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

Marfa ISD Board of Trustees appoints new member

By MARY CANTRELL
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MARFA — The Marfa Independent School District Board of Trustees appointed Marfa resident Stela Fuentez to the board on Monday.

Fuentez will serve as Place 1, a seat that has remained vacant since the resignation of Christa Marquez last July, and which the board previously struggled to fill due to a lack of applicants.

With the filling of the final vacant seat, Fuentez rounds out the board of seven, joining existing members President Teresa Nuñez, Vice President Yolanda Jurado, Secretary Rene Gonzales, Lori Flores, Ernie Villarreal and Ruben Martinez.

After putting out a call for letters of interest from potential school board members, Fuentez was the chosen candidate at Monday night's board meeting and was sworn in alongside existing Board Member Lori Flores, who ran unopposed to keep her Place 2 seat.

Fuentez is originally from San Benito, a town in South Texas near the Rio Grande Valley. She earned degrees from the University of Texas San Antonio and moved to the Big Bend region with her husband, Vince, who is from Presidio, in 2010.

Professionally, she works in strategic communications with the Air Force Installation and Mission Support Center out of San Antonio, and has two children, ages 9 and 7, who currently attend Wonder School Marfa, but will continue their education in junior high and high school with Marfa ISD, said Fuentez.

Fuentez has experience volunteering with MISD's Parent Teacher Organization (PTO), Read Marfa, has served on the Marfa Studio of Arts board and more. She said she hopes to continue strengthening existing community partnerships in her new role as a board member. Fuentez said she was also eager to offer new ideas and support local students, staff and parents.

"My main focus as a board trustee is to ensure that our Shorthorns have a strong academic focus all while preparing them for life beyond high school," said Fuentez. "I want to ensure that we prepare them with the necessary life skills and empower them with the insight needed to create goals and take all the necessary steps to reach those goals."

"I also want to ensure that we are doing everything possible to support the morale, health and well being of our students and staff,"

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Staff photo by Mary Cantrell

Marfa ISD Senior Charlize Martinez and her horse Yoshiki ride in the senior parade down Highland Avenue this week celebrating the Class of 2023. SEE MORE ON PAGE 5.

Texas House passes controversial bill to create a 'Border Protection Unit'

By SAM KARAS
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AUSTIN — A controversial bill to create a separate border policing unit in counties along the Río Grande — co-authored by Texas State Representative Eddie Morales, who represents the Big Bend region — passed the Texas House of Representatives last week and is now working its way through the Senate. House Bill 7 would create a "Border Protection Unit" to assist law enforcement in operations along the border.

Unit members, who would not have to be law enforcement officers, would be empowered to "arrest, apprehend, or detain persons crossing the Texas-Mexico border unlawfully, and deter persons attempting to cross the border unlawfully."

HB 7 rose from the ashes of House Bill 20, an entirely Republican-sponsored bill killed on a technicality last Wednesday night. Sponsors of HB 7 quickly copy-pasted language in order to allow key elements of the dead bill to live on — the amended version was then passed along to the Senate, which held public hearings on Thursday morning.

The authors of the original HB 20 argued the creation of the Border Protection Unit was necessary given the spread of human and drug trafficking across the United States-Mexico border as well as border communities becoming "overwhelmed" with an influx of migrants.

Beyond threats to the health and safety of border residents, the bill suggested there was an emotional toll its authors hoped to quell by expanding law enforcement presence. "Many Texans have lost the peaceful use and enjoyment of their properties due to criminal activities along the border," it reads.

In both bills, the Border Protection Unit is described as a "criminal justice agency" that supports existing law enforcement operations in border counties and counties adjacent to border counties.

Commissioned law enforcement officers from other agencies — sheriffs, state troopers and local police — can be members. Other state employees designated as peace officers can also be appointed, pulling from a huge pool of folks employed in positions as diverse as park rangers, fire marshals and TABC investigators.

The Border Protection Unit would be led by a "unit chief" appointed by the governor. The only

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After grant loss and firing of top staff, community leaders triage to save local nonprofit in crisis

By ALLEGRA HOBBS
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MARFA — After failure to complete years of mandatory audits led to the loss of key grant money for the organization, Big Bend Community Action Committee's Board of Directors terminated the nonprofit's top staff, throwing the embattled nonprofit into disarray as community leaders scrambled to salvage the remaining programs.

Leadership of the committee — which provides economic assistance to low-income residents across five counties through state-funded grants — have not completed fiscal audits required by the federal government dating back to 2019, leading the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA) to defund the utility assistance program provided through the group.

Two weeks ago, after the defunding, Executive Director Adan Estrada and Financial Officer Bernie Zelazny were fired. Last week, remaining staffers and board members gathered at the committee's Marfa office for a series of meetings on the organization's future. At the first meeting, on Thursday, some decisions were made swiftly, with Brewster County Judge Greg Henington initiating motions — Presidio County Judge Joe Portillo was appointed chairman of the board, while Big Bend Regional Hospital District Director JD Newsom was appointed interim CEO, "as long as we can have him," said Henington.

Newsom was present to offer his nonprofit expertise as the committee struggled to get back on its feet, and ended up agreeing to the temporary appointment — it was unclear how long he would be able to fulfill it, given the demands of heading up the hospital district. On Thursday, he gave his assessment of the organization's current situation.

"The organization is in crisis right now," said Newsom. "The upper leadership is not here anymore, so there's going to be a lot of pieces to pick up. It's also a great opportunity to fix a lot of issues the organization has and come out stronger, but it's going to take a lot of time and effort."

The challenges facing the organization were many, and overlapping. Most pressing was the matter of the lost utility assistance program — TDHCA's Comprehensive Energy Assistance

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Marfa resident and softball coach PJ Serrano charged with possession of child pornography

By ALLEGRA HOBBS
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MARFA — Marfa local Patricio Javier "PJ" Serrano, 35, was arrested and charged last week with possession of child pornography. He remains in custody as he awaits a preliminary detention hearing.

News of Serrano's arrest sent shockwaves through the Big Bend Amateur Softball Association (BBASU), where he coached a softball team for girls 10 and up. A representative for the association took to social media last week to assure community members that Serrano has been suspended and no allegations have emerged against him within the team.

"This news has shocked all of us," wrote Letty Carillo of BBASU. "At this time there are no allegations that involve any of the Lady Horns 10u players. [Serrano's] coaching status is suspended. Reports to USA Softball and SafeSport have been completed and will be updated as needed. Keep the Marfa community and the Lady Horns in your thoughts and prayers."

According to a criminal complaint, investigators with the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Texas Department of Public Safety executed a federal search warrant on the morning of May 5 for all electronics used by Serrano and recovered a Samsung Galaxy in his possession. Though Serrano refused to provide the passcode, agents managed to search it via a "ruse," per the complaint: agents handed Serrano his phone, at which point he unlocked it, and agents snatched it from his hands before he could lock it again.

A search of the phone revealed numerous pieces of child pornography involving prepubescent boys, according to the complaint, including images, videos, and content within the phone's browser.

Records show Serrano was formally arrested on May 11, and the criminal complaint was filed on May 12 in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Texas.

As of press time, Serrano was being held in the Presidio County Jail as a federal inmate. The U.S. Attorney's Office, which is prosecuting the case, has filed a motion to have Serrano detained without bond on the grounds that he poses a flight risk, is a danger to the community and might attempt to obstruct justice if released.

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Regional EMS talks gain momentum with task force, Senate bill

By MARY CANTRELL
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BIG BEND — Discussions among local government and healthcare leaders regarding the possible creation of a regional emergency medical services entity are ramping up, with the creation of a task force devoted to the issue and the movement of a Senate bill that would allow the hospital district to oversee the operation.

The exploration of a regional EMS concept comes at a time when EMS providers — which are scattered across the tri-county area and operate in a variety of ways — are grappling with staffing and funding shortages. Proponents argue streamlining the Big Bend region's EMS operations would help cut costs, increase efficiency and better serve constituents located across a vast region.

J.D. Newsom, executive director of the Big Bend Regional Hospital District (BBRHD), who is heading up regional EMS solution efforts, said after an initial meeting last August, and a more recent meeting this month, enthusiasm for the idea remained and involved parties — around 30 local officials — were ready to accelerate the planning process.

"We want to move, hopefully, a little bit faster than we've been moving because it's such an important conversation for us," said Newsom.

The district aims to host another meeting next month, and will soon develop a smaller, more nimble task force consisting of EMS directors and political leaders that will make recommendations to cities and counties.

The hospital district has been collecting data on 911 call volumes throughout the area and assessing a variety of operating models for a potential regional EMS outfit. Right now, stakeholders are seeking to determine what overarching entity would oversee the operation. Options on the table include the the hospital district, Big Bend Regional Medical Center, a new nonprofit or a new emergency services district — a taxing, governmental body.

The hospital district-run model would be made possible by SB1526, a bill authored by Senator César Blanco adding a provision to the district's enabling legislation that would allow the district to "provide emergency medical assistance within the district's boundaries."

Allowing the district to provide emergency assistance could help solve some of the complications of maintaining such crucial services in a remote, rural region, said Sen. Blanco.

"When I visit with the families of Far West Texas, I hear about how low population density, great geographic distances, and relative isolation from major population centers make emergency medical services (EMS) expensive and challenging," said Blanco in a statement to *The Big Bend Sentinel*. "Access to EMS can mean the difference between life and death - and our families can get proper care when they need it."

The bill has passed the Senate and will now move to the house for a vote. Newsom said while options are still being explored, the district decided to work with Blanco's office to get the bill passed this legislative session to expedite the process should the hospital district choose to proceed with the

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Border Protection Unit

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explicit qualification to be tapped as unit chief is to be a U.S. citizen, and only the governor can remove the chief from office. Working closely with the governor, the chief would have hiring and firing power and help implement an as-yet-undetermined training program.

Any officer within the unit may make arrests on suspected immigration offenses. Commissioned officers — meaning individuals with a peace officer license under the Texas Criminal code — may make arrests in any border county, even if it's not their own.

In addition to making arrests, officers may also use "non-lethal crowd control measures" to deter people from crossing the border.

The original text of HB 20 — decried by the Human Rights Watch — granted officers of the Border Protection Unit "immunity from any criminal or civil liability" for actions taken on behalf of the agency.

The version of HB 7 that passed the House retains much of the same language as the amended HB 20 while also including provisions for a "Border Region Court Program" supporting strained legal institutions along the border — arguing that prosecutions have "significantly increased" in the wake of Operation Lone Star, the state's $4-billion-plus infusion of cash to local law enforcement.

In addition to a pathway for grant funding for visiting judges and court staff, the bill also specifies that state money can be used for "construction and maintenance of facilities" including courts and processing and detention centers, as well as "temporary border security infrastructure" such as "barriers, fences, wires, roads, trenches and surveillance technology."

Ports of entry and qualifying educational institutions could also benefit financially from the bill — HB 7 has a pro-business bent, hoping to attract companies to set up shop in border counties as well as to "support and promote tourism in the border region."

All of the 55 sponsors of HB 20 were Republicans. None of the six primary sponsors represented border counties.

HB 7 was authored by five state representatives from border counties, including three democrats: Richard Raymond (District 42), Sergio Muñoz Jr. (District 36) and Eddie Morales (District 74). Republicans Jamie Lope (District 37) and Ryan Guillen (District 31) also signed on.

Five of the primary sponsors of HB 20 signed on to the amended version of HB 7 that was passed on to the Senate: Brian Harrison (District 10), J.M. Lozano (District 43), Teresa Leo-Wilson (District 23) and Ellen Troxclair (District 19).

None of the authors of HB 20 or HB 7 returned requests for comment from *The Big Bend Sentinel*, including Morales, the Big Bend's representative in the House.

Senator Cesar Blanco, the Big Bend's representative in the Senate, said he was "vehemently opposed" to the creation of a Border Protection Unit. He felt that the vagueness of the bill could still pave the way for civilians to be granted the power to enforce federal immigration law, as originally detailed in HB 20. "This bill lacks guardrails," he wrote to The Big Bend Sentinel. "With this bill lacking a humanitarian aspect, I worry that this could potentially lead to the profiling and targeting of Latinos in our communities."

On a media call hosted by a panel of policy experts and immigrants rights advocates, Fatima Menéndez, Southwest regional counsel for the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, explained that the bill would directly challenge the delineation between state and federal law enforcement, as Border Protection Unit officers would be tasked with enforcing federal immigration law.

Menéndez pointed toward efforts by Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton to fight *Arizona v. United States*, a 2012 ruling that state law enforcement agencies may not usurp federal immigration officials in enforcing federal law, citing Article VI of the U.S. Constitution. Paxton has sued the Biden administration a dozen times hoping to challenge current immigration policy at the federal level.

Paxton has repeatedly called to "test" the limits of the Arizona ruling in particular and argued that the time was ripe, given the fact that the Trump administration appointed more justices to the Supreme Court than any president since Reagan. "We should test to see if the states can protect themselves, given the circumstances we're in that we've never been in before," he testified before the Texas Senate on March 16.

Menéndez felt that those efforts by states to supersede federal policy would target the most vulnerable land border crossers. "These officers would be authorized to arrest, apprehend, detain and remove persons that may have legitimate asylum claims before those individuals are ever able to speak with a federal immigration officer," she said.

On a more symbolic level, Betty Camargo of the El Paso-based Border Network for Human Rights — which also has an office in Presidio — felt that the bill contributed to a pervasive mischaracterization and militarization of "safe and secure" border communities. She argued that many borderlands residents would prefer to welcome and serve migrants rather than turning them away.

Camargo found parallels in early 20th century immigration policy and the waves of immigrants from Europe seeking financial and physical security. "The border has become the new Ellis Island for many individuals," she said. "We want to uphold our American values of dignity and respect, rather than hate and fear."

Regional EMS talks

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regional EMS initiative. As it stands, said Newsom, the legislation simply opens up an option that still needs to be fully fleshed out.

"I don't know if the hospital district desires to run EMS," said Newsom. "Our board would really want to understand the financing and the liabilities before they even thought about running it."

And while regional EMS talks are tri-county, the BBRHD is bi-county, serving Presidio and Brewster counties through a property tax, meaning Jeff Davis County would need to either enter into the hospital district to capitalize on its new EMS services, should it go that route, or continue to run an independent service. (Jeff Davis county is the only remaining primarily volunteer-run EMS in the area and is currently working on transitioning to a paid service.)

"The way the legislation is written, it would allow us to operate a regional EMS within the district's boundaries. My interpretation of that is Jeff Davis would need to decide if they wanted to be part of the hospital district," said Newsom.

"Even if we were to consolidate Brewster County and Presidio County, that's a win," Newsom added. "There could be a smaller regionalization, even if we were to just consolidate those two counties. I think that you're decreasing costs for those respective county residents and providing a better service."

Jeff Davis County Judge Curtis Evans said, at this time, the county would like to be included in the regional EMS model, but many important details — financial cost, namely — still needed to be worked out.

"It is something we're going to have to discuss in order for us to be included in this regional EMS service," said Evans. "We're still in the baby steps."

The option to establish an independent nonprofit entity to run a regional EMS, creating interlocal agreements and determining a service area, is also being assessed, said Newsom.

Creating a tri-county emergency services district (ESD), which would be a taxing entity, is another possibility. The ESD could act as a governmental entity and take on all EMS operations, or it could support other organizations through funding. An existing ESD in Southern Brewster County, for example, is a sales tax-based fund that assists Terlingua Fire and EMS, a nonprofit.

Additional legislation that would have created a new taxing entity in the form of a tri-county ESD was withdrawn from this legislative session, said Newsom, in favor of pursuing the option as a voter referendum. ESDs, which can provide EMS and fire services, have the ability to impose both a sales tax and property tax.

But because most communities have already maxed out the legal sales tax — the state's rate of 6.25% leaves local taxing jurisdictions with 2%, not to exceed 8.25% total — a new ESD would need to be funded through a property tax, explained Newsom. Due to existing property tax burdens, another taxing entity would likely not be met favorably by the public, said Newsom.

A hospital-run EMS solution could have advantages in terms of funding and sustainability, said Newsom. Because the Big Bend Regional Medical Center is classified as a "critical access hospital," it would be able to receive federal subsidies for running EMS.

"It specifically allows critical access EMS to recuperate costs for Medicare transports," explained Newsom.

And very few EMS providers in the state take advantage of the funding, said Newsom. The Hamilton County Hospital District, who has been meeting with the local leaders regarding the regional EMS solution, is the only entity in the state utilizing available critical access funding for EMS, and currently serves five counties in its jurisdiction.

When it comes down to it, said Newsom, the combination of the area's low call volumes, due to smaller populations, and need to have EMS stationed across the expansive Big Bend region for favorable response times, makes the financial viability of EMS difficult.

"The problem is, because our volumes are so low, EMS is always going to need to be subsidized because it will not sustain itself," said Newsom.

The hospital district is currently collecting financial data from existing tri-county EMS providers on how many patients utilize Medicare, Medicaid, private insurance and private pay to develop a revenue model for a regional EMS entity.

How to equitably fund EMS in each community and how much local control will remain are broader topics of discussion, said Newsom. He argued staffing decisions should be data-driven, based on transportations and population, moving forward, but certain communities may want more support that they will, in turn, need to pay for.

On top of that, there are "all kinds of little idiosyncrasies with all these different areas," said Newsom. Valentine, for example, is in Jeff Davis County but is covered by Marfa EMS. Big Bend National Park's EMS staff have been attending meetings, said Newsom, but will not be participating in a regional solution because they are a federal entity.

There is still a lot to work out, said Newsom, and the initiative would take time regardless of the chosen model, and may be approached in phases.

"There could be a multi-year transition to where we're getting the infrastructure in place to handle the whole region," said Newsom.

Regardless, alleviating counties and cities from having to fund and run their own EMS services on top of other critical duties would be beneficial, said Newsom.

"All of our cities are struggling with infrastructure issues, staffing and recruiting," said Newsom. "It allows them to focus on other important things, knowing that there's a regional operation that's just focused on providing the best EMS service."

PJ Serrano charged

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A preliminary detention hearing is scheduled for May 19.

Shane O'Neal, the attorney appointed to represent Serrano, did not return a request for comment.

Serrano had recently been arrested twice by the Marfa Police Department for unrelated offenses, public records show. On April 4, Serrano was arrested for harassment, a class B misdemeanor, and was released on a $1,000 cash bond. He was arrested again on April 7 for violation of a protective order, a class A misdemeanor, and was released on a $4,000 surety bond.

Marfa ISD Board

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she added.

Now, with no vacancies, the full school board will move forward with the 2023-2024 budgeting process, ushering in of new Interim Superintendent Arturo Alferez and more. Fuentez's seat, Place 1, will be up for election next May because she was appointed, rather than elected. Existing board members said they were happy to welcome Fuentez to the board and were looking forward to working with her.

"The decision was to appoint her because she has been a big supporter of Marfa ISD through PTO and the Marfa Education Foundation and shows a great interest in our school and community," said Teresa Nuñez, board president. "She wants to help continue to move our school in the right direction."

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Local nonprofit in crisis

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Program (CEAP) — which is now in the process of being transferred to another nonprofit, Community Action Committee of South Central Texas, that will provide those funds to Big Bend area residents.

"The folks receiving utility assistance are going to be in crisis without making sure they're transitioned to the new organization that's coming in," said Newsom. "I think a lot of folks are very anxious about: are they going to have their electricity on next month?"

Recipients of the funds will have to re-apply for the program, Board Member Becky Brewster told *The Big Bend Sentinel*, but are not in danger of losing their assistance — the funds will simply be funneled to them through a different channel now. "The funds are available to provide energy assistance in our region," Brewster explained. "It's just going to take some time for this new agency to get the applications and get the people recertified."

The organization's loss of the CEAP is a significant financial hit — one that will have an impact on administrative salaries, said Newsom. Staffers responsible for providing utility assistance through BBCA have been laid off, their jobs now redundant. Those funds had provided the bulk of the salaries of the now-fired executives, said Brewster.

And just completing the outstanding audits will be a massive blow to the group's shaky finances. The organization currently has a little over $100,000 in its accounts, said Brewster at Thursday's meeting; it is estimated that each audit will cost the organization approximately $25,000, meaning $75,000 total to get up to date.

"This would wipe out anything that we have," said Brewster.

In order to get through the period of crisis, in the short term, Newsom recommended the committee take a look at its finances and ensure expenses are in line with revenue. At present, it isn't always meeting that goal. BBCA was spending more than it was taking in to keep up a contract with All Aboard America, a charter bus service to surrounding cities. And despite having just a handful of vehicles in operation right now for its transportation program, the organization last year spent over $61,000 insuring 33 vehicles.

Henington swiftly put forth a number of cost-saving measures that flew through the board. The board passed motions to renegotiate or cancel its contract with All Aboard America, and to cancel its lease on its Alpine office (the organization also has offices in Presidio and Van Horn). The board also decided to take an inventory of its vehicles and see which could be declared surplus and auctioned — a process that was apparently set in motion years ago, but stalled for unknown reasons — and explore taking unused vehicles off the insurance policy.

As for how the organization got into its current mess in the first place, a visit from a state representative on Friday made clear that trouble had been brewing for some time. Micheal De Young, director of TDHCA's Community Affairs Division, told board members that his office had previously raised concerns about BBCA's finances and had tried to help steer it on the right course over the past two to three years, to no avail. His office had sent a consultant previously, and had sent a "very sharp fiscal person" from an El Paso nonprofit, "each time trying to help, to try and get it to work."

"I regret that we're at this point that we're shedding programs and we're in a tough spot, but we have to ultimately do what's right for the low-income residents of the counties," said De Young.

At the point that TDHCA defunded the group's utility assistance program, BBCA leadership had received several warnings. De Young said he had called Adan Estrada, then executive director, in the fall of 2022 to warn him that the outstanding audits would soon become a problem; he called again that winter to prod Estrada again, only to be told the 2019 audit would be concluded by January 2023. To date, the outstanding audits still have not been filed, said De Young.

TDHCA's hands were tied at this point, explained De Young — the federal government requires the audits be completed each year to prove all funds are accounted for and being administered properly. With three years of missing audits, the agency's compliance division declined to recommend BBCA for funding.

"We've had entities that had a CFO get sick or go out and their records were a little bit amiss — they applied for an extension on their audit and we usually grant it as long as we have the previous year's audit," said De Young. "This has gone on too long at this point."

Bernie Zelazny, former financial officer, told *The Big Bend Sentinel* he felt unfairly saddled with the blame of the incomplete audits. He attributed the holdup on those filings to outstanding paperwork that the executive director had to provide.

"The problem was materials on payroll, like sign in-sheets and some information on the former weatherization program, which were things that Adan [Estrada] could provide but I couldn't," said Zelazny.

Estrada did not return multiple requests for comment.

At this point, with the loss of CEAP, BBCA still has the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), a federal grant contracted through the state agency — through that grant, BBCA receives $150,000. But those funds are administered quarterly, and BBCA currently has just $75,000 of that grant money in contract, $37,500 of which has already been expensed. The organization is projecting to spend approximately $17,286 in March alone, though that report has yet to be filed. In short, the existing funds are dwindling.

Relying entirely on one grant is likely unsustainable in the long term, said De Young — without other federal funds in significant chunks, it will be difficult to maintain the staff necessary to keep client services running.

"Moving forward, it's a very difficult walk with a very rural agency and meeting all the requirements of CSBG and making sure that we get all this moving in the right direction," said De Young. "In my 20 years, I've seen probably 15 agencies try this. We have very few CSBG-only agencies — we have two right now, Big Bend being one of them."

Fortunately, BBCA's transportation program — a crucial service offering rides to medical appointments and more for folks otherwise without transit options — has "really great cash flow," said Newsom, and doesn't seem in jeopardy. ("It seems like the transportation program is hale and hearty," said Brewster). But the gradual peeling off of programs — BBCA had already dropped its weatherization program, which provided insulation services — and lack of funds leaves the future of the organization in question.

"If we keep not doing the programs, then eventually, what are we going to be doing?" said Brewster.

Judge Portillo, now CEO of the organization, said on Tuesday that he wasn't interested in pointing fingers as to the former upheaval. He was currently hard at work with those still on board to keep the organization above water — keeping the transportation program active, for example, would be vital for many area residents.

"Please, let's come together, let's reunite, let's salvage what we have," he said. "The mission they have that's left, transportation, is a vital function for those that can't drive. We have people that are blind. We have people that don't own a vehicle. We have people that need dialysis."

Asked whether he was concerned about existential threats to BBCA, Portillo declined to entertain the thought.

"I refuse to even let that cross my mind," he said. "I am going to do everything possible to make sure that what we have continues."

In wake of Title 42's end, local officials and advocates see little change

By SAM KARAS
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PRESIDIO COUNTY — As the clock struck midnight last Thursday, the controversial immigration policy Title 42 was lifted. Officials and media organizations had warned of a "major influx" of migrants at ports of entry — but in the past week crossings along the U.S.-Mexico border have dropped.

Title 42 authorized the federal government to "immediately expel" people apprehended for crossing the border illegally and effectively shut down the asylum-seeking process. Since the implementation of the policy by the Trump policy — as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic — numbers of illegal crossings have ballooned. In 2023, over 244,000 migrants were "expelled" under the policy.

U.S. immigration policy is now ruled by Title 8. Title 8 requires a formal deportation process and requires enhanced criminal penalties for unlawful entry into the United States — the inflated number of "expelled" migrants under Title 42 is in part because migrants could attempt to cross multiple times without legal consequences if not found to have committed other immigration-related crimes like smuggling.

So far, the port of entry in Presidio has been quiet. The only change locals have noticed is that the bridge has been closed randomly for short periods of time in order for Customs officials to practice opening and closing the bridge in case of a surge of migrants.

The drills have been ongoing sporadically at ports of entry for years, but have been a more frequent occurrence since Thursday. CBP spokesperson Roger Maier said that the Presidio Port of Entry was running drills of an average of around 12 minutes — users on Facebook bridge wait time groups in Presidio and El Paso reported 20-30 minute delays.

The agency insisted that — though the drills would not be announced ahead of time — "legitimate trade and travel" would not be hindered. "As the men and women of CBP conduct these drills, it is important for the traveling public to be aware of these operations and understand that they will be done quickly," reads a Customs and Border Protection press release.

El Heraldo de Chihuahua reported that authorities on the Mexican side would not be running similar drills, but would work with other agencies to keep bridge-crossers informed.

In Marfa, Father Michael Wallens of St. Paul's Episcopal Church has been leading a coalition of law enforcement, religious leaders and citizen volunteers to welcome asylum seekers to the Big Bend and help connect them with resources. Their mission has effectively been on hold since Title 42 was enacted. "It's been frustrating since we've been getting geared up everytime Title 42 was going to drop," he explained, citing the numerous times the policy was set to expire but was delayed by the courts.

He had been advised by local immigration officials that it might take a few weeks for Presidio County to see an influx of migrants at the port of entry — and if the influx doesn't arrive by then, it could be delayed until the end of the hottest summer months.

Presidio could become a destination for migrants, given that the port is equipped to process asylum seekers in a matter of hours, rather than the wait times of a week or more at busier ports of entry. "Word could get out like it got out before," he said, referring to a small group of migrants from Guatemala who arrived in Ojinaga in 2019. "We are expecting numbers to rise here."

For now, the number is zero. Wallens said that people in the community were still waiting with open arms. "More people have opened up their homes," he said. "We've gotten more volunteers who are willing to greet people and try to get them to where they want to go."

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Opinion

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor:

The Chinati Foundation's annual Community Day was held this past Saturday, May 13. This year, and every year, Community Day is a celebratory occasion for our neighbors, friends and family to spend time together.

In addition to open viewing of Chinati's permanent collection and special exhibition by artist Sarah Crowner, the day's events included a dance performance by Marfa ISD's own Ballet Folklórico Atzlán, and a community dinner at the Arena with barbecue from Convenience West and music from Presidio's Tequila Sound Machine.

We are grateful to the following individuals and businesses for their support of Community Day: Arturo Alférez, Ben E. Keith, *The Big Bend Sentinel*, Cactus Liquors, Mark Cash, Gabriel Chavarria, Cochineal, Convenience West, Janet Enriquez, John D. Garcia, Glazer's Beer and Beverage, Rachel Gomez, Bianca Gonzalez, Jorge Tellez Guillen, David Harding, Griselda Hinojos, Judd Foundation, Marfa ISD Ballet Folklórico Atzlán, Cassaundra Nickerson, Bridget Orr, Rambler Sparkling Water, Roadrunner Rentals, Sarabia's Portable Jons and Blue Sanitation, Luis Sigala, Tequila Sound Machine, Sarah M. Vasquez, and Francisco Flores Villar.

Thank you to Chinati's dedicated docents, interns and staff whose time and hard work ensured that Community Day was a success: Evalice Arguello, Tobin Becker, Molly Bondy, Julie Carey, Shea Carley, Tamara Carrasco, Mariana Chavarria, Kathie Compton, Marella Consolini, Elizabeth Davis, John Ehrke, Malinda Galindo, Glen Hanson, Jacqueline Hernandez, Kathryn Hinojos, Levi Hinojos, Sandra Hinojos, Lauren Jablonski, Alex Kamelhair, Hannah Lange, Hannah Marshall, Stephen Martin, Kat McKenna, Socorro Mena, Dillon Orr, Rory Parks, Ron Parrish, Angela Pastor, Melissa Perez, Adri Pineda, Michael Roch, Jerram Rojo, Karina Salcido, Ingrid Schaffner, Sam Schonzeit, Andrew Schneider, Matt Scobey, Ben Shurley, Shelley Smith and Irlanda Vargas.

Thank you to all who joined in the celebration with us.

Caitlin Murray
Director

We want to hear from YOU!

- Letters to the editor 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.
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- ***The Big Bend Sentinel Editorial Staff***

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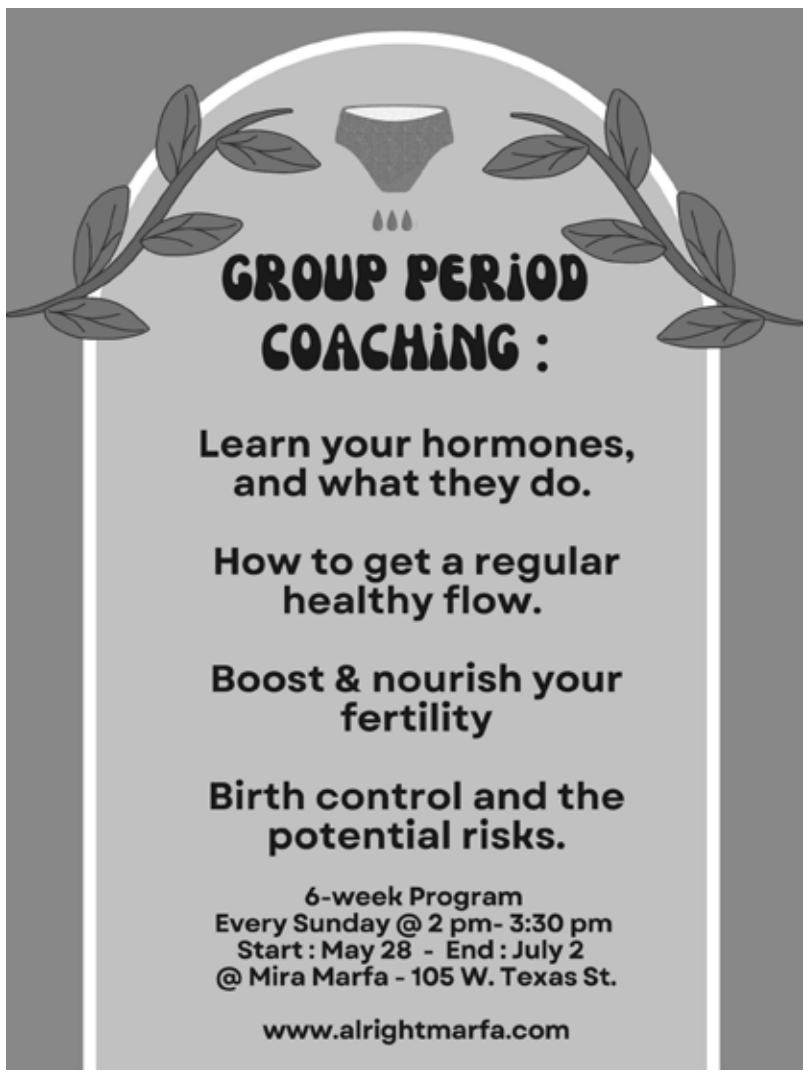
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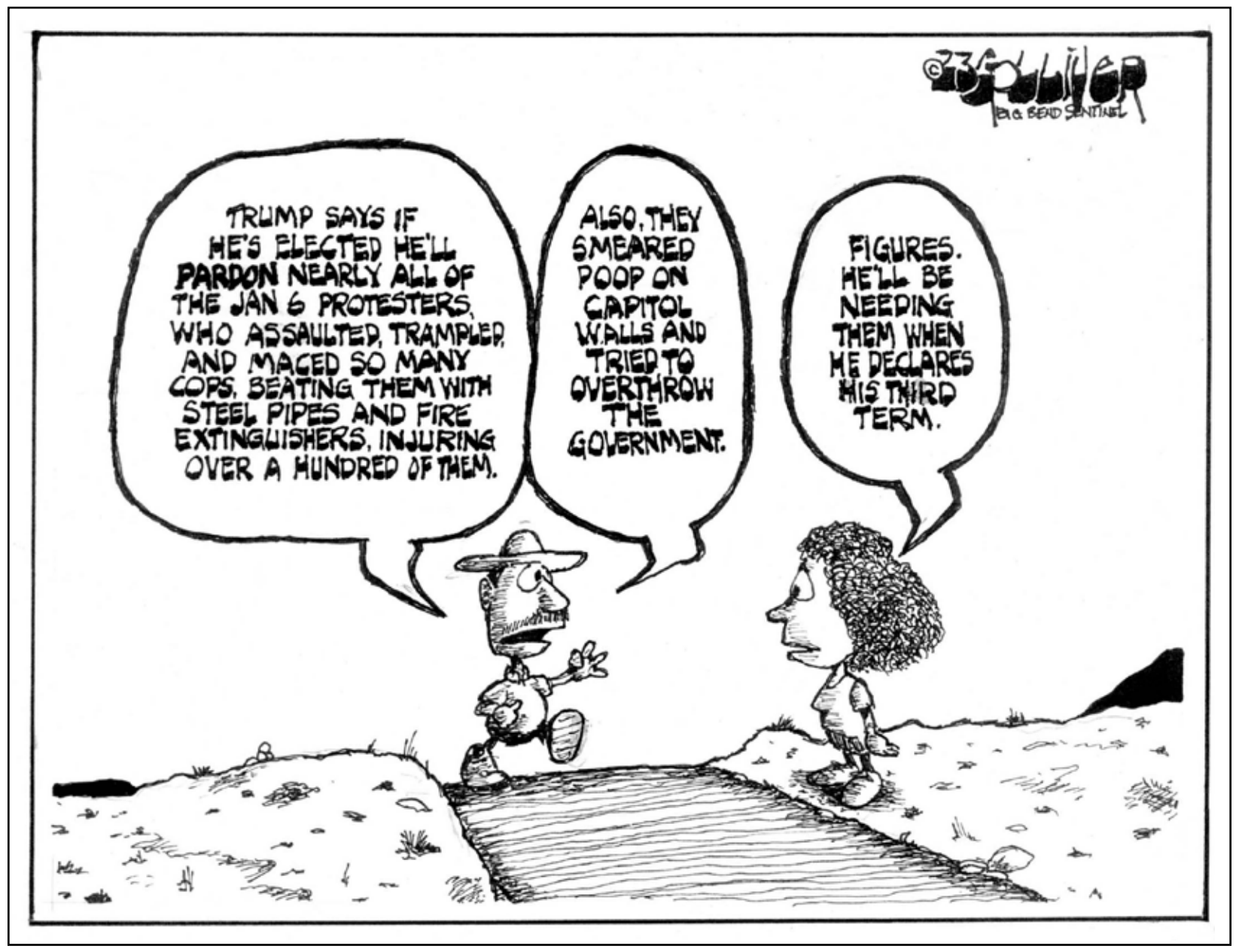
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OUR WATER MATTERS

Texas water legislation update

By TREY GERFERS
tgerfers@pcuwcd.org

As the 88th Legislature nears the close of its regular session, "Our Water Matters" takes a look at what Dr. Todd Votteler, editor-in-chief of the website Texas+Water, has called "the most significant legislative session for Texas water since 2013."

In the Texas Senate, the key committee for water legislation is the Water, Agriculture, and Rural Affairs Committee, chaired by Senator Charles Perry (R) of Lubbock. Our own state Senator César Blanco also serves on this important committee. In the Texas House of Representatives, the key committee for water legislation is the Natural Resources Committee, chaired by Representative Tracy King (D) of Uvalde.

One of the most consequential pieces of water legislation this session is Senate Bill 28, which would use some of the state's multi-billion-dollar budget surplus to create a new Water for Texas Fund to support improvements to the state's outmoded and leaking water infrastructure, among other things. According to Robert Mace, chief water policy officer at The Meadows Center for Water and the Environment at Texas State University, SB28 is significant because it would take state water infrastructure funding, which has traditionally gone to the major cities, and direct it to "take care of rural Texas." The Big Bend region could greatly benefit from the Water for Texas Fund as local water infrastructure efforts gather speed in coming years. However, according to Vanessa Puig-Williams, director of the Environmental Defense Fund's Texas Water Program, "It remains to be seen what the final legislation and amount of funding will be."

Other major water-related bills that have passed both the Senate and House include SB 1047 and its House companion HB 2757. These bills authorize the Texas Produced Water Consortium to develop a pilot project to demonstrate produced water recycling feasibility. "Produced water" is the toxic water that returns to the surface in oil and gas operations using unconventional techniques, such as "fracking." According to Amy Hardberger, director of the Texas Tech Center for Water Law and Policy, "A pilot study is the next logical step towards assessing if there are appropriate reuse alternatives for treated produced water. The pilot should implement best practices, such as preventing discharge until more is learned about what might still be in the water after treatment … It is also important for state agencies to wait for the results of a pilot project before permitting beneficial reuse projects." (More on this in a future issue of "Our Water Matters.")

House Bill 3990, which seeks to study the connection between groundwater and surface water, seems to be stalled, according to Puig-Williams, "because of a misperception that [the science] will negatively impact private property rights." Texas law currently recognizes no interaction between surface water (which is owned by the state) and groundwater (which is the property of the surface owner). Carlos Rubinstein, former head of the Texas Water Development Board, also lamented the apparent death of HB 3990, stating that, "We continue to shy away from recognizing, studying, and better quantifying the degree to which groundwater and surface water interact in Texas. The fact is that groundwater and surface water do interact and are critical to preserving property interests in water." These scientific efforts could fall to local entities, like the Presidio County Underground Water Conservation District, which is currently contemplating a groundwater/surface water interaction study on the Alamito Creek, with or without funding and leadership from the state.

Leah Martinsson, executive director of the Texas Alliance of Groundwater Districts, sounded an upbeat note by stating that "a lot remains to be seen during these final two weeks. Really anything can happen — even bills that have officially 'died' could be revived through a floor amendment to another bill so long as it is germane to the subject of the original bill."

Perhaps the greatest achievement for water legislation has been the creation of the Texas House Water Caucus, whose 70+ members include our own state Representative Eddie Morales. Rubinstein calls the caucus "transformative" because it demonstrates lawmakers' understanding that "water deserves continuous focus," while Puig-Williams describes the "first-ever bipartisan water caucus" in Texas as "a huge win for raising awareness, educating members, and creating new water champions."

To learn more about current Texas water legislation, visit texaspluswater.wp.txstate.edu.

Trey Gerfers is a San Antonio native and serves as general manager of the Presidio County Underground Water Conservation District. He is also chairman of the Presidio County Water Infrastructure Steering Committee and president of the Marfa Parks and Recreation Board. Trey has lived in Marfa since 2013.



Staff photo by Mary Cantrell

Nathan Peña, Marfa ISD Senior, throws candy from the back of a decorated truck to friends and family who gathered to watch the 2023 graduating class parade down Highland Avenue this week.



Staff photo by Mary Cantrell

Marfa ISD Senior Juan Bautista participates in the annual parade honoring the graduating class, a tradition which started during the pandemic and has continued due to popular demand.w

Marfa ISD presents one-act play, short animated film

MARFA — Marfa ISD is hosting a special community performance and screening for student one-act play and short film UIL entrants this Thursday, May 18, at the Crowley Theatre at 6 p.m.

Admission is one canned food item, which will be donated to the Marfa Food Pantry.

The play "After Hours," by Kevin Stone, is a comedy set in a clothing store at night and will be performed by the One-Act Play Troupe, which was coached by teacher Donel Lara.

"Come out and support the UIL One-Act Troupe as they present their encore performance," said Lara. "This year's play won the district competition, advanced to the bi-district round where they were named alternate for the area competition."

A viewing of the animated short film by Aubrie Aguilar titled, "Unrequited Love?" which tells the tale of a teenage crush and placed fourth in state completion, will follow the play.

Teacher Adele Powers said she hopes the public will come out and see Aguilar's film to support the hard work and ambition the graduating senior put into the project.

"Aubrie's short film is just so incredible to me — when we went to the UIL state competition she was up against schools with whole digital media departments and classes, and she is totally self-taught and self-motivated and made this piece in her spare time — not for a grade or a class — and she came in fourth in the state," said Powers. "It's really, really impressive to see a student take initiative and succeed in that way."



Photo courtesy of Donel Lara

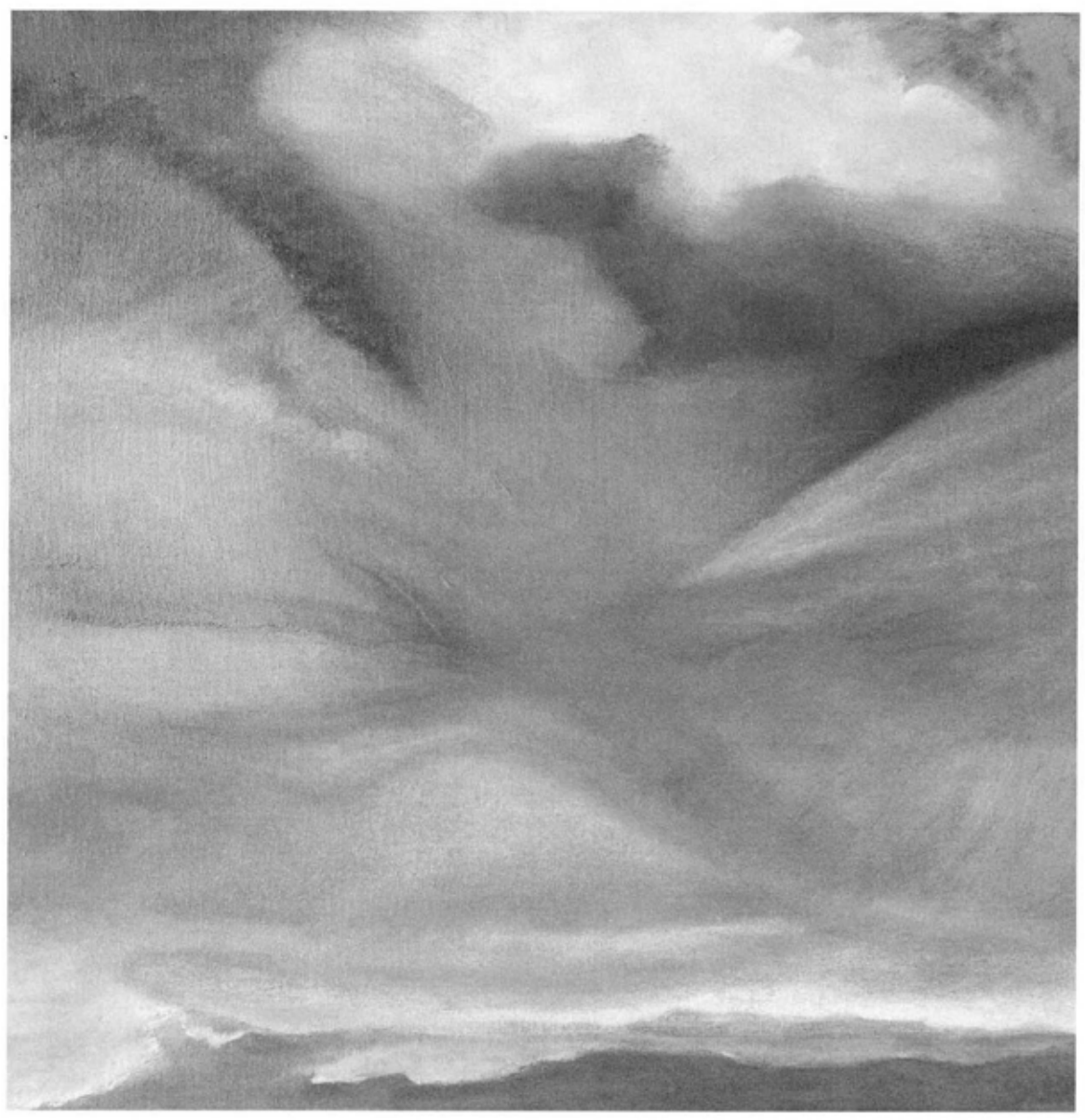
The Marfa High School UIL One-Act Play Troupe.



Film still courtesy of

Film still from "Unrequited Love?" a short animated film by Marfa High School Senior Aubrie Aguilar that placed fourth in state competitions.





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Community

'Civil disobedience with a party': Voices from Both Sides returns to Lajitas

By SAM KARAS
sam@bigbendsentinel.com



Photo by Hannah Gentiles

Last Saturday, locals from both sides of the river in the Big Bend region met for a party marking the community ties transcending the border.

LAJITAS — Last Saturday, hundreds of people flocked to the old border crossing between the American town of Lajitas and the Mexican town of Paso Lajitas for food, music and fun. Neighbors and family members reunited in the middle of the Rio Grande while musicians played off of each other from the shore — marking the ninth Voices from Both Sides festival, also known locally as the "Fiesta Protesta."

The border crossing at Lajitas — used continuously for hundreds of years — was shuttered in the aftermath of 9/11, severing ties between neighbors who could still see each other from across the river. Paso Lajitas dwindled from a bustling village to just five people after locals dependent on crossing for school, work and basic necessities could no longer do so without making an eight-hour round trip routed through Ojinaga.

This year marked the return of the Voices festival after a three-year pandemic hiatus. Rumors swirled that the event would be revived last year, but efforts to revive it didn't get off the ground in time for Mother's Day weekend. Jeff Haislip, one of the original organizers of the event, passed away in February — giving the community the much-needed push to bring his vision alive one more time.

Haislip's friend and frequent musical collaborator Marc Utter explained that one of Haislip's goals — beyond throwing a killer party — was to motivate locals to advocate for the reopening of a crossing at Lajitas. He wanted the port of entry to be modeled after the crossing at Boquillas, which was reopened as an experiment between the National Park Service and Customs and Border Protection in 2013.

Haislip felt that the opening of a foot-and-ferry crossing at Lajitas could revive the tourist economy of Paso Lajitas and nearby Manuel Benavides. "We believe in Texas/Mexico trade, tourism, and reuniting families," he wrote in a petition signed by over 200 people.

Since Voices' debut in 2012, the event has been covered by numerous publications across the country as a counterexample to popular depictions of the border as a chaotic, war-torn place. The festival even got the Comedy Central treatment in 2019, when Full Frontal with Samantha Bee sent a mock reporter to Lajitas.

Haislip treated comedian Michael Rubens to a tour of the grounds: stages set up on opposite sides of the river, expansive tailgating setups and a huge unicorn-shaped raft ferrying attendees back and forth across the Río. "If you've never seen the togetherness, then you wouldn't notice the separation," he said of the crowd gathered in the water. "This is an act of civil disobedience with a party."

This year, Border Patrol drones hovered overhead as attendees cooled off in the river, danced to Norteño grooves in the dust — and even attended Communion served from the thwarts of a canoe. "This was one of the best [Voices]," said Utter. "The music was great — there were a few technical difficulties, but that's to be expected when you're running on solar and generators."

Local law enforcement was initially concerned that hosting the event just days after the lifting of the controversial immigration policy Title 42 might not be the wisest idea, but Brewster County Sheriff Ronny Dodson said the event was a success. "It worked really well — we didn't have any problems," he said.

Dodson even got to have his own family reunion in the river: a marriage back a few steps back in the family tree links him to the Baezas of Paso Lajitas, who have relatives all over the county he now patrols. "[My cousins] came over and I got to take a picture with them," he said.

Adriana Sanchez Valdez — a Boquillas mom who makes a living selling handicrafts — attended the festival with her husband and daughter.

Sanchez Valdez and her family have plenty of friends in Terlingua, thanks to the crossing in the National Park — but had never met anyone from Manuel Benavides, another small, rural town largely dependent on tourism.

Inspired by photos on social media from years past, the family decided to take the nine-hour trek. (Before the border closures, their journey would have taken around an hour and a half.)

After camping out for the weekend among new friends, she no longer felt like a stranger.

Festival attendees on both sides were eager to tell her about the history and significance of the fiesta protesta. "It was an incredible adventure," she said. "We saw how families reunited after so long apart — we were moved even though we didn't know them."

The whole family enjoyed dancing and splashing in the river — though she said her six-year-old daughter, Camila, was the most excited.

Camila asked her parents if they could make the journey an annual tradition. The three agreed — and hope to come next year with more family in tow. "That day, two countries became one — and that's admirable," Sanchez Valdez said.

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Do not fear, for I am with you,
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I will help you,
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Isaiah 41:10

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DRAWING OF THE WEEK



Aundrea Garcia
12th Grade
"Corner of Ms. Powers' Room"

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.

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

5/3

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★☆☆

Solution from last week's puzzle:

SOLUTION:

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

4/25

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Universal Crossword

Edited by David Steinberg May 15, 2023

ACROSS
1 Founded: Abbr.
4 Copies
8 Amy of "Dis-enchanted"
13 "I've seen better"
14 What Luke Skywalker wore over his prosthetic hand
15 2:1, e.g.
16 Fury
17 Planets where some sci-fi tales are set
19 Sci-fi writers' awards, or clouds in space
21 Cubes in craps
22 Burden
23 Sticky stuff
25 Small watercrafts
29 Chill out
30 Canine coat?
32 Debtor's letters
33 Drags from behind
35 Actress Spelling
36 "... ay, there's the ___" (Hamlet)
37 Detest
39 Soup with a Hanoi style
40 Swerves
42 Neither's partner
43 Shrunken Asian sea
45 Cohort born during COVID, informally
46 Lao-tzu's "way"
47 Less significant
49 Pooches
52 Words of confession
54 Bird that swallows large pebbles to aid in digestion
55 Currency in Germany
56 Big Apple fashion inits.
58 Bit of an optometrist's solution
60 Google's search algorithm, or Coca-Cola's formula
64 Remote batteries
65 ___ of the ball
66 Blender sounds
67 Wildebeest
68 Go undefeated in a tournament
69 Lone
70 Medium strength?: Abbr.

DOWN
1 Key related to G major
2 Peaceful
3 Betray, literally?
4 Whom G-rated movies are for
5 Deadly substance
6 The "E" of NYE
7 Texting button
8 Be unaware of current events, literally?
9 "Would it be too bold of me?"
10 Delta hub in Ga.
11 Prefix with "night" or "day"
12 Palindromic plea
14 Gadot of "Death on the Nile"
18 None the ___
20 "So are we!"
24 Perjure oneself, literally?
26 Immense bravery, literally?
27 Number of leaves on a "lucky" clover
28 Some are footlongs
31 Cow noise
34 Wait to reveal, literally?
37 2016 Rihanna album
38 Banana ___ (sunscreen brand)
39 Word after "saute" or "sauce"
41 Finished
44 The remains of Machu Picchu, e.g.
45 Swiss cheese used in French onion soup
48 Chef Lagasse
50 Reacts to a dad joke, maybe
51 Absorbs, as gravy
53 Confuse
57 Trees used for bows
59 UFO beings
60 "Conan" channel until 2021
61 FF's opposite on a VCR
62 Brew that may be brown
63 Comedian Margaret

PREVIOUS PUZZLE ANSWER

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

5/14

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5/15

Down Under *by Taylor Johnson*

1	2	3	■	■	4	5	6	7	■	8	9	10	11	12
13			■	14					■	15				
16			■	17					18					
19			20				■	21				■	■	■
22				■	23		24	■	25			26	27	28
29				■	30			31			■	32		
■	■	33		34		■	35				■	36		
37	38				■	39			■	40	41			
42			■	43	44			■	45				■	■
46			■	47				48		■	49		50	51
52			53			■	54			■	55			
■	■	■	56			57	■	58		59				
60	61	62					63				■	64		
65					■	66					■	67		
68					■	69				■	■	70		

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MARFA SHORTHORNS SPORTS CALENDAR

SAT, MAY 20: JH Softball vs Van Horn Tournament
MON, MAY 22: HS Boys Golf, State Meet in Kyle

Local efforts raise thousands for the Tejada family with burgers, music, jerseys and community

By ALLEGRA HOBBS
allegra@bigbendsentinel.com

MARFA — A fundraising event hosted by Bordo for the Tejada family this week was a huge success, drawing an enthusiastic crowd and raking in $3,500 for the beloved local burrito royalty.

At the same time, charitable bike race Marfa100k sold 25 limited-edition Marfa Burrito jerseys at $75 a pop, with proceeds going directly to the Tejadas. The jerseys sold out, bringing in a total of $1,875.

At Bordo, Bad Larry's Burger Club collaborated with the local Italian eatery to feed the community Monday evening, where large baskets collected cash to benefit the Tejadas and a Venmo code made it easy to donate virtually as well. Local band Puño — consisting of John Lujan, Ryan Pinsky and Bordo's own Richard Covarrubias — provided entertainment, as did Sweetheart of the Radio Jacqueline Delolmo.

Bordo's Michael Serva explained that the fundraiser came out of his deep love for the Tejada family, who he has known for years. When both Marfa Burrito owner Ramona Tejada and her son Jess suddenly experienced health scares back-to-back, Serva knew the community would come together to support the family that feeds Marfa.

"I was so excited, because I knew that the town was really going to turn out for this," said Serva. That excitement was reinforced by the feedback he was getting leading up to the event: "People started scaring me in the best way, going, 'Just so you know, it's gonna be crazy, the whole town's gonna come out.'"

Sure enough, the event was packed — despite Bad Larry's founder Matt McGinn beefing up the number of burgers he anticipated serving to prepare for the crowd, they had sold out by 7:30, halfway through the event. Serva knew he didn't have to oversell it — that's just how much the town loved the Tejadas.

"I was excited to get out of the way and kind of watch the event unfold because I knew how much it wasn't something that needed to be communicated to anybody," he said. "I just knew everybody was going to feel it in terms of their gratitude towards the Tejada family and what they do."

The event was truly a communal effort, he said, between the musical performers offering their art, Bad Larry's offering up food, and other community members offering their time and resources to make it happen. Fatima Anaza showed up to help with food, and Andrew Stevens donated their gear, including an amplifier, and their time, said Serva.

Bordo is still accepting donations at its Venmo, @bordo-deli. Public transactions show donations have continued to flow in the days since the fundraiser.

"The feedback I got from a lot of people was to just be able to stack up a bunch of cash and give it directly to somebody who needs it was really pure, with no middleman," said Serva.

Serva hopes the fundraiser for the Tejadas is just the first of many community events the eatery will host. He is currently in talks with the Big Bend Conservation Alliance about a potential event, and hopes to work with the Blackwell School as well. He knows the community will turn out again.

"Those events are really hard and tiring, and it's a lot of work, and we all just left going, 'We have to do this again.'"

OBITUARIES



Garcia

Carmel L. Garcia, age 78 from Marathon, Texas, passed away at home in Edmond, Oklahoma, on April 15, 2023. Her cause of death was a long battle with rheumatoid arthritis. Carmel was the last surviving child of Tiburcio Oliveres Garcia and Merced Silvas Garcia. She was the maternal granddaughter of Leondro and Maria DeAnda Silvas, and the paternal granddaughter of Jesus and Mariana Oliveres Garcia of Castolon and La Coyota located in what is now Big Bend National Park, Texas.

Carmel was a deaf/mute, and due to the lack of resources in her hometown, she attended school for a short time but was eventually not allowed to continue. Nevertheless, she was very intelligent and taught herself to communicate with those around her, and learned to sign her name. She also recognized names and maintained her own phone book to reach out to relatives. She enjoyed making salsa on the molcajete and making homemade tortillas for her friends.

Carmel was predeceased by her parents, Tiburcio and Merced Garcia; her sisters, Elvira G Ramos and Esperanza (Quati) Garcia; brothers, Roberto (Quate), Ysidro, Agustin, Jose Guadalupe and Ezequiel Garcia; her cousin Cornelio S. Ramirez, who she considered as her brother; and her nephew Samuel Garcia Ramos.

Left to cherish her memories are her caregivers, Elva Ramos Diaz (niece), and Elva's husband and son, Robert and Bobby Diaz; nephew and wife, Samuel and Stephanie Diaz of Phoenix, Arizona; sister-in-law, Salome, Refugia and Lorina Garcia; nephews Ezequiel, Michael, Eddie, Jose, Hector, Ysidro Jr., and Ricardo Garcia; nieces Viola Muniz, Valerie, Janie, and Rachel Garcia; her cousins, Susie Thompson, Sonia and Maria Aguirre, and Jose Silvas Chavarria; her best friend, Consuelo Estrada; last but not least, Steven and Selena Ramos, whom she considered her own children.

Her caregivers would like to acknowledge and thank her private CNAs: Cheri Kriesel and Alicia Swanegan, along with Mercy Home Health, and Mercy Hospice nurses and CNAs.

Honorary Pallbearers: Robert, Bobby, and Samuel Diaz. Morgan Hatton, Jose S. Chavarria.

In lieu of flowers the family requests donations be made to the Marathon Latin Cemetery, P O Box 278, Marathon, TX 79842.

Services were held Saturday, April 29, 2023, beginning at 11 a.m. at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in Edmond, Oklahoma.

AROUND THE BIG BEND

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Thu May 18

The Marfa High School One Act Class presents After Hours
6:00pm at the Crowley Theatre in Marfa
Admission is one canned food item, which will be donated to the local food pantry. Bring your friends and family!

Public Meeting held by Keep Big Bend Wild coalition
7:00pm at Alpine Public Library Community Room, 805 W Ave E, Alpine, TX 79830
A public meeting to discuss and seek comments on a proposal to designate wilderness in undeveloped areas of Big Bend National Park. A proposed wilderness map, legislation, and management plan will be available for review and consideration. For more information, see www.keepbigbendwild.org

Fri May 19

Family Crisis Center Fundraiser Dance
9:00pm - 1:00am at the Ole Crystal Bar, 410 E Holland Drive in Alpine
Kick your boots up for a good cause at the Family Crisis Center of the Big Bend fundraiser dance. Great music by Drew Moreland and The Neon Hustle, with opener Seth Morse. There will also be a silent auction. Tickets are $10 each and can be purchased through any FCCBB board member or employee or at the door. All proceeds go to the Family Crisis Center of the Big Bend.

Prepney432 at Planet Marfa
9:00pm at 200 South Abbot Street in Marfa
Electronic music all night long!

Sat May 20

Disco Fever Kid Prom
11:00am at Marfa Public Library Courtyard, 115 E Oak Street in Marfa
Ages 13 and under. Come in your best attire!

Alpine Public Library Patio Sale
8:00am - 1:00pm at 805 W Avenue E in Alpine
The Alpine Public Library is hosting their annual Patio Sale!

Have an upcoming or weekly event?

Please submit a two sentence maximum description of your weekly event including who, what, when, and where by Tuesday at 10 am to ads@bigbendsentinel.com

Ongoing Weekly Events & Classes

Big Sky Yoga
Monday: Vinyasa at 6:00pm
Tuesday: Hatha at 9:00am
Wednesday: Restorative at 3:00pm; Vinyasa at 6:00pm
Thursday: Yin Yoga at 6:00pm
Friday: Breathwork at 9:00am; Vinyasa & Core at 12:00pm
Saturday: Vinyasa at 10:00am
New location: 105 E Oak #4 (in the ally behind the Wrong Store)

Step it Up (Step Aerobics)
Tuesday at 6:00pm, Thursday at 9:00am & Saturday at 9:00am @ Big Sky Yoga
All fitness levels welcome. New location: 105 E Oak #4 (in the ally behind the Wrong Store)

Free Zumba Classes
Monday & Wednesday at 6:30pm at Marfa Public Library

Free Meditation Classes
Tuesday & Thursday at 6:00pm at Marfa Public Library

Life Drawing with Model
Tuesday from 7:00pm - 9:00pm at Talent Studios in Alpine
Join this vibrant artist community, make new friends and hone your drawing skills. Reserve your easel by texting 206.619.4699

Baby & Toddler Storytime
Wednesday at 11:00am at Marfa Public Library

AA (online & sometimes in-person)
Saturday at 12:00pm at https://tinyurl.com/y686nnw2 & sometimes in-person at Marfa Public Library

Saturday Farmer's Market
Saturdays at 9:30am at the pavillion behind the Visitors Center in Marfa

The Alpine Farmers Market
Saturday at 9:00am on historic Murphy Street in Alpine

Note: Schedules are subject to change. Please call or visit business websites to confirm that event is happening.

ALPINE SMALL ANIMAL PRACTICE
AND LARGE ANIMAL SERVICES
Mary Dodson, D.V.M.
Zachary Dodson, D.V.M.
3201 N. HWY 118, Box 7
Alpine, Texas 79830
432-837-5416
Mon. - Fri. 7:45 - 12:00 & 1:30 - 5:30
after hours - emergency 432.837.5416

Judd Foundation

Judd Foundation offers direct engagement with Donald Judd's art and vision in the Chihuahuan Desert. These formerly private living and working spaces provide firsthand experience of his ideas of permanent installation.

Advance reservations are required.

The Studios
Visit Judd's Art Studio, Architecture Studio, Cobb House, and Whyte Building.

Guided visits are available every day except Wednesday and begin at the former Marfa National Bank at 101 North Highland Avenue.

Visit juddfoundation.org to book reservations. For more information please contact: marfa@juddfoundation.org or 432 729 4406.

JUDD



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JOBS

PREVENTATIVE CARE HEALTH SERVICES JOB OPPORTUNITIES

LOOKING FOR A CNA, CMA, RN & LVN

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

VILLAGE FARMS - EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY - FAST TRACK TO MANAGEMENT

Village Farms is seeking a detailed oriented individual to join our team as Shipping/Receiving Clerk for our Marfa 2 location.

Responsibilities include loading and unloading, forklift operation, preparation of shipping documents, verify deliveries, maintain warehouse and other general duties.

Requirements: Must be willing to work flexible hours including evenings, weekends and holidays, ability to work independently, verbal and written communication skills, working knowledge of computers and forklift experience preferred.

Opportunity to move to Supervisor level and pay within the first 6 months of employment. Must be able to pass a pre-employment drug screen.

Interested candidates should call (432)729-3071 Ext. 607 or fax resume to (432)375-6241. Applications are also available at Village Farms Security Stations 3 Miles N. Hwy 17 Marfa, TX or 3 Miles S. Hwy 17 FT. Davis, TX.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

Help create much-needed home daycare in Presidio and Marfa as a Presidio County Rural Community Outreach Specialist contractor with Workforce Solutions Borderplex and the Rio Grande Council of Governments.

This is an hourly-basis part-time position at $17 per hour, upon initiation of a Letter of Agreement (LOA) through September 30, 2023, with the ability to renew annually if funds are available.

The Rural Community Outreach Specialist in part will recruit and support up to 10 home-based childcare providers in Presidio County and help them become licensed and registered.

To apply and for more information, please contact:
Ivette Alvarado, Project Specialist II, Workforce Solutions Borderplex
915-887- 2223 / ivette.alvarado@borderplexjobs.com

The Rio Grande Council of Governments

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS BORDERPLEX

EMPLEO OPORTUNIDAD

Ayude a crear las tan necesitadas guarderías en el hogar en Presidio y Marfa como contratista Especialista en Relaciones con la Comunidad Rural del Condado de Presidio con Workforce Solutions Borderplex y el Consejo de Gobiernos del Río Grande.

Este es un puesto a tiempo parcial por horas a $17 por hora, al iniciarse la Carta de Acuerdo (Letter of Agreement) y hasta el 30 de septiembre de 2023, con la posibilidad de renovar anualmente si hay fondos disponibles.

Especialista en Relaciones con la Comunidad Rural reclutará en parte y apoyará hasta 10 proveedores de cuidado de niños en el hogar en el Condado de Presidio y les ayudará a obtener la licencia y a registrarse.

Para solicitar el puesto y para obtener más información, póngase en contacto con:
Ivette Alvarado, Especialista en Proyectos II, Workforce Solutions Borderplex
915-887-2223 / ivette.alvarado@borderplexjobs.com

The Rio Grande Council of Governments

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FOR ADVERTISING RATES

Big Bend Regional Hospital District Employment Opportunity

The Big Bend Regional Hospital District is now accepting applications for a full-time **Patient Advocate position at our office in Presidio, Texas.**

The Patient Advocate will assist clients with enrollment in state and local assistance programs. Job requirements include: high school diploma or equivalent, proficiency in English and Spanish, computer literacy, high attention to detail, and a 2 years' experience (professional or volunteer) in social services, customer service, case management, or other related experience. Occasional travel in company provided vehicle is required to our Alpine office and regional training events. Salary commensurate with experience. Benefits include: 100% company sponsored health insurance, generous PTO and paid holiday schedule, and retirement contributions.

Please send a resume and cover letter to jd@bbrhd.com or they can be dropped off at the Presidio office.
Applications will be accepted through May 31, 2023.

For more information call 432-837-7051.

The Big Bend Regional Hospital District is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

NOW HIRING

Village Farms

Human Resources/Admin Assistant- performs a range of administrative and clerical tasks to support management and the HR department.

Key Skill & Competencies

- Organization & planning
- Work management & prioritizing
- Verbal/written communication skills
- Attention to detail
- Reliability & Flexibility
- Strong MS Office skills
- Teamwork
- Bilingual (Spanish) is a must
- 2 yrs. relevant experience required

Full-time position with great benefits package which includes; paid vacation, health, vision, dental, life and STD insurance & 401k retirement plan

Submit resumes to aanderson@villagefarms.com applications @ Village Farms Security Stations 3 miles N. Hwy 17, Marfa or 3 miles S. Hwy 17, Fort Davis or call 682.647.1214 ext. 469 for more information.

The City of Marfa is hiring for the following positions:

- Streets Crew/Recycling (Full-time)
- Streets Crew/Recycling (3 positions, part-time/seasonal)
- Parks (1 position, part-time seasonal)

Applications are available online at https://cityofmarfa.com/administration/page/employment-application

Deadline to apply for all positions is May 26.

City of Marfa is an Equal Opportunity Employer

COALICIÓN REPRODUCTIVA DEL BIG BEND REPRODUCTIVE COALITION

Reproductive Health Resources & Free Emergency Contraception (Plan B):

BIGBENDRC.ORG

BBRC is a grassroots mutual aid abortion advocacy group that provides educational materials, resources, & support for West Texans in the Big Bend.

Recursos de salud reproductiva y anticoncepción de emergencia gratuita (Plan B):

BIGBENDRC.ORG

La Coalición Reproductiva del Big Bend es un grupo de defensa del aborto de ayuda mutua que brinda materiales educativos, recursos, y apoyo para los habitantes del oeste de Texas en la region Big Bend.

BigBendRC.org • @BBReproductiveCoaltion

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PUBLIC NOTICES

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

PRESIDIO COUNTY
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
VEHICLE ACCESSORIES

Presidio County is soliciting proposals for the purchase of Mobile Video Surveillance System. 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 June 1st, 2023, at 4:00 pm and be clearly marked "RFP #23-01 - MOBILE VIDEO SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM," and delivered to:

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

FOR SALE

ADOBE HOME FOR SALE BY OWNER

c. 1920 - One Lot
217 E TX St, Marfa, TX.
$375,000
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For more information call 432-295-2878

Presidio County, 30 acres for sale.

Section 147. Consists of the NE/4NE/4NE/4, SE/4NE/4/NE/4, SW/4NE/4NE/4. No information on access. You are buying AS IS.

We are the sole owners of record. NO financing. Cash sale only. Taking bids, to close on May 31 at midnight.

Send a letter with your contact information and bid to: DGH, P.O. Box 834, Alpine, Texas 79831.

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GOVERNMENT CONTACTS

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Judge Jose Portillo:
(432) 729-4452

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

BREWSTER COUNTY
Judge Greg Henington:
(432) 837-2412

Alpine Mayor Catherine Eaves:
City Hall: (432) 837-3301
Email: mayor.eaves@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)

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