

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

Friends group seeks to beautify Marfa Cemetery

By MARY CANTRELL
mkcantrell@bigbendsentinel.com

MARFA — The Marfa Cemetery Association, a reinvigorated friends group, is seeking to beautify the historically-rich graveyard for the deceased, their loved ones and the public.

Marfa’s three cemeteries — the Marfa Cemetery, Cementerio de la Merced and the Catholic Cemetery — are all located on adjacent hilly lots on the west side of town. They are divided by fences, and by race; the Marfa Cemetery is the predominantly white cemetery while the other two are predominantly Hispanic.

The Marfa Cemetery, described in a 2014 Marfa Public Radio article as “full of well-groomed, grassy plots,” has since succumbed to the harsh desert environment in the absence of a caretaker and routine watering. Dirt is easily picked up by wind, and established trees have died.

Marfa Cemetery Association President Kim Bedell points out that even the cedar trees, whose taproots reach well below the surface, are yellowing. She said when those that have left the area return to bury their family members they are “shocked” at the condition of the site. Flags commemorating veterans’ graves are “whipped and torn,” and some headstones appear neglected, slumping to one side or nearly fully covered by tumbleweeds and brush.

“We want it to have a more peaceful and tranquil feeling than what it is right now,” Bedell said. “It’s just dirt. There’s no grass left.”

The cemetery was incorporated in the ‘50s, and this month the association elected four new officers to help improve the burial ground’s appearance.

“We’re excited to have that place looking better, and that’s our goal, is to redo, refurb and get it back on track of being more of a cared-for cemetery,” Bedell said.

Water was recently shut off after several pipes burst in a freeze and started leaking — a key issue that will have to be addressed swiftly, Bedell said. Also on the association’s to-do list is to hire a new caretaker, get bids from landscape architects, remove dead trees, add benches and, perhaps of utmost importance, fundraise. Bedell said the group would like to engage Marfa’s younger population to assist, and is open to the possibility of collaborating with the other two cemeteries on beautification projects.

“We really want to work together with them,” Bedell said. “We want it all to look like a beautiful parkside hill.”

Bedell said the Cementerio de la Merced, in particular, is better maintained. The Merced Cemetery Association has recently

(Continued on page 2)

INSIDE
NEWS P. 1 - 10
OPINION P. 4 - 5
CLASSIFIEDS P. 10

The West Texan Media Group, LLC



8 0 4 8 7 9 3 6 2 3 5 7



Staff photo by Sam Karas

Carlie Tise (left) and Ashley Mahaney wave to passers-by during a protest held in Study Butte this past weekend against cuts to Big Bend National Park staff initiated by billionaire Elon Musk’s Department of Government Efficiency.

Military could start encampment, patrols in Big Bend National Park

By SAM KARAS
sam@bigbendsentinel.com

SOUTH BREWSTER COUNTY — Active-duty military personnel could return to patrol Big Bend National Park for the first time in nearly three decades following a surge of troops sent to the border by President Donald Trump his first week in office. Negotiations between park leadership and U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) began in earnest last week, sparking anxiety in a region still scarred by its last armed occupation.

The park declined to comment on

the matter, which was relayed to the The Big Bend Sentinel by numerous sources who wished to remain anonymous amid a wave of layoffs.

Troops arrived in El Paso for training ahead of military exercises the last week of January to bolster local Customs and Border Protection (CBP) operations, but have yet to reach the Big Bend country. “National security cannot exist without border security and border security is the reason why the U.S. Border Patrol exists,” a spokesperson for Big Bend Sector Border Patrol wrote to *The Sentinel*. “[We have] a longstanding

history of working closely with federal, state, and local agencies to enhance border security, including collaboration with the Department of Defense.”

On January 24, USNORTHCOM announced that 1,500 active-duty Army and Marine Corps servicemembers would be headed to the border in the coming weeks to supplement 2,500 already working with CBP. Numbers and details are still in flux. “The exact number of personnel will fluctuate as units rotate personnel and as additional forces are tasked to deploy once planning efforts are finalized,” the

agency wrote in a press release. “These military forces will support enhanced detection and monitoring efforts and repair and emplace physical barriers.”

The U.S. Cavalry had a strong presence in the lower Big Bend before the creation of the national park — perhaps most infamously at Glenn Springs, the site of a Villista raid on an Army encampment that resulted in the deaths of three soldiers and the taking of two American captives.

During World War II, rancher Elmo Johnson allowed the military

(Continued on page 2)

“An incredibly uniquely bad time’: national park layoffs prompt anxiety about the future

By SAM KARAS
sam@bigbendsentinel.com

STUDY BUTTE — As people across the country swapped teddy bears and boxes of chocolate on February 14, nearly 1,000 National Park Service employees received an extremely unromantic valentine from Washington D.C. “The Department determined that you have failed to demonstrate fitness or qualifications for continued employment because your subject matter knowledge, skills, and abilities do not meet

the Department’s current needs,” the email read. “It is necessary and appropriate to terminate your appointment.”

Of those 1,000, five worked at Big Bend National Park. Kelon Crawford, a physical scientist who monitored air, water and dark sky quality for the park, knew that tensions had been mounting for weeks — her supervisor had been asked to provide a list of probationary, or “career conditional,” employees up the chain of command for review.

Probationary employees are those

who have served one year or less in their post, but she’d never heard of anyone getting fired before their year was over unless they’d stopped showing up or committed a heinous crime. “In my mind, I didn’t think anything was going to happen,” she said.

Deputy Superintendent Rick Gupman began an all-staff meeting that Friday by saying that he had been asked about the probationary employees but had no update. Then his phone buzzed — an email from Washington. He didn’t have specific names yet, but the layoffs were on.

Crawford’s heart sank. She fought back tears the rest of the meeting and went home, texting her husband, Eric Hamm, to meet her as soon as possible.

Similar scenes were playing out all over the country as Crawford joined 2,300 total Department of the Interior personnel who were laid off from their jobs that day under the direction of the federal Office of Personnel Management (OPM). Over 2,000 workers were also laid off from the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), which falls under

(Continued on page 3)

Blackwell and Fort Davis historic sites in limbo due to DOGE directives

By MARY CANTRELL
mkcantrell@bigbendsentinel.com

TRI-COUNTY — The future of Marfa’s Blackwell School National Historic Site, one of the nation’s newest parks, and one of few dedicated to preserving Mexican American heritage, is uncertain due to recent Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) actions to curb the federal workforce.

“There’s a lot of things that have unfortunately converged at this moment in time where Blackwell School National Historic Site really is at risk of not only not being open more fully, the way it should be,

with a full staff, but it’s at risk of not being able to be open at all,” said Daniel Hernandez, president of the Blackwell School Alliance.

The Blackwell School served as a de-facto segregated school for Mexican American students from 1909 to 1965. In 2022, after 16 years of advocacy on behalf of alumni, activists and lawmakers, the Blackwell National Historic Site Act was signed into law, officially designating the adobe schoolhouse as a federal park.

Since then, efforts have been underway to seek public input on a foundation document, develop a scope of collections and interpretive

plan, assess the structure’s integrity and determine site accessibility. Staff from the nearby Fort Davis National Historic Site — a frontier military post established in 1854 — are in charge of administering Blackwell while it awaits its own park rangers.

Hernandez said the site is almost “in a worse position” now than before it was a National Historic Site (NHS) because of the federal hiring freeze. Volunteers from the alliance, which formed in 2006, used to run the space as a museum. But that option is no longer available, Hernandez said, due to a lack of signed volunteer agreements

required by the parks service.

“We were under the impression that once the site was established the federal government would come in and start staffing and doing the interpretive work and everything that needs to happen at a new park,” Hernandez said. “But a lot of that is just largely on hold because of the change in administration.”

For now, Fort Davis NHS employees ensure Blackwell remains open to visitors on Saturdays and Sundays. But that’s a concern for Hernandez, who fears NPS is “hamstrung” by the hiring freeze, unable to hire Blackwell

(Continued on page 2)

Council considers new billing software following resident complaints

By GINA VERA
For The Big Bend Sentinel

ALPINE — The City Council is considering the possible replacement of USTI, the city’s current utility (gas, water and sewage) billing software system after receiving a list of top five choices from city staff.

Customer Clerk Supervisor Carmen Rodriguez presented details of her team’s review of multiple software systems at the February 18 council meeting, including the pros and cons that led to selection of the top five. The team reviewed 11 options over about 18 months, Rodriguez said.

The list five included (in order of most to least recommended) included: CUSI, Fund View, Muni-Link, MyGov and Smart Fusion.

Rodriguez, Mayor Catherine Eaves and council members pointed to sketchy, error-filled service for residents and an often-complete lack of responsiveness from the city’s current system, USTI, as reasons for the search for a replacement.

“We urgently need something that works better,” Rodriguez said. “What we currently have is just no longer surprising, just no longer acceptable. It doesn’t meet our expectations. We are unable to do our job ... without good software.”

Eaves and Councilmember Darin Nance supported Rodriguez, interjecting that they had heard from a lot of resident complaints.

Residents have been frustrated by multiple issues with the online billing system, Rodriguez said, including system errors that have prevented them from accomplishing tasks such as making payments and resetting their passwords, and others that have caused account summaries to be inaccurate — not reflecting payments that were made or posting some twice. USTI’s response to these issues has also been frustrating, she said.

“We don’t know — that’s not an answer I can give our customers,” Rodriguez said. “And unfortunately, that is a very common answer from them.”

The team researching possible new systems checked three references for each of the five top picks. Those were strong for CUSI and during demonstrations, the team found it user-friendly and that it contained many useful tools for customers.

Council members had questions regarding the cost of transitioning to a new system and whether CUSI and the other possible options could be merged with new financial software, which they also believe is needed.

Councilmember Reagan Stone asked what the increase in cost would be if CUSI was selected. City staff estimated the increase would be about \$15,000 per year, with onboarding of the new system costing about \$32,000 and yearly costs of about \$34,800.

Stone, staff and other council members postulated that the increase could be made by the money saved in postage, staffing and office supplies by combining water and gas billing and by possibly changing the billing date or adding a grace period in consideration of when paychecks are sent out from social security and the school district.

Regarding integrating a new billing system with future financial software, Rodriguez advised that Fund View offered financial software to work with its utility billing software making integration

(Continued on page 5)

Marfa Cemetery

(Continued from page 1)



Staff photos by Mary Cantrell

Kim Bedell waters a volunteer Texas sage bush in between her in-laws' graves. She is part of a group looking to beautify the Marfa Cemetery, which has fallen into disrepair.

The Marfa Cemetery Association is getting organized in order to hire a new caretaker for the property after neglect caused trees and other landscaping to die.

experienced the passing of members Armando Garcia and David Chavez but is still moving forward and doing well, member Consuelo Chavez said.

Bedell said a total of 1,600 plots at the Marfa Cemetery are full, including those that have been purchased in advance, like hers. She plans to be buried at the cemetery, along with her late husband and his parents. Bedell and her husband were in the process of looking into cemetery updates when he passed away suddenly.

"It's just given me even more steam to get that place looking halfway nice," Bedell said.

On Monday afternoon she visited her family plots at the Marfa Cemetery, emptying two plastic water bottles onto a volunteer Texas sage bush in

between her in-laws' graves. The Bedell family plots are located in the newer, and smaller, part of the cemetery which is currently barren with no landscaping. The older section's graves, including that of William Edward Russell, whose final resting place is commemorated by a Texas Historic Commission placard, date back to at least the late 1800s.

In a "pauper's corner" on the far side of the cemetery, two friends who were once staples of the community lie side by side, one marker reading, "Granison Chaney, 1893-1972, loyal citizen," and the other, "George Livingston, 1901-1974, Paisano Hotel chef."

Bedell said the association would like to designate the old and new sections with formal signage and fix up a small brick building on the site,

adding maps and benches so people can locate their loved ones' graves and shelter from the sun. She said they want to restore a sense of pride and dignity to the Marfa Cemetery for all interred individuals, including those that lack regular visitors.

"We definitely don't want to do just mine or yours," Bedell said. "We want to do everyone's and step in for those families that aren't here anymore."

If you would like to get involved with the Marfa Cemetery Association, join the Marfa Cemetery Friends group on Facebook, email marfacemetery@gmail.com, call Bedell at 903-327-2843, or keep an eye out for meeting notices in The Big Bend Sentinel.

Blackwell in limbo

(Continued from page 1)

employees and seasonal workers, meaning closures could be coming. The superintendency at Fort Davis NHS is also vacant after the resignation of David Larson at the end of the year.

"From what I know, staffing at Fort Davis is a challenge as it is and being down a superintendent and also needing to co-manage this brand new national park site, it's just proved to be a real challenge for them," Hernandez said.

The only Blackwell employees that have been brought on so far, to Hernandez's knowledge, have been temporary interns from entities including the Student Conservation Association and the Latino Heritage Internship Program that have partnered with the parks service.

Fort Davis NHS Interim Superintendent Doug Olds did not respond to a request for comment from The Big Bend Sentinel. Chief of Interpretation Chelsea Rios, who is working with Blackwell closely, according to Hernandez, declined to comment, and recommended the paper reach out to the NPS Office of Communications. That office did not respond to a request for comment by press time.

Hernandez said the region's national parks are a major economic driver — the Fort Davis NHS generated \$2.7 million for the local economy in 2023, according to the NPS — and with spring break fast approaching, it would be a shame to see visitors who travel across the country to the area turned away due to staffing shortages that could otherwise "be solved very quickly."

"We're on a collision course towards disaster in the Big Bend region in terms of our public lands," Hernandez said. "The services and the visitation experience that people have come to expect is not going to be what's waiting for them if things don't change very soon."

Someone familiar with regional Department of Interior operations who wished to remain anonymous for fear of retaliation, said, to their



Staff photo by Mary Cantrell

Blackwell School alumni gathered in April of 2023 for a community block party to celebrate the site's designation as a National Historic Site. Now, despite the hard-won victory, the site's establishment is on hold due to Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) directives.

knowledge, no one employed at Fort Davis NHS full time has been fired. They were aware of a regional Geographic Information System (GIS) worker involved at the park that was fired by DOGE due to their probationary status.

Fort Davis NHS employees were issued a return to work order on Monday, which requires them to be at the site without the option for remote work, the anonymous source said. The park, like many across the nation, is understaffed with a need for more seasonal workers, they said.

Federal employees, including local NPS staff, received the initial "fork in the road," email weeks ago from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) encouraging them to retire early or leave to go into private sector jobs. Then, this past Saturday, federal employees received an email — which DOGE's Elon Musk claimed credit for — titled "what did you do last week?" instructing them to respond by midnight on Monday with five things they accomplished the prior week or risk being fired.

On Monday afternoon, the Department of the Interior, which manages the NPS, sent an email, viewed by *The Sentinel*, to its employees stating that the email was legitimate and to respond with the five bullet points and cc: their manager. Once that guidance was issued, Fort Davis NHS supervisors had all employees respond, the anonymous source said.

"They sat us all down, and they basically made us respond to the five bullets just to cover our asses and be like, at least you did something, they can't fire you," the anonymous source said. "It's kind of sad to me that our local people wouldn't push back a little harder."

The anonymous source said routine performance evaluations for park employees are already in place, and that the recent DOGE actions are "demoralizing," with an apparent goal of "trying to undercut job protections."

The emails, staffing cuts at parks across the state and country, and uncertainty about the next federal budget and potential shut downs are creating a fearful working environment, they said. "This whole thing, it's just sowing chaos," they said. "It's really frustrating a lot of employees."

Military in BBNP

(Continued from page 1)

use of his airstrip, which was notable as the only civilian-operated military airfield in the United States. The remote ranch was an oasis for military pilots, many of whom enjoyed whiling away precious off-duty hours on the porch with Mr. Johnson and a colorful cast of characters from both sides of the river.

But once the park was established in 1944, active duty military all but vanished from within the protected area's boundaries — only to return in the mid-1990s to kick up dust along the River Road.

In 1989, President George H.W. Bush created Joint Task Force 6 (JTF-6) as part of his National Drug Control Strategy. JTF-6 brought different branches of the military together to conduct training along the border — a location chosen in part to support Border Patrol operations and in part because leadership thought it physically resembled the Middle East, where the Gulf War was about to bubble over.

About 20% of JTF-6's budget and manpower was allocated toward engineering projects. In the Big Bend, most of these improvements were made to roads used by Border Patrol through private ranches and the rugged River Road through the interior of the national park.

While some local leaders were grateful for help with infrastructure projects that otherwise wouldn't have gotten done, JTF-6's presence in the region was fraught with controversy from the start, sparking town halls and spirited letters to the editor in local newspapers. Local ranchers felt duped, alleging that the military had not been clear that the "free" road improvements they'd been promised in exchange for property access would require an extensive environmental review before they could even begin. "Some Big Bend residents wonder what price they're paying for a well-prepared armed forces and minor interruptions in the interminable flow of drugs into this country," Orlando Segura reported in *The Sentinel* on September 16, 1993. "Many feel that the involvement of the military in 'support' roles is just one step away from undeclared martial law."



Photo courtesy of the University of North Texas Libraries Portal to Texas History

Cavalrymen pose in front of a house in Glenn Springs, a military outpost in what's now Big Bend National Park, in 1916.

In October of that year, under pressure from constituents, the Jeff Davis County Commissioners Court rescinded their permission for the military to access county-owned land in a show of solidarity with the ranchers. Folks in other counties pressured their local officials to follow suit. "Why fix up a road to help stop the flow of drugs?" Terrell County rancher Pinkie Carruthers wondered aloud at a town hall. "They want to improve private roads, but I can't see how that will help stop the flow of drugs. It looks like they're promoting drugs."

The controversy faded as the road grading crews migrated south, and JTF-6 would only face public

backlash again in a freak accident in February 1996, when a surprise windstorm forced two Cobra helicopters on training exercises to emergency land in Marfa — one touching down in a pasture in a residential neighborhood. (*The Sentinel* reported that — in a display of true Big Bend hospitality — the landowner's wife brought the traumatized trainees cookies, and then-Sheriff Abe Gonzalez invited them over for breakfast.)

But whatever mild irritation towards JTF-6 some locals harbored turned into out-and-out hostility on May 20, 1997, when Presidio High School senior Esequiel Hernandez was shot and killed by Corporal

Clemente Bañuelos, a U.S. Marine on drug patrol in Hernandez's hometown of Redford.

A grand jury declined to indict any of the four Marines on patrol that day, and the federal government dropped its investigation soon after, but the damage to public relations was done. "This past week an event took place that, for the citizens of Presidio County, makes crystalline clear the absolute power and intrusive nature of our federal government," Mark Davis of Marfa wrote to *The Sentinel*. "This was not the usual slow erosion of our individual rights to which we have become so accustomed. It was a covert, hostile act, which breaks the back of the Constitution and breaks the trust with all of the citizens."

In January 1998, the Pentagon recommended that a temporary halt on military drug patrols along the border become permanent. "It's not worth the legal liability for our soldiers, and the actual amount of drugs seized throughout the performance of those missions proved to be modest," an anonymous senior official told the Scripps-Howard News Service.

As of 2021, all branches of the military — with the exception of the Coast Guard — are subject to the Posse Comitatus Act. Originally signed by President Rutherford B. Hayes in 1878, the act limits the power of the armed forces to enforce domestic law. (At the time of Hernandez's death, the Marines were not explicitly included in the law but were functionally subject to the same restrictions.)

This year's troop surge to the border will be matched by 10,000 Mexican active duty service members deployed to the other side of the border, which both the Sheinbaum and Trump administrations hope will curb migration and drug trafficking between the two countries. "The ability to control every portion of the border — underneath, above ground, [by air] and by sea is something we take very seriously, and we will ensure [that happens] as rapidly as possible," Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth told the Department of Defense's internal news service.

National park layoffs

(Continued from page 1)

the umbrella of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Since President Trump’s inauguration on January 20, the OPM has become a tool wielded by another acronym swirling in the federal alphabet soup: DOGE, or the Department of Government Efficiency, headed by unelected billionaire Elon Musk. Musk has promised to cut federal spending by any means necessary in order to reduce the government’s \$36.22 trillion deficit.

DOGE has claimed savings of upwards of \$55 billion, but its methods have proved controversial, sparking outrage and triggering lawsuits across the country. Even those generally supportive of the department’s mission are confused by its targets — why start with the National Park Service, which represents less than one fifteenth of one percent of the national budget?

The layoffs at the National Park Service have hit a nerve, prompting protests across the country. On Saturday, images began to circulate on social media of the American flag hung upside down from the face of El Capitan — one of the most iconic peaks in the National Park system — by Yosemite National Park employees. Per the flag code, the red white and blue may only be flown upside down in times of “dire distress.”

Yosemite lost a dozen staff members on Valentine’s Day, including its only locksmith, responsible for the maintenance of law enforcement gun safes, vaults stocked with valuables, copying keys for employee housing and freeing tourists trapped in bathrooms. “The people that fired me don’t know who I am, or what I do,” the locksmith, Nate Vince, wrote on Instagram. “They simply don’t understand this park and how big and complex it is.”

Vince’s and Crawford’s stories — and those of thousands of others who staff America’s public lands — have become a rallying cry for millions of people alarmed about the future. If no one has the keys, then who’s driving?

“This land was made for you and me”

As the flag hung upside down in Yosemite Valley, folks gathered in Study Butte at a pair of highway pullouts just west of the entrance sign to Big Bend National Park. Bruce Springsteen’s “Born in the USA” blasted on a Bluetooth speaker while a crowd that fluctuated between 40 and 70 flashed homemade poster board signs at oncoming traffic.

“No park ranger? You’re in danger!” one sign read.

“There is nothing so American as our national parks,” read another.

Most passers by honked and waved. A handful flipped the bird. One man rolled down the windows of his truck and pumped his fist in the air. “Hail Trump!” he shouted.

The gathering was organized in part by Hayley Pines, who has guided in Terlingua for nine seasons. She was inspired to get her friends and neighbors together after hearing about what had happened to Crawford.

Pines anticipated that — without people like Crawford — the parks would suffer. “They might just have to close access to the land, which was set aside over a hundred years ago for all of the American public and for people visiting America to enjoy,” she said. “Everyone will lose access to public land that’s meant to be for everyone, no matter who you voted for.”

Pines got a bloody valentine from DOGE all her own. During the brutally hot Terlingua summers, she’s worked 11 seasons across the West for the United States Forest Service, a Jacqueline of all trades running mule teams, working trails and serving on fire crews. On the 13th, she got a call from her USFS bosses, whom she considered friends and assumed just wanted to catch up.

It turned out that word had gotten out about the impending layoffs. “They

wanted to tell me before I read about it in the *New York Times*,” Pines said.

Organizing the gathering was not without its ups and downs. A friend advertising the event on Facebook had to take down his post after it devolved into a flame war over the use of the term “protest,” with pro-Trump community members concerned that “crybabies” and “snowflakes” might run riot. They decided to keep it simple, inviting folks one at a time through word of mouth.

Longtime Terlinguan Jenny Schooler carried a fan-favorite sign: “SHITTER’S FULL,” mounted on a long piece of cane. The sign is a reference to the NPS’s waterless pit toilets, which must be manually cleaned and packed out on mules from remote locations.

To Schooler, it’s not just potty humor. “It’s important to realize that the people laid off aren’t just waste and bloat,” she said. “They are essential to everyone’s enjoyment of the outdoors and aren’t something that’s going to be done by AI. For years and years and years to come, we’re not going to be able to automate taking poop out of backcountry toilets.”

While Schooler is a believer in the spiritual mission of protecting wilderness, she also knows that the park service is her community’s financial bottom line. It’s estimated that national parks generate about \$15 for every dollar of investment by the federal government. Last year, Big Bend drove \$56.4 million in economic growth in “gateway” communities like Terlingua.

If the park closes — or if the state of its skeleton crew facilities drives visitors away — that could mean the end of a way of life. “Terlingua wouldn’t be here without the National Park Service,” she said.

“Big Bend is a barometer”

Big Bend National Park is so remote that it’s easy to forget that its fortunes rise and fall with the rest of the world. If you take a look at its history, you can see funding and focus fluctuate as park superintendents and presidents come and go — not unlike reading a tree’s rings for evidence of long-ago drought. “The park is always facing moments,” said Michael Welsh, a professor of American history at the University of Northern Colorado. “Big Bend is a barometer of one administration pivoting one degree to the next.”

Welsh studies the history of institutions and focuses on the Southwest. Around the turn of the millennium, he undertook an ambitious project at the request of park staff — what would become *Landscape of Ghosts, River of Dreams: an Administrative History of Big Bend National Park*.

Rattle off a few buzzwords from recent political discourse — economic collapse, fascism, socialism, drought, climate change, DEI, nuclear war — and you’ll be able to find them somewhere in the story of the park, which was envisioned during the Great Depression. Much of its original infrastructure was built by Black and Chicano men hired by the Civilian Conservation Corps, part of Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s extensive web of New Deal programs. In the spirit of the president’s “Good Neighbor” policy toward Latin America, many early boosters of the park eventually wanted to see it straddle both sides of the river.

By the time the deed to Big Bend National Park crossed the president’s desk in 1944 — a week after D-Day — the world was a much different place, cold in the shadow of the atomic bomb. But in the age of headlines, the park had been a glimmer of hope. “The 1930s was this magic moment for the Park Service, and then it was gone,” Welsh said. “It almost vanished overnight.”

While other presidents have initiated notable infrastructure projects since 1944, no president leaned on developing parks as a way to boost economic

growth to the same degree. The way the parks have been monetized has changed, too, evolving into a corporate model that rakes in billions of dollars a year — most of which go to benefit folks outside the NPS. And the dream of a collaborative Mexican and American park has all but died, with only a concertina wire cross marking the spot.

Marcos Paredes — who served as a ranger at Big Bend National Park for more than two decades — said that prior to the Trump administration, the biggest shift in the park he remembers seeing between presidents came with George W. Bush. That may have partly been an accident of history — 9/11, which took place during his first year in office, prompted a major shift in foreign policy, which manifested in Big Bend as the closure of informal border crossings like Boquillas.

As a border park, Big Bend was uniquely impacted by these closures, as well as the creation of the Department of Homeland Security and the reorganization of older iterations of the Border Patrol, U.S. Customs, and the brand-new agency ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) under its umbrella.

Paredes maintains that even those impacts feel faint compared to the events of the first month of Trump’s second term in office. “This is an incredibly uniquely bad time,” he said.

Parks around the country have cut hours and access in response to this month’s layoffs, and Paredes said Big Bend might have to follow suit. During his time with the NPS, he had the unfortunate duty of standing guard at the gate at Persimmon Gap during a government shutdown, turning people away who had come to see the park from all over the United States. “It was the worst duty I ever had with the park service,” he said. The park has temporarily shuttered for budgetary shortfalls a handful of times in its history. Administrations have experimented with a few different arrangements — locking gates, leaving gates open and shuttering facilities — but no matter which path of action is chosen, unattended visitors tend to behave badly.

After each shutdown, park staff return to find four-wheeler ruts in cryptobiotic soil and graffiti on ancient rock art panels and trash piled up everywhere. After COVID-19 closures, rangers discovered that Chisos Basin guests, disgruntled by the state of the unattended restrooms, had taken to defecating in the parking lot.

Reduced or nonexistent staff also has an impact on visitor safety. In a place as remote as Big Bend, search and rescue operations take a village. One particularly harrowing example: during a government shutdown in 2019, a man hiking in Santa Elena Canyon fell and broke his leg. There were no rangers on duty, requiring a rag-tag team of fellow guests to help carry him to safety.

Paredes was not optimistic about the future of the park, should the layoffs escalate. “They used to tell us we needed to do more with less,” he said. “They’re getting to the point where they’re going to start doing less with less.”

“Double or triple duty”

Unfortunately for Big Bend National Park, there may not be a kindly band of strangers waiting at the bottom of the cliff for rescue. The chaos and confusion wrought by Musk and his team has had a huge impact on staff morale — to a degree that may have permanent repercussions for an administration doing its best to keep up with D.C.’s demands.

On Valentine’s Day, Crawford’s husband, Eric Hamm — a maintenance worker for the park — had also been in the fateful all-staff meeting but was

(Continued on page 6)

MARFA LIVE ARTS

IN ASSOCIATION WITH MUSD

PRESENTS

Winter Showcase

Theater

MONOLOGUES BY JUNIOR HIGH STUDENTS

PERFORMED BY MARFA ACTORS!

AT Planet Marfa

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2025

AT 5PM • FREE

MARFA LIVE ARTS

MARFA EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Texas Commission on the Arts

MARFA INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

MARFALIVEARTS.ORG

ARTWORK BY GISELLE TORRES

MARFA LIVE ARTS + MARFA ISD

PRESENT

14TH ANNUAL

ONE ACT PLAYS

BY MARFA HIGH SCHOOL AWARD-WINNING PLAYWRIGHTS

PERFORMED BY MARFA ACTORS

FAMILY LEGACY BY GISELLE TORRES	THE GIRL WITH DREAMS AND PURPOSE BY ALEXIS VILLELA
THE LIGHTS KEEP SECRETS BY MEMO GUARDIOLA	SAMMY VS. THE FORCES OF MCDONALD'S BY KAYLA VASQUEZ

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5TH, 2025

CROWLEY THEATER

FREE — 7PM

MARFA LIVE ARTS

Texas Commission on the Arts

The Roca Charitable Trust

MARFA EDUCATION FOUNDATION

MARFA INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Crowley theater

Artwork by Zoey Salgado

WWW.MARFALIVEARTS.ORG

Opinion

Rural Texans suffer more than most at the hands of politicians

By David Marwitz and Deece Eckstein

"Democracy is the theory that the common people know what they want, and deserve to get it good and hard." — H. L. Mencken.

Rural Texas is getting it good and hard from the governing elites in Austin and Washington. Whether it's education, healthcare or agriculture policy, decision-makers at the state and federal levels are leaving rural Texans behind. Let's consider how state and federal policies leave rural Texans in the lurch.

Education — Texas has about 900,000 K-12 students on more than 2,000 rural campuses. They comprise 15.4% of the total K-12 population, the highest percentage of any state, according to the U.S. Department of Education. As we all know, rural schools face challenges of personnel, resources, and transportation, but still graduate their students at a higher rate than urban or suburban schools. However, those graduates are less likely to have access to college-level coursework, take college entrance exams, or enroll in college, often limiting their futures.

Texas' school funding system has been in disrepair for a generation and is getting worse. Adjusted for inflation, the state now invests as much per pupil as it did in 2014. The feds kick in \$2,425 per pupil, and local taxpayers kick in \$6,853 — that's 48% of the total cost paid at the local level. In rural school districts, though, that percentage may be higher because of additional costs. For instance, in 2021-2022, local taxpayers paid 84% of the Marfa ISD's budget and 63% of the Marathon ISD's budget. Overall, Texas ranks 42nd in K-12 school funding.

To make matters worse, our state leaders are pushing for passage of a "school choice" bill, which would divert taxpayer dollars to private schools. Sadly, such schools are not an option in 158 of Texas' 254 counties, according to the Texas Private School Accreditation Commission. Once again, rural Texans are left behind by the actions of the elites in Austin.

Healthcare — Rural Texas has seen a steady decline in access to healthcare. Governing elites in Austin lament the problem but have not done anything about it. In doing so, they deprive rural Texans of needed healthcare and leave billions of healthcare dollars laying on the table.

Texas is one of only 10 states, and the only border state, that has not expanded Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act. The decision not to participate in the program costs Texans approximately \$5 billion every year. Those funds could have been used to save rural hospitals and address the physician, nursing and other health professional shortages. But instead, our federal tax dollars go to California, New York and other expansion states to provide healthcare for their citizens.

One of the leading causes for increased costs in healthcare is the number of patients without health insurance. Unfortunately, Texas continues to lead the nation in both the number and percentage of uninsured patients. Because of this lack of access to health insurance, 1 in 5 Texas adults don't have a primary care doctor they see regularly and utilize hospital emergency rooms for routine care. As everyone knows, emergency rooms are the most expensive places to receive medical treatment.

Since 2010, Texas leads the nation in hospital closings and currently has 76 rural hospitals that are at risk of closing. We rural Texans know what happens when a hospital closes. The doctors and other healthcare professionals leave town, with cascading effects as families relocate, businesses and schools close, and community life grinds to a halt.

Of the 163 rural hospitals still operating, fewer than 70 deliver babies and 50% must rely on local taxpayers' property taxes for funding to stay open. To make matters worse, 77 counties have no hospital, and 35 counties have no doctors. And some rural patients must drive more than 75 miles to the nearest hospital.

Agriculture — Agriculture has always been a mainstay of the Texas economy. The 185,000 Texas farms and ranches compose more than one-sixth of all the agricultural land in the U.S.A. Our chief crops are cotton, cattle, dairy, poultry, and corn. And we lead the nation in beef and cotton production.

Of course, Texas agriculture faces severe challenges, the largest being prolonged drought conditions. Not only will agriculture not survive without water, but our rural communities will die, too.

One cannot discuss agriculture in Texas without noting the critical role played by farmworkers, many of them undocumented. Texas continues to face a shortage of agriculture workers. The current mass deportation strategy has added to concerns that crops, such as vegetables, produce, fruits, and other perishable items, will go unpicked and rot in the fields. Forty-two percent of agriculture workers are immigrants who lack proper documentation. And in many cases, undocumented workers are paid up to 50% less than other workers. Mass deportations will not only lead to higher labor costs but also higher consumer costs, and many foods will no longer be available on our grocery store shelves.

Texas' strong agricultural sector also makes it vulnerable to fluctuations in international relations, such as the trade wars over tariffs during the first Trump Administration. You will recall that after countries placed retaliatory tariffs on agricultural goods during President Trump's first term, the federal government had to pay farmers \$32 billion in farm subsidies.

And we could be headed towards an even more expensive taxpayer bailout this time. China, Canada, and Mexico are 50% of our agriculture exports. And if retaliatory tariffs are imposed, markets could be lost for years.

Meanwhile, Elon Musk's attack on USAID means food grown by U.S. farmers will not be used; 41% of USAID food aid is grown by U.S. farmers, about \$2.1 billion.

Conclusion — Texas is doing well — we're the best state in the Union. But not all Texans are doing well, and rural Texans suffer more than most. The irony is, it is rural Texans who provide victory margins for our current crop of political leaders — and have done so for at least a generation. Our leaders must pay more attention to the needs of their rural voters — and rural voters must pay more attention to who they're voting for.

David Marwitz was an advocate for not-for-profit healthcare organizations in Austin for more than 25 years, and was a former staff person for members of the Texas House of Representatives and a governor of Texas. He is a full-time resident of Marfa.

Deece Eckstein worked in and around the Texas Capitol for 30 years, over which time he served a governor of Texas, a member of the state Senate, multiple counties and numerous advocacy groups and nonprofits. He currently lives in Marathon.



OUR WATER MATTERS

Protecting environmental flows in Texas – the work continues

By TREY GERFERS

Faithful readers will recall that environmental flows involve the “quantity, quality and timing of water that are necessary to sustain the fish and wildlife of a river, wetland or coastal zone,” according to the Texas Living Waters Project. The protection of environmental flows is critical for a healthy environment as well as a thriving economy. But experts are warning that the vitality of our streams, rivers and estuaries is at serious risk from flow depletion.

One of those experts is environmental attorney Myron Hess, who authored a report in 2021 titled “Delivering on the Unrealized Potential of Senate Bill 3 for Achieving Meaningful Environmental Flow Protection,” which was the subject of a recent issue of this column. With the opening of the 89th Legislature last month and the expansion of the Texas Water Caucus to include both the Texas Senate and the Texas House, hopes are high that lawmakers will be focusing on water issues this session. Our Water Matters caught up with Hess to sound him out about the prospects for legislation to better protect and promote environmental flows.

“My top objective for flow protection,” says Hess, “would be for the state to allocate funding for an endowment to support the purchase of water rights for flow protection. Most people who donate rights for flow protection can qualify for an income tax deduction, but having funding to pursue acquisitions in key locations will be critical for making significant progress.” A novel idea to stretch this allocated funding would be “to get some holders of water rights to do a combination donation/purchase to help the funds go farther.”

Another approach could involve allocating “a portion of water made available for use through state funding, but not consumed in that use ... for flow protection.” For example, “The Legislature provided that 5% of the firm yield of reservoir projects within 200 river miles of the coast in which the state was a financial participant, under certain financing approaches, would be allocated to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for protection of environmental flow,” according to Hess. “Those provisions have never been triggered, but some variation of that approach makes sense going forward.”

Funding is also needed from the Legislature “to cover costs for getting the statewide science advisory committee and, on a sequential basis, basin and bay expert science teams back in action.” Hess asserts that this “science work is a critical predicate for progress.” Groups like the Environmental Flows Advisory Group (EFAG) rely “heavily on the science input — and that science work

won't happen without funding.” EFAG “is the group charged with studying approaches for flow protection ... and they will need expert support to make that happen.”

One of the aspects in greatest need of attention is the state's approach to planning. “The issue of flow protection remains largely out of sight, out of mind,” according to Hess, “[because] no progress has been made on incorporating planning to meet environmental flow needs into the water planning process.” The current process “quantifies demands for meeting the various consumptive uses of water and then proposes ways to meet those demands. That makes for an easily understood problem to work on. [But] [t]he amount of water needed to maintain adequate environmental flow levels is not recognized as a demand to be planned for. That makes for a problem that is easily ignored.” The state needs “a truly comprehensive water planning process that includes planning to meet flow needs.”

Hess argues that another major obstacle to realizing the promise of Senate Bill 3 is “a general lack of understanding about how water is managed and about what future river flows might look like. Water rights management and the relationship between groundwater and surface water are not broadly understood by the general public and even by many decision-makers. As a result, I don't think there is much appreciation of the level of risk the bays, rivers, and springs in Texas face and what that means in terms of economic impact and quality of life.”

When asked how Texans can work to overcome these obstacles, Hess responded that people need to “understand that our rivers and coastal bays are at real risk. I also want them to understand that we can meet human water needs, including the need for healthy rivers and bays, if we plan comprehensively to do that.” Voters can contribute to this effort by “letting politicians on all levels know that this is an issue [they] care about.” Meanwhile, “folks who hold water rights that are no longer needed for other uses can donate all or a portion of those rights for flow protection. Donations to the Texas Water Trust can be made for a defined period or in perpetuity.”

The time to act is now, warns Hess. “The longer we wait to get serious about flow protection, the harder it will be to get it done.”

Visit <https://www.twdb.texas.gov/waterplanning/waterbank/trust/index.asp> to learn more about donating water rights to the Texas Water Trust.

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.

“One of the aspects in greatest need of attention is the state’s approach to planning. The issue of flow protection remains largely out of sight, out of mind”

MAC SEPTIC PORTA POTTIES

Rick McIvor
Owner / Operator

325-812-5541
RickMcIvor7@gmail.com
P.O. Box 640, Fort Davis, TX 79734

COCHINEAL

MARFA

CASUAL FINE DINING IN FAR WEST TEXAS

107 West San Antonio Street
Marfa, Texas 79843
432 729 3300 - cochinealmarfa.com



Donate here or go to marfastudioarts.org
The MSA is a 501 3 (C) non-profit organization serving the Marfa Community

Give the Gift of Art to the Children of Marfa



Providing Free Art Classes to Marfa Elementary School for over 20 years

New council billing software

(Continued from page 1)

easier but limiting the city to that system, while CUSI offered a list of financial software on the market that its system works with.

City staff advised that the next step is for council to approve a recommendation so that money can be set aside in the budget to start the transition.

Rodriguez explained CUSI would enable the city to:

- Send mass notifications to customers, such as water main breaks
- Scan and store documents
- Allow staff to attend bi-monthly, online training sessions.

For residents, CUSI offers the ability to:

- Pay by credit card at the city office and online
- Pay by bank draft
- Schedule reoccurring payments
- See graphs of their usage for the last 12 months and compare their usage to the previous year’s usage.

PMDD hosts International Bridge study and planning discussions

From John T. Kennedy, executive director, the Presidio Municipal Development District

PRESIDIO — On February 20, the Presidio Municipal Development District (PMDD) brought together local, state and federal officials, along with binational infrastructure leaders, to discuss the future of the Presidio-Ojinaga International Bridge. The event featured a walk with key stakeholders, followed by presentations on financing, tolling operations, and regional economic opportunities.

The morning session included a site walk of the Presidio-Ojinaga International Bridge, led by PMDD Executive Director John T. Kennedy and Presidio County Judge Joe Portillo Jr.; Caroline Mays, director of planning and modal programs at the Texas Department of Transportation; Alvaro Esparza, representative for Caminos y Puentes Federales (CAPUFE); and Benito Reyes Jr., director of the Presidio Port of Entry. Representatives of the Presidio International Port Authority (PIPA) were also present, underscoring the importance of collaborative governance in advancing the bridge project.

This meeting, organized by PMDD, focused on the bridge study, which is being conducted with the support of the North American Development Bank, PMDD and Presidio County. Discussions centered on governance and financing options, with consideration of the best strategies for long-term sustainability.

At the PMDD office, the group gathered for a working lunch, with additional participants, including Mexican Consul Gamaliel Bustillos Muñoz, joining the conversation. Consultants Phil Eshelman and Dr. Michael Bomba provided insights into the operations and revenue potential of the toll system, while Jesse Hereford, director of partnerships at the North American Development Bank, shared funding opportunities for infrastructure projects.

Kennedy opened the session by emphasizing the importance of bringing stakeholders together to assess the future of the international bridge, noting that, “This meeting represents the collaborative effort needed to secure the region’s economic future. Working with leaders at all levels, we can lay the foundation for a thriving, sustainable economy.”

Eshelman and Bomba discussed aspects of the toll system, focusing on planning and financial modeling. Eshelman highlighted the importance of right-sizing infrastructure and governance, while Bomba emphasized the need for tailored solutions for the region’s unique border dynamics.

“The Presidio-Ojinaga International Bridge is more than a transportation corridor — it is an economic lifeline for our region,” Kennedy said. “We are taking critical steps toward bridging Presidio’s future through strategic infrastructure investment, binational cooperation, and economic development.”

“We are pleased to award funds from the NADBank’s Technical Assistance Program, which will help provide valuable information for Presidio County to consider the operations and maintenance of the international bridge should they acquire it,” said Jesse Hereford, head of Strategic Partnerships at NADBank. “This study will determine if owning the bridge is feasible for the county. Finally, I’d like to commend the judge and commissioners court for trying to help bring economic development to the southern part of the county anchored by the International Bridge.”

In a statement about the collective progress, Presidio County Judge Portillo remarked, "Right now, I feel like we are all moving toward the same goal — this includes the city, the county, and our local businesses, importers and exporters. We are working closely with Mexico, with Ojinaga, as well as with local elected officials and state leaders from Chihuahua. Together, we recognize the opportunity to be a part of the success we’ve seen across Texas, and we are committed to ensuring that Presidio is part of that success."

Tim Tarver, CEO of Exceed Geo Energy, made a presentation emphasizing Presidio's potential as a hub for geothermal energy and how this could complement the region's infrastructure development. His remarks recognized Presidio’s position to lead in renewable energy development, which will support local and regional growth.

The event reinforced PMDD’s commitment to advancing sustainable development, enhancing cross-border trade, and fostering new economic opportunities for the Presidio region.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

The Trump/Musk administration’s cuts to our national park system (430 parks, including the newest: Blackwell School NHS) will have a HUGE negative economic impact on West Texas communities. Sectors directly affected: restaurants, hotels, gasoline, groceries, recreation industries, retail, transportation, camping, etc. Cuts will result in a very negative tourist experience!

Why are our elected legislators allowing an unelected billionaire to devastate our local economies? Why aren’t they standing up against this?

This link www.nps.gov/subjects/socialscience/vse.htm gives information such as how much money each park provides to local economies and how many jobs. Here are some stats for 2023:

PARK	VISITOR SPENDING	LOCAL JOBS SUPPORTED
Big Bend National Park	\$48.5 million	657
Fort Davis National Historic Site	\$2.7 million	34
Guadalupe Mountains National Park	\$27.5 million	325
Amistad National Recreation Area	\$42.3 million	531
Rio Grande Wild & Scenic River	\$224 thousand	4
Carlsbad Caverns National Park	\$29.1 million	359
Chamizal National Memorial	\$557 thousand	8

Donna Smith
Fort Davis

Universal Crossword

Edited by Taylor Johnson February 17, 2025

ACROSS
1 Instrument with pipes
6 Help with a heist, maybe
10 Knee-ankle connector
14 Watchmaker headquartered in Tokyo
15 Singer Lovato
16 "Paddington in _____" (2024 film)
17 "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz" author
19 Desertlike
20 Vinegar's partner, in salad dressing
21 "Will do!"
22 Completely surround
24 Encyclopedia's range
25 Boo-boo
26 Bit of fish food
29 Check over
30 2010 health law: Abbr.
33 Ice-skating jumps
34 *French-Belgian cookware maker
36 Many a gala hairstyle
37 Make pricier at auction
38 Relaxation destinations
39 *Iconic garment of 1980s aerobics videos

41 "Silly" birds
42 Drink with a foamy head
43 "ABC World News Tonight With David _____"
44 Eye's outer layer
45 Offshoot group
46 Bothers
47 Esoteric
50 Diva's solo
51 Payment promise
54 Ring up
55 Toy construction pieces, or what can be found at the starts of the starred clues' answers?
58 T, on a test
59 Like every leap year
60 Tire pattern
61 Look to be food
62 Not challenging
63 "Sayonara!"

DOWN
1 Where the Nobel Peace Prize is awarded
2 APR-lowering deal
3 _____ Scout cookies
4 Alias letters
5 "It's fine as is!"
6 Madison Ave. industry
7 Exhausted
8 Big bird
9 Sci-fi travel aid

10 "Give me some _____"
11 Zeus' wife
12 Colorful eye part
13 Naked
18 Pretzel shape
23 Number of awards won by Taylor Swift at the 2023 VMAs
24 Let
25 Happen
26 Singer Abdul
27 Eject
28 Jumping-off point, maybe?
29 Passover meal
30 "Quaking" tree
31 Discontinue
32 On the ocean
34 Cap
35 App customers

37 Martial arts icon
40 "Right on!"
41 Kids' racing vehicles
44 Infant's bed
45 Oregon's capital
46 Wry humor
47 Does what Viola Davis does
48 Uncommon
49 What you're reading right now?
50 Gets older
51 Slurpee alternative
52 Authorize
53 Food safety agcy.
56 "Desperate Housewives" actress
57 Wrath

PREVIOUS PUZZLE ANSWER

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

2/16 © 2025 Andrews McMeel Universal
www.upuzzles.com

2/17

Building Blocks by Jay Silverman

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

Come worship with us



First United Methodist Church

Do not fear, for I am with you,
do not be afraid,
for I am your God;
I will strengthen you,
I will help you,
I will uphold you with my
victorious right hand.
Isaiah 41:10

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

Please recycle this paper

DRAWING OF THE WEEK



Alexis Viella
9th grade

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.

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

Solution from last week's puzzle:

SOLUTION:

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

© 2025 Andrews McMeel Syndication

☺ MARFA SCHOOL LUNCH MENU ☺

MAY	Thu, Feb 27	Fri, Feb 28	Mon, Mar 3	Tue, Mar 4	Wed, Mar 5
BREAKFAST	BREAKFAST BREAD, YOGURT, JUICE, FRUIT, MILK	DONUT HOLES, SAUSAGE, JUICE, FRUIT, MILK	NO SCHOOL	CHEESE OMELET, TOAST, JUICE, FRUIT, MILK	POWER BREAKFAST, JUICE, FRUIT, MILK
LUNCH	HOT DOG, POTATOES, TOMATO CUP, FRUIT	FISH STICKS, POTATOES, CUCUMBERS, ROLL, STRAWBERRIES	NO SCHOOL	BURGER CHOICE, CHIPS, TOMATO CUP, SALAD, PEARS	CHICKEN NUGGETS, MAC & CHEESE, CARROTS, CUCUMBERS, GRAPES

YOUR AD HERE!
ONLY \$10 / WEEK
Contact
ads@bigbendsentinel.com

Acupuncture

- natural therapy for aches & pains -

Now at 905 A W San Antonio

www.tinyurl.com/acumarfa

For more sports events please visit:

marfaisd.com/events

PREScription SHOP MARFA

A full-service pharmacy. Now accepting many insurance plans for service while you wait.

105 East Oak Street, next to Marfa Country Clinic

432.729.4244

rxshopmarfa@gmail.com

ALTA MARFA WINERY

Texas Wine & Food

Thursday - Sunday

5:00pm - 10:00pm

120 N Austin St.

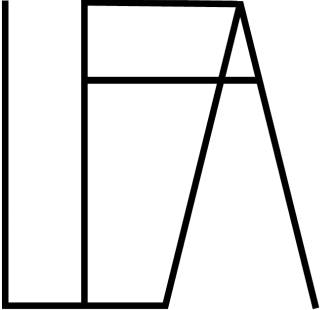
instagram:
@altamarfa for updates



MARFA SHORTHORNS SPORTS CALENDAR

28th - 1st: HS Softball in Kermit

1st: HS Softball vs McCamey in Marfa



Lillian Fields Architect
lillianafields@gmail.com
512.589.8617

Far West Texas Based Architect
specializing in
Residential and Commercial

MOONLIGHT GEMSTONES

Paul Graybeal, Owner
Ben Toro, Associate
432-729-4526
pgagates@gmail.com
moonlightgemstones.com



P.O. Box 1220
1001 W. San Antonio St.
Marfa, Texas 79843
Mon-Sat, 10-5pm
Sunday by Appt

Lapidary • Silversmith • Custom Jewelry • Rocks • Fossils • Minerals

National park layoffs

(Continued from page 3)

attending remotely. Thanks to a bad connection, he’d missed the grim news at the top. When Crawford filled him in, he knew what he had to do — resign. “I’m not going to work for an organization that does that to people,” he said.

Hamm and Crawford are both longtime tri-county residents who have worked in and around the parks for years. They eventually settled in Alpine, but decided to give South Brewster County another go after suffering the loss of their daughter. They felt a change of scenery in a place they both loved might help them heal.

Less than a year after their big move, their dreams dried up with the click of a far-away mouse. Both were technically probationary employees, but as a Marine Corps veteran, Hamm was spared. (Ironically, Crawford had served the job she had gotten fired from before, about a decade ago — anyone who bothered to look at personnel records would be able to see that she’d served more than one year in that position.)

Hamm’s principled decision taps into a much longer-term problem flagged by folks like Welsh and Paredes: the erosion of faith in the NPS as an honorable, stable career path for young people who want to serve their country — a demographic that made up a huge chunk of the thousand layoffs.

Cary Dupuy, regional director for the National Parks Conservation Association, said that the responsibilities of folks in the NPS have ballooned alongside visitor counts while staffing and budgets stay relatively stable. Since 2010, visitation to national parks has jumped 16% while staffing has declined 20%. “Many times they are having to pull triple or double duty,” she said.

Last week, the Trump administration announced that around 50 people who were fired on Valentine’s Day would have their job restored and promised to hire 7,700 seasonal workers, higher than the average of 6,350 seasonal workers hired per year by the Biden administration.

Dupuy thinks that’s too little, too late. “Seasonals are not a replacement for a permanent park service staff,” she said.

Though some were cheered to see “essential” jobs in the Park Service being restored, the term “essential” is up for political debate. The very premise of Crawford’s job — that humans have a long-term, irreversible impact on the environment that needs to be studied — is not a sentiment shared by many on the American right wing.

A shorter-term ecological storm in Big Bend is brewing after the Valentine’s Day layoffs, which claimed the lone maintenance worker responsible for

running the park’s recycling program. In a region that faces chronic issues with recycling — municipal programs in Marfa, Alpine and Presidio have flickered on and off over the past few years — the national park’s comprehensive system was something to brag about.

The recycling program is key to prolonging the life of the national park’s landfill, whose days are numbered — park leadership estimates about five to seven years, and there is no set plan in place for how to go forward once the final diaper is tossed in the hole.

Dupuy said that — apart from contacting your congressional representatives to urge them to protect the park service — being trash conscious is one of a few ways that folks can support remaining employees while staffing is in flux.

As a professional advocate, Dupuy said that a good attitude toward staff goes a long way, especially during an emotionally fraught high season. “Be good park visitors, especially now more than ever,” she said.

Representatives for Big Bend National Park declined to comment for this story. For more information about the National Park Conservation Association, visit <https://www.npca.org/>.

Marfa Junior High students create ocean installation



Marfa ISD sixth-graders turned a hallway at school into an installation of the ocean.

From Adele Powers, Marfa High School art teacher

My sixth-graders and I turned a hallway at school into a total installation of the ocean. The work was inspired by both Samara Golden's show "if earth is the brain where is the body" at the Nasher Sculpture Center, and also the idea of total installations, something that I thought about a lot when I worked at Chinati, as I'm a

big fan of work by Ilya Kabakov.

We started the paintings for the installation in January and it has been up for a few weeks. The pieces were drawn and painted by students and then outlined in India ink and cut out. On a Monday, when there was no school, and with some of my high school yearbook students the next day, I cut and hung blue butcher paper to be the background. Over the next few days,

sixth-graders added their creations to the wall with staplers and filled in any empty spaces by making more paintings: a pirate ship, a submarine, a scuba diver, a mermaid, lots of jellyfish, a kelp forest, a puffer fish and many different kinds of sharks are just some of the things in our ocean.

To finish the piece off, we added blue twinkle lights and blue cellophane, and covered the fluorescent lights

with more blue paper to make the viewer feel truly underwater. To celebrate the opening of the piece, we watched Finding Nemo.

The students involved are: Azul, Landyn, Aubrey, Devante, Ranger, Nyla, Eduardo, Liam, Matthew, Allan, Jade, Mia, Landin Rey, Matt, Dania, Fatima, Lyla, Aubrianna, Aiden S., Jonathan, and Adiel.

BALLROOM MARFA Presents

ELEMENTAL CURRENTS – MATERIAL, MEMORY, AND MYTH

Christopher Blay, Laddie John Dill, and Virginia L. Montgomery

March 7–June 8, 2025

Opening Celebrations
March 7, 5–8 PM
108 E San Antonio St

Artist Talk: Moderated by Curator Maggie Adler
March 8, 11 AM–12:30 PM
98 S Austin St
Caffeine provided by our neighbors Mutual Friends

BALLROOM

Gallery Hours
Wednesday to Saturday: 11 AM–6PM
Sunday: 11 AM–3 PM

MARFA
VISITMARFA.COM

COMING SOON

MARCH 2025

BOXES

MAIL BOX RENTAL

ALL YOUR BOXES, IN ONE PLACE!

S

PACKING SHIPPING RECEIVING
WWW.BOXESMARFA.COM 1411W SAN ANTONIO ST, MARFA TX [432] 729-0434

Big Bend Regional History Fair engages area youth with the past

ALPINE — Students from school districts across the region gathered to present projects to judges on Wednesday at the Big Bend Regional History Fair held at Sul Ross State University.

In total, 34 projects and 55 students attended from Alpine, Marathon, Marfa, Fort Davis, San Vicente and Valentine ISDs. The Big Bend Regional History Fair is part of the larger organizations, Texas History Day and National History Day.

Each year, students do a project, documentary, exhibit, paper, performance, website or elementary poster based on a National History Day theme. This year's theme is "Rights and Responsibility in History."

By participating in National History Day, students become writers,

filmmakers, web designers, playwrights and exhibit developers as they create unique contemporary expressions of history.

Caroline Fox, director of Curriculum & Special Programs at Alpine ISD, has been the regional coordinator since 2001 and said there has been a significant decrease in participation since 2020. In response, the state has added fourth- and fifth-grade competitions to help recruit and rebuild programs all over the state. This year, 14 fourth- and fifth-graders competed. Fox said she would like to thank the Brewster County Historical Commission, the Bechtel Foundation and Sul Ross State University for funding, aiding and supporting the Big Bend Regional History Fair.

Rivera, Harper open joint exhibition at Do Right Hall

MARFA — Join artists Tina Rivera and Sandra Harper for the opening of "Ecstatic Elata," on Saturday, March 1, from 5 to 7 p.m. at the Do Right Hall, 110 W. Dallas. Their work explores the intersections of language, ritual, myth and the natural world in the Chihuahuan Desert.

As Harper writes in her artist statement: "My work explores how plants and animals have shaped our collective memory through ritual and myth. Plants give us life. Food and medicine and the air we breathe.

"I began this Plant Project in the Chihuahuan Desert, observing the pollination event between the blooming yucca elata and its moth, tegeticula

yuccasella. The yucca flower is a sublime container for its sexual organs. The female yucca moth lays her eggs in the ovary of the flower. Hatching out, the larvae thrive on the seeds in the developing fruit. The blossom and its moth expressing their symbiotic relationship took hold of my imagination.

"At the same time, I was humbled by this magnificent yucca which had given much to the survival of the people who have lived in the desert. I wanted to listen to this plant and to the desert."

Brewster County has the highest rate of deaths from suicide in Texas

By HAILEY MCKINNEY
For The Big Bend Sentinel

BREWSTER COUNTY — According to data collected by Texas Community Health News, Brewster County has the highest death by suicide rate in comparison to all other 254 Texas counties.

Mental healthcare accessibility has long been a challenge in Texas, especially in rural counties like Brewster, which can make combatting suicide difficult. Many factors contribute to mental healthcare inaccessibility in the rural areas of West Texas, including underfunding, a shortage of mental health care professionals and stigma surrounding discussions of mental health and suicide.

For various mental health conditions, the most effective treatment for patients is a combination of psychiatric care and therapy. Despite the essential role therapy plays in an effective treatment plan, Todd Luzadder, director of Mental Health Services at PermianCare in the Odessa and Midland area, says that Brewster is experiencing a significant shortage of licensed professional mental health counselors.

"That's something we continually struggle with and try to seek funding for," Luzadder said. "There's a shortage of those providers, and it's especially difficult to recruit them to rural areas."

Luzadder says that PermianCare's Mental Health Services have been using innovative ways to combat the lack of professional mental health counselors in Brewster through means such as telehealth technology to connect patients with therapists from other areas. However, this also has posed some challenges as licensing boards often don't allow for much expansion in the use of telehealth technology due to limitations of many counselors only being able to practice in the state they are licensed.

"We got some therapists in urban clinics in Midland and Odessa," Luzadder said. "Although, we're still short-staffed in those therapist positions."

Along with the high suicide rate, Brewster County also has an insufficient number of mental facilities to properly meet the needs of its population size. Many areas of Brewster County are isolated, which might cause many residents to not be aware of what mental health services are available.

Within the past year, the Big Bend area received funding for a Rural Border Intervention Team to assist in community outreach and education on nearby mental health services available to residents. Luzadder says that there is a growing increase in referrals in the tri-county area to mental health service programs as a result of this outreach.

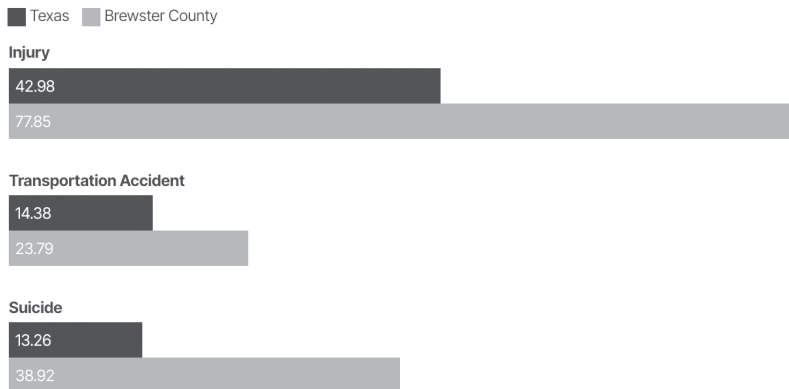
Along with underfunding and mental health counselor shortages being barriers to preventative suicide treatment in Brewster County, mental health care professionals in rural areas of West Texas also often come across lingering stigma associated with mental health and suicide. There are many misconceptions about mental health and suicide that are prevalent, and Nicole Elliot, a licensed clinical social worker and director of Zero Suicide Services at West Texas Counseling in Guidance, says that she's seen this stigma especially extend to middle-aged white males who might be more susceptible to feeling shame around discussing their mental health struggles.

"If they share that they're having some mental health issues, they're concerned about being perceived as weak," Elliot said. "There's still that myth of, 'If I say the word 'suicide' to somebody, that's going to now plant an idea in their head,' and the research shows that is not the case."

Zero Suicide Services in West Texas works closely with local law enforcement in Tom Green County to collect data on suicides within the area, and this year, Tom Green County has had 14 deaths by suicide, and six of those deaths were men aged 70 or older by firearm. Elliot emphasizes the importance

Causes of death in Brewster County

Numbers indicate the number of deaths per 100k residents.



Data last updated in 2020.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Wide-ranging Online Data for Epidemiologic Research (CDCWR)

> TEXAS COMMUNITY HEALTH NEWS

on the reduction of access to lethal means as being especially significant in suicide prevention in Texas.

"It doesn't mean taking your firearms away forever," Elliot said. "If there's some way that we can slow down that access ... so that there is some time and distance so that crisis can start to come down on the other side of that curve and start to lessen."

Healthcare access is a challenge faced by many Americans due to a lack of insurance coverage and financial means to pay for care out-of-pocket. Even with insurance coverage, receiving mental health treatment can still be made difficult as many health insurance plans will not cover it.

Five percent of residents in Brewster County are on Medicaid or other forms of public insurance, while 7% of residents have Medicare as their only form of health insurance. PermianCare in Brewster is currently working to combat financial barriers to mental health treatment by providing patients with access to care regardless of their ability to pay.

"If you have no ability to pay, we work on a sliding fee scale that's based on your income," Luzadder said. "The majority of our patients that do not have a funding source pay zero dollars to receive care."

Other gradual changes have been made in Texas to integrate mental health into standard healthcare practices, according to Dr. Monica Hughes, director of Public Health Nursing for the Texas Department of State Health Services.

"Providers are doing depression screenings now for the most part," Hughes said. "It's best practice to do the screening for depression when you're treating an adolescent for just a regular yearly evaluation, and I think that's a really positive trend."

This story uses data from Texas Community Health News at Texas State University. Specifically, it focuses on data related to the prevalence of suicide and depression as well as mental health facilities, which are based on data collected by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as well as the Health Resources and Services Administration.

Editor's note: This piece expands on mental healthcare reporting that The Big Bend Sentinel did in early 2024, and all articles in the series can be found at www.bigbendsentinel.com. Authorities suspect a death by suicide in Alpine on February 2, but an autopsy with a toxicology report is still pending completion.

New owner of Front Street Books grew up with the store

By ROB D'AMICO
rob@bigbendsentinel.com

ALPINE — Kendra DuBois feels at home in Alpine's Front Street Books, partially since she's served as its bookkeeper for several years, but also because she's been browsing its shelves since her youth.

"We've been shopping at the bookstore since I was in high school," she said. "It's definitely something that was a big part of my life, especially in discovering the outside world. Because I was born here and raised here, which is a really cool thing, but it can be pretty isolating. In finding Front Street Books, anything you wanted to read, you could find it."

When longtime owner Anne Calaway told DuBois she wanted to step back from the operation, DuBois made an offer and purchased the store along with her husband, Jonathan, who she helps run an electrical services business. "When it was offered, one of the things that was very important to me was just to keep that feeling of the store going," she said. "I want other people to have that same experience, to have a place that, you know, if you want to read a certain book about caterpillars, if we don't have it, we can find it."

DuBois said that she always relished the store's ability to do special orders. "So, whatever archaeology nerdy thing I happened to be really into at the time, they were happy to get stuff for me," she said. "It's always been a place that I've really appreciated. I graduated, moved away for quite a while, lived all over the place, but every

time I came home to visit, one of the places I always needed to go back to was the bookstore."

Calaway bought the store — which opened around 1994 — in 2018 from Jean Hardy-Pittman and continued its traditional role as an independent book seller that carries a wide variety of titles in addition to collectibles and books about the Big Bend. Book signings, book club meetings and other events have always been featured as often as possible, Calaway said, since she strived to be connected to the community.

"Anne has done a wonderful job of keeping the store cool and interesting with all the literary events and people coming in," DuBois said. "The authors that she brings in are really fun, and they have such varied interests and topics that they write on. So many of them are engaging and interesting to talk to."

Calaway said she sold the store because it was time for a new generation of ownership after seven years at the helm. "I just didn't want to see it close, though," she said. "And when Kendra started working for me, within a week or two, I knew that she would be a good fit for this. The same staff will stay in place, and it will continue. It will only get better with Kendra."

DuBois said she wants to remain an integral part of the Alpine community and serve locals as well as tourists, offering a place to come in and relax and meander. She often gets asked whether physical books are a dying business, but DuBois said some national booksellers are actually expanding, and there is no replacing the personal touch you get at a small-town independent store.

Even the aroma adds to the experience. "Books absolutely have a smell," she said. "That's the reason why bookstores are still in business."

DuBois said the only new additions — besides expanded hours on Saturday and being open on Sunday — will be some marketing initiatives like free books for kids on their birthday and a loyalty program that offers a free book (up to a certain dollar limit) for customers who purchase a given number of books.

Calaway said Friday will be her last day at the store, but she plans to go out with a "bang" by participating in the national Blackout Friday, in which Americans are encouraged not to spend money at certain locations and on certain items as a protest to Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency cuts to programs and termination of federal employees. "The cash register will be closed, but we'll be open in protest," she said.

While the Blackout is intended to target no sales at big box retailers and corporate chains, Calaway said her employees thought it would make a statement of protest against corporate greed and political influence. And she wanted a final farewell that concentrates on reading. She said it was the staff's idea. "The way that they worded it is telling customers to bring a book from your bookshelf to sit and read, or they can grab one off of our shelves and sit and read and enjoy the space."

Front Street Books is open from Monday through Saturday from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and Sunday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at 121 E Holland Avenue in Alpine.

BIG BEND

WILDLIFE & WINE FESTIVAL

March 11th, 12th, 13th (12pm - 10pm)
22970 FM 170, TERLINGUA, TEXAS

FOOD PARK

TEX WINE

GAMES

RETAIL VENDORS

LIVE MUSIC

CAMPING

BIGBENDSPRINGBREAK.COM

ENTREE FEE \$10 CAMPSITES \$75

WILDLIFE EDUCATORS

LOS PINCHE GRINGOS

WINE, BEER, COCKTAILS

SCOTT WALKER BAND

Specializing in Texas Ranch and Rural Properties

Cleat L. Stephens, Broker

FindARanchOutWest.com

Wonder School Marfa Montessori

fostering peace, purpose, and wonder out west

For inquiries or to schedule a school visit:
info@wonderschoolmarfa.org

320 W EL PASO • 432.420.6661 • THEMARFASPIRIT.COM

Come TOAST THE DESERT WITH US!

Visit! GODBOLD BLDG DOWNTOWN

DISTILLERY TOURS • DREAMY COCKTAILS • GIFTY THINGS

IRAM MARQUEZ

903 W SAN ANTONIO-PO BOX 965-MARFA, TX 79843
OFFICE - (432) 729-4306 FAX - (432) 729-4305
Iram@MarfaInsurance.com
www.marfainsurance.com

ironwood INDUSTRIES

Specializing in architectural hardware for remodels and new construction

Coupland | Marfa

ironwoodindustries.com | 713.817.4041

Researchers uncover new sunflower species in Big Bend National Park

From the California Academy of Sciences

SAN FRANCISCO — Academy researchers and partners made the first discovery of both a new genus and species of plant in a U.S. national park in nearly 50 years. The new-to-science wooly devil (*Ovicula biradiata*), described today in the journal *PhytoKeys*, is a member of the sunflower family and was found in Big Bend National Park, Texas. Scientists from the California Academy of Sciences, Big Bend National Park, Sul Ross State University, and Centro Interdisciplinario de Investigación para el Desarrollo Integral Regional (CIDIIR) in Durango, Mexico, collaborated on the study.

Big Bend National Park, located within the Chihuahuan Desert — the largest and most biologically diverse warm desert in North America — is a well-studied floristic region that has been the subject of countless botanical surveys over the last century. This discovery is particularly rare, as it marks the first time a new plant genus was described in a national park since the mountain-dwelling shrub July gold (*Dedeckera eurekaensis*) was found in Death Valley National Park in 1976.

“While many assume that the plants and animals within our country’s national parks have probably been documented by now, scientists still make surprising new discoveries in these iconic protected landscapes,” said corresponding author and Academy researcher Isaac Lichter Marck, PhD. “*O. biradiata* is a member of the sunflower family, although it does not resemble its sunburst-shaped relatives at first glance. After sequencing its DNA and comparing it with other specimens in the Academy’s herbarium, we discovered that this small, fuzzy plant is not only a new species within the sunflower group, but it is also distinct enough from its closest relatives to warrant an entirely new genus.”

The plant was first observed in March of 2024 by park volunteer Deb Manley, who promptly uploaded the unknown species to the community science app iNaturalist, where an international community of botanists assembled to identify the mysterious flower. Known colloquially to botanists as a “belly plant,” or a small, discreet plant that can only be properly observed by lying on the ground, this distinctive wild flower with furry white foliage and maroon ray florets is an ephemeral species that only blooms after rain. It is found in harsh rocky habitats with scant rainfall and grows alongside a variety of drought-tolerant shrubs, such as ocotillo, hedgehog cactus and creosote.

“Plants that thrive in deserts are often quite unique, having evolved specific mechanisms to withstand the extreme drought-and-deluge conditions of these arid landscapes — from water-storing structures to rapid life cycles triggered by rain,” Marck said. “But as climate change pushes deserts to become hotter and drier, highly specialized plants like the wooly devil face extinction. We have only observed this plant in three narrow locations across the northernmost corner of the park, and it’s possible that we’ve documented a species that is already on its way out.”

The name *Ovicula biradiata* was inspired by the plant’s wooly appearance and striking red petals. *Ovicula*, meaning “tiny sheep,” refers to the thick, white hairs that cover the plant’s leaves and honors a more iconic endangered species in Big Bend: the bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis*).



Photo by James Bailey, © California Academy of Sciences

The “wooly devil” is the first new plant genus and species discovered in a U.S. national park in nearly 50 years.

Biradiata, or “bi-radial,” refers to the two ray florets in each of the plant’s flowers. Researchers working with the plant affectionately dubbed the fuzzy flower the “wooly devil,” which has become its suggested common name.

“Now that the species has been identified and named, there is a tremendous amount we have yet to learn about it,” says Big Bend National Park botanist Carolyn Whiting. “I’m excited to discover whether there are other populations in the park, the details of its life cycle, what pollinates it, and whether we’ll observe it this spring, given the current drought.”

Visitors to the park can contribute to this effort by documenting wildflowers they encounter following spring rains and uploading their observations to iNaturalist.

Back in the academy’s herbarium in San Francisco, which recently received a grant to digitize its entire botany collection, researchers ponder the wooly devil’s potential medicinal properties.

“Under the microscope, we noticed specific glands that are known to possess compounds with anti-cancer and anti-inflammatory properties in other plants within the sunflower family,” says academy co-author Keily Peralta. “While further research is needed to determine these properties, this discovery underscores the potential knowledge we stand to gain from preserving plant diversity in fragile desert ecosystems.”

About the California Academy of Sciences

The California Academy of Sciences is a renowned scientific and educational institution with a mission to regenerate the natural world through science, learning, and collaboration. Based in San Francisco’s Golden Gate Park, it is home to a world-class aquarium, planetarium and natural history museum as well as innovative programs in scientific research and environmental education — all under one living roof.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

May 18, 2000

Editor’s note: This article has been edited for length.

Sheriff proposes law enforcement contract with city

By JACOB SILVERSTEIN

MARFA — The Presidio County Sheriff’s Office has submitted a proposal to the city of Marfa that would transfer municipal law enforcement duties to the sheriff’s department. The proposal, sent by Sheriff Danny Dominguez to Mayor Fritz Kahl and the members of the city council, contends that the sheriff’s office “can provide the type of law enforcement that you and the citizens of Marfa expect and deserve while saving the city thousands of tax dollars.” The sheriff’s plan would dedicate two Presidio County deputies to full-time law enforcement duty in Marfa, as well as making available Chief Deputy Rusty Taylor and Sheriff Dominguez for such cases as necessary.

The plan could save the city up to \$25,000 each year, according to Dominguez, “I think the sheriff can do the job cheaper,” Taylor said. Currently, it costs the sheriff’s office around \$30,000 in salaries and other expenses for each of the eight sworn officers. The Marfa Police Department pays \$37,000 for each of its three sworn officers. The sheriff’s proposal is to provide law enforcement to the city for \$100,000 per year, \$45,000 of which would be covered by revenue generated from citations and fines. Last year’s police budget was \$187,000, \$90,000 of which was covered by revenue. The sheriff’s office currently provides policing services to city of Presidio residents.

Presidio City Secretary Citidi Clarke agreed. “It’s cost-effective for the city for sure,” she said, noting that Presidio saves on worker compensation premiums, payroll taxes and law enforcement vehicle maintenance. Presidio’s police contract with the county is \$40,000 a year. The contract has been in effect for about six years. Four deputies are stationed in Presidio. Clarke said the city of Marfa can take those personnel-related and auto shop savings “and spend the money on other things. Marfa probably would be saving themselves some money.”

She did say that there have been times when the on-duty deputy must leave the city and answer calls in Redford, Candelaria and Ruidosa. “But Danny’s usually had an off-duty officer go on call (for city law enforcement needs).” She added that with Presidio’s population at 5,500 residents and growing — about twice the size of Marfa’s population — four deputies no longer are enough for sufficient city coverage. Yet more than a simple numbers game, the proposal represents an alternative vision of policing for Marfa. Part of what makes the sheriff’s plan cost effective is that he plans to use fewer officers than the city police currently employ. “I don’t think three city officers are necessary in Marfa,” Taylor said. And they also have several reserves there. Under this plan, there would only be two deputies assigned to Marfa.”

AROUND THE BIG BEND

Thur
Feb
27

Hike with Homeless Dogs

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

Seed Swap

5pm - 7pm at CDRI
The Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute will host a seed swap at CDRI's Nature Center & Botanical Gardens. Free—Reservations not required.

Marfa Live Arts: Winter Showcase Theatre, MONOLOGUE

5pm At Planet Marfa

Paint & Sip

6pm - 9pm at Alcove Social
No experience necessary - just relax, create, and enjoy some drinks while we guide you through a featured painting!

Fri
Feb
28

Ladies of West Texas

3pm - 10pm at Little Burro Country Store

Sherita Perez

7pm - 9pm at The Ritchey
Come watch Sherita Perez play at The Ritchey, no cover!

Live Music: Matthew Pink

6pm - 7pm at Granada Theatre
Come watch Matthew Pink play at the Granada Theatre, 6pm - 7pm! Visit Granadatheatre.events for more information.

Sat
Mar
1

Art in the Park

2pm - 3:30pm at Davis Mountains State Park
Join us for an all-ages & all-ability levels arts & crafts workshop.

Open Mic Night

8pm - 10pm at Alcove Social

Fundraiser for Patty’s Garden

4pm at The Ritchey

Miles & Miles of Stars

8pm - 9pm at Davis Mountains State Park
Come join us as we appreciate some of the darkest skies in the U.S.

Sun
Mar
2

Melissa Engleman

6pm - 8pm at The Ritchey
Come watch Melissa Engleman play at The Ritchey, no cover!

Presented by...
YOUR BRAND HERE!
Email ads@bigbendsentinel.com

Mon
Mar
3

First Monday Market

4pm - 9pm at The Ritchey
Drink specials all night, vintage, pet portraits, ceramics, tarot, “hit or miss” self portraits & much more. Music by Marijuana Sweet Tooth at 7pm.

Wed
Mar
5

Marfa Live Arts: One Act Plays

7pm at Crowley Theater
Four award-winning Marfa High students (Memo Guardiola, Giselle Torres, Kalya Vasquez & Alexis Villela) will have their plays brought to life with Marfa actors. Themes include immigration, family legacy, real estate, McDonald’s and the Marfa Lights. Join us for this annual feel-good event.

Ongoing
Weekly
Events &
Classes

Free Zumba Classes

Monday & Wednesday at 6:30pm at Marfa Public Library

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.

SEALED BID REAL ESTATE AUCTION

2012 W. 46TH ST, ODESSA, TEXAS

INSPECTION: THURS. MARCH 13TH & FRI. MARCH 14TH AND THURS. MARCH 20TH & FRI. MARCH 21ST FROM 8:00 AM TO 5:00 PM EACH DAY

**ALL SEALED BIDS MUST BE SUBMITTED TO:
DAKIL REAL ESTATE, INC
200 NW 114TH ST, OKLA. CITY, OKLA.**

BIDS MUST BE RECEIVED BY TUES. MARCH 25TH AT 2:00 PM PLEASE MARK EXTERIOR OF ENVELOPE SEALED BID

Property contains Approx. 1.04 Acres MOL of Commercial Land.

Main Building contains Approx. 7,450 SF MOL w/Approx. 1,250 SF of Office Space, Approx. 5,000 SF of Warehouse Space and an Additional Approx. 1,250 SF of Warehouse Storage Area. Equipment included with Main Building is Air Compressor, (2) Air Reclaimers, (2) Jib Cranes Sand Blasting Booth & Sand Blaster. Building has 240/480v 3phase.

Additional Buildings on the Property are Approx. 1,000 SF (20x50) Metal Storage Building. Approx. 1,232 SF (28x44) 2001 Palm Harbor 3 Bedroom, 2 Bath Mobile Home. Approx. 1,216 SF (16x76) 3 Bedroom, 2 Bath Mobile Home.

TERMS: 5% down, 30 days to close. Closing cost and title insurance split 50/50. 10% Buyers premium.

**Dakil REAL ESTATE
405-751-6179
www.dakil.com**

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 or call 432 729 4406.

JUDD

READ MORE AT BIGBENDSENTINEL.COM

Marfa Live Arts presents one-act plays at Crowley Theater



Photo by Tina Rivera

Marfa Live Arts, in association with Marfa ISD, presents the 13th annual award-winning playwrights: (top row from left) Abelardo Marquez, Christopher Huerta, Asael Zubia, Samuel Estrada, Andres Solis, Francisco Rosas. (Bottom row from left) Alexis Villela, Belen Soto Torres, Giselle Torres, Piper Donaldson, and Kayla Vasquez. Four One Act plays will be presented on Wednesday, March 5, at 7 p.m. at the Crowley Theater with Marfa actors bringing life to these students' words.

By JD Garcia

MARFA — Marfa Live Arts will bring four one-act plays to life with Marfa actors at the Crowley Theater on Wednesday, March 5, at 7 p.m. These short plays were written by Marfa High School students and were created during Marfa Live Arts' annual Playwriting Program taught this year by El Paso-based filmmaker Joe Salinas during Donel Harnett and Linda Ojeda's English classes.

Salinas, who resided in Marfa several years ago, spent one week instructing students through the creation of a one-act play, which were then selected by a panel of judges to be awarded prizes and performed live with local actors. "It was a great experience working with the kids of all different age levels and grades. At first, there was little eye contact, but they were listening, and I was listening to them," said Salinas. "It was great hearing their stories and seeing their energies. By the end, it was really hard to say goodbye. Even with that short amount of time compressed, I made some meaningful relationships and really related to them, being from a small town myself."

Salinas, who will also be acting in The Lights Keep Secret by Memo Guardiola, found that some of the more introverted students created works that hopefully helped them discover things about themselves. "It seemed like the quieter students had a lot to say," he said. "I felt like they kind of kept to themselves, and when I read their work, they have really vivid, grand imaginations."

"At the end, we had to grade everything, but I kind of knew how it would be going, because I was interacting with them the whole time," Salinas said. "I didn't just come in and give a lesson plan, I was walking around and making sure everyone received some attention," he said. "By the end of the week, I think some of them were like, 'I hope you guys talk to me because I have a lot to talk about.' So I already knew about their stories and which ones wanted to break out of their shells, and start talking about their work in front of the classroom without anybody being judged. It was just a positive vibe."

When the time came to judge the plays and pick the ones that would be performed, Salinas said choices were difficult. "At the end of the day, when I had to grade them, I was really impressed. It was really difficult."

The winners of this year's workshop, whose works will be performed, are: freshman Alexis Villela (The Girl with Dreams and Purpose), sophomore Giselle Torres (Family Legacy), junior Kayla Vasquez (Sammy vs. The Forces of McDonald's), and senior Memo Guardiola (The Lights Keep Secrets). Themes include immigration, family legacy, real estate, McDonald's and the Marfa Lights.

Second place winners who will be recognized are: freshman Miguel Gonzales (The Great Texas Freeze), sophomore Asael Zuniga (The Butter Believer), junior Piper Donaldson (Pink Pony Club), and senior Francisco Rosas (Dancing with the Devil). Honorable mentions goes to freshman Abelardo A. Marquez (Scary Mickey), sophomores Belen Soto (Secret Swap) and Dariela Munoz (The Secret), juniors Chris Huerta (Shadows of Love) and Sammy Estrada (Lights Out), and senior Andres Solis (Flamingos).

As for Salinas, his experience with the program was nothing but positive. "Marfa High School was very accommodating, and there was a lot of collaboration with the teachers. These are their students. They know the students more than anyone," he said, adding that Marfa Live Arts was also a great organization to work with. "Marfa Live Arts is an incredible organization, and I think the community is lucky to have them. They really help foster the creativity in the youth, and I think, even help influence the adults. It's important for the kids around here to understand that art isn't only putting a paintbrush to canvas, but that writing and performance is out there." The upcoming performance, he added, is an exciting prospect for him. "I can't wait for the show. I'll be there with my best tuxedo T-shirt," he laughed.

For more information of past, present, and future Marfa Live Arts programs, please visit www.marfalivearts.org.

Texas announces first death in measles outbreak

From the Texas Department of State Health Services

TEXAS — The Texas Department of State Health Services is reporting the first death from measles in the ongoing outbreak in the South Plains and Panhandle regions. The school-aged child who was not vaccinated was hospitalized in Lubbock last week and tested positive for measles.

As of February 25, 124 cases of measles have been confirmed in the outbreak since late January. Most of the cases are in children. Eighteen people have been hospitalized over the course of the outbreak.

Measles is a highly contagious respiratory illness, which can cause life-threatening illness to anyone who is not protected against the virus. During

a measles outbreak, about one in five people who get sick will need hospital care, and one in 20 will develop pneumonia. Rarely, measles can lead to swelling of the brain and death. It can also cause pregnancy complications, such as premature birth and babies with low birth weight.

The best way to prevent getting sick is to be immunized with two doses of a measles-containing vaccine, which is primarily administered as the combination measles-mumps-rubella or MMR vaccine. Two doses of the MMR vaccine prevent more than 97% of measles infections. A small number of vaccinated people can occasionally develop measles. In these cases, the symptoms are generally milder, and they are less likely to spread the disease to other people.

OBITUARIES



Rodriguez

Gilberto Martinez Rodriguez, Sr. affectionately known as "Gily," was a remarkable individual whose passionate spirit and nurturing nature touched the lives of many. Born on February 22, 1955, in Alpine, Texas, Gily spent his years building both a thriving career and a loving family. He passed away peacefully on his 70th birthday, February 22, 2025, in the town he cherished.

Gily's career was as diverse as his interests. He was a business owner and self-employed entrepreneur. His journey led him through significant roles at the Toltec, Metal Mart, and a local feed store. Gily was a master of his craft, which was welding, and each step of his professional life was marked by dedication, a strong work ethic, and a love for crafting tangible results with his hands. Outside of work, Gily had a passion for life that radiated through everything he did.

A devoted family man, he adored his children — Andy Rojo, Gilbert Rodriguez, Hilary Smith, Felicia Rodriguez, and Harley Rodriguez. Additionally, he is survived by his grandchildren, Kael, Gilbert "Vinny," Kaleb and Jasmine Rodriguez, Destiny Mandevi, Genesis Huerta, Malarly Smith, Scarlett and Violet Rodriguez and great-grandchild, Alanah Rodriguez; his siblings, Manuel "Manny" and Dola Rodriguez, Rodolfo "Roy" Rodriguez, Raul "Stufa" and Brenda Rodriguez,

Hector and Esmida Rodriguez and Ruby Rodriguez. He brought a sense of camaraderie and loyalty that was a significant part of his journey, and while he was loved by many, but one stood above the rest, his long-time partner, Marsha Cooper.

Gily was preceded in death by his parents, Manuel and Felicitia M. Rodriguez, and by his beloved sister, Maria "Mary" Rodriguez Ramon.

Gily was known for his adventurous spirit. He loved attending biker rallies and relished the freedom of being on his bike. He was the champion of rally games. Dance floors became a stage for his joyful expression, and these memories will forever echo in the hearts of those who knew him. Gily had a knack for standing out, making headlines in newspapers and capturing the essence of living fully. His zest for life perfectly mirrored his accomplishments, most notably when he bought his first house at the age of 15 — a testament to his determination and independence.

As we remember Gilberto Martinez Rodriguez, we celebrate a man whose life was a beautiful tapestry woven with love, resilience, and a vibrant spirit. His legacy will continue to inspire those who were fortunate enough to know him, reminding us to embrace life passionately and support one another with a loving heart. Gily, you will be deeply missed but never forgotten.

Services will be held in Gily's honor with visitation to begin at 8:30 a.m. on Friday, March 7, 2025, at Our Lady of Peace Catholic Church in Alpine, Texas. The recitation of the Holy Rosary commences at 9:30 a.m. and the funeral Mass begins at 10 a.m. with burial to follow at Holy Angels Cemetery in Alpine, Texas.

Services have been entrusted to Alpine Memorial Funeral Home in Alpine, Texas. Gifts and condolences may be left by visiting www.alpinememorialfuneralhome.com.



Watts

Patricia Ann Watts, born August 29, 1936, passed peacefully on February 3, 2025, at home in Fort Davis, Texas.

Retired teacher, devoted wife, loyal and faithful mother and grandmother; Patricia loved her students and strived to be as guiding and supportive to the hidden plights some students may have endured throughout her career just as if they were her own children. She taught for 20 years at the district, where she helped forge some of the best minds and professionals to walk the halls of Fort Davis High School. Patricia loved traveling with her

husband on motorcycle or towing an RV to take the boat on the lake. She loved all her puppies and cats! She always expressed her love and pride for her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She truly loved each one of them, however, that would not prevent her from pointing out areas of their lives that needed correcting.

Patricia was preceded in death by her parents, Maj. Fletcher Smith Randall (ret. U.S. Army), and Elizabeth Ruth; siblings Ed Randall (Nancy) and Claudia Pearce; her oldest son, Roger Kinzie; step-granddaughter Danita Kinzie; and step-grandson Jonathan Salcido

She is survived by her husband of 54 years, Barrick Watts; her youngest brother, Richard Randall (Lynn); her children Debbie Billing (David), Randall Kinzie (Belinda); step-sons Bradley (Sylvia) Watts Gary (Vickie) Watts; daughter-in-law Ellen Kinzie; numerous grandchildren, great grandchildren and great-great grandchildren; and cousins, nephews and nieces.

There are no services planned at this time.

TO SUBMIT AN OBITUARY PLEASE EMAIL: EDITOR@BIGBENDSENTINEL.COM

MINB
THE MARFA NATIONAL BANK

24 Hour ATM
Loans

Personal Banking
Business Banking

301 S. Highland Ave. - Marfa
432-729-4344 or 877-729-4344

Member
FDIC
www.marfanb.com

ClearPoint
WELLNESS

Feel Like
Yourself
Again



Lisa Hastings, DC
Dr. of Chiropractic, Multisensory Functional Integration
In Marfa by appt. 432.214.2031 www.clearpointwellness.com

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.

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



Classifieds & public notices

Texas Senate bill would give public school teachers free pre-K and raises based on experience and performance

BY JADEN EDISON
AND ALEJANDRO SERRANO
The Texas Tribune

AUSTIN — A Texas Senate panel on Thursday unanimously advanced a proposal that would provide annual pay raises to teachers based on years of experience, expand a state program that offers raises to instructors based on student performance and allow educators to enroll their children in pre-K free of charge.

Senate Bill 26, authored by Sen. Brandon Creighton, R-Conroe, comes as Texas educators have left the teaching profession in droves and the state has increased its reliance on instructors who lack formal classroom training. Gov. Greg Abbott declared teacher pay an “emergency item” earlier this month, allowing lawmakers to fast-track any proposals on the topic during the legislative session that ends June 2.

SB 26 would establish yearly pay raises for teachers with at least three years of experience, with additional increases for instructors who teach for at least five years.

On Thursday, the Senate's education committee voted to send SB 26 to the full chamber after hearing from a parade of public speakers largely in support of the measure. A handful of speakers testified they wished the proposal included non-classroom school workers like nurses and aids.

Teachers in smaller school districts would receive bigger raises. Those with 3-4 years of experience in school districts with 5,000 students or less would receive a \$5,000 raise, while those with five or more years of teaching on their resume would earn \$10,000. Educators with 3-4 of experience in school districts with more than 5,000 students would earn a \$2,500 raise, while those with five or more years of experience would receive \$5,500, according to the bill.

The legislation would also expand the Teacher Incentive Allotment, a state program that allows eligible school districts to award bonuses to instructors based on their students' academic growth. It would also allow districts to implement a similar evaluation system for school principals and assistant principals.

"We want to maximize the teacher retention for our district and for many other districts, and we're able to do that by rewarding our teachers for the hard work that they do in our classrooms," Southwest ISD Superintendent Jeanette Ball said ahead of the vote. That school system has implemented the incentive program. "Our teachers are working together to support each other, to learn more, to enhance what they do in the classroom," she said.

The new bill proposal would allow up to 50% of teachers at a school district to participate in the teacher incentive program compared to the current cap of



Photo by Azul Sordo for The Texas Tribune

Senate Bill 26 would give raises to teachers based on their experience and performance.

33%.

SB 26 would also add the children of public school teachers to the list of kids who qualify for free pre-K services from the state, which many Texas elementary schools already offer. And it would allow the Texas Education Agency to offer liability insurance that protects educators from legal action stemming from “conduct that the teacher allegedly engaged in” throughout the course of their duties.

“Totaling almost \$5 billion, this is a generational investment in our educators,” said Creighton, the bill’s author, in a statement. “If we want to recruit and retain the best teachers for our kids, we must make Texas the most attractive place in the country to teach.”

The state’s average teacher salary rests at \$60,716, which ranks 30th in the nation, according to the National Education Association, an organization tracking educator pay across the U.S.

For at least one of the state’s teacher advocacy organizations, the Senate bill does not go far enough in helping improve teacher salaries for all Texas educators.

“Let’s quit talking about pulling out a select few teachers for extra pay,” Texas State Teachers Association spokesperson Clay Robison told The Texas Tribune. “Because every student deserves a well-paid teacher, and every teacher deserves to be well paid.”

Monty Exter, governmental relations director for the Association of Texas Professional Educators, called the money designated for experienced teachers “impressive.” But if lawmakers in the future decided not to set funds aside for those teachers in the budget, Exter said, then school districts would likely have to cover the costs. That could lead to districts eventually clawing back raises from instructors or

adopting budget deficits, he said.

Exter also said teachers may not support the state attempting to encourage districts to adopt a merit-based pay evaluation system for all educators. The bill notes that if a school district participates in the expanded teacher incentive program, they must not provide “across-the-board salary increases for instructional staff” except for salary changes related to inflation.

“I don’t think that teachers or educators at large are probably going to respond very positively to that based on history,” Exter said. “But we’re going to tell them about it, and we’ll see what they tell us.”

Abbott said during his State of the State address that he wanted to increase Texas teachers’ average salary to an “all-time high” and put more teachers on a pathway to a six-figure income through the Teacher Incentive Allotment. The House and Senate have both proposed allocating roughly \$5 billion in new funds to public schools. Senate leadership has said it wants to use most of that funding to boost the teacher incentive program and increase teacher pay.

Notably, the new Senate bill does not aim to raise teacher pay through an increase to the base amount of money school districts receive for each student — something that public school administrators and education advocates have called for in recent years. Increasing that stream of funding, which the state’s teacher vacancy task force also recommended in 2023, could offer school districts more flexibility in raising salaries for teachers and support staff while helping them combat the rising costs of goods and services schools rely on.

Districts have not received an increase to their base amount of funding per student since 2019,

which school officials say has exacerbated the challenges they currently face — from budget deficits and program cuts to campus closures and teacher shortages. During the last legislative session, schools missed out on a \$7 billion funding boost, which would have included an increase to schools’ base funding, after lawmakers declined to pass a bill establishing a program that would have allowed families to use taxpayer dollars to fund their children’s private education.

Abbott had promised that he would not sign a bill increasing public education funding without the passage of that program — widely known as school vouchers or education savings accounts — his top legislative priority in recent years. The Senate has already passed its priority school voucher proposal this year, and the legislation now awaits a vote in the House.

Newly elected House Speaker Dustin Burrows, R-Lubbock, said at a private school event on Monday that the House would introduce its own voucher bill this week. He expressed confidence that the proposal has enough votes to pass that chamber, where it repeatedly hit a dead end two years ago.

The House has also indicated a desire to increase teacher pay, but it has not yet outlined specifics.

This story was originally published on February 18 and updated on February 20 in The Texas Tribune.

Editor’s note: The Senate Committee on Education met on February 24 and advanced a substitute to SB 26 to the full Senate. The key goals of the bill remain unchanged, but please check capitol.texas.gov for details.

Bringing together buyers and sellers of
ranches and unique properties throughout Texas



Protecting Clients. Conserving the Land.

Offices in Fort Davis and Austin
432-426-2024 www.KingLandWater.com
info@KingLandWater.com

The City of Marfa Planning and Zoning Commission has scheduled Public Hearings for March 18, 2025 and April 15, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. in the Casner Room, City Hall, 113 S. Highland Street, Marfa, Texas, regarding a Request for Rezoning from R1 Single Family Residential to Industrial by AEP Texas, Inc. for a property of 4.0388 acres of land, situated at 102, 104 N. Aparejo St., and at the corner of N. Aparejo St. and E. Oak St., also described as Parcel 1: S ½ of Block 103, Original Townsite of Marfa; Parcel 2: N ½ of Block 103, Original Townsite of Marfa; Parcel 3: a 3.57-acre tract, more or less, out of 6.71-acre tract in Section 244, Block 8, G.H.&S.A. Ry. Co. Survey, City of Marfa, Presidio County, State of Texas. Additional information concerning the above Request for Rezoning is available at City Hall, (432)729-4315.

Big Bend Regional Hospital District Employment Opportunity

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

The Patient Advocate will assist clients with enrollment in state/local assistance programs and other health initiatives. Job requirements include: high school diploma or equivalent, proficiency in English and Spanish, excellent communication skills with clients and the community, solid grasp of how state and federally funded benefits programs work, two years experience in social services, customer service, case management, or other field-related experience. Monthly travel in a company-provided vehicle is required to our Presidio office and for outreach in areas of Presidio and Brewster County. Salary commensurate with experience. Benefits include: health insurance, generous PTO and paid holiday schedule, and retirement contributions.

Please send a resume and cover letter to maria@bbrhd.com or they can be dropped off at the Alpine office.

For more information call 432-837-7051.

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



BBT AWARDED \$4.89 MILLION IN GRANTS FOR RURAL FIBER EXPANSION

BBT IS EXCITED TO ANNOUNCE OVER \$4.89 MILLION IN GRANTS TO EXPAND FIBER OPTIC INFRASTRUCTURE ACROSS, FORT DAVIS, LIMPIA CROSSING, IRAAN, MARATHON, AND ALPINE.

THESE PROJECTS WILL SERVE 513 LOCATIONS, OFFERING SCALABLE SPEEDS UP TO 1 GIG/GIG WITH A LOW-COST OPTION OF 100/20 MBPS.

THIS EXPANSION AIMS TO ENHANCE CONNECTIVITY, SUPPORTING FAMILIES, BUSINESSES, AND COMMUNITIES THROUGHOUT WEST TEXAS.

GOVERNMENT CONTACTS

PRESIDIO COUNTY

Judge Jose Portillo:
(432) 729-4452

Presidio Mayor John Ferguson:

City Hall: (432) 229-3517
Email: jferguson@presidiotx.us

CITY OF MARFA

Manny Baeza, City of Marfa Mayor
mayor@cityofmarfa.com
(432) 295-0048

Raúl Lara, Mayor Pro Tem
councilmemberlara@cityofmarfa.com

Mark Cash
councilmembercash@cityofmarfa.com

Eddie Pallarez
councilmemberpallarez@cityofmarfa.com

Mark Morrison
councilmembermorrison@cityofmarfa.com

Travis Acreman
councilmembearcreman@cityofmarfa.com

BREWSTER COUNTY

Judge Greg Henington:
(432) 837-2412

Alpine Mayor Catherine Eaves:
City Hall: (432) 837-3301

Email: mayor.eaves@ci.alpine.tx.us

JEFF DAVIS COUNTY

Judge Curtis Evans: (432) 426-3968

FEDERAL:

U.S. Sen. John Cornyn:
(202) 224-2934 (D.C. office)

U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz:
(202) 224-5922 (D.C. office)

CELEBRATING 65 YEARS
CONNECTING WEST TEXAS

NEW RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMERS GET
FIBER-FAST 1 GIG
INTERNET FOR JUST \$65/MONTH
NOW THROUGH 2025!

1 GIG SPEEDS FOR ONLY \$65 A MONTH*

CALL **800.592.4781** OR VISIT **bigbend.com**

FREE INSTALLATION
NO CONTRACTS
CALL NOW!

*TERMS APPLY

**HIGH-SPEED INTERNET FOR THE
WHOLE FAMILY**

ESTATE SALE

Sunday, March 2nd
113 E Waco, Marfa
9am — Noon
Sofa, dining table, chairs,
queen mattress, furniture,
books, dishes, more!
503-422-0995



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.



Maisie Crow
Max Kabat
Rob D'Amico
Sam Karas
Mary Cantrell
Ariele Gentiles
Tyler Sousa
Mary Etherington
Gilberto Carrillo
Rene Gonzales

Editor-in-Chief
Publisher
Managing Editor
Reporter
Reporter
Copy Editor
Designer / Advertising
Office Manager
Distribution
Distribution

Office: 209 1/2 W. El Paso St., Marfa, Texas
Mail: Drawer P, Marfa, TX 79843
Telephone: 432.729.4342
Contact: editor@bigbendsentinel.com
Advertising Inquiries: ads@bigbendsentinel.com
www.bigbendsentinel.com

The Big Bend Sentinel (ISSN 1076-1004 USPS 055-800) is published weekly, on Thursdays, 50 times a year by West Texan Media Group LLC, Drawer P, Marfa, TX 79843. Annual subscription rates are \$50 in Presidio, Brewster & Jeff Davis counties, and \$60 elsewhere in Texas and the United States. Special rates apply abroad. Periodicals class postage paid at Marfa, Texas 79843.
Postmaster: Send address changes to Drawer P, Marfa, TX 79843.

Email ads@bigbendsentinel.com for advertising rates