THE BIG BEND
Sentinel

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

Presidio County part of statewide wildfire disaster declaration

By SAM KARAS
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PRESIDIO COUNTY — On Monday, Governor Greg Abbott issued a disaster proclamation in response to widespread wildfires across the state. The proclamation affects 191 counties, including Presidio, Brewster and Jeff Davis counties.

In a press release, Abbott sang the praises of local first responders who had weathered a busy fire season. "As we continue to respond to wildfire conditions across the state, Texas is ready to provide any additional resources and aid to impacted communities," he wrote. "I commend the bravery and service of the hundreds of emergency personnel and firefighters who have swiftly responded to the wildfires to protect their fellow Texans and communities."

According to the Texas A&M Forest Service, 8,500 acres of Texas land have burned since August 1. As most of the state faces record-high temperatures and drought, public officials are worried that even more land could be at risk.

The Big Bend has been a hot spot for fire activity this summer. In May, Brewster County first responders put out a spate of brush fires in the wake of high winds, and in late June, Presidio County responded to a number of fires caused by lightning strikes. Earlier this month, Jeff Davis County has seen so much fire activity that it launched a formal investigation.

In more populated counties, the increased level of wildfire activity has translated into property damage and major risks to humans and animals. Last week, a fire in the Austin suburb of Cedar Park led hundreds of people to evacuate their homes and businesses.

Presidio County Emergency Management Coordinator Gary Mitschke said that he hadn't personally seen a major spike in wildfires corresponding with the governor's declaration — but the measure serves as a solid fall-back plan if fire activity worsened.

Marfa and Presidio's volunteer fire departments are the first to respond to the county's fires, but — as their name implies — their work is strictly volunteer. "We do it for nothing," Mitschke said.

While the volunteers themselves are happy to offer their time and training, the equipment they use isn't free. The governor's proclamation allows fire departments the option to apply for reimbursement for damaged equipment and wear and tear on vehicles. "It's a lot of work, and I won't say it pays off, but we can be reimbursed for our gear," he said. "Maintenance is constant."



Staff photo by Allegra Hobbs

Becky Roberts, descendent of the Reverend W.B. Bloys, whittles during Monday morning worship service at the 134th Bloys Campmeeting. The annual religious gathering still draws longtime attendees each August to Skillman Grove in Jeff Davis County. READ MORE ON PAGE 6.

Facing deficit, Presidio County officials deliberate property tax rates

By SAM KARAS
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PRESIDIO COUNTY — At last Friday's meeting, the Presidio County Commissioners Court spent hours discussing the county's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2024. In the wake of property tax reform bills passed in the Texas Legislature over the past few years, local officials have had to think strategically about balancing the poor, isolated county's budget — which is currently facing a deficit of around $680,000.

The county was also in the red last year, to the tune of around $300,000. Presidio County's total budget is around $4 million — bare bones compared to nearby oil rich counties.

For comparison, the state's smallest county, Loving County, enjoys a $25 million budget for 67 residents. "I'm not saying I'm envious of people with oil and gas in their backyard," said Presidio County Judge Joe Portillo. "But it sure makes things easier."

In Texas, the bulk of taxes collected come from sales tax. A smaller portion comes from property tax, which is split between local school districts — which get the lion's share — and county governments. Counties funnel taxpayer money into their general funds, which covers the baseline costs of running essential offices like county treasurers and clerks.

Though the county regularly pursues grants and other opportunities, it does not operate enterprises like water and waste disposal services — moneymakers for the county's incorporated communities of Marfa and Presidio.

The majority of the county's budget comes from property taxes. The state of Texas sets the standards, which have been consistently slashed over the past few years — this year, all eyes were on Senate Bill 2, representing the largest property tax cut in Texas history.

Legislative sessions in Texas typically end in May, but this year Governor Greg Abbott called a series of special sessions that stretched through the summer. Property tax reform — popular on both sides of the aisle, with some caveats — was the subject of a session called in June.

While the measure was touted as a financial relief to many households in Texas, many local officials couldn't help but wonder: how would this impact local governments?

County Judge Joe Portillo raised the question back in March, when SB 2 was still a gleam in the governor's eye. Portillo approached both Presidio County and the City of Presidio about

(Continued on page 2)

Amid tense budget season, county attorney seeks raise

By SAM KARAS
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PRESIDIO COUNTY — At last Thursday's meeting, County Attorney Rod Ponton approached the Presidio County Commissioners Court to ask for approval to apply for a grant for new office staff — and a $12,000 raise for himself. The request came just 24 hours before the commissioners deliberated for hours over how to handle a looming budget deficit and address the ongoing failure of county employees' salaries to keep up with inflation.

The discussion over Ponton's salary was spurred by a wider-ranging conversation about the impact of a bill to fund law and enforcement and prosecutors on the border. In June, the state legislature adopted SB 22, promising large grants to certain local officials in border counties.

Under SB 22, salaries for the Presidio County Sheriff's Office will see a disproportionate jump compared to other offices. Sheriff Danny Dominguez will see a raise from $54,746.64 to $75,000, a $20,253.36 increase. Precinct 1 Constable Steven Marquez and Precinct 2 Constable Adan Covos will see their salaries increase from $15,409.68 to $45,000.

An additional $100,000 would be available to the county attorney's office, under a provision seeking to ease rural counties' caseloads in the wake of increased immigration-related arrests. Ponton was hoping to use the money to hire a full-time assistant so that he could have help in Marfa and Presidio — and potentially use any leftover to provide for a code enforcement officer, a years-long sore spot for the county.

The full details of the grant have yet to be fully determined — the bill requires the comptroller's office to set the final restrictions and an application process by January 2024. The bill's text provides for assistance to increase the salary of or create a position for an assistant attorney, an investigative assistant, a victim assistance coordinator or "to hire additional staff for the office."

Precinct 1 Commissioner Brenda Silva Bentley was concerned about rubber-stamping Ponton's request before the final details were ironed out by the state. "What I don't want to see is us approving this and it not being used appropriately the way the grant is asking us to," she said. "This isn't going to be, 'Let's find a loophole and get through it.'"

Ultimately the commissioners voted to approve his request — with a promise to keep a watchful eye on how the money would eventually be spent.

For the next agenda item, Ponton asked the

(Continued on page 3)

In quest to bring nursing home to Alpine, local nonprofit aims for financial modeling tool

By ALLEGRA HOBBS
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ALPINE — In June, the Big Bend Regional Hospital District was presented with the results of a second feasibility study looking into the possibility of bringing a nursing home to Alpine. That second study, which included an in-depth economic assessment of the region, was funded by the hospital district in the wake of an initial study that showed the area may be able to support such a facility by 2026.

Strictly in terms of financial feasibility, the results of the second study were not as clear-cut as district leaders would have liked, Director J.D. Newsom said at the time. The study showed that the majority of the demand in the area was for skilled nursing, rather than assisted living, beds. The majority of skilled nursing beds would be occupied by Medicaid patients, Newsom explained, meaning the facility would receive a lower daily rate.

That doesn't mean a nursing home is out of the realm of possibility — just that it's not a financial "slam dunk" in a city where, for the past decade, several efforts to introduce a nursing home have already fallen through. Alpine Valley Care Nursing Home abruptly shuttered due to financial difficulties in 2012, and Alpine has been without a nursing home ever since. Two attempts to fill the void have failed.

"I think the data shows that there is demand," said Newsom, following the results in June. "I was hoping for a more favorable pay mix, and there's also a scale that you need to make a facility profitable, and I think that we're right at the low end."

Current efforts to bring a nursing home to Alpine are being undertaken by local nonprofit Alpine Community Projects, which aims to use the "Green House" model — clusters of smaller homes housing 10 to 12 individuals each, rather than one larger facility. Now, ACP's Kirsten Moody said the group is working towards securing a financial modeling tool and accompanying consulting in order to better hone in on the financial realities of opening a facility in Alpine.

"The financial modeling tool will allow us to see — running many different scenarios using

(Continued on page 3)

Alpine ISD opens new child development center

By MARY CANTRELL
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ALPINE — The Alpine Independent School District is now enrolling local children aged six months to three years old at its newly-opened daycare, located in the west wing of the district's existing administrative building. The 50-spot facility opened its doors on Wednesday, August 15.

The project was announced back in February as a solution to the consistent lack of childcare options in the area hampering the adult workforce, and is made possible by a half-a-million-dollar grant from the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and nonprofit Workforce Solutions Borderplex (WSB).

"I know that there's definitely a need [for a daycare] in our community," said Superintendent Michelle Rinehart. "People have found these different work-around ways to meet that need in the absence of consistent childcare. This will provide an opportunity for more families to have that."

Officially coined the "Alpine Child Development Center" (ACDC), the facility is hoping to enroll 20 to 30 children by the end of 2023, said Rinehart, and scale up to its full capacity over time. It will charge parents and guardians a daily fee of $40 — a cost daycare leaders say they hope to reduce as more grants and subsidies come online. In the meantime, qualifying families may have those fees subsidized by TWC.

The child development center will be open year-round, including in the summer months, and will otherwise follow the school district calendar, according to Rinehart. The space, which the district most recently utilized for meetings and storage, is well-suited to house a daycare and required only light renovations. Features include a kitchen, outdoor play area walking distance to the public library, and multiple age-specific classrooms outfitted with custom cabinetry, learning stations and supplies. Staff currently includes a director, assistant director, and three childcare workers.

In addition to the funding stream brought in by the daily daycare fees, the center will pursue TWC matching-grant partnerships with local employers like Sul Ross, Brewster County, the City of Alpine and the school district in order to create a more sustainable business model, said Rinehart — meaning the state agency would match whatever funds those institutions are able to provide.

"The other entities in town that are like, 'We need this, we know we've needed this, our employees need this,' are coming to the table wanting to be partners on some of these grants that help take, say, $50,000 of their dollars and turn it into $100,000 on behalf of our community," said Rinehart.

Those contributions may entitle employers to a certain number of spots in the daycare for their employees, explained Rinehart, but for now enrollment is open to everyone.

Rinehart said the district would like to drive down the daily rate, but the cost of running the childcare facility properly requires the fee be above market rate.

After a year of being open, ACDC will be eligible and plans to apply for a Texas Rising Star Certification, a TWC designation signaling a top-tier daycare provider that also allows for families to receive greater, sometimes full, subsidies on daily enrollment fees.

Chelsea Craddock, ACDC director, and Alayna Ramirez,

(Continued on page 2)

INSIDE

NEWS P. 1 - 3
OPINION P. 4
COMMUNITY P. 5 - 7
CLASSIFIEDS P. 8

The West Texan Media Group, LLC

Presidio County

(Continued from page 1)

making the Presidio International Bridge its own taxing entity.

The goal of Portillo's pitch was not to raise taxes, but to ensure that the bridge could fund its own improvements in the likely event of budget cuts caused by slashed property tax revenue. "We are going to see a cut — all of us are going to see a cut in our general revenue that comes in," he said.

SB 2 was finally passed in July, and faces a statewide constitutional amendment election in the fall. If voters approve the amendment, homestead exemptions will jump from $40,000 to $100,000 for all homeowners, with a ceiling of $110,000 for elderly and disabled Texans.

Homestead exemptions apply to property owners who can prove that a property is their primary residence. Taxable value is deducted from the appraised value of a home — a homestead appraised at $300,000 before SB 2 would be taxed as though it was worth $260,000. Under the new law, that same property would be taxed the same as a property valued at $200,000.

If the amendment is approved, Texas homesteaders stand to save an average of $1,300 a year on property taxes, a significant cut considering Texas' property tax rates have consistently rank among the top 10 in the nation. "This will be a good thing for many of our citizens," said Precinct 4 Commissioner David Beebe.

State Representative Eddie Morales, who represents the Big Bend, was a co-sponsor of SB 2. "No bill is perfect, but this legislation was built on months of negotiations between the House, Senate and governor's office and will provide nearly $18 billion in relief across the state," said Cayden McCord, Morales' director of communications.

If approved by voters, SB 2 will positively impact many households across Texas — but the long-term impacts to local governments remain to be seen. This year's county budget was crafted with these unknowns in mind.

The Big Bend's state representative in the Senate, César Blanco, was confident that SB 2 would not negatively impact county budgets, due to "compression measures" built into the bill that would shift the tax burden away from property owners and toward the state, which is currently enjoying a budget surplus.

Blanco also knew that small and poor counties were particularly vulnerable to shifting regulations guiding their budgets. "I've also supported legislation to prohibit unfunded mandates on local government, to ensure counties in Far West Texas have the resources they need to serve their communities," he wrote in a statement in *The Big Bend Sentinel*.

SB 2 was not the first time that Abbott had championed property tax reform. In 2019, the legislature passed a bill that caps annual growth in property tax rates by 3.5% for county governments and 2.5% for school districts.

County officials pointed toward the 3.5% growth cap as a major reason why the county could not keep a balanced budget in FY 23 and the upcoming FY 24. Like most American consumers, Presidio County has been hit hard by inflation. For example: last year, the county's expenses for existing employees' health insurance went up 9%, and electricity in county facilities went up 12%.

Counties wishing to alter their property tax rates have a few options. Their tax rates are tiered: the lowest is the "no new revenue" tax rate, which keeps property tax revenues the same year to year. Last year's county property tax rate was around 42 cents per $100 of taxable value.

The "no new revenue" rate is typically a bit lower than the proposed tax rate, prepared by the county's appraisal district, which allows the county to raise revenues.

The voter-approval rate is intuitive: it's the rate the county can raise taxes without giving taxpayers the power to petition for an election. If appraisals go up and new properties are added to the rolls, these proposed tax rates decrease year to year. This year's voter-approval rate is 43 cents per $100 of taxable value.

Then there's the de minimis rate. For smaller counties, the de minimis rate allows the government to raise $500,000 in new revenue, but that rate gives voters the power to petition for an election that can roll back that number to the standard voter approval rate.

The county can decide to go beyond the de minimis rate, which triggers an automatic election. Presidio County officials decided not to go that route and instead to deliberate whether or not to seek the de minimis rate.

Typically, local entities will stop at nothing to prevent any kind of election — almost universally, voters are not in favor of raising their own taxes. "I don't want the cost and trouble of an election," Beebe said. "There's going to be a freakout."

Judge Portillo was adamant about going for the de minimis rate. He felt that the situation was so dire that he was willing to fall on his sword — politically speaking — to help the county function. "I have no delusions of grandeur," he said. "Any way you look at it, it's going to be painful."

Despite the fact that tax rate increases are unpopular, Portillo felt that the county could use this year's tax cuts to their advantage. He was confident that Presidio County property owners would still be able to reap the benefits of the statewide cuts while supporting the county's quest to close the deficit.

Pursuing the de minimis tax rate would decrease the county's deficit by around $470,000 — leaving the county around $110,000 in the red. If the county were to attempt to levy a tax rate higher than the de minimis rate, an election would be triggered by law.

Portillo pointed out that the de minimis tax rate would only raise bills by four cents per $100 of taxable value. A Presidio County resident homesteading a property valued at $200,000 would only see their bill go up about $40 per year.

Beebe agreed that the tax situation left Presidio County in dire straits. He explained that part of the expense was the sheer size of the county — offices like the county clerk and judge need to be filled by a full staff, despite the fact that the county has a population of around 6,000 and even fewer property taxpayers.

Anything beyond these basic county services would be on the chopping block. "I'm going to be reevaluating everything we do," he said. "Everything we own owns us."

Portillo agreed. "Do you want it, or do you need it? That's the million dollar question."

The commissioners ultimately voted in favor of adopting the de minimis tax rate for the proposed budget. The final budget will go to public hearing on August 28 — the proposed budget does not include employee raises, which are currently under review for elected officials.

If voters successfully petition, the budget will still be adopted as-is but an election will be held during the primary elections next spring. If voters vote against the tax rate increase, the tax rate will return to the standard voter approval rate. "It's a mechanism for the voters to speak," Portillo said.

Alpine ISD

(Continued from page 1)

assistant director, were brought on to help establish the daycare, both existing Alpine ISD employees with experience in early childhood development. They spent the spring and summer readying the facility to welcome kids and traveling to other daycare centers, some run out of school districts, others independently, in Fort Stockton, Pecos and Alpine.

"I have enjoyed this process. I love kids. I have a one-year-old, so it's kind of like, 'Well, what would I want her to see?'" said Ramirez of the startup process.

Daycare staff will follow a daily curriculum, said Ramirez, and the program will be focused on getting children ready for their next educational step with the district.

"Our huge goal is to have the kids ready to go to pre-K at the elementary: potty trained, identifying letters, numbers, letters in their name," said Ramirez. "Because we met with the pre-K teachers towards the end of the school year last year, and those were their big things."

Craddock and Ramirez said as the center's leaders they hope to create a positive environment for the children, making sure to greet them by name every morning in addition to other small practices that help build trust with kids and parents.

"[We want to] let parents know that their kids are in a safe space, and we want them to thrive, and we want them to feel safe and be happy here," said Craddock.

An open house for those already enrolled will take place soon, and a larger, community-wide event will likely take place later this fall.

Once the daycare gets off the ground, it may expand to act as a training site for other area childcare facilities in partnership with WSB, said Rinehart, and could explore offering career technical education (CTE) training for high school students in early childhood education and teaching.

While a new daycare may seem overzealous considering Alpine ISDs current financial difficulties — it anticipates adopting a $1 million deficit budget this school year — Rinehart argued the state's failure to properly fund public education should not thwart local progress.

"I don't believe that a great opportunity should be conditional on state legislative action that's needed to fully fund our schools," said Rinehart. "Why doesn't our community deserve an incredible childcare center? If the district is the closest or most peripheral organization to coordinate that, we will do that in creative ways — grant funding, partnerships — to bring something to Alpine that otherwise we couldn't have right now."

PRESIDIO COUNTY, TEXAS
NOTICE OF ELECTED OFFICIAL PROPOSED SALARY CHANGES FOR FY2024

In compliance with section 152.013 of the Local Government Code, The Commissioners Court does hereby give notice of salary and allowances for the elected officials of Presidio County. Elected officials' salaries will be set on Monday, August 28, 2023 at 10:00 a.m., as part of the FY2024 budget adoption process. The public meeting will be held at the Presidio County Courthouse, 300 N. Highland, in the County Judge's Office, Marfa, Texas 79843. The officials and the proposed salaries are shown below:

Elected Official	Current Salary	Current Allowance	Proposed Salary		Proposed Allowance	Increase (Decrease)
County Judge	69,233.32		66,009.32	*		(3,224.00)
County/District Clerk	44,943.86		53,719.01			8,775.15
County Commissioners (4)	97,012.24		97,012.24			0.00
Justice of the Peace-Presidio	37,872.64		40,872.64			3,000.00
Justice of the Peace-Marfa	37,872.64		40,872.64			3,000.00
County Attorney	65,790.40		68,590.40	**		2,800.00
District Judge	4,964.44		4,964.44			0.00
County Treasurer	48,687.60		52,687.60			4,000.00
County Tax Assessor/Collector	49,615.28		53,615.28			4,000.00
County Sheriff	54,746.64		75,000.00			20,253.36
Constable-Precinct 1	15,409.68		45,000.00			29,590.32
Constable-Precinct 2	15,409.68		45,000.00			29,590.32

* Proposed salary includes State supplement of $25,200
** Proposed salary includes State supplement of $28,000

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED

PRESIDIO COUNTY BUDGET

Notice is hereby given that a public hearing on the proposed Presidio County Budget for Fiscal Year 2023-2024 will be held on Monday, August 28, 2023, at 10:00 a.m. at the Presidio County Courthouse, 300 N. Highland, Marfa, Texas in the County Judge's Office. Individuals may join the hearing via computer or mobile device at: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83974308983, meeting ID: 839 7430 8983 passcode: 334660 , or by phone by dialing 1-346-248-7799.

This budget will raise more total property taxes than last year's budget by $459,916 (13.34%), and of that amount, $23,488 is tax revenue to be raised from new property added to the tax roll this year.

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MARFA, TX 79843

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ON TAX INCREASE

A tax rate of $0.47005 per $100 valuation has been proposed by the governing body of PRESIDIO COUNTY.

PROPOSED TAX RATE	$0.47005 per	$100
NO-NEW-REVENUE TAX RATE	$0.41516 per	$100
VOTER-APPROVAL TAX RATE	$0.43046 per	$100
DE MINIMIS RATE	$0.47005 per	$100

The no-new-revenue tax rate is the tax rate for the 2023 tax year that will raise the same amount of property tax revenue for PRESIDIO COUNTY from the same properties in both the 2022 tax year and the 2023 tax year.

The voter-approval rate is the highest tax rate that PRESIDIO COUNTY may adopt without holding an election to seek voter approval of the rate, unless the de minimis rate for PRESIDIO COUNTY exceeds the voter-approval tax rate for PRESIDIO COUNTY.

The de minimis rate is the rate equal to the sum of the no-new-revenue maintenance and operations rate for PRESIDIO COUNTY, the rate that will raise $500,000, and the current debt rate for PRESIDIO COUNTY.

The proposed tax rate is greater than the no-new-revenue tax rate. This means that PRESIDIO COUNTY is proposing to increase property taxes for the 2023 tax year.

A PUBLIC HEARING ON THE PROPOSED TAX RATE WILL BE HELD ON MONDAY, AUGUST 28, 2023, 10:00 A.M. at the PRESIDIO COUNTY COURTHOUSE, 300 N. HIGHLAND, IN THE COUNTY JUDGE'S OFFICE, MARFA, TX 79843.

The proposed tax rate is greater than the voter-approval tax rate but not greater than the de minimis rate. However, the proposed tax rate exceeds the rate that allows voters to petition for an election under Section 26.075, Tax Code. If PRESIDIO COUNTY adopts the proposed tax rate, the qualified voters of PRESIDIO COUNTY may petition PRESIDIO COUNTY to require an election to be held to determine whether to reduce the proposed tax rate. If majority of the voters reject the proposed tax rate, the tax rate of PRESIDIO COUNTY will be the voter-approval tax rate of the. PRESIDIO COUNTY.

YOUR TAXES OWED UNDER ANY OF THE TAX RATES MENTIONED ABOVE CAN BE CALCULATED AS FOLLOWS:

Property tax amount = (tax rate) x (taxable value of your property) / 100

FOR the proposal: JOSE PORTILLO, PRESIDIO COUNTY JUDGE; BRENDA BENTLEY, COMMISSIONER PCT. 1; MARGARITO HERNANDEZ, COMMISSIONER PCT. 2; JOSE CABEZUELA, COMMISSIONER PCT 3; DAVID BEEBE, COMMISSIONER PCT. 4

AGAINST the proposal: NONE

PRESENT and not voting: NONE

ABSENT: NONE

Visit Texas.gov/PropertyTaxes to find a link to your local property tax database on which you can easily access information regarding your property taxes, including information about proposed tax rates and scheduled public hearings of each entity that taxes your property.

The 86th Texas Legislature modified the manner in which the voter-approval tax rate is calculated to limit the rate of growth of property taxes in the state.

The following table compares the taxes imposed on the average residence homestead by PRESIDIO COUNTY last year to the taxes proposed to be imposed on the average residence homestead by PRESIDIO COUNTY this year.

	2022	2023	Change
Total tax rate (per $100 of value)	$0.493833	$0.47005	Decrease of $0.023783 or 4.81%
Average homestead taxable value	$78,726	$87,722	Increase of $8,996 or 11.42%
Tax on average homestead	$388.77	$412.33	Increase of $23.56 or 6.06%
Total tax levy on all properties	$3,829,577	4,340,595	Increase of $511,018 or 13.34%

For assistance with tax calculations, please contact the tax assessor for PRESIDIO COUNTY at 432-729-4081 or natalia.williams.pctac@co.presidio.tx.us or visit www.co.presidio.tx.us for more information.

County attorney

(Continued from page 1)

commissioners for a raise of $12,000. The county currently pays him $40,000 a year annually — county attorneys also receive an annual state stipend of $28,000, bringing his total annual salary to $68,000.

Ponton felt that his salary was unfair, given the discrepancy between his salary and those of neighboring counties. Brewster County currently contributes $57,000 a year to their county attorney's salary, and Culberson County contributes $60,000. Oil-rich Reeves County pays $115,000.

Over the course of the past year and a half, Ponton has resigned from two separate contract city attorney positions after drawing ire from local officials. In April 2022, Ponton resigned from his post as Presidio city attorney in the wake of heated discussions about the legality of a proposed diesel shipping route — some council members were upset that Ponton opposed an ordinance on legal grounds that had already been passed by the city.

In June, Ponton resigned from his position as Alpine city attorney just ahead of a scheduled performance review. An internal email obtained by *The Big Bend Sentinel* through a public records request includes criticism from City Manager Megan Antrim about Ponton's performance, including "scheduling conflicts after meetings have been set" and "not responding in a timely manner or providing updates/documentation."

At the time, Ponton denied having any knowledge of any performance issues or an impending performance review, though he is included on the email from Antrim and the discussion of his employment was placed on the city council meeting agenda ahead of his resignation.

Ponton said that resigning from these positions was not due to poor performance and instead would allow him to dedicate himself more fully to his elected position as county attorney. "I've reduced my workload so that I can spend more time and be more focused on doing a good job for Presidio County," he said.

Precinct 4 Commissioner David Beebe was upset by the proposition, given frozen salaries and pay cuts for other officials — but did concede that Ponton had been fulfilling his duties as county attorney. "You do show up, and I'm happy for that," he said.

Precinct 2 Commissioner Margarito Hernandez initially spoke in favor of granting Ponton the extra money, given the hefty pay increases granted to law enforcement. "Whether we like him or don't like him, whether he's a good lawyer or a bad lawyer — we already [gave raises] for the constables," he said.

Beebe also clarified that — unlike contracted city positions — raises for elected officials are not based on performance. "Even if he was doing the greatest job that anybody could do, he wouldn't necessarily qualify for a $12,000 raise," he said.

The commissioners ultimately voted against granting the raise, and Ponton said he plans to hold off on submitting a formal salary grievance before elected official salaries are set on August 23. The lone dissenting vote was County Judge Joe Portillo.

Nursing home

(Continued from page 1)

various assumptions — exactly what income we'd need to bring in in order to be able to operate skilled nursing and assisted living homes," said Moody. The system was developed by the Green House Project and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

ACP plans to reach out to the community to help raise the funds necessary for the consulting, said Moody. While the tool itself will cost $2,500, the fee for "unlimited consulting" from the Green House Group to best utilize the tool is a heftier $10,000.

"We've held off asking for any funds from the community until we knew exactly what we needed the money for," said Moody. "In order to move onto the next steps with the nursing home, we need access to solid financial modeling and the consulting advice to go with it. So that's what we're asking for now."

50-280 (Rev. 4-22/6)

NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING TO DISCUSS BUDGET AND PROPOSED TAX RATE

The Marfa Independent School District will hold a public meeting at 6:00 P. M. on August 28, 2023 in Marfa ISD Board Room, 401 W. Lincoln Marfa, TX. **The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the school district's budget that will determine the tax rate that will be adopted. Public participation in the discussion is invited.**

The tax rate that is ultimately adopted at this meeting or at a separate meeting at a later date may not exceed the proposed rate shown below unless the district publishes a revised notice containing the same information and comparisons set out below and holds another public meeting to discuss the revised notice.

Maintenance Tax $ .66920 /$100 (Proposed rate for maintenance and operations)

School Debt Service Tax Approved by Local Voters $ .15000 /$100 (proposed rate to pay bonded indebtedness)

Comparison of Proposed Budget with Last Year's Budget

The applicable percentage increase or decrease (or difference) in the amount budgeted in the preceding fiscal year and the amount budgeted for the fiscal year that begins during the current tax year is indicated for each of the following expenditure categories:

Maintenance and operations	14	% increase or		% (decrease)
Debt service	8	% increase or		% (decrease)
Total expenditures	22	% increase or		% (decrease)

Total Appraised Value and Total Taxable Value (as calculated under Tax Code Section 26.04)

	Preceding Tax Year	Current Tax Year
Total appraised value* of all property	$ 1,245,323,804	$ 1,412,740,971
Total appraised value* of new property**	$ 10,257,560	$ 12,405,090
Total taxable value*** of all property	$ 560,403,039	$ 662,083,534
Total taxable value*** of new property**	$ 8,194,370	$ 3,787,632

* "Appraised value" is the amount shown on the appraisal roll and defined by Tax Code Section 1.04(8).
** "New property" is defined by Tax Code Section 26.012(17).
*** "Taxable value" is defined by Tax Code Section 1.04(10).

Bonded Indebtedness

Total amount of outstanding and unpaid bonded indebtedness* $ 418,700.00

* Outstanding principal.

50-280 (Rev. 4-22/6) (Back)

Comparison of Proposed Rates with Last Year's Rates

	Maintenance & Operations	Interest & Sinking Fund*	Total	Local Revenue Per Student	State Revenue Per Student
Last Year's Rate	$ .8546	$ .2500 *	$ 1.0460	$ 16709	$ 736
Rate to Maintain Same Level of Maintenance & Operations Revenue & Pay Debt Service	$ .68438	$ .06880 *	$ .75318	$ 16960	$ 415
Proposed Rate	$ .66920	$ .15000 *	$ .81920	$ 18115	$ 415

* The Interest & Sinking Fund tax revenue is used to pay for bonded indebtedness on construction, equipment, or both. The bonds, and the tax rate necessary to pay those bonds, were approved by the voters of this district.

Comparison of Proposed Levy with Last Year's Levy on Average Residence

	Last Year	This Year
Average Market Value of Residences	$ 278,651	$ 318,006
Average Taxable Value of Residences	$ 138,952	$ 109,270
Last Year's Rate Versus Proposed Rate per $100 Value	$ 1.0046	$ .91920
Taxes Due on Average Residence	$ 1396	$ 1004
Increase (Decrease) in Taxes		$ (392)

Under state law, the dollar amount of school taxes imposed on the residence homestead of a person 65 years of age or older or of the surviving spouse of such a person, if the surviving spouse was 55 years of age or older when the person died, may not be increased above the amount paid in the first year after the person turned 65, regardless of changes in tax rate or property value.

Notice of Voter-Approval Rate: The highest tax rate the district can adopt before requiring voter approval at an election is .82385. This election will be automatically held if the district adopts a rate in excess of the voter-approval rate of .82385.

Fund Balances

The following estimated balances will remain at the end of the current fiscal year and are not encumbered with or by a corresponding debt obligation, less estimated funds necessary for operating the district before receipt of the first state aid payment:

Maintenance and Operations Fund Balance(s)	$ 3,136,662
Interest & Sinking Fund Balance(s)	$ 474,636

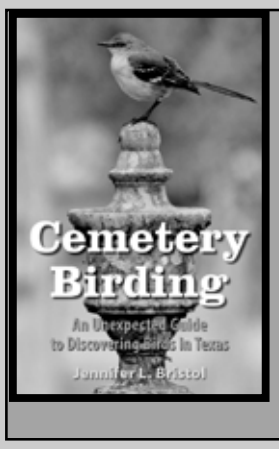
A school district may not increase the district's maintenance and operations tax rate to create a surplus in maintenance and operations tax revenue for the purpose of paying the district's debt service.

Visit Texas.gov/PropertyTaxes to find a link to your local property tax database on which you can easily access information regarding your property taxes, including information about proposed tax rates and scheduled public hearings of each entity that taxes your property.

The 86th Texas Legislature modified the manner in which the voter-approval tax rate is calculated to limit the rate of growth of property taxes in the state.

Saturday, August 19
1 - 3 pm
Meet & Greet!
Jennifer L Bristol

FRONT STREET BOOKS



The author of
PARKING LOT BIRDING,
Jennifer will be available to talk birds and discuss her new book.
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First United Methodist Church

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do not be afraid,
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I will help you,
I will uphold you with my
victorious right hand.
Isaiah 41:10

Sundays 9 am
Pastor Stephen White
110 W Washington Steet
Marfa 432-729-4534

BBT KEEPING YOU UP TO SPEED

BBT Launches BBT Fiber Care Package Exclusively for FCC Afforable Connectivity Program Participants*

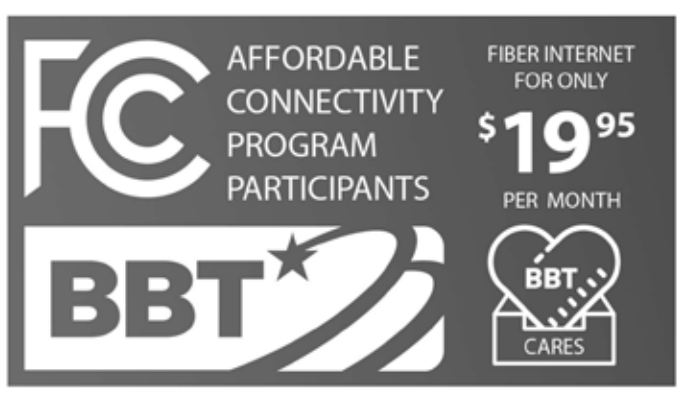
BBT, the leading telecommunications provider in West Texas, is introducing the BBT Fiber Care Package, a groundbreaking and affordable internet plan exclusive to participants of the FCC Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP).

The FCC Affordable Connectivity Program is designed to ensure that every American has access to affordable, quality broadband services.

The BBT Fiber Care Package offers fast Fiber internet speeds of 100 Mbps for downloads and 20 Mbps for uploads, ensuring quality online experiences. With the ACP's generous $30 monthly credit, qualified recipients can now enjoy this remarkable package at an exceptionally low cost of only $19.95 per month.

"BBT believes in the power of connectivity and its ability to positively impact lives. With the BBT Care Package, we are taking significant steps to provide affordable internet solutions to those who need it the most," said Rusty Moore, General Manager at BBT. "Our partnership with the FCC Affordable Connectivity Program allows us to connect even more households in our community, fostering opportunities for education, employment, and enriching experiences online."

To take advantage of the BBT Fiber Care Package and explore the benefits of Fiber-fast internet, participants of the FCC Affordable Connectivity Program can reach out to BBT at **800.592.4781** or visit https://www.bigbend.com/fcc-affordable-connectivity-program for more information and sign-up details.



**Some restrictions apply, and offering is limited based on service location.*

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Opinion

TEXTURE PRESIDIO

Ramon Rodriguez Aranda

Photos and Text by HANNAH GENTILES

Texture Presidio uses the art of photography and storytelling to explore and highlight the textures and tales that make South Presidio County and the surrounding desert landscape both beautifully ordinary and unique.

As I chatted with Ramon Rodriguez Aranda, a recent graduate of Presidio High School, I couldn't help but feel a sense of awe at his unwavering commitment to leading and motivating groups and initiatives toward a greener community, especially in the face of the growing climate crisis. When I asked him about his inspiration, he replied with a twinkle in his eye: "The whole community is my motivation. We are a town with limited resources, often leading to a lack of education. These climate issues are new to many people here. As a young person, I feel raising awareness about these issues is important."

Throughout our conversation, he noted several times: "We are the generation that will be most affected."

Aranda's leadership skills are as impressive as his passion for the environment. He has held several high-profile positions this past year, including National Honor Society president, class president and Rocketry Committee president. He has also revitalized several PHS traditions, such as homecoming, more frequent pep rallies, and other spirited events throughout the school year. Despite his youth, he is an active volunteer and helps to facilitate community events. Community leaders know they can count on Ramon.

Aranda's love for environmental causes began in his early years as he was captivated by a presentation on recycling from local community leaders Elvira Hermosilla and Liz Rohana in his kindergarten class. They continued to inspire and support him throughout the years as they carried out important work. He holds a special reverence for them and got emotional while speaking about a recent event they organized together for young students through the Big Bend Conservation Alliance — there, they commented that there might be a future Ramon in the crowd of children who would take the initiative to benefit their community and the environment in the same way he has. Aranda's unwavering dedication and involvement in a small town that has struggled to encourage significant community involvement inspires hope.

Aranda has been involved in various activities over the years. Still, his greatest passion lies in addressing the climate crisis. He is dedicated to educating others, creating real change and starting conversations about the future impacts on the environment.



Ramon Rodriguez Aranda

During his eighth-grade year, Aranda was stirred by the wave of youth-led protests happening across the globe and the tenacity of his idol, Greta Thunberg. He couldn't help but take action in his community of Presidio, thus birthing Project Homeleaf. This movement was akin to a growing tree, with each "leaf" playing a vital role in its development. Aranda boldly rallied his classmates to join the cause, even standing on top of a cafeteria table during lunch, calling out to his fellow students.

After a successful recruitment, 10 students banded together to make up the passionate team of Project Homeleaf. Those 10 students remain at the helm of the organization. Often in partnership with Big Bend Conservation Alliance, they have effectively coordinated events and initiatives to tackle the climate crisis. Amid the pandemic, Aranda took it upon himself to grow a collection of tree saplings to distribute to each household in Presidio. Eventually, he teamed up with BBCA and began donating trees to any community member who expressed interest, brandishing shovels and donning gloves, ready to dig.

In 2022, Project Homeleaf organized the first Climate Summit in the area, inviting the community to learn from local climate experts about how climate change has and will affect the region. The group also revitalized the rock planters lining O'Reilly Street with beautiful native foliage and helped revive the city's dormant recycling program. As a result, the recycling center is now accessible two days a week. They have also placed two recycling bins across town to encourage community recycling further.

Aranda proposed an innovative xeriscaping design to create a green space at the high school that utilized native plants, reduced water usage, improved commuter safety and provided better access for disabled individuals. He presented a detailed proposal on costs, materials and installation time to the school board and maintenance director early in the school year. His hard work paid off as the project has since been completed, leaving a true legacy as he exited PHS.

Aranda is dedicated to expanding the success of Project Homeleaf and hopes to duplicate its model in other small towns — Marfa, Alpine and beyond. He will soon go on to complete his biology/environmental science degree at UTPB and pursue a master's degree at Texas Tech to best arm himself for success. Aranda and his team operate without a formal hierarchy, as he believes in giving people the freedom to explore different roles. In addition, they are actively engaging with young people to ensure that their work continues, and they plan to return regularly to provide support.

Aranda's mission is to arm people with information so that they can better understand climate change and its impacts. In his efforts, he has become increasingly aware of how important it is to approach all climate control conversations with care, patience and an open mind, especially in a region like West Texas, where many families rely on work in the oil industry.

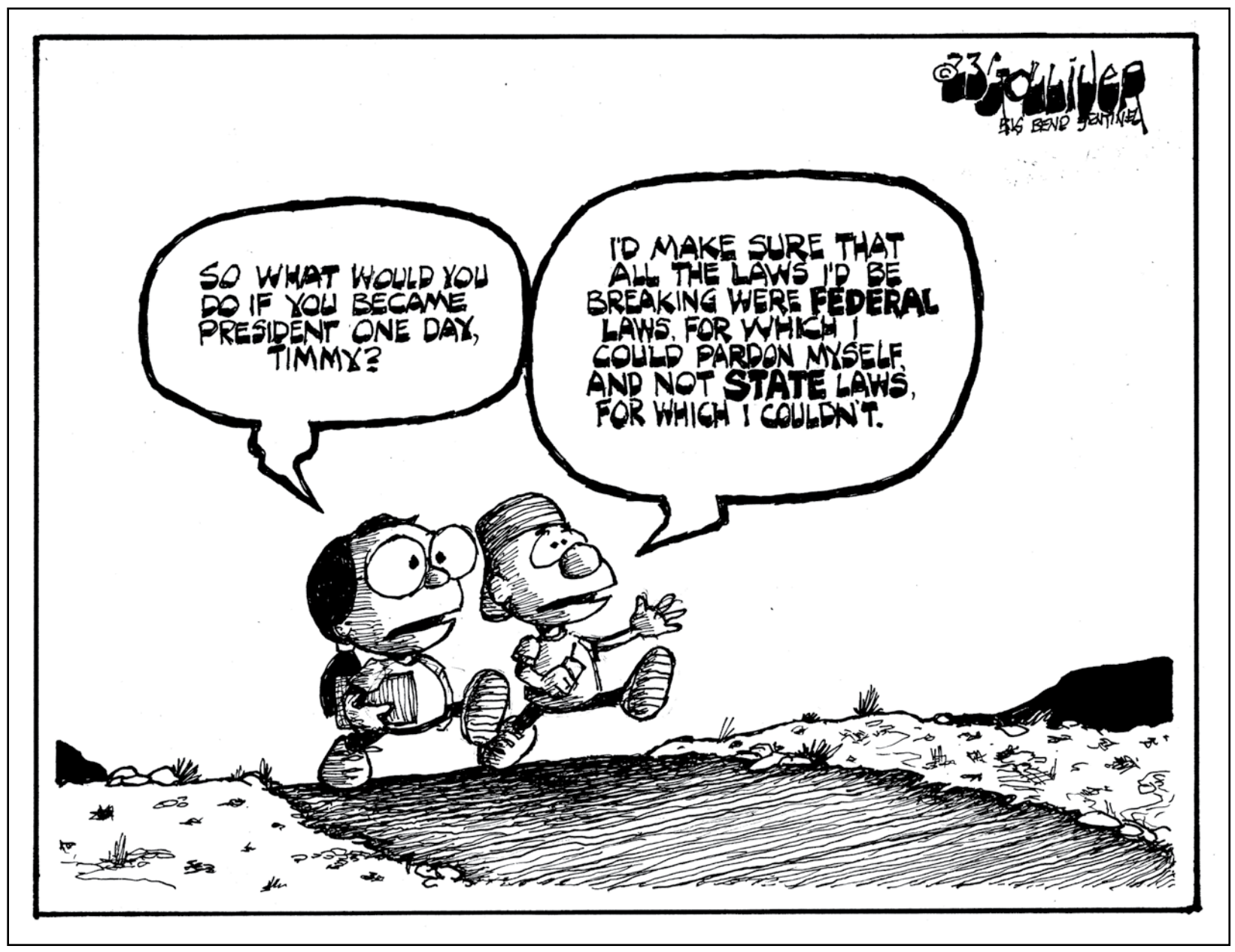
In an era where folks struggle to have productive conversations with those who think differently than them, Aranda believes it's his curiosity that makes all the difference. "I'm fond of other people's ideas; I'm curious. How do they see it? How do they see me?" he said. "It's essential to see how other people view things." He said he always tries to avoid arguments, instead sticking to the facts and being as respectful as possible.

As he moves on to the next chapter in his life, Aranda hopes that Presidio maintains a mindset of growth and giving back — that those like him, who leave for educational purposes, come back to put their knowledge to use.

"[We should] go get our knowledge and bring it back here, shaping new leaders and coming back educated — really value the new generation of students so they have something/someone to lean back on," he said. "It comes back to people specializing in certain gaps in the community and coming back to fill them."

Hannah Gentiles is a trained photographer with a background in social work who has lived in Presidio County since 2015. She currently runs "Texture Presidio," a photo essay-based storytelling project, and lives in Presidio. To find out more about Texture Presidio and her photography, visit www.hannahgentiles.com/texturepresidio or ig:texturepresidio







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Community

Birders flock to Davis Mountains Hummingbird Celebration this weekend

By MARY CANTRELL
mkcantrell@bigbendsentinel.com

JEFF DAVIS COUNTY — The Davis Mountains Hummingbird Celebration, a biennial event, will take place this weekend from August 17 to 20, bringing hundreds birders from around the country to local hummingbird hot spots during peak migration time.

The event, which is put on by local nonprofit Trans-Pecos Bird Conservation, includes lectures and vendor booths taking place in the afternoons at The High Frontier — a new resort southeast of Fort Davis officially opening next spring — which will be free and open to the public.

Vendors, including Texas A&M Press and Twin Sisters Natives plant nursery, will be set up from noon to 5 p.m. Friday and Saturday. Talks on hummingbirds and other topics will take place from 3 to 5 p.m. both days.

Early morning field trips led by local and visiting guides to view hummingbirds in Balmorhea, Marathon, Presidio, The Davis Mountains Preserve, Christmas Mountains as well as at homes in the Davis Mountains Resort (DMR) and Limpia Crossing are full.

Cecilia Riley, celebration coordinator, said many of the trips sold out in May, on the day they released tickets for the festival, and had over 150 sign ups by noon.

"People are always surprised when I get calls really late in August when they start thinking about hummingbirds and we're already full and have been full for months," said Riley. "But it happens that way every year."

The hummingbird celebration has been in existence since the '90s, first taking place on the Prude Ranch, and has grown in popularity over time. Ticket sales go towards putting on the event — paying homeowners and organizations that help host field trips as well as caterers and more — and any left over revenue goes toward education and bird conservation initiatives.

Hummingbird feeders at various locales have been taken care of weeks in advance, said Riley, to ensure there are enough for visitors to see when they arrive. So far, the whizzing, pint-sized birds were doing their part in showing up.

"This year has been especially hot, but that may be one of the reasons why the hummingbirds are so dense already," said Riley. "We have had just lots and lots of hummingbirds, five and six species every day."

Species of note that can be seen in the area include Lucifer, Rivoli's, calliope and broad-billed hummingbirds, to name a few.

Riley said in addition to sharing the area's unique concentration of hummingbirds with the national birding community, the celebration brings in valuable dollars to the local economy, which ideally leads to an appreciation for birds and support for their conservation, even among non-birdwatchers.

"By bringing people to our community who spend dollars on hotels, restaurants, shopping, venues, all of that demonstrates to our communities that birds are valuable to all of us out here and hopefully creates some appreciation for little birds, even hummingbirds out here in West Texas," said Riley.

For more information, visit davismountainshummingbirdcelebration.com/



Photo by Sharon McClanahan

A broadtail hummingbird perches on a red yucca. The Davis Mountains Hummingbird Festival takes place this weekend, welcoming naturalists from all over the United States who travel to the Big Bend region for hummingbird-related field trips, lectures, and more.

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the CHINATI foundation

Chinati is an artist foundation created by Donald Judd and opened to the public in 1986.

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Reservations are encouraged
as capacity is limited.

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of Presidio, Brewster, and Jeff Davis counties.

For details and reservations, please
come to the Chinati Visitor Center
at 1 Cavalry Row or go to
chinati.org





A tradition of belief: Bloys Campmeeting reconvenes for 134th year

By ALLEGRA HOBBS
allegra@bigbendsentinel.com

JEFF DAVIS COUNTY — The 134th Bloys Campmeeting began with the hymn "How Firm a Foundation," as it has for every meeting prior, as far as anyone can recall. Many traditions of the mass religious gathering have been carefully documented, their roots accounted for, pinned to some historical record. Others are hazier in origin but still vital, professed by the living banner-holders of what the Reverend W.B. Bloys began, upheld by sentiment rather than mandate. And according to Deborah Bloys Hardin, a direct descendent of the founder, it has always been the inaugural hymn — it had been the reverend's favorite.

The hymn speaks to the unwavering presence of God to the believer. "Deep waters" and "fiery trials" are obstacles through which God the Father pledges to lead the faithful — the water is sanctifying, the fire refining. For the thousand-plus worshippers that travel every year to Skillman Grove — a 640-acre expanse in the shadow of the Davis Mountains — it marks the beginning of a week-long immersion, not only into worship and prayer but into a distant past they feel tied to by lineage.

Attendees of the meeting live minimally, in rudimentary cabins made of tin on concrete floors. Electricity and running water are available, but fresh air through an open window stands in for air conditioning in the sweltering heat. For one week in August, life is simple. The days consist of Bible study, worship services, prayer meetings and shared meals. Free time is spent chatting on the porch or exploring the grounds.

"When we tell people we're going to Campmeeting, they say, 'What's that?' Then you have to try to explain it," said Stephen Hardin, who was inducted into the tradition when he met Deborah in college. "They never get it. They say, 'Are you in a cult?' And you say 'No, no, that's not it at all.' But Campmeeting is hard to explain."

Stephen remembers the first time Deborah brought him to the grounds. He was baffled by the proposition — a week of church outdoors in late-summer at a fairly remote desert locale. It took a few years to really acclimate, he said. Then he got it.

"It's our New Year," said Deborah. "We get a spiritual revitalization — then you can get through the next year, and come back."

For those like the Bloys Hardins, whose families have been flocking to the annual meet-up since its inception, it's a repeated experience by which they keep time and mark milestones. Deborah, who was first brought to the campgrounds as a child, was baptized there. Her daughter was as well. In the cabin her clan shares with cousin Ben Bloys — W.B.'s great-grandson — its every occupant is cataloged on the wall by name, height and year. Deep friendships are formed across the years, one week at a time.

Elsie Boone, great-granddaughter of W.B. Bloys, said she makes her New Years' resolutions at the August meetings. On the drive back to her home in San Antonio, she reflects on her spiritual life in the next year.

"That's kind of my Yom Kippur, I guess," she said. "I think, what can I do better? If I hurt someone, my atonement. And then to just change and do better."

–

Now a respite from the flurry of modern life, the Campmeeting began as an escape from solitude. W.B. Bloys came from Tennessee as a missionary of the Presbyterian Church and oversaw a congregation in Fort Davis. He was a small, mild-mannered man, affectionately dubbed "The Little Shepherd of the Hills." Accounts from the time recall an almost baffling, gentle strength of presence despite his stature — one man claims to have witnessed the reverend walk into a rowdy saloon, full of men "cursing and yelling" and watching as an inexplicable quiet fell over the room.

On the frontier, God's flock was disparate, Bloys found, separated by vast ranges and mountains — and life was harsh and lonely, full of sickness and death. He took to horseback to minister to the cowboys and ranchers living in relative isolation; he came to appreciate their preference for the open sky to the walls of a church.

It was during a visit to the Means ranching family in 1890 that the idea for the cowboy church came about — it was patriarch John Zack Means, supposedly, who suggested Skillman Grove as a central location for a religious meeting. The first Campmeeting, attended by 27 adults and 21 children, took place in October of that year under an oak tree.

It was determined from the beginning that the meeting would be nondenominational — a Presbyterian minister, Bloys didn't care for such divisions, and the Means family, an integral part of the meeting's genesis, was Baptist. Writer Max Bentley, who documented the meeting in 1924, wrote of Bloys that, "Denominational interpretation of the scripture meant nothing to him — he cleaved straight through to the heart of the Book, and taught the fundamental and thrilling old truths in a way that all could understand."

Word spread, and the meeting ballooned in size. "The camp meeting is the pivot of the year," wrote Bentley. "Everything dates from before and after." The tabernacle was built to accommodate worshippers, then expanded to accommodate more (the old oak tree remains the site of a daily men's prayer meeting). Cabins were eventually built, snaking up the hill that rises from the grove — as more and more accommodations were built, the cabins' numberings lost any semblance of a logical sequence.

But much of the meeting is as it always has been, preserved, a place out of time. The same rules put in place over a century ago are still codified and observed. Nothing is to be bought or sold. No pets, firearms or alcohol are allowed on the grounds. Rolling rocks down Mount Bloys is forbidden, thanks to the resourcefulness of some of the kids. And in bold letters, at the top of the 134th welcome pamphlet: "There will be no line drawn because of different religious beliefs but everyone is welcome to come and worship with us."

"We're a 134-year tradition of just belief," said Deborah.

Becky Roberts — Elsie Boone's sister, great-granddaughter of Reverend Bloys — is a testament to that ethos. She broke from her Presbyterian roots while in college and converted to Catholicism, she said. For a few years thereafter, she lived as a nun. She still provides the opening prayer at the tabernacle on the first Thursday.

Roberts and Boone, both baptized at the meeting as children, described the event as a kind of marathon of spiritual growth. "We go to church every Sunday, but there's something about the intensity here," said Roberts. Between moving from Bible study to worship service to prayer meeting, the sisters sit on the front porch of the cabin that has been in their family since the 1950s. They hand out bubble gum to children — a years-old, endearing tradition. In the late afternoons, many Bloys descendents, cousins who see each other this one time a year, gather on the porch to visit.

"I don't think there will ever be another place like this," said Boone.

–

There is also, inherent in the continued gatherings, a degree of nostalgia for the "Old West" days of the ancestors who paved the way in Skillman Grove. Melanie and Connie Meeker's parents started attending Campmeeting in the '50s, when their father was working as a ranch hand in Van Horn for the Joneses, one of the founding families of the original meeting. Cal and Frank Jones had pitched their tent for years at the site of what is now the Meekers' cabin — the Jones family left it to them. The Meekers have fond childhood memories of listening to the Jones brothers tell stories about their teenage years in the West, as their father spat his chewing tobacco.

Steve Meeker, Melanie and Connie's cousin, laughed as he recalled watching the men in Sunday service that very morning take up an offering in Stetsons. "You don't see that anymore," he said.

The Meeker sisters delight in their retreat from the modern world — they delight, even, in recounting the time they cornered a rattlesnake in their cabin, which they worked together to wrangle so that Melanie could behead it with a knife. She put the head in a Coke bottle to keep as a trophy.

But they delight even more in the sense of peace the campgrounds give them. Before her retirement, Melanie was a cop for 26 years — she remains in such a state of readiness, she said, that her own grandchildren know not to approach her house unannounced at night. She said the Campmeeting is the only week out of the year where her level of alertness drops to "white," the lowest possible reading.

"This is the only place that I don't carry a gun," she said.

At the Campmeeting, everyone can take a deep breath — it is "a place to come and get recharged," said Steve.

Growing up on the campgrounds, Ben Bloys said, he and the other kids were "given free range but expected to behave." They had to attend two services a day, but otherwise, their time was their own. They took up whittling — an old tradition passed down through the generations. Ben now offers to pass it down to any camp-going child that wants to learn.

Ben situates himself just outside of the tabernacle with his whittling knife and his latest project. As he listens to the sermon, the wooden shavings fall to the ground. They can be found all around the tabernacle's outskirts — evidence that the tradition lives on. On Monday, Becky Roberts does the same in the back of the space, her Bible at her side.

"You tell first-timers, and they don't quite understand it," said Bloys. "But it all fits right in."

☺ MARFA SCHOOL LUNCH MENU ☺

MAY	Thu, Aug 17	Fri, Aug 18	Mon, Aug 21	Tue, Aug 22	Wed, Aug 23
BREAKFAST	PANCAKE WRAP, YOGURT	CINNAMON ROLL, SAUSAGE	PANCAKES, BACON	STRUDEL, CHEESE CUBES	BREAKFAST PIZZA
LUNCH	CORN DOG, TATER TOTS, TOMATO CUP, FRUIT	CHEESEBURGER, MACARONI, ROLL, CARROTS, GREEN BEANS, FRUIT, COOKIE	COUNTRY FRIED STEAK, GRAVY, OKRA, ROLL, POTATOES, FRUIT	HOT SANDWICH, BEANS, CARROTS, FRUIT, SHERBET	PIZZA, CARROTS, SALAD, GREEN BEANS, PEACHES

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MARFA SHORTHORNS SPORTS CALENDAR

THU, AUG 17: Football Scrimmage at Van Horn, games start at 10:00am
THU, AUG 17: JH Volleyball at Presidio
FRI, AUG 19: HS Volleyball - Van Horn Volleyball Classic, games start at 8:00am
TUE, AUG 22: HS Volleyball Tournament vs Renkin at Marfa



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.

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

8/2

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★☆☆

Solution from last week's puzzle:

SOLUTION:

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

7/31

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Universal Crossword

Edited by David Steinberg August 14, 2023

ACROSS
1 "Good lord!"
6 With 49-Down, challenge for a Roomba
10 Guns, as an engine
14 Appliance brand
15 Low-carb food regimen
16 "Will do!"
17 Skedaddle
18 ___ Berlin (former communist capital)
19 Palindromic name that starts with "O"
20 Snack for Peter Rabbit (In this answer, unscramble letters 4-9)
23 Chewie's co-pilot
24 Narcissist's problem
25 In general
27 People who are unprofessional?
32 Cupid, to the Greeks
33 Not optional: Abbr.
34 Perimeter marked by "do not cross" tape (... letters 2-7)
38 It may be cut off a sandwich
41 Online forum admin
42 Killed, as a dragon
43 Warm place to swim (... letters 5-10)
46 Go downhill fast?
47 Flowing tresses
48 Appeased
51 Falls at Ontario's border
54 Deface
55 Goof up
56 Bullmatians and boxweilers, or a theme hint
62 Mold for a sandcastle
64 Horrid
65 Target of the Salk vaccine
66 Palindromic name that starts with "A"
67 Stress-free feeling
68 Aspiring exterminator of Bugs?
69 Stretched the truth
70 Toboggan, e.g.
71 Have a bite of

DOWN
1 Opposite of fem.
2 "It's fun to stay at the ___" (Village People lyric)
3 Clothing
4 How some stunts are performed
5 Vandalize, say
6 ___-Ball (arcade game)
7 Get better
8 On the Mediterranean or Baltic
9 "You busy?"
10 Kanga's kid
11 Ardent fan
12 Crucial
13 One of 16 needed for a curling game
21 Increase
22 Taxi charges
26 Throw some dice
27 Curved feature of a bridge
28 Mother, in Montreal
29 Blue-green gemstone
30 Lopsided win
31 Sailboat whose name comes from Dutch
35 Person you look up to
36 Brand with a swoosh
37 Oklahoma city
39 Male deer
40 Time for a coffee break, perhaps
44 Originates (from)
45 Bleating baby
49 See 6-Across
50 Biological ring of color
51 Himalayan country
52 Tehran native
53 Like some symmetry
57 "If all ___ fails ..."
58 Proof of homeownership
59 Majestic shade trees
60 15-Across, for one
61 Tender
63 Lass's brother

PREVIOUS PUZZLE ANSWER

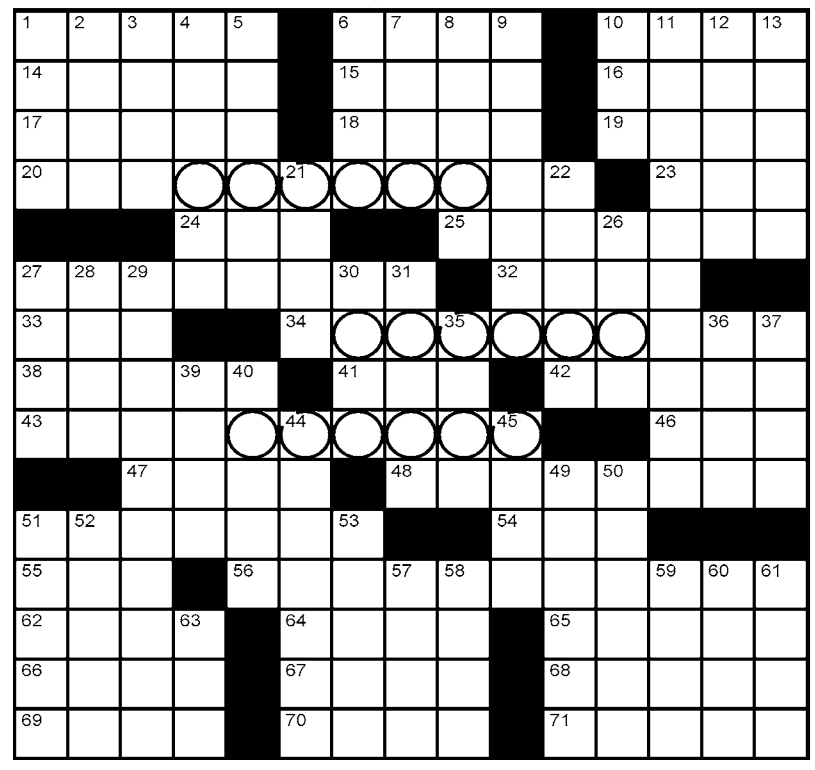
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8/13

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www.upuzzles.com

8/14

Mutts *by Michele Govier*



BBT launches Fiber Care Package for FCC Affordable Connectivity Program participants

ALPINE — Big Bend Telephone is introducing the *BBT Fiber Care Package*, an affordable internet plan exclusive to participants of the FCC Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). With the new offering, BBT aims to bridge the digital divide and provide individuals and families with reliable, high-speed internet access at an exceptionally affordable price.

The FCC Affordable Connectivity Program is designed to ensure that every American has access to affordable, quality broadband services. BBT says that it supports this program's mission and is committed to playing an active role in bringing the benefits of the internet to more households.

The BBT Fiber Care Package offers fast fiber internet speeds of 100 Mbps for downloads and 20 Mbps for uploads for a quality online experience. With the ACP's $30 monthly credit, qualified recipients can now enjoy this package at only $19.95 per month.

"BBT believes in the power of connectivity and its ability to positively impact lives. With the BBT Care Package, we are taking significant steps to provide affordable internet solutions to those who need it the most," said Rusty Moore, general manager at BBT. "Our partnership with the FCC Affordable Connectivity Program allows us to connect even more households in our community, fostering opportunities for education, employment, and enriching experiences online."

Participants of the FCC Affordable Connectivity Program interested in taking advantage of the BBT Fiber Care Package and exploring the benefits of fiber-fast internet are encouraged to reach out to BBT at 800.592.4781 or visit bigbend.com/FCC for more information and sign-up details.

AROUND THE BIG BEND

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Thu Aug 17

Davis Mountains Hummingbird Celebration
8/17 - 8/20 at the High Frontier in Fort Davis
A biennial event that brings hundreds of birders from around the country to local hummingbird hot spots during peak migration time. For more information, visit davismountainshummingbirdcelebration.com/ .

Fri Aug 18

Chris DeAnda Live at Jett's Grill
6:00pm at the Hotel Paisano in Marfa
Come hear some live Country music from this West Texas native.

Presidio's 8th Annual Dark Skies Music Series: Lovable Losers
7:00pm - 9:00pm at the American Legion in Presidio
Live music and food! Vendors every Friday in August. Free and open to the public!

Sat Aug 19

Movies on the Lawn
8:00pm on the Courthouse Lawn in Fort Davis
Screening the locally filmed "Blanche" with cocktails, kids snacks and drinks, actor meet and greet, and cast/director Q&A starting at 8pm. Movie starts at 8:30pm.

Wed Aug 23

Sam Pace Live at Marfa Spirit Co.
8:00pm 320 W El Paso Street in Marfa
From Austin, TX, Sam Pace kicks off his 2023 summer solo tour at Marfa Spirit Co.

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: Sculpt at 5:00pm, Vinyasa at 6:00pm
Tuesday: Hatha at 9:00am
Wednesday: Sculpt at 9:00am; 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
Saturday from 9:45am - 12:00pm 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

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

AA (in-person)
Monday & Wednesday at 6:00 p.m. at St. Paul's Episcopal Church

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.

OBITUARIES

There will be a celebration of the life of Brian Kokernot on Sunday, August 20 at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 1308 N 5th St, Alpine at 2 pm. Please bring food to share.

• • •



Lara

Irma Navarrette Lara transitioned peacefully on August 9, 2023, at the age of 83 at her home, surrounded by her loved ones.

Irma was born on July 3, 1940, to Patricio "Picho" and Carmen Navarrette in Alpine, Texas, where she attended Centennial School. As the eldest of three children, she took pride in looking after her younger brothers, David and Joe Navarrette, as they ultimately helped her build her strong and confident personality.

In 1959, Irma married Juan Lara Sr. and soon after the two moved to Marfa, Texas, where they began growing their young family. Although widowed in 1970, Irma persevered to raise her four boys with determination and resilience. She welcomed the challenges that came with being the central figure in her children's lives and never wavered in her love for her children, family, friends, and above all things, her faith in God.

With a loving demeanor and her smiling eyes, Irma will be remembered for her endless loyalty and love for her family. Her legacy of strength and independence will remain with her loved ones, and she will always be known for her perseverance. Putting her family first, above all else, was her priority and she will be missed greatly.

Irma is survived by her sons, Juan Lara Jr., Jose Eduardo Lara, Robert Lara, Raul Lara, and her daughter-in-law, Gracie Lara; grandchildren, Roxye Lara, Robert Lara Jr., Mercedes Lara, and Christian Lara; and great-grandchildren, Alexia Marquez, Jack Marquez, Adeline Marquez, Selena Lara, Eduardo Juan Lara, and Johh Lara.

A public viewing will be held at Alpine Memorial Funeral Home on August 17, 2023, from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m., and funeral services will be held on August 18, 2023, at 10 a.m. at the Alpine Memorial Funeral Home. Burial services will be held at Holy Angel's Cemetery in Alpine, Texas.

Online condolences may be left at: www.alpinememorialfuneralhome.com

Services have been entrusted to Alpine Memorial Funeral Home in Alpine, Texas.

• • •



Merino

Odilia Vasquez Merino, 74, of Alpine passed away peacefully on Tuesday evening, August 8, 2023, following a short illness. Odilia was born January 21, 1949, in Alpine, where she spent most of her life.

Odilia was the daughter of the late Jesusita Escareno.

Prior to her failing health, Odilia enjoyed music, dancing and socializing. Odilia's loud and spunky personality could not be missed by those in her presence. Her favorite colors were red, blue and yellow. Odilia was a member of Our Lady of Peace Catholic Church and had a strong devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe.

She is predeceased in death by her infant son, Joseph Merino; her mother, Jesusita Escareno; and siblings, Scotty Escareno, Evodio Salas, Elida Espinoza, Teresa Rios and Maria Luisa Rodriguez.

Odilia is survived by husband, Jose Merino; brother, Carlos Vasquez; sisters, Balvina Fuentez and Corina Lopez (Pete); and many nephews and nieces.

Services have been entrusted to Alpine Memorial Funeral Home. Rosary and funeral Mass will be held at Our Lady of Peace Catholic Church on Wednesday, August 16, 2023, beginning at 9 a.m. Pallbearers are as follows: David Campbell, Benjamin Campos, Joe Martinez, Bobby Rodriguez, Jesse Rodriquez and Sonny Rodriguez.

Odilia will be greatly missed by her family and friends.

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THE MIRACLE PRAYER

Dear Heart of Jesus, in the past
I have asked for many favors.
This time, I ask you this very special favor
(mention favor). Take it dear Heart of Jesus, and
place it within your own broken heart where your
Father sees it. Then in his merciful eyes it will
become your favor. Not mine.

Say this prayer for 3 days.
Promise publication and favor will be granted, no matter how impossible.
Never known to fail.

JPT


Share Your Thoughts About
REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH NEEDS
in the Big Bend Area
Big Bend Reproductive Coalition is a practical care organization that provides support to women and people who can get pregnant in our region. We want to hear your thoughts about our region's needs!
TOWN HALL DISCUSSION #2:
TUESDAY | AUGUST 29 | 7 PM
The Sentinel, 209 W. El Paso St., Marfa, TX
Meetings in Fort Davis, Presidio, and Terlingua coming soon. Learn more:
COALICIÓN REPRODUCTIVA DEL BIG BEND REPRODUCTIVE COALITION
bigbendrc.org
@bbreproductivecoaltion

BIGBENDSENTINEL.COM

Classifieds & public notices

LOST/FOUND

LOST CAT

Smallish fixed male orange cat with light green collar still missing from just east of the library on Oak Street. He got chased and have no idea where he might be.
Please call or text if you think you see him, he'll run if you try to get near him, so alert me and I'll spring into action.

Thanks for any help
Mary
508-221-1053

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

MARFA COUNTRY CLINIC IS LOOKING FOR A NEW MEDICAL PROVIDER

If you are a Family Medicine provider and your calling is to practice in a small and independent practice, providing quality patient-oriented medicine in a remote but culturally rich rural setting, come join us!

Our providers offer a wide range of medical services to all ages, from well exams to urgent care visits, screenings, injections, immunizations, joint injections, minor skin procedures, and more. Our clinic is small but our staff is robust and versatile.

We are looking for a MD, DO, NP or PA. Spanish-speaking a plus. Please send CV to Don Culbertson (email below).

105 E. Oak, PO Box 368 Ph.(432)729-3000
Marfa, TX 79843 marfacountryclinic@gmail.com

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.

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.

PUBLIC NOTICES

NOTICE TO PUBLIC
9-1-1 Addressing
Outreach Event

Do You Know Your
Physical 9-1-1 Address?
The Rio Grande Council of Governments will host a 9-1-1 Addressing Outreach Event. The purpose of this 9-1-1 Addressing Outreach Event is for the general public to ask questions or obtain a Physical 9-1-1 Address. The 911 Addressing Outreach Event will be held:

August 30, 2023 at Fort Davis Post Office
Located at 500 Sgt Gonzales, Fort Davis, Texas 79834
9 a.m. — 3:30 p.m. CDT

For additional information, please contact:
Kayse Muratori
911 GIS Coordinator
Brewster, Jeff Davis & Presidio Counties
Rio Grande Council of Governments
(432) 837-7199

NOTICE TO PUBLIC
9-1-1 Addressing
Outreach Event

Do You Know Your
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August 22, 2023 at J.W. Red Pattillo South Brewster County Community Center
Located at 100 TX-118, Terlingua, Texas 79852
10 a.m. — 2:30 p.m. CDT

For additional information, please contact:
Kayse Muratori
911 GIS Coordinator
Brewster, Jeff Davis & Presidio Counties
Rio Grande Council of Governments
(432) 837-7199

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

NOTICE OF APPOINTMENT OF LUPITA L. RAMIREZ AS INDEPENDENT EXECUTRIX OF THE ESTATE OF EUSEBIO L. RAMIREZ, Deceased.

Pending in Probate Court of Presidio County, In Matters of Probate No. 2019.

TO ALL PERSONS INTERESTED IN THE ABOVE ESTATE:

WHEREAS, on the 25th day of July, 2023, in the Probate Court of Presidio County, Texas, LUPITA L. RAMIREZ duly qualified and was appointed as Independent Executrix of the Estate of EUSEBIO L. RAMIREZ, Deceased.

Notice is hereby given that original Letters Testamentary on this estate were granted and this is to notify all persons having claims against said estate to present the same to the individual identified below within the time prescribed by law. Any person indebted to said estate is hereby notified to pay same to the individual identified below.

LUPITA L. RAMIREZ
Independent Executrix of the
Estate of EUSEBIO L. RAMIREZ, Deceased.

Address: c/o Kenneth Beanland, Attorney
1734 W. Gramercy Place
San Antonio, Texas 78201

At Marfa, Texas, Dated August 1, 2023.

Big Bend Regional Hospital District
Notice of Board of Director Vacancy

The Big Bend Regional Hospital District seeks to fill vacancies on its Board of Directors.

The Board position of Director will serve constituents in Single Member District 2 which includes parts of the Cities of Marfa and Presidio and areas south of Alpine and north of Terlingua. The unexpired term to be filled will begin upon appointment by the Board of Directors and will continue through May 2026.

The Board position of Director will serve constituents in Single Member District 1 which includes western parts of Presidio County, the City of Marfa, and the City of Presidio. The unexpired term to be filled will begin upon appointment by the Board of Directors and will continue through May 2024.

To qualify, a person must be a qualified voter, reside within the boundaries of the respective Single Member District, and complete an application.

Interested parties should complete an application available for download at www.bigbendhealth.org. Questions regarding the board vacancy can be directed to J.D. Newsom, Executive Director, at 432-837-7051 or jd@bbrhd.com.

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.

NOTICE TO PUBLIC
9-1-1 Addressing
Outreach Event

Do You Know Your
Physical 9-1-1 Address?
The Rio Grande Council of Governments will host a 9-1-1 Addressing Outreach Event. The purpose of this 9-1-1 Addressing Outreach Event is for the general public to ask questions or obtain a Physical 9-1-1 Address. The 911 Addressing Outreach Event will be held:

August 24, 2023 at Marfa Post Office
Located at 100 N Highland, Marfa, Texas 79843
9 a.m. — 3:30 p.m. CDT

For additional information, please contact:
Kayse Muratori
911 GIS Coordinator
Brewster, Jeff Davis & Presidio Counties
Rio Grande Council of Governments
(432) 837-7199

NOTICE TO PUBLIC
9-1-1 Addressing
Outreach Event

Do You Know Your
Physical 9-1-1 Address?
The Rio Grande Council of Governments will host a 9-1-1 Addressing Outreach Event. The purpose of this 9-1-1 Addressing Outreach Event is for the general public to ask questions or obtain a Physical 9-1-1 Address. The 911 Addressing Outreach Event will be held:

August 23, 2023 at Marathon Public Library
Located at 106 NE 3rd Street, Marathon, Texas 79842
9 a.m. — 3:30 p.m. CDT

For additional information, please contact:
Kayse Muratori
911 GIS Coordinator
Brewster, Jeff Davis & Presidio Counties
Rio Grande Council of Governments
(432) 837-7199

Big Bend Regional Hospital District Budget Hearing
August 31, 2023

WHEREAS, the Board of Directors of Big Bend Regional Hospital District has caused to be prepared an annual budget for the fiscal year beginning October 1, 2023 and ending September 30, 2024. Notice is hereby given that a public hearing on said proposed budget will be held on August 31, 2023 at 5:00 p.m. at the BBRHD Administrative Office at 105 W. Holland Ave, Alpine, TX 79830.

Buddy Cavness
Chairman / Board of Directors

GOVERNMENT CONTACTS

PRESIDIO COUNTY
Judge Jose Portillo:
(432) 729-4452

CITY OF MARFA
Manny Baeza, City of Marfa Mayor
mayor@cityofmarfa.com
(432) 295-0048
Raúl Lara, Mayor Pro Tem
councilmemberlara@cityofmarfa.com
Mark Cash
councilmembercash@cityofmarfa.com
Eddie Pallarez
councilmemberpallarez@cityofmarfa.com
Mark Morrison
councilmembermorrison@cityofmarfa.com
Travis Acreman
councilmembeacreman@cityofmarfa.com

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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