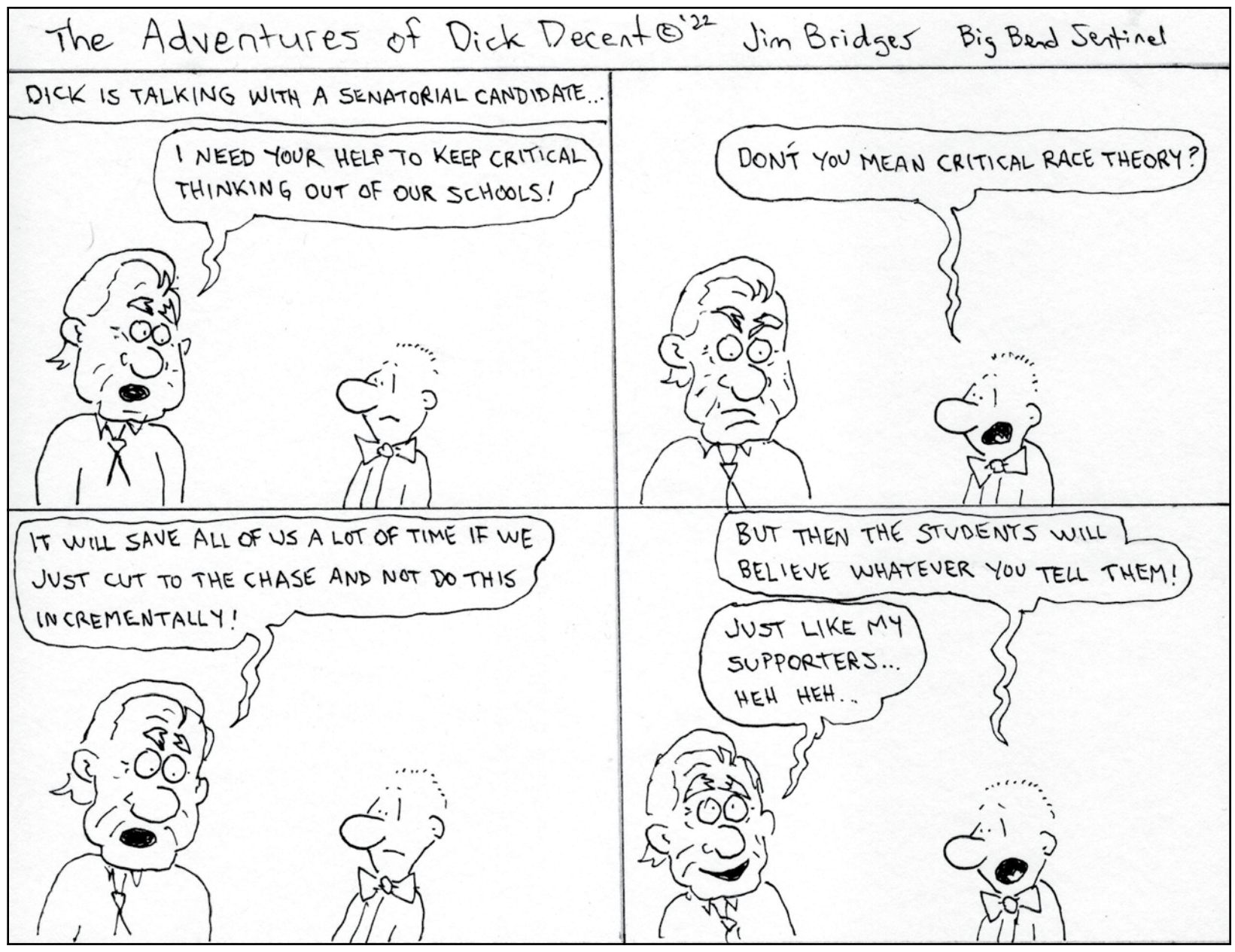
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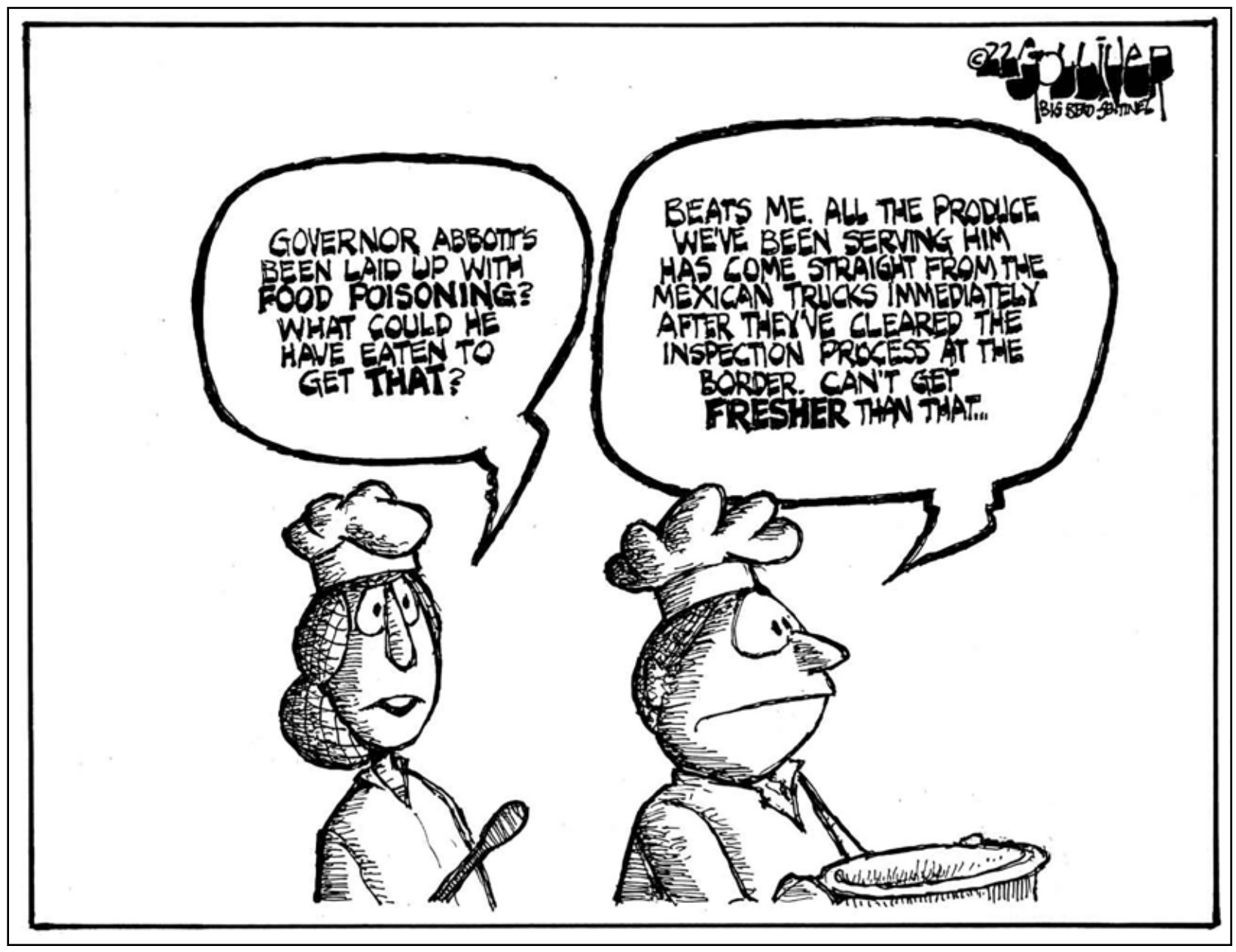
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- Letters should be sent to editor@bigbendsentinel.com, and must provide the writer's full name, city of residence and an email or phone number, so that we may follow up and verify information as needed.
- Your letters may be edited for clarity and brevity. While opinions of all kinds are welcome, when it comes to claims of fact, we strive to only publish what is verifiable.
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- We may reach out to ask questions and verify the identity of the sender. We do not run letters anonymously unless the sender is privately identified and has a reasonable claim to anonymity.
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- ***The Big Bend Sentinel Editorial Staff***





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Community



Staff photo by Maisie Crow

Julian Camarena shows off an egg he found to his sister Eva Camarena at the Marfa Chamber of Commerce Easter Egg Hunt on Sunday. Julian and Eva, both of Austin, were visiting their grandmother, Luly Karam (left), from Ojinaga with their mother, Lee Taylor, who previously worked at the Mexican consulate in Presidio.

Marfa Chamber of Commerce hosts family Easter event, says hopefully first of many

By ALLEGRA HOBBS
allegra@bigbendsentinel.com

MARFA — Local children decked out in their pastel best flooded the lawn outside the Presidio County Courthouse on the morning of Easter Sunday to hunt for colorful, candy-filled eggs hidden in the grass.

A sizable group of egg hunters lined the sidewalk seconds before takeoff, waiting for the Marfa Police Department officers tasked with overseeing the event to give them the go-ahead. "Everyone go, go, go, go, go!" came the call from the squad car parked alongside the lawn. Kids 5 and under were given a head start of a few seconds, then it was a free-for-all. "Adults, you can go now!" came the second call, met with laughter from attendees.

Angela Morgan, owner of Salon Coterie, said her kids were so filled with anticipation the morning of the event, they almost left her behind.

"They were very excited — they were going to leave me at home to run here," she said. "They said, 'We're going to get there early!' I said, 'I think in an Easter egg hunt, they don't actually want you to get there early.'"

Morgan's sons, 11-year-old Easton Watts and 7-year-old Cy Watts, were dressed in matching pastel jumpsuits as they poured over their treasures. Easton held up a massive egg filled with Reese's Pieces and temporary tattoos. Easton said he had a great time, even though he suspected the game was rigged by the grown-ups: "The little kids got to go first" he said, and "Their parents helped them grab all the big eggs."

Morgan said she was thrilled by the large turnout. "It's festive, there were so many kids — and a perfect day for it. You've got to take advantage of the peach courthouse on Easter."

The event was put on by the Marfa Chamber of Commerce and was catered by the operators of beloved, gone-but-not-forgotten local restaurant Mando's — the eatery closed its doors in December 2019, but made a triumphant comeback for the spring holiday to raise funds for the chamber. The sales from Mando's generated around $2,000, said the chamber's president, Abby Boyd, which will go towards future public programs and workshops.

The event was the first Easter event of this kind, but Boyd said she hopes it's just the beginning. Seeing the big turnout is a good indicator the community will continue to turn up, she said.

Sunday's event was powered by a crew of about 20 volunteers, who hid roughly 900 eggs spread out across three hunts: at 11:30 a.m., 12:30 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. If volunteers keep turning up, said Boyd, maybe the chamber can replicate the event on a larger scale in the future.

"I wanted every kid to leave with a bucket full of eggs," said Boyd. "This was definitely a test run. We weren't sure what the turnout would be, but now that I know that this is something the community wants and will show up for, we'll do our best to do it bigger and better. But that totally depends on our volunteers and the people who are willing to show up and make sure it happens for the kids."

Boyd said that in her position at the Chamber of Commerce, she wants to create events that make the local kids feel special.

"We want to make sure that kids in Marfa have the opportunities to come out and see that their community cares for them and be able to form great memories in this town that keep them connected and tied to this community," she said.

Boyd also said she hopes such community-oriented events will incentivize potential donors to give more money to the chamber, which can go towards funding more events. The work of putting on the events should shift the reputation of the chamber, she said, so that donors want their dollars going into it — events like the Easter egg hunt showcase that potential.

"We're hoping just by doing the work that the people who support it will start showing up, but that needs to happen for this to keep going," said Boyd. "These are the things we always should have been doing for this community. So after I'm not in the chamber any longer, and it's somebody else's job, I want this to be just a given — this happens every year, it's expected."

Lee Taylor of Austin, originally from Ojinaga, said she and her kids had been visiting her hometown the weekend of Easter and decided to drive up for the event — she was glad they had. And, she would make the trek from the border again, if the chamber put it on next year.

"It's been fun," she said. "I would definitely come back. There's a lot of people — I think everyone's happy about it."

The next event hosted by the Marfa Chamber of Commerce will be a three-on-three basketball game for adults to take place this summer, said Boyd. More information on that event is forthcoming.

Ballroom Marfa to host Music for Earth Day featuring a variety of musical artists

By BIG BEND SENTINEL

MARFA — Ballroom Marfa is hosting their first public music concert since the pandemic this Friday, April 22, Music for Earth Day, which will feature a variety of artists across two different venues.

Part of their current exhibition Kite Symphony by artists Roberto Carlos Lange and Kristi Sword, which closes May 7, the music show brings together a diverse and dynamic range of artists working creatively and collaboratively across genres to perform in honor of Earth Day. Lange worked in tandem with Ballroom Marfa Music Curator Sarah Melendez on their "dream lineup" of musical guests.

First performances by Lange, also known as Helado Negro, Li(sa E.) Harris and Jamire Williams will take place at 6 p.m. at the Ballroom Marfa Courtyard, followed up by a 9 p.m. live musical score by Jace Clayton (DJ Rupture), Lori Scacco and Newman T. Baker to accompany the exhibition film Star Scores at the Marfa Visitor Center. The concerts are both free to attend, but the gallery is requesting RSVPs through their website.

"All of the artists have multi-dimensional practices. They're all really thoughtful and sensitive. They're creating new work and a lot of them are improvisers. So, it's not a traditional concert in that way. It's a special experience," said Melendez.

The film Star Scores, made by Lange and Sword, is currently on view at Ballroom Marfa as a part of the Kite Symphony exhibition. It was inspired by the dark skies and stars of the Big Bend. The artists lived and worked in Marfa to create the show during the pandemic, doing field recordings of nature sounds and more.

"The whole exhibition is really rooted in sort of the appreciation of the landscape," said Melendez.

On April 22, Ballroom Marfa will also release the album Kite Symphony, Four Variations on vinyl in a limited edition of 100. The records will only be available for sale on-site at Ballroom Marfa and the gallery will host extended hours throughout the weekend of April 22.



Photo courtesy of Ballroom Marfa

Musical artists performing this Friday as a part of Ballroom Marfa's Music for Earth Day event, their first public concert since the start of the pandemic. Clockwise starting at the upper left corner: Li(sa E.) Harris, Newman Taylor Baker, Jamire WIlliams (center), Jace Clayton, Roberto Carlos Lange, Lori Scacco

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Rock hunters turn out for Alpine's 31st Annual Gem and Mineral Show

By MARY CANTRELL
mkcantrell@bigbendsentinel.com



Staff photo by Mary Cantrell

Alex Nuñez chats with a customer this past weekend at Alpine's 31st Annual Gem and Mineral Show.

ALPINE — Various rocks and minerals in the form of calcites, fluorites, agates and many more shone underneath the West Texas sun, dazzling their viewers this past weekend at Alpine's 31st Annual Gem and Mineral Show hosted by Big Bend's Chihuahuan Desert Gem and Mineral Club.

The well-attended, three-day celebration, hosted at the Alpine Civic Center, consisted of around 45 vendors both indoors and outdoors. Shops from the surrounding area and from around the U.S. displayed their wares, selling everything from raw, unrefined rock specimens to finished jewelry products and other lapidary art.

Chihuahuan Desert Gem and Mineral Club President Judith Bruski and show dealer Sue Franklin of Davis Mountains and Balmorhea Rock Shop hosted this year's fair. In addition to putting on the annual show — which was back this year after being canceled in 2020 and 2021 due to coronavirus — the club seeks to share the appreciation and education of earth sciences with its members and the public.

On Friday morning, Alex Nuñez of El Paso-based Nuñez Minerals slung deals beneath a pop-up tent outside, bagging up his customers' purchases and offering them insights about his products — a variety of rocks, minerals and jewelry Nuñez hand makes. Small, colorful, polished rock charms for Croc shoes, Nuñez's idea to capitalize on the popular fad, sat on a neatly-displayed table next to other-wordly orbs shaped out of mined rock specimens.

Nuñez, who was accompanying his father, uncle and brother at the event, grew up in the gem and mineral business, he said. His father, José, purchases rocks and minerals primarily from miners in Chihuahua and Durango, Mexico — areas rich in mineral deposits with many active mines.

Nuñez said he hopes to own a brick and mortar shop one day in town. He said his customers are often looking for gems and crystals with healing properties or that can remove bad energies. He assists customers with ease as they inquire after an adjustable obsidian ring, purchase a small handful of citrine from Brazil and ask if he knows where to source amethyst geode columns. He said he enjoys being a part of the family business and that it is connected to some positive, formative memories.

"When I used to go outside there always were rocks outside because my dad would buy them. I grew up with them, that's why I like them. I can feel the energy sometimes, because you do feel the energy, and it makes me happy," said Nuñez.

Tents away, Edgar Ruiz of Trini and Julie's Mexican Gems and Minerals from Anthony, Texas, was in good spirits, happy to be back at the Alpine fair after the two-year, virus-induced hiatus. Ruiz's annual income, similar to other vendors, is heavily reliant on the circuit of gem and mineral fairs that take place across the country. During the height of the pandemic, he said, they took to selling online to stay afloat.

Ruiz attends around 30 shows a year, traveling in his R.V. to save on hotel costs. Sporting a hat with his business' name, he explains he's been attending the Alpine Gem and Mineral Show since age seven. Now 31-years-old, his father, who started the business, has retired and Ruiz, one of six siblings, was the only one to take up his father's path and continue to run Trini and Julie's Mexican Gems and Minerals.

"It's a family business," said Ruiz. "I love it. I wouldn't change it. I don't think I'll ever get a nine-to-five in my life."

Rocks stacked and categorized by variety were available for wholesale at Ruiz's booth, most originating from the mines of Durango, Chihuahua and Sonora, Mexico. Ruiz takes trips to Mexico to mine the rocks himself — paying fees to commercial and private mines and claiming harvests with the government. The Mexican government regulates the amount of minerals that can be mined. Ruiz travels south to Guerrero, Mexico, to mine rare firework obsidian. He said he is familiar with the area but many miners choose not to travel there due to the heavy presence of cartels.

Ruiz will often ship his supplies of rocks and minerals to Juarez in order to avoid complications that come from traveling with them. Operating his business requires knowledge about everything from importing laws to metaphysical properties of the minerals, which younger crowds have more recently become engaged with.

"We're into logistics, we're into customer service," said Ruiz.

Paul Graybeal of Marfa's Moonlight Gemstones has been involved with Alpine's Gem and Mineral Show since its inception in the '90s. Graybeal has been collecting rocks and minerals since the mid-eighties, he said, and is also a longtime member of the Chihuahuan Desert Gem and Mineral Club. His fascination with rocks and minerals began after an initial encounter with a plume agate on an area ranch, he said. The Alpine Gem and Mineral Show, in essence, is meant to offer another avenue for those with a fascination for the natural beauty of the earth's rocks and minerals to connect and learn.

"I think a certain percent of people have a genetic disposition towards appreciation [of rocks]. We just kind of naturally pick shiny things up and we value it," said Graybeal. "I recognize it, I see it in little kids, their eyes get big and they get excited."



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Chinati invites the community to a daylong celebration of the completed restoration of the John Chamberlain Building. A former warehouse adapted by Donald Judd, the building, with 24 sculptures by John Chamberlain, contains the first permanent installation at Chinati to open to the public in Marfa, Texas, in 1983.

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El Edificio John Chamberlain está situado en el 106 de la Avenida North Highland.

Para más información, visite chinati.org.

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McDonald Observatory to host Dark Skies Fest April 29-30

By SAM KARAS
sam@bigbendsentinel.com

FORT DAVIS — Fans of the Big Bend region's starry nights are encouraged to mark their calendars for the last weekend of April, when the McDonald Observatory will be hosting its Dark Skies Fest. The family-friendly event features a host of fun and educational activities for budding astronomers of all ages and skill levels.

The weekend will kick off on Friday, April 29, at 3:30 p.m. with presentations on dark skies and the oil and gas industry and the impact of light pollution on local bird populations. The speaker series will continue on Saturday at 12:30 p.m. with presentations by representatives from the International Dark Sky Association (IDA), as well as a dive into the observatory's research by University of Texas astronomers.

Reservations are required for nighttime programming each day of the festival. On Friday, staff members will lead a workshop on astrophotography — the workshop is "beginner level" but requires attendees to bring their own equipment. The Cielo Quartet, a local string group, will take the stage at 8 p.m. for a twilight symphony.

Saturday night's festivities will kick off at 8 p.m. with a presentation on modeling the night sky, followed by a space trivia competition at 8:30. On both Friday and Saturday nights, a classic McDonald Observatory Star Party will begin at 9:15 p.m., where attendees are given a tour of the night sky using the observatory's telescopes. Guests won't need to bring any equipment to the Star Parties, but a pair of binoculars can enhance the experience.

Throughout the festival, there will be food trucks onsite for refreshments as well as a variety of activities and exhibits to enjoy. The festival will mark the debut of a new exhibit at the Frank N. Bash Visitors Center that explores dark sky protections through interactive content that encourages visitors to think about light and how it affects the night sky.

The festival comes on the heels of an announcement that the Big Bend region was named the world's first International Dark Sky Reserve, a designation handed down by the IDA. The new title recognizes that communities in Brewster, Jeff Davis and Presidio counties are working together with protected areas on both sides of the border to fight light pollution and protect the region's pristine night skies.

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 the 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 and senior outreach coordinator 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."

The McDonald Observatory is located about 15 miles outside of Fort Davis on Highway 118. Reservations can be made and more information can be found on the observatory's website.

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Eunice Golden
Jenna Gribbon
Alex Heilbron
Ania Hobson
Luchita Hurtado
Chantal Joffe
Hayv Kahraman
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Christiane Lyons
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Marilyn Minter
Alice Neel
Elizabeth Peyton
Paula Rego
Faith Ringgold
Deborah Roberts
Susan Rothenberg
Jenny Saville
Dana Schutz
Joan Semmel
Amy Sherald
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Njideka Akunyili Crosby, *Dwell: Me, We*, 2017. Acrylic, transfers, colored pencil, charcoal, and collage on paper. 96 × 124 inches. Collection of the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Gift of the Director's Council and Museum purchase, The Benjamin J. Tillar Memorial Trust, 2019. © Njideka Akunyili Crosby. Photo: Kevin Todora

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The Studios
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mcdonaldobservatory.org
This event made possible through support from Apache Corp.

Marfa ISD students qualify for State Golf Tournament

MARFA — Two Marfa ISD golfers, Alexis Gonzales and Cristian Ontiveros, qualified for the State Golf Tournament this week.

Cristian Ontiveros, a senior who has played four years for Marfa High School, won 1st place overall at the Regional tournament, and Qualified as the 1st Medalist for State shooting 78 and 79 at regional for a total score 157. The State tournament will be May 9-10 in Kyle, TX.

Alexis Gonzales, a junior who has played three years for the high school, won 4th place overall at the regional tournament and qualified as the 2nd Medalist for State, shooting 95 and 88 at regional for a total score of 183. The State tournament will be May 16-17 in Kyle, TX.

"We would like to thank the Marfa ISD administration, Oscar Aguero, Allison Scott, and Linda Ojeda for supporting the team in all they do," said Marfa golf coach Curtis Pittman. "Special thanks to Ernest Villirial and the Marfa golf course for allowing us practice space and time. Also to local help Mario Ontiveros and Ricky Luna and the many other people at Marfa golf course for the pointers and help with team members. Barry Mcalister of San Angelo was an amazing help in getting Cristian ready for this accomplishment. We are expecting great things from these two athletes at state."



Photo courtesy of MISD

Marfa High School students Alexis Gonzales and Cristian Ontiveros qualified this week for the State Golf Tournament. From left, Alexis Gonzales, Coach Curtis Pittman and Cristian Ontiveros.



Photo courtesy of Elizabeth Donaldson

Marfa High School student Febi Brimhall enjoys a canoe trip on the Rio Grande with fellow environmental systems classmates.



Photo courtesy of Elizabeth Donaldson

From left: Uriel Torres, Jose Sandoval, Juan Bautista, Dimetrey Stewart, Febi Brimhall, Donel Lara and Far Flung Outdoor Center river guide Olivia Gonzales.

Marfa students participate in Big Bend river trip

By BIG BEND SENTINEL

BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK — A handful of Marfa High School juniors and seniors recently experienced a river tour excursion on the Rio Grande in Big Bend National Park as a part of teacher Elizabeth Donaldson's environmental systems class.

Students have been compiling "field guides" as a part of the course, containing grasses, shrubs, trees, flowers, succulents, birds, reptiles, insects, mammals and minerals of Big Bend. On their trip to the national park, students utilized their field guides to identify various flora and fauna in the park.

"Several students have never ventured into the park, or if they have, they weren't equipped with a vast array of knowledge that they will have this time," said Donaldson.

Donaldson said students have been learning about a variety of environmental regions around the world, but the course has continuously focused on the Chihuahuan Desert, Trans-Pecos and the Big Bend area.

Student Tori Torres said she enjoyed the challenge of canoeing on the Rio Grande River and logged a number of locations, plants, and animals on the trip.

"My favorite part of the trip was most of us going to swim in the spot where we had lunch," wrote Torres in an essay about the trip. "I would love to return."

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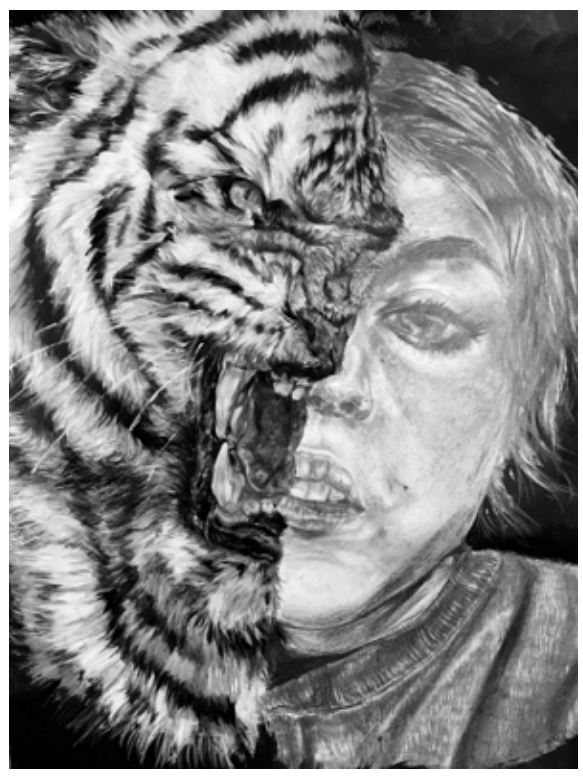
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I will help you,
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Isaiah 41:10

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DRAWING OF THE WEEK



Hannah Ibarra
"Neuroticism"
8th Grade

Sudoku & Crossword puzzles:

UNIVERSAL Sudoku Puzzle

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9 inclusively.

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

4/5

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

Solution from last week's puzzle:

SOLUTION:

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

3/28

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Universal Crossword

Edited by David Steinberg April 18, 2022

ACROSS
1 Reacts to astonishing news
6 Extracurricular group
10 The basics
14 Snow shelter
15 Apple's bitten apple, for one
16 Search (for)
17 Respond like Pavlov's dogs
18 Scandinavian capital
19 Arthur Ashe Courage Award, e.g.
20 Motor City baseball team
23 "I do"
24 Taxing agcy.
25 Consumed amount
28 "Hugo" actor Butterfield
29 Filled with amazement
31 Seize
32 Runner's statistic for part of a race
36 Western necktie
37 Like a desert
38 Blow off lots of steam?
40 Place to bake a cake
41 Relocate
42 European commune known for sparkling wine
44 Hydrogen's atomic number
45 Walking support
47 UNLV or UCLA
48 Gymnast's off-the-ground maneuver
50 ___-fi
51 Afternoon drink
54 What may stop you from scratching
58 "C'mon, man!"
60 Off-the-wall effect?
61 Ted ___ (coach played by Jason Sudeikis)
62 "Right now!"
63 Nifty
64 Go inside
65 Ernie's pal
66 Shipped
67 Hairdo ... or do, as hair

DOWN
1 Dizzy with excitement
2 Concur
3 Casino machines
4 Low-quality
5 Concerto star
6 What blood thinners prevent
7 Misplaced
8 Fruit named for its unattractiveness
9 Get down to disco music
10 Warn
11 Brazilian dance
12 Take, as a plea
13 Word before or after "blue"
21 Extremely mad
22 G, for one U.S. state's name
26 Superman's birth name
27 Material for black piano keys
28 Helper
29 Get a laugh out of
30 Sobbed
32 Pacific island nation
33 Likely (to)
34 Source of storm updates
35 Neighbor of Pakistan
36 This and that
39 47-Across for NYU art students
43 They grow down
45 Manx or Siamese pet
46 1986 Sigourney Weaver sequel set in space
49 Not competent
50 "The Office" character Michael
51 Easy to irritate
52 Artist's stand
53 Love, in Livorno
55 Slushy drink
56 Better safe ___ sorry
57 Go on a tirade
58 Bit of glue
59 Employ

PREVIOUS PUZZLE ANSWER

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

4/17

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☺ MARFA SCHOOL LUNCH MENU ☺

APR	Thu, Apr 21	Fri, Apr 22	Mon, Apr 25	Tue, Apr 26	Wed, Apr 27
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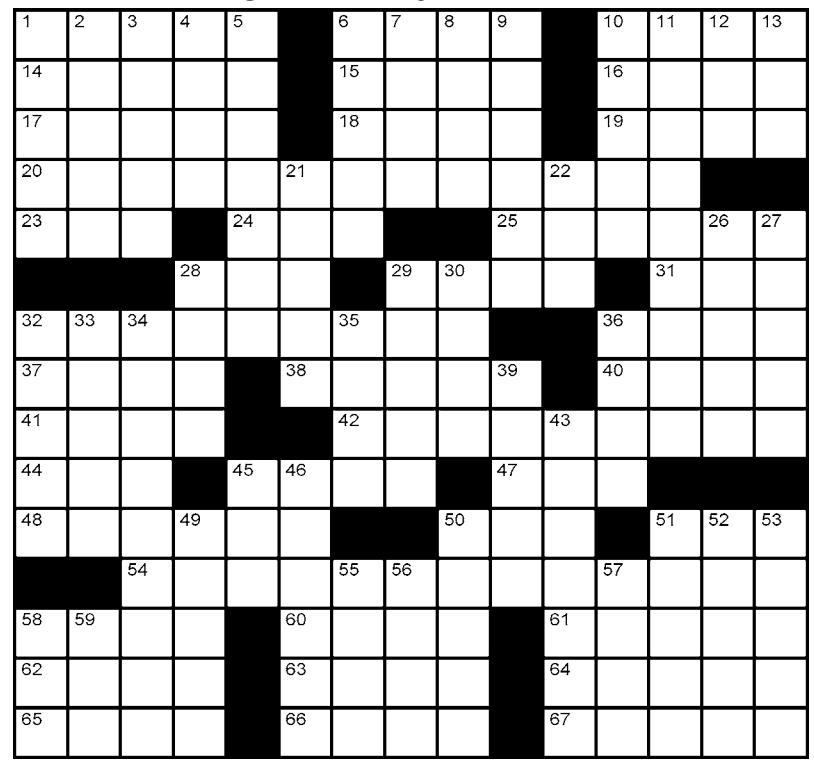
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MARFA SHORTHORNS SPORTS CALENDAR

FRI, APR 22: Varsity Softball vs Van Horn at Van Horn, 5:30 PM
MON, APR 25: Varsity Softball vs Van Horn in Marfa, 5:30 PM
TUE, APR 26: Varsity Softball District Certification

4/18

Having It Both Ways *by Joseph A. Gangi*



Terlingua Community Garden to celebrate 15 years of sustainable growing

By SAM KARAS
sam@bigbendsentinel.com

TERLINGUA — This Saturday, the Terlingua Community Garden will throw a quinceñera bash to celebrate 15 years of Ghost Town growing. Locals and visitors are welcome to join for a full day's lineup of live music, food and hands-on activities for green thumbs of all ages. The organization will also be raising money to expand their water catchment system.

Back in 2007, a small group of locals weary of driving all the way to Alpine for fresh produce banded together to make a change. Zoey Sexton and Shannon Carter, who had recently quit their jobs as guides, decided to approach Starlight Theatre owner Bill Ivey about donating a slice of the Ghost Town to the cause.

"A lot of people offered places, but we wanted somewhere that was relatively centrally located," Carter explained. "Without hesitation, he was completely on board. He said, 'You guys can use that caliche pit down there,' and laughed, but we ran with it."

Carter and Sexton sent soil from the future site of the garden to Texas A&M for sampling. The samples came back with a pH of 8.7 — not out of the norm for the desert environment, but off-the-charts basic for a typical home garden. "They were like, 'You guys really think you're going to grow food with that?'"

The group asked the baristas and line cooks up the hill at the Starlight and the Posada Milagro coffee shop to donate compost, and Sexton trucked in manure from the local stables. Fifteen years of hard work later, the garden is thriving. "Last growing season, we grew 547 pounds of food out of that garden," Carter reported.

In a place like Terlingua, which received a total of 5 inches of rain last year, every drop of water counts. The garden's catchment system is located on the roof of the Starlight. When it rains, the roof drains into tanks behind the building, which are then gravity-fed down the hill to the garden through pipes underneath the parking lot.

The garden and the famed restaurant-and-bar have a symbiotic relationship: the catchment system fuels the garden, and also helps protect the historic building from erosion during monsoon season. "When we got big rains, the dance floor used to flood up to 2 feet," Carter explained.

The catchment system currently covers a third of the roof, and the group would like to expand to maximize available space. Tripling the catchment system would collect 2,400 gallons of water for each inch of rain, saving the organization from having to buy water from outside sources during dry spells.

Increasing the catchment capacity would allow more gardeners to join in on the action. Eleven community members currently tend plots in the garden — greens grow "incredibly well," and they've also had some success with onions and broccoli. In recent years, they've paused the accompanying farmer's market due to COVID, but it provides an opportunity for locals to grow food for themselves and make a little extra income on the side or donate to neighbors in need.

"It's all about empowering the individual," Carter explained. "People move out here for a reason: they want to be more independent, they want to live differently, they want to live simply. And the basis for all of that is learning how to grow food."

Saturday's celebration will kick off around 10 a.m. with kid-friendly arts and crafts tables and a plant sale. At 11:30, Bob Estrin of the School of Constructive Arts will give a talk on compressed earth bricks. At 2 p.m., Jeff and Binky Sartain will lead a demonstration on building with papercrete. The festivities will come to a close at 4:30 p.m., when competitors in the "quinciñera couture" costume contest will line up for judging.

Throughout the day, local musicians will perform. Beer donated by Brick Vault Brewery will be flowing, and the Kosmic Kowgirl and Milky Way Treats will provide sustenance. Attendees are also invited to bid in a silent auction for a fig tree — the proceeds will go to the water catchment project.

Folks who can't make it to the party but would like to contribute can pick up silent auction tickets at the Terlingua Trading Company or donate remotely through the Big Bend Citizens Alliance Paypal account.

The Terlingua Community Garden is located just up the road from the cemetery in the Terlingua Ghost Town.

BBT and Affordable Connectivity Program helping households connect

ALPINE — BBT is proud to participate in the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) program. The new long-term benefit will help to lower the cost of broadband service for eligible households struggling to afford internet service.

The ACP provides a discount of up to $30 per month toward broadband service for eligible households. The benefit also provides up to a $100 per household discount toward a one-time purchase of a computer, laptop or tablet if the household contributes more than $10 and less than $50 toward the purchase through a participating broadband provider.

A household is eligible if one member of the household meets at least one of the criteria below:

- Has an income that is at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines;
- Participates in certain assistance programs, such as SNAP, Medicaid, Federal Public Housing Assistance, SSI, WIC, Veteran's Pension or Survivor Benefit, or Lifeline;
- Participates in one of several Tribal specific programs, such as Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance, Tribal Head Start (only households meeting the relevant income qualifying standard) Tribal TANF, or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations;
- Is approved to receive benefits under the free and reduced-price school lunch program or the school breakfast program, including through the USDA Community Eligibility Provision;
- Received a Federal Pell Grant during the current award year; or
- Meets the eligibility criteria for a participating broadband provider's existing low-income program.

Households can apply in two simple steps: (1) visit ACPBenefit.org to submit an application, or print out and mail in, and (2) contact BBT and to select a plan. Additional information about the Affordable Connectivity Program is available at www.fcc.gov/ACP, or by calling 877-384-2575.

A 100% fiber network in Presidio in 2022

PRESIDIO — BBT has been a pillar of West Texas' vast remote territory for the past 60 years, providing telecommunications and technology services and keeping customers moving far into the future. BBT is the only fiber-based provider in the many rural communities served, and its service area covers 18,000 square miles, including 485 miles of border with neighboring Mexico.

With an eye on prosperity and growth, BBT remains committed to the economic development of the communities served and has already made a capital investment of $36,000,000 over the course of the last several years to deploy fiber to 6,000 locations. In addition, BBT continues to explore state and federal broadband funding opportunities to further expand the critical infrastructure required to deliver vital fiber-based connectivity throughout its entire serving territory. Business and economic growth are dependent on fast connectivity. Health and medical services share information and resources that can be lifesaving. Fiber-fed communications systems deliver information on weather, traffic alerts, and critical safety updates. In addition, it's essential for education and border security purposes. This technological evolution requires a fiber optic infrastructure in order to deliver these critical services.

By the end of 2022, BBT will complete a 100 percent fiber infrastructure to Presidio, Texas. This will give Presidio residents and businesses the ability to learn and work remotely, attend telehealth appointments and more. "BBT is very excited about the progress we are making in Presidio. Fiber optics is reliable, future proof, and provides increased security and value." said Rusty Moore, BBT general manager/COO. "Access to high-speed broadband is especially important to rural communities, which is something we advocate for across the nation. We are proud to help our communities close the digital divide."

BBT has invested $3,500,000 to The Presidio Fiber Project that is currently under construction. Some phases have been completed and many customers are already utilizing a fiber optic connection in their homes and businesses. For more information about BBT Fiber, customers can contact BBT at 800.592.4781 or learn more at bigbend.com.

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Submit a cover letter and resume via email to jobs@chinati.org.

Visit the Opportunities page of our website at chinati.org for detailed information about the job description and requirements.

The Chinati Foundation is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

JOB OPENING

The Presidio County Appraisal District is seeking a full-time Office Clerk for our Marfa office.

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Must be able to work M-F, 8:00 am- 5:00 pm.
High School/GED required.

Please submit applications/resume to the Presidio CAD Office, PO Box 879, Marfa, Texas 79843 or by email cramirez@presidiocad.org.

All applications must be submitted by May 1, 2022.

The Presidio CAD is an equal opportunity employer.

FOR SALE / RENT

PROPERTY FOR SALE

60' x 100' Lot at 201 S Hartford, Marfa
Has livable mobile home; tool shack; car port.
Selling for $80,000.

Interested parties please write to
M. Rod. 2316 Washington St., Carlsbad, NM 88220-3368

COMMERCIAL LEASE SPACES AVAILABLE

DOWNTOWN ALPINE
CORNER OF 6TH AND HOLLAND
12 MONTH LEASE
PRICE REDUCED

Please call: 432-837-9100 or 254-482-0077

STUDIO APARTMENT AVAILABLE

Studio apartment downtown Marfa with kitchen, bath and lovely backyard with trees. Central AC. Available May 1st.

All utilities included - $1300 a month.

Please contact Lindy: 917-574-7297

PLEASE RECYCLE THIS PAPER



Big Bend Community Action Committee, Inc.

P O Box 265/1412 W. Berlin, Marfa, TX 79843
Phone: 432-729-1992 ext. 102 / Fax: 432-729-3435
TRAX TRANSPORTATION

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

BBCAC is accepting applications for a transportation driver position. Applicant must have a valid Texas driver's license and have at least 5 years of driving experience. Applicant must pass a drug/alcohol test; and a background criminal history check before being hired.

Requirements for this position include: transporting and waiting for clients; MN DHS Background Study; DOT Medical Exam; MN DOT New Driver Training; working with individuals from infants to elderly; be knowledgeable in both English and Spanish; and be willing to work with disabled individuals. We are looking for applicants who are interested in working long term, for our agency.

Starting pay is $15.00 per hour.

Applications may be picked up at Big Bend Community Action offices, from 9:00 AM-12:00 PM and 1:00 PM-4:00 PM; Monday-Friday.

BBCAC is an equal opportunity employer.

PREVENTATIVE CARE HEALTH SERVICES JOB OPPORTUNITIES

•CHW-COMMUNITY HEALTH CARE WORKER•
(Outreach)
•PROGRAM COORDINATOR•
Collaborate with team to ensure program process and outcomes.
•HUMAN RESOURCE REP•
(Bachelors required)
•INSURANCE IN NETWORK CREDENTIALING REP•
•MEDICAL FRONT DESK SUPERVISOR•
•DENTAL FRONT DESK SUPERVISOR•
•MEDICAL FRONT DESK SUPERVISOR•
•CQI COORDINATOR•
Training will be provided.
Oversees the quality improvement program for the organization.
Prior clinical experience in health care setting is preferred:
RN, LVN, or other professional health care employment.

ALSO LOOKING FOR A DENTIST, MEDICAL DOCTOR, FNP, AND DENTAL HYGIENIST

Please call Sarah at 432-837-4812 for more information.

Applications may be picked up at 1605 N. FT. Davis Hwy Alpine, TX 79830 or call (432) 837-4555.

Please call first before arrival.

Family Health Service of Alpine • 1605 N. FT. Davis Hwy

THE SENTINEL IS LOOKING FOR A BARISTA TO JOIN OUR CREW!

WE ARE SEEKING INDIVIDUALS WITH A GREAT ATTITUDE AND CUSTOMER SERVICE SKILLS.

CANDIDATES WILL CROSSTRAIN BETWEEN COFFEE AND COCKTAILS.

EXPERIENCE IS A PLUS, HAPPY TO TRAIN THE RIGHT CANDIDATE.

PLEASE EMAIL YOUR RESUME TO MAISIE@THESENTINELMARFA.COM

LEGAL NOTICES

APPLICATION HAS BEEN MADE WITH THE TEXAS ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE COMMISSION FOR A MIXED BEVERAGE PERMIT WITH FOOD AND BEVERAGE CERTIFICATE AND LATE HOURS CERTIFICATE BY ALTA FRONTERA, LLC DBA HIGH FRONTIER LOCATED AT 1164 HIGH FRONTIER ROAD, FORT DAVIS, JEFF DAVIS COUNTY, TEXAS 79734. TIMOTHY CROWLEY - MANAGER.

GOVERNMENT CONTACTS

PRESIDIO COUNTY
Judge Cinderela Guevara:
(432) 729-4452

CITY OF MARFA
Manny Baeza, City of Marfa Mayor
mayor@cityofmarfa.com
(432) 295-0048
Irma Salgado, Mayor Pro Tem
councilmembersalgado@cityofmarfa.com
Buck Johnston
councilmemberjohnston@cityofmarfa.com
Raúl Lara
councilmemberlara@cityofmarfa.com
Eddie Pallarez
councilmemberpallarez@cityofmarfa.com
Yoseff Ben-Yehuda
councilmemberbenyehuda@cityofmarfa.com

Presidio Mayor John Ferguson:
City Hall: (432) 229-3517
Email: jferguson@presidiotx.us

BREWSTER COUNTY
Judge Eleazar Cano:
(432) 837-6200 x 124

Alpine Mayor Andy Ramos:
City Hall: (432) 837-3301
Email: mayor.ramos@ci.alpine.tx.us

JEFF DAVIS COUNTY
Judge Curtis Evans: *(432) 426-3968*

FEDERAL:
U.S. Sen. John Cornyn:
(202) 224-2934 (D.C. office)
U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz:
(202) 224-5922 (D.C. office)

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
AUCTION AND SALE OF ABANDONED MOTOR VEHICLES

Pursuant to the authority granted under the Texas Transportation Code, Section 683.011, and or Section 683.031: and having complied with the notification procedures required on Section 683.012 of this Article, the Sheriff, Presidio County, Marfa, Texas, shall conduct an auction and sale of abandoned motor vehicles at 10:00 A. M., Saturday, April 23, 2022, at the following location: Outside the Marfa Airport Impound Lot, Hwy 17 N, Marfa, TX 79843.

Abandoned vehicles to be sold are:

- 1985 MOTOR HOME, VIN: 1GBKP37WXF3300432
- 1992 FORD TBIRD, VIN: 1FAPP60T4NH106991 NO KEY
- 1992 FORD VAN, VIN: 1FTFE24H9NHA24586 NO KEY
- 1996 FORD VAN, VIN: 1FBJS31H0THB21741
- 1998 CHEV EXP VAN, VIN: 1GAHG39R8W1022227 NO KEY
- 1998 FORD EPT LL, VIN: 1FMRU1760WLB66033
- 1999 FORD LL, VIN: 1FMZU32X3XZB38706
- 1999 DODG DUR UT, VIN: 1B4HR28Y0XF581258
- 2000 FORD PK, VIN: 1FTSF31S5YEE53554
- 2001 CHEV PK, VIN: 2GCEC19W611109255
- 2001 FORD PK, VIN: 1FTRX17L41KA51323
- 2003 CHEV EXP VN, VIN: 1GAHG39U531157665
- 2003 CHEV LL, VIN: 1GNEC13V73R194771
- 2004 DODG PK, VIN: 1D7HA18D44S521753
- 2005 NISS ALT 4D, VIN: 1N4BL11DX5N924081
- 2005 NISS TTN PK, VIN: 1N6BA06A15N535562
- 2005 DODG DUR LL, VIN: 1D4HB48D55F617915
- 2006 CHEV HHR LL, VIN: 3GNDA23P46S626954
- 2006 FORD PK, VIN: 1FTPW14VX6KD89106
- 2010 NISS SBL 4D, VIN: 3N1AB6AP2AL718069
- 2012 KIA OPT 4D, VIN:5XXGN4A75CG027510
- 2012 HOND ASE 4D, VIN: 1HGCP2F68CA089672
HOMEMADE TRAILER, NO VIN
- AIRCRAFT 28-10103 PIPER PA-28-235 FIXED-WING SINGLE-ENGINE, NO KEYS

Danny Dominguez, Sheriff, Presidio County Sheriff's Office, P.O. Drawer V, Marfa, Texas (432) 729-4308

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
VEHICLE ACCESSORIES

Presidio County is soliciting proposals for the purchase of Vehicle Accessories. Proposal documents may be obtained by contacting the Presidio County Auditor's Office at 432-729-1990, email: countyauditor@co.presidio.tx.us.

Sealed proposals must be received by April 29, 2022, at 4:00 pm and be clearly marked "RFP #22-05 – VEHICLE ACCESSORIES," and delivered to:

Presidio County Auditor
PO Box 423
300 N. Highland, 3rd Floor
Marfa, TX 79843

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
THERMAL BINOCULARS

Presidio County is soliciting proposals for the purchase of Thermal Binoculars. Proposal documents may be obtained by contacting the Presidio County Auditor's Office at 432-729-1990, email: countyauditor@co.presidio.tx.us.

Sealed proposals must be received by April 29, 2022, at 4:00 pm and be clearly marked "RFP #22-04 – THERMAL BINOCULARS," and delivered to:

Presidio County Auditor
PO Box 423
300 N. Highland, 3rd Floor
Marfa, TX 79843

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Your Full Service Propane, Gasoline & Diesel Distributor for Brewster, Jeff Davis & Presidio Counties of West Texas

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2411 East Highway 90
ph: 432-837-2518

MARATHON OFFICE:
Highway 385 South
ph:432-386-4422

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