BIG BEND
Sentinel

Vol. 93 No. 37 • December 4, 2025 | Combined with the Presidio International | Marfa, Texas • $1

County eyes AI for phone tracking

Park visitor data would be used for marketing

En español en la página 3

By Sam Karas

Starting during the busy holiday rush, visitors to the region may have their mobile phones—and thus their travel plans, spending patterns and preferences—tracked by Brewster County officials who want to better understand tourism trends in the Big Bend.

Back in October, the Brewster County Commissioners Court approved a contract with Placer AI, an Israeli company selected by the county's Tourism Council marketing committee. Officials hope it will give them a better sense of visitation trends and spending patterns in South Brewster County, helping them market the area with greater accuracy—but some residents were spooked by the idea of the county using taxpayer money to access private data.

Robert Alvarez, executive director of Visit Big Bend, explained that Placer's software allows county officials to "geofence" specific areas within Brewster County that they'd like to better understand. "Then it does that whole Big Brother thing," he explained. "It finds out where they're from, what their income is, etcetera—the kind of stuff [that's generated] when you allow apps to track you." The company's website explains that Placer has been on the cutting edge of location analytics since 2018. "We've expanded far beyond foot traffic data to uncover new layers of insight—from local crime trends to planned developments and beyond," they explain. "Today, our powerful solution delivers unmatched visibility into offline

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U.S ARMY MILITARY HISTORY INSTITUTE

Ernie Pyle in Anzio, Italy, 1944

Ernie Pyle saw promise in the *Sentinel*

En español en la página 3

In late 1934 or early 1935, celebrated columnist and war correspondent Ernie Pyle visited Marfa and was intrigued by a young couple, Charles and Ruth Moore, who had recently bought Big Bend Sentinel and were bootstrapping to keep the paper running.

Pyle was impressed by their determination, and after another visit to Marfa a year and a half later, he wrote about the experience after a visit to the newspaper office.

Mike Brainard, a member of the Ernie Pyle Legacy Foundation, sent Big Bend Sentinel the column and allowed it to be published early. As Brainard noted: "I am posting one Pyle column a day from his 1935-1945 output with the Scripps Howard chain. He wrote six days a week, 1,200 to 1,600 words per column. He was prolific."

While Pyle reported from WW II battlefields in Europe, Africa and Japan, he spent much of his prior life in New Mexico and Mexico.

City-room pipe dream comes true for young man and wife

By Ernie Pyle

Marfa

ONE Sunday night, a year and a half ago, I was walking down the street in this southwest Texas cattle town and I saw the words "Big Bend Sentinel" on a window.

So I went in and introduced myself to a young fellow, and it turned out he had just bought the paper, and he and his wife were trying to put it on its feet.

They were in their middle 20s, I'd say, and very enthusiastic, altho, perhaps, a little frightened. Their names were Charles and Ruth Moore, and we sat and talked all that evening. As Moore said:

"The depression hit me pretty hard before I got out of the University of Missouri, only I didn't know it.

"I had a sheepskin from journalism school, and a little newspaper experience, including a short stay as copy boy on the old New York World. I didn't think the newspaper business could get along without me. Well, it did.

"Finally I got a job with an oil company in the Texas Panhandle. I figured then that this depression was just a story. So I sent for the girl, and got married. It's a good thing I did, for her teaching job kept

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112 MPH PURSUIT ENDS IN ARREST

By Rob D'Amico

An Alpine man who is facing previous charges led Jeff Davis County deputies on a high-speed chase on November 24, winding through the Davis Mountains and reaching speeds up to 112 mph.

Arrested was Justin Vega Lara, 38, who is in Brewster County Jail. As of Wednesday morning, Lara had not been brought to court, so the specific charges and bond amount are unknown.

According to a release from Jeff Davis County Sheriff Victor Lopez, deputies had learned that Lara was living in a trailer home in Fort Davis with an outstanding warrant out of Alpine for indecency with a child. Deputies spotted Lara at the home, but he fled, and the chase took officers up Highway 17 all the way to Interstate 10, where they were joined in pursuit by Reeves County officers heading toward Fort Stockton.



JEFF DAVIS COUNTY SHERIFF

Justin Lara Vega waits for transport to jail.

"Near mile marker 214-215, the suspect began driving erratically, weaving in and out of traffic and drifting toward the shoulder," the release stated. "At that point, Sheriff Lopez executed a controlled maneuver, pushing the suspect's vehicle toward the service road, successfully bringing the pursuit to an end." Lopez said that it was clear that Lara was a "danger to the community," which prompted the decision to pursue him. Lara is now in the Brewster County Jail on the warrant with no bond. It's unclear if additional charges will be filed out of Jeff D. Lara is the brother of Ismael Javier "I.J." Vega, then 23, who died of a fentanyl overdose on February 15, 2024, at his home in Alpine. Authorities in Sierra Blanca then arrested Vega's other brother, Willie "Sapo" Lara III, and two others on March 4 for possession of narcotics (including fentanyl) with intent to distribute. Those three were sentenced in October 2024 to terms of 15-30 months in federal prison.

After his brother's arrest, a gunman opened fire on Justin Lara on April 16, 2024, at the 1100 block of North 9th Street. The alleged shooter, Juan Jose Tafoya, 30, of Alpine, turned himself in three days later and was taken to the Brewster County Jail on charges of aggravated assault.

About a week later, on Wednesday, April 24, officers arrested Lara on charges of indecency with a child with sexual contact—which led to the warrant for his arrest that resulted in the chase. He also was arrested by Alpine police on October 29, 2024, at the 1300 Block of East Gallego on charges of continuous family violence.

The 93th District Attorney office did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the status of Lara's most recent charges, which are not in court records. He also faced charges in the past for burglary to a building, possession of narcotics, and assault causing serious bodily injury.

Feds: Acosta says cartel 'buttered him up'

Separate case finds ammunition stash

En español en la página 3

By Rob D'Amico

Presidio

Presidio businessman Tiburcio "Butch" Acosta—arrested on federal gun smuggling charges on November 13—told investigators that the La Linea cartel "buttered him up" to get him involved in smuggling weapons to them, according to federal court records.

On Monday, U.S. Texas Western District Judge David Counts denied a motion from prosecutors to detain Acosta without bail and set a bond of $30,000. The prosecution is appealing that ruling—saying that the defendant is a danger to the community and a flight risk. The judge stayed Acosta's possible release until he makes a ruling on that motion. "[When arrested, Acosta] did not directly admit to trafficking firearms, however when asked why he got involved in the scheme his response was that they 'buttered him up' which the Government argues is tantamount to an admission," the prosecution's appeal motion stated.Acosta, 50, and another man arrested for allegedly smuggling with him—Adalberto Jaquez-Hinojosa of Presidio—face

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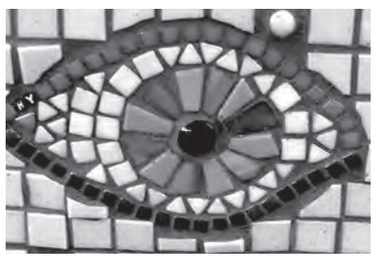


PRESIDIO POLICE DEPARTMENT

Authorities found a gun and ammunition stash in an abandoned house.

INSIDE

Mosaic adds sparkle to Murphy Street



Tile, glass and other ornamentation was used to create the eyes. Page 8

Water's essential role in thermoelectricity

Opinion: Page7

Trump creates "Americans first" park fees

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Sentinel News Project

Ornament sale raises $8K for food pantry

The spirit of Marfa rose up and shone brightly Saturday night at Do Right Hall as throngs of folks seeking some 400 ornaments made by those near and far jostled each other to reach their sought-after ornaments as the start bell rang, each priced at $20.

The sale, a fundraiser for the Marfa Food Pantry--started 36 years ago by Genevieve Bassham who saw a need and filled it and is still at the helm--raised $8,000, basically twice the original goal.

Gallery owners Buck Johnston and Camp Bosworth hatched the homemade ornament sale plan and brought it to life, inspiring all to participate, featuring DJ Julie Bernal, a rotund Adam Bork as Santa, and wild creations.

The event spread the best kind of holiday cheer, and the good people of Marfa responded in kind.



Genevieve Bassham, long-time coordinator of the Marfa Food Pantry.

Donations to the pantry can still be made online at marfafoodpantry.com/make-a-donation.

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Sentinel

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We're planning to move to a membership model to reflect our new non-profit status. Yearly memberships will include full access to both print and digital, and the charter rate will be double. This is to support the increased efforts of the *Sentinel* team to make the paper better. (And of course to compensate for inflation.)

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Sentinel

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Brewster tourism plans for 2027

By Sam Karas

Lajitas

When it comes to legislative politics in Texas, the early bird gets the worm—or at least, that's what officials in Brewster County are hoping. State leaders meet in Austin only every two years, meaning that there's a lot of ground game to be laid in the off years between sessions, particularly for groups with niche or hyperlocal concerns.

Justin Braigel of the Texas Hotel and Lodging Association—a lobbying group that's represented the industry in the state for over a hundred years—gave a presentation to help local officials and business owners understand what went down in the 2025 session and how to get a jump on 2027. "Our mission is really very simple," Braigel explained. "We support all the legislation and bills filed that make it easier to operate tourism businesses and hotels."

The Legislature's biggest priority every other year is passing the state's budget, so groups like the Hotel and Lodging Association make sure that the needs of folks in the industry don't get lost in the shuffle. Of the nearly $338 billion budget passed last session, $127 million was specifically earmarked for tourism promotion.

"We make sure that the Legislature actually spends that money on tourism," Braigel said.

This year, it was tough to keep lawmakers focused on that mission as issues like school vouchers and THC legalization dominated the conversation during the regular session. During the overtime session called in the summer, Democrats fled the state in hopes of breaking quorum to block a controversial redistricing scheme pushed by President Trump to benefit state Republicans.

Almost every session, hotel occupancy tax (HOT) funds are a hot issue for communities that make their livelihood by tourism, but it can be difficult to convince top lawmakers to feel the same urgency.

By state law, HOT funds can only be used for tourism promotion through narrowly-prescribed methods, but local governments can file bills in an attempt to carve out exceptions.

Last session, the Brewster County Tourism Council's neighbor to the north, Visit Alpine, lobbied to repeal a special law that requires the city to spend more than 50% of its HOT funds on tourism advertising. Big Bend area legislators Eddie Morales in the House and Cesar Blanco in the Senate filed companion bills, both of which died just before the end of the session.

Braigel said that the Alpine bill—and 37 other cities and counties with hyperlocal tourism-related requests—was killed in part by fighting over restrictions on hotel development in North Texas. He explained that bills like the Alpine HOT law go on the Legislature's local calendar, where non-controversial and hypothetically easy-to-pass laws are scheduled. "It only takes one member of the Legislature to speak against the bill in order to kill it," Braigel said.

"Some of the new members that came into the Legislature felt that the way they could get their voice heard was by killing the local calendar."

Legislators regrouped and added all of the local tourism bills to a big omnibus bill that included the controversial hotel development provisions, dealing the final blow.

"I was disappointed, we'd tried to get [the Alpine] bill passed for a while," Braigel said. "But those will all come roaring back in the next legislative session."

Robert Alvarez, executive director of Visit Big Bend, worried that local tourism bills might have another rough go in 2027 if many of the same legislators remained in office—but Braigel said there was plenty of potential for shakeups, with every member of the House and half of the Senate up for election. Instead, Braigel thought it was a good idea to approach the next legislative session as a clean slate and praised Brewster County's hard work. "Start thinking about what you're looking for," Braigel advised the members of the council.

"I hold you all out as an example to other places in Texas about how to do it right."


CAROL M. HIGHSMITH

Foreigners will pay a hefty price to enter Yellowstone National Park.

Trump creates fees called 'Americans First'

Big Bend National Park not impacted

Foreign visitors will now pay a hefty price for national park entries after the Trump administration unveiled a new fee structure last week. In addition to the standard entrance fees, foreigners will be charged $100 per person. Annual passes for foreigners will hike to $250.

The changes will take effect on January 1 at the following parks: Yellowstone, Grand Canyon, Acadia, Bryce Canyon, Everglades, Grand Teton, Rocky Mountain, Sequoia & Kings Canyon, Yosemite and Zion. Big Bend National Park will continue to charge standard fees to foreigners—$30 per vehicle, $25 per motorcycle and $15 per person, $55 annual pass and Senior/America the Beautiful passes (free access to all federal parks) at $80.

"President Trump's leadership always puts American families first," Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum said in a new release. "These policies ensure that U.S. taxpayers, who already support the National Park System, continue to enjoy affordable access, while international visitors contribute their fair share to maintaining and improving our parks for future generations."

New revenue generated will pay for park upkeep and improvements, according to the Department of the Interior. Trump had signed an executive order this summer directing the department to look at a fee structure that makes foreigners pay more—with the rationale that Americans also pay for parks through taxes.

The department also highlighted resident-only "patriotic fee-free days" for 2026:

President's Day (February 16, 2026)
Memorial Day (May 25, 2026)
Flag Day/President Trump's birthday (June 14, 2026)
Independence Day weekend (July 3–5, 2026)
110th Birthday of the National Park Service (August 25, 2026)
Constitution Day (Sept. 17, 2026)
Theodore Roosevelt's birthday (Oct. 27, 2026)
Veteran's Day (November 11, 2026)

For more information on digital passes, pricing updates, and how to prepare for the 2026 changes, visit https://www.nps.gov/planyourvisit/passes.htm or Recreation.gov.


SAM KARAS

Tourist phones may be tracked for marketing.

PRESIDIO INTERNATIONAL

Ernie Pyle ve potencial en el periódico de Marfa

A finales de 1934 o principios de 1935, el célebre columnista y corresponsal de guerra Ernie Pyle visitó Marfa y quedó intrigado por una joven pareja, Charles y Ruth Moore, que recientemente habían comprado el Big Bend Sentinel y se esforzaban por mantener el periódico en funcionamiento. Pyle quedó impresionado por su determinación, y después de otra visita a Marfa un año y medio después, escribió sobre la experiencia.

Mike Brainard, miembro de la Fundación del Legado de Ernie Pyle, envió la columna al Big Bend Sentinel y permitió su publicación anticipada. (Se publicará en el sitio web de la fundación The Complete Works of Ernie Pyle en Substack el 28 de diciembre, pero Brainard permitió un adelanto para los residentes de los tres condados).

Como señaló Brainard: "Estoy publicando una columna de Pyle al día de su producción de 1935-1945 con la cadena Scripps Howard. Escribía seis días a la semana, de 1200 a 1600 palabras por columna. Era muy prolífico".

Si bien Pyle informó desde los campos de batalla de la Segunda Guerra Mundial en Europa, África y Japón, pasó gran parte de su vida anterior en Nuevo México y México. Puede obtener más información sobre Ernie Pyle en erniepylefoundation.org y seguir las columnas publicadas aquí: michaelbrainard.substack.com

La columna (sin editar) del 1 de junio de 1936 del Washington Daily News



AP

Ernie Pyle wrote prolifically throughout his career, even from battlefields, like Normandy in 1944.

El sueño de un joven matrimonio se hace realidad

Por Ernie Pyle

Marfa

UNA NOCHE DE DOMINGO, hace un año y medio, caminaba por la calle de este pueblo ganadero del suroeste de4 Texas y vi las palabras "Big Bend Sentinel" en una ventana.

Así que entré y me presenté a un joven, y resultó que acababa de comprar el periódico, y él y su esposa estaban tratando de sacarlo adelante. Tendrían unos 25 años, diría yo, y eran muy entusiastas, aunque quizás un poco asustados. Se llamaban Charles y Ruth Moore, y nos sentamos a hablar toda la noche. Como dijo Moore:

"La depresión me afectó bastante antes de terminar mis estudios en la Universidad de Misuri, solo que yo no lo sabía".

"Tenía un título de la escuela de periodismo y algo de experiencia en periódicos, incluyendo una breve estancia como chico de los recados en el antiguo New York World. Pensaba que el negocio de los periódicos no podría funcionar sin mí. Pues bien, sí que pudo". "Finalmente conseguí un trabajo en una compañía petrolera en el Panhandle de Texas. Entonces pensé que esta depresión era solo un cuento. Así que le pedí a mi novia que viniera y nos casamos.

Menos mal que lo hice, porque su trabajo de maestra nos permitió comprar comida después de que me despidieran".

"Luego tuvimos un golpe de suerte. Unos amigos nos regalaron billetes de tren a Nueva York. Llegamos allí con 50 dólares. Trabajé para la ciudad de Nueva York durante un año, y luego surgió la oportunidad de un buen trabajo en los campos petrolíferos del este de Texas. Estuvimos allí dos años. Entonces me enteré de que se podía comprar este semanario. Y lo compramos."

"Marfa es un pueblo de 4000 habitantes. Es un lugar precioso.

Está en una meseta a una milla de altura, rodeado de montañas, y México está a solo dos horas al sur. Esta es tierra de ganado Hereford. Pero tres años de sequía han dejado a Marfa en la ruina. No sé cómo saldremos de esta".

"Cualquiera de estas tres cosas nos salvaría: lluvia, la reapertura de Fort Russell por el Ejército, o que alguno de estos buscadores de petróleo encontrara un yacimiento".

Eso fue hace un año y medio. Desde entonces, a menudo me he preguntado cómo les iría a Charles y Ruth Moore.

Me interesaba especialmente porque ahora, alrededor del 90 por ciento de los periodistas que he conocido profesan la ambición de adquirir un periódico semanal rural algún día en un futuro lejano, establecerse y ser sus propios jefes.

Así que cuando llegué a Marfa esta vez, fui directamente a la oficina del Big Bend Sentinel para ver cómo iban las cosas. Las cosas van bien. Charles Moore dice:

"El periódico estaba en bancarrota cuando llegamos. Mi experiencia en impresión comercial, que es esencial para cualquier periódico semanal rural, era nula. Siempre había considerado el trabajo publicitario como un mal necesario que debía hacer otra persona. Yo era periodista".

"Pero aprendí cosas. Aprendí sobre publicidad. Aprendí sobre gastos. Me costó 600 dólares el privilegio de publicar The Big Bend Sentinel durante nuestro primer año".

"Y luego llovió. La hierba grama creció hasta la altura de las rodillas en las tierras altas. Los abrevaderos se llenaron. El ganado Hereford volvió a engordar". "Hay minas de plata cerca de aquí, y la política monetaria del Gobierno impulsó el mercado de la plata a su punto más alto en años".

"Y luego, el verano pasado, Fort D. A. Russell fue reabierto. Trajo de vuelta el ambiente de la vida militar, buenos salarios y alegría a los corazones de los empresarios de Marfa. Empezamos a vender algo de publicidad y a imprimir membretes en nuestro taller de impresión".

"Luego logramos reunir suficiente dinero para comprar nuestro periódico competidor y fusionarnos con nuestro competidor en impresión comercial. Eso nos dio un periódico y un taller de impresión exclusivos en el condado de Presidio.

Esta ha sido nuestra mejor decisión. Obtendremos ganancias este año".

"Pagar la nómina cada semana me ha parecido una responsabilidad mayor que cobrarla. Ha habido ocasiones en las que he pagado a los empleados, pero no a mí mismo.

Incluso hemos aceptado huevos como forma de pago por las suscripciones. Esperemos que esos días hayan quedado atrás para siempre". "Ambos hemos trabajado día y noche. Ruth se encarga de la sección social y de muchas noticias de actualidad, así como de reportajes y artículos de opinión.

Y cuando la venta de publicidad y los trabajos de imprenta me impiden dedicarme a las noticias, ella interviene y se encarga de cubrirlas.

También gana un dinero extra colaborando con periódicos de la ciudad y agencias de noticias"

"Hemos logrado comprar una casa, aunque todavía no la hemos terminado de pagar. Nuestro último logro es una camada de pollitos: nuestra primera incursión en la agricultura".

"Hemos conseguido mantener una visión justa e imparcial de las pequeñas disputas y rencillas que ocurren en todos los pueblos, pero que afectan más directamente al editor local. Nos hemos ganado la amistad del pueblo".

"Publicar un semanario rural no da tanto dinero como otros negocios, y estamos muy lejos de lo que antes considerábamos el centro de todo, pero tenemos muchas cosas que lo compensan con creces".

"Hemos descubierto que la tierra y la tinta de imprenta nos sientan mejor en las manos que cualquier otra cosa que conozcamos."

AUTORIDADES FEDERALES: ACOSTA DICE QUE EL CÁRTEL LO 'ENGATUSÓ'

En otro caso aparte, se descubre un alijo de municiones

Por Rob D'Amico

Presidio

El empresario de Presidio, Tiburcio "Butch" Acosta, arrestado el 13 de noviembre por cargos federales de contrabando de armas, declaró a los investigadores que el cártel de La Línea lo "engatusó" para que participara en el contrabando de armas para ellos, según consta en los registros del tribunal federal.

El lunes, el juez del Distrito Oeste de Texas, David Counts, denegó una moción de la fiscalía para detener a Acosta sin derecho a fianza y fijó una fianza de 30.000 dólares. La fiscalía apeló esa decisión, argumentando que el acusado representa un peligro para la comunidad y existe riesgo de fuga. El juez suspendió la posible liberación de Acosta hasta que emita un fallo sobre dicha moción. "[Al ser arrestado, Acosta] no admitió directamente el tráfico de armas de fuego, sin embargo, cuando se le preguntó por qué se involucró en el plan, su respuesta fue que lo 'engatusaron', lo que el Gobierno argumenta que equivale a una admisión", declaró la fiscalía en su moción de apelación.

Acosta, de 50 años, y otro hombre arrestado por presunto contrabando junto con él, Adalberto Jaquez-Hinojosa, de Presidio, enfrentan tres cargos graves relacionados con el contrabando, el más grave de los cuales, el tráfico de armas de fuego, es punible con 15 años de prisión. Counts denegó una moción de la defensa para fijar fianza para Jaquez-Hinojosa, quien es ciudadano mexicano. En la moción original para detener a Acosta sin fianza, los fiscales declararon que no es ciudadano estadounidense y no está "admitido legalmente para residencia permanente".

El fiscal adjunto Steven Spitzer escribió que los investigadores tenían registros de teléfonos móviles de Acosta, Jaquez-Hinojosa y otra fuente con conversaciones sobre el contrabando de armas para el cártel de La Línea. También escribió que los investigadores contaban con un testigo colaborador, cuyo nombre no se reveló, que corrobora esas conversaciones, incluyendo la colocación de armas en el coche de Acosta para llevarlas a México. "Estas conversaciones indicaron que las armas de fuego traficadas se entregaron al acusado en Presidio antes de ser transportadas a través de la frontera", declaró la moción de apelación. "Las armas de fuego mencionadas incluían un SCAR, que es un rifle de asalto militar de alta potencia, así como otras armas de fuego semiautomáticas muy codiciadas por los cárteles".

En la audiencia se presentaron 22 cartas de amigos, socios comerciales y familiares, incluida la esposa de Acosta, Laura Viramantes, elogiándolo como un padre cariñoso de sus dos hijos y un gerente de negocios trabajador que encuentra tiempo para donar sus famosos cortes de carne a la iglesia y a otras actividades benéficas de la comunidad. Entre las peticiones para que Acosta fuera puesto en libertad bajo fianza se encontraban cartas de Nancy Arevalo, tasadora de impuestos del condado de Presidio, y de Ruben Ortega, comisionado del condado de Brewster.

Arevalo señaló que compitió con Acosta en las primarias demócratas de 2024, cuando Acosta perdió su candidatura a comisionado del condado en una segunda vuelta por 22 votos ante Franky Ortiz.

Aunque ninguna de las personas contactadas por el Big Bend Sentinel quiso comentar públicamente sobre los cargos, varios funcionarios y amigos de Acosta dijeron estar conmocionados por el arresto del popular residente de Presidio.

Acosta administra la tienda libre de impuestos UETA en Presidio, dirige un negocio de transporte y es conocido por ayudar con el servicio de grúa.

En otro caso, se encontró un alijo de municiones y dos pistolas en una casa abandonada en Presidio el jueves pasado, y el Departamento de Policía de Presidio continúa trabajando con agentes de Investigaciones de Seguridad Nacional para identificar a más sospechosos de contrabando de armas y municiones, dijo el domingo el jefe de policía Adan "Pugi" Cavos. Aún no se ha arrestado a ningún sospechoso en relación con el hallazgo, dijo Covos.

Según un comunicado en la página de Facebook del departamento, los agentes encontraron 6.400 cartuchos de munición de alto calibre y dos pistolas 9mm. El contrabando estaba destinado a ser introducido ilegalmente en México, según el comunicado.

Mientras tanto, Ojinaga, que había enfrentado una serie de tiroteos en lugares públicos y violencia adicional al sur, cerca de Coyame del Sotol, se había calmado la semana anterior. El cártel La Línea controla gran parte de Chihuahua. Esta facción del cártel de Juárez ha estado en guerra recientemente con el cártel de Sinaloa.

Trump impone tarifas de entrada a parques nacionales

El Parque Nacional Big Bend no se ve afectado

Los visitantes extranjeros ahora pagarán un precio considerable por la entrada a los parques nacionales después de que la administración Trump presentara una nueva estructura de tarifas la semana pasada.

Además de las tarifas de entrada estándar, a los extranjeros se les cobrarán 100 dólares por persona. Los pases anuales para extranjeros aumentarán a 250 dólares.

Los cambios entrarán en vigor el 1 de enero en los siguientes parques: Yellowstone, Gran Cañón, Acadia, Bryce Canyon, Everglades, Grand Teton, Rocky Mountain, Sequoia y Kings Canyon, Yosemite y Zion. El Parque Nacional Big Bend seguirá cobrando las tarifas estándar a los extranjeros: 30 dólares por vehículo, 25 dólares por motocicleta y 15 dólares por persona, pase anual de 55 dólares y pases Senior/America the Beautiful (acceso gratuito a todos los parques federales) a 80 dólares.

"El liderazgo del presidente Trump siempre prioriza a las familias estadounidenses", dijo el secretario del Interior, Doug Burgum, en un comunicado de prensa.

"Estas políticas garantizan que los contribuyentes estadounidenses, que ya apoyan el Sistema de Parques Nacionales, sigan disfrutando de un acceso asequible, mientras que los visitantes internacionales contribuyen con la parte que les corresponde al mantenimiento y la mejora de nuestros parques para las generaciones futuras".

Los nuevos ingresos generados se destinarán al mantenimiento y las mejoras de los parques, según el Departamento del Interior. Trump firmó una orden ejecutiva este verano en la que ordenaba al departamento que estudiara una estructura de tarifas que hiciera que los extranjeros pagaran más, con el argumento de que los estadounidenses también pagan por los parques a través de los impuestos.

El departamento también destacó los "días patrióticos de entrada gratuita" exclusivos para residentes en 2026:

- **Día del Presidente (16 de febrero de 2026)**
- **Día de los Caídos (25 de mayo de 2026)**
- **Día de la Bandera/Cumpleaños del Presidente Trump (14 de junio de 2026)**
- **Fin de semana del Día de la Independencia (3-5 de julio de 2026)**
- **110.º Aniversario del Servicio de Parques Nacionales (25 de agosto de 2026)**
- **Día de la Constitución (17 de septiembre de 2026)**
- **Cumpleaños de Theodore Roosevelt (27 de octubre de 2026)**
- **Día de los Veteranos (11 de noviembre de 2026)**

Para obtener más información sobre pases digitales, actualizaciones de precios y cómo prepararse para los cambios de 2026, visite https://www.nps.gov/planyourvisit/passes.htm o Recreation.gov.



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BBT Expanding Across West Texas
BBT is proud to have received $4.89 million in funding through the BOOT (Broadband Opportunity Outreach and Technology) Grant Program. With this support, we are expanding our fiber network to reach over 500 homes in Fort Davis, Limpia Crossing, Iraan, Marathon, and Alpine.
This initiative is part of our ongoing mission to close the digital divide by building reliable, future-ready internet infrastructure in rural West Texas.
Please note: Some areas included in this expansion are pending final agreements related to AEP pole contracts.
We remain committed to transparency and will continue working closely with local partners to complete these projects as efficiently as possible.
Stay informed at **bigbend.com**

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AROUND THE BIG BEND

Thursday December 4

Hike with Homeless Dogs
10 am-11 am
Davis Mountains State Park
H3V6+G93, Park Rd 3
Fort Davis

Cold Moon Hike
8:30 pm-9:340 pm
Davis Mountains State Park
Fort Davis

Friday December 5

Master Naturalist Hike
10 am-11:30 am
Davis Mountains State Park
H3V6+G93, Park Rd 3
Fort Davis

Live Music: Jeremy Parsons
6 pm-9 pm
Alpine

Christmas Open House
6 pm-8 pm
Marathon public library
106 NE 3rd Street
Marathon

Saturday December 6

Patty Manning Pollinator Garden Grand Opening
2 pm-4 pm
Public Library
805 W Avenue E
Alpine

Sunday December 7

Open Mic Night: Music
4 pm-7 pm
Alcove Social, 211 E Holland Ave
Alpine

Boxing at Maintenant
9 am-11 am
Maintenant
1825 Rabbits Rd.
Marfa

Weekly events

Free Zumba Classes
Mondays and Wednesdays at 6:30 pm
Marfa Public Library

Free Meditation Classes
Tuesdays and Thursdays at 6 pm
Marfa Public Library

AA (online)
Saturdays at 12 pm
https://tinyurl.com/y686nnw2
Sometimes in-person, Marfa Public Library

AA (in-person)
Monday and Wednesday at 6 pm
St. Paul's Episcopal Church

The Alpine Farmers Market
Saturday at 9 am-12 pm
Alpine Visitor Center. Visit Marfa Farmstand on Facebook.

Email announcements for arts and entertainment and all social activities to editor@bigbendsentinel.com

DRAWING OF THE WEEK



Still life with Snoopy, color with acrylic
Daniela Munez

NOTICES

Notice of Public Meeting to Discuss the Presidio ISD State Financial Accountability Rating. Presidio ISD

will hold a public meeting at 6:30 p.m. on December 17, 2025, in the Board Room at the Presidio Administration Building on 701 E. Market Street in Presidio, Texas. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the Presidio ISD rating on the State's Financial Accountability System.

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE
Aviso de audiencia pública

CITY OF PRESIDIO TEXAS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM

CIUDAD DE PRESIDIO PROGRAMA DE SUBVENCIONES EN BLOQUE PARA EL DESARROLLO COMUNITARIO DE TEXAS

The City of Presidio will hold a public hearing at 4:00 p.m. on Monday, December 8, 2025 at the Presidio Activity Center located at 1200 E. O'Reilly to discuss an amendment to the 2023 Water/ Drainage Improvements Project for the Texas Community Development Block Grant Program (TxCDBG) grant from the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA Contract No. CDV23-0300). The purpose of this hearing is to consider an amendment to change the scope of the project to remove the drainage improvements, to extend the project deadline, to amend the budget, and to receive citizen comments regarding the project. The City encourages citizens to make their views known at this public hearing. Citizens unable to attend this meeting may submit their views to John Ferguson, Mayor, at the City Hall (432) 229-3517. Persons with disabilities or special needs that wish to attend this meeting should contact City Hall at least 48 hours before the meeting to arrange for assistance. Individuals who require auxiliary aids or services for this meeting should contact City Hall at least two days before the meeting so that appropriate arrangements can be made. La Ciudad de Presidio llevará a cabo una audiencia pública a las 4:00 p. m. del lunes 8 de diciembre de 2025 en el Centro de Actividades de Presidio, ubicado en 1200 E. O'Reilly, para discutir una enmienda al Proyecto de Mejoras de Agua y Drenaje de 2023 para el Programa de Subvenciones en Bloque para el Desarrollo Comunitario de Texas (TxCDBG) del Departamento de Agricultura de Texas (Contrato TDA n.° CDV23-0300). El propósito de esta audiencia es considerar una enmienda para cambiar el alcance del proyecto, eliminar las mejoras de drenaje, extender la fecha límite del proyecto, enmendar el presupuesto y recibir comentarios de los ciudadanos sobre el proyecto. La Ciudad anima a los ciudadanos a expresar sus opiniones en esta audiencia pública. Quienes no puedan asistir a esta reunión pueden enviar sus opiniones al alcalde John Ferguson en el Ayuntamiento al (432) 229-3517. Las personas con discapacidades o necesidades especiales que deseen asistir a esta reunión deben comunicarse con el Ayuntamiento al menos 48 horas antes de la reunión para solicitar asistencia. Las personas que requieran ayudas o servicios auxiliares para esta reunión deben comunicarse con el Ayuntamiento al menos dos días antes de la reunión para que se puedan hacer los arreglos correspondientes.

CROSSWORD

Edited by David Steinberg December 4, 2025

ACROSS
1 ___ to none
5 Joins with heat
10 Bearded antelope
13 Bavaria-based automaker
14 Fell face-first
15 Dairy farm sounds
16 Papa's papa, perhaps (In this clue's answer, note letters 5-6 and 8-9)
18 Assistant
19 Rebounds, as sound
20 Longed (for)
22 Place where waves crash
23 Corp. top banana
25 Refuse to share
26 Annual celebration of Hawaiian fashion and heritage (... letters 2-3 and 5-6)
31 Dude
34 Mentor to many Minions
35 Professor's job protection
36 ___ flag
37 Degree for many profs
38 Future flower
39 Deuce in tennis, e.g.
40 Like the land of Cusco and Kuzco
42 Organ you might pierce
43 Roll in a yard?
44 "What's cooking, ___?" (... letters 2-3 and 6-7)
47 Actress Vardalos
48 Pet doc
49 The "U" in UV
54 Water cooler?
57 Zodiac bull
58 Cheer (for)
59 What city streets typically do (... letters 4-5 and 9-10)
62 Major musical work
63 Wizard's billowy garment
64 Otherwise
65 After-tax amount
66 Harmonizes
67 Mailbox feature

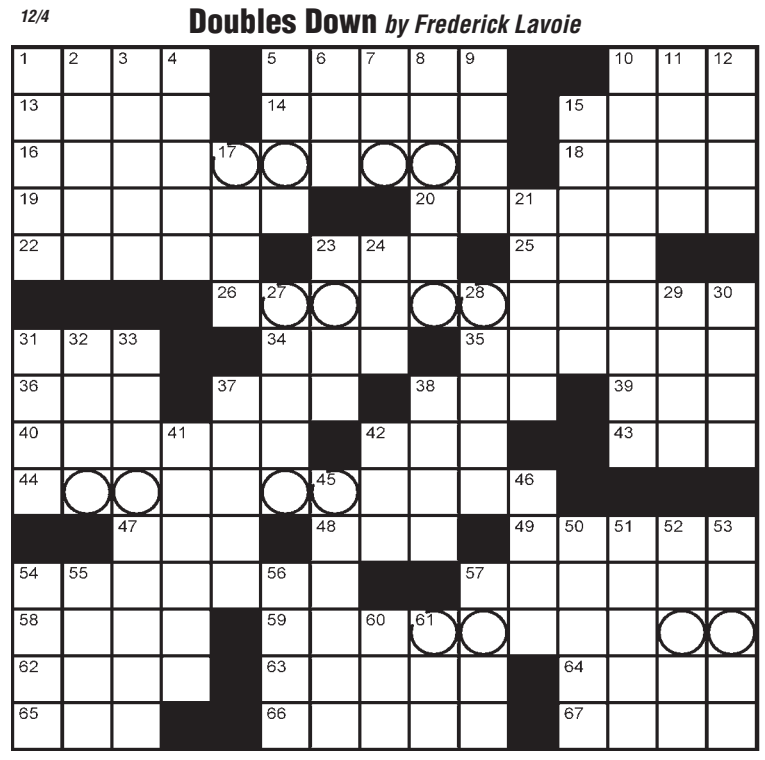
DOWN
1 Wise people
2 Stagger
3 State that borders Canada
4 Like a melancholic key
5 Bundles of bills
6 GPS guess
7 Ran
8 "___ ever stop to think ..."
9 Real eye sore
10 Absolutely losing it
11 Connecting point
12 Took advantage of
15 Strand on an island
17 Consider to be
21 "Arabian Nights" prince
23 Bit of cheese in poutine
24 Bird that lays large green eggs
27 "Eww, hard pass"
28 One-eighty
29 Quartet minus one
30 Pay attention to
31 Toot your own horn
32 Home makeover, briefly
33 Thing that's different from the rest
37 Pacific island nation
38 Try to get a reaction out of
41 Formal decrees
42 Scrape (out)
45 Excessively
46 Green burrito bowl topper, for short
50 Pieces of fishing tackle
51 Online instigator
52 ___ brothers ("Avengers: Endgame" directors)
53 Positive quality
54 Mineral obtained from leafy greens
55 Deal with difficulty
56 Privately includes on an email
57 Disapproving clucks
60 Charged particle
61 Anatomical pouch

PREVIOUS PUZZLE ANSWER

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

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Doubles Down *by Frederick Lavoie* 12/4



SUDUKO

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9 inclusively.



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

SOLUTION:

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

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Jingle all the way!

Chorale set for sing-along

Marfa/Alpine

The Big Bend Community Chorale (BBCC) will hold a "Holiday Road" sing-along with two free performances.

The first will be Friday, December 5, at 7:30 p.m. at First Methodist Church of Alpine, 208 E. Sul Ross Ave. Then the chorale performs on Sunday, December 7, at 3 p.m. at the First Presbyterian Church of Marfa, 110 E. Columbia St.

BBCC is the premier choral ensemble of West Texas under the direction of Dr. Andrew D. Alegría. The singers come from all backgrounds and live throughout the Big Bend area. The BBCC performs a diverse style of music, from classical to Broadway. The events are free, but donations will be accepted.

Teachers' art show on display Saturday

Marfa

Marfa Studio of Arts invites the public this weekend to an art show, featuring the work of artists teaching this year at Marfa Elementary. The opening reception for the show is Saturday, December 6, from 4 to 7 p.m. See works by local artists Chelsea Quinlan, Katrina Jane, Marcy Rodriguez, Suzanne McCleod, Katy Baldock and Gary Jean Dorey. The work will be exhibited until January 2026 at 106 E San Antonio Street.

Annual Posada returns to Presidio

Presidio

Experience the holiday traditions of the borderlands at the annual Posada at Fort Leaton on Saturday, December 13, from 6 to 8 p.m. Posada means "inn" or "shelter" in Spanish.

This traditional Mexican Christmas tradition tells the story of Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem through skits and songs.

What to expect: Over 1,000 candle luminarias light the way for you to walk and sing with Mary and Joseph as they search for shelter. Following the procession, there will be traditional holiday drinks, snacks, piñatas, and mariachi.



HANNAH GENTILES

The annual Posada features food, music, dance and tours of Fort Leaton.

You can wander the halls of the candle-lit fort on your own or take a guided tour. The guided tours will occur once every 30 minutes starting at 6:30 p.m. Admission is free.

Shopping season swings into drive with bazaar

Alpine

The Alpine Civic Center will host the Mountain Country Christmas this weekend.

This huge bazaar features quilts, candles, jewelry, T-shirts, holiday décor, local artisans, vendors, food, and pictures with Santa. Hours are: Friday, December 5, 1 to 9 p.m. and Saturday, December, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the Alpine Civic Center, 801 W. Holland. The Santa photos for kids and pets will be on Friday, December 5, from 1 to 5 p.m.

Historic Alpine invites all to Christmas in Alpine

Alpine

Christmas in Alpine is a multi-day series of community events featuring starlight shopping, festive neighborhood gatherings, historic sites, holiday treats, and a grand finale performance by the Big Bend Community Chorale and SRSU University Chorus. This year's celebration begins on Thursday, December 4, with Starlight Shopping & the Wassail Crawl in Alpine's Downtown Shopping District from 4 to 7 p.m. Local businesses will stay open late with special holiday offerings, warm wassail, treats, and festive window displays.

Live music will fill the streets as shoppers enjoy a small town Alpine tradition that kicks off the holiday season with charm and cheer.

On Friday, December 5, the community gathers again for the Christmas Stroll, a progressive, family-friendly walk through three of Alpine's most historic and beloved institutions:

5:30 p.m. • First Baptist Church – 203 North 4th Street

Hot cocoa, caroling, and live music by the FBC Choir and Children's Ensemble.

6 p.m. • The 135-Year-Old Historic School House – 205 East Sul Ross Avenue

Meet Santa Claus, enjoy bizcochos, hot cider, and visit with neighbors at one of Alpine's oldest buildings, hosted by Historic Alpine and Alpine Community Projects. 7:30 p.m. • First United Methodist Church – 208 East Sul Ross Avenue The evening concludes with *holiday road,* this year's major performance by the Big Bend Community Chorale and the SRSU University Chorus.

To allow for a safe, festive block-party atmosphere for the Stroll, portions of Sul Ross Avenue and the surrounding blocks will be closed to through-traffic. Clear access and parking will remain open for choir members, attendees with mobility needs, and all partner churches.

This year's Christmas in Alpine weekend is a collaboration between Historic Alpine, Alpine Community Projects, the Big Bend Community Chorale, Sul Ross State University and local small businesses—uniting Alpine in celebration, music, history, and holiday spirit.

Merry 'Wranch' Christmas features petting zoo

Alpine

The Wasserman Ranch will hold "A Very Merry Wranch Christmas" with a petting zoo, games, a penguin slide, caroling and food from the Bread Garden Bakery on Saturday, December 13, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the ranch, 10 Rim Road in Alpine. Santa will be on hand from 1 to 3 p.m. The cost is $15 and includes a bag of cookies.

Farewell to police chief with parade

Alpine

The City of Alpine will honor Police Chief Darrell Losoya, who is leaving the position at the end of the year, and his wife Belen on December 13 with a parade from 6 to 8 p.m. starting at the Civic Center, 801 W Holland. No need to register, and lineup for the parade starts at 5:30 p.m.

Marathon hosts Fiesta de Noche Buena

Marathon

Fiesta de Noche Buena is a local tradition when residents, artists, businesses, and visitors ring in the holiday season on Marathon's main strip.

Santa Claus parades into town with Marathon Volunteer Fire Department vehicles and greets children in the lobby of Trans Pecos Bank. Also planned are hayrides, a street party, live music, food and folklórico—on Saturday, December 6, from 5 to 9 p.m. Shops also stay open late with seasonal offerings. Hosted by Marathon Chamber of Commerce.

CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS

$1.2 billion headed to Texas broadband access

Federal funding included in the 2021 infrastructure law passed during the Biden administration has been slow to reach states, The News reported. But the Trump administration announced recently that it has approved a plan to spend more than $1.2 billion in federal funds to improve broadband access in Texas, delivering high-speed internet to rural areas.

That amount is considerably less than the $3.3 billion allocated to Texas under the original infrastructure law passed in 2021.

Texas is the 19th state to win approval of a final plan.

Acting Texas Comptroller Kelly Hancock said the approved plan will make it possible for nearly every Texas location to connect to high-speed internet.

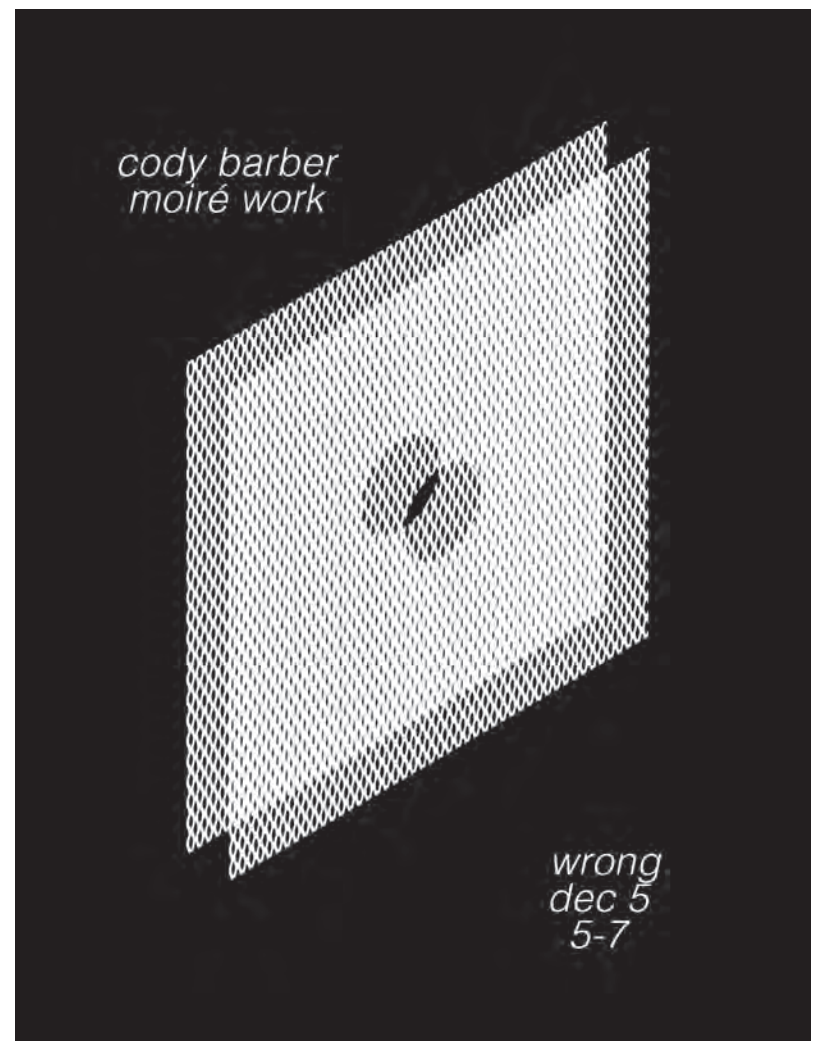
"The Texas broadband plan reflects our state's commitment to responsible stewardship and to creating an environment where families, students and businesses can continue to thrive for generations to come," Hancock said.

Older Texans face steep ACA price hikes

About 1 million Texans over the age of 45 who receive health insurance coverage through the federal Affordable Care Act will likely face monthly premiums of more than $1,000, the Austin American-Statesman reported.

That accounts for one-fourth of the state's 4 million ACA enrollees. The Republican-led Congress has thus far refused to extend pandemic-era subsidies that reduced ACA premiums, a factor in the recent government shutdown. Part of the deal to reopen the government includes a promise to hold a vote on the issue in December, but it appears unlikely to pass. Texas insurers have raised ACA premiums by an average of 35%, but the hikes have been even higher for older enrollees. "So price impacts tend to hit older folks the hardest," said Laura Dague, who is the James M. Griffin professor of health policy at Texas A&M University. That is because insurance companies consider them higher risk, she added.

— Gary Borders
gborders@texaspress.com





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Stroll Alpine December 4th and 5th

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DECEMBER 5TH (5:30-7:00PM) CHRISTMAS STROLL

FOR DETAILS VISIT: HISTORICALPINE.ORG / CHRISTMAS



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Sentinel

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.

Putting out the *Sentinel* was always a struggle

Continued from page 1
us in groceries after I got fired. "Then we had a windfall. Some friends gave us railroad tickets to New York. We landed there with $50. I worked for the City of New York for a year, then came a chance for a good job in the east Texas oil fields. We were there two years. Then I heard this weekly could be bought. We bought it.

"Marfa is a town of 4,000. It's pretty here. On a tableland a mile high, mountains all around, Mexico just two hours to the south. This is Hereford cattle country. But three years of drought have put Marfa flat on its back. I don't know how we'll come out.

"Any one of three things would fix us—rain, the reopening of Ft. Russell by the Army, or a hit by some of these oil wildcatters.

That was a year and a half ago. Since then I have often wondered how Charles and Ruth Moore were getting along.

I was especially interested because now about 90 per cent of the newspaper men I have ever known profess an ambition to acquire a country weekly some far day in the hazy future, settle down and be their own boss.

So when I landed in Marfa this time I made a beeline for the Big Bend Sentinel office to see how things were doing. Things are doing all right. Charles Moore says:

"The paper was bankrupt when we came. My experience in job printing, which is essential to any country weekly, was zero. I had always looked at advertising work as a necessary evil for somebody else to perform. I was a news man.



WIKI COMMONS

Ernie Pyle eating "C" rations at the Anzio beachhead, March 18, 1944

"But I learned things. I learned about advertising. I learned about expenses. It cost me $600 for the privilege of issuing The Big Bend Sentinel our first year. "And then it rained. It pushed the gramma grass knee high over the highlands. Cattle tanks filled up.

The Herefords filled out again."There are silver mines near here, and the Government's monetary policy pushed the siver market to the highest peak in years. "And then last summer Ft. D. A. Russell was regarrisoned. It brought back the color of military life, a good pay roll, and joy to the hearts of Marfa business men.

We began to sell some advertising and to print letterheads in our job shop. "Then we managed to scrape up enough cash to buy our competing newspaper and to merge with our competitor in job printing. That gave us an exclusive newspaper and job shop in Presidio County.

This has been our best move. We'll make a profit this year. "Meeting a pay roll every week I've found to be a greater responsibility than being on a pay roll every week. There have been times when I paid the men but not myself. We have joyously accepted eggs for subscription payments. Let's hope those days are gone forever. "We have both worked day and night.

Ruth handles society and a lot of straight news, as well as features and sketches. And whenever selling advertising and job printing leaves me no times for the news, she steps in and covers.

She also makes pin money by corresponding for city papers and wire services. "We have managed to buy a home even tho it isn't paid for. Our latest achievement is a bunch of baby chicks–our first venture in farming.

"We have managed to take a fair and impartial view of the little fights and petty quarrels that happen in all towns, but which come closer to the country editor. We have made friends with the town. "There isn't the money in publishing a country weekly that there is in other lines of business, and we are a long way from what we used to consider the center of things, but we have a great many things that more than compensate.

"We have found that the soil and printer's ink look better on our hands than anything else we know of."

The column (printed here, undited) from the June 1, 1936, Washington Daily News. You can learn more about Ernie Pyle at erniepylefoundation.org

Follow the published columns here: michaelbrainard.substack.com
It will be posted on the foundation's "The Complete Works of Ernie Pyle Substack" website on December 28.

Acosta facing up to 15 years in prison on guns charge

Continued from page 1
felony counts related to smuggling, the most serious of which, trafficking in firearms, is punishable by 15 years in prison. Counts denied a defense motion to set bond for Jaquez-Hinojosa, who is a Mexican citizen. On the original motion to detain Acosta without bond, prosecutors stated he is not a U.S. citizen and is not "lawfully admitted for permanent residence."

U.S. Assistant Attorney Steven Spitzer wrote that investigators had mobile phone records from Acosta, Jaquez-Hinojosa, and another source with discussions about smuggling weapons to the La Linea cartel.

He also wrote that investigators had a cooperating witness, unnamed, who corroborates those discussions, including putting weapons in Acosta's car to take to Mexico.

"These conversations indicated that trafficked firearms were dropped off with Defendant in Presidio prior to being taken across the border," the appeal motion stated.

"The firearms discussed included a SCAR which is a high-powered military grade assault rifle as well as other semi-automatic firearms highly sought after by cartels."

Presented at the hearing were 22 letters from friends, business associates and family—including Acosta's wife, Laura Viramantes—praising Acosta as a loving father of his two sons and a hard-working business manager who finds time to donate his famous briskets to the church and other community fundraisers.

Included in those pleas to release Acosta on bond were letters from Nancy Arevalo, Presidio County tax assessor, and Ruben Ortega, a Brewster County commissioner.

Arevalo noted that she ran with Acosta in the 2024 Democratic Primary when Acosta lost his bid for county commissioner in a runoff by 22 votes to Franky Ortiz.

Though no one contacted by Big Bend Sentinel wanted to comment publicly about the charges, several officials and friends of Acosta said they were shocked by the arrest of the popular Presidio resident.

Acosta manages the UETA tax-free store in Presidio, runs a shipping business and is known for helping out with towing cars.

In another case, a cache of ammunition and two pistols were found in an abandoned Presidio home last Thursday, and the Presidio Police Department continues to work with Homeland Security Investigations agents on identifying more suspects in weapon and ammunition smuggling, Police Chief Adan "Pugi" Cavos said Sunday. No suspects have yet been arrested in connec tion with the discovery, Covos said.

According to a statement on the department's Facebook page, officers found 6,400 rounds of high-caliber ammunition and two 9mm pistols. The contraband was intended to be smuggled to Mexico, the statement said.

Meanwhile, Ojinaga—which had faced a rash of gunfights in popular gathering places and additional violence to the south near Coyame del Sotol—had quieted down in the previous week.

The La Linea cartel controls much of Chihuahua.

An offshoot of the Juarez cartel, it has been in recent warfare with the Sinaloa cartel.



BUTCH ACOSTA—FACEBOOK

Acosta narrowly lost a county commissioner's race

County reviews AI for phone tracking

trade areas, audience behavior, and demographics—helping businesses understand not just where people go but the forces that shape every market."

Alvarez said that—despite the expense—he had high hopes for the return on investment. "I've heard from other colleagues that it's a very good company," he said.

Visit Big Bend started experimenting with the program during the Chili Cookoff at the beginning of November, geofencing the Tolbert and CASI cookoff sites as well as the Cottonwood store. They hope to expand the tracking area to the whole county, in hopes of figuring out how successful the organization's marketing at the Texas State Fair was.

On Facebook, Precinct 2 Commissioner Sara Allen Colando addressed constituent concerns about the potential impacts to privacy. "I understand that the idea of being tracked by our phones everywhere is jarring, to say the least," she wrote. "But it's important for everyone who uses a smartphone to understand that it's already an integral part of the technology that makes our lives so convenient."

Colando said that she hoped the anonymized data collected by the app would be used to help get a fresh perspective on visitation trends. "You could think of it like a visitor survey that is running in the background, without the visitor having to do anything besides go about their regular business."

At their November meeting, Alvarez updated his fellow board members and said that he hoped to get preliminary data by January, explaining that before contracting with Placer, officials had no way of getting hard data on how many people come to Brewster County. "I think we're going to get some really good stuff out of this," he said.

OPINION



LETTERS

Education Foundation celebrates a year of growth

The Marfa Education Foundation (MEF) is closing out one of its strongest years yet, marked by new grants, expanded programs, and deeper support for students and teachers across Marfa ISD.

Despite increased competition for funding statewide and regionally, MEF secured the grants that fund necessary programs at Marfa ISD and continued to build strong relationships with foundations that have supported the district for many years. These partnerships helped MEF approach its largest annual budget to date, allowing the nonprofit to grow programs that directly benefit Marfa students.

Among this year's accomplishments, MEF continues to support college readiness programs, helping high school students prepare for higher education and pursue the colleges of their choice. Funding for early-grade literacy initiatives help teachers strengthen reading skills for elementary students. The foundation also continues to work with the district to build their music program, ensuring all students have meaningful access to music education. MEF also made progress on its long-term effort to upgrade technology districtwide, making more than $74,000 available to the district for computers and software this year. MEF continued its tradition of providing scholarships to Marfa graduates pursuing college and stipends to support Marfa ISD teachers, but for the first time, MEF is offering scholarships to teachers employed by Marfa ISD who are pursuing certifications. "We have to put our money where our mouth is," says MEF Director, Abby Boyd. "We promised the school board that MEF would be a partner in addressing community concerns about our school. We know that having certified teachers will make a big impact on community trust, and benefit students and the teachers who obtain the certification. This is a program we hope to grow significantly over the coming years."

While MEF celebrates these successes, the organization also points to an ongoing challenge: individual giving. Nationally, nonprofits receive an average of 66% of their revenue from individual donors. This year, only 11% of MEF's funding came from individuals and small businesses. "Individual contributions are essential to the work we do," Boyd shared. "They help sustain programs that don't always qualify for grant funding and allow us to respond quickly to student and teacher needs."

MEF is already planning new projects for the coming year and hopes to increase community involvement to support this growth. Those interested in contributing or learning more about MEF's work can visit www.marfaeducationfoundation.org.

—**Abby Boyd**
MEF Executive Director

Thanks to Crowley Theatre

Julie and Bruce Webb and I want to thank Tim Crowley for allowing us to screen Laundromat, Texas at the Crowley Theatre this month. I hope there is a record of all the events that have been performed in that cool building. What a benefit it is to our community. The director of the film, Matthew Dylan, is fresh out of film school and only 23 years old, and we were so pleased to help him show his work in Marfa, especially since he allowed some of the proceeds to benefit Marfa Public Radio. The whole cast was in town for the party. Joe Cashiola made two trips to the theatre to make sure the film would run smoothly. Manny Dutchover fixed the film crew breakfast at Poco Mexico in Fort Davis so they could shoot some footage for their upcoming debut at the National Finals Rodeo in December in Las Vegas. Astrid and Kat worked the bar for the after party at the Wild Mare, and Ross Cashiola, Pat Kesey, Cale, Jimmy & Amanda, who are a really great band, got the crowd dancing.

We are so thankful for the warm reception and the generosity of all who attended. When Matthew Dylan gets to the Oscars in a few years, we can remember we saw him first in Marfa, Texas.

—**Liz Rogers, Julie and Bruce Webb**

OUR WATER MATTERS

Water's essential role in thermoelectricity

WELCOME to the 100th Our Water Matters. As we learned in previous columns, the power of falling water is a central component of hydroelectricity generation. Water is also essential to thermal forms of electricity, known as thermoelectricity.

"In the United States, 90% of electricity comes from thermoelectric power plants—coal, nuclear, natural gas, and oil—that require cooling," according to the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS). "Thermoelectric power plants boil water to create steam, which then spins turbines to generate electricity ... Once steam has passed through a turbine, it must be cooled back into water before it can be reused to produce more electricity." The three most common cooling methods for thermoelectricity plants include once-through systems, wet-circulating or closed-loop systems, and dry-cooling systems. The first two methods use water for cooling, while the third method uses air. Dry-cooled systems "can decrease total power plant water consumption by more than 90%," explains the UCS in an article titled "How it Works: Water for Power Plant Cooling." But "[t]he tradeoffs to these water savings are higher costs and lower efficiencies."

Once-through systems "take water from nearby sources ... circulate it through pipes to absorb heat from the steam in systems called condensers, and discharge the now warmer water to the local source," writes the UCS. Although their simplicity and low cost initially made them the most widespread method for cooling thermoelectricity plants, once-through systems involve "draining huge volumes of water from our rivers, lakes, or oceans ... then discharging it back from where it was taken but at much higher temperatures," explains Parker Shabala in her article for Earthday.org titled "Powering the Future Without Draining the Planet." This results in "thermal pollution, which disrupts aquatic ecosystems" due to "short-term effects" such as "heat shock to fish and other aquatic organisms, which can cause death or severe physiological stress." Long-term effects include "biodiversity loss, harmful algal blooms, and altered reproductive cycles in marine life," according to Parker.

Wet-recirculating or closed-loop systems



ALAN PRESSLER FOR USGS

Evaporative towers cool water at Plant Bowen in Georgia.

"reuse cooling water in a second cycle rather than immediately discharging it back to the original water source," according to the UCS. These systems most commonly "use cooling towers to expose water to ambient air. Some of the water evaporates; the rest is then sent back to the condenser in the power plant. Because wet-recirculating systems only withdraw water to replace any water that is lost through evaporation in the cooling tower, these systems have much lower water withdrawals than once-through systems, but tend to have appreciably higher water consumption," writes the UCS.

In his book Thirst for Power: Energy, Water, and Human Survival, author Michael E. Webber argues that the power sector is "the single largest user of water in the United States." He puts this into perspective by explaining that, "on average across the thermal power sector in the United States, about 15 gallons of water are withdrawn and just under 1 gallon consumed for every kilowatt-hour of electricity that is generated," according to Webber. "Because typical homes in the United States use about 20 to 40 kilowatt-hours of electricity each day, approximately 300-600 gallons of cooling water are required to make electricity for those homes." If we take into consideration that an average home uses about "150 gallons per day for washing, cooking, drinking, and watering lawns," writes Webber, this "means we use two to four times more water at home for our lights and outlets than our faucets and showerheads."

Webber also points out that the need for such large amounts of water "introduces vulnerabilities" for America's power plants. Nowhere is this truer than in Texas, where much of the state's electricity generation "relies on state water resources," according to "Foundation for Economic Growth: Assessing Texas' Water Infrastructure Needs" by chief author Jeremy Mazur of Texas 2036. "More critically, this generation is essential for meeting peak summertime loads." Heavy dependence on water availability, especially during the hottest months, makes the state's grid particularly susceptible to drought. To illustrate the point, Mazur recounts the events of 2023, when "Texas witnessed one of its hottest summers on record, precipitating record-breaking electricity demands as homes and businesses increased air conditioning use. In the meantime, severe drought conditions spread throughout the state ... That August ... more than 25% of the grid's dispatchable electricity generation was at risk of having insufficient water supplies over the subsequent 18 months to sustain operations." If the drought had continued into 2024 "as had happened during previous multi-year droughts, then a substantial portion of Texas' dispatchable generating capacity needed for reliable electricity service would have been at risk of interruption." Any interruption in electricity service can have devastating consequences for people and the economy. A recent study cited by Mazur suggests that "each 1,000 MW of generation capacity shortfall could trigger daily economic losses of more than $320 million."

Texas voters recently authorized the state to allocate an additional one billion dollars annually to shore up these vulnerabilities. This is a good start. But we also need greater awareness of where our water and energy come from in the first place. Toward that end, Our Water Matters will continue educating readers about the complex interplay between water and energy in the firm belief that knowledge is also power.—**Trey Gerfers**

Trey Gerfers serves as general manager of the Presidio County Underground Water Conservation District.

BIG BEND Sentinel

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Sentinel News Project
www.bigbendsentinel.com

Published weekly on Thursdays 50 times a year
by Sentinel News Project,
A Texas non-profit organization.

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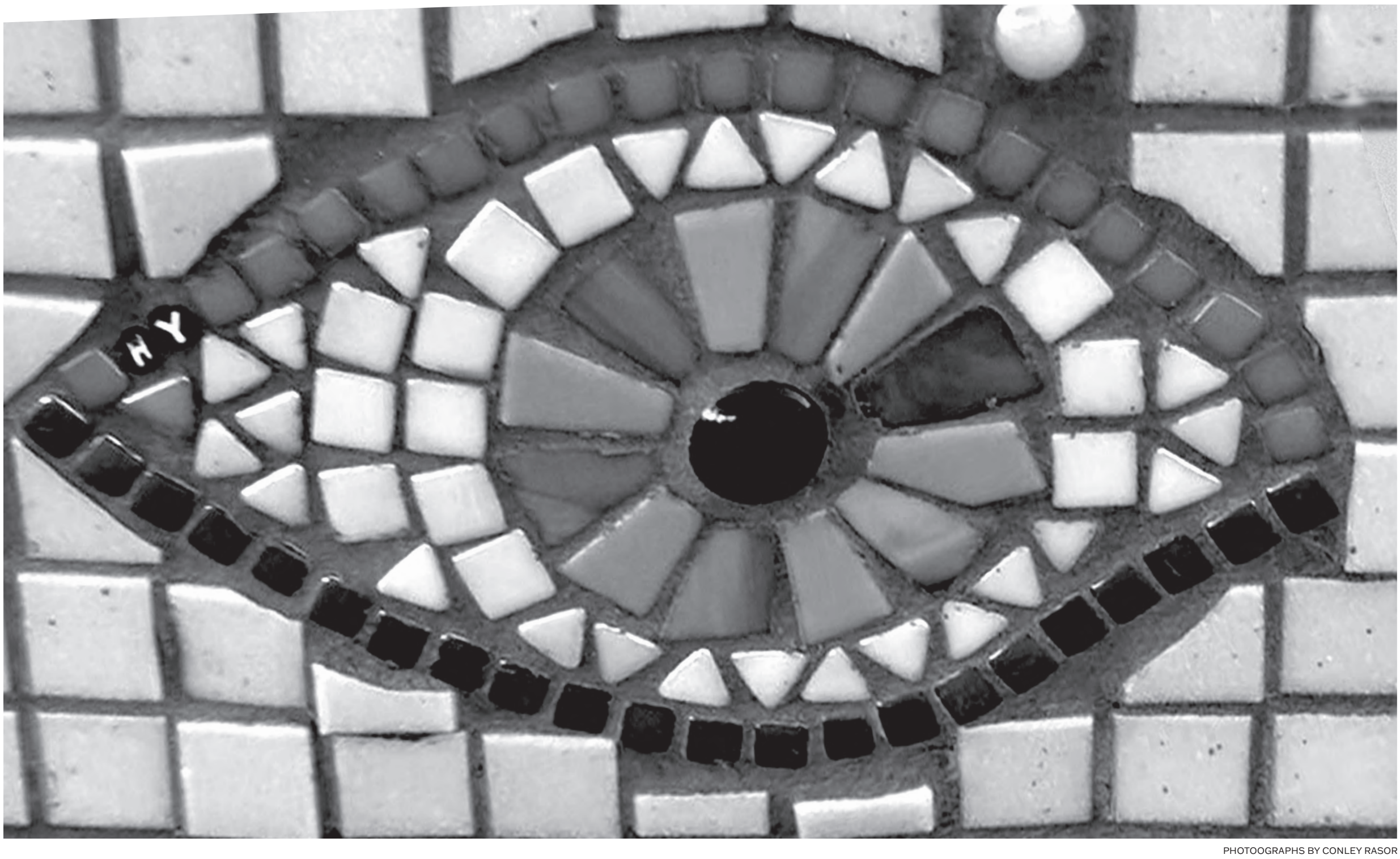
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Annual subscription rates are $50 in Presidio, Brewster and Jeff Davis counties, and $60 elsewhere in and the United States. Special rates apply abroad.
Periodicals class postage paid at Marfa, Texas 79843.
Postmaster: Send address changes to Drawer P, Marfa, TX 79843

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ART Sentinel

Mosaic adds sparkle to Murphy Street



PHOTOOGRAPHS BY CONLEY RASOR

Tile, glass and other ornamentation was used to create the eyes.

Don't overthink it! Go back to your 6-year-old self and say, "Ooh, colors. I'm just going to build something fun."—LIZ SIBLEY

THE ALPINE mosaic artist Liz Sibley opened her studio in Alpine for many months—to teach participants to cut glass, assort colorful pieces of different materials, and arrange them to form eyes for mosaic a wall.

Dozens of Big Benders helped install hundreds of mosaic eyes in a wall along the historic Murphy Street.

Sibley, a gallery owner who has worked on projects like the Art Alley murals and mosaic utility poles in Alpine, partnered with her niece, Shiloh Sibley Cutforth, and the two set out to teach her neighbors the craft needed to add some sparkle to 106 W. Murphy Street. Blue back-ground tile was added to the 100-foot-long wall in October, and crews went to work the over months with a goal of 200 eyes. The end count totaled well over 300—which were unveiled in an opening ceremony for "Eye Love Mosaics" on November 22.

—ROB D'AMICO



Liz Sibley and Shiloh Sibley Cutforth set a goal of 200 eyes.





A blue tile background was installed first along the 100-foot wall.