THE BIG BEND Sentinel

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

# *Safety concerns accelerate conversations about courthouse renovation*

**By SAM KARAS**
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MARFA — At a commissioners court meeting held on February 14, Presidio County officials once again revisited the daunting prospect of renovating the historic Marfa courthouse. The issue has popped up time and again over the past year as local leaders have debated where the county's limited funding should go first.

The conversation started in earnest under previous County Judge Cinderela Guevara, who hired InSitu Architecture, an El Paso-based firm, to evaluate what the building needed the most. After sweating through countless high desert summers, county employees felt strongly about replacing the building's aging A/C system but had to weigh their personal comfort with the need for a new elevator and repairs to the old jail building, which houses many of the county's historical records.

A classic Marfa vs. Presidio debate also emerged over the County Annex building, which south county representatives insist is as equally and urgently in need of repair. The building has been plagued with flooding issues since it was built, and an especially damp fall of 2022 led to mold issues so severe that Justice of the Peace Juanita Bishop's offices needed to be relocated.

The elevator at the Marfa courthouse may emerge as the top priority. At a commissioners court meeting on January 24, Precinct 1 Commissioner David Beebe implored the court to consider the liability issues the county could face if the elevator failed — he had personally refused to use the elevator since taking office as justice of the peace in 2015.

Beebe explained that the particular design of the elevator wasn't reliant on cables, so there wasn't a risk the cables would snap, but that its hydraulic piston system was leaking oil and could potentially get stuck between floors. "It's not a safety issue as far as falling and dying, but it could be a safety issue so far as getting stuck and not being able to get help," he explained.

In addition to the upper floor courthouse employees, Beebe was concerned about the many visitors who come to the courthouse to access county services, see its historic architecture — and in some cases, get married. "While it really is a functionality issue, it's also an embarrassment issue," he said.

At the February 14 meeting, Gabriela Fierro of McKinstry — a

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The West Texan Media Group, LLC



Photo by Roxann Chavez / Pecos Enterprise

***Sophomore Diego Jurado placed fourth in the 275 weight class at the Pecos LCQ last Thursday. Marfa ISD placed 12th overall at the event with Christopher Huerta, Jaden Nunez, Isaiah Ramos, Tony Saenz and Jaidan Villa also competing. READ MORE ON PAGE 10.***

# *Parents of slain Marfa teacher say it's been silence from DA incumbent Ori White on a new trial*

**By ROB D'AMICO**
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83rd DISTRICT — Parents of former Marfa ISD teacher Sophia Sullivan — who was stabbed to death in Fort Davis in 2018 — are frustrated by a lack of communication from the district attorney, who they said has not contacted them about a retrial in the years after Sullivan's husband was freed with a hung jury in 2019. Now with 83rd District Attorney Ori White running for another term, they worry the case will never be retried.

"We're disappointed that there's been no follow through at all from the district attorney," said Chuck Sabey, Sophia Sullivan's father. "This has certainly gone on for a long time, and it's been hard for myself and my family, and we haven't gotten the communications we hoped for."

Sophia Sullivan, known as Sophi to friends and family, was found dead by her husband with more than 40 stab wounds in her Fort Davis home on March 16, 2018. Authorities quickly keyed in on her husband, Danny Sullivan, as a suspect and charged him with capital murder. Some jurors and family members later stated that a series of missteps by Jeff Davis County law enforcement may have led to no forensic evidence tied to Danny. Then DA and prosecutor Sandy Wilson relied on testimony from the Sullivans' son, who witnessed the murder and pointed to his father as the killer, but he was only 7 years old at the time. While nine jurors voted to convict, three did not, resulting in a mistrial.

Following the mistrial, Danny was freed and has been living in Illinois ever since. However, an Odessa judge ruled in favor of Sophi's mother, Theresa Blain, in a wrongful death suit naming Danny responsible for Sophi's death and awarded her $7 million in damages last May. Danny continues to deny he had anything to do with the killing.

Sabey, Sophi's father, said when White defeated Wilson in 2020, he promised Sophi's family that a retrial for the case would be a priority. But the parents have said there has been no communication from White ever since, with more than four years passing since the first trial in November 2019. White told the Texas Observer a new trial was planned for the spring of 2023, then he moved that date to the summer of 2023, then to the fall of 2023.

"One of my highest priorities is to make sure

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# *Financially fraught nonprofit Big Bend Community Action Committee to dissolve*

**By MARY CANTRELL**
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TRI-COUNTY — The Big Bend Community Action Committee (BBCAC), a nonprofit established in 1956 to provide critical public assistance programs to low-income residents in the tri-county area, will soon dissolve as other area organizations take up its remaining programs.

The shuttering of the organization comes nine months after its chief executive officer and chief financial officer were fired for failing to complete annual audits for three consecutive years, leading to the loss of key grant funding for the organization. Several community leaders were brought in to resuscitate the failing nonprofit following the firing of top executives, including Big Bend Hospital District Director J.D. Newsom, who was acting as interim CEO.

Newsom said after months of cleaning up the mess at BBCAC — auctioning off 27 unused vehicles the entity was needlessly paying insurance on and more — it was clear getting back into good standing with federal grant programs was going to be extremely difficult, requiring paying $80,000 to retroactively file audits.

Leaders have ultimately decided to transfer the operation of BBCAC's primary programs to other nonprofits and abandon the organization altogether. "Big Bend Community Action Committee, as an entity, will eventually go away," Newsom said. "All of the messed up books and poor financials dissolve with the organization."

The organization's utility assistance and weatherization programs, which help low-income individuals pay for utility bills and lower energy costs through improved home weatherization, funded by the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs, have officially been transferred to the Community Council of South Central Texas.

Newsom said there was at least a three-month period where "funding was in limbo being transferred from one organization to another," and people who rely on the assistance program

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# *P.J. Serrano sentenced to 8 years in prison for possession, transportation of child sex abuse material*

**By MARY CANTRELL**
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MARFA — Patricio Javier "P.J." Serrano was sentenced this week by Federal District Court Judge David Counts to serve eight years in prison for possession and transportation of child sex abuse material.

Serrano will serve five years in prison for the transportation charge and 37 months for the possession charge. He was facing up to 20 years for each charge. Judge Counts determined Serrano's sentence after considering U.S. sentencing guidelines as well as other statutory factors, according to a press release from the United States Attorney's Office.

"I was pleased that Judge Counts stayed within the recommended sentence," said Serrano's defense attorney Shane O'Neal. "On the whole, I thought it was a pretty good outcome for Mr. Serrano."

When Serrano's eight-year sentence is up, he will be let out on supervised release for 15 years. The conditions of that release will be detailed in the final judgment, which is not yet publicly available. He will also be required to pay a $100 fine for each charge.

It is not yet clear where Serrano will be serving time. O'Neal said Serrano will now be sent to the Federal Bureau of Prisons, which will assign him a facility.

Serrano, a Marfa resident and softball coach at the Big Bend Amateur Softball Association, was arrested in May 2023 after officers from the Texas Department of Public Safety and Federal Bureau of Investigation discovered multiple photos and videos depicting child sex abuse material stored on Serrano's cell phone and in a web browser, according to a criminal complaint.

Investigators found that Serrano sent links of child sex abuse material to other individuals via email in 2017 using the application imgbox, according to court documents. Serrano pled guilty to charges of possession and transportation in November 2023.

Around a month after Serrano's arrest, a previous romantic partner of his, Marfa resident Sonya Murillo, who worked as a property manager and substitute teacher at Marfa ISD, was arrested and charged with child sexual exploitation. At least eight videos of Murillo performing sexual acts on a young child were uncovered by investigators while "conducting a forensic review of a cell phone from a different child pornography investigation in Marfa," according to the criminal complaint. Serrano and Murillo's cases have been tried separately.

Murillo pled guilty to production of child sex abuse material in January and is facing up to 30 years in prison and a $25,000 fine. Her sentencing date is currently set for April 23.

# *Citing staffing and logistical issues, county seeks permanent polling locations*

**By SAM KARAS**
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PRESIDIO COUNTY — Early voting kicked off last week, marking the start of the busiest part of primary season for the folks who oversee Presidio County's elections. So far, this year's election has been running relatively smoothly — but Election Administrator Florcita Zubia spoke out at a Commissioners Court meeting held on February 14 to voice her concerns about holding successful elections in the future.

Zubia's primary concern is space. This year's early voting location in Marfa is the USO Building, and Presidians are assigned to the Pabellon building, located next to the Valero gas station on U.S.-67. Not everyone was happy about the latter. Zubia reported getting some "backlash" from local voters who had never used the space before. "The public doesn't like for the [polling place] to be moved very often because they get used to one location," she explained.

The process of scouting out and securing these locations for the two-week stretch of early voting isn't as easy as the average voter might expect. At February's meeting, Zubia explained that she felt like she had to scramble each election cycle to make sure that county residents could hit the polls.

While the USO has historically been a reliable location for Marfans, Presidio has been a challenge for her office in recent years. Early voting spans 11 consecutive days, with polls open six to twelve hours a day; state law recently changed to extend hours.

While the Presidio Activities Center is a relatively reliable spot for Election Day, the communal nature of the space makes it difficult to disrupt ongoing events. Every day of the week the building hosts meals for local seniors in the morning and youth sports and city meetings in the evening. All of those activities would have to be put on hold for a week and a half to house early voting.

Over the past few cycles, Presidians turned out to Building C of their local County Annex, but ongoing issues with mold in the former office of the justice of the peace pushed Judge Juanita Bishop and her staff into the building. In response, Zubia had to get creative, working with Ismael Lara, who offered his building for free if the county could take care of the utilities.

The catch: Lara's building is only available if no paying tenant wants it for the month. In the event of a runoff election, the county could very well be out of luck.

Still, she was grateful for Lara's generosity. "I think it's big enough and gives voters enough privacy," she said. "That's super important to

*(Continued on page 3)*



# Murder trial

*(Continued from page 1)*

that any victim of any type of crime is communicated with and knows what court dates are coming up," White told *The Sentinel* after his election victory in 2020. Sabey said he has been contacting White's office, with no reply the past two weeks. "The lines of communication have only been one-way," Sabey said. "It's been frustrating in my attempts to reach people."

On Monday, White said he fully intends to retry the case. "We're just waiting. All of our judges have just been inundated with cases that are on trial. We have to try cases where the people are in jail first. That's the rule throughout the state of Texas. So, they don't have a choice about that. I don't have a choice about that either."

However, no Texas law or rule requires judges to prioritize trying inmates awaiting a trial first. Texas laws on how long someone charged with a felony can be held in jail without an indictment can impact decisions by prosecutors and judges for setting trial dates. "If there's a trial that's ready whenever a defendant is in custody, they'll get a priority setting, but that doesn't mean another trial doesn't get a setting," said Jesse Gonzales, a former DA and current defense attorney running against White in the March 5 Republican Primary.

White's office later clarified that it's the judge's discretion on who to schedule for trial and when, and that the DA can merely suggest that they are ready and request a date.

White said in the summer of 2022 that the defense and prosecution had agreed on a change of venue since it would be difficult to find jurors in the Jeff Davis County area without substantial knowledge of the case to retain impartiality. Months later, White said that the defense would be responsible for filing a motion to change venue. (Danny Sullivan no longer has defense counsel to file a motion.) Either party can file that motion, and White told The Sentinel that no motion had been filed by either side, so it's unclear how a trial could even be considered anywhere in the near term if the venue hasn't been decided.

"We just have this inundation of cases, particularly people illegally transporting individuals from Mexico," White said of ongoing delays for setting trials. "I don't know how many cases we have, what we have right now, but it's quite a few, definitely in the hundreds."

Presidio County Attorney Rod Ponton, who faces a primary challenge from Marfa attorney Blair Park, commented at the local candidate forum on February 10 that White had a backlog of 500 felony cases that had been filed but with no indictments.

White provided The Sentinel with statistics from his term beginning in 2020. His office has handled 2,800 cases in the district's four counties — Pecos, Jeff Davis, Brewster, and Presidio. His office has prosecuted or disposed of 80% of those cases. The remaining 20% pending, about 560, include both indicted and unindicted defendants. The pending cases, therefore, are "substantially small," considering the total number of cases handled, he reported.

Gonzales, a Fort Stockton attorney who served as DA from 2009-2012, said Sophi's murder case came up at two Fort Davis campaign events this month and that "it's a pretty hot topic." He said it would be impossible to comment on the possibility of a retrial if he was elected because he doesn't have access to the case file, evidence and witnesses.

Gonzales also said he can't verify a backlog at the 83rd DA's office without access to files. "Court backlogs happen everywhere, some worse than others," Gonzales said. If true, he said, "That's a big number, a lot of cases to be filed but not disposed of, even if you go district-wide to all four counties."

Gonzales said he wants to "make prosecutions more timely so people don't get frustrated."

# Big Bend Community Action Committee

*(Continued from page 1)*

were left stranded. "I know it put people in crisis because they were counting on that assistance to pay their bills, and the money just wasn't there," Newsom said. "It just makes you mad because it shouldn't happen, but it did."

The Community Council of South Central Texas has since hired staff in Presidio and Alpine to help residents re-enroll and the program is now back on track, Newsom said.

The transportation program BBCAC was running, commonly referred to as TRAX, has officially been transferred over to the Family Crisis Center of the Big Bend. The Family Crisis Center board was officially voted onto the BBCAC board on January 17, with all remaining BBCAC board members resigning. BBCAC staff and offices in Marfa and Presidio will now fall under the purview of the Family Crisis Center.

The TxDOT-funded program is currently helping transport elderly residents or those without vehicles to doctor's appointments. Drivers take patients, including those that require daily dialysis, to Fort Stockton, Odessa and as far away as El Paso.

Leticia Carrillo, executive director of the Family Crisis Center, said the nonprofit agreed to take over the transportation services because its board of directors believed the service is both helpful for their clients — survivors of violence crimes and sexual assault — as well as the general public.

"While it's not a perfect fit, we're going to make it work because transportation is needed," Carrillo said. "We don't want to have people that can't make a doctor's appointment because they don't have transportation. We've stepped in to fill that void."

A consultant from the Hendrickson Transportation Group has been brought in for six months to help the Family Crisis Center improve efficiency and reliability during the transition period, Newsom said. "The transportation [program] is so critical for our communities that we're just entirely focused on getting that back on track towards a valuable service for everybody," he said.

In the past, the transportation service has been more robust, Newsom said, with daily routes taking people to the grocery store, post office and pharmacy, but the program has dwindled in the past few years and is now primarily providing medical transport.

Carrillo said the entity is currently looking to hire new drivers to join their team and aims to eventually expand local routes, creating a twice-weekly route from Terlingua to Alpine. "We're hoping to grow it as soon as we can," she said.

The Family Crisis Center currently serves the tri-county region in addition to Terell and Pecos counties. The transportation program overlaps with that coverage area in the tri-county region but includes Hudspeth and Culbertson counties, areas without any crisis center services, offering a potential future expansion for the Family Crisis Center. "Long term I think this helps them as well, to be able to provide services to a larger geographic area," Newsom said.

# Courthouse renovations

*(Continued from page 1)*

design-build firm that handles both the planning and construction stages of a project — gave a presentation on what the company could offer the county.

Alongside all the practical support McKinstry offers, Fierro explained that the firm can also help the county seek out and apply for grant funding. "We make sure that we understand your specific financial landscape as we're planning for the critical issues you have now — and planning for what there is to be done in the future," she said.

County Judge Joe Portillo explained that the architectural assessment completed during Judge Guevara's tenure wasn't a waste of county cash — instead, InSitu's findings would be incorporated into the process as a jumping-off point. "The architectural plans that were done don't address a lot of things — broken doors, windows, other things that need to be done," he said. "It focuses on the emergency stuff that needs to be done now or the building will deteriorate."

There were a few reasons to be hopeful. McKinstry had worked on courthouse renovations before, and Fierro explained that historic courthouse projects were especially appealing to grant committees.

At Wednesday's meeting, commissioners approved $45,000 for McKinstry for "grant development services" to help the county prepare a successful application for money from the Texas Historical Commission (THC), due in May.

Fierro said that the three major projects — elevator, HVAC and jailhouse roof — could potentially be covered by the grant. If the application is successful, the firm would wait for guidance before proceeding so as not to compromise the building's historical integrity. "We won't touch a door or a hinge or anything without the THC's approval first," she said.

County Attorney Rod Ponton said that he had been doing his due diligence in working with the THC for its expertise and funding. For Ponton — and many of the county officials in attendance — repairing the courthouse wasn't just about elevators and air conditioning, but about promoting a positive image for the county. "Getting somebody with specific knowledge will help Presidio County make the courthouse gleam again because we're so proud of it," he said.


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# Polling locations

*(Continued from page 1)*

me — that when people come in, they feel like they have the privacy to be able to vote who they want to vote for."

Apart from a reliable space, Zubia's other concern is more chronic. Like many other voting entities around the country, it's difficult for her to find and retain poll staffers.

Working the polls — even through a local election — can be a tough job, requiring staff to keep abreast of election law and new voting technology. Election staff also have to have a good "customer service" attitude, be willing to help folks figure out the process and be ready to potentially diffuse tense situations.

A study conducted by the Brookings Institution found that around half of all election officials nationwide find it difficult to find adequate staffing, and that the problem was much more pronounced in rural counties.

Part of the issue is the long hours — having polls open on weekdays from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. disqualifies many working people and students. The study found that the majority of poll workers are female and of retirement age. "I think the hardest thing is that it's not an actual, everyday job," Zubia said. "People can't just take off work for two weeks to work the election."

Zubia was thankful for assistance from Presidio County Democratic Chair Ramon Rodriguez for helping recruit a new crop of younger poll workers to work this year's early voting. "They are go-getters," she said. "They've worked out great."

# Presidio ISD names Carmen Rubner new superintendent

**By SAM KARAS**
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PRESIDIO — At last week's meeting, the Presidio ISD School Board announced that Carmen Rubner has been selected to serve as district superintendent for the 2024-2025 school year and beyond. Last June, she was hired as an interim superintendent to fill in for Ray Vasquez, who announced his resignation at the end of the 2023-2024 school year.

Rubner is a familiar face to many Presidio ISD families. She worked for the district previously from 1991 to 2019, serving a variety of roles from teacher and coach to assistant principal and technology director. In addition to her superintendent role, she is also the high school principal; the district has not yet decided whether they will hire a new campus leader.

District leaders decided to make Rubner's position permanent with help from Doug Karr, a consultant with Arrow Educational Services, Inc. Before the search began in earnest at the beginning of January, Karr issued a questionnaire to board members asking them to rank the qualities they felt were most important in district leadership — the trustees expressed that they were looking for someone who was a "collaborator" and a "visionary."

Rubner wrote to *The Presidio International* about some of her goals for the upcoming school year.

**What have you learned during your time as interim superintendent?**

I have learned a great deal in a very short period of time. Most of this has to do with new laws and requirements for school districts. My carryover is that no matter what I do, I need to know in my heart that it is best for the students and staff of Presidio ISD.

**What are some of your favorite parts of working for the district — and some of the biggest challenges?**

I have three favorite parts of working for Presidio ISD. One has and will always be the students. They are incredible and want to learn every day. I see smiles on faces and that makes me want to work even harder to give them every chance to succeed. The second is the people I work with every day. People who come to work to make a difference for a child. People who, no matter their position, always put our students first. And third, being part of this incredible community, a community who always wants what is best for all of our students.

My biggest challenge is making sure everyone is on the same page. I'll need to use all types of data — achievement, program and even perception data to see that PISD is on an upward trajectory. We won't be looking at data for data's sake though. It is imperative to have useful data to ensure that everyone is working towards the goals set forth by the school board. We have to know where we are in order to guide where we are going.

**What kind of changes do you hope to see in the school district under your care?**

I want to see our district flourish — financially, academically, athletically and with every program or opportunity we give students. I want everyone to come to school excited and leave knowing they did the very best they could do that day.


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**Do you need to reapply annually?**

If your land already receives agricultural or timber productivity appraisal, you normally don't need to reapply unless the chief appraiser requires you to do so. If a new application is required, the appraisal district will notify you by mail.

For more information, call or come by:

Presidio County Appraisal Dist.
P.O. Box 879
Marfa, Texas 79843
(432) 729-3431 / Presidio (432)229-3963
info@presidiocad.org

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# *Last chance for early voting, and election day information*

## *Brewster County announces remote early voting for Marathon and Terlingua*

TRI-COUNTY — Early voting for the March 5 primary election ends on Friday, March 1. Voters are casting their ballots for presidential candidates, U.S. Senate candidates and several other state-wide and regional seats as well as a number of local county-level seats up for election across the Big Bend. Leading Democrat and Republican candidates will proceed to the November 5 General Election. Primary runoff elections will take place on May 28.

Those elected will not assume office until January 2025. To check your voter eligibility, visit the secretary of state's website.

Below, *The Big Bend Sentinel* details a list of voting times, locations and candidates. Presidio County received only Democratic candidates, Jeff Davis County received only Republican candidates and Brewster County received both Republican and Democratic candidates, but none are vying for the same position — meaning all local elections will be decided in the primaries.

Voting precincts are different from county commissioner precincts. To find your precinct number, or for more election information, call Presidio County at 432-729-4812, Brewster County at 432-837-6230 and Jeff Davis County at 432-426-0801.

**TRI-COUNTY**

Across the region, the district judge and district attorney seats, currently held by Roy Ferguson and Ori White, are up for election. Running for district judge are two Brewster County Republicans, Bill Parham and Monty Kimball. Running for district attorney are two Republicans from Fort Stockton, incumbent Ori White and Jesse Gonzales.

**PRESIDIO**

Early voting continues at the Marfa Visitor's Center (USO), 302 S. Highland Street, and at 309 Jose Rodriguez Street in Presidio. Polls will be open Thursday, February 29, through Friday, March 1, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Election Day voting (March 5) will take place from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. at:

Marfa Visitor's Center (USO), 302 S. Highland Street — Voting precincts 1 and 7

Presidio Activity Center, 1200 E. O'Reilly — Voting Precinct 2

Presidio County Annex, Bldg. B — Voting precincts 3 and 4

309 Jose Rodriguez Street in Presidio — Voting precincts 5 and 6

Incumbent Rod Ponton is running against attorney Blair Park for the role of *county attorney*. *County commissioner Precinct 1* candidates include Deirdre Hisler, a retired Texas Parks and Wildlife employee; Samuel Sánchez, who runs a cattle business; and Ruben Armendariz, the facilities director at Presidio ISD.

*County commissioner Precinct 3* candidates include incumbent José Luis Cabezuela; Tiburcio Acosta, a store manager; Irma Carrasco, a teacher; and Frankie Ortiz, a truck driver.

Nancy Arevalo, an accountant, and Norma Valenzuela, the Presidio County tax office deputy clerk, are running for *tax assessor-collector*.

Law enforcement officials running for re-election include incumbent Sheriff Danny Dominguez and incumbent Constable Precinct 1 Estevan "Steve" Marquez. Incumbent Adan "Pugi" Covos and Rafael Bentley Acosta, who is retired, are running for the role of constable Precinct 2.

Ramon Rodriguez is running to continue in his role as Presidio County Democratic Party chair, as is Presidio County Republican Party Chair Dan Dunlap.

Candidate questionnaires for Presidio County candidates can be found in recent print editions of *The Big Bend Sentinel*.

**BREWSTER**

Early Voting continues at the Judge Val Clark Beard Office Complex (Old Library) 203 North 7th Street, Alpine. Polls will be open Thursday, February 29, through Friday, March 1, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Last week, Brewster County added two "remote" early voting locations for Thursday, February 29, and Friday, March 1, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. for the Marathon Community Center, 2nd and Ave. E, and the JW "Red" Pattillo Community Center, 201 Rex Ivey Road in Terlingua.

Election Day voting (March 5) will take place from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. at:

Assembly of God Fellowship Hall (Across from Alpine High School), 1802 N Hwy 118 — Voting Precinct 1

Judge Val Clark Beard Office Complex (Old Library), 203 N. 7th St. in Alpine — Voting Precinct 2

Marathon Community Center, 2nd and Ave. E — Voting Precinct 3

Alpine Civic Center, 801 W. Holland in Alpine — Voting Precinct 4

Panther Junction Visitors Center, Big Bend National Park — Voting Precinct 5

JW "Red" Pattillo Community Center, 201 Rex Ivey Rd. in Terlingua — Voting Precinct 6

Food Pantry of Alpine, 933 East Gallego — Voting Precinct 8

There are no contested races in the Republican primary. Marisol Skelton, assistant district attorney, is running for the role of *county attorney*. J. Steve Houston is currently county attorney but not seeking re-election.

Incumbents James Westermann and Flavio Ybarra have filed for *county commissioner Precinct 1* and *constable Precinct 1* positions, respectively. Monica McBride is running to continue in her role as Brewster County Republican Party chair.

The Democratic primary includes one contested race for *county commissioner Precinct 3*, against incumbent Ruben Ortega by Alpine ISD School Board Member Joe Portillo.

Incumbent Sheriff Ronnie Dodson is running for re-election as is incumbent Tax Assessor-Collector Sylvia Vega. Both are running unopposed. Mary Bell Lockhart is running to continue her role as Brewster County Democratic Party chair.

**JEFF DAVIS**

Early voting continues at the County and District Clerk's Office, 111 North Front Street, through the green double doors. Polls will be open Thursday, February 26, through Friday, March 1, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Election Day voting (March 5) will take place from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. at:

Jeff Davis Community Center, 601 Cemetery Rd., Fort Davis — Voting precincts 1,2 and 3.

Valentine Community Building, North Main and 8th Streets, Valentine — Voting Precinct 4.

DMPOA Community Center, 101 Yellowknife Trail, Fort Davis — Precinct 5.

Up for election in Jeff Davis County are *county commissioner precincts 1 and 3* seats, currently held by Jody Adams and John Davis. Adams is running for re-election unopposed. Davis is running against Graydon Hicks, Fort Davis ISD superintendent.

Running for the combined role of *sheriff/tax assessor-collector* are Victor Lopez, a police officer; Clay Woods, a retired police officer; C.W. Stephens, current deputy sheriff; and Rick McIvor. Bill Kitts, who currently holds the office, is not seeking re-election.

King Merritt, deputy sheriff, and incumbent Mike Wright both filed for the role of *county constable*. No candidates filed for the role of *county attorney*, currently held by Glen Eisen.

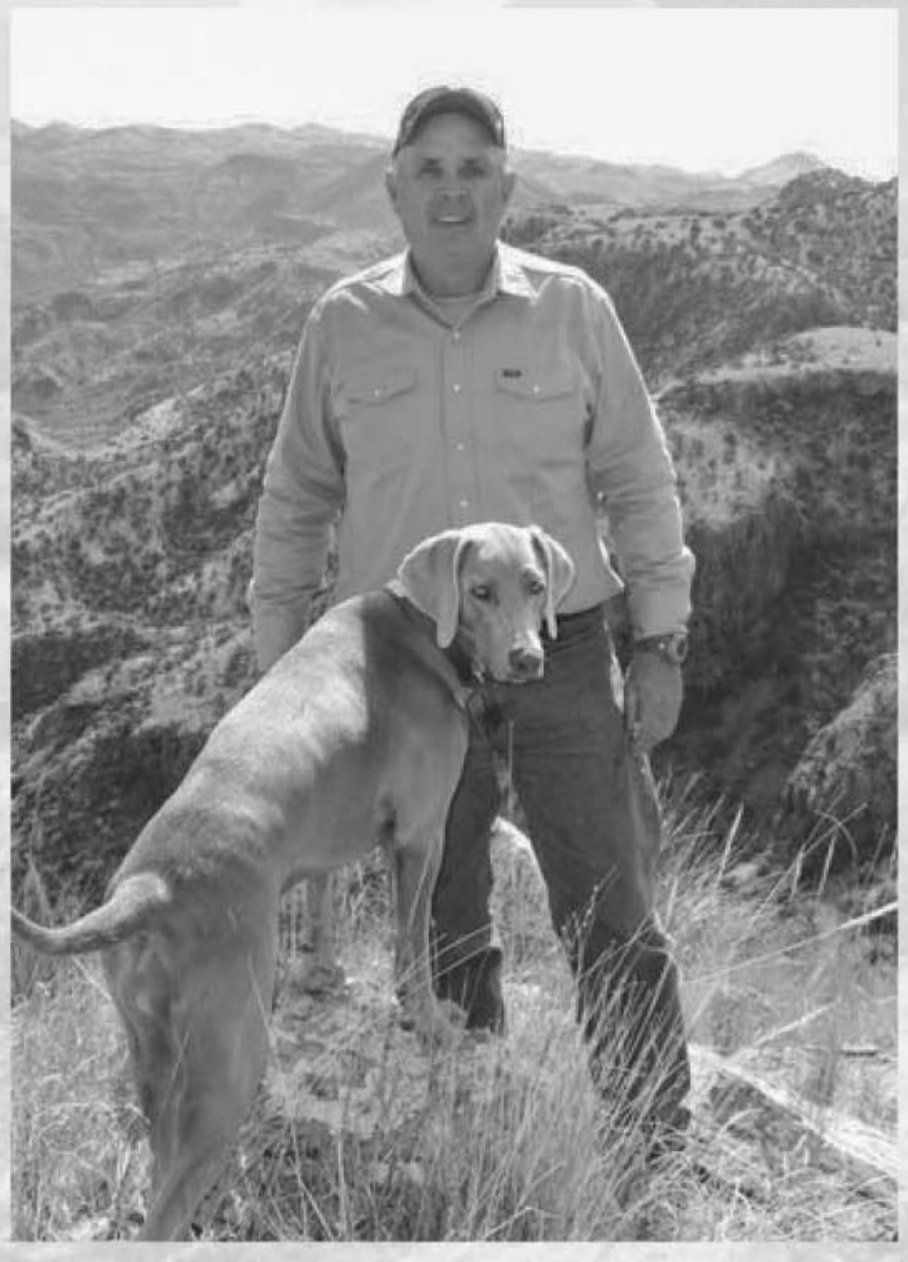
Matthew Blackman is running to continue his role as *Jeff Davis County Republican Party chair* as is Jeff Davis County Democratic Party Chair Calvin Glover.




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★ Rancher and retired Assistant United States Attorney, Western District of Texas Alpine-Pecos Division
★ Practicing Law for 32 years in Far West Texas, local, state and federal.
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# *Presidio County groundwater district increases monitoring efforts to better understand status of aquifers*

**By MARY CANTRELL**
***mkcantrell@bigbendsentinel.com***

PRESIDIO COUNTY — The Presidio County Underground Water Conservation District (PCUWCD) installed new water level monitoring equipment in 18 wells across the county this month to collect more data on the area's under-studied aquifers.

The county now contains a total of 25 water level monitoring sites that will gather data on the Igneous Aquifer and West Texas Bolsons, two minor aquifers tri-county residents rely on for their water supplies.

"Measuring water levels is the most important thing that a groundwater district can do," PCUWCD General Manager Trey Gerfers said. "These data points help us to construct a greater overall picture of the health of the aquifers."

The 18 wells are outfitted with permanent monitoring equipment that takes measurements every 12 hours. Data points are sent electronically to the groundwater conservation district's data management software, and some sites will contribute to the National Groundwater Monitoring Network.

Gerfers said the data will help the county understand trends in its water levels over time — like how levels correlate to spring flow, rainfall and recharge — and better plan for the future.

Without that comprehensive water level data, the PCUWCD is "flying blind," he said. "The old timers say there's an ocean of water under there — everyone has always heard that and always thought that — and that could very well be the case, but we need data to confirm that," Gerfers said.

Funding for the effort — which includes some salaries, equipment, travel and the drilling of a well — totals $170,000 and is coming from grants from the Horizon Foundation and the United States Geological Survey.

Some of the participating wells were already being measured annually by the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB). The PCUWCD will now take over that monitoring on behalf of the TWDB, part of a greater effort by the state-wide agency to "collaborate more closely with local districts," Gerfers said. Local groundwater districts can more readily measure their wells compared to the TWDB, which is tasked with covering the entire state and has limited resources, he said.



Photo by Cody Bjornson

***The Presidio County Underground Water Conservation District, with the help of Texas Water Development employees, installed water level monitoring equipment in 18 wells this month across the county. Data collected from the new monitoring sites will help better determine the status of the area's aquifers.***

Most of the monitoring wells are located on private property, with the landowners giving permission to the TWDB and PCUWCD to install monitoring equipment.

Gerfers said many of the monitoring wells are concentrated around the cities of Marfa and Presidio, while others are placed in Big Bend Ranch State Park, the Chinati Mountains, south of Valentine and other locations.

"Roughly half of the wells are in the Igneous Aquifer and the other half of the wells are in the West Texas Bolsons," Gerfers said. "The two main aquifer systems in our county, within our district, will be covered."

The PCUWCD is also planning to conduct water quality tests and share results with landowners at no cost. Landowners will also be able to request hydrographs of their wells on a monthly basis, Gerfers said. He said the services are not only beneficial for landowners, but the entire county, and no new rules or restrictions are involved.

"This isn't really about expanding the authority of the groundwater district or trying to take control of people's groundwater," Gerfers said. "It's really just trying to help people understand it, and gain a better, more comprehensive picture of the health of the aquifers for everyone."

More data will also help the groundwater district better determine its desired future conditions (DFCs) for the aquifers — required benchmarks that identify the amount of groundwater needed to sustain local natural resources, the human population and the economy. Models that determine DFCs generated by the TWDB will now have access to daily, versus annual, data from wells, helping them craft a more dynamic model and more meaningful DFCs, Gerfers said.

If the Big Bend region were to experience significant population growth, changing rainfall patterns or other effects of climate change, the increased data will help inform decisions and protect resident's access to a vital resource, Gerfers said.

"The more data we have the better," he said. "We're going to be able to craft solutions and approaches so that we can continue to prosper and we don't see major deterioration of our quality of life."

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# Opinion

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Bordo Dinner
Marfa, Texas
02/25/2024

Torn bread rolled in seeds
And a loose pinch of salty butter

A hard shell held eye level
Carries the ocean to the desert

Rolled pasta wraps a pillow of sheep's cheese
Pine nuts and butter

Chamomile-infused lamb,
Sweet like honey,
And a braised grape
Joined on fork,
burst on bite

Pink Radicchio, two-ways
Bold.
and a creamy dressing

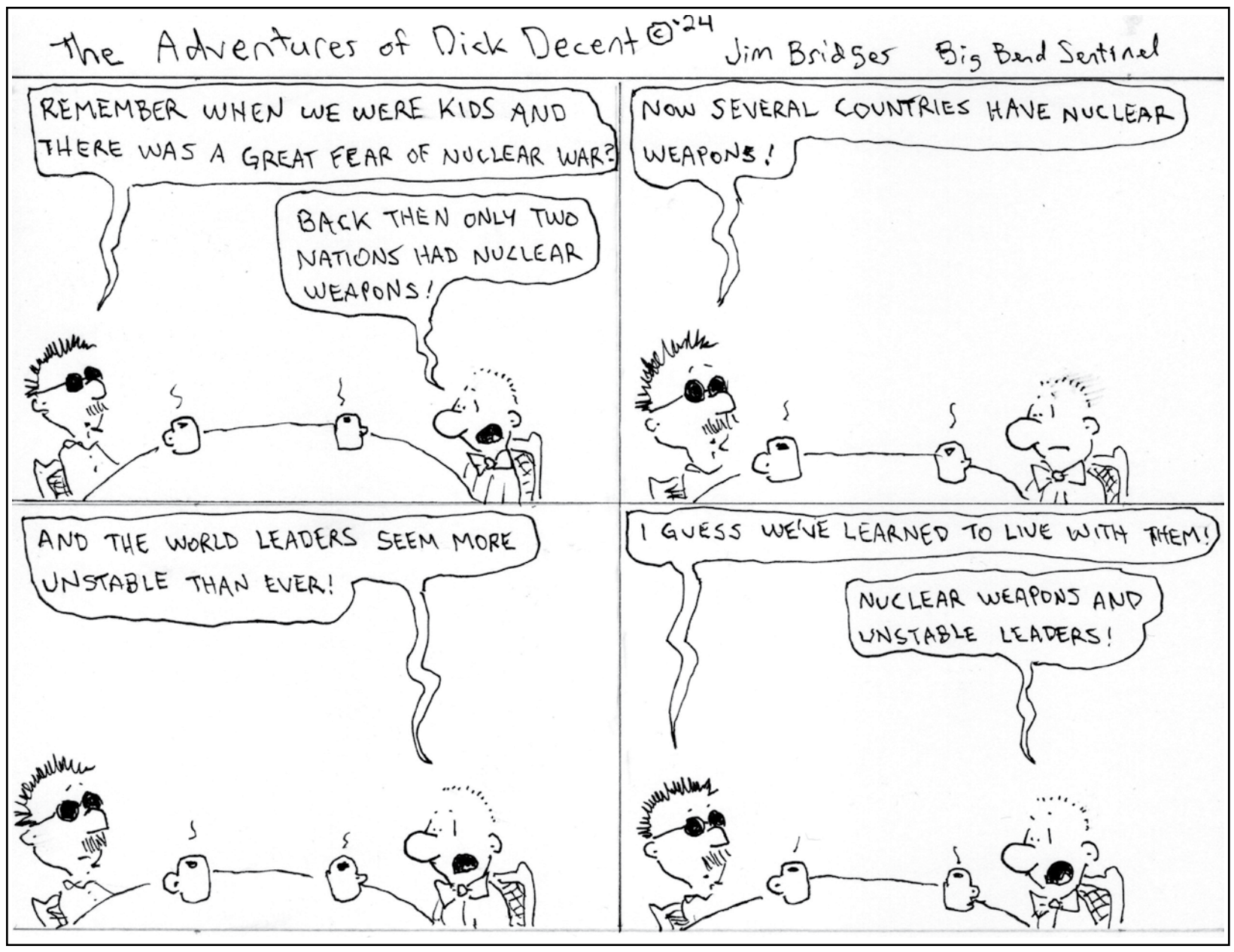
Your teeth, black from
coffee dusted tiramisu,
Smiles across the table

"He needs to get it out"
She says on the chef

His ensemble ends
With a sweet, round, ring

**Katrina Cano**
***Alpine***

• • •




Dear Editor,

This is a response to the Gaza petition presented by four Marfa residents at a recent City Council meeting. The war was started by a cross-border rampage by Hamas on October 7, 2023. Hamas captured 250 hostages. Israel wants them all back. I suggest you send your petition to the man in charge. Maybe he will listen to you.

Ismail Haniyeh c/o Hamas
Al Mirqab Tower
Ambassadors St.
Doha, Qatar

I don't think Mr. Haniyeh has an interest in peace. The war in Gaza would have stopped the day all the hostages returned home. Hamas has had 145-plus days to stop this war.

If you drive from Marfa to Lubbock, you will know the number of miles in the Gaza underground tunnel /bomb shelter complex. How many women and children can be protected with 300 miles of tunnels/bomb shelters? Hamas doesn't care about civilian casualties. That is the reason Hamas does not let civilians in the tunnels. There is an exception, of course, the families of the Hamas leadership. If you want to end the death and destruction please direct your petition to Hamas and ask them to release the hostages.

**Stuart Isgur**
***Fort Worth***
***(Marfa from 2000-2021)***

• • •

Hello,

I'm an Israeli man, living in Houston, traveling through Marfa and Fort Davis, and I wanted to see what folks here in the small towns of the West Texas desert are up to, so I bought a local paper.

I couldn't believe my eyes. Folks are trying to get the council of Marfa to call for a ceasefire … in Gaza? I know it's a long shot for this to be posted, but I wanted to try and make a difference here.

My mama always told me: "If you ain't got something smart to say, best you don't say it." Now, I'm sure folks out here are smart and good people and therefore have smart things to say, but there is so much nuance that's difficult even for me to follow, as someone who has family back in Israel, served in the military and follows multiple sources.

One lady was explaining how the voice of the community must speak against a "plausible genocide." That sentence is objectively true in human history, only it's completely miscalculated, because she's probably missing a lot of information to think it applies here, as do most folks who don't have first-hand knowledge and sources.

To summarize — if you want your opinion to matter on a conflict thousands of miles away that's been running for over a century, you need to know a lot of things. A lot. I actually compiled a whole file of the Israeli perspective, for those curious Americans wanting to learn from a place that isn't the media, and even then, you would still get a partial perspective. Consider visiting the area and seeing it all for yourself, if you truly seek this knowledge. You might be surprised by what you find out, just as I was about West Texas.

**Tom**
***Houston***

P.S. - I envy the people of West Texas. You got the climate of the Israeli desert, with more plants, and less rockets and war. Might move here someday.

• • •

Dear Sentinel,

I've lived in Marfa for almost 10 years, and I walk my dog through the center of town, and often I look at the monument on the side of the courthouse that honors Marfans who died in foreign wars. My dad was a World War II veteran and I went to high school during Vietnam, and friends of mine went to war after high school and some of them died. Whether we like it or not, the amount of money the state of Texas and the U.S. government sends Israel means that we are at war. Young people from Marfa won't be dying in Gaza, but when I went to Palestine for work in 2017, I saw a situation comparable but even tougher than what's happening on our border (and the same Israeli-made towers and drones are used in both places), and I more than care about what's happening there.

Saying this out loud in a resolution very much is in Marfa's "wheelhouse." I look at my phone most mornings and our friends in Gaza are begging us to help. I read Tony Georges' letter to the editor last week, scoffing at our desire for the City of Marfa to adopt a ceasefire resolution, that trash and pools and toilets are all the City Council can and should want to handle. That's demeaning to say the least and simply not true. One can like and care about pools, toilets, trash AND feel passionately about people just like us being slaughtered in Gaza with our tax dollars. We need so much in Texas. We don't need to be funding slaughter 7,000 miles away. Some of us have been doing Read Marfa and the beautiful kids we meet are really just the same as the kids who are being blown to bits in Gaza today. We've been out in front of the post office all week and 400 Marfans have already signed on to this resolution. We think we'll have a couple of hundred more by the time the council meets and that's half the people who vote here. Maybe more. We've gotten signatures from Marfa teachers, veterans, Marfa business owners, Marfa elders. People want this.

And we've done our research: It says right there in the legal description of a General Law City that a city council can pass resolutions on many kinds of things, including as a reflection of public expression, "on matters of public concern." We're not asking for foreign policy. And meanwhile, two council members have outright refused to meet with us, one even told us that whatever the mayor wants the council does. We know Tony Georges is wrong about what the City Council is capable of and empowered to do and the importance of small towns getting to say what matters to us. His letter was a pot shot at Mark Morrison, who has been open and friendly and welcoming of the hundreds of us who have been expressing concern. We hope the council will vote yes on this basic humanitarian resolution and not silence a significant number of Marfans who will be voting in the next City Council elections. And we want to join with all the other towns across the U.S. to stop the bombing of Gaza and put the money back into the communities that deserve them. We hope to meet Thursday with five compassionate men (and the mayor makes six) who are big-hearted enough to admit that people being bombed is as least as important as the very human need for adequate public toilets.

Tony Georges' letter deserves a big flush.

Thank you!

**Eileen Myles**
***Marfa***

• • •

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To apply or request additional information, please call 432 729 4362 EXT 225 or email education@chinati.org.

Enrollment is limited. Women and gender non-conforming individuals based in the tri-county area are strongly encouraged to apply by March 7. Transportation to research sites will be provided from Marfa or Alpine.

Chinati's educational and public programming is generously supported by the Prentice Farrar & Alline Ford Brown Foundation, the Cowles Charitable Trust, the Carl B. & Florence E. King Foundation, the Women Skaaren Charitable Trust, #startsmall, the Texas Commission on the Arts, and the Union Pacific Foundation. Chinati is also grateful to our members and the people of Marfa and Far West Texas for their generous support and in-kind contributions.

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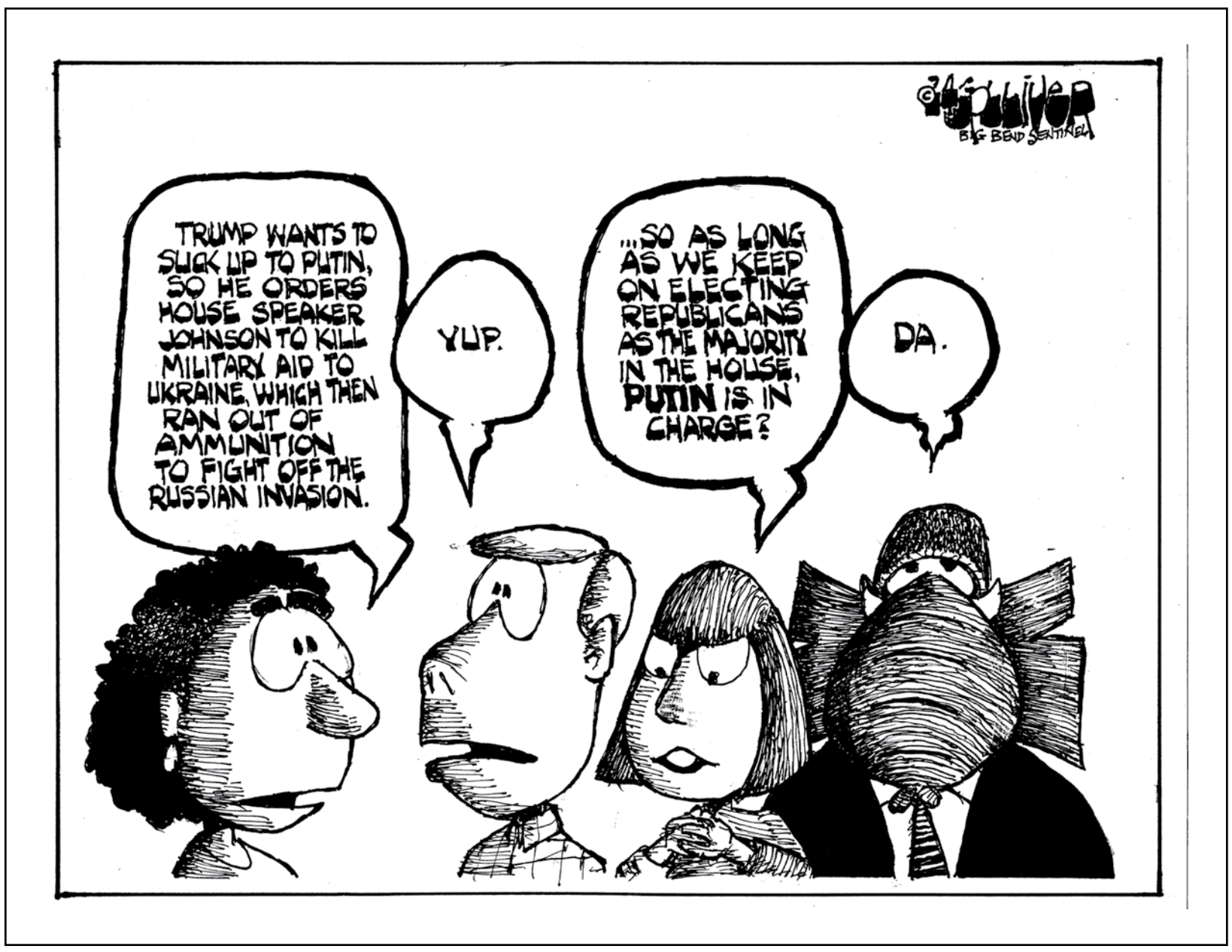
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Dear Editor,

As a Native person from out here, I know what it is to lose your culture and your identity and your home and your land. I know what it is to have your history whitewashed and your community gentrified. After all, West Texas was all Indigenous territory. Our people stewarded and shared and managed and took care of the land, in harmony with nature. Settlers used the idea that the land was untouched and no one was living here to steal it. They called Native people savages for fighting back and almost completely wiped us out. They put up barbed wire fences and borders and said you cannot cross. When I look at what is happening to Palestinian people, to Gaza, I am painfully reminded of this history. I know genocide when I see it. I have always wondered how a people could wipe out another people with no care, and now I'm witnessing it. The war machine is perfected, the weapons destroying people, agriculture, architecture, culture.

Over 30,000 Palestinians have been killed in the past four months. Imagine all of Marfa, Alpine, Ft. Davis, Presidio, Valentine, and so much more — destroyed, wiped out. The amount of lost life is incomprehensible. We cannot become desensitized. We cannot get used to war. The people of Gaza will never be the same, but we won't either. We have so much complicity in this — our tax dollars, our silence, our bombs, our weapons.

Calling for a ceasefire is one small thing we can do to stand for life, for peace, and for justice. It is uncomfortable to acknowledge the violence Israel is carrying out against the people of Gaza. It is uncomfortable to acknowledge that our tax dollars are funding it. It is uncomfortable to acknowledge the history of genocide and colonialism and gentrification right here in Marfa. It is uncomfortable to connect the dots between here and there. But it is our responsibility to do so, and our first step towards healing. Towards being in the right relationship with one another and with the land.

I call on everyone in Marfa — including those of us whose families were forced to stop speaking Spanish at Blackwell, who know what it is to lose our homes and our land and our culture — to sign the petition for a ceasefire resolution and show up to the city council meeting on February 29.

**Calletana Vargas**
***Marfa***

***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.
- Your letters may be edited for clarity and brevity. While opinions of all kinds are welcome, when it comes to claims of fact, we strive to only publish what is verifiable.
- We have limited staff capacity to fact check unsubstantiated claims, so letters that include those may be held or remain unpublished if information is not easily verifiable.
- We may reach out to ask questions and verify the identity of the sender. We do not run letters anonymously unless the sender is privately identified and has a reasonable claim to anonymity.
- We reserve the right to hold or refrain from publishing a letter for any reason and we thank you for always sharing your letters with us.

- ***The Big Bend Sentinel Editorial Staff***

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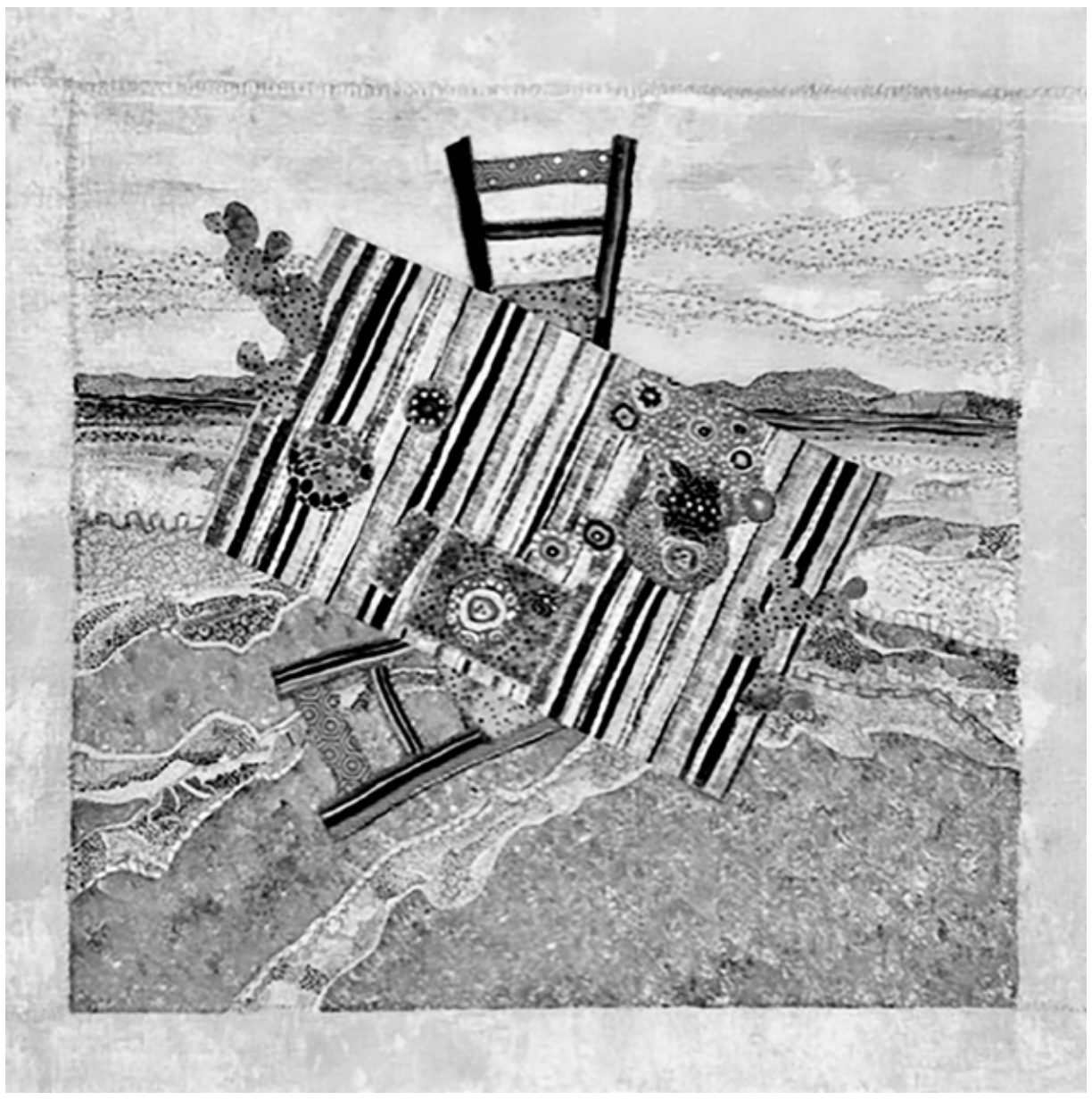

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# Community



Courtesy of Darlene Marwitz and Greasewood Gallery

***"Desert Tablescape One"; cloth, thread, acrylic, board; 24 x 24 x 2.5 inches***

## *Darlene Marwitz's 'Ocotillo Days' at Greasewood Gallery*

MARFA — The Greasewood Gallery at the Hotel Paisano has opened a new exhibit, Ocotillo Days by mixed media artist Darlene Marwitz.

Marwitz enrolled in weaving and textile courses as a part of her studio arts curriculum at the University of Houston. Two graduate degrees followed from the School of Architecture at The University of Texas in Austin.

"Mixed media art, for me, represents the intersection of textiles and painting," says Marwitz. "For my landscapes, I find muse in the mountains and open expanses surrounding where I live in Marfa, Texas. There's a spareness and bristle to the raw beauty of the high desert plateau."

Marwitz has worked on major historic preservation projects and has overseen the research, design and reproduction of numerous period textiles: woven matelassé and brocatelle drapery fabrics, hand-crafted passementerie, plus Wilton and Brussels carpets loomed in England. Her travel-inspired artwork takes root in Italy, France, Spain and Morocco.

"My travel-inspired collages incorporate food and architectural elements — from tabletop compositions to zellige tile interpretations. Developed through trial and error, my studio techniques are layered across many mediums. I enjoy the complexity and back-and-forth innovation that is possible with unexpected materials: cloth, thread, acrylic and board. I loosely identify my work as mixed-media fabric collage."

An artist's reception will be hosted on Friday, March 1, from 6 until 8 p.m. in Greasewood Gallery at the Hotel Paisano on the corner of Highland and Texas Streets in Marfa.

Stephen Bright will provide classical guitar music for the evening. The public is invited, refreshments will be served. Greasewood Gallery is open daily and the show will run through May 12.






## *Morgan Bassichis, Chinati artist in residence, hosts collaborative open studio on local response to Israel-Hamas war*

**By MARY CANTRELL**
***mkcantrell@bigbendsentinel.com***



Photo by Sam Riehl

***Chinati artist in residence Morgan Bassichis held a collaborative open studio event last weekend featuring several local artists. Performances and work on view centered around opposition to the Israel-Hamas war and Bassichis' time in Marfa.***

MARFA — A simple white banner declaring "Marfa for a free Palestine" in bold black letters has been affixed to the Chinati Foundation's Locker Plant studio window with blue painter's tape for the past six weeks — a reflection of its latest artist in residence, Morgan Bassichis.

Bassichis, a New York-based musician, comedian and writer, held an open studio event last weekend in collaboration with several Marfa residents focusing on the Israel-Hamas war. "Artists have always played a really important role in social movements and in reflecting and amplifying the struggles of our times," Bassichis told *The Big Bend Sentinel*.

"I've been so warmly welcomed during my time here and so inspired by all the work that people are already doing and engaged in," they added. "I was really happy we got to celebrate it all together."

The open studio featured readings by poet Eileen Myles, risograph prints by Eva Claycomb and sound healing by Daire Kelly. Hannah Delagi sold baked goods to help fundraise for families fleeing from Gaza, and a two-channel video made by Marfa resident Kate Sterchi and Palestinian artist Samara Sallam in 2021 comparing the landscapes of West Texas and Palestine was on view.

Fatima Anaza read excerpts from Donald Judd's 1991 essay titled "Nie Wieder Krieg," or "Never Again War," that Bassichis wanted to include in the event. Judd's political views, his stance on war as a veteran as well as the history of Chinati's grounds as a military fort were of interest to Bassichis. Chinati Director Caitlin Murray introduced Bassichis to the essay, and they were moved by Judd's opposition to war and militarism.

"The connections he made between the destruction that war wrecks — on people and architecture and land — and its impacts at home on the American economy … I was really thrilled to find this powerful essay, and I wanted to put it in the space," Bassichis said.

Bassichis played keyboard and sang with Calletana Vargas, repeating the sentiment "We'll keep reaching for each other," to honor the life of Cecilia Gentili, a trans activist that recently passed away. Bassichis also set art historian and critic Douglas Crimp's 1989 essay "Mourning and Militancy" to song, opening with, "There is no question but that we must fight the unspeakable violence we incur from the society in which we find ourselves."

The artist said the past essays are important to draw from in the wake of contemporary issues. "We should continue to not just celebrate anti-war histories in the past, but to draw on their courage and clarity to reject wars that are happening now," Bassichis said.

Bassichis is currently part of a group calling on Marfa's City council to adopt a "Ceasefire in Gaza Resolution," a move no other Texas city has yet to make. Organizers are circulating a petition that has garnered around 450 signatures in support of the resolution that they will bring to City Council for discussion and a vote later this week.

Bassichis said people across the world are outraged and activated to help "stop Israel's genocidal assault on Gaza," and citizens of the tiny town of Marfa are no exception. "Every single thing we do matters no matter how small it seems," Bassichis said. "It is a beautiful, sacred thing when we use whatever spheres of influence we have to join with the millions around the world calling for justice."

A series titled "To Do Marfa" of comedic lists, common in Bassichis' practice, was also on display. Jotted down on found paper, including museum maps and a flier for the Lone Star Poetry Gathering, the artist completed one each day of their residency. "It becomes a kind of record of the mundane and everyday and also the more existential and political questions of daily life that all of us are navigating," they said. A series of prints of "To Do Marfa" are forthcoming.



Staff photo by Mary Cantrell

***Marfa resident Calletana Vargas and Chinati artist in residence Morgan Bassichis perform at an open studio event last weekend.***




**THANK YOU CHRISTY!**

After 40 years of dedicated service to the Marfa National Bank, Christy Madrid will be retiring.

Please come by the bank on February 29th during regular hours to enjoy a snack and to say good bye to Christy.



Staff photo by Sam Karas

*George Delgado of Fort Stockton and his burro, Rojo, in Presidio.*

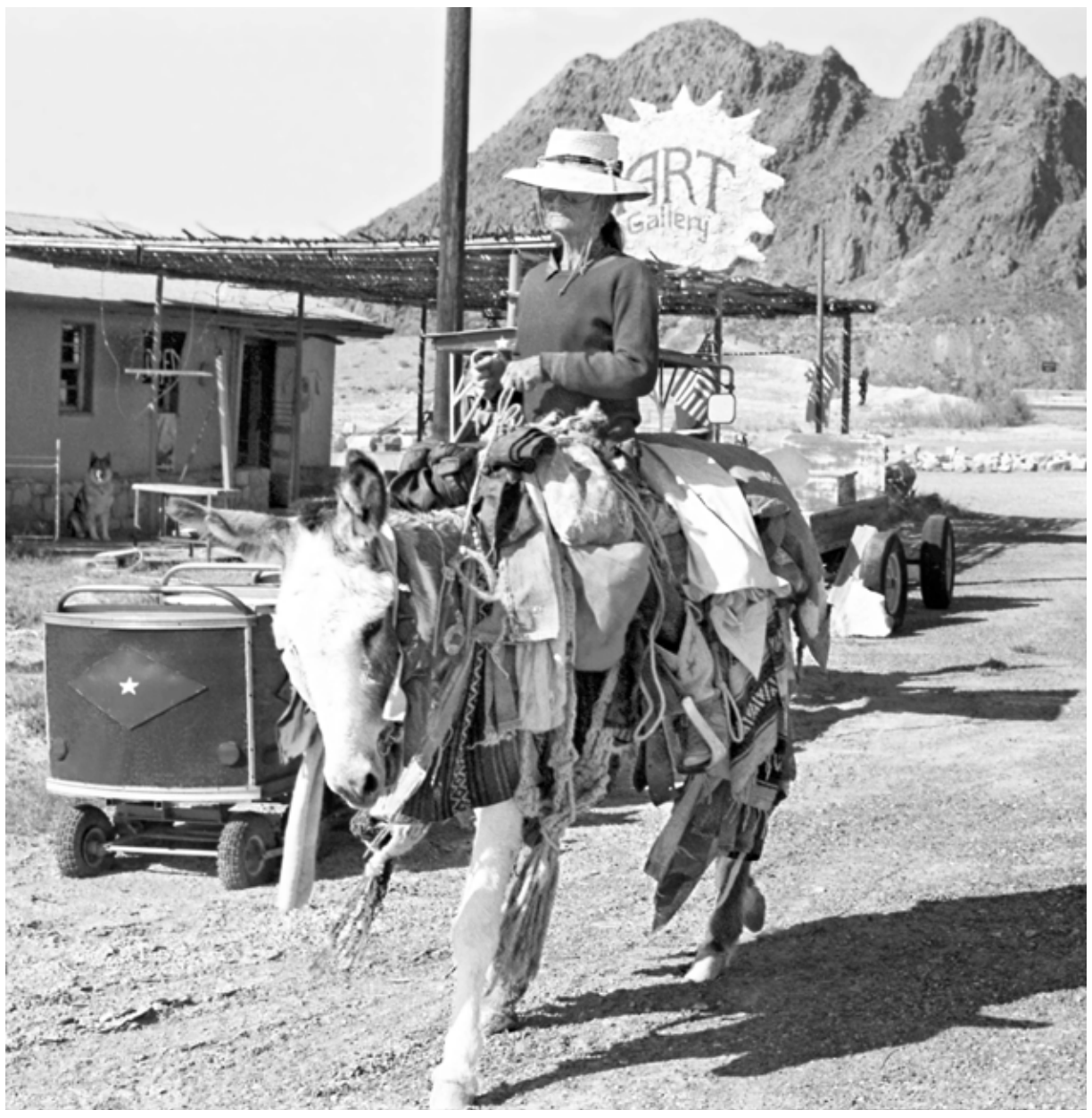



Photo by Bonnie Wunderlich

*Judy Magers, the "Burro Lady," rides through Study Butte.*

# *Fort Stockton man takes 260-mile trek to honor Judy Magers, 'the Burro Lady'*

**By SAM KARAS**
***sam@bigbendsentinel.com***

TRI-COUNTY — On February 18, George Delgado of Fort Stockton and his donkey, Rojo, set off from the appropriately-named Jackass Flats for an epic journey in honor of Judy Magers, affectionately known as the "Burro Lady." The two walked side-by-side on the shoulder of Highway 118 to Terlingua to pay their respects by her graveside; they then continued on to complete a triangle between Presidio, Marfa and Fort Davis.

Magers — who passed away in January of 2007 — was a legendary Big Bend character. For around 25 years, she and a donkey companion restlessly walked the shoulder of the highways south of I-10, camping out where she was most likely to be alone.

No one knows much about Magers, except for the fact that she was born in Nebraska and had five children. These details only tumbled out in time for her funeral, like little rocks shaken out from the boots she asked to be buried in.

Delgado saw her by the side of the road on his first of many trips to the Big Bend nearly 40 years ago. He'd continue seeing her a few times a year up until her death but never learned much else about her. "She was very aloof — she just didn't want people in her business," he said.

Still, Magers never felt like a stranger. Nearly two decades after her death, Delgado couldn't get her out of his mind. She was just as much a part of the landscape as the creosote.

After retiring from his job as a pharmacist at Walmart in Fort Stockton, Delgado wanted a hobby that could offer some of the thrill and adventure his younger self found in team roping. He took up long-distance hiking, tackling the Pacific Crest and Continental Divide trails.

Magers' nomadic lifestyle reminded him a lot of life on the trail, but without the nicknames and camaraderie. Delgado and Rojo broke with her solitary tradition by roaming the desert with three companions: Andy Armendariz (human), Boomer (equine) and Teak (canine). The two humans share a love for chuckwagons and cast-iron cooking and spent their nights on the trek cowboy camping under the stars.

The team traveled in a boomerang — Delgado and Rojo would set off on foot; Armendariz would catch up to them with a truck and trailer, and then they'd swap so he and Boomer could go for a ride.

Delgado wanted to see the landscape through Magers' eyes and feel its extremes the way she must have felt them. One particular story stuck with him: on a frigid desert night, Magers fell asleep by the side of the road on her blue tarp, like she almost always did, and woke up covered in snow.

A friend of Delgado's saw Magers' donkey standing alone in a ditch and assumed she froze to death in her sleep. Of course, Magers was fine — but in a rare moment of vulnerability, she asked for a favor. "Can you knock off some of this snow?" she asked from under her tarp.

Though Delgado started his trip in February, he was blessed with unusually warm weather. On Thursday night, he spent the night at Loma Paloma RV Park outside of Presidio, another one of Magers' old haunts.

Maxine Bishop, who splits time between Marfa and the RV park, knew Magers better than most. Bishop doesn't like to talk about the Burro Lady, but she will talk about why she doesn't like to talk about the Burro Lady.

They first met in Lajitas around 1989. Bishop bought land next to the small patch of desert set aside as a semi-permanent campground by Magers' legal guardian, Bill Ivey of Terlingua Ghost Town fame. When the Bishop's house neared completion and folks started coming to visit, Magers made herself scarce.

But the two had a magnetic tie. Magers eventually had a lot at Loma Paloma, where a chunk of the extended Bishop clan reside. She hated charity, but would sometimes accept it from Bishop, who would bring her donuts and other little treats. "She didn't have much, but she was a very proud lady," Bishop said. "She didn't want you to give her anything."

One detail Bishop will reveal is that Magers loved coffee. Magers loved coffee so much that she always carried a container of the instant stuff, and when she didn't have enough water to spare for a cup, she'd eat it as a paste.

Bishop said Delgado's visit to Loma Paloma brought a lot of memories to the surface, the rest of which she declined to share. "She was such a private person that I want to stay private for her," she said. "There's a lady in Marfa who says, 'You're going to die with those memories.' That's fine. Ten years from now, nobody's going to know who she is."

A lot has changed since Magers walked the shoulder of these highways. In 10 years' time, a lot more will change. Delgado found sections of highway between Alpine and Terlingua were dicey, with unprecedented numbers of tourists whizzing by at freeway speeds.

"When I first came out here, it was called the Last Frontier — now I call it the Past Frontier," Delgado said. "But people still see the wildness, the freedom and the openness of it. I think that's why so many people miss seeing her — they knew she was a big part of that."

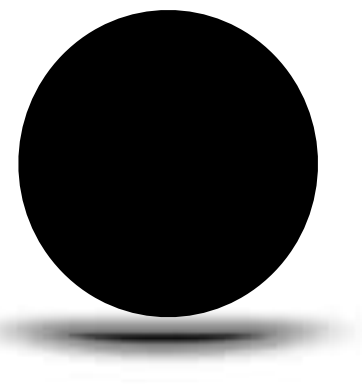
# *Sul Ross State University choir to perform in Marfa*

MARFA — The Sul Ross State University choir will perform their Scotland Tour concert on Friday, March 8, at First Presbyterian Church in Marfa. The concert will begin at 6:30 p.m. Admission is free but donations toward offsetting the tour to Scotland are greatly appreciated. The concert will feature music from Texas, Mexico and Americana folk music. Student solos will also be a feature of the concert. The choir is under the direction of Dr. Andrew Alegria, director of choral activities and vocal studies at SRSU. All are welcome to attend this unique event.




*Valerie Arber*
March 1 - 24

**PEARLS**
**WHEELS**
**JACKPOT**
**LIFE ON MARS**
**A MASSIVE BAG OF DREAMS**
**OTHER PLANETS**
**RADIANT EARTH**
**AFTERLIFE**
**AHOY!**



The Do Right Hall, 110 W. Waco St. Marfa, TX
**Opening March 1, 2024 - 6 to 8 pm**

Thursday, Friday, Saturday 12 to 4 + by appointment 432-386-3144

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# *Marfa hoops squad defeated in area championship, powerlifters advance*

**By LINDA OJEDA**

**Marfa High School basketball team's season ends with area championship loss**

Marfa's basketball season concluded last Friday with a tough defeat to Robert Lee in the area championship. Despite a strong effort, Marfa's squad faced challenges in matching up with Robert Lee's larger roster, ultimately resulting in a 51-32 loss.

Leading the scoring for Marfa were Dustin Martinez with 13 points, Zach Wilson with 6 points, Marco Ruiz with 3 points and Derick Campos with 2 points. The loss marks the end of an impressive season for the Horns with a 2023-2024 district title and a bi-district championship. The program bids farewell to seniors Luis Solis, Dustin Martinez, Marco Ruiz and Zach Wilson.

**Marfa powerlifters advance to regional meet after recent last chance qualifying meets in Wink and Pecos**

Annalise Jack Marquez is currently ranked number 3 in Region 1, Division 3 (1A,2A,3A) and is ranked number 6 in State All Regions, Division 3 (1A,2A,3A). Marquez will compete at the regional powerlifting meet in Colorado City, Texas, on Friday.

Diego Jurado, 275 weight class, is currently ranked number 5 in Region 1, Division 4 and is ranked number 53 in State All Regions, Division 4. Jaidan Villa, 275 weight class, is currently ranked number 10 in Region 1, Division 4 and is ranked number 66 in State All Regions, Division 4. Jurado and Villa will compete at the regional powerlifting meet in Brownfield, Texas, on March 7.







Photos courtesy of Marfa ISD Athletics

*Marfa's boys basketball season concluded last Friday with a defeat to Robert Lee in the area championship.*



Photo by Rowdy Dugan

*Chinati staff and interns scatter grass seed alongside Judd's 15 untitled works in concrete, October 2023.*

# *Chinati Foundation seeking applicants for paid, 5-day grassland restoration workshop*

MARFA — The Chinati Foundation is seeking applications for a paid educational opportunity focused on the conservation and care of local ecology taking place from April 1-5.

"Central to visitors' experience of the Chinati Foundation is the land, which our team stewards as part of ongoing conservation efforts," Director Caitlin Murray said. "Chinati's upcoming grassland restoration practicum seeks to complement these efforts by providing an experiential learning opportunity for tri-county residents who are interested in connecting with regional experts, expanding their studies, or pursuing related professions."

Participants will gain hands-on experience in grassland restoration and native plant propagation while exploring pathways to professions in rangeland ecology and land management. Project leaders include Jason Crosby, Sul Ross Borderlands Research Institute; Jim Martinez, Marfa-based landscape designer and soil scientist; Price Rumbelow and Jeff Bennett, Rio Grande Joint Venture; and Rachael Connally, Texas Parks & Wildlife.

Enrollment is limited. The deadline to apply is Thursday, March 7. Women and gender non-conforming individuals based in the tri-county area are strongly encouraged to apply. The only application requirement is a desire to learn more about the Chihuahuan Desert's unique environmental systems.

Transportation to research sites will be provided from Marfa or Alpine. Participants can expect a commitment of six to eight hours daily, and they will earn $15 per hour. Attendance for all days of the workshop is required.

*For more information or to apply, call 432-729-4362 ext. 225 or email education@chinati.org.*

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*First United Methodist Church*

Do not fear, for I am with you,
do not be afraid,
for I am your God;
I will strengthen you,
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

## DRAWING OF THE WEEK



**Flavio Udave**
***9th Grade***
***Etching***

## *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.

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

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

## *Solution from last week's puzzle:*

SOLUTION:

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

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## Universal Crossword

*Edited by David Steinberg February 19, 2024*

**ACROSS**
1 ___ chi
4 United by a cause
10 THESE LETTERS
14 YouTube spots
15 Seasickness, say
16 Heed
17 Cornmeal flatbread
19 The Go-Go's "Our ___ Are Sealed"
20 Luau dish
21 Reggae relative
22 Cranberries' sources
23 Attacked by a jellyfish
25 Commuter rail from San Francisco to San Jose
29 Diacritics in heavy metal band names
32 Tommy Hilfiger rival
33 Where to sleep
34 Nuke, as leftovers
36 Post videos of a personal journey, maybe
37 Biblical act of betrayal
39 Castle entrance
42 Self-deprecating remark
43 ___ Grand (Vegas casino)
46 Resolve, as the nitty-gritty
48 More loud
50 Lead musician ... or the start of 17-, 25- or 37-Across?
52 Termites and others
53 Seller's caveat
54 Campfire residue
57 Greek P
58 Message board rando
59 Supporting musicians ... or the end of 17-, 25- or 37-Across?
63 Very eager
64 Where remote work is often done
65 Bit of wordplay
66 They lay eggs
67 World of Warcraft, e.g., briefly
68 Massage venue

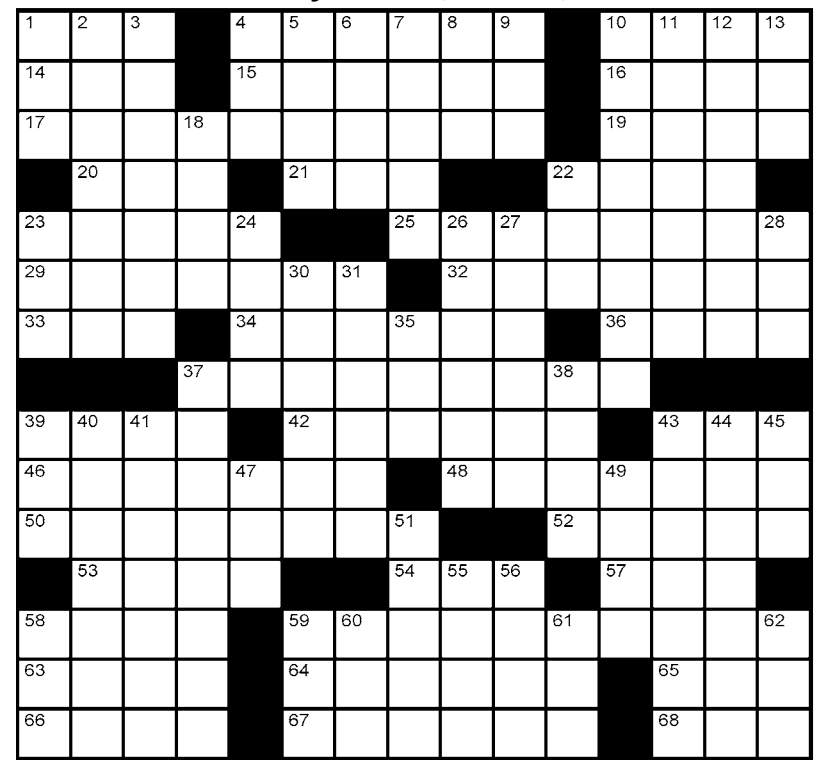
**DOWN**
1 ___ Mahal (blues legend)
2 Words on a pet shelter's window
3 "That would be good for me"
4 Raggedy doll
5 Places (down)
6 Good fortune
7 Newton of apple fame
8 Scared shriek
9 Actor Daniel ___ Kim
10 Sets sold since the '50s
11 First lady Adams
12 Gatorade maker
13 Part of CBS: Abbr.
18 Soulful Simone
22 AC measure
23 Hero, to some
24 Spiritual teacher
26 Skywalker played by Hayden Christensen
27 John Leguizamo, e.g.
28 Remind endlessly
30 Dullness
31 Pop brand named after a mountain
35 February hrs. in Toronto
37 Ken who's a "Jeopardy!" host
38 Curling team member
39 Reaction ___ (certain image file)
40 Put in order
41 Reaction to bad comic timing?
43 Unfortunate events
44 2014 James Brown biopic
45 ___ Fields cookies
47 Extra NHL periods
49 Tesla, by birth
51 Chip topped with cheese
55 Hershey toffee bar
56 Camel feature
58 Sound heard at a 68-Across
59 "Kapow!"
60 Most reliable source of money in Vegas?
61 Coatrack pin
62 Forensics evidence

***PREVIOUS PUZZLE ANSWER***

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T | R | O | T | | A | C | R | E | | P | A | S | T | A |
| B | E | A | R | | N | A | I | L | | A | T | L | A | S |
| H | A | H | A | | T | I | N | T | | R | O | A | C | H |
| | R | U | N | N | I | N | G | O | N | E | M | P | T | Y |
| | | | C | U | D | | | R | O | N | | | | |
| W | E | R | E | N | O | T | W | O | R | T | H | Y | | |
| I | D | O | | S | T | A | R | | | S | E | E | P | S |
| L | I | L | Y | | E | X | A | M | S | | R | A | I | L |
| D | E | L | A | Y | | | T | A | T | S | | S | E | A |
| | | S | M | O | O | T | H | R | E | E | N | T | R | Y |
| | | | | U | F | O | | | E | M | O | | | |
| T | I | M | E | O | F | O | U | R | L | I | V | E | S | |
| A | B | A | C | K | | B | R | I | E | | E | M | I | R |
| G | E | N | O | A | | I | G | O | R | | L | I | Z | A |
| S | T | O | N | Y | | G | E | T | S | | S | T | E | W |

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2/19 **You Guys Rock** *by Daniel Hrynick*



## ☺MARFA SCHOOL LUNCH MENU☺

| FEB/MAR | Thu, Feb 29 | Fri, Mar 1 | Mon, Mar 4 | Tue, Mar 5 | Wed, Mar 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| BREAKFAST | BURRITO, HASH BROWN | SHORTHORN SUCCESS DAY | BREAKFAST SANDWICH | DUTCH WAFFLE, SAUSAGE | POWER BREAKFAST |
| LUNCH | STEAK FINGERS, GRAVY, ROLL, GREEN BEANS, CORN, PEACHES | SHORTHORN SUCCESS DAY | QUESADILLA, SALSA, BEANS, CUCUMBERS, APRICOTS, ICE CREAM | PIZZA, CORN, BROCCOLI, FRUIT | BURGER CHOICE, CHIPS, TOMATO CUP, FRUIT CUP |

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**MARFA SHORTHORNS SPORTS CALENDAR**

**THU, FEB 29: JH Track Meet at Alpine, 4:00pm**
**THU, FEB 29: Girls Powerlifting Weigh-In at Colorado City**
**FRI, MAR 1: Girls Powerlifting Regional Qualifier at Colorado City, Bar Loaded 1:00pm**
**SAT, MAR 2: HS Track Meet at Alpine, 9:00am**
**MON, MAR 4: HS Boys/Girls Golf, Marfa Invitational**
**TUE, MAR 5: HS Softball vs Van Horn in Marfa**



Photo by Sarah M. Vasquez / Courtesy of Marfa Live Arts

***Marfa High School award-winning playwrights (front row left to right) Amaya Gomez, Diego Jurado, Jack Marquez, Vanessa Díaz, Ava Flores, Francisco Rosas and Luis Solis take a curtain call bow with actors who brought their words to life at the 13th Annual Marfa Live Arts One Act Plays at the Crowley Theater.***



Photo by Sarah M. Vasquez / Courtesy of Marfa Live Arts

***Prepney Torres and Jasmin Pineda perform in "Borderland Love" by Marfa High School award-winning playwright Luis Solis at the 13th Annual Marfa Live Arts One Act Plays.***



Photo by Sarah M. Vasquez / Courtesy of Marfa Live Arts

***Fatima Anaza and Romi Gold perform in "Tlanic in Metzlahuillic, Under the Moonlight" by Marfa High School award-winning playwright Francisco Rosas at the 13th Annual Marfa Live Arts One Act Plays.***

## AROUND THE BIG BEND

**Thu Feb 29**

**Hike with a Homeless Dog**
10:00am - 11:00am at Davis Mountains State Park in Fort Davis
*Help a homeless dog have a great time on the trail! Join our pack at the Interpretive Center and give a rescue dog from Grand Companions of Fort Davis a fun morning on the trail. Maybe you'll find your new forever friend! More info at https://tpwd.texas.gov/calendar/davis-mountains/hike-with-a-homeless-dog/2024-01-18*

**Fri Mar 1**

**School of Constructive Arts Workshops**
3/1 - 3/9 at the School of Constructive Arts, 1316 Snake Road in Alpine
*The School of Constructive Arts is hosting two workshops covering sustainable off-grid systems and earthen construction. Take your education off-line and off-grid. Learn the ancient art and cutting edge science of building with the earth. Discounts available for locals. More info at constructivearts.org.*

**Andy Warhol: Cowboys and Indians Opening Reception**
5:00pm - 7:00pm at Museum of the Big Bend in Alpine
*Andy Warhol, fascinated by icons of American culture, released a portfolio of Cowboys and Indians in 1986. This portfolio is one of the last major series the artist completed before his death in 1987. Runs through June 1. Free for museum members, $20/non-members.*

**R3 Show (Recycle Art)**
5:00pm - 7:00pm at the Gallery on the Square, 115 W Holland Ave in Alpine
*Gallery on the Square invites you to the opening reception of R3: Reuse, Recycle, Repurpose Art Show Opening Reception on March 1, 2024. R3 runs February 29 to April 16, 2024. Organized by the Big Bend Arts Council.*

**Ocotillo Days: Landscapes from Far West Texas**
6:00pm - 8:00pm at Greasewood Gallery at the Hotel Paisano in Marfa
*Opening Reception for solo gallery exhibition for local artist Darlene Marwitz. Mixed media work representing the intersection of textiles and painting. The exhibit celebrates the iconic and beloved plant of the Chihuahuan Desert, the ocotillo. On view through May 12.*

**Valerie Arber Opening Reception**
6:00pm - 8:00pm at The Do Right Hall, 110 W Waco Street in Marfa
*Show runs through March 1 - 24, 2024.*

**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**

*Presented by...*
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**Sat Mar 2**

**Los Yonke Gallos de Marfa Season Opener**
2:00pm at Vizcaino Park in Marfa
*Join the fun this Saturday for the season open against our friends and neighbors Los Chupacabras de El Paso! Beer & food! Free admission!.*

**Birding for Beginners**
2:00pm - 3:00pm at Davis Mountains State Park in Fort Davis
*Come learn some basic skills for birding, then put them to use at our bird blind. More info at https://tpwd.texas.gov/calendar/davis-mountains/birding-walk-1*

**Tue Mar 5**

**Election Day!**
Polls open at 7:00am in the Tri-County Region
*For details on voting times, locations and candidates, see page 4. VOTE!*

**Ongoing Weekly Events & Classes**

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

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

**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

**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.*

## FROM THE ARCHIVES

***Presented by***

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**August 6, 1953**

FORT DAVIS — This is about a stolen car, that really wasn't stolen.

Ira Hector, owner of the Mile-Hi tourist court here, drove down to the post office last week in his daughter's car.

After completing his business, he came out, hopped into a car, put his keys in the ignition, and off he drove.

Soon after, Mrs. W.M. Ballard sped to the sheriff's office and reported her car as stolen. And soon after that, Mr. Hector was "apprehended" in the "stolen" automobile.

Mr. Hector had just forgotten he had driven his daughter's car to town and gotten into a car the same make and color as his own.

But people are still wondering how one set of ignition keys happened to fit both cars.




Be a part of the heartwarming display of gratitude by Candidates Deirdre Hisler and Norma Valenzuela to the public and voters of Presidio County.
Savor the atmosphere of thanks and celebration, complete with delicious food and refreshing drinks starting at 6pm until 10 pm!

Paid Pol Ad by Deirdre Hisler Campaign, Pablo G. Carrasco Jr, Treasurer

# Classifieds & public notices

## 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.

The City of Marfa is accepting Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) proposals. Information and complete RFP may be found at https://cityofmarfa.com/rfps

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Notice of Intent to Seize Abandoned Motor Vehicle
Notice is hereby given that the Presidio County Sheriff's Office has taken the following described vehicle into custody pursuant to the authority granted under the Texas Transportation Code, Section 683.011, and/or Section 683.031:

- BIG TEX TRAILER, UNKNOWN YEAR, NO VIN, 22GN WITH HD MEGA RAMP

Said vehicles are being held for the Presidio County Sheriff's Office at 320 N. Highland, Marfa, Texas 79843, (432) 729-4308

To the last known registered owner/lien holder of the above-described vehicle:
You have the right to reclaim this motor vehicle not later than the 20th day after publication of this notice, on payment of all towing, preservation, and storage charges resulting from placing the vehicle into custody.
Failure to exercise your rights to reclaim the vehicle within the time provided constitutes a waiver of all rights, title, and interest in the vehicle and is a consent to the sale of the abandoned motor vehicle at public auction, or use for the Sheriff's Office purposes as provided for by the Texas Transportation Code Section 683.014 or Section 683.016.



Share Your Thoughts About

**REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH NEEDS**

in the Big Bend Area

**REGIONAL SURVEY**

*Big Bend Reproductive Coalition wants to know your opinion about reproductive health needs in the Big Bend Region. Participation in this anonymous digital survey will help to inform the services that we provide to our communities. Your voice matters, and your experience matters to us.*

Use the QR Code to right or follow the link below to access the **BBRC Community Needs Assessment Survey:**

bit.ly/BBRC-Survey

COALICIÓN REPRODUCTIVA DEL BIG BEND REPRODUCTIVE COALITION
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## JOBS

**VILLAGE FARMS EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY**
**SHIPPING / RECEIVING CLERK**

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. 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.**

**FRONT DESK ATTENDANT**

Marfa Public Radio is seeking a part-time Front Desk Attendant. Candidates should live in Marfa or within commuting distance.

The Front Desk Attendant will provide support in visitor services, merchandise shipment and mail collection. They will be supervised by the Station Manager. They will support management and/or operations through their work in various capacities.

This job will be 20 hours per week at $18 per hour.

**Tasks for the Front Desk Attendant include:**
- Welcoming visitors at front desk, answering phones
- Handling merchandise sales and premium fulfillment
- Assisting with administrative task including picking up the mail and making deposits, data entry, social media posting
- Other duties as assigned

**About You:**
- Excellent interpersonal skills and expertise in customer service
- Cash register skills and interest in radio
- Must adhere to organizational standards of confidentiality and ethics
- Candidates bilingual in English and Spanish are strongly encouraged to apply.

***To apply, email resume and letter of interest to: work@marfapublicradio.org.***

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

Please call first before arrival.




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*(432) 295-0048*
**Raúl Lara, Mayor Pro Tem**
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**Mark Cash**
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**Eddie Pallarez**
*councilmemberpallarez@cityofmarfa.com*
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