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BURN BAN IN EFFECT, NO GROUND FIRES

by order of Presidio County

Local officials seek solutions for storm damage to County Annex in Presidio

By SAM KARAS
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PRESIDIO COUNTY — At the two most recent meetings of the Presidio County Commissioners Court, Precinct 3 Commissioner Eloy Aranda advocated for funding to address storm damage to the County Annex buildings in Presidio. The county has decided to explore grant-funded opportunities and invited William Helm of in*situ Architecture — the firm in El Paso advising the county on their courthouse and jail restoration project — to come and assess the damage mid-September.

After weeks of heavy rain, employees have complained of leaky roofs and damp carpets — a situation that could quickly spiral into mold and increased risk of health issues for employees. "The water came in really bad to my office," Precinct 2 Justice of the Peace Juanita Bishop told commissioners at their meeting on August 24. "Water is coming in from the walls, the door, everywhere."

Two weeks later, the situation hasn't improved. Bishop said the buildings' employees have taken to layering the carpet with Clorox wipes before leaving for the day to combat the mold. Yellow stains have sprouted on the ceiling — she said her coworkers started noticing roof problems in July, and the monsoon made them worse. "The smell of mold and the soggy carpet is unbearable," she said.

Aranda's first proposition was to rescind American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds from the Marfa Fire Station to make repairs — after months of deliberation, the county had decided to use their federal stimulus money to help make necessary repairs to the building, to the tune of $224,000.

Precinct 1 Commissioner Brenda Bentley asked if there was still money left over in the ARPA pot to dedicate to both buildings. County Judge Cinderela Guevara and Auditor Patty Roach clarified that there wasn't anything left, but that the county had some time left to commit and use the funds — the funds had to be committed by 2024 and spent by 2026. "We still have some time," said Roach.

Despite the wiggle room, County Judge Cinderela Guevara quickly shot down the idea of reapportioning ARPA funds and promised to seek other avenues for cash. "I do not want to touch the funds set aside for the fire station at all — those need to be solidly for the fire station, period," she said.

Before seeking out and applying for grant money, Guevara stressed

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Photo courtesy of John Ferguson

The Presidio High School Band marches down Lincoln Street at last weekend's Marfa Lights Festival.
La Banda de la Escuela Secundaria Presidio marcha por Lincoln Street en el Festival de las Luces de Marfa el pasado fin de semana.

POR ORDEN DEL CONDADO DE PRESIDIO ENTRA EN VIGOR UNA PROHIBICIÓN SOBRE EL USO DEL FUEGO, NO SE PUEDE HACER FUEGO SOBRE LOS TERRENOS

Los funcionarios locales buscan soluciones para los daños causados por la tormenta en el anexo del condado en Presidio

Por SAM KARAS
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CONDADO DE PRESIDIO — En las dos reuniones más recientes de la Corte de Comisionados del Condado de Presidio, el Comisionado del Precinto 3, Eloy Aranda, abogó por financiamiento para abordar los daños causados por la tormenta a los edificios del Anexo del Condado en Presidio. El condado decidió explorar oportunidades financiadas por subvenciones e invitó a William Helm de in*situ Architecture, la firma en El Paso que asesora al condado en su proyecto de restauración de la cárcel y el juzgado, para que viniera y evaluara los daños a mediados de septiembre.

Después de semanas de fuertes lluvias, los empleados se han quejado de techos con goteras y alfombras húmedas, una situación que podría convertirse rápidamente en moho y aumentar el riesgo de problemas de salud para los empleados. "El agua entró muy mal a mi oficina", dijo la jueza de paz del Precinto 2, Juanita Bishop, a los comisionados en su reunión del 24 de agosto. "Está entrando agua de las paredes, la puerta, por todas partes".

Dos semanas después, la situación no ha mejorado. Bishop dijo que los empleados de los edificios han comenzado a cubrir la alfombra con toallitas Clorox antes de irse para combatir el moho. Han brotado manchas amarillas en el techo; dijo que sus compañeros de trabajo comenzaron a notar problemas en el techo en julio y que el monzón los empeoró. "El olor a moho y la alfombra empapada es insoportable", dijo.

La primera propuesta de Aranda fue rescindir los fondos de la Ley del Plan de Rescate Estadounidense (ARPA, por sus siglas en inglés) de la Estación de Bomberos de Marfa para hacer reparaciones; después de meses de deliberación, el condado había decidido usar su dinero de estímulo federal para ayudar a hacer las reparaciones necesarias en el edificio, al ritmo de $224,000.

La comisionada del Precinto 1, Brenda Bentley, preguntó si todavía quedaba dinero en el bote de ARPA para dedicarlo a ambos edificios. La jueza del condado Cinderela Guevara y la auditora Patty Roach aclararon que no quedaba nada, pero que al condado le quedaba algo de tiempo para comprometer y usar los fondos: los fondos debían comprometerse para 2024 y gastarse para 2026. "Todavía tenemos algunos tiempo", dijo

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City of Presidio wages 'war on mosquitoes' after weeks of heavy rain

By SAM KARAS
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PRESIDIO — After an especially heavy monsoon season, Presidio has been hit by a plague of mosquitoes, swarming around front doors and pools of standing water. Citronella candles and torches have become ubiquitous, and local stores have teetered on the verge of selling out of bug spray. Presidio old-timers have learned to swat away the annual mosquito bonanza, but the City of Presidio has taken action to combat the scourge.

At the last Presidio City Council meeting, Administrator Pablo Rodriguez informed the crowd that the "war on mosquitoes" was ongoing. The city decided to contract with Adrian Flores, a local pest control expert, to fog the city streets from the back of a truck after dusk. "We're doing the best that we can, and sometimes conditions are just not good to fog," explained Mayor John Ferguson. "[Flores] is very sensitive to the resources that we have."

Flores explained that the fogging is "kind of a luxury" — he grew up in Presidio and doesn't remember a time where there was an outbreak of mosquito-borne illnesses like West Nile virus or malaria. The annual resurgence of these pests is more of a nuisance than it is a public health risk, but that doesn't mean Presidians are enjoying being eaten alive every time they leave their homes.

It will take awhile for the fogger to reach every part of town, so Flores

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La ciudad de Presidio libra una "guerra contra los mosquitos" después de semanas de fuertes lluvias

Por SAM KARAS
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PRESIDIO — Después de una temporada de monzones especialmente fuerte, Presidio se ha visto afectado por una plaga de mosquitos, que pululan alrededor de las puertas de entrada y charcos de agua estancada. Las velas y antorchas de citronela se han vuelto omnipresentes, y las tiendas locales han estado a punto de agotarse el repelente de insectos. Los veteranos de Presidio han aprendido a aplastar la bonanza anual de mosquitos, pero la Ciudad de Presidio ha tomado medidas para combatir el flagelo.

En la última reunión del Concejo Municipal de Presidio, el administrador Pablo Rodríguez informó a la multitud que la "guerra contra los mosquitos" estaba en curso. La ciudad decidió contratar a Adrián Flores, un experto local en control de plagas, para que empañara las calles de la ciudad desde la parte trasera de un camión después del anochecer. "Estamos haciendo lo mejor que podemos y, a veces, las condiciones simplemente no son buenas para la niebla", explicó el alcalde John Ferguson. "[Flores] es muy sensible a los recursos que tenemos".

Flores explicó que la nebulización es "una especie de lujo": creció en Presidio y no recuerda un momento en el que hubo un brote de enfermedades

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Facebook posts about attempted kidnapping just 'misinformation,' says police chief

By SAM KARAS
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PRESIDIO — Last week, rumors swirled among Facebook users in Presidio about an attempted kidnapping at the Big Bend Apartments. Posts shared among city officials asked locals to look out for a "suspicious silver vehicle" roving the streets, "possibly a Chevrolet station wagon or SUV," per the post on Mayor John Ferguson's profile.

Ferguson was the first to sound the alarm around 10:30 p.m. on August 29 after receiving a tip from a resident. "I was contacted through Facebook Messenger by a citizen, they said it looked like somebody was trying to force their way into a residence here at Big Bend Apartments," he recalled. "I thought, 'Wow, it's kind of late at night. Maybe I should just put something out there.'"

Presidio Police Department Chief Margarito Hernandez was contacted after the mayor's post started to make the rounds. He got in touch with the mother of the alleged kidnapping targets, who addressed a lot of the questions that had come up as folks around town kept an eye out for the vehicle. Earlier that evening, her kids noticed a man in a silver vehicle parked outside the apartment complex and felt something was off.

The kids panicked and ran inside the house, and the man got out of his vehicle and approached the front door of their residence. Eventually, he turned around and got back in his vehicle. The mother did notice that the

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Las publicaciones de Facebook sobre intento de secuestro son solo "información errónea", dice el jefe de policía

Por SAM KARAS
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PRESIDIO — La semana pasada, surgieron rumores entre los usuarios de Facebook en Presidio sobre un intento de secuestro en Big Bend Apartments. Las publicaciones compartidas entre los funcionarios de la ciudad pedían a los lugareños que buscaran un "vehículo plateado sospechoso" que deambulaba por las calles, "posiblemente una camioneta Chevrolet o un SUV", según la publicación en el perfil del alcalde John Ferguson.

Ferguson fue el primero en hacer sonar la alarma alrededor de las 10:30 p.m. el 29 de agosto después de recibir un aviso de un residente. "Un ciudadano me contactó a través de Facebook Messenger, dijo que parecía que alguien estaba tratando de entrar a la fuerza en una residencia aquí en Big Bend Apartments", recordó. "Pensé, 'Wow, es un poco tarde en la noche. Tal vez debería poner algo ahí afuera'".

El jefe del Departamento de Policía de Presidio, Margarito Hernández, fue contactado después de que la publicación del alcalde comenzó a circular. Se puso en contacto con la madre de los presuntos secuestradores, quien abordó muchas de las preguntas que habían surgido mientras la gente de la ciudad estaba atenta al vehículo. Más temprano esa noche, sus hijos notaron

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ENGLISH NEWS

War on mosquitoes

(Continued from page 1)

preaches patience and taking basic steps to prevent mosquitoes from setting up shop in your backyard. "The grass is super overgrown, it's overwhelming," he said. "Make sure you don't have tires collecting in your backyard or let your weeds get out of control — anywhere that's going to harbor them. It's normally where there's shade and the sun doesn't shine."

Flores has been using a permethrin product for the job — a tried and true weapon against the pests. According to the National Pesticide Information Center, permethrin affects the nervous systems of insects, causing paralysis and death. The chemical doesn't have the same effect on humans and most animals — it's broken down easily by the body and doesn't linger. There are harsher products on the market, but Flores wants to keep things safe and simple. "I'm not going overboard with it," he said.

The pest control efforts have been most aggressive in the parts of the city closest to the river, but as the weather permits, Flores has a plan to target each part of town — even parts of the city furthest away from the river have standing water in their creeks from all the dramatic rain. It'll take time — and it's a one-man operation. "That person that you see driving around at night, that's me," Flores said.

Storm damage

(Continued from page 1)

that the county needed a second opinion. "Without having an assessment, we really don't know what it's going to cost," she said. She suggested the commissioners pass on the item for the moment. "We want to clarify that we're not taking money away from the fire station, but that we will maybe address the annex buildings first because they're falling apart already."

At the commissioners court budget hearing held a few weeks later, Guevara invited William Helm of in•situ Architecture to field concerns from county officials before traveling to Presidio to assess the damage in person. Commissioner Aranda asked if Helm would be assessing the area around the buildings in addition to the leaky roofs — one problem that Aranda had observed was that the building's sidewalks are flush with the entrances, allowing water to pour into the buildings.

Helm explained that while he would be inspecting multiple aspects of the buildings to try and prevent water damage, creating a barrier between the inside and outside made seeking Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance difficult. "You don't want to create an obstacle to getting in with a wheelchair," he said.

The commissioners set a range of dates in mid-September that would be best for Helm's visit — Helm also stressed that he wanted to come during business hours so he could interview employees who use the buildings daily. "Let's hope the skies dry up for you down there a little bit in the meantime," he said.

Attempted kidnapping

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vehicle cruised by the house again later that night, but there was no contact or altercation between her children and the man in the silver vehicle.

Hernandez stressed that no crime had been committed — or as far as he could tell, even attempted. He left his card and number with the mother, but has not been contacted by her again or able to locate the man in the silver vehicle to get his side of the story.

Had there been an incident, it would have been a first in Hernandez's career. While kidnappings and missing persons cases occasionally make headlines in Presidio's much larger sister city, Ojinaga, it's not a common type of crime on this side of the river. "It's something all my life we haven't seen," he said.

Mayor Ferguson met with Hernandez later that week and apologized for "jumping the gun" — he wanted to be responsive and reach as many people as possible in case of an emergency. "There may have been another side to the story," he said. Hernandez told him to reach out to the police department if he received another crime tip from a local.

In case of a potential kidnapping, Hernandez stressed that parents can help investigators by making a note of a vehicle's license plate number. "Make sure you get a description of the vehicle, and if you have a cell phone, take a picture," he said.

He also stressed that folks should take a second to check their facts before spreading information about a potential crime. "You have to make sure you have true information, because otherwise it can cause a panic within the town," he said. That kind of panic can amplify interactions between the public and police and make a sketchy situation even more dangerous.

According to the Texas Center for the Missing, 33,774 children went missing in the state last year. The majority of those missing children were runaways — different types of abductions accounted for 20% of the missing children cases. Most child abductions are committed by family members; less than 1% of abducted children were taken by total strangers.

In their educational materials, the Texas Center for the Missing provides some tips to help prevent and handle these types of crimes: keeping up-to-date photos of your children and teaching them how to contact law enforcement during an emergency are important steps to make investigations easier. The organization also advises parents to keep track of kids' internet habits and accompany them as much as possible when in public. "Most crimes involving children are crimes of opportunity," reads one educational pamphlet for parents.

Presidio High School Band lights up Marfa Lights

By SAM KARAS
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MARFA — Last Saturday, the Presidio High School Band strutted their stuff in the Marfa Lights Parade, an annual festival that many view as a homecoming celebration — and an excuse to tear up the dance floor to a mostly-Latino lineup. The Presidio band kept with tradition, marching to a song called "Las Nubes," arranged by Mayor and former band director John Ferguson.

"Las Nubes" is one of the most famous songs by legendary Tejano musician José "Little Joe" Hernández, who has toured since the 1950s. "It's a song with a message," Hernández said of the hit — one that he performed for Cesar Chavez after taking an interest in joining Chavez's labor movement.

It's a song that sparks nostalgia for many throughout Latino Texas, with a theme of hope and perseverance through hard times. "Las nubes van pasando se paran un llovisnar. Parece que se sostienen, cuando a mi me oyen cantar," Hernández's chorus goes. "The clouds pass by, a drizzle stops. They seem to hold when they hear me sing."

Ferguson picked the song to appeal to that nostalgia. "A lot of old-time Marfa folks are big Tejano music lovers," he explained, "We made sure to play a song in the parade that they would recognize."

An arrangement of "Las Nubes" for a high school band didn't exist, but that was no challenge for Ferguson, who's been both a music educator and a musician for decades — his family band, Mariachi Santa Cruz, is a staple in the local Latin music scene. "When I heard them marching down the street, I actually started tearing up — it was great to hear them play," he said.

His daughter, Molly Ferguson Rodriguez, has taken up the family mantle as the current Presidio High School band director. "I grew up in that band room," she said. "It's a part of why I am me. It's such a nice experience to work with the kids at Presidio High."

She was proud of the kids for how well they performed despite not having that much time to practice — school started just a few weeks ago. "That really didn't matter, they were super determined," she said. "It was a shout out to the older generation's kind of music."

Rodriguez said the kids were especially excited to wear their new uniforms — "a complete upgrade" from the vintage uniforms the school had been stockpiling since the '90s. "Originally, we were just going to wear a T-shirt, something simple," she explained. "But the kids wanted to go ahead and do the uniforms. They were purchased last year and still very new to a lot of them."

The only thing that was missing from the traditional marching band lineup was a strong tuba player — Rodriguez's brother, Maxwell, filled in at the last minute. She currently has three horn players who can fill in tuba parts, but tuba is not their primary instrument and there's a steep learning curve. "Those kids stepped up to the plate immediately," she said.

The Ferguson family is hoping to see more collaborations between the high schools in the two towns. There's been some talk about having the Presidio band come and perform a halftime show during a Marfa football game. "We're a school without a football team and they're a school without a band," Ferguson explained.



Staff photo by Maisie Crow

The Presidio High School marching band performs at the 35th Annual Marfa Lights Festival.
La banda de música de la Escuela Secundaria Presidio se presenta en el 35º Festival Anual de las Luces de Marfa.

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NOTICIAS EN ESPAÑOL

Guerra contra los mosquitos

(Continuación de la página 1)

transmitidas por mosquitos como el virus del Nilo Occidental o la malaria. El resurgimiento anual de estas plagas es más una molestia que un riesgo para la salud pública, pero eso no significa que los presidentes estén disfrutando de ser comidos vivos cada vez que salen de sus hogares.

El nebulizador tardará un tiempo en llegar a todas las partes de la ciudad, por lo que Flores recomienda tener paciencia y tomar medidas básicas para evitar que los mosquitos se establezcan en su patio trasero. “La hierba está muy cubierta, es abrumadora”, dijo. “Asegúrese de no tener llantas acumuladas en su patio trasero o deje que sus malezas se salgan de control, en cualquier lugar que las albergue. Normalmente es donde hay sombra y no da el sol”.

Flores ha estado usando un producto de permetrina para el trabajo, un arma probada y verdadera contra las plagas. Según el Centro Nacional de Información sobre Pesticidas, la permetrina afecta el sistema nervioso de los insectos, causando parálisis y muerte. El químico no tiene el mismo efecto en los humanos y en la mayoría de los animales: el cuerpo lo descompone fácilmente y no permanece. Hay productos más duros en el mercado, pero Flores quiere mantener las cosas seguras y simples. “No voy a exagerar con eso”, dijo.

Los esfuerzos de control de plagas han sido más agresivos en las partes de la ciudad más cercanas al río, pero si el clima lo permite, Flores tiene un plan para atacar cada parte de la ciudad; incluso las partes de la ciudad más alejadas del río tienen agua estancada. sus arroyos de toda la lluvia dramática. Tomará tiempo, y es una operación de un solo hombre. “Esa persona que ves conduciendo por la noche, soy yo”, dijo Flores.

Intento de secuestro

(Continued from page 1)

a un hombre en un vehículo plateado estacionado afuera del complejo de apartamentos y sintieron que algo andaba mal.

Los niños entraron en pánico y corrieron dentro de la casa, y el hombre salió de su vehículo y se acercó a la puerta principal de su residencia. Finalmente, se dio la vuelta y volvió a subir a su vehículo. La madre notó que el vehículo pasó nuevamente por la casa más tarde esa noche, pero no hubo contacto ni altercado entre sus hijos y el hombre en el vehículo plateado.

Hernández enfatizó que no se había cometido ningún delito, o hasta donde él sabía, ni siquiera se había intentado. Dejó su tarjeta y número con la madre, pero ella no lo contactó nuevamente ni pudo ubicar al hombre en el vehículo plateado para obtener su versión de la historia.

Si hubiera habido un incidente, habría sido el primero en la carrera de Hernández. Si bien los casos de secuestros y personas desaparecidas ocasionalmente aparecen en los titulares en la ciudad hermana mucho más grande de Presidio, Ojinaga, no es un tipo de delito común en este lado del río. “Es algo que no hemos visto en toda mi vida”, dijo.

El alcalde Ferguson se reunió con Hernández más tarde esa semana y se disculpó por “apresurarse”: quería ser receptivo y llegar a la mayor cantidad de personas posible en caso de una emergencia. “Puede haber habido otro lado de la historia”, dijo. Hernández le dijo que se comunicara con el departamento de policía si recibía otro aviso de un crimen de un local.

En caso de un posible secuestro, Hernández enfatizó que los padres pueden ayudar a los investigadores tomando nota del número de placa del vehículo. “Asegúrese de obtener una descripción del vehículo y, si tiene un teléfono celular, tome una fotografía”, dijo.

También enfatizó que la gente debería tomarse un segundo para verificar sus datos antes de difundir información sobre un posible delito. “Hay que asegurarse de tener información veraz, porque de lo contrario puede causar pánico dentro del pueblo”, dijo. Ese tipo de pánico puede amplificar las interacciones entre el público y la policía y hacer que una situación incompleta sea aún más peligrosa.

Según el Centro de Texas para los Desaparecidos, 33,774 niños desaparecieron en el estado el año pasado. La mayoría de esos niños desaparecidos eran fugitivos: diferentes tipos de secuestros representaron el 20% de los casos de niños desaparecidos. La mayoría de los secuestros de niños son cometidos por miembros de la familia; menos del 1% de los niños secuestrados fueron tomados por completos extraños.

En sus materiales educativos, el Centro para los Desaparecidos de Texas brinda algunos consejos para ayudar a prevenir y manejar este tipo de delitos: mantener fotos actualizadas de sus hijos y enseñarles cómo comunicarse con la policía durante una emergencia son pasos importantes para tomar investigaciones más fáciles. La organización también aconseja a los padres que realicen un seguimiento de los hábitos de Internet de los niños y los acompañen tanto como sea posible cuando estén en público. “La mayoría de los delitos que involucran a niños son delitos de oportunidad”, dice un folleto educativo para padres.

El anexo del condado en Presidio

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Roach.

A pesar del margen de maniobra, la jueza del condado Cinderela Guevara rápidamente rechazó la idea de reasignar los fondos de ARPA y prometió buscar otras vías para obtener dinero en efectivo. “No quiero tocar los fondos reservados para la estación de bomberos en absoluto; esos deben ser sólidos para la estación de bomberos, punto”, dijo.

Antes de buscar y solicitar el dinero de la subvención, Guevara enfatizó que el condado necesitaba una segunda opinión. “Sin tener una evaluación, realmente no sabemos cuánto va a costar”, dijo. Ella sugirió que los comisionados pasen el tema por el momento. “Queremos aclarar que no le quitaremos dinero a la estación de bomberos, pero que tal vez primero nos ocuparemos de los edificios anexos porque ya se están desmoronando”.

En la audiencia de presupuesto de la corte de comisionados que se llevó a cabo unas semanas después, Guevara invitó a William Helm de in•situ Architecture a abordar las inquietudes de los funcionarios del condado antes de viajar a Presidio para evaluar los daños en persona. El comisionado Aranda preguntó si Helm evaluaría el área alrededor de los edificios además de los techos con goteras; un problema que Aranda había observado era que las aceras del edificio estaban al ras de las entradas, lo que permitía que el agua entrara a los edificios.

Helm explicó que mientras inspeccionaba múltiples aspectos de los edificios para tratar de prevenir daños por agua, crear una barrera entre el interior y el exterior dificultaba la búsqueda del cumplimiento de la Ley de Estadounidenses con Discapacidades (ADA, por sus siglas en inglés). “No quieres crear un obstáculo para entrar con una silla de ruedas”, dijo.

Los comisionados establecieron un rango de fechas a mediados de septiembre que sería mejor para la visita de Helm. Helm también enfatizó que quería venir durante el horario comercial para poder entrevistar a los empleados que usan los edificios a diario. “Esperemos que los cielos se sequen un poco mientras tanto”, dijo.



Foto cortesía de Juanita Bishop / Photo courtesy of Juanita Bishop

Las lluvias recientes han causado estragos en los edificios del anexo del condado en Presidio
Recent rains have been wreaking havoc on the County Annex buildings in Presidio..

Presidio High School Band ilumina Marfa Lights

Por SAM KARAS
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MARFA — El sábado pasado, la Banda de la Escuela Secundaria Presidio se pavoneó en el Marfa Lights Parade, un festival anual que muchos ven como una celebración de bienvenida y una excusa para romper la pista de baile con una alineación mayoritariamente latina. La banda de Presidio siguió con la tradición, marchando con una canción llamada “Las Nubes”, arreglada por Mayor y ex director de la banda, John Ferguson.

“Las Nubes” es una de las canciones más famosas del legendario músico tejano José “Little Joe” Hernández, quien ha estado de gira desde la década de 1950. “Es una canción con un mensaje”, dijo Hernández sobre el éxito, uno que interpretó para César Chávez después de interesarse en unirse al movimiento laboral de Chávez.

Es una canción que despierta nostalgia en muchos latinos de Texas, con un tema de esperanza y perseverancia en tiempos difíciles. “Las nubes que van pasando se paran a lloviznar. Parece que se sostienen, cuando a mi me oyen cantar”, dice el coro de Hernández. “Pasan las nubes, cesa una llovizna. Parecen aguantar cuando me escuchan cantar”.

Ferguson eligió la canción para apelar a esa nostalgia. “Muchos de los ancianos de Marfa son grandes amantes de la música tejana”, explicó, “nos aseguramos de tocar una canción en el desfile que pudieran reconocer”.

No existía un arreglo de “Las Nubes” para una banda de la escuela secundaria, pero eso no fue un desafío para Ferguson, quien ha sido tanto educador musical como músico durante décadas: la banda de su familia, Mariachi Santa Cruz, es un elemento básico en el escena musical latina local. “Cuando los escuché marchar por la calle, en realidad comencé a llorar, fue genial escucharlos tocar”, dijo.

Su hija, Molly Ferguson Rodríguez, ha tomado el relevo familiar como la actual directora de la banda de Presidio High School. “Crecí en esa sala de la banda”, dijo. “Es parte de por qué soy yo. Es una experiencia tan agradable trabajar con los niños de Presidio High”.

Estaba orgullosa de los niños por lo bien que se desempeñaron a pesar de no tener tanto tiempo para practicar: la escuela comenzó hace solo unas semanas. “Eso realmente no importó, estaban súper determinados”, dijo. “Fue un reconocimiento al tipo de música de la generación anterior”.

Rodríguez dijo que los niños estaban especialmente emocionados de usar sus nuevos uniformes, “una actualización completa” de los uniformes antiguos que la escuela había estado almacenando desde los años 90. “Originalmente, solo íbamos a usar una camiseta, algo simple”, explicó. “Pero los niños querían seguir adelante y hacer los uniformes. Fueron comprados el año pasado y aún son muy nuevos para muchos de ellos”.

Lo único que faltaba en la formación tradicional de la banda de marcha era una tuba fuerte: el hermano de Rodríguez, Maxwell, reemplazó en el último minuto. Actualmente tiene tres trompetistas que pueden tocar partes de tuba, pero la tuba no es su instrumento principal y hay una curva de aprendizaje empinada. “Esos niños dieron un paso al frente de inmediato”, dijo.

La familia Ferguson espera ver más colaboraciones entre las escuelas secundarias de los dos pueblos. Se ha hablado de que la banda de Presidio venga y realice un espectáculo de medio tiempo durante un partido de fútbol de Marfa. “Somos una escuela sin equipo de fútbol y ellos son una escuela sin banda”, explicó Ferguson.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Editor:

On the date of September 4, 2022, nine other seniors from my class in Presidio High School decided to volunteer at Cibolo Creek Ranch in order to take advantage of an opportunity that they gave us out of their generosity.

I would like to thank the staff members and everyone that we crossed paths with at Cibolo Creek Ranch and for giving us this chance to also assist the event that was held.

I would like to thank the students that took time out of their long weekend to volunteer and work a shift of 6 hours from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m. on a Sunday, regarded for family events. They dedicated their time to the task and devoted their skills to the duties at the event. I would like to point out their exceptional, hardworking characteristics and teamwork skills that they showed at the event when completing the assignments that were given to them by very kind and humble staff. Tasks involved cleaning, serving, coordinating designated parking, and best of all, admiring the beauty of the venue.

Because of this, I would like to recognize them and officially present their names to the public as an item of gratitude towards them for doing this for the Presidio community in representing, and for doing this for their Presidio High School Family of 2023.

Thank you,

Clarisa Villagran
Mia Marquez
Itzel Rubio
Victoria Corrales
Yaretzi Anaya
Jaylene Loera
Dafny Moreno
Adriana Barajas
Juan Orona

Last but not least, thank you Mr. Eric Turner and Mr. Jesus Zubia for volunteering to take us, and Dr. Laura Portillo and Ms. Hevila Ramos for organizing the coordination of the event.

OP-ED

No family should go hungry in Texas

By SENATOR CESAR J. BLANCO

No family or child in the greatest state should go to bed hungry, and with September being National Hunger Action Month, there is no better time to raise awareness of the rising number of Texans struggling with food insecurity.

Before the pandemic, hunger already plagued thousands of Texas families and children. The COVID-19 pandemic made matters worse. Now, with the pandemic behind us, inflation and gas prices along with stagnant wages, Texas families are increasingly forced to make impossible choices between food and other basic needs.

Nearly 13% of Texas households — 4 million Texans — face food insecurity. In rural communities, like those in the Big Bend and Trans-Pecos region, food-insecurity rates are almost double the state average. According to Feeding Texas, "Rural families often face higher rates of hunger because of the unique challenges of living remotely. These challenges include poor geographic access to healthy food, limited or unreliable job opportunities, and high rates of un- and under-employment. Addressing hunger in rural areas is a unique challenge."

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) makes it possible for many struggling Texans to buy food to feed themselves and their families despite low wages. Yet a growing number of families are being denied help because Texas is one of the few states where owning a vehicle can disqualify you from receiving food assistance. Imagine a single parent with multiple kids who needs that vehicle to work two or three jobs to make ends meet. Imagine that ranchhand who works before sun-up to after sun-down and needs his truck to do his job to barely make ends meet. These countless scenarios are heartbreaking and these families need help.

Although SNAP is a federal program, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) gives states the flexibility on determining eligibility. Established in 2001, Texas rules cap the maximum value of a vehicle at $15,000 for the first vehicle and $4,650 for any additional vehicle in the household to qualify for SNAP benefits. Owning a vehicle worth more than those limits disqualifies hungry Texas families from SNAP benefits — even if you have lost your job and have no way to pay for food.

These vehicle valuation limits, set 20 years ago, are outdated and have lost touch with reality. If the limits were adjusted to reflect the current value of vehicles today adjusted for inflation, the maximum value of the first vehicle would increase to $25,000 and $7,800 for an additional vehicle in the household. Because the vehicle asset test has not been updated in 20 years and has not kept up with inflation, Texans that would otherwise be eligible for SNAP are increasingly facing food insecurity.

To make matters worse, a dramatic 40% average increase in the values of used cars has recently led to something we have never seen before; instead of depreciating, used cars appreciated in value in the past year. As a result, families that have previously been approved for SNAP and go to renew their benefits are having their cases suddenly rejected because their used cars are worth more today than they were just one year ago. Thousands of eligible Texas families are being disqualified from basic food assistance because of an outdated vehicle asset test mandated by the state. That's why I filed Senate Bill 1914 last legislative session. The bill would have modernized the SNAP vehicle asset test by adjusting for inflation. Unfortunately, the bill did not make it across the finish line before session ended.

Food insecurity and Texas' vehicle asset tests disproportionately affect children, seniors, rural families, and people of color the most. According to Feeding Texas, 20% of children, 11% of households with seniors, 25% of African Americans, and 18% of Latinos are facing hunger in Texas.

Updating Texas' SNAP vehicle asset test is not a handout, it is a hand-up for thousands of Texas families facing food insecurity who shouldn't be punished for having the vehicles they need to lift themselves out of poverty and welfare. Because Texas' SNAP vehicle asset test is not a federal requirement or in state statute, Texas can take steps now to help hungry Texans at no cost to the state. Texas should eliminate the SNAP vehicle asset test now, or at the very minimum, adjust the outdated vehicle limits to reflect today's inflation and distorted used vehicle market. If Texas fails to take action in the interim, I will continue the fight against hunger by refiling S.B. 1914 next session.

Senator César J. Blanco proudly represents the people of Culberson, El Paso, Hudspeth, Jeff Davis and Presidio counties in the Texas Senate.

OUR WATER MATTERS

2022 Texas Groundwater Summit focuses on conservation and drought

By TREY GERFERS
tgerfers@pcuwcd.org

The Texas Alliance of Groundwater Districts held its annual groundwater summit in San Antonio last week. Groundwater professionals, scientists, lawmakers, attorneys, consultants and vendors from across the state gathered for the event, which is now in its 11th year.

The summit kicked off with a lively panel on "The 'S' word: Sustainability in Groundwater," moderated by Vanessa Puig-Williams of the Environmental Defense Fund. Panelists included Dr. Robert Mace of the Meadows Center for Water and the Environment; Wade Oliver of the INTERA Inc., a geoscience and engineering firm; Mitchell Sodek of the Central Texas Groundwater Conservation District; and Deborah Trejo, an attorney who represents several groundwater districts in Texas.

As readers of "Our Water Matters" will recall from past issues, maintaining our groundwater resources involves such concepts as "groundwater sustainability," which the U.S. Geological Survey defines as "the development and use of ground water in a manner that can be maintained for an indefinite time without causing unacceptable environmental, economic or social consequences," and "sustainable yield," which is the amount of groundwater that can be produced to achieve groundwater sustainability. The panelists discussed the challenges of pursuing and enforcing sustainable pumping of groundwater resources in the real world. Difficulties include the fact that Chapter 36 of the Texas Water Code, which governs groundwater districts in Texas, does not define sustainability but instead refers merely to "unacceptable" levels of pumping. The definition of "unacceptable" is ultimately a local decision which can vary widely within a given area, including areas that share the same aquifer.

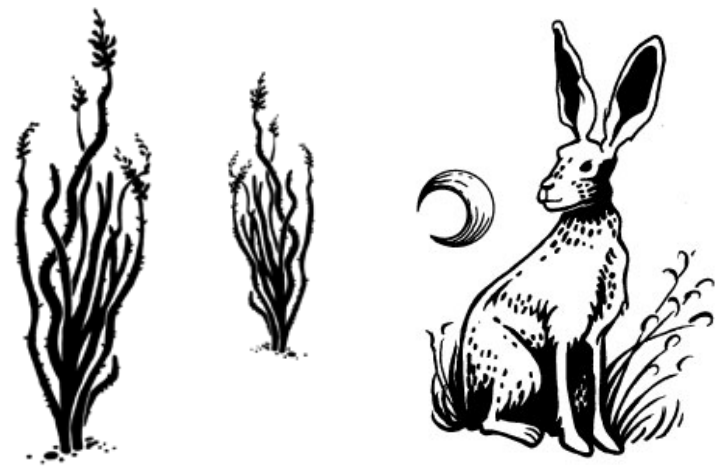
Even if stakeholders may disagree about the definition of "unacceptable," the panelists pointed out that one of the best ways to achieve sustainability is through conservation. Dr. Mace recommended that groundwater districts reach out to cities and counties within their jurisdictions to "encourage conservation efforts." According to Mace, these partnerships can be very effective in "making up for GCD [groundwater conservation district] limitations as regards … authority." By partnering with counties, for example, groundwater conservation districts can advise them on commonsense protections against impacts from development, an area where counties have jurisdiction but groundwater districts do not.

Dr. Mace also suggested that groundwater districts get "good production numbers" to provide a clear understanding of the number of permit holders, municipal water utilities and water supply corporations within a given district and the volumes of groundwater they are pumping. Other ideas included looking at fee reductions to incentivize users to reduce their pumping, encouraging landowners to create conservation easements on their property to protect watersheds, and private-public partnerships to promote the restoration of waterways and experimental approaches, such as managed aquifer recharge.

All of the panelists agreed that sustainability ultimately protects private-property rights in groundwater over the long term by providing a clear framework for ensuring that everyone has the water they absolutely need, while ensuring that the investment-backed expectations of landowners remain realistic and practicable over time.

The realities of groundwater as a finite resource are increasingly clear as Texas continues to face drought conditions. Readers should not be deceived by recent rainfall. The drought is ongoing, and several Texas legislators expressed their concern during a panel at the Groundwater Summit. Senator Sarah Eckhardt (D-District 14), Representative Kyle Kacal (R-District 12), Representative Tracy King (R-District 80 and chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee), and Senator Charles Perry (R-District 28 and chairman of the Senate Agriculture, Water, and Rural Affairs Committee) discussed the resource challenges in Texas, where population growth and drought are expected to increase exponentially in coming years. The 2022 Texas State Water Plan predicts that future demand will outstrip supplies by nearly 7 million acre-feet of water per year, with the biggest growth in demand expected from municipal users. Senator Echkhardt pointed out that these projections, which are based on current rainfall patterns, could grow increasingly dire if rainfall decreases "just when that water is needed most." All the lawmakers emphasized the need for more conservation, while also respecting the private-property rights of landowners to use their groundwater as they see fit. The role of groundwater conservation districts (where they exist) will remain vital in balancing the rights and needs of Texas' growing population.

Trey Gerfers is a San Antonio native and serves as general manager of the Presidio County Underground Water Conservation District. He also works as a translator of technical documents from German to English for the German and Swiss pharmaceutical and medical-science industries. Trey has lived in Marfa since 2013.



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PRESIDIO SPORTS CALENDAR

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 8:
LRFMS V-ball vs Van Horn @ Presidio

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 9:
PHS V-ball vs Pecos @ Presidio
JV @ 5:00 pm, V @ 6:30 om

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 10:
PHS V-ball JV @ Denver City Tourney
LRFMS V-ball (B) @ Ft. Stockton Tourney
LRFMS CC Boys/Girls @ Wink

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 12:
LRFMS V-ball @ Crane

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