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## County colonias, Marfa-area projects under review by water board

**Incomplete audit also results in inability to apply for \$15 million in funding until next year**

By ROB D'AMICO  
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PRESIDIO COUNTY — Several projects previously approved for new water infrastructure grants in Marfa and the county's colonias are now under review by the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) to ensure they are still eligible for funding, according to a spokesperson for the board. The news — which puts some of the projects in limbo — came with word of another blow from a different TWDB funding source: Presidio County will have to wait until the next funding cycle early next year to apply for \$15 million in new water grants because it hasn't completed its 2023 financial audit. The TWDB's Economically Distressed Areas Program (EDAP), intended to fund water and wastewater infrastructure in areas without service, has added "new hoops" to go through to get money for an approved grant that could leave some projects on the chopping block, according to Trey Gerfers, general manager of the Presidio County Underground Water Conservation District, who helps coordinate the grant program locally.

The Presidio County Water Infrastructure Steering Committee initially sought \$12.6 million in loans and grants from the EDAP program after holding numerous committee meetings to pinpoint the county's high-priority projects — which include new water/wastewater systems in Las Pampas and Shafter, a new wastewater system for the Fort D.A. Russell area and first-time services for the East Heights area and other pockets in Marfa. Although the projects were pre-approved for \$12.6 million, the TWDB scaled down the funding to \$4.6 million (including \$3.2 million in grants and \$1.4 million in loans) after it said it would only fund planning of the projects, not the actual construction, Gerfers said.

The other reason for the reduction was a Texas attorney general's office assessment that the county needed a county-wide utility board, which was a requirement to administer the grants. The county subsequently formed a Systems Utility Board last January to fulfill the requirement for the remaining grant funds.

Now, the TWDB is stating that it will only fund areas if they have actual residences — the preference being contiguous houses or apartments that would form the

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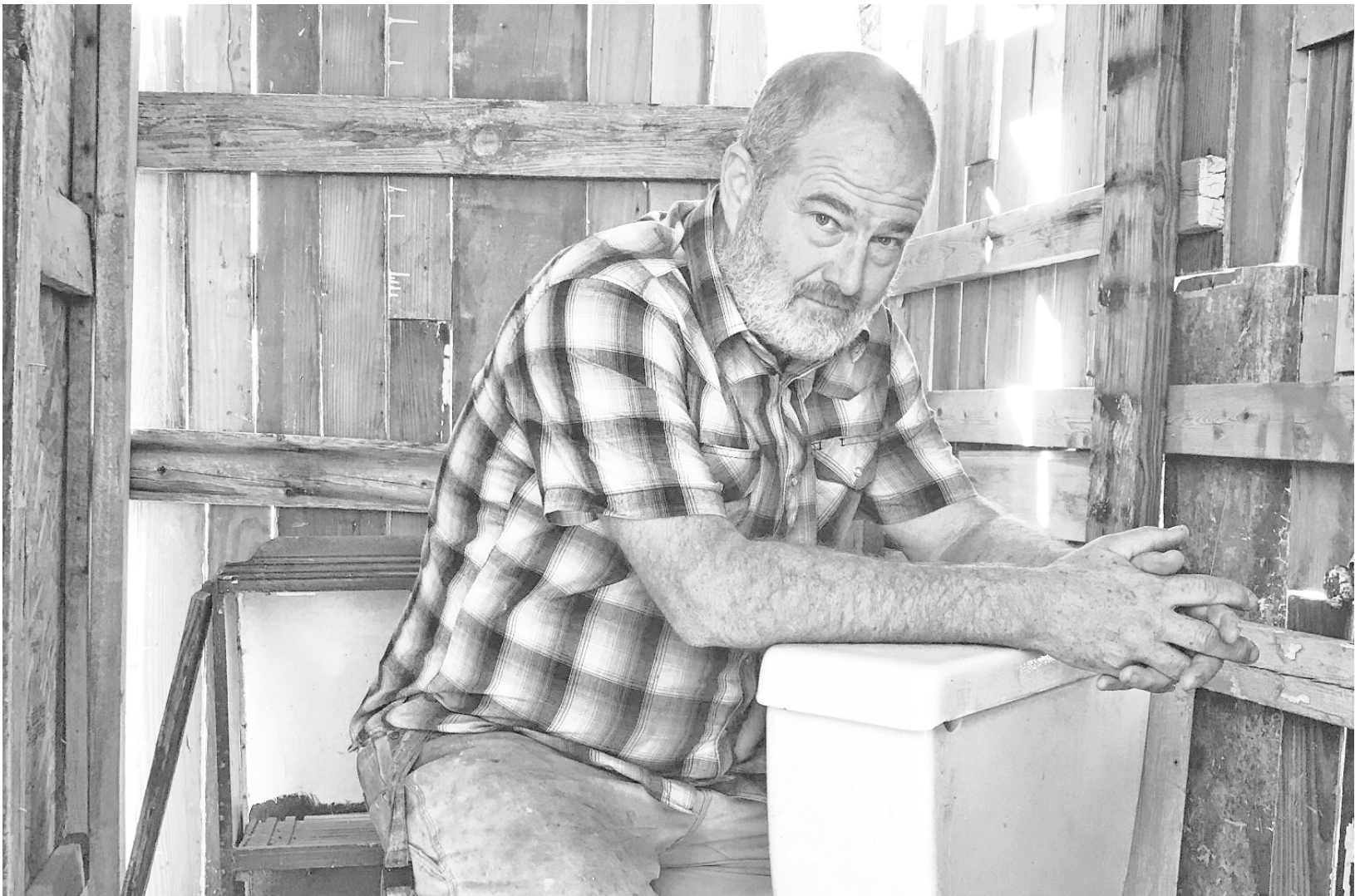


Photo by Jennifer Pittinger

Artist Chicken George Zupp ponders his new toilet setting at his Marathon studio-home.

## A 'catastrophe of idiocy'

Marathon artist 'Chicken' George Zupp reflects on life after the fire that destroyed his toilet

By ROB D'AMICO  
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MARATHON — The bells at Paris' famed Notre Dame cathedral again rang above the City of Lights Saturday night after a conflagration at the Gothic landmark almost destroyed it five years ago. The donges were a joyous sound of rebirth for Parisians who still don't know how the fire started.

The only thing ringing in "Chicken" George Zupp's new bathroom is an occasional bellow from a bowel and the final gurgles of a flush. Chicken has been through a swing of moods the last couple months after a September 28

fire destroyed a new building and bathroom, both nearing completion, that would have added a bit of refinement to his rugged desert living on the outskirts of Marathon.

Chicken is well known in Marathon for his bizarre compound of shacks, steepled roofs, trailers and odds and ends scattered amongst the creosote outside of town — situated across from the odd collection of colorful papercrete buildings of the La Loma del Chivo hostel/Airbnb. He's also known as an accomplished artist; his thick, colorful paintings depicting Far West Texas life have shown at numerous galleries nationwide. He sells his work anywhere and everywhere — at galleries, online,

at events or from inquiries he gets.

We're sitting by his studio-slash-home drinking a beer, and for me, a couple shots of tequila he made sure to have on hand. Directly across from us is all that's left after the fire — a concrete foundation and a pile of burnt wood. Rammy, the speckle-striped herding dog of some mangled variety, wanders around, stopping occasionally to beg for affection. We're talking about the fire — the good, bad and ugly it's produced in his life now at age 56. Chicken talks in a bit of a low grumble and always has a bewildered look on his face, which one might call a ruggedly handsome hillbilly mug if he gave a damn and

embraced it. His hair is always shaven, but his face likely not, and he often dons a straw cowboy hat.

Chicken was in San Marcos when the fire broke out — likely an "electrical f-up" he reckons, but he stares at the dirt and expands on the possible cause. "I don't know how the fire started. I wasn't here to see it. It's been a who-done-it Clue game, and everybody here was really nervous when I got back. But after all the figuring, the experts chimed in that it was electric or ion batteries or the red Baptist satellite lasers — which we all agreed it had to be lasers."

He's already constructed a new  
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## Years-long effort to expand Big Bend National Park pending bill passage this week

By MARY CANTRELL  
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BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK — A years-long effort to expand the boundaries of Big Bend National Park, requiring an act of Congress, comes to a head this week as the 118th Congressional Session comes to a close.

Mere days are remaining to pass the initiative, which was introduced in 2023 via two identical companion bills in both the House and the Senate, Rep. Tony Gonzales filing one and Sen. John Cornyn filing another.

The legislation seeks to expand

the boundaries of the national park 6,100 acres westward towards Terlingua. The Big Bend Conservancy, a nonprofit that raises money on behalf of the park, has been acquiring properties in the area for the past couple of years with the end goal of donating the land, which contains the valuable Terlingua Creek watershed, to the park.

While both bills made their way through the chambers of Congress, S.1059, the Big Bend National Park Boundary Adjustment Act, fared more favorably, advancing through the Senate Energy and Natural Resources committee

while its House companion stalled due to pushback over the expansion of the federal estate, according to a lobbyist for the Big Bend Conservancy. (Texas is 95% privately owned.)

"Texas is home to beautiful terrain and vibrant wildlife, and Big Bend National Park is no exception," said Sen. Cornyn when S. 1059 was introduced. "This legislation expands and preserves the park's heritage, natural resources, and scenery while also safeguarding private property rights, and I urge my Senate colleagues to support it."

As of last week, the bill was rolled

into a larger public lands package, along with 120-150 public lands and forestry bills, which is currently being negotiated among the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee and House Committee on Natural Resources. Big Bend Conservancy's lobbyist said several dynamics are at play that could impact whether the bills make it to President Biden's desk in the next few days.

While the current public lands package will still exist in the new Congress if it does not pass this session, it will be a whole new ballgame come 2025 with

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## Warriors Research Institute aids in mental healthcare for park employees

By MARY CANTRELL  
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BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK — The Warriors Research Institute (WRI), a Baylor Scott and White health system program, is helping bolster mental healthcare for the Big Bend National Park community by establishing a peer support program.

WRI was founded 13 years ago to improve care for first responders and veterans and is now expanding its scope to include park employees. Since September 2022, WRI researchers have been visiting Big Bend from Waco, conducting trainings and helping establish a program where members of the park

community support one another through mental health challenges.

"There are 16 peer supporters that are active right now," Dr. Suzy Gulliver, a clinical psychologist and director of WRI, said. "So we have this robust program, and we've been going back about every month to do a check in and to give more skills to the group of people that are doing the most peer support."

WRI staff developed a peer support curriculum for the park after a series of initial focus groups. Through an anonymous survey, park staff nominated individuals to become peer support specialists. The idea is to rely less on professional help and more on coworkers and community members, Gulliver said, who have

a greater understanding of specific job stressors and exposure to living in an extremely remote place.

"Park Service work has all sorts of challenges — anything from having to respond to a species of wildlife that's been hit by a vehicle and has to be humanely destroyed to not having enough people to man the gates," Gulliver said.

"I haven't fought a fire or chased down a bad guy or killed a bear, but a peer supporter, matched to that occupational group, has done those things, and they know what it feels like," she added. "When they are given a few effective communication skills, listening skills, assessment skills — when they have those in their hands —

they can have greater power than a well-intentioned but quite removed clinician in coping with day-to-day, job-specific stress."

Deputy Superintendent Rick Gupman said he first pursued more mental health support for first responders as the head of law enforcement for the national park, then when he was promoted to his current role he realized the broader need for increased mental healthcare for the entire park community. Employees of Aramark, the park's concessionaire, the Big Bend Conservancy, the park's friends group, and Border Patrol are now also part of the peer support program.

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## Alpine residents receive notification of possible lead water pipes

By ROB D'AMICO  
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ALPINE — Some Alpine residents were alarmed recently when they received letters from the city's water utility notifying them that their service lines — pipes leading from the main water line to their home's meter and from the meters to the home — may be made of lead.

The notification letters are the result of new Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Lead and Copper Rule Revisions (LCRR) that mandate water utilities inventory all service line pipes to see if they are lead or galvanized. (Galvanized pipes can be contaminated with lead that then leaches into the water.)

Annette Minjarez, administrative assistant to the City of Alpine's director of utilities, said the letters don't necessarily mean there is actual lead in the homeowner's water or that it's dangerous. The letters notify residents that the city has made a determination that the residence's pipes are in three categories: lead, galvanized or unknown. However, the content in the letters that then outlines the dangers of lead — learning and behavioral disabilities as well as a wide range of significant health problems — was required, according to EPA instructions on the notifications. That content led many residents to post concerns on Facebook over lead in their water, with the same alarm being spread around the country with cities now sending out letters.

Minjarez said about 2,105 letters were sent out (out of 2,779 metered customers) on November 15. The results of the current inventory show:

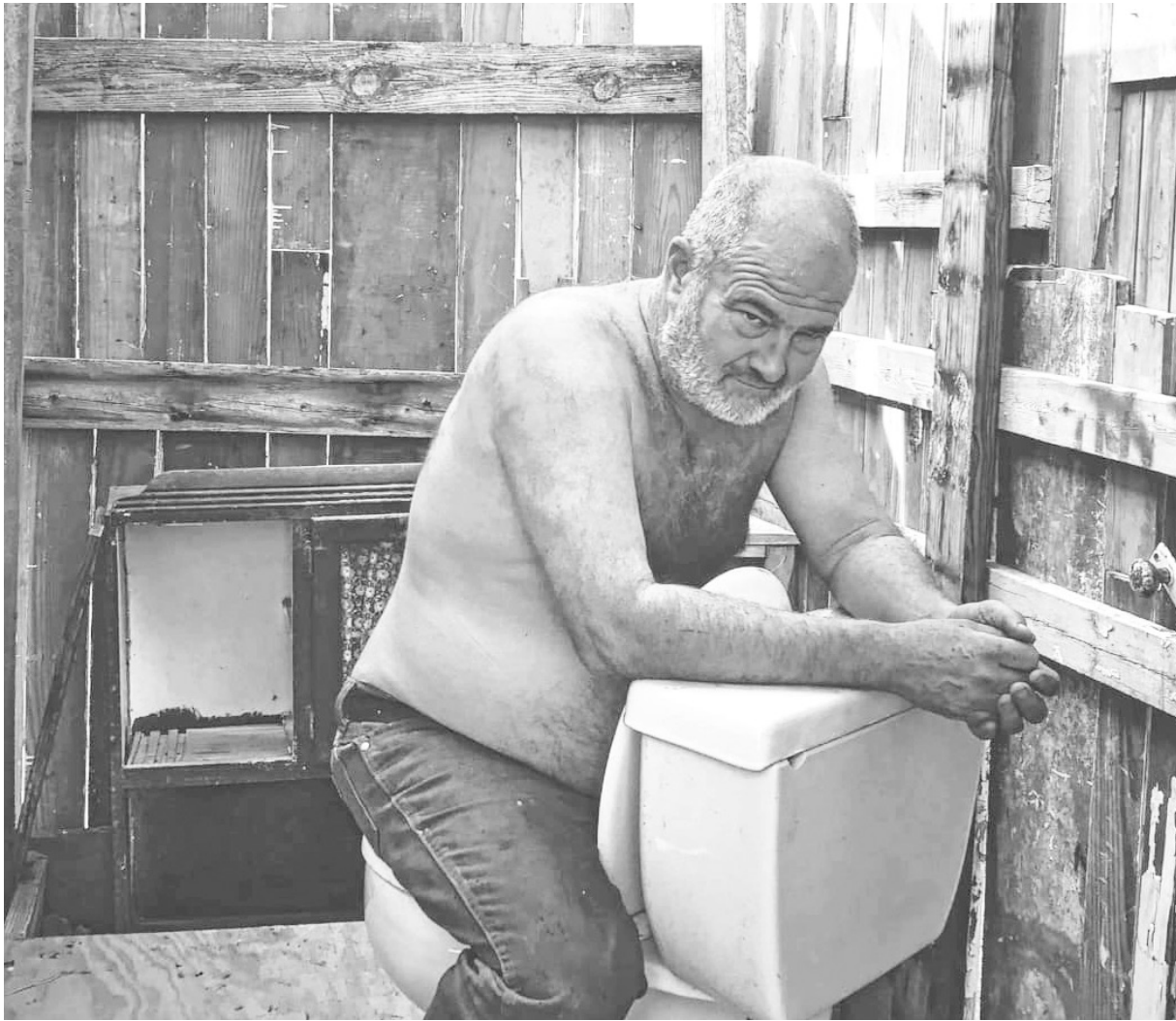
- 67 (2.4%) identified as lead
- 228 (8.2%) identified as galvanized, requiring replacement
- 1,991 (72%) identified as unknown
- 498 (17.9%) identified as non-lead

The EPA rule revisions, which began in October of 2021 and are administered by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), required an inventory showing which pipes may be lead, galvanized or unknown to be completed by October 16. But Minjarez said for Alpine it will be an ongoing process of checking local records and physically rechecking homes to make sure that assessments are accurate. The city had assessed 38% of its lines by the deadline, Minjarez said. "We're slowly identifying all the lines, and the people that got a letter that said 'unknown' will get an updated letter saying we now know what your line is," Minjarez said. "We have already found that some of the lines that were pre-identified as lead are not lead, or they're galvanized or even PVC." EPA regulations call for submitting another inventory and replacement plan by November 1, 2027.

The residences in question will be those built before Congress made additions to the Safe Drinking Water Act in 1986 that banned lead pipes for service lines or in newly-constructed homes. The new rule is intended to prompt the replacement of lead and galvanized service lines and to try and help pay for that process with federal and state grants, according to EPA documents. Another goal is to

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outhouse with plumbing next to the barren foundation and piles of ash and wood where a new studio building would have sat. "I don't know how to set a toilet," he says, showing me his handiwork. The toilet is not flush against any wall and sits diagonally in the middle of the room, and most of the roof is missing. But its installation is an achievement that gives him mixed emotions, sometimes fervent with the attitude of a phoenix, sometimes downtrodden that \$15,000 in construction and equipment were left in a smoldering heap.

Chicken recalls one of his first reactions after the fire, pondering the survival of a stack of porn magazines that had lain deteriorating in a box for over a decade inside the bathroom. "That box was in there, but when the building collapsed along with two other new side buildings, the firefighters took to dousing the whole pile down, hitting the box and blowing pages of porn all over the fire site," he says. "The fire chief said, 'You never know what you're gonna find at a site.' I was looking down at the ground and saw a lady's butthole. There was that along with a box of my high school history of the occult and strange religions — and 1970s horror comics were blown all over the place. It looked like a magic trick had gone bad and exploded the building. The sheriff's department and the Border Patrol showed up to see if it was a blown meth lab. Nope. Just a catastrophe of idiocy!"



Photo courtesy of George Zupp  
*A painting in progress hangs in Zupp's studio.*

Chicken is in a lot behind a row of studios in Marfa stirring a pot of beans heated by propane below. He doesn't stop stirring. "George, why do you keep stirring the beans?" I ask. "You never stop stirring." He looks at me like I'm stupid, but in a kindly way, as if I were a child merely unwinding life's mysteries. "So they don't stick," he says. "They'll stick to the bottom of the pan if I don't keep stirring." We eat the beans later standing in the studio space. They're good, soft and warm with cheese and other garnishes.

I don't ask him about the origin of "Chicken," because I've heard it and it's simple: He painted a bunch of chickens during a stint in San Marcos after he found they sold well. Sometimes "Bone" gets added — "Chicken Bone George" — but to me that's too much, kind of like the famous late Marfan named Chili (sometimes Chile) Bean Ridley whom you could call "Chili" or "Bean" but never "Chili Bean."

I'm looking at some of Chicken's paintings he's hauled from Marathon to Marfa to sell out of Myles Glynn's studio. Chicken often turns grotesque into fun, although maybe the deranged kind. His work features characters from his life in Far West Texas. Their visages and outlines are rough, almost garbled, and the scenery features a lot of booze bottles, boobs and butts.

I note to him a couple favorites of mine — a cowboy raucously riding a goat, which has been a hit for him. But I'm drawn to a scene with a woman dumping a body from a lounge chair into what looks to be a fire pit, with a garish face of a man dumping a bottle of something on it. Behind them are a cowboy that looks like he's riding a bull sidesaddle while in rigor mortis and a naked woman relieving herself in a bucket. Many of his works feature the highs and lows of men and women simply having a good time over food and liquor, although in a world that's not quite right. They're figurative works, but as if the painter's subjects were denizens of a rugged landscape defiled by debauchery and captured in thick globs of colorful paint.

Back at his home studio, Chicken says he isn't sure if the fire will inform many paintings, but he suddenly channels some optimism. "I am going to build back better studio-wise. I have been making these new elite lines of work called flaming outhouses to work down the loss of the whole mess." He shows me one piece, an outhouse violently burning and spreading to a wild hog. "There was no hog present for the real fire," he says. "But in this painting, I just figured no matter how hot the fire got they would want to BBQ themselves over it. So, it fits in."

Being one of the more popular residents of Marathon



Photos by Jennifer Pittinger

*Supp surveys the damage from the fire that destroyed his buildings.*

— with a population that’s on the decline sinking below 400 now — Chicken still had plenty of people ready to jump to his aid. But he eschewed a GoFundMe campaign to help him rebuild. “I’ll just sell more paintings,” he says.

Chicken's origin story has been reported widely: growing up in high school near Houston, school at Texas State University for painting, then UTSA for sculpture, living with Enrique Madrid, the renowned historian, in Redford, living with James Evans, the accomplished photographer, in Marathon — all in a variety of living spaces. He finally seems to have settled on the property he bought in Marathon.

As we walk through his compound, a circle of ramshackle buildings with some trailers, I note that desert plants are accompanied by little plantings of ceramic tea cups and other little ornaments of, well, junk. "People like to give me stuff," Chicken says. And so, each little gift has its place amongst the plants. He and visitors, a cadre of young guys that often visit and stay, leave markings in Sharpie — little pithy sayings or meaningless scripts on walls and supporting 2-by-4 studs. Inside his cramped studio, it's a mishmash of works in progress, sketches, objects found, objects left. The defining anchor, though, is a long table filled with the remnants of hardened paint, lumpy blobs of colors, that stretches the length of his studio.

His proximity to the La Loma del Chivo guest quarters leads to interactions with tourists, which he finds entertaining. One of his Facebook posts makes the case: “A lot of people are irritated by the tourists walking around, but I actually like them. It’s a great opportunity to bullshit. Like yesterday, a couple walked up on my place and asked me where was I gonna spend Thanksgiving?” “I only got 17 more Thanksgivings left,” I responded. And she asks, “Oh why is that?” “Well, I went to my folks’ house for Thanksgiving dinner. Ma bought 30 Hungry Man Thanksgiving dinners for me.

They don't want to deal with it anymore.'"

The compound is the starting place for many of Chicken's other dabblings, such as video snippets and short films posted on social media. Sometimes they are stories, sometimes just musings on whatever has been bothering or interesting him. His videos have an air of horror to them, as if a chainsaw massacre or planted-bodies-to-BBQ Motel Hell venture is about to erupt.

In one video, he walks a desert dirt road eating a slice of frozen chocolate cake, reenacting the story he's about to tell. Shirtless, with paunch, curled chest hair and cowboy hat, he recounts, "I realized I had this one event ... that laid the foundations for who I am out here in West Texas." It happened in 2002 while he was living in Evans' barn, and he pried off a piece of the cake left in a freezer and began to walk the streets in the hot summer sun. "I don't know if you've ever eaten frozen cake, but it's like gnawing on a brick," he says.

A family checking into his neighbor's Airbnb peered over a balcony to watch the strange figure dropping cake from his mouth and eventually spitting it all over the ground. When the family asked, "Who the hell is this guy," his neighbor responded, "Oh, he's the resident artist." The family then declined to stay at the rental.

“It dawned on me what my purpose was in this town,” Chicken says. “It’s to repel the gentrifiers.”

Chicken has withstood what Far West Texas has thrown at him — isolation, loneliness, the lack of comforts, and now, he even admits, the company of a woman. But the fire wasn't going to drive him away and send him down in the dumps. He's here to stay, stirring the local pot so the beans don't stick.

"I was getting used to hanging out here in this town," he says in a video posted on Facebook recently. "They didn't think I would last that long out here. But with enough beer, music blasting and coffee, you can do anything."

*You see more of Chicken's work at [www.georgezupp.com](http://www.georgezupp.com) and @gzuppcollection.*

Fort Davis Cow Camp is excited to announce the opening of **"The Rendezvous,"** an event center situated at the site of the former Mountainside Liquor Store in Fort Davis on 105 W. Second Street. Currently underway is the construction of a pickleball/cornhole court, tavern, food truck pads, outdoor kitchen, and event center.

We envision this venue as an ideal spot to offer food and beverage services, outdoor recreation, a listening room for local singer songwriters and a facility for locals to utilize year-round for various private events such as birthdays, quinceañeras, baby showers, and more. We are scheduled to commence operations in April 2025 and are actively seeking food truck owners, bar managers and chefs interested in joining our team. If you have 5+ years of management and operations experience in any of these positions, we'd love to hear from you.

For those interested, please forward your resume to [mark.fillman@fortdavisowcamp.com](mailto:mark.fillman@fortdavisowcamp.com) to schedule an interview. See you soon.



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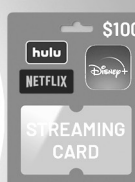
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# Lead water pipes

(Continued from page 1)

educate homeowners on whether the pipes inside their house are lead or galvanized and urge replacement when possible.

“Our main goal is by October of next year to have a [service line] replacement plan,” Minjarez said. “We'll have to replace so many of the lead and galvanized lines, and we'll have to do so many a year depending on the size and the number. It's going to take some time and quite a bit of money. There are grants available that we're in the process of applying for and have applied for. We're taking some big strides in trying to get in compliance with the TCEQ.”

Public water utilities are required by the TCEQ to periodically test to ensure the supplies — often from multiple sources — don’t contain lead, but poisoning is still possible through the service line pipes and indoor plumbing. The notification letter sent by the City of Alpine includes EPA language on how to minimize risks, such as not using hot water for drinking or cooking, since lead leaches more with hot water, and using filters designed specifically to remove lead.

Getting rid of lead and galvanized pipes has been a goal for the EPA since the 1990s, but the effort came to a head with the Flint Michigan water crises in 2014 that saw hundreds of residents suffering from lead ingestion. On October 8, President Biden announced the finalization of EPA rules with \$2.6 billion in federal funding (\$15 billion over five years) and a goal to

eliminate lead pipes within 10 years.

If water systems don’t comply within the deadlines under the new rule, they could receive a violation notice from TCEQ and must notify consumers of the violation, Ricky Richter, a TCEQ spokesperson, said in an email. “If serious or continuing violations are identified, TCEQ initiates enforcement and the entity receives a Notice of Enforcement (NOE),” he wrote. “When violations are serious enough to warrant an enforcement action, the TCEQ is authorized to enforce correction of the violations and to seek penalties to deter future noncompliance.”

### Other area public water supplies

Marfa Interim City Manager Kelly Perez said Marfa did an inventory of its 1,197 active customers, which found:

- 0 (0%) identified as lead
- 46 (5.3%) identified as galvanized, requiring replacement
- 505 (42.2%) identified as unknown
- 646 (54%) identified as non lead

Perez said the utility department will prioritize replacing the galvanized pipes over the next year and will continue to manually inspect the unknowns to classify them. Customers will be notified of the findings and process in annual utility notices and with door-to-door fliers.

# Expanding Big Bend National Park

(Continued from page 1)

Republicans taking control of both Congress and the White House. Big Bend Conservancy’s lobbyist said Republicans on the Hill are viewing current potential actions as having more favorable outcomes in the new session come January.

The effort to expand Big Bend National Park’s boundaries westward dates back at least four years when a similar 2020 bill, authored by then-Congressman Will Hurd, failed to pass. If the new bill filed in 2023 does not pass soon, it will likely be in for another two-year journey through the chamber of Congress. Executive Director of the Big Bend Conservancy Loren Riemer said while she is prepared for the worst outcome, the conservancy, and their partners, which include the National Park Conservation Association and the National Park Foundation, are still hopeful the bill will be signed into law.

“While we were hopeful for these remaining few days of this Congress, we also stand prepared to work with our great partners and reintroduce in the next congress,” Riemer said. “We have really a groundswell of grassroots support of folks who really want to see this bill passed. So regardless, we're optimistic, even though we'd like to see it through this year.”

Last year, the conservancy closed on a deal to purchase 3,044 acres — less than an originally planned 3,815 acres — of the Fulcher Ranch, and it continues to fundraise in order to acquire more property within the 6,100-acre expansion boundary, Riemer said. “As of today, we currently own 3,377 acres within

that 6,100-acre proposed boundary adjustments,” Riemer said. “We're in conversations with, I believe, three additional landholders that we're hoping to close on within the next month or two, so that it's the largest quantity of purchased land that goes direct to the park as possible when the bill does eventually pass.”

Riemer said appraisal costs have skyrocketed two, three, and four times on land the conservancy plans to purchase — despite it being undeveloped, uninhabited land inaccessible by road — in the past year and a half, creating a matter of urgency to acquire acreage sooner rather than later.

But no one will be forced to sell. The federal government will not evoke eminent domain in order to acquire more park land, which is clarified in the bill. There will likely be private inholdings — like the Rosillos Ranch within the existing park — within the new 6,100-acre swath, which is not uncommon for a park of Big Bend’s size, Riemer said.

Riemer said due to the expansion area being just 6,100 acres compared to the park’s overall 800,000 acres, additional costs are not associated with maintenance of the land. While the land is not yet in the hands of the Park Service, it is not likely that significant visitor infrastructure will be installed even when it is.

“The plan has always been pure conservation, so there won't be development of any new trails or anything like that,” Riemer said. “Though, of course, park visitors can explore it, just like any other remote part of the park that they're allowed to right now.”

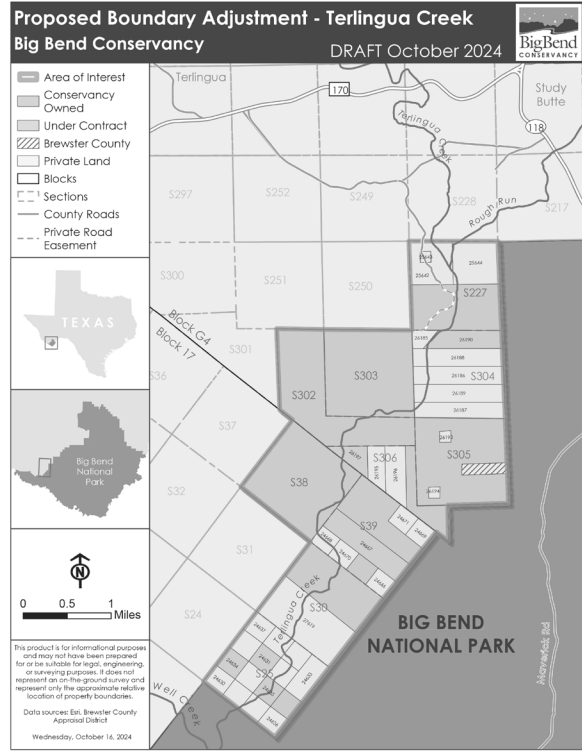


Photo courtesy of Big Bend Conservancy

**Previous Fulcher Ranch property near Terlingua Creek now belongs to the Big Bend Conservancy – part of a 6,100 national park expansion pending approval.**

# Warrior Research Institute

(Continued from page 1)

“It's been a slow expansion, trying to recognize need and acknowledge ability and resources internally,” Gupman said. “We can't really take care of everyone, but we're trying to build that program so that we can serve a larger group.”

WRI meets with peer support groups monthly, online and in person, and will return to the park in February to train a new cohort of peer support specialists. They are able to offer their services to the national park for free and are continuing to pursue grants in order to continue to do so, Gulliver said.

While peer support programs can be an effective “first line of intervention,” Gulliver said, specialists are also trained to know when to refer an individual to a professional psychologist. Both her and Dr. Victoria Torres, who is also heading up the initiative, are available to assist peer support specialists if they are unsure how to move forward with a situation, she said.

“In the initial training, and then through every check in, we work to make sure that people's decision trees are effective and ethical, frankly, so that people know what's in their lane and what isn't,” Gulliver said.

Peer support specialists are also trained in how to identify and respond to those at risk of suicide, a critical mission of the program, Gupman said.

Times where more professional assistance may be needed in addition to peer support, Gulliver said, are in the wake of significant crises. Within the past year, two visitors have died by suicide in the park, prompting local agencies including park employees to respond to difficult scenes. “You do want to do follow-up when people respond to a crisis event, but it's not boiler plate,” Gulliver said. “It's very adaptive to the event itself and to the people who participated in the event.”

But even in such extreme situations, she said, peer support holds up as an effective tool, she said. “We have increasingly a better evidence base that peer support is, in some cases, even more effective in dealing with



Photo courtesy of Rick Gupman

**Peer support specialists meet at Panther Junction headquarters for a monthly check in with Warriors Research Institute clinicians.**

the common disorders in the mental illness arena than some professional help,” Gulliver said.

The concept of peer support has a long history, she said, but gained traction with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs and National Alliance on Mental Illness as a way to treat first responders in

the wake of 9/11.

While WRI is currently working with Big Bend National Park exclusively, they are interested in expanding services to other parks where the model developed in Big Bend will serve as a template, she said.

“Big Bend is leading the way for other Park Service [employees.] Because at the national level, they have a peer support program, and they have trained peer supporters for critical incidents, but they don't have a boots on the ground standard of having multiple people trained in peer support right at your home park,” Gulliver said.

Gupman — a peer support specialist himself — said, so far, the program is a success and the support of WRI clinicians is vital to ensuring the peer supporters themselves are taken care of. “Peer support specialists are there because they genuinely want to help people,” Gupman said. “But then this is the layer of people that are taking care of the peer support specialists who, frankly, have to deal with some pretty stressful stuff.”

Gupman said he continues to advocate for an increase in mental health professionals in South Brewster County, particularly an in-person option in addition to telehealth appointments. He said he intends to reintroduce the topic to the Big Bend Regional Hospital District, which first heard his concerns on the matter last March. As it stands, those residing in the national park wishing to visit with a therapist in person must travel to Alpine — a two-hour trip each way.

“We joke about mental health days, but that's literally going to be a mental health day in order to see a mental health professional in person,” Gupman said.

“We choose to live in Big Bend National Park. But that doesn't mean that we choose to have mental health crises while we're living here,” he added. “I'm very much advocating for an increase in mental health professionals in South Brewster County, for everyone.”

### Delayed for an additional state funding pool

While wrestling with additional reviews with TDWB on the EDAP grants, local officials realized that an important deadline was approaching — having a 2023 county audit completed by December to meet requirements to apply for TWDB State Revolving Funds totaling \$15 million for water projects.

Alicia Sanchez, who was appointed as the county auditor after serving five years in the office as an assistant, said she was aware of the requirement, but a lack of office staff and resources made meeting the deadline for the audit — which usually takes at least a year to complete — impossible. “It’s myself and one other assistant, and unfortunately sometimes you have to leave things on the back burner so you can take on other stuff that takes precedence over the audit,” Sanchez said. The auditor said she’d like to have more help in her office to keep the audits on track, but understands the county doesn’t have the money to do that.

Gerfers said the auditor was burdened by work from other departments and he fully understands the constraints Sanchez was under.

On November 25, the County Commissioners Court accepted a \$5,000 grant from the Water Finance Exchange — a nonprofit helping with the county’s water projects — to hire assistance in accounting for specific tasks, Sanchez said. But she added that even if that help had come sooner, her office still wouldn’t have completed the audit in time to be eligible for the water funding.

# Opinion

U.S. Rep. Tony Gonzales is still misleading on immigration statistics even after his errors were pointed out months ago. In his op-ed last week, he said “As of July this year, 662,566 noncitizens with criminal histories were on ICE’s national docket.”

He didn’t tell you those were not recent arrivals — many have been here for years, even decades. Most are noncitizens in the criminal justice system either at the federal or state level, either indicted or serving their sentences. When those are completed they will be eligible for deportation.

Then he talks about deporting “criminal migrants” without saying what that term includes. Does that include people whose only crime is entering the country illegally? And to further confuse, he referred to those seeking asylum, which is legal entry, and complains they are being allowed out in our communities while their claim is evaluated. We do need a better court system to process those claims, but those seeking asylum are more often a credit to our communities.

Of course, he pulls out some rare examples of noncitizens committing heinous crimes; however, he never reveals that noncitizens, including undocumented migrants, have a much lower crime rate than citizens. It’s selective use of statistics and anecdotes to scare us. We don’t need to start deporting criminal aliens since it’s already happening; and surely he isn’t proposing that those in jail or prisons be taken from there and deported.

Often deportation only benefits the cartels who profit from bringing the deported back into the country. The real solution is an expeditious process of admitting and assimilating the many immigrants we need in our industries and communities and holding both citizens and noncitizens accountable for criminal activity. Meanwhile, he should stop denigrating immigrants and scaring people away from the border. America is already very safe.

Mary Bell Lockhart  
Alpine

...

Dear Editor,

The Marfa Studio of Arts wants to thank the community for coming out last Saturday to celebrate the joyous art by the children of the Marfa Elementary School. The amazing festive treats were donated generously by Aster’s Café, Bitter Sugar and supported by Lowe’s Market.

The kids were delighted by our Marfa Santa Claus (AKA David Beebe) and we sent home photos of them with their very special Santa. None of this would be possible without the dedicated teachers of our Studio in the Elementary School Art Program: Sam Dwyer (SITES Coordinator), Suzanne Mcleod, Rhonda Manley and Ariana Vega. Our great gallery staff Lindsey Gore and Alex Luna were invaluable in organizing and setting up the event.

The exhibition will be open through December and January, gallery hours are Tuesday to Saturday 12 p.m. To help continue this wonderful program, you may go to our fundraising campaign: [givebutter.com/artformarfakids](https://givebutter.com/artformarfakids) or send a check to MSA, P.O. Box , Marfa, Texas 79843

Sincerely,

The Board of the Marfa Studio of the Arts

...

Dear Editor,

I am writing to announce my departure from the Marfa Country Clinic, effective January 15, 2025. It has truly been an honor to work as a physician in my hometown. Marfa was a wonderful place to grow up, and has been an equally excellent place in which to practice. Thank you, Marfa and surrounding communities, for all of the support you provided, and for the trust you later placed in me to be your doctor.

I would especially like to thank Don Culbertson and Valerie Breuvar for allowing me to be a part of the clinic for over 20 years, first as a patient, then to volunteer and shadow, then employed as a medical assistant, all of which were integral parts of being accepted to medical school, and finally to return as a physician. Thanks also to Kaela Donaldson and Kassandra Hernandez, our medical assistants who make a difficult job exponentially easier and more enjoyable, and without whose efforts the clinic could not run.

I have accepted a job as a family physician with the Ysleta del Sur Pueblo in El Paso, Texas. Indigenous Health has been a calling for me, so it is with a great mix of emotions that I leave my present post here which had also always been a personal and professional goal.

After January 15, 2025, I will no longer be able to refill medications, provide treatments, or answer questions pertaining to your medical care. Don Culbertson, PA-C will continue to see patients at the clinic. Your medical records will continue to be stored at Marfa County Clinic and to be available should you decide to transfer care to a different practice.

Be well, and farewell for now, Marfa.

In gratitude,  
Marco Garcia, DO  
Marfa Country Clinic

**We want to hear from YOU!**

Letters to the editor should be sent to [editor@bigbendsentinel.com](mailto: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



la fundación the CHINATI foundation

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

Chinati is open Wednesday through Sunday. Office hours and guided tour times are seasonal. For details and reservations, please come to the Visitor Center (1 Cavalry Row) or go to [chinati.org/visit](https://chinati.org/visit).

Free entrance is available for residents of Presidio, Brewster, and Jeff Davis counties.

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OUR WATER MATTERS

TWDB funding for Presidio County – What went right and what went wrong

By TREY GERFERS

Presidio County has been working for over three years now to obtain funding for essential water and wastewater infrastructure in the form of grants and loans from the Texas Water Development Board. We were told of funding of such historic proportions that the lender would be “throwing the money out the window.” We were assured that the lender was eager to “get points on the board” with rural regions specifically, and that Presidio County could serve as a “model” for other underserved communities.

With robust technical assistance and expertise from our grant writer, Bill Moriarty, as well as the Environmental Defense Fund and Water Finance Exchange, Presidio County organized a Water Infrastructure Steering Committee, bringing together representatives from every community in the county. Local governments at all levels passed resolutions committing themselves to the steering committee process and the 40-member group met frequently throughout 2022 to compile a comprehensive list of projects. The idea was to work together regionally to get the needs of every community met, rather than competing against each other for this funding — a groundbreaking concept whose time had come.

The county was soon invited to apply for \$12.6 million in pre-approved funding from TWDB’s Economically Distressed Areas Program (EDAP) to bring first-time water and wastewater to colonias like Las Pampas and Shafter, as well as several areas of Marfa. The 100-year-old sewer system under Fort D.A. Russell (now known as the Chinati Foundation) — long the subject of environmental violations due to raw sewage leaking on open ground — would also be replaced.

The lender dithered and eventually withdrew \$8 million in EDAP funding because there was no county-wide utility and this constituted “too many unknowns.” The county would have to be content with a fraction of the originally promised amount and could reapply for the remaining funding at a later date. After lurching from one cliffhanger to the next, the EDAP loan miraculously closed in January of this year and actual money began to flow in August, a mere two-and-a-half years after the lender had preapproved the funding.

The EDAP deal involved the issuance of nearly \$1.5 million in county debt, with the remaining \$3 million to be released in the form of a grant. One condition of the loan required the county to form a Utility Systems Board (USB), which was swiftly created and began meeting in January of this year. Around that same time, the county hired me as the program manager, and I started working on the EDAP projects with our engineers

in February.

We had almost finalized two proposed solutions for each of the project areas when the lender suddenly informed us in September that nearly half of our project areas were actually ineligible for EDAP funding. Unless a parcel has a physical residence on it, the lender insisted, the county cannot build any infrastructure to it with EDAP funding. Las Pampas residents, who have been waiting for decades, whose structures may have fallen down in the meantime or who never built a residence because there was no water, will not be receiving water with EDAP funding. Chinati Foundation, whose sewer was built to serve thousands of soldiers residing at the fort, is not eligible for EDAP funding because the fort-turned-foundation no longer meets the lender’s residence requirements. One is left with the impression that the goalposts have been moved, and the engineers and I are now scrambling to relitigate the eligibility of each individual parcel within the project areas. In the end, we will be forced to design rump systems that make little sense from an engineering standpoint and fail to meet the needs we clearly outlined in our EDAP application.

As if that weren’t enough of a shock, the lender informed Presidio County on November 21 that it was withdrawing another \$15 million in preapproved funding from the State Revolving Funds (SRFs) because the county had failed to complete its 2023 annual audit. It’s no secret that the county auditor and her one assistant are overwhelmed and under-resourced. The low morale at the courthouse probably also played a role. Could the judge spend more time in his office, leading by example and raising morale? Certainly. Could the county attorney have done his job instead of adding to everyone else’s burden by not showing up for work since March? Definitely. Could the commissioners work harder to lighten the judge’s workload and better serve their constituents? Most assuredly. And could the county auditor be more emphatic when voicing her need for support? Yes. But regardless of our flaws, Presidio County is not unique. Virtually all rural counties have dysfunction. If the state is serious about helping the underserved, Presidio County should be at the top of the list. And unlike many other counties, we are not two to three years behind on our annual audits. We just couldn’t produce the latest audit within the lender’s timetable, and now many months of work and stress have come to nothing.

The TWDB is a lender with a notoriously difficult application process. I have spent hours, days, even weeks chasing down the information they require. Those weeks then easily turn into months because the team that is handling our SRF applications routinely fails to respond to emails and phone calls. This lack of communication is further aggravated by requests for information that waste precious time. For example, a TWDB team leader contacted me demanding answers to questions about two arsenic-removal projects in the county that TWDB had funded several years ago. Come to find out, he already had the answers he was seeking in his own project notes which he seemingly failed to read. Another TWDB team member demanded reports for five entities, three of which were not included in our application and one of which his own agency classifies as “non-reporting.” These rabbit holes, among others, took weeks to resolve. Can you imagine trying to buy a home through a lender that asks for answers it already has and demands documents it doesn’t need?

Most applicants would just walk away from this monkey business. But Presidio County doesn’t have that luxury. We need the grant dollars attached to the loan. And I felt perfectly justified in admonishing both of these gentlemen to think carefully before burdening an economically distressed

area like ours with unnecessary work. They didn’t take too kindly to my reprimands, especially when an applicant is typically expected to act like a supplicant.

Perhaps as a result, the lender went dark on us for months, refusing to meaningfully respond to emails or phone calls about the status of our SRF applications. In August, we finally heard that a new team leader had been appointed and she wrote to say she would set up a meeting the following week. After three more weeks went by with no word from her, we desperately requested a meeting with her team. Imagine my surprise when the new team leader and her 8-10 colleagues on the video-conference were unable to answer a single one of our questions. That’s right. Not a single one. After I blasted them on the call in a manner not dissimilar to the way I have sometimes blasted the Presidio County commissioners and county attorney, I received a letter from the new team leader accusing me of unprofessional behavior. The irony was apparently lost on her.

This same team leader and the gentleman who insisted I provide him with reports he didn’t need are now taking an ax to our EDAP eligibility threatening to bring an already-glacial process to a virtual halt. So, while losing the \$15 million in SRF funding is definitely discouraging, the thought of further tying our destiny to such a capricious lender has come to seem somewhat unwise.

Whether it’s \$4.6 million or \$15 million, this is a lot of money for a rural community. Such transactions should be built on trust — a quality lenders typically strive to develop with their clients through good-faith actions over time. But this lender’s refusal to provide timely guidance to first-time applicants, rigid adherence to opaque rules, and readiness to change those rules without notice leave little room for anything but confusion.

I am recounting Presidio County’s experience with some trepidation because I have been warned not to embarrass the TWDB. It seems just about everyone is scared to death of this agency’s wrath. But what choice do I have? Unless someone has the courage to speak truth to power, the most vulnerable among us will continue to get the runaround and the much-needed reform of this lender will be delayed indefinitely. My hope is that our story can play some part in an eventual solution.

As disheartening as this situation may be, it’s important to remember that we have much to be grateful for here in Presidio County. We have amazing vistas, clean air and abundant groundwater. We have vibrant communities that found a way to work together to go after this money in the first place. And we have two energetic, new commissioners and a bright, young county attorney about to take office in January. Even though we may be saddened by this setback, we must resist the urge to point fingers at each other, to assign blame for our shortcomings. We may not always know what we’re doing, but at least we’re trying to do something. Regions like ours have long been neglected by the powers that be in Austin. But we’ve made it this far and we’ll continue to find ways to move forward, with or without the help of a lender who keeps claiming to be a champion for rural communities.

Trey Gerfers serves as general manager of the Presidio County Underground Water Conservation District. A San Antonio native, he has lived in Marfa since 2013 and can be reached at tgerfers@pcuwc.org.

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Come worship with us



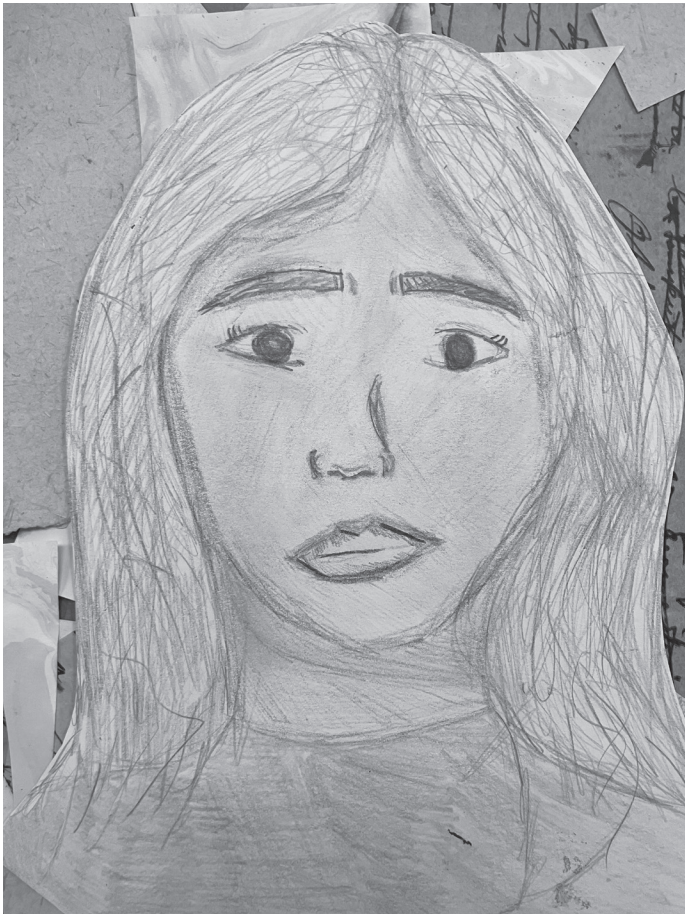
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Do not fear, for I am with you,  
do not be afraid,  
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I will help you,  
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Isaiah 41:10

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DRAWING OF THE WEEK



**Azul Contreras**  
6th Grade - Mixed media collage

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.

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

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

SOLUTION:

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

MARFA SCHOOL LUNCH MENU

| MAY       | Thu, Dec 12                                                     | Fri, Dec 13                                | Mon, Dec 16                                    | Tue, Dec 17                          | Wed, Dec 18                                        |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| BREAKFAST | PANCAKE WRAP, YOGURT, JUICE, FRUIT, MILK                        | CINNAMON ROLL, SAUSAGE, FRUIT, JUICE, MILK | PANCAKES, BACON, JUICE, FRUIT, MILK            | BREAKFAST PIZZA, JUICE, FRUIT, MILK  | DONUT, SAUSAGE, JUICE, FRUIT, MILK                 |
| LUNCH     | NACHOS GRANDE, SALSA, BEANS, CUCUMBERS, APRICOTS, ICE CREAM CUP | CORN DOG, POTATOES, TOMATO CUP, FRUIT      | FISH STICKS, POTATOES, CUCUMBERS, STRAWBERRIES | POTATO BOWL, ROLL, TOMATO CUP, FRUIT | PIZZA, GARDEN SALAD, GREEN BEANS, PEACHES, DESSERT |

**For more sports events please visit:**

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**MARFA SHORTHORNS SPORTS CALENDAR**

No Sports Events

**Universal Crossword**

Edited by David Steinberg December 23, 2024

**ACROSS**

1 Boats like Noah’s  
5 “Succession” network  
8 Rapper with a clock necklace, familiarly  
12 Pro (for free)  
13 Treasure hunter’s aid  
14 Summary  
16 Not just simmer  
17 Summer hrs. in Colorado  
18 Cry at the end of a scene  
20 Following (Note letters 3-5 in this answer + ...)  
22 Teeny-tiny (... letters 1-5 in this answer)  
24 “This is infuriating!”  
26 \_\_\_ Enterprise  
27 Thin Mints seller (Letters 7-9 + ...)  
30 One of Santa’s reindeer (... 1-4)  
32 “Where the Wild Things ”  
33 Promos  
34 Consumed  
35 Winter Olympics hats (Letters 4-7 + ...)  
38 Built muscle (...1-4)  
42 That woman  
43 Beethoven’s “\_\_\_ Elise”  
44 \_\_\_ out a victory

**DOWN**

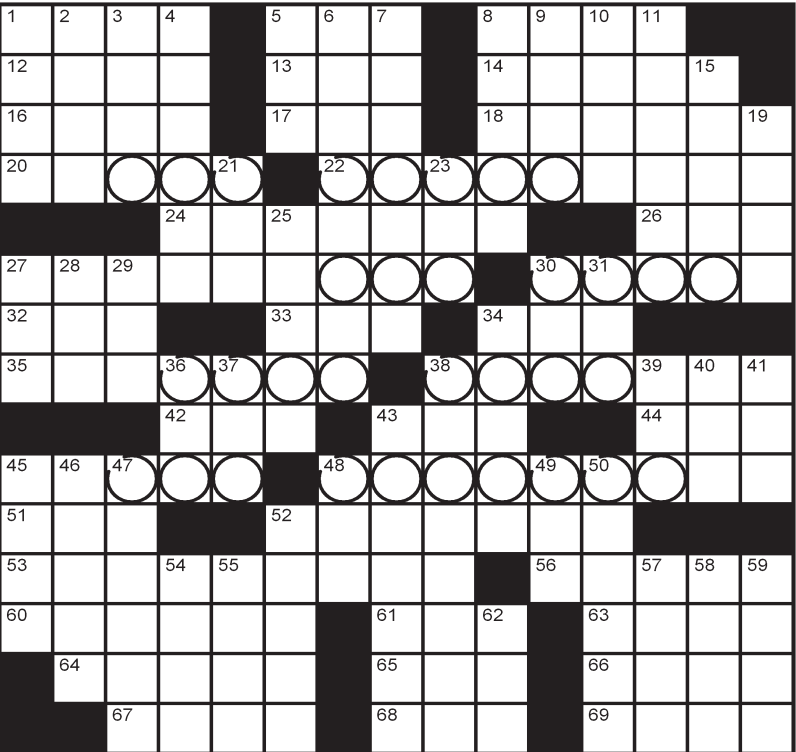
45 Nativity scene figure (Letters 3-5 + ...)  
48 Retiree on a fixed income (... 1-7)  
51 Moody music genre  
52 Choir members  
53 One reason to get a haircut ... or what four black squares in this puzzle do?  
56 Window ledges  
60 Pilfered  
61 GPS guess  
63 Train track part  
64 Approvals  
65 Color on a candy cane  
66 A big fan of  
67 Feminine “sir”  
68 \_\_\_Cat (winter vehicle)  
69 Ooze

**PREVIOUS PUZZLE ANSWER**

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

12/22 © 2024 Andrews McMeel Universal www.upuzzles.com

12/23 **Bad Hair Day by Jessica Lovelock**



# HOLIDAY EVENTS

### Fort Davis library to sprinkle holiday cheer

FORT DAVIS — Everyone is invited to a special free music program offered by Friends of the Library on Saturday, December 14, at the Jeff Davis County Library in Fort Davis.

Beginning at 4:30 p.m. there will be light refreshments and time to mingle over hot cocoa; at 5 p.m. music will be performed by the Guitar Ensemble of Sul Ross. Local pianist, Lana Potts, will lead sing-a-longs to holiday favorites at 5:30 p.m. until 6 p.m. when the guitar group will conclude with more Christmas carols.

**Marfa police host cookies and cocoa with Santa**

MARFA — The Marfa Police Department toy drive continues with a Cookies and Cocoa with Blue Santa Claus on December 17 from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. at the USO Building at 305 S. Highland.

Photos with Santa will be available as well as games, music, and prizes. The entry fee is an unwrapped toy for Marfa PD's annual Operation Blue

Santa. Toys also can be dropped off at the Marfa Police Department, and monetary donations are also accepted; speak to Lt. Nicole Fuentes for monetary donations.

### Marfa Chamber sponsors ‘Holiday Shopping Crawl and Dance’

MARFA — The Marfa Chamber of Commerce is sponsoring a “Holiday Shopping Crawl and Dance” on Saturday, December 14, at 6 p.m.

Participating businesses will be open for special holiday hours from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. for all of your holiday shopping needs. Stroll through beautiful Marfa and enjoy festive beverages, travelling carolers, shopping, community and more. Afterwards, head over to Marfa Spirit Co. for a holiday dance featuring local DJs and live music.

Entry into the dance is one unwrapped gift for either children or adults. To sign up as a vendor or participating business for the shopping crawl, please email [marfachamberofcommerce@gmail.com](mailto:marfachamberofcommerce@gmail.com). Lesley Villarreal of Love Marfa, working with the chamber, also has posted a list of participating businesses (and other businesses with regular hours around town for an ongoing list) at [www.lovemarfa.com/shop-local](http://www.lovemarfa.com/shop-local).

## Ferguson Motors toasts to grand reopening and 3rd anniversary

SANDERSON — Ferguson Motors, a cafe and event venue housed in an old Ford dealership, will celebrate its third anniversary and the grand reopening of Fordhouse Social, its gathering space, with a party at 5 p.m. this Friday, December 13.

The event venue side of the business was badly damaged by a tornado in June. Ferguson Motors owners Jake and Hannah Harper have been hard at work since rebuilding the structure with the help of local residents. Jake said with things finally returning to normal, they were looking forward to toasting to a new chapter of their business.

“We’re excited to get people out here to see the new and improved venue,” Jake said. “After all this tornado stuff we feel like we’ve put it back together better, and we’re excited to move forward and celebrate with everybody.”

There is no cover charge for the celebration, which will feature live music, food, beer and wine. The star-studded musical lineup includes Neil Trammell and The Doodlin’ Hogwallops, Ross Fleming, John Dunn, Doug Moreland, The Lavens, Ross Cashiola, Sid Sharp and more.

Ferguson Motors will be offering their full menu. The Sighting BBQ will offer three brisket queso specials. Event sponsors include the Desert Air Motel, Tall Texan Sotol, The Sighting BBQ, KLiQ Enterprises and the Sanderson Table.

Ferguson Motors is located at 111 W Oak Street in Sanderson.



Photo courtesy of Ferguson Motors

*Avintage Ford truck sports a festive accessory. Ferguson Motors will host a three-year anniversary party and reopening this Friday in Sanderson.*

*For more information, follow @ford\_house\_social and @fergusonmotors on Instagram.*

## Marfa Education Foundation looks back at 2024 efforts

MARFA — Though the calendar year is coming to a close, Marfa Education Foundation (MEF) is very much in the middle of a year of fundraising for programs at Marfa ISD.

“Our fiscal year coincides with the school’s, so we are taking stock of what we’ve been able to do so far and how far we have yet to go to fund all of our programs and be in good shape for the next school year,” said MEF’s Executive Director Abby Boyd. “We have been fortunate to have amazing foundation partnerships, and have had a great showing of generosity from Marfa locals this year.”

MEF is making a big impact on art and literacy at Marfa ISD thanks to the Rea Charitable Trust, which granted funds for the second year in a row. This year the \$30,000 is split among several programs, including a University Interscholastic League (UIL) competition-compliant props package and allowing one-act play students to rehearse for competition more effectively. MEF also allocated funds for supplies for the middle school and high school art classroom, library books, literacy training for elementary teachers, and support for Marfa Studio of Arts, which provides elementary art classes. A new addition to the arts program, the conjunto band, received \$3,000 for the purchase of instruments and equipment to kick off the band’s first year at MISD.

Other supporters making a big impact include the Prentice Farrar Brown and Alline Ford Brown Foundation. The check for \$25,000 in unrestricted funds allowed MEF to support Marfa Live Arts classroom curriculum, as well as provide technology upgrades for students. Abell-Hanger, who has given support for the sciences in past years came through again with \$10,000 for science classroom supplies and projects, which will be divided among teachers in the district. The Wayne & Jo Ann Moore Charitable Foundation continued its more than



decade-long support of dual-credit classes for Marfa High School students, which has shown an increase in participation this year thanks to a concerted effort from district administrators.

Other foundations contributing to MEF’s schedule of programs include the Still Water Foundation, which funds MindPop training for teachers, contributes to teacher grants and teacher appreciation events as well as Career Day and college preparatory courses for juniors and seniors. The Dollar General Literacy Foundation shares support of Marfa Elementary’s Guided Reading program with the Rea Foundation. The FMH Foundation gave a one-time unrestricted grant that will provide teacher training, and a grant from the Mitchell Foundation will provide technical education classes and contribute to classroom supplies that teachers request through small grants.

With support from individual donor Vicki Pfeifer and others, MEF is continuing their scholarship program this year for graduates of Marfa ISD who are currently enrolled in a college or trade school as a sophomore or higher level. Scholarships are intended to help

Marfa graduates complete college by easing some of the financial hardship. Applications for the scholarship are open now, closing at 11:59 pm on December 16, and anyone who qualifies is encouraged to apply.

In 2024 the Education Foundation was also supported through local events as a featured nonprofit. The Marfa 100 bike race encouraged participants to make donations that ended up totaling \$3,000, and the Marfa Municipal Alliance used funds raised at their Loretta Lynn tribute show to benefit MEF programs. MEF plans to co-host the second annual Arm Wrestling Competition with local Christy Miller again this spring.

Looking to the new year and the spring semester at Marfa ISD, MEF looks forward to continuing auditorium and playground updates, as well as applying for grants they hope will support much needed technology upgrades and music programs at Marfa ISD. “There is always a need for more support at our school,” Boyd said. “That’s why keeping great relationships with our funders is so important. If we can keep our regular programs in good standing, that allows us to look for support for even more resources that benefit Marfa students. The plan is to just keep going and keep growing, and we are so grateful to everyone who has helped us this year.”

Marfa Education Foundation is a registered (501) c3 nonprofit organization that works to support and enhance the work of the Marfa Independent School District. Marfa ISD staff and administration as well as the MEF Board of Directors and direct the programs supported by MEF. Decisions for the 2025-26 school year budget will be made at the MEF board meeting in August, 2025.

*To learn more about MEF programs visit [marfaeducationfoundation.org](http://marfaeducationfoundation.org).*

## Club Nowhere hosts art auction benefiting the Marfa Food Pantry

MARFA — Club Nowhere, a new DIY arts space located at 401 S Highland Ave., is hosting an art auction benefitting the Marfa Food Pantry throughout the week.

An opening reception will be held from 5 to 9 p.m. Friday, December 13, at Club Nowhere. Sealed and online bidding will be open throughout the week with a live auction taking place at 3 p.m. Saturday, December 21, at the space. Works will be on view in person as well as online.

Artists whose work will be featured include Ann Marie Nafziger, Camp Bosworth, Chelsea Quinlan, Julie Speed, Lisa Chestnut, Liz Potter, Matt Scobey, Mo Eldridge, Pat Keesey, Rob Mazurek and more.

Currently on view at Club Nowhere is a collection of works by Marfa resident Robert Roth, as well as the “House of Christmas” — vintage holiday decor and slide photographs. Several open viewings will take place throughout December and the space is also available to visit by appointment.

*For more information, visit [clubnowhere.org](http://clubnowhere.org) or follow @weareclubnowhere on Instagram.*



Staff photo by Mary Cantrell

*Currently on view at Club Nowhere are a display of vintage holiday decor and works by artist Robert Roth.*

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## Part II of Animal Chronicles: It takes a village

By MARY ETHERINGTON  
*Big Bend Sentinel*

So the little rescue puppy wanted a new name in the previous installment and managed to make that happen. This is more of his story.

My first reaction to hearing Oxford announce his desired name, “Archie,” was shock and disbelief. I immediately called my son; his response was also a quick and unequivocal “No.” Archie was the name of our deceased cat, the companion to dog Ida Mae, that we were trying to replace with this puppy, and Archie the cat’s death still stung profoundly. Yet somehow this sweet puppy’s insistence won through and although it took awhile for us to come around, he proudly became Archie, and Oxford now rests as his middle name, although in formal documents he’s Archibald.

So just when all that name drama was tucked away, I ran to the window one morning to see what my dogs were furiously barking about just in time to see the City of Marfa workers driving down the alley on the side of my house spraying weed killer. They sprayed both of my dogs right in the face and kept driving. These workers wore no protective clothing or respirators and while I was screaming for them to stop. I knew they had no idea what they were doing, the risks not only to the rest of us, however, to themselves as well.

Both of my dogs were throwing up and had diarrhea within minutes. Phone call to the intuitive to the rescue once again. He said their kidneys were shutting down, told me what to give them, to wash them and get them out of there for several days. I felt sick too after washing them and wanted to escape what I considered to be a crime scene. While driving the dogs toward Fort Davis to stay at a kennel, I passed my friend Bell driving back toward Marfa. I drove on to the airport and went to stay in a safe place for a few days to take care of myself.

Upon my return I got the call from Bell that her dog, Rossi, had just died at the vet clinic from kidney failure. When we passed on the highway days before, she had just dropped Rossi off at the vet clinic and I was driving my dogs to safety. If only we had spoken during the time. However, we were both consumed trying to save our animals. He had been outside the same day the city was spraying my alley and hers.

So although my dogs survived, they were not thriving. My emails and visits to the mayor and city administrator fell on deaf ears. I decided between the rattlesnake bite and the RoundUp, I’d be happier back east. I packed up and moved us. One conundrum was the tarantula that lived in our yard. She hung out with the dogs and came when I called her. To dispel Bell’s disbelief at my outrageous claim, we walked out in my yard one day, I called the spider, she waved one of her arms out of her hole, then popped her whole self out. Bell stared down at the spider, straightened up and announced the name was Claude. What is its female version I queried? Then it’s Claudette, almost a command. I never had any intention of naming her. I do refer to her as Claudette in my mind now, rather than the friendly tarantula that once lived in my yard. I did learn that female tarantulas can live to be 40 years old.

This one was missing one leg. I also learned when they molt they get a new leg, albeit a tiny bit shorter. I was never able to confirm she lost that leg goofing around with the dogs, but that easily could have happened. I hated leaving her, but the New England winter would not be ideal. She stayed behind.

In Northampton Massachusetts, Archie got to see a vet who referred him to a cardiologist, as he now had an enlarged heart, and also very early stage lung cancer. He wasn’t even a year old. Ida Mae was also in rough shape, with a swollen brain. At one point I contemplated having them both euthanized. Their medical care was expensive, and I wasn’t sure their quality of life was improving, and boy would I have loved to have the city of Marfa pick up the tab for their medical care.

“I decided between  
the rattlesnake  
bite and the  
RoundUp,  
I’d be happier  
back east”

I distracted myself giving feedback to my son, who came on the train from Boston to stay with me on weekends. He was enrolled at UMass Boston. His plan was to go there for a year, make straight A’s and transfer to another school. He again was Archie’s (Oxford’s) constant companion on those visits while Harvey worked on college essays, something that helped carry us all through.

Specialists were able to figure out what medication would help Ida Mae’s encephalitis, Archie’s heart stayed large, but his lung cancer went into remission, I got Lyme disease several times that summer, which is why I left the East Coast in the first place, so I threw up my hands and moved all the way back to Marfa.

By the time I got back here we had a new mayor and city administrator. In spite of my pleading with the previous administration, with not so much as a nod of having heard me or read any of the documents I shared, progress was made to use city workers with weed eaters in alleys, instead of spraying chemicals. However, there were still trucks driving around spraying RoundUp in some parts of the city. They said it was a different mixture, with less RoundUp. In my estimation, that totally missed the point.

Harvey’s plan worked and he got a full-ride offer to Vanderbilt University, and I moved back to Marfa, set to work to re-establish myself. All was going along swimmingly when I was offered a job in Santa Fe — a director of contemporary art. I drove up on Christmas through the Davis Mountains, after a lunch with friends in Fort Davis, through swirling snow to a new chapter.

The hiking around Santa Fe was incredibly

beautiful and easily accessible. The air was clear. After several months I woke up early one Saturday morning to discover Archie unable to walk properly and could barely stand. Off we rushed to the emergency vet. The prognosis was spinal cord injury. I disagreed wholeheartedly. He and Ida Mae had been with me every minute the night before. Nothing had happened that could have injured him. I had taken them out for a hike, part of which crossed an old landfill. I figured it was a toxin of some sort picked up from the dirt, and brought him home.

Archie was getting weaker and weaker. I removed his collar, bathed him and laid his unresponsive body out on my bed. His breathing became labored. I called a friend; 40 years previous we had been close back east while both students. After several iterations she was now a healer living in Santa Fe. “Jot, I need you to come over, I’m losing Archie.” She responded, “I’m in Florida. I’ll meditate and call you back in 15 minutes.” I waited for her instructions.

“Place one hand on the back of his neck, the other hand on what would be his sacrum. Keep your hands there for five minutes, then your hands will automatically go to the part of his body that needs help.” I was desperate, and did as instructed with no idea what would follow. At some point my hand traveled to Archie’s neck almost like magic, and pulled off a tick, something I had done endless times back east. I went to throw the tick in the toilet when it hit me; I hadn’t seen a tick since leaving the East Coast. At that moment I remembered Bell, recounting how her dog Rossi, fell over in the backyard one morning and suddenly couldn’t walk. They were living in Australia and he had been bitten by what’s fairly common there, a paralysis tick.

The thought that flashed across my mind, paralysis tick, seemed crazy, yet all the symptoms matched. I called the emergency vet clinic back with my suspicion. They assured me there were no paralysis ticks in New Mexico, and only dogs that had been in Colorado could contract that dread disease. I ignored them and continued researching. The cool thing about reversing this life threatening tick venom is all one has to do is remove the tick. Unlike other tick borne diseases, with lingering complications, no medicine was needed. Within 48 hours Archie was up and around, eating again and very soon completely restored to his regular dog self.

It turns out the tick bite contains a neurotoxin that slowly paralyzes the body beginning with the hind quarters and progresses until it reaches the lungs and stops the breathing. It takes between 5 to 7 days for the toxin to build up enough before the paralysis begins to set in. Almost a week before we had been at another friend’s house, another friend from back east, also from 40 years previous, when we were students. Her house was just outside of Santa Fe city limits, where my dogs could run free. I called that friend to inquire if she had any knowledge of this tick. She practically screamed, “That’s what killed my dog Alma.” The vets had also told her it was a spinal cord injury, clearly unaware that Santa Fe, New Mexico, now definitely has a hot spot.

To be continued ...

## Sul Ross student creations answer the question ‘What is woman in art?’

By KATRINA CANO  
*For The Big Bend Sentinel*

It’s the morning after the opening reception of In our Voices, the World is Created, an exhibition of work from six Sul Ross State University students at the Ballroom Marfa Annex. I pass a handwritten list of women artists, a stack of books, and a poster for the exhibit promoting the students’ end-of-term projects. The projects answer an assignment posed by creator, writer and instructor, Mo Eldridge – make art from recorded conversations with women. In the conversations discuss: “What is woman? What is woman in art?”

The students responded with a wide range of pieces.

Karina Cantens created a ceramic, sand-brown torso. A teardrop cut reveals the womb. Inside, a mirror reflects a flicking candle light. The torso’s nipples and mons pubis glisten with a wet, brown glaze. Crystals, stones and notes are arranged on a podium draped in sheer fabric. The altar supports the bust. On view are videos of candid conversations with loved ones that heal.

Emily Oyama painted three 18-by-24-inch abstract acrylics on canvas. The abstraction ensures anonymity. Flowers, picked by each interviewee, determine the color scape — Lavender Orchid, Chrysanthemum Dahlia,

Carnation Azalea. Cool purples, burnt oranges, and rosy reds — pigment in a polymer emulsion. Painted with plastic shopping bags over the artist’s hands, the acrylic dries rough, producing a texture that catches the light. Put your ear to a can of sound to the left of the paintings and hear windchimes and the sea.

Vic Montilva set up a tent of tulle and tea cups where a video plays. Enter and see a woman taking care of her ill father. She shaves his face. Hear a conversation on assault against women as a white candle flickers on the screen. The picture moves to the kitchen where a woman dances with rolling hips. Next, two women share a deep embrace. Hear strong words from a friend force through wounds to create power. In the Annex, the artist’s mother beams outside the installation, sharing the pride she feels for her daughter’s art.

Sofia Gutierrez Gladwish displays three ceramic sculptures foregrounding three tin cans mounted on the wall. The cans hold speakers that project conversations with the artist. A dark purple ceramic vase holds a single, long-stemmed, red rose. Books support the vase. A long-lashed sand woman with shining serpent hair sits on her great rump. “A boat can be a woman; a spider can be a woman” — the artist subverts the question by including both. A breasted, faceless figure holds a bundle in each arm. The form is glazed with a cosmic scape of star-colored purples, blues and

whites. Put your ear to each can and hear the women speak.

Julian Vidales presents a 3-by-3-feet square of mixed media with a red and black color scheme. He depicts messages imposed on women, and explores struggle and recovery. A crying eye in the upper left sees a suited woman on the right. She faces the viewer as she smiles in perfect form. Over her shoulder, a second face grimaces with a sour look of pain.

For Bella Stimpson, five sculptures made of clay and paint are hung on the wall. Cords connect each shape. Five shapes of five colors for five people. Each person’s face is pictured in the center of their shape. Each tightly cropped face is encircled by a low wall. “The shape is the shape I saw for each person” the artist says. “Then, they picked the color.” In her recorded conversations, she questions the color pink.

The students respond to their assignment by engaging in dialogue, connecting with others, and creating. They practice personal vulnerability and share their reflections through the exhibit of art created in response to the assignment. They create with healing strength.

Visit Ballroom Marfa today and view the Sul Ross students’ exhibit on its last night, Thursday, December 12.

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## Santa Claus visits the Presidio Public Library



Photo by Diana Armendariz

*Santa reads a classic tale to youth at the Presidio Public Library.*

PRESIDIO — Every year, Carmen Elguezabal, director of the Presidio Public Library, along with her team and volunteers, surprise children with the early arrival of Santa Claus at the library.

This year’s gathering took place on December 4, where the children were able to enjoy a reading that Santa Claus shared with them. “This tradition is more than 20 years old and we continue to strive for our children to find the love for reading in different ways,” Elguezabal said. “And we want to promote family values, since they live with their parents and live with other children — to promote good habits in children, not only in reading but in fond memories.”

After listening to the reading, Santa Claus handed out gifts to each of the

children present, who took the opportunity to tell him what their wishes were for the year. Later they went to the tables to decorate Christmas cookies and enjoyed a feast next to their parents or grandparents.

“I would like to thank Santa Claus for reading The Polar Express to them,” Elguezabal said.

“I would also like to thank Elvira Hermosillo, Brenda Witty and Mercy Ornelas for donating cookies, Haydee Hernandez for helping me decorate the library, the students from the Presidio High School Honor Roll Society who also helped with the decorating, and of course First Presidio Bank and Big Bend Telephone Company for sponsoring the Cookies with Santa story time event.”

### AROUND THE BIG BEND

Thur  
Dec  
12

#### Hike with Homeless Dogs

10am - 11am at Davis Mountains State Park  
*Help a homeless dog have a great time on the trail!*

#### Santa at WTNB

3pm - 5pm at WTNB - Alpine  
*West Texas National Bank is hosting Santa on Thursday, December 12th! Come by from 3-5pm to get a free picture.*

Fri  
Dec  
13

#### Marfa Food Pantry Benefit Auction

5pm - 9pm at Club Nowhere - 401 S Highland Avenue  
*All proceeds for the auction go to the Food Pantry.*

#### Mountain Country Christmas

1pm - 9pm at Alpine Civic Center  
*The Women’s Club of Alpine celebrates the Christmas season! SHOP SHOP SHOP! This huge bizarre features quilts, candles, jewelry, t-shirts, holiday décor, local artisans, vendors, food, Santa and pictures!*

#### Cam Allen

10am - 12pm at Railroad Blues  
*Cam Allen will be performing with us on Friday, December 13th, at Railroad Blues. Don’t miss this opportunity-secure your tickets now!*

#### Tom Griffith

6pm - 8pm at Alcove Social

Sat  
Dec  
14

#### Art Market & Print Sale

6pm - 9pm at Club Nowhere - 401 S Highland Avenue

#### Holiday Ornament Workshop

10am - 12pm at Davis Mountains State Park  
*Come have some holiday fun making ornaments.*

#### Red McAdam

7pm - 9pm at The Ritchey  
*Come watch Red McAdam play, no cover!*

#### Christmas Around the World

7:30pm - 9pm at First United Methodist Church  
*Take a journey around the world through song at the Christmas Around the World Concert. Saturday, December 14th 7:30pm, at the First United Methodist Church!*

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Sun  
Dec  
15

#### Stand-up Comedy Night

7pm - 9pm at Granada Theatre  
*Get ready to laugh on Sunday, December 15th! The Granada brings you a fun-filled evening, featuring comedians Gabriel Kerr, Scott Wharton, and Hunter Lane. The show is at 7PM*

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Classes

#### Free Zumba Classes

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#### Yin Yoga

Tuesdays at 12pm at Marfa Public Library

#### Free Meditation Classes

Tuesday & Thursday at 6:00pm 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 - 12:00pm at Alpine Visitor Center

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

### FROM THE ARCHIVES

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March 29, 1979

## Jail Escapee in Custody

Kevin Wayne Steele, 18, being held in the Presidio County Jail awaiting transfer to the Texas Department of Corrections for confinement on a charge of murder, escaped from jail last Friday night along with three other prisoners. Presidio County officers were alerted by other prisoners at 8:55 p.m. and told that Steele, Rito Aguilar Juarez, 17; Fernando Fuentes Rios and Manuel Tenazas Carrillo had gone out through a small vent and escaped.

The vent is located eight to ten feet above the bunks in the main cell of the jail. All area officers were alerted and road blocks were thrown up throughout the Davis Mountain-Big Bend area. Officers searched through the night finding foot tracks of Steele leading east from Marfa through Sal Si Puedes and into the ranch land. Early Saturday morning searching officers were able to track Steele to an area near the Paisano Baptist Encampment on U. S. Highway 90 east of Marfa. Steele was spotted hiding in some rocks and was taken into custody by officers at about 8 a.m. and returned to jail in Marfa. Juarez, Rios and Carrillo were reported to have stolen a pickup from the W. B. Blakemore San Estabén Ranch off Ranch Road 169 south of Marfa.

Continuing their search, officers located the pickup abandoned Sunday near the railroad bridge over the Rio Grande at Presidio. Officers believe the three escaped to Mexico. Juarez and Rios were being held on a charge of burglary of the Munoz Grocery in Shafter on March 9 and Carrillo was being held as an illegal alien.

Steele had been charged and convicted for the February 11 slaying of Horace Ray DeYampert at a roadside park west of Marfa. DeYampert was a school teacher in Presidio. Steele pleaded guilty in 83rd District Court before Judge William H. Earney on March 5 after waiving trial by jury. Steele had been sentenced Friday by Judge Earney to serve not less than five nor more than 50 years confinement in the Texas Department of Corrections and was to be held in Presidio County Jail until he could be transferred to the TDC. Steele had waived right of appeal and his confinement on the sentence was started with the February date of his original confinement.

Steele is now charged with felony jail escape while Juarez and Rios have been charged with felony jail escape and auto theft. Carrillo has been charged with misdemeanor jail escape. Presidio County Sheriff Rick Thompson said this week that he sincerely apologized to people of Presidio County for the worry and anxiety caused by the incident. "I know it was a strain on all the citizens to know that a convicted killer was loose and I do apologize. But, I do want to thank all the citizens for their great cooperation with the law enforcement officers by offering help and information that helped us get the man back in custody.

Steele has been taken to Huntsville to serve out his term, Thompson said. "We had the cooperation of all the officers in the area and we are very grateful for their help. We had Border Patrol people from all over the area working with us as well as officers from the state Game Department from Marfa, Fort Davis, Alpine and Van Horn. We had sheriff's officers from Alpine, Fort Davis, and Van Horn, city police officers from Marfa, Alpine and Van Horn, Department of Public Safety officers from Marfa, Fort Davis, Van Horn and Alpine, Texas Rangers from Alpine and Midland and the use of the Department of Public Safety helicopter and we are very grateful to all of them and to the citizenry that came to our aid," Thompson said.

# Judd Foundation

Experience Donald Judd’s art as installed within his former living and working spaces in downtown Marfa. These spaces, including his libraries and studios, consider his ideas for the permanent installation of art within historic buildings.

Free for residents of Presidio, Brewster, and Jeff Davis counties.

Judd Foundation is open Tuesday through Sunday and offers two distinct guided visits. Please visit our office, 104 South Highland Avenue, or website for the current schedule.

For more information and to book reservations please visit [juddfoundation.org](http://juddfoundation.org) or call 432 729 4406.

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## Ghosttown hosts annual black-eyed pea cookoff

TERLINGUA — The 34th Annual Black-Eyed Pea Off (cookoff) will be held in the Terlingua Ghosttown on Wednesday, January 1, 2025. Participants need to bring their best black-eyed peas for judging and to share with spectators.

Award and prizes will be given for first, second and third place. Turn-in time is 2 p.m. sharp with a \$10 entry fee. Peas may be cooked

onsite or off.

Spectators can start the year off with a bowl of "good-luck" peas for a \$10 (or more) donation — it includes a bowl, spoon and cornbread until it runs out. There will be local music, local art and a "Hot Date" raffle (room and/or dinner). All proceeds will benefit continuing education scholarships for Terlingua School graduates.



Photo right: Terlinguans and visitors line up for luck at the town’s annual pea off.

## Information session informs Jeff Davis residents on future medical clinic

By JEANINE BISHOP  
For the Big Bend Sentinel

FORT DAVIS — Area residents took advantage of the opportunity at a meeting Monday to learn more about the planned “box” clinic expected for completion in April 2025 in Fort Davis County.

Judge Curtis Evans, a strong proponent of the project, said he was pleased by the turnout of residents and the insightful questions asked. The grant-funded clinic will provide telemedicine services, basic on-site lab tests, and access to

medical residents and interns through Texas Tech and Texas A&M universities.

Dr. Billy Phillips of Texas Tech was on hand to answer questions, along with Curtis Donaldson and Carly McCord from Texas A&M. Danielle Gallo, who heads up a similar new clinic in Marathon also attended. “She’s offered so much help to us,” Evans said of Gallo. Area physicians James Luecke and Adrian Billings were also in attendance. Billings brought residents and interns from Texas Tech to the information session.

On Tuesday, during Jeff Davis County

Commissioners Court, commissioners agreed to accept the clinic but did not vote to locate it on the proposed fire hall property. The clinic itself will be contained in a “box” structure, measuring only about eight feet by 40 feet, but county officials and the fire department want to review potential parking issues, especially during times when numerous firefighters and equipment are staged at the fire hall. Commissioners did express their willingness to locate the clinic on a county-owned property.

## Lauded Texas writer Joe Holley visits the Jeff Davis County Library

By MARY CANTRELL  
mkcantrell@bigbendsentinel.com

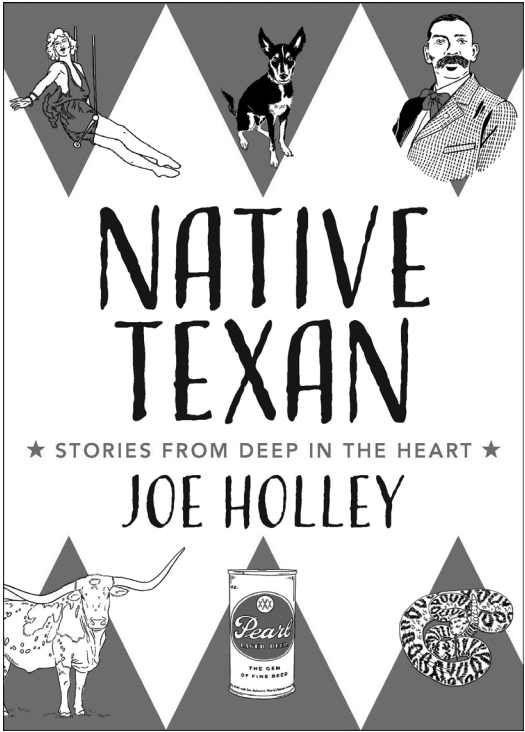
FORT DAVIS — Texas journalist Joe Holley will present his latest book Native Texan: Stories from Deep in the Heart, a collection of columns originally published in The Houston Chronicle, at 11 a.m. this Saturday, December 14, at the Jeff Davis County Library.

Published in July, Native Texan is a compilation of 30 stories culled from around 400 columns Holley has written about unique people, places and histories throughout the Lone Star State. Titles include Texans Who Dropped Out of the History Books (or Were Never There to Begin With); E.E. Townsend, the Young Man in the Big Bend Who Came to No Good End; and A Brush with Bonnie and Clyde’s Getaway Drivers.

Some of the columns focus on Holley’s personal experiences as a native Texan — he grew up in Waco, and now owns a house in Marathon. His dog, Buddy, after Buddy Holly, who was adopted from Grand Compansions in Fort Davis, dons the book’s illustrated cover.

In addition to working as a journalist and author, he also served a stint as a speechwriter for Gov. Ann Richards.

For years Holley wrote a “Native Texan” column weekly for The Chronicle in addition to



editorials on political issues like gun control. In 2022, he was part of a team that won a Pulitzer Prize for their series of editorials on Donald

Trump’s “Big Lie” that the 2020 election was stolen. Hometown Texas, a book he authored in collaboration with Houston photographer Peter Brown, which included an initial selection of “Native Texan” columns, came out in 2017.

Holley said there’s never been a lack of material for his columns given the state’s size. His curiosity to investigate — sometimes accompanied by “a prickly feeling on the back of your neck, like, ‘Hey, this is a story,’” — came from a variety of sources, from eavesdropping in Dairy Queen dining rooms to calls and emails.

“It usually involved either going to some small town — or even stories out of places like Houston or Austin or San Antonio. Stories about people, interesting, unusual, people, about place, and usually about the past, how history affects who we are and the places where we live,” Holley said. “When all three of those come together, that usually makes for the best columns.”

Holley will give brief remarks and read from the book on Saturday, then be available for questions and book signing. Books will be available for purchase. The event is free to attend.

For more information, contact the library at (432) 426-3802.

## OBITUARIES



### Torres-Vega

**Chastity Ann-Marie Torres-Vega**, a cherished homemaker and loving family member, passed away on December 2, 2024, in Odessa, Texas, at the age of 48. Born on January 1, 1976, in Alpine, Texas, she grew up surrounded by the warmth of family and the spirit of her hometown.

Chastity was a proud graduate of Alpine High School, where she cultivated lifelong friendships and cherished memories that would always hold a special place in her heart. Her life’s work as a homemaker was not simply a career for her; it was a reflection of her nurturing nature and her love for her family. Chastity poured her heart into creating a warm and inviting home for her loved ones.

Music was one of Chastity’s great passions. She found joy in listening to the sounds of George Strait, Dolly Parton and Johnny Cash, often filling her home with melodies that brought comfort and joy to those around her. In the kitchen, Chastity displayed remarkable skill, delighting

her family and friends with her cooking and baking. Her famous enchiladas and the traditional biscochos became legends in her circle, often requested and never forgotten.

Chastity’s love and compassion extended beyond her human family to the animals she adored, including her beloved German Shepherd, Clover. She had a unique way of connecting with animals, demonstrating her gentle spirit and kind heart.

She is survived by her beloved husband, Guadalupe “Cuate” Chavez Vega; her devoted daughter, Savannah Vega; her daughter’s boyfriend, Saul Baeza; her father, Vivian Torres; her sister, Virtudes “Birdie” Torres; and her cherished companion, Clover.

Chastity was preceded in death by her mother, Diana Valencia, and her brother, Robert Valencia. Her legacy will live on in the hearts of all who knew her, remembered for her warmth, culinary talents, and the love she shared unconditionally. The impact she had on her family and friends is immeasurable, and she will be deeply missed.

Donations to fund Chastity’s funeral services are welcome and may be made by visiting Alpine Memorial Funeral Home at 209 W. Sul Ross Street in Alpine or calling (432) 837-2222.

Services have been entrusted to Alpine Memorial Funeral Home in Alpine, Texas and gifts and condolences may be left at [www.alpinememorialfuneralhome.com](http://www.alpinememorialfuneralhome.com).



### Smith

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of **Susan Ann Smith** on November 22, 2024, after a multi-year battle with cancer.

Beloved wife, mother, sister and grandma, Susan was a strong, remarkable woman and a dear

friend to many. Susan grew up in a military family with many of her childhood years spent abroad in places like Guam, Panama and the Philippines. She fell in love with and married her first and only sweetheart, Raymon John Smith, and together they raised a family.

Susan held an associates degree, enjoyed books, puzzles and painting, and proudly served as a soldier in the U.S. Army. When the time came, Susan and John retired in the beautiful desert mountains of Fort Davis, where they have resided for over 25 years. Susan is survived by her husband, children, siblings and beloved dogs. She will forever be in our hearts. Remembrances and condolences may be shared with the family at Mobile Mortician of Texas’ web site: [www.mmofstexas.com](http://www.mmofstexas.com)

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Search for new city manager continues

MARFA — Marfa City Council members will meet this Thursday to interview candidates for the available city manager position.

Previous City Manager Mandy Roane resigned from the position on September 18 after over four years in the role. Shortly after council members passed a resolution appointing City Secretary Kelly Perez as interim city manager.

The job application was then posted publicly, with a deadline of November 7. A hiring committee made up of Mayor Manny Baeza, Council Members Eddie Pallarez and Mark Morrison and Police Chief Gilberto Carrillo was formed in November to narrow down applicants.

Baeza said the city received a total of 12 applications for the city manager position. On Thursday he and council members will interview four of those candidates, one of which is Perez, he said.

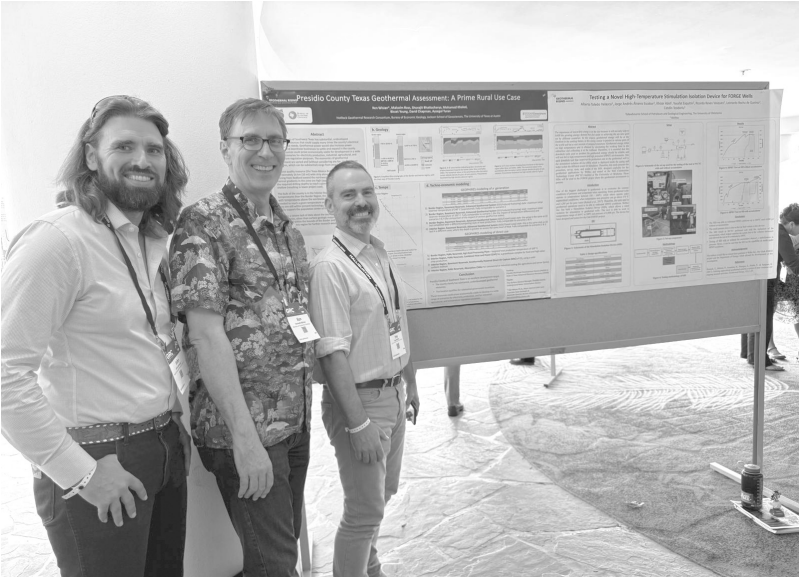
It is possible that council members will select a final candidate and vote to hire a new city manager on Thursday, Baeza said. If that does not happen, the effort to fill the top administrative role will likely stretch into the new year.

### Presidio among first in Texas to advance ‘World-changing’ carbon-negative geothermal project

PRESIDIO — In a groundbreaking move that could reshape the energy landscape of Far West Texas, the Presidio Municipal Development District (PMDD) unanimously voted on December 4 to authorize a letter of intent in support of an ambitious deep-well geothermal project in partnership with Exceed Geo Energy, Inc. out of Austin. This deal comes just weeks after Austin Energy, one of the most innovative electricity utilities in the country, announced its own power purchase agreement with Exceed Geo Energy as a “potential game changer for geothermal energy in Texas.” In a press release, the utility stated that “[t]he pilot is expected to be online and producing carbon-free electricity in 2025 and could signal the next green energy innovation in Texas.”

Presidio’s geothermal journey began with a technical assessment by Dr. Ken Wisian and his team from the Bureau of Economic Geology (BEG) at UT-Austin. Based on his highly favorable findings, Wisian encouraged Presidio representatives to attend Geothermal Rising, the world’s largest geothermal conference, on the Big Island of Hawaii in October. Local geothermal booster Trey Gerfers participated in a rural geothermal panel there that was attended by several geothermal developers who spent the rest of the conference courting Gerfers and John Kennedy, consultant for the City of Presidio. On the final day of the conference, Exceed Geo Energy CEO Tim Tarver and Drilling and Completions Lead Nasikul Islam met with Wisian, Gerfers, and Kennedy to hammer out a preliminary arrangement for geothermal electricity development in Presidio County.

Unlike conventional and enhanced geothermal systems, Exceed Geo Energy’s advanced engineering method uses supercritical carbon dioxide instead of water as the heat transfer medium, offering significant



From left, Presidio City Consultant John Kennedy, Dr. Ken Wisian of UT-Austin’s Bureau of Economic Geology, and Presidio County geothermal booster Trey Gerfers in front of Wisian’s poster at the Geothermal Rising Conference on the Big Island of Hawaii in October.

environmental and efficiency advantages, without any fracking or ongoing water input. “Our closed-loop system not only produces clean, baseload power but also actively sequesters carbon,” said Islam. “By using supercritical CO2 as our working fluid, we’re creating a negative carbon footprint while generating electricity.” Tarver added that Exceed Geo Energy’s plants “take 10 times less land than solar does for the same amount of energy we can create, and we’re baseload power, so that means 100% ‘on’ power.”

Ahead of the PMDD board meeting on December 4, Tarver and Islam toured the Presidio area, including 142 acres of PMDD-owned land behind the industrial park that Kennedy has identified as highly suitable for geothermal development with plenty of room for future growth. In addition to geothermal electricity, the effluent heat from the geothermal system can be harnessed for a wide range of commercial and industrial applications, including greenhouse agriculture, food processing, and refrigeration, creating a cascade of economic opportunities. According to Tarver, “This technology has the potential to transform Presidio’s economy and serve as a blueprint for sustainable development in rural communities worldwide.”

By harnessing the earth’s heat, Presidio could become a hub for sustainable industry, attracting businesses seeking reliable, carbon-negative energy. The project opens up possibilities for innovative applications such as efficient building climate control, domestic hot water production, and even the “green” production of hydrogen and fertilizer. As the project moves forward, this small border town is set to take a giant leap into the future of energy, potentially setting a new standard for renewable, carbon-negative power generation and rural economic development.

Visit [exceedgeoenergy.com](http://exceedgeoenergy.com) to learn more about Exceed Geo Energy.



### Shackelford

**William "Bill" J. Shackelford**, a cherished son of Texas, was called to his eternal rest on December 5, 2024, in Odessa, Texas. Born on June 18, 1940, in the small town of Marathon, Texas, he grew up with a heart as expansive as the landscapes that surrounded him.

A devoted husband, Bill found endless joy and partnership in his life with Isabel Shackelford, whom he affectionately referred to as "old woman." Their bond was a testament to love’s ability to flourish in simplicity, marked by shared laughter and deep affection for one another. His life was one richly woven with the threads of genuine companionship and heartfelt moments.

Bill’s journey was characterized by steadfast commitment, exemplified through his years of dedicated service to the state of Texas until his retirement. Prior to this, he honored his country with pride as a member of the United States Army, embodying the spirit of duty and sacrifice.

A proud graduate of Marathon High School, Bill carried the versatile lessons of his education into the vibrant tapestry of his life. He was an unwavering enthusiast of the great outdoors, indulging in hunting and fishing, pursuits that allowed him to connect with nature and reflect on life’s simple

pleasures. His love for animals was profound, showcasing his compassionate spirit that endeared him to many. He spent countless days in the embrace of the wilderness, forging a profound appreciation for the beauty that surrounded him.

Bill’s legacy is enriched by his siblings, who have predeceased him; his father, William Shackelford, and mother, Marjorie Shackelford, instilled in him a strong sense of family values that he cherished throughout his life, along with his brother, Bunky Rutledge, and brother, Lee Roy Rutledge, who watched over him from beyond this world.

In days to come, the memories of Bill will resonate in the lives of his surviving family, including his loving wife Isabel, his nephews Jon Rutledge of Midland and Roy Rutledge of Monahans, and his nieces Karen Austin of Lubbock and Patsy Rutledge of Midland. Surviving stepchildren are Macky McGuire of Sunrise Beach Village, Texas; Eric McGuire of Laredo, Texas; Joel McGuire of Burnett, Texas; and Roxie McGuire of Marathon, Texas. They will carry forward the warmth of his spirit and the joy he brought into their lives.

Bill Shackelford’s days on this earth were a testament to love, duty, and a splendid appreciation for nature, enveloping all who knew him in kindness and camaraderie. His life will be celebrated, and his memories cherished as a guiding light for those he leaves behind.

Funeral services will be held Saturday, December 21, 2024, at 1 p.m. at Marathon Cemetery in Marathon, Texas.

Services have been entrusted to Alpine Memorial Funeral Home in Alpine, Texas, and gifts and condolences may be extended by visiting [www.alpinememorialfuneralhome.com](http://www.alpinememorialfuneralhome.com).

# Classifieds & public notices

## Sports updates from Marfa ISD athletic director



Asael Zubia lines up a shot.

By LINDA OJEDA

MARFA — The Marfa Shorthorns are gearing up for a second straight weekend of competition as they head to Van Horn for the Van Horn Eagles Basketball Tournament. Both the boys and girls teams are entering the tourney with momentum, aiming to secure key wins early in the season. The boys team, riding a three-game winning streak, will face Van Horn in their opening game on Thursday at 8 a.m. Meanwhile, the girls team is set to take on Fort Davis at 11 a.m. Both teams are eager to prove themselves



Photos courtesy of Linda Ojeda

**Coach Kevin Pippen gives the Marfa High School girls basketball team a play by play.**

and advance through the tournament bracket. Leading the charge for the Shorthorns are standout juniors Alejandro Rodriguez for the boys and Raven Martinez for the girls. Both have been pivotal in their teams’ success so far this season, showcasing skill, leadership, and four-plus games of double digit scoring, rebounds and assists. The tournament will be a great opportunity for both squads to test their abilities against strong competition as they prepare to enter the district season.

## Family raises money for Marfa third-grader battling leukemia

MARFA — The family of a nine-year-old girl from Marfa battling leukemia is reaching out to the community for financial support to help cover medical and travel expenses. A GoFundMe was launched this week by members of her family with a \$30,000 fundraising goal. “As a daughter, sister, niece, and cousin, she has always been a strong, supportive, kind, and special little girl in our lives,” Alexis Villela, the girl’s

sister, wrote on GoFundMe. “Now, as she battles this devastating illness, this will undoubtedly be a financial burden to our family. I have established this fund to help ease as much of the financial stress as possible during this time and to cover medical and travel expenses insurance won’t cover.” To donate, visit <https://gofund.me/b4a15e4d>.

## Customs agents nab smuggler with meth at port

PRESIDIO— U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers working at the Presidio Port of Entry seized 68 pounds of methamphetamine on December 7. The drugs were hidden in a vehicle being driven by a 47-year-old female citizen of Mexico. “CBP officers will employ a variety of tools and techniques to identify and stop drug smugglers,” said CBP Presidio Port Director Benito Reyes Jr.

“This layered enforcement approach allows CBP to quickly separate legitimate trade and travel from those who attempt to violate the laws of our nation.” The seizure was made just after 11 a.m. when a 2010 Honda Pilot with a lone female driver arrived from Mexico. CBP officers selected the vehicle for a secondary exam. CBP officers noted anomalies in the appearance

of the SUV. They utilized a fiber optic scope to search the fuel tank and spotted bundles inside. The fuel tank was removed from the vehicle and CBP officers extracted 63 methamphetamine-filled bundles. CBP officers arrested the driver. She was turned over to Homeland Security Investigations special agents to face federal charges associated with the failed smuggling attempt.

### Estate Sale for Gayle Gordon, 1018 Yale, Marfa Dec 14-15, Sat-Sun, 9-3

Fine Art including works by Julie Speed, Cesar Martinez, Lamar Briggs, Billy Ray Mangham, Terry Ybanez, Jean Jack, Kaeko Moti, Charles Pebworth, Josephine Rubirosa and many more.

Herman Miller Eames chair and footstool, 7ft burlwood parsons table, Isamu Noguchi floor lamp, antique tables, church pew, Chippendale dining chairs, Secretary desk, kitchen/hoosier table, thousands of books and cookbooks, Mexican folk art, Oaxacan figures and ceramics, clothes, linens, kitchen ware-glass, dishes, small appliances, pots/pans by Staub, Le Crueset, All Clad. Antiques- cut glass, fine porcelain, midcentury glass, Asian art, Inuit, pre-Colombian pottery, queen bed, Willie Nelson's First July 4th Picnic poster and so much more!

Don't miss this sale!

Dear Patients of the Marfa Country Clinic,

I will be leaving the clinic to continue my career with the Ysleta del Sur Pueblo in El Paso, Texas. My last day in the clinic will be January 15, 2025. Don Culbertson, PA-C will continue to see patients at this clinic. Your medical records are confidential, and a copy can be transferred to another doctor or released to you or another person you designate only through your permission. Requests for transfers will be filled as per time limitations dictated by state law requirements, which also limits how long records are to be kept on file.

Thank you for welcoming me back home and allowing me to be your doctor for these nearly two years.

Sincerely,  
**Marco Garcia, DO**  
**Marfa Country Clinic**

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Rob Mazurek  
and more?!

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5-9pm

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Saturday  
December 21  
3pm

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Please send resumes to: [ebaeza@villagefarms.com](mailto:ebaeza@villagefarms.com)  
Or call 432-729-3071 Ext. 607 to inquire

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.

Davis Mountains Nut Company needs general help and a management trainee.

Starting at \$12.00 per hour and going to \$40,000 annually.  
Apply in person!

### GOVERNMENT CONTACTS

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

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

CITY OF MARFA  
Manny Baeza, City of Marfa Mayor  
[mayor@cityofmarfa.com](mailto:mayor@cityofmarfa.com)  
(432) 295-0048  
Raúl Lara, Mayor Pro Tem  
[councilmemberlara@cityofmarfa.com](mailto:councilmemberlara@cityofmarfa.com)

Alpine Mayor Catherine Eaves:  
City Hall: (432) 837-3301  
Email: [mayor.eaves@ci.alpine.tx.us](mailto:mayor.eaves@ci.alpine.tx.us)

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

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

FEDERAL:  
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