# Bulletin HEAL+H FRIDAY, MAY 27, 2022

# Families: Play together, stay together

BY RICHARD COLTHARP

Las Cruces Bulletin

Welcome to "Your Family's Health," what we plan to be an annual edition of the Las Cruces Bulletin.

This inaugural edition focuses a lot on the outdoors, one of the great features of Las Cruces and southern New Mexico.

It also focuses a lot on mental health, the stresses of which have been greatly enhanced by the Covid pandemic and two years of having to adjust our lives to one degree or another.

You'll hear from people in this publication who believe getting

outside and doing something out of your routine can be a good benefit for our mental health.



Being a healthy family doesn't mean everyone has to run a marathon together. or take 100-mile bicycle rides. Activity can take thousands of different forms. Most will agree that doing SOMETHING, regardless of what it is, is almost always healthier than doing NOTHING.



**RICHARD COLTHARP** 

From the Publisher

Then again, as you'll see in one article, there

NOTHING, or at least quieted down for a bit. Under the headline "The family that

plays together, stays together." the Consortium for Health and Military Performance (CHAMP) said this on its website:

can be a mental ben-

efit from trying to get

your racing mind to do

"An important part of your family's health and happiness is making time to have fun together. Families who make time to have fun together report feeling closer, more satisfied, and more mentally healthy. Families who engage in many types of quality time (as opposed to just one) are closer and more adaptable too."

Some of my favorite memories of living in southern New Mexico are of getting outdoors with my daughters. Here's a brief list of things we've done the past 25 years or so. Most of these things are easily done in a day or less starting from Las Cruces.

• Cutting down a Christmas tree in the Sacramento Mountains or the Gila National Forest



**BULLETIN PHOTOS BY RICHARD COLTHARP** 

A cottonwood's roots outpace the shifting gypsum at White Sands National Park.

- Sledding down White Sands
- Hiking the Aguirre Spring Pine Trail Loop
- Running along Las Cruces' Triviz Trail
- Plaving basketball at Four Hills Park
- Hiking the OSHA Trail (or any number of trails) outside Cloudcroft
- Bouldering at City of Rocks State Park between Deming and Silver City
- Walking the dog at **Baylor Pass**
- Jogging the path at Hangar Lake Park in East Las Cruces
- Exploring petroglyphs at Three Riv-

ers, north of Tularosa Hike the Valley of Fires Recreation Area

outside Carrizozo

The list could go on, but vou can notice a theme of our amazing region.

The beauty is, you can keep exploring. I'd lived in Las Cruces for 13 years before I ever made it to Soledad Canyon, a gorgeous multi-faceted trail system barely outside the city limits.

If you live in Las Cruces, you've almost certainly done this: Get up early, drive to Cloudcroft for some type of activity, break

for a meal, either in Cloudcroft or Alamogordo, then stop at White Sands National Park on the way home to watch another amazing sunset and/ or moonrise.

Whatever activities you and your family like to do, make a point to go do them more often this summer.

Whether it's board game night, a family trip to the local swimming pool, or modifying your cooking and eating habits, this is your week to start something new and healthy.



Avalon Coltharp and her father, Richard Coltharp, finish a day of recreation in southern New Mexico with the requisite stop at White Sands National Park.





# 'Decompression for the brain:' BLM hikes offer lots of variety, activity

# **DAVE BURGE**

Las Cruces Bulletin

One of the best things about living in the Las Cruces and Borderland region is being able to get away quickly for an outing to the great outdoors.

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) oversees two national monuments that are a quick drive from Downtown Las Cruces.

The Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument is located east of Las Cruces and includes designated recreation areas Dripping Springs Natural Area and Aguirre Spring Recreation Area.

Northwest of Las Cruces is the Prehistoric Trackways National Monument.

Both offer miles of hiking trails and what is called dispersed camping – camping in nondeveloped areas where you have to bring in your own water and bring out your trash.

Edna Flores, an outdoor planner with the BLM who works exclusively for the two national monuments in the Las Cruces area, said hiking and camping can be good for the spirit and give individuals and families the chance to recharge and get away from the rat race.

A group of hikers enjoy the great outdoors at the Organ **Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument.** 

"It is big decompression for the brain," Flores said.

"Whatever blinders they have on when they are in the city or focused on whatever they are doing, tend to come off and they start seeing a lot of different things," Flores said.

Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks comprises about 500,000 acres of land. About half of that is designated wilderness area, which means you can hike and horseback ride in those areas but other recreational activities are prohibited. Motor vehicles and motorized bikes are only allowed in the wilderness areas on what are called boundary roads outlining those areas.

In the non-wilderness areas, you can also ride your mountain bike. There are ample opportunities to view wildlife and take photos.

The mantra of leaving nothing behind but footprints needs to be adhered to at both national monuments, Flores said.

Prehistoric Trackways contains about 5,000 acres and preserves fossils of footprints and body



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE BLM

A group of hikers take a look at fossils at the Prehistoric Trackways National Monument.

movements of amphibians, reptiles and insects, plants and petrified wood dating back 280 million years.

Here, there are opportunities for hiking, horseback riding and off-road vehicle driving in parts of the Prehistoric Trackway monument. Viewing trackway fossils is limited and at this time there are no developed sites interpreting them.

**Dripping Springs** is about 10 miles east of Las Cruces on the west side of the Organ Mountains. Travel east on University Avenue/Dripping Road to the end of the road.

To get to Aguirre Spring, take U.S. 70 east for 14 miles. Turn south on Aguirre Spring Road (1.1 miles after San Augustine Pass) and travel for six miles. At mile 4, the road becomes one way and climbs steeply.

To get to Prehistoric Trackways, coming from Las Cruces, travel on Picacho Ave./U.S. Highway 70. At the stop light with Shalem Colony Trail, go north on Shalem Colony Trail for about 5.5 miles. Before reaching the Rio Grande, you will reach Rocky Acres Trail, a county road. Go west on Rock Acres for about a quarter-mile to a dirt entrance road on the lefthand side. Cross

over a cattleguard and continue west. After about a mile, this road becomes a little rough and is for high-clearance, four-wheel-drive vehicles.

Visit www.blm.gov/ visit/omdp and www. blm.gov/visit/ptnm. Both sites have ample information to help plan your trip including maps and downloadable brochures.

The Friends of the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks offer docent-led hikes. You can go to their website at www.organmountainsdesertpeaks.org to find out more information about their organization and any planned events they may have.

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# Rio Grande Trail coming into place

# BY MIKE COOK

Las Cruces Bulletin

"Getting outdoors is healthy; it's a medically established fact," said state Sen. Jeff Steinborn, a Las Cruces Democrat, environmentalist and avid outdoorsman.

Steinborn is also a champion for the Rio Grande Trail Project.

Steinborn's 2015 legislation created the Rio Grande Trail Commission to oversee the development of a 500mile recreational trail that stretches across the north-south length of Doña Ana County and the entire state. The trail corridor includes six state parks, three national wildlife refuges and six national monuments and touches on 10 New Mexico counties and about two dozen towns and cities.

The trail includes "some incredibly beautiful spots" that embrace the state's "very rich history and culture," Steinborn said.

Steinborn was on hand as the 4.5-mile La Llorona Trail along the Rio Grande in Las Cruces was designated as the first segment of the Rio Grande Trail in October 2016.



PHOTO COURTESY OF STATE SEN. JEFF STEINBORN

The Rio Grande and the southern Caballo Mountains. The range is in Doña Ana and Sierra counties.

And trail development continues to move forward, he said.

Eighty miles of the trail have been designated to date and more designations are on the way, Steinborn said. State funds will pay for full-time trail planning and infrastructure, and \$250,000 has been allocated for a campground in Hatch.

The trail will continue to "grow and become more celebrated over time," Steinborn said, and the addition of campgrounds, shelters, water-access points and other infrastructure along the way will enhance the "economic power of being a trail town," he

said.

That boosts the appeal of Hatch, Las Cruces, Sunland Park and other communities along the trail to visitors and it makes them more attractive to business owners looking for sites that offer quality of life for their employees.

"I am so excited to see communities around the county embracing (the trail) and the state funding it," Steinborn said. "It's all coming together."

The trail, nearby Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument, Las Cruces' 6.2-mile dam trail and many other out-

SEE RIO GRANDE, PAGE 6

# When it comes to snakes, you can teach any dog this important trick

# BY MIKE COOK

Las Cruces Bulletin

Terry Chandler of Las Cruces has been training dogs professionally across the country for more than 40 years and has conducted rattlesnake aversion clinics for more than 30 years.

Through trial and error, Chandler said he discovered the only way to train a dog to avoid rattlers is to use a live rattlesnake out in the open.

"I had to learn how to render the rattlesnake to where it was harmless to man or beast." Chandler said.

That means milking and defanging the snake, "which is a very intricate procedure," he said, because it involves removing not only the fangs in use, but also up to four sets of "backup" fangs.

"In our clinic, we put the snake out in the desert, we have the owner put the dog on a leash and walk right up the snake," Chandler said. About 90 percent of the time, he said, the dog is curious and "will walk right up and put its nose on the snake."

For the training, the dog is wearing a shock collar, Chandler said. When the dog comes in contact with the snake, Chandler activates the collar, delivering a shock to the dog.

"The dog is convinced that the snake

hurt it," he said. And, after that single shock, the dog will avoid in future contact with rattlesnakes.

"What we do at the clinic is we remove the curiosity and replace it with abject terror," Chandler said. "After my clinic, they are no longer curious about rattlesnakes; they don't want to get near them."

That can not only keep a dog safe, it also helps protect humans from snakebite, Chandler said.

Because dogs have more sensitive vision and hearing and a far more acute sense of smell than humans, they can detect the presence of a snake before a person does,



Professional dog trainer Terry Chandler teaches dogs to keep their distance from rattlesnakes and other snakes.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF TERRY CHANDLER

Terry Chandler uses aversion therapy to teach dogs to keep a safe distance from rattlesnakes.

he said. And, after the aversion training, their behavior will alert humans that a snake is nearby.

In one example, Chandler said, a Las Cruces man who had taken the aversion training with his German shepherd was cutting weeds in his yard when the dog, also in the yard, started barking and ran back to the house. The man discovered a four-foot diamondback rattler nearby "'that would have nailed me in a few more seconds," Chandler quoted him as saving.

A Rio Rancho man whose dog had received the training has been saved from three snake bites by his dog, Chandler said. In one case, the man was reaching for a bale of hay in his barn when the dog started barking.

The man moved the bale with a rake and discovered a five-foot diamondback rattler.

"I have hundreds of stories like that," Chandler said.

Chandler said the training takes only a few minutes per dog. The shock collar provides "a mild stimulation" that is painful to the dog, but doesn't cause permanent damage, he said.

And no matter what species of rattlesnake is used in the training, it will make dogs afraid of all rattlers, he said. Some dogs will become frightened of all snakes as a result of the training, Chandler said, along with garden hoses and "anything that resembles a snake."

Chandler said only a handful of dogs have been bitten by rattlers after the aversion training, and in each case it was because the dog was running or for some other reason didn't know the snake was there.

"As long as they know it's there, they're not going to get near it." he said.

Chandler said the training is beneficial for dogs of any breed and any age.

"It lasts forever," he said. Dogs that have received the training have come back for retests 10 years later and "the dog still would not get near that rattlesnake," Chandler said.

After the training, Chandler said the rattlesnake that has been used is turned loose. He said its fangs will grow back "in a week or so."

For more information, call Janet Chandler at 575-496-4575.

# Longtime teacher: Meditation helps people of all ages

Andrea Cowan defines transcendental meditation (TM) as "a very easy-to-learn mental technique that expands the conscious capacity of the mind and dissolves stress and tension."

And Cowan should know. She has been practicing TM since 1969.

TM has a special training program for children as young as 5, she said. Her clients have ranged in age from 5 to 99.

After completing the course, the 99-year-old client told Cowan, "'My mantra is my new best friend."

Cowan can even teach TM to whole families learning together.

Instruction, she said, is usually one on one or in small groups.

Cowan originally studied the technique with its founder, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, in Spain and has been teaching TM since 1973, including the past 46 years in Las Cruces.

"It was so powerful for me," Cowan said.

After she began practicing TM, Cowan said the colitis she had been suffering from disappeared within three days.

Cowan said the

seven-step TM course can be learned in about a week, with teaching and learning taking place almost entirely online. Only a single 90-minute in-person meeting is needed, during which new practitioners receive their mantras. The mantra, which is TM's core, comes from "the kev sounds of the universe." Cowan said. and is used silently by practitioners to dissolve stress.

Benefits include improved problem solving memory and intuition, reduced stress, increased energy, fewer illnesses,



**Andrea Cowan** 

better sleep and peacefulness, Cowan said.

Well-known practitioners of TM include Super Bowl-winning quarterback Joe Namath, comedian Jerry Seinfeld and filmmakers David Lynch and Martin Scorsese.

"I have gotten from TM what I had hoped for: a calmer perspective on life, improved relationships with other people, and a regular practice that I can look forward to every day," said Don Kurtz of Las Cruces. Kurtz said he learned TM from Cowan and has been practicing it for more than 20 years.

TM "has revolutionized my creative practice," said local artist and arts educator Isadora Stowe. "The stresses that I have can be positively managed now. All humans live with uncertainty and challenges, and TM allows me to handle mine. I am grateful for this practice and for Andrea; it has been what I can rely on to change whatever circumstance I am managing for the better. The gift of TM has farreaching implications. It is the gift that keeps on giving. I cannot recommend it enough."

Cowan uses a sliding scale based on her clients' income to determine her fee for teaching the course.

Contact her by visiting www.tm.org, where you can also learn more about TM.



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**RIO GRANDE,** CONTINUED FROM **4** 

door recreation opportunities in and around the city and county help "create a sense of wellbeing," he said.

The 496,000-acre monument includes 22 miles of the Butterfield Stage Trail, the hiding places of Billy the Kid and Geronimo, training grounds for World War II pilots and Apollo astronauts and countless species of birds and animals. There are also many miles of trails for hikers and bikers.

Steinborn also sponsored legislation that created the New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division (ORD) within the state's Economic Development Department.

"Outdoor recreation touches all corners of the state, and it goes beyond partisanship," Steinborn said when Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham signed the bill creating ORD in 2019. "There's a high sense of enthusiasm about the opportunity we have to really grow these jobs and teach stewardship to our next generations."

Visiting the outdoors and enjoying its fresh air and natural beauty releases beneficial chemicals in the brain and is "a powerful and affordable tool" for healthy living for children and adults, Steinborn said.

"We are so blessed in this community," Steinborn said, to be surrounded by worldclass outdoor amenities.

And it's welcoming not only to visitors from all over the world, he said, but to the people who live here.

"It's right in our back yard," Steinborn said. "Take advantage of it."

Visit www.emnrd. nm.gov/riograndetrailcommission, www.blm.gov (enter Organ Mountains Desert Peaks in the search box), www.lascrucescvb.org/outdoor and www.nmoutside. com.

# Project Light gives families new options in times of crisis

## BY MIKE COOK

Las Cruces Bulletin

By almost all accounts, the global pandemic has increased the incidence of mental health crises.

People and families in Doña Ana County will soon have help in dealing with these is-

The City of Las Cruces, with the Las Cruces Fire Department (LCFD) taking the lead, expects a mobile crisis intervention team to launch by the end of 2022 or early in 2023 to respond to an increase in calls dealing with mental health emergencies.

Project L.I.G.H.T. (Lessen the Incidence of Grief, Harm, and Trauma) will help meet the demand for emergency behavioral health services that has been increasing since before the onset of Covid-19 and continues to strain available resources, LCFD Mobile Integrated Health Care (MIH) Coordinator Paul Ford told the Las Cruces City Council.

"A highly specialized emergent response team" is needed to work in the field and collaborate with other community stakeholders to "reduce the longstanding



**Paul Ford** 

challenges in providing de-escalation, care and intervention to

COURTESY PHOTO

those in crisis," Ford

LCFD receives about

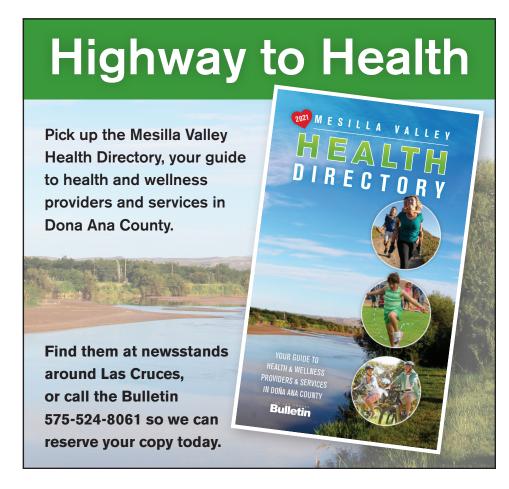
700 calls a month - an average of 23 to 24 calls every day - for behavioral health. welfare checks, intoxication, suicidal ideations/attempts and overdoses," Fire Chief Jason Smith said.

This is "just a fraction of calls/dispatches" the department receives. Smith said in an email to the Bulletin, "LCFD's daily call volume for all call types is roughly 60 per day," the chief said.

Project L.I.G.H.T. has funding of almost \$600,000 in the coming fiscal year, LCFD **Battalion Chief Cody** Haver said, and would initially operate 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday-Saturday, with the Las Cruces Fire Department and the Las Cruces Police Department continuing to provide the services that are available at present when Project L.I.G.H.T. is not in operation.

City council members expressed strong support for the program and Mayor Ken Miyagishima asked Smith to submit a budget proposal that would fund the program 24/7 365 days a year.

"If we're going to do this, let's just go big and do it right," Miyagishima said.





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