



PAGOSA SPRINGS, ARCHULETA COUNTY, COLORADO 81147

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Old Fashioned Christmas



SUN photos/Garrett Fevinger

The fourth annual Old Fashioned Christmas Celebration brought residents and visitors alike to the downtown area for a night of time together, hearing live music, partaking in activities and more. The special guests of the evening were, of course, Santa and Mrs. Claus. The people's choice for favorite segment at the event was the San Juan Sled Dogs.

Lots to consider: BoCC moves forward on property for new admin building

By Clayton Chaney
Staff Writer

The home of Archuleta County's future administration building has taken another change in direction, with the Archuleta County Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) approving a letter of intent to purchase a property located at 2901 Cornerstone Drive on Dec. 17.

The decision followed recent discussion on the topic at a Dec. 16 work session and Dec. 17 meeting.

Commissioner Veronica Medina

stated at the beginning of the Dec. 17 meeting that she would not be voting on the item involving a purchase and sale agreement with ArenaLabs LLC involving a property located at X West U.S. 160 for the purpose of a new county administration building.

Medina did not vote on three matters during the meeting, which included the purchase and sales agreement — one with ArenaLabs and one with Pagosa Partners Inc. — involving two properties for the purpose of

■ See Property A9

Ethics complaint against Commissioner Veronica Medina deemed nonfrivolous

By Clayton Chaney
Staff Writer

The Colorado Independent Ethics Committee voted unanimously on Nov. 19, deeming complaint 24-16 against Commissioner Veronica Medina as nonfrivolous.

The complaint was originally filed on June 17 by Ashley Springer.

The complaint was filed using personal contact information. Springer also works as the county's communications specialist.

According to the complaint filed, Springer claims that on June 6, she filed a petition to recall Medina. That recall eventually was dropped

in September.

Springer's complaint also states that Medina failed to recuse herself during county property purchase and land use regulation votes, "patterning a conflict of interest."

Examples included in Springer's complaint note that Medina failed to disclose during the BoCC meetings held on May 21 and June 4.

The complaint further claims that during the May 21 meeting, Medina failed to disclose potential conflict of interest during a presentation by Exit Realty Broker Shelley Low, and that during the June 4 meeting, Medina failed to disclose to the state poten-

■ See Ethics A8

PAWSD approves 2025 budget

■ Drops wastewater rate increase from 30 percent to 10 percent

By Josh Pike
Staff Writer

At a Dec. 20 special meeting, the Pagosa Area Water and Sanitation District (PAWSD) Board of Directors approved the district's 2025 budget.

This approval follows discussion of the budget at several previous meetings, including a public hearing on the budget on Nov. 21.

At a Dec. 12 board meeting, the board discussed the budget further, with the conversation focusing on if the wastewater rate increases recommended by the district's 2024 rate study could be reduced from those projected by the study.

Following an extensive discussion where PAWSD Business Manager Aaron Burns and PAWSD board member Glenn Walsh highlighted that transfers of money from the general fund along with changes to how the district is budgeting for fu-

■ See PAWSD A8

Small town, big spirit: Athletic Booster Club invites everybody to the game

By Garrett Fevinger
Staff Writer

It's a Friday night in late September, and the homecoming football game in Pagosa Springs is underway.

Fans and family are cheering; glow sticks and pom-poms wave from the stands.

The visitors are trailing, the Pirates are sailing: It's 28-0 with just a minute

to go.

"Pirates log homecoming win over Monte Vista," the headline will read. Coach Nathan Morales thanked the crowd.

"We've gotten a lot of support and we love it," he said. "We want a lot of people here 'cause we feed off of our crowd and that really helps us. So, the more people we have in the

■ See Boosters A7



SUN photo/Randi Pierce

Local dancers of the Pagosa Springs Dance Academy take attendees of "The Nutcracker Storybook" into the organization's version of the classic Christmas tale.

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Opinion

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OUR VIEW

Surviving the glitch and the lines

The "Legacies" column has been especially interesting lately, taking us back to the days of the fear of the unknown that was Y2K and the Y2K bug.

As you'll see in this week's column, it was a possible "millennium-launching computer glitch that some say will bring civilization to its knees."

What would happen when computer clocks switched from 1999 to 2000 could only be guessed at, and officials around the world were left to plan for the worst-case scenario.

It was unknown if financial databases, government systems and things like airline reservation systems would crash as computers turned to the new year.

We laugh at it now, but it was serious back then and took weeks of emergency planning to ensure that, if the worst happened and people were left without necessities, everything would turn out OK and people would be safe and have a warm place to be.

Millions of dollars and untold hours were spent trying to avoid issues.

And, in the end, everything turned out OK, just like our next challenges are likely to.

We noticed a lot of complaining, plan-

ning and working together over the last few weeks, too, as packages seemed to inundate the post office and shipping companies. There might have even been some fear and dread at the thought of devoting hours of your life to standing in line at the post office.

While it pales in comparison to Y2K, we noticed a similar pattern.

A problem arose. Then the planning and working together kicked in.

People were grouping together to mail things and pick things up for each other, as well as letting each other know the status of the line and how long the wait was. Friends waiting in line would text us updates about how far they'd made it in a certain amount of time and the people they'd run into.

Those with entrepreneurial mindsets floated ideas of snack stands and services to stand in line for people while they ran other errands or waited in their vehicles.

The post office crew and local delivery drivers worked day and night to deliver packages — at the post office, at cluster boxes and to houses.

On several days, we saw carriers delivering mail in the darkness, and delivery trucks making stops well into the night.

We also saw a gradual change in the overall tone of how people talked about the

lines. At first, we mostly heard grumbling and complaining. By the end, we heard from people about how they were able to get a lot done while waiting in line, that they loved getting to visit with community members and that they'd learned new tricks about shipping parcels.

We saw a change from people complaining about the staff of the post office to standing up for them and praising them for their work. Messages to The SUN went from calling for investigations to suggesting we feature our local postal workers on our front page.

We even saw that some visitors to the community put the busy post office on their must-see list while they were in town.

We like where things have ended up. It's exactly what we need as we turn the calendar to a new year.

As we step into 2025, let's keep caring and keep building community. Let's keep standing up for each other, planning and conquering problems together.

"Without a sense of caring, there can be no sense of community." — Anthony J. D'Angelo.

Happy new year from all of us at The SUN.

Randi Pierce

LEGACIES

By Shari Pierce

100 years ago

Taken from SUN files of
December 26, 1924

The government thermometer at the W.E. Colton residence yesterday, Christmas morning, recorded the coldest temperature in this city since being installed in Pagosa Springs. An even 40 degrees below zero was the registry, and was followed by 36 below this morning. As a result, thawing and repairing frozen water pipes is the favorite indoor sport in Pagosa these days. Mr. Colton predicts that after the present heat wave is over, we can look for a little cold snap on scheduled time in the fore part of January.

Lon Hardman, who is operating a sawmill in the lower Stollsteimer creek section, last week purchased from Mrs. Porfiria Valdez de Velasquez of that vicinity, all the coal and timber rights and a half interest in her 160 acre tract of land. This property embodies what is known as the "Stollsteimer Coal Bank," which Mr. Hardman will open up and place the product on the market. The sawmill is now being set up preparatory to sawing the timber therefrom besides considerable additional timber in that neighborhood.

75 years ago

Taken from SUN files of
December 23, 1949

Paving of Wolf Creek Pass and six other San Juan Basin projects totaling \$1,265,000 was authorized in the Colorado state highway budget for 1950.

Resurfacing of Wolf Creek pass came in for \$325,000, the second largest allocation. Another \$122,000 will be spent on 160 between Bayfield and Pagosa Springs.

The Arboles district has been allocated an additional \$18,000 for State Highway 151 north of Arboles.

Snow has fallen a great deal during the past week and there is nearly a foot on the level here in town. About six feet is reported on Wolf Creek Pass and winter is definitely here. The weather has not been too cold until the middle of this week. On Thursday morning the temperature dropped to an unofficial low of minus 27 and rose to a little above zero by noon. It appears that colder weather is ahead.

County Clerk and Recorder Phillip R. Johnson announced this week that the 1950 license plates have been received at his office and will go on sale January 11th. Mr. Johnson also stated that anyone desiring the same number they held last year must call for his license plates prior to February 15th.

50 years ago

Taken from SUN files of
December 26, 1974

Winter arrived in full force here the first of the week. High winds on Sunday preceded the snow which started falling early Monday morning.

Snow continued falling until Tuesday morning. About six inches fell in one 24 hour period on Wolf Creek Pass. Roads and town streets were unusually slick and the ordinary fender benders and stuck cars would be spotted here and there.

Temperatures dropped after the snow-storm and a cold snap may be in prospect for the area. All roads are open for travel, however, and there are no serious conditions. The new snow was welcome news to snowmobilers and skiers, the colder weather was welcome to ice skating enthusiasts and ice fishermen.

25 years ago

Taken from SUN files of
December 23, 1999

Ready or not, here comes Y2K. Archuleta County held its final Y2K meeting of the year Tuesday, just 10 days before the possible appearance of the millennium-launching computer glitch that some say will bring civilization its knees.

Ready or not? Archuleta County says it is ready.

Starting with 10 p.m. New Year's Eve, county, town, utility employees and other key officials will be managing communication centers, ready to respond to any calls.

Getting help will be just like any other time of the year for the average citizen. Just call the county communication center at 731-4799. Emergency 9-1-1 will be working normally, but Y2K coordinators are hoping people leave that number alone unless they have a real emergency.

In Archuleta County, provisions have been made to provide food, water, warming stations, and medical services for county citizens.

If electricity goes off, School District 50 Jt. will open the doors of the junior high school to the public. The school is heated geothermally, has a kitchen, and has access to a community food bank. The town has provided a backup generator to ensure that the geothermal system at the school operates, even if the commercial electric system fails.

LOOKING BACK



From the Jan. 25, 1968 Pagosa SUN — HEADED NORTH — A large bull elk with a nice rack of horns took off for the tall timber when approached by a helicopter during the annual elk trend count in this area. The big fellow was in the Dutton Park area in snow about three feet deep and seemed to have no trouble getting through the snow.

<p>Veronica Medina, Chair veronica.medina@archuletacounty.org • (970) 264-8305</p>	<p>Archuleta County Commissioners Ron Maez rmaez@archuletacounty.org • (970) 264-8303</p>	<p>Warren Brown warren.brown@archuletacounty.org • (970) 264-8300</p>
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12/17	50	9	0.00	NA	NA
12/18	52	9	0.00	NA	NA
12/19	55	10	0.00	NA	NA
12/20	57	9	0.00	NA	NA
12/21	59	10	0.00	NA	NA
12/22	55	11	0.00	NA	NA
12/23	53	20	0.00	NA	NA

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Letters

Letters to the Editor are printed as received and are not edited for grammar or punctuation, but may have been edited for content or style.

Letters to the Editor are opinions and information in them has not been verified for accuracy.

The opinions of letter writers do not necessarily represent those of the paper.

ing critical resources away from our most fragile citizens, including but not limited to profoundly disabled individuals who cannot speak, care for or defend themselves. Candidates who champion Women's right to choose, which include the "choice" to end the life of viable children in the womb do not reflect the values of many Christians, and are not candidates for whom most Christians choose to vote.

Joan and Sonny Kelley
Gardner, Kans.

PLPOA board resignation

Dear Editor:

The membership of the PLPOA is almost completely dependent upon the PLPOA leadership (namely the Directors and the General Manager) for information concerning the gymnasium project currently under consideration. I believe the circumstances of my resignation are relevant to that issue. I therefore feel compelled to offer a brief summary of those circumstances.

Prior to November 14, 2024 I was critical of the Directors' manner of undertaking the gymnasium project. I particularly disagreed with a survey which gave the membership options as to how they wanted to pay for the

new gymnasium without an option to object to the project. It was my opinion that the Board of Directors should have carefully reviewed the language of the survey before sending it out. I urged the Board to take a "hands on" approach to its communication with the membership and I submitted a Motion giving the Board a chance to review those communications before they were published to the membership. This Motion, based on my opinion of subsequent communications, did not resolve the issue. I therefore submitted my resignation immediately prior to the November 14, 2024 meeting of the Board.

At the Directors' meeting (still on Thursday, November 14) immediately after I submitted my resignation, the Directors submitted a Motion to Rescind my earlier Motion which had given the Board the opportunity to review gymnasium related communications. It was noted then that Mr. Roth, the General Manager, reviewed such communications and that there was no need for the Board to micro-manage those communications.

Accordingly, two days later, on November 16, 2024, it appears that Mr. Roth would have approved the following statement to be published to the membership on a slide presentation and in a "Narrative" set out on the back cover of the PLPOA

Gymnasium handout distributed at the presentation.

... "While we feel somewhat discouraged in having to seek permission for the gymnasium when other projects that serve far less of the community have not required it, we respect and abide by the governing documents ..." (slide 18 of presentation)..."

That statement went on to explain that, "...In fact, the chance to vote on that project is a unique privilege..." This vote is in fact, our right, not a privilege. It is set out in black-and-white in the bylaws.

The above statements were not well received. Therefore a "clarifying of statement" which clarification notably did not, in my opinion, apologize for or withdraw the statement, was published on the PLPOA website on November 22, 2024 under, Gym-talk, "Addressing Misunderstandings".

It is my opinion that the Board of Directors and the General Manager do, in fact, feel discouraged (irritated?) by the fact that they are required to seek our permission before undertaking a two million dollar plus gymnasium project with our money - as is plainly required by our bylaws. I believe this attitude should be considered when evaluating information received from the leadership.

Patrick Moore

Myths

Dear Editor:

During the commencement address at Yale University, June 11 1962 John F. Kennedy stated:

"The great enemy of the truth is very often not the lie -- deliberate, contrived and dishonest, but the myth, persistent, persuasive, and unrealistic. Belief in myths allows the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought."

Myths stated in several opinion letters in the December 19th Sun are portrayed as "facts" and are continually perpetrated by mainstream media outlets. We do not watch Fox news and do not think Trump is a savior. We do however, know that millions of illegals entering our country are tak-

Public Meetings

The following meetings are subject to change.

Friday, Jan. 3

San Juan Water Conservancy District

work session for strategic objective three. 3 p.m., 46 Eaton Drive, Suite 5. Visit <https://www.sjwcd.org/> for Zoom option.

Tuesday, Jan. 7

Archuleta County Board of County Commissioners meeting. 8:30 a.m., Archuleta County administration building, commissioners' meeting room, 398 Lewis St. View Zoom meeting at: <https://zoom.us/j/91609048375?pwd=d1FFV0J1cGVKa1NHWHFsa2taeGxtZz09>, meeting ID: 916 0904 8375, passcode: 4141885. For more information, visit <http://archuletacounty.org/agentcenter>.

Archuleta County Board of County Commissioners meeting. 1:30 p.m., Archuleta County administration building, commissioners' meeting room, 398 Lewis St. View Zoom meeting at: <https://zoom.us/j/91609048375?pwd=d1FFV0J1cGVKa1NHWHFsa2taeGxtZz09>, meeting ID: 916 0904 8375, passcode: 4141885. For more information, visit <http://archuletacounty.org/agentcenter>.

Pagosa Springs Town Council meeting. 5 p.m., Town Hall, 551 Hot Springs Blvd. See town website for participation information: <https://pagosasprings.civicweb.net/portal/>.

Pagosa Springs Sanitation General Improvement District special

meeting. 5 p.m., Town Hall, 551 Hot Springs Blvd. See town website for participation information: <https://pagosasprings.civicweb.net/portal/>.

Tuesday, Jan. 14

Archuleta County Board of County Commissioners meeting. 8:30 a.m., Archuleta County administration building, commissioners' meeting room, 398 Lewis St. View Zoom meeting at: <https://zoom.us/j/91609048375?pwd=d1FFV0J1cGVKa1NHWHFsa2taeGxtZz09>, meeting ID: 916 0904 8375, passcode: 4141885. For more information, visit <http://archuletacounty.org/agentcenter>.

Thursday, Jan. 16

Archuleta County Board of Health

meeting. 3 p.m., Archuleta County administration building, commissioners' meeting room, 398 Lewis St. View Zoom meeting at: <https://zoom.us/j/91609048375?pwd=d1FFV0J1cGVKa1NHWHFsa2taeGxtZz09>, meeting ID: 916 0904 8375, passcode: 4141885. For more information, visit <http://archuletacounty.org/agentcenter>.

Monday, Jan. 20

San Juan Water Conservancy District special meeting. 4 p.m., 46 Eaton Drive, Suite 5. Visit <https://www.sjwcd.org/> for Zoom option.

Public meeting information should be sent to editor@pagosasun.com with "Public Meeting" in the subject line. The deadline is noon Monday each week prior to publication for that week's issue.

Letters

The SUN welcomes letters from readers.

Please submit your letter electronically in a format that can be copied and pasted to editor@pagosasun.com or via the form at www.pagosasun.com. Letters must not be in all capitals.

All letters must:

- be 500 words or less
- include the actual first and last name of the author
- include the author's address and daytime phone number
- be received by The SUN by noon on Tuesday (deadline may move up due to a holiday)

Letters will be limited to two per month per letter writer.

Letters quoting other people must contain proper attribution.

There is no guarantee letters will be published.

Poetry, anonymous letters, letters that are libelous or in poor taste, or that attack a private citizen or business will not be published.

If necessary, only one letter pertaining to a candidate or political issue will be printed in each edition up to three weeks prior to the election.

The SUN generally does not edit letters, but reserves the right to do so.

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Obituaries

Richard 'Dick' Bryce Hamilton

Richard "Dick" Bryce Hamilton, a resident of Pagosa Springs, Colo., died at home at the age of 84 on Dec. 17, 2024. He loved living in the Pagosa Springs area for over 21 years and owning property there for 41 years.

Richard was born in Chicago, Ill., on April 11, 1940, to Winton and Suzanne Hamilton. He graduated from Carl Sandburg High School in Orland Park, Ill. He attended college at the University of Wyoming, and then moved to McAllen, Texas. He enjoyed his time in South Texas, belonging for many years to the Model A club, and was a dedicated Boy Scout leader in Troop 68.

He attended and then graduated Pan American University in Edinburg, Texas, earning a bachelor's in business. He accomplished a 31-year career at Crest Fruit Company in Alamo, Texas, where he rose to the position of senior VP of marketing. After retiring, he and his wife, Kathy, moved to Pagosa Springs, where he pursued a life of volunteer work at the Visitor Center, National Forest Ser-



vice as well as the Archuleta County Sheriff's Office.

Richard is survived by his wife, Kathleen Hamilton, and his children, Kevin Hamilton (Andrea) and Emily, as well as his grandson, Samuel Hamilton. He is predeceased by his parents and granddaughter Emma Hamilton.

He will be deeply missed by family and friends. A private family service to honor his life is planned.

Jennie Knapp

Our beloved Jennie Knapp reached for the hand of God and followed him home Dec. 16, 2024. Born June 26, 1932, Jennie lived her last five years in Pagosa Springs, Colo., enjoying beautiful views of the San Juan mountain range and Lake Pagosa.

Until the end, she was an avid bridge player, participating three days a week through games organized by the Senior Center. Jennie was of Italian heritage and would lapse into that language without warning. At times, when her Italian did come out, you knew you were in trouble. Her favorite command, "Mangia," was our



cue to sit down at the dinner table. Her recipes for lasagna, manicotti, spaghetti with homemade meatballs, pizzelles and Russian tea cookies will live on in the kitchens of her loving grandchildren and daughter in law.

Jennie was one of six children and grew up in New Jersey. Her father, Salvatore, was a baker and wine maker. Her mother, Josephina, was the neighborhood whiskey distiller and worked as a seamstress in the local silk factory. Jennie moved to Los Alamos, N.M., in 1955 and worked as a medical assistant for Dr. Roger Gartz and then as a computer operator for Los Alamos National Laboratory. She retired in 1998 and was active with Trinity on the Hill Episcopal church and the Los Alamos Medical center gift shop for many years.

Jennie is survived by her sons David (Kim) and Gary; and grandchildren Giovanna (Ryan), David Jr. and Jenais. She is predeceased by her son Russell. A celebration of life will be held Jan. 3, 2025, at the Pagosa Springs PLPOA Clubhouse from noon to 1 p.m. All are welcome to attend. A private service will be held in Los Alamos, N.M., on Jan. 10, 2025, at 11 a.m. in the chapel at Trinity on the Hill in Los Alamos, N.M., with a public reception immediately following. In lieu of flowers, Jennie requested donations be made in her name to St. Jude Children's Research Center at www.stjude.org/donate.

Tammy Gail Sullivan

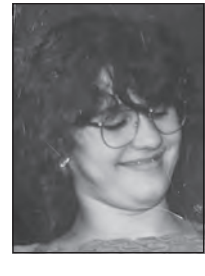
Tammy Gail Sullivan, age 48, passed away Dec. 14, 2024, in Pagosa Springs, Colo.

A wife, a mother, a grandma, too, this is the legacy we have from you. You taught us love and how to fight. You gave us strength, you gave us might.

A stronger person would be hard to find, and in your heart you were always kind. You fought for us all in one way or another, not just as mother, not just as a friend. For all of us you gave your best. And now the time has come for you to rest. So, go in peace, you've earned your sleep. Your love in our hearts we'll eternally keep.

Tammy is survived by her two daughters, Courtney and Jessica Sullivan; her grandson, Dominic Selph; her mom, Janet Jones; her siblings; and many nieces and nephews.

Services for Tammy will be held on Saturday at 2 p.m. at the Amazing Grace Community Church, 77 Navajo Circle, Pagosa Springs, Colo. A potluck will be held right afterward.



Town begins consideration of allowing metro districts

By Derek Kutzer
Staff Writer

At a Dec. 19 Pagosa Springs Town Council meeting, Development Director James Dickhoff introduced the idea of allowing metropolitan districts within the town's limits.

A metropolitan district, also known as a metro district, is a special-purpose district allowed in the state under the Colorado Special District Act.

An agenda document on the matter states that a "metro district has the ability to provide any two or more services within its boundaries," including street improvements, water facilities and services, sanitation facilities and services, and park and recreation facilities.

"Throughout Colorado, developers establish metro districts in order to issue tax-exempt bonds to finance public infrastructure and amenities necessary to support a new master planned community. Subsequently, the new community's future residents will pay for the infrastructure through property taxes," the document states. Currently, the town has no metro districts within its boundaries, but Archuleta County has several within its boundaries, Dickhoff explained, adding that, in the future, the town should decide if it wants to allow or prohibit metro districts within its boundaries.

Dickhoff pointed to a few examples of metro districts within the county, saying that Alpha Rock Ridge operated as one, "mainly for maintaining roads," and that Aspen Springs and Timber Ridge are other examples of metro districts.

He added that metro districts "are becoming more and more common," and can serve as an "essential tool" to serve growth that town resources can't provide.

He explained that the purpose of such districts "is really to fund and oversee, and sometimes operate and maintain, critical public infrastructure necessary for new residential and commercial developments."

Some of the negatives that he listed were higher property taxes to "pay down those loans," adding that "finance costs can shift to the owners after the developer is out of the picture."

If the council decided to allow metro districts, the best approach would be to develop a clear policy, setting the ground rules for any development proposing such a district, he added.

A metro district is required to abide by the policies set for metro districts within the jurisdiction where it resides, but it would operate as an independent unit of government that exists separately from the town or county, according to the document.

"Much like Town Council, the metro district board is accountable to the taxpayers in the metro district and must follow similar requirements," the document states.

A metro district, for example, is required to conduct elections for its governing board, hold public meetings and keep records and minutes of these meetings, adopt annual budgets, submit to annual financial audits and comply with the Taxpayer Bill of Rights, also known as TABOR.

"Accordingly, the Town would not assume any of the rights or responsibilities of the metro districts within its boundaries. The Colorado Department of Local Affairs is the agency that regulates metro district activities, and it maintains a Special District Repository of individual metro district documents," the document states.

Dickhoff told the council that he could bring the topic up again in January 2025, when Town Attorney Bob Cole could attend the meeting.

He explained that Cole has a lot of experience with metro districts and could offer the council important insight into the positives and negatives of such special districts.

He said that typically metro districts are formed "in the very early stages of development" as a means of paying for infrastructure.

He explained that a would-be metro district would need to submit a detailed service plan for the council's consideration and, if approved, that plan would serve as the district's "governing document, similar to a town charter."

"So, it's very specific to the district boundaries within, and it's a governing document for those districts," he said, adding that a service plan would set "the amount of debt that can be issued, set maximum levels of taxation and a maximum time period over which a tax can be imposed, among other things."

Once the council approves a service plan for a metro district, the property owners would then "file a petition for organization with the district court," Dickhoff said.

"The court would hold a public hearing on behalf of the proposed metro district, and if the majority of property owners within that district approve," the court would then order the organization of that metro district "and, at that time, a board is formed who will then make the decisions and manage the metro district," Dickhoff said.

He then walked the council through some of the "pros and cons" of metro districts.

He noted that some of the positives are the promotion of development and the ability to "take on tax-exempt bonds, which lowers the cost of infrastructure."

He said that in this scenario "development pays for its own way, because it only impacts the properties within this development, and it may provide higher grade amenities" than

the town can provide, "whether it's more parks, or recreation facilities within that subdivision."

Some of the negatives that he listed were higher property taxes to "pay down those loans," adding that "finance costs can shift to the owners after the developer is out of the picture."

He also noted that "it can create confusion for property owners," because "some property owners are not aware that they are buying into a metro district until they get to the table at the closing" and then find out about "the additional property taxes."

Dickhoff explained that the council could decide if it wants to allow all types of metro districts, allow only certain types or restrict all metro districts within town limits.

"Some are commercial only. Some are residential only. You can certainly consider both, mixed developments, for example, versus residential," he said, adding that if the council chose to allow metro districts that it should "outline various elements" allowed in a district's service plan that would align with "the town council's goals and priorities."

Dickhoff's recommendation to the council was not to wait until a specific development applies for metro district status, but to, instead, take preliminary action on the issue before any specific development proposal comes to the table.

"The council should look at 'developing a policy' that would meet its 'goals and objectives,'" he recommended.

"We can really guide how we would approve metro districts. What would be acceptable? How are they formed? What would they fund? We could put caps and limits on some of the taxation and borrowing mechanisms that they can pursue," he said.

The "potential pitfalls" of metro districts could be avoided, Dickhoff suggested, if the council spearheaded a policy with "guardrails," structuring a policy "to avoid those pitfalls."

Council member Brooks Lindner asked if a metro district within town limits would be required to abide by the town's Land Use and Development Code (LUDC).

Dickhoff answered, "They would certainly have to follow our code for development, but they could add more-stringent codes on top of that, just like [a homeowners association]," derek@pagosasun.com

Celebration

Rachael Berndt

Rachael Berndt, of Pagosa Springs, has been named to the Southeast Missouri State University dean's list and president's list for academic achievement during the fall 2024 semester.

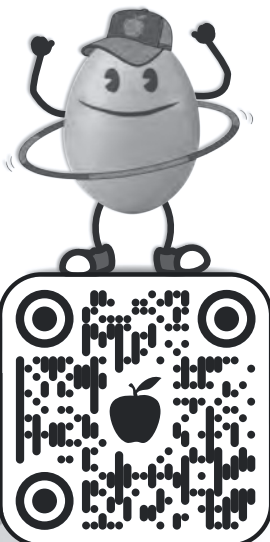
Students named to the dean's list earned at least a 3.75 GPA on a 4.0 scale, completed at least 12 hours of standard graded credit, achieved no grade below a B and received no failing grades in enrolled, credit/no credit or pass/fail courses.

Students named to the president's list earned at least a 4.0 GPA and completed at least 12 hours of standard graded credit in a semester.

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Business

County unemployment rises to 4.6 percent

By Garrett Fevinger
Staff Writer

Archuleta County's unemployment rate rose two-tenths of a percentage point in November to reach 4.6 percent, according to a report released by the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE) on Dec. 20.

That figure represents a slight increase from October's rate of 4.4 percent, according to the report, as well as an increase from November 2023, when the county's unemployment rate was 3.2 percent.

The county's rate was also higher than the state average, which rose to 4.3 percent in November with about 139,300 individuals unemployed across the state, according to the CDLE's survey of households.

The labor force in Archuleta County numbered 6,634 in November, according to the report, down from 6,769 in October.

A map of the state included in the report shows Huerfano County with the highest unemployment rate in

November at 7.1 percent, followed by San Miguel County at 6.8 percent, Las Animas at 6.7 percent and Fremont County at 6.6 percent.

Additional increases in unemployment rates were seen across the southwest region, according to the report, with La Plata County at a rate of 4.1 percent, Hinsdale County at 4.4 percent, Mineral County a rate of 5 percent and Conejos County at 4.8 percent.

At the state level, "The number of individuals employed in Colorado decreased by 4,900 in November to 3,114,000, which represents 65.0 percent of the state's 16+ population," the release states. "The national unemployment rate increased one-tenth of a percentage point to 4.2 percent from October to November."

Employers in Colorado lost 3,900 nonfarm payroll jobs during that same time period for a total of 3,011,000 jobs, according to the survey of business establishments. Private-sector payroll jobs decreased by 5,500, while the government added 1,600 jobs.

Nonfarm payroll jobs measure the number of workers excluding farmers.

According to the CDLE, the only private-industry sector with significant job gains over the month was education and health services with about 1,100.

In contrast, private-industry sectors with significant over-the-month job losses were:

- Professional and business services at about 3,500; and
- Trade, transportation, and utilities at about 2,300.

"Since November 2023," the press release states, "nonfarm payroll jobs have increased 52,900, with the private sector growing by 35,100 and government adding 17,800 jobs."

Over the course of the year, the largest private-sector jobs gains were found in:

- Education and health services at about 12,300;
- Leisure and hospitality at about 7,000;
- Construction at about 6,200;

• Financial activities at about 4,100; and

• Trade, transportation, and utilities at about 3,400.

During that same period, the press release states, payroll jobs declined in:

- Information, with about 3,500 fewer jobs; and
- Manufacturing, with about 500 fewer.

The press release notes that Colorado's rate of job growth over the past year is 1.8 percent, above the U.S. rate of 1.4 percent.

"Over the year, the average workweek for all Colorado employees on private nonfarm payrolls decreased from 33.3 to 32.8 hours, while average hourly earnings grew from \$36.82 to \$39.20, three dollars and fifty-nine cents more than the national average hourly earnings of \$35.61," the report states.

The December 2024 Colorado Employment Situation report will be released Jan. 27, 2025, according to the CDLE.

garrett@pagosahun.com

Town, Springs Resort enter into parking agreement for U.S. 160 reconstruction

By Derek Kutzer
Staff Writer

On Dec. 19, the Pagosa Springs Town Council approved an agreement with The Springs Resort to accommodate public parking during Colorado Department of Transportation's (CDOT's) highway reconstruction project through downtown Pagosa Springs.

An agenda document on the matter states that the parking area, located at 347 Hot Springs Blvd., is "now being used for staging contractors and materials for" the resort's expansion project and is "where the Folk Fest campers" queue before heading up Reservoir Hill."

The Springs Resort's expansion project "is expected to wrap up in March 2025, at which time the Town can begin applying gravel, installing signage and other needed items to accommodate the use for a temporary public parking area," the document states.

This agreement "is part of the effort to locate public parking options to help accommodate parking needs" during the main street reconstruction project," the document states.

CDOT's project is slated to begin in the spring of 2025 and is expected to continue through at least two construction seasons.

CDOT has revealed, at several

public meetings, that some parking through downtown would need to be sacrificed in order to keep two lanes of traffic open during the construction.

However, it remains uncertain how many of downtown's 188 parking spaces will be lost at any given time during the construction phases of the project.

Once CDOT's contractor, WW Clyde and Company, releases more details on the schedule and phasing of its construction, more will be known about how many parking spaces will be lost at any given time during the construction.

Development Director James Dickhoff explained that the parking license agreement is similar to an agreement with the Upper San Juan Library District, forged last May, which will allow public parking in a gravel lot, accessed from U.S. 160, west of the Ruby Sisson Library.

Dickhoff has noted that the public parking at the library would best be utilized by downtown businesses as employee parking, while the parking area on Hot Springs Boulevard would be more suited for patrons of downtown businesses.

The library lot will accommodate about 60 free parking spaces on the western edge of downtown and the Hot Springs Boulevard lot will accommodate about 220 public parking

spaces, states the new license agreement with The Springs.

Dickhoff noted that one of the "revisions" that The Springs Resort made to the agreement actually provided "a much larger area for parking," bringing it to more than 200 spaces.

The agreement states that the town "shall pay all costs associated with the use and enjoyment" of the parking area, which includes maintenance, grading, drainage, installation of gravel and signage, as well as "snow removal of the parking area and adjacent sidewalk areas."

Dickhoff noted that once the Springs' expansion project concludes, in March, the town would be "clearing that area of materials ... and, at that time, we can move in, take a look, get some gravel where we need some gravel" and install some signage.

He also explained that a provision in the agreement states that if the parking area is used for something other than offsetting lost parking during the CDOT construction, such as "an event," The Springs Resort would "have the option" to charge for parking in the area.

He said that, overall, it is a "straightforward, simple agreement."

When opened to questions, council member Madeline Bergon asked how the town would enforce the ban on overnight parking, per the agreement and asking if it "would

become burdensome on the police department" to ticket and patrol for overnight parking in the area.

Dickhoff explained that it could become burdensome, but that the police would probably lean more toward asking people "to move along, rather than ticketing them."

He responded that it definitely was a concern of the property owners, "the library included, to have people camping overnight."

He added that while these parking agreements would "be important for our business owners, we do need an enforcement component if we have violations on those properties."

When a motion was made to approve the parking license agreement with The Springs Resort, it was passed unanimously by the council.

derek@pagosahun.com

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LPEA youth tour, scholarship applications now open

La Plata Electric Association

La Plata Electric Association Inc. (LPEA) is excited to announce two opportunities for students in its service area: the 2024 youth tour to Washington, D.C., for high school juniors and scholarship programs for graduating high school seniors and GED graduates.

These initiatives reflect LPEA's ongoing commitment to empowering future leaders and supporting educational success.

Youth tour

Applications are now open for LPEA's annual youth tour, a leadership experience designed for high school juniors.

Selected participants will travel to Washington, D.C., in June 2025 to learn about the electric cooperative industry, meet legislators and connect with peers from across the country.

The application deadline is Jan. 2, 2025, and students can apply or learn more at lpea.coop/lpea-youth-tour.

"Participating in the youth tour is an incredible opportunity for students to gain leadership skills and learn how their voice can make a difference," said Carrie Hugas, LPEA's community outreach specialist. "This program embodies LPEA's mission to connect our communities with opportunities and to inspire students to shape a brighter future for all of us."

Scholarships

LPEA is also accepting applications for its rolling scholarship programs, open to graduating high school seniors and GED recipients within LPEA's service territory.

Scholarships provide financial assistance for higher education, including four-year universities, two-year colleges and vocational programs.



Photo courtesy La Plata Electric Association

Applications are now open for LPEA's annual youth tour, a leadership experience designed for high school juniors. Selected participants will travel to Washington, D.C., in June 2025 to learn about the electric cooperative industry, meet legislators and connect with peers from across the country.

"By offering these scholarships, LPEA is helping to ensure that students in our community have access to the resources they need to succeed, whether their path includes a traditional college experience or a hands-on trade program," Hugas said.

Students and their families can attend a webinar on Feb. 12, 2025, to learn more about the application process and tips for crafting a strong submission.

Scholarship applications are due by March 1, 2025.

For more details, visit lpea.coop/scholarships.

"LPEA is proud to support our community's youth through these programs," added Hugas. "Programs like the youth tour and education scholarships are central to LPEA's vi-

sion of empowering young leaders to thrive and contribute to the success of our region."

To learn more or to apply, please visit lpea.coop.

About LPEA

LPEA is a member-owned, not-for-profit, electric distribution cooperative serving La Plata and Archuleta, with segments of Hinsdale, Mineral and San Juan counties.

LPEA is the fifth-largest cooperative of 22 in Colorado and aims to provide safe, reliable electricity at the lowest reasonable cost to its approximately 36,500 members.

For additional information, contact LPEA at (970) 247-5786 or visit lpea.coop.

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Owners of Habitat house 36, Lamont and Jillian, on their porch.

Photo courtesy Justin Treptow

By the numbers: Habitat for Humanity wraps up build season

By Monica Nigon
Habitat for Humanity of Archuleta County

Habitat for Humanity of Archuleta County is closing out the 2024 build season on time and under budget.

We couldn't have done it without support from our community.

For the first time in our campaign to build "15 Homes in 5 Years" all three partner families are in their new homes for the Christmas holiday.

These families have spent more than 18 months partnering with Habitat Archuleta, contributing more than 1,000 sweat equity hours collectively. Together we completed three new homes in the Pagosa Lakes Property Owners' Association (PLPOA).

These all-electric homes are equipped with net-zero roof top solar panels to support long-term affordability. The properties are deed restricted for 30 years to protect the investment of our community and this organization, while still empowering these families to build equity.

In 2024, we helped three families build their own homes alongside volunteers and obtain an affordable mortgage, impacting five adults and seven children, who ranged in age from newborns to middle schoolers.

Also in 2024, four additional families are now homeowners due to Habitat Archuleta supporting a total of nine buyers through USDA 502 Direct mortgage processing for financially

qualified applicants who were not selected to build a new house with us.

This security of homeownership helps to maintain four jobs in our county and builds equity for generations to come.

Throughout the year we facilitated 2,906 volunteer hours on our construction site. Our off-site volunteers contributed an additional 1,510 hours assisting staff with fundraising, real estate transactions, construction planning and supporting family services.

Thirty-four local businesses and organizations generously contributed over \$63,000 of in-kind labor. Grants and donations to help build affordable workforce homeownership exceeded \$268,000 this year.

The county donated tax-lien lots that the Habitat homes were built on now provide tax revenue and homeowner association dues of over \$3,600 annually, a reinvestment back into our community.

We were able to host two high school interns thanks to the Building Trades Program at Pagosa Springs High School and the Pagosa Springs Community Development Corporation (see our Volunteer Spotlight on our website featuring one of our interns, Lorelei).

Since 1994, Habitat Archuleta has built 36 homes and repaired 30, impacting 146 children and 116 adults to date.



Photo courtesy Justin Treptow

Core volunteer Larry Parks reads an excerpt at the 2024 Habitat for Humanity of Archuleta County house dedications.

2025 build season

Looking ahead to the 2025 build season:

We are now transitioning to planning for our 2025 build season. This will be year four of our campaign to build 15 homes in five years.

Three families have already been selected as Habitat partner families, who will help build homes alongside

volunteers and pay an affordable mortgage. Four adults and six children will have an affordable place to call home.

Four local employers — at the hospital, local government, the retail and restaurant industries — and the school district will retain employees who have the security of homeownership.

We have seven homes to go in our campaign in 2025 and 2026.

To learn more about how to get involved in affordable homeownership in Archuleta County, email us at volunteer@habitatarchuleta.org or call (970) 264-6960.

at 11 a.m., the Barkus parade will take off from Town Park and parade along the Riverwalk with a menagerie of pets. Often there are costumed pets vying for the award for best costume. Registration begins at 10:30 a.m.

While not a part of WinterFest activities, there will also be a March for Equality coinciding with the national People's March in Washington, D.C. This parade will also kick off in Town Park at 11 a.m. and follow the sidewalk routes from Hot Springs Boulevard to 8th Street and back. All are welcome to this peaceful gathering.

Then, grab a great seat along the Riverwalk as the Penguin Plunge begins at 1 p.m. Registration begins at noon. Hearty souls swim in the frigid San Juan River raising money for their favorite nonprofit. Registration forms can be found on the Chamber website on the event page, <https://pagosachamber.com/winterfest.html>. In the past, more than \$10,000 has been raised for local nonprofit agencies. If you can't plunge, then pledge for a Penguin Plunger.

Following the Penguin Plunge, walk over to Reservoir Hill and enjoy the Sledz on Rez activity hosted by Build Pagosa. Every year there are more creative sleds and more fun. You will be able to obtain the registration form soon; however, plan now on a theme and sled design with your family, friends or organization.

All day long you can watch the fast pace, skillful racing of horse riders and skiers in Skijoring, hosted by Skis and Saddles. The festivities will be held at the Archuleta County

Fairgrounds. You can purchase two-day passes or single-day passes and then come and go to watch other events occurring around the community. On Saturday evening, Skis and Saddles will also host a dance at the Fairgrounds. More information and tickets are forthcoming.

On Sunday, the day again kicks off with the hot air balloon rally on the west side of town at about 8 a.m. Please remember that all hot air balloon activities are weather contingent.

If you have wanted to learn how to cross-country ski, now is your opportunity. The Nordic Club on Sunday will offer a "Learn How to Cross Country Ski" clinic for free. This clinic typically is full, so, while free, register early for a space in your ability category. We will be watching how the snow flies before we announce where the clinic will be held.

If you were too busy participating or spectating the downtown activities on Saturday, head out to the Fairgrounds for another full day of skijoring.

WinterFest will occur over the Martin Luther King Jr. Day weekend, so, with visitors taking advantage of a three-day weekend, our town should be very busy.

More information about WinterFest will be coming out in the upcoming weeks; however, we want to get these activities on your calendar.

Should you have any questions, please visit the event page at <https://pagosachamber.com/winterfest.html> or call the Chamber at (970) 264-2360.

Looking ahead to WinterFest weekend

By Mary Jo Coulehan
Pagosa Springs Area Chamber of Commerce

We have not even completed 2024 and the Chamber already has its sights set on 2025 and the activities that kick off the new year.

We are hoping for a little more snow for WinterFest activities, which will take place Jan. 17-19, 2025. Many of these events are weather contingent, so, either way, we hope Mother Nature cooperates.

Here is a rundown of the activities throughout the weekend.

Beginning on Jan. 17, 2025, there will be the WinterFest Bonfire held at the Archuleta County Fairgrounds.

Don't forget to recycle your real Christmas trees at the Fairgrounds. Signage is in place just east of the U.S. 84 entrance. The more trees the merrier.

There will be live music, hot beverages, food vendors and fun. Registration will also be held there for the hot air balloon pilots and the Skijoring contestants. Festivities begin at 5 p.m. and run until 8 p.m.

On Jan. 18, get ready for a packed day. We will kick off with a hot air balloon rally on the west side of town starting at about 8 a.m. Then we will venture downtown later that morning for a plethora of events. The Pagosa Nordic Club will host the BBGun Biathlon at Yamaguchi Park. You can register and find out more about Nordic Club events at www.pagosanordic.com.

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Local reporting that matters.

Discussion of county attorney contract delayed

By Clayton Chaney
Staff Writer

Archuleta County Attorney Todd Weaver was absent from the last regular meeting of the Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) meeting held on Dec. 17, delaying discussion regarding his contract.

Weaver was also absent from a work session held earlier that day.

During the work session, Commissioner Veronica Medina stated, "Weaver will not be joining us today at all, but hopefully we will have him back in the new year."

Medina explained that she had questions in regard to if the BoCC could hold an executive session during the regular meeting later in the day while Weaver is not present to discuss his contract with the county.

"Even though myself and [Human Resources] sat down with him on Friday to discuss his contract, to discuss his annual evaluation and his performance," Medina said.

She mentioned the BoCC may have to hold a special meeting, possibly on Dec. 30, to hold an executive session to discuss the matter.

Medina indicated she contacted outside counsel to "see what we could do."

She went on to explain that if the BoCC did not go into an executive

session to discuss the matter and make a decision, then Weaver's "contract will automatically renew for only one year," noting that the contract would stay the same, which includes a vehicle expense.

"What I was trying to negotiate with him was a one-year contract," Medina said, explaining that would involve a review after six months, "and then at that point we would determine whether or not we would continue forward with him as a county employee."

Medina also indicated that Weaver wanted to discuss his evaluation further with the other members of the BoCC.

Medina mentioned that she took out the vehicle expense, "since we do have many county vehicles available," noting that Weaver's previous contract states if there is ever a county vehicle available, then "the county could take that exception out."

Commissioner Ronnie Maez asked if Weaver was aware of the Dec. 17 BoCC meeting agenda, to which Medina indicated that Weaver was aware of the matter.

"And some of the changes that I made in the contract with outside counsel was at will, and he was fine with it," Medina added.

She explained that Weaver indicated he was "fine" with the BoCC

discussing the matter, reiterating that Human Resources was present during that conversation.

Medina further explained she met with Weaver to give a "heads up of where we were going" and that she didn't want to "blindside" him with information.

She added that she was unsure if the BoCC could hold an executive session on the matter with Weaver being absent.

Commissioner Warren Brown asked if Weaver was present, if he'd be included in the executive session, to which Maez explained, "absolutely," adding that by law Weaver has the choice of the matter being discussed openly or in an executive session.

Medina added that since Weaver was not present the BoCC does not know what his choice is, again stating she was unsure if the BoCC could have an executive session on the matter, "even though he was aware and knew and said he was OK to me and the [Human Resources] director."

Brown suggested that, "out of an abundance of caution," the BoCC table the matter.

Maez commented that "it's on the agenda" and that the county had until 1:30 p.m. to hear back from outside counsel on the matter.

During the Dec. 17 meeting, the agenda was amended by Brown to

add item E, the consideration and authorization of the chair of the BoCC to seek contract and determine services relating to discussing personnel matters involving the county attorney's contract, while also removing item A under the new business (continued) portion, which the consideration and approval of the county attorney agreement.

The amended agenda was approved unanimously by the BoCC, along with the added item E under new business.

Before approving the amended agenda, Medina commented that "in light of some recent events," and according to counsel received, the BoCC does have the ability to add the new item and remove the original item A under new business (continued).

In a later interview, Medina stated, "It's a personnel issue. He's out on leave and he'll be back the first week of January. That's it."

In an attempt to contact Weaver, The SUN received an automatic email reply on Monday, Dec. 23, stating Weaver is out of the office "until at least January 6th."

Additionally, the response notes that if immediate assistance is required, please contact Executive Assistant/Paralegal Tonya McCann. clayton@pagosasun.com

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One of the real joys of the holiday season is the opportunity to say thank you and to wish you a new year of prosperity and happiness.

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Boosters

Continued from front

stands, the better, for sure."

But rewind the game clock. See the players scramble in reverse. It's 0-0 with hours left to kickoff. Monte Vista's bus is just pulling into town.

Greeting the opponents are passing cars emblazoned with Pirate jersey numbers, storefront windows adorned with banners and painted slogans of local support.

It was a moment Aubrie Limebrook had imagined months before, when she and a group of fellow parents and community members gathered together as part of a reenergized, partly reformed Pagosa Springs Athletic Booster Club.

"We're a small town," said Limebrook, a longtime resident and mother to three student-athletes. "There's no reason we can't have that community feeling."

To help stoke it, club members took to downtown Pagosa Springs in the days leading up to homecoming, enlisting the support of local businesses while embellishing windows with rallying calls in support of the home team.

"Having those businesses be a part of [homecoming] was huge," Limebrook recalled, "so that when Monte Vista rolls into town, it's like, 'OK, they have this school spirit, from the businesses to the kids to the parents.'"

Painted on one of those windows was, "Small town, big spirit."

According to Limebrook, it's been the club's mantra, mission and marching orders ever since.

A resurgence

Although the booster club has long been a staple of prep athletics in Pagosa Springs, Limebrook recalled how membership declined in the aftermath of COVID-19, how some volunteers felt stretched too thin and on the brink of burnout — herself included.

"People are so busy and COVID got weird, and then people didn't come back to volunteering," Limebrook recalled. "We just lost a lot of manpower, a lot of volunteers, a lot of hands, a lot of energy."

When some months before the start of the 2024 fall season the president and vice president decided to step away, the club found itself at an uncertain crossroads.

"There were talks of, maybe it's just too much, maybe we disband and give the money back to the school district," Limebrook remembered. "We kind of had that moment."

But sometime before summer, Limebrook startled to the recognition that she wasn't ready to let the club go.

"I was like, 'I think we can do this,'" she said. "Why not? I don't want to see it go away. It's huge, it's such a value to the schools, to all these athletes."

In a bout of "perfect timing," Limebrook's friends now had children entering high school, others had children that were close and she was able to successfully coax many of them to July's back-to-school meeting.

"Before that, I'd say we had four to five people at a meeting, 10 at the most," Limebrook said. But at that July meeting, 25 people showed up, all saying, "We can help now." They're just amazing friends and amazing people.

Limebrook assumed the club's vacant vice president role.

"It was exciting, it was new energy. It was people wanting to do more, wanting to talk about ideas," she said. "For those of us that were kind of burning out ... their energy has reenergized us."

"It was exciting, it was new energy. It was people wanting to do more, wanting to talk about ideas," she said. "For those of us that were kind of burning out ... their energy has reenergized us."

A club for every sport

Alongside new president Curtis Nehring, also a parent of student-athletes, Limebrook and the club's roster of volunteers began focusing on making small strides toward some big dreams — namely, tending to and fueling that community spirit and fostering an inclusive sporting environment where everyone is welcome.

"In our mind, our vision for booster is to boost spirit and to keep that Pirate pride feeling," Limebrook said. "That's the whole point of what we're trying to do," added Nehring. "Support the kids, support that spirit, support the community."

The homecoming window displays were a part of that effort, as were the pom-poms and glow sticks. Turnout for this year's homecoming game was higher than Limebrook and Nehring remember in years' past — even drawing tourists — and support remained strong throughout the season.

As Morales noted, the players and coaches could feel it.

Fundraising for the club, which most visibly takes place at home-game concession stands, helps to purchase items like snack bags for away trips, end-of-season banquets, state sendoffs and more — all in addition to athletic program wish-list items that may not otherwise receive full funding from Archuleta School District.

Once Pagosa Springs High School Athletic Director Chantelle Jordan approves initial funding requests, coaches head to the club to pitch their ideas and program needs. According to Nehring and Limebrook, funds from the club go toward renewable assets that stand to benefit teams for seasons to come.

"It's anything that's coming to us that the coach feels is necessary and that [Jordan] has approved that will benefit the team and all of the athletes," Limebrook said. "It's something that will come back and be there for the next year and the next year."

In addition to things like uniforms and warmups, the club has recently helped purchase advanced technologies designed to capture games, swings and strokes for later analysis by coaches and players.

"It's starting to dovetail into the kids now having film to submit to colleges," Nehring said, adding that

when it comes to funding, the club tries to focus on what will have the biggest, most immediate impact.

"We really want to spend the money on the kids as fast as we can so that they get the benefit [before graduating]," he said.

Nehring and Limebrook have also made a point of highlighting sports with less-visible presences at home, hoping to add a little wind to the sails of Pirate swimmers, bowlers, golfers, cross-country harriers and more.

"Sending goodie bags, sending little pom-poms for the parents that are going ... We don't have home swim meets because we don't have a pool, but we can still send our love," Limebrook said, "so everyone feels that boosters is behind you."

It's an added "oomph," as Nehring described it, that goes a long way toward contributing to athletic success, and one that can result in a win for the entire community.

"You think, 'Oh, we're just handing out glow sticks at a football game,'" Limebrook said, "but, in the long run, just the impact, you're bringing more people in [who say], 'Oh, this is fun, I was going to go do something tonight that I maybe shouldn't have and I went to the game instead because it was so fun.'"

"All of those little things I think will have a bigger impact. But in the moment it's like, we're just taking these small steps."

Take the weight room at Pagosa Springs High School as an example.

This fall, the club partnered with a local community member to purchase new equipment for the space, resulting in a surge of interest from students throughout the district.

"There's way more kids in the weight room, way more activity," Nehring said. "Some of them are athletes, but there's a good chunk of non-athletes, kids working out in jeans that are just kind of feeling their way out, having never really done it, which is cool."

Limebrook added that the improved space is "bringing girls into the weight room, who before would have been like, 'I'm not going into that place, ever,' that are now feeling welcome and like, 'I can do this, too.' All of those little things, I think, will have a bigger impact."

And if booster club can help fund initiatives like the weight room, Nehring and Limebrook suggested, that means the school district is freer to direct money toward other sports-related opportunities that in other districts might be more rare.

"Our kids pay almost nothing to be able to participate in sports," Nehring said, "whereas a lot of kids in these other communities are putting up a couple hundred bucks a sport to be able to afford jerseys and equipment and things like that."

"If the booster club is able to fund things like uniforms, that means [the district] has more money to do these other things — paying for hotels for kids when they're at state and all that. It's a very collaborative thing."

Back from the brink of dissolution, Limebrook and Nehring noted the club is always looking for new volunteers — and the commitment

might not be as demanding as many might think.

"Really what we're looking at is like an hour a month," Nehring said. "It's silly things people don't think about, like one more person in the concession stand just goes so far."

"It's nice to have all these people and their different skills," Limebrook added. "I'm hoping eventually we'll all look back and go, 'OK that was cool. It started slow, but look at us now.'"

The Pagosa Springs Athletic Booster Club meets every third Wednesday of the month. For more information, including how to get involved and to sign up for the club newsletter, send an email to contact@pagosaboosters.org. garrett@pagosasun.com

Rendering courtesy Reynolds, Ash and Associates, photos courtesy Jeff Laydon

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Photo courtesy Chris Hinger

The eighth-grade student council at Pagosa Springs Middle School recently organized a competitive food drive among advisory classes and collected more than 850 nonperishable food items for local food banks.

Ethics

Continued from front

tial conflict of interest and failure to recuse when voting on property selection for the county's administration building property listed under Exit Realty's Low, "where Medina's license hangs."

The complaint further alleges that, at the June 4 meeting, Medina requested that the commissioners make a "swift" decision regarding the purchase of the property.

"Her pushiness in moving the motion forward, and her vote in favor of the property listed by Low, would lead one to believe she is using an act of persuasion on her fellow commissioners in this matter," the complaint states. "It is worth noting, it is rumored Medina will benefit financially by making 1% of the sale of this property. Medina violated the following Colorado State Statutes and Ethical Codes, when she did not recuse herself from this vote, nor did she properly disclose a potential conflict of interest to the state."

Springer claims in her complaint that Medina violated Colorado Revised Statute (CRS) 24-18-109, failure

to recuse; CRS 18-8-303 failure to disclose a potential conflict of interest to the state body; and Principle of Ethics III, rules of ethics B.

Springer writes in her complaint that she has witnessed "many other violations" by Medina, along with Commissioner Ronnie Maez, "regularly breaking Colorado Open Meeting Law."

Additionally, Springer writes, "Due to being a licensed real estate agent with the brokerage making the approximately \$5 million deal a reality, I believe she grossly violated state law and used her position irresponsibly and recklessly. Medina has broken the trust of more than just me, but the community as a whole, by showing her personal agenda comes first, not the county taxpayer's opinion."

Dec. 17 meeting

The agenda for the regular BoCC meeting held on Dec. 17 included three matters under old business that involved two letters of intent for two properties and a consideration of a purchase and sales agreement

with Arena Labs for land located at X West U.S. 160 — the property being represented by Low and Exit Realty.

Medina stated at the beginning of the Dec. 17 meeting that she would not be voting on the purchase and sales agreement matter.

"I would like to state that after a lot of consideration, I have chosen not to vote on the new business item ... purchase of property for the county building," Medina said, "I'll be a no-vote."

She added, "I'm not recusing myself, I'm not stating there's a conflict, I just have chosen not to vote on the item."

Medina did not vote on items C, D or E under the old business portion of the agenda. See related article for additional information.

In a later interview, when asked to explain why she did not vote on the items, Medina reiterated that, after consideration, she has chosen not to vote on the land.

"What I can say to that is that I have retained counsel and we will be responding in due course," Medina said.

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PAWSD

Continued from front

ture regulatory costs could allow it to only increase wastewater rates by 10 percent in 2025 instead of by the 30 percent recommended in the study, the board agreed to pursue this approach.

The 2025 budget includes \$1,345,822 in revenues for the PAWSD general fund, primarily from property taxes, and \$1,647,189 in expenditures, a 20 percent increase from 2024.

The budget indicates that legal and professional spending, as well as spending on maintenance and computer support and upgrades, are anticipated to increase in 2025.

The general fund balance at the end of 2025 is projected to be \$1,448,928, down 17 percent from the end of 2024.

The PAWSD water enterprise fund is projected to receive \$33,450,308 in revenues, including \$5,609,336 in service charge revenue, \$1 million in capital investment fee (CIF) and raw water acquisition fee revenue, and \$25.2 million in loan proceeds, which will be used for the continued construction of the Snowball Water Treatment Plant expansion.

Overall, revenues for the fund are projected to rise 5 percent from 2024.

Expenditures for the fund are budgeted at \$35,934,411, an 18 percent increase from 2024.

This total incorporates \$28,193,518 in spending on capital projects, including the Snowball Water Treatment Plant.

The project fund balance at the end of 2025 for the water enterprise fund is \$6,446,071, down 28 percent from 2024.

The PAWSD water enterprise fund is budgeted to receive \$18,061,491 in revenues, including \$2,982,227 in service charge revenue, \$1.25 million in CIF revenue and \$12,389,000 in other revenues, including charges collected from waste haulers and bond proceeds.

These revenues include money

from the issuance of enterprise revenue bonds approved by the district at its Oct. 12 meeting for the purpose of funding improvements to the Vista Wastewater Treatment Plant, among other work.

Total expenditures for the fund are budgeted at \$18,441,980 in 2025, including \$14,107,485 in capital projects. Among these capital projects are regulatorily required upgrades for the Vista Wastewater Treatment Plant.

The end-of-the-year fund balance for the wastewater enterprise fund for 2025 is projected to be \$4,058,693, down 9 percent from 2024.

According to the budget, the mill levy for PAWSD District 1 is set at 4.037 mills upon each dollar of property value in the district, while the mill levy for PAWSD District 2 is set at 1.434 mills.

A resolution setting these mill levies was approved at the board's Dec. 12 meeting.

At the Dec. 20 meeting, Burns explained that he had adjusted the budget to account for a 10 percent increase in wastewater rates and that he had decreased the revenue estimates for water and wastewater CIFs to match what the district experienced in 2024.

He added that he also updated the budget to reflect the district's plan to transfer \$500,000 from the general fund to the wastewater enterprise fund in 2025, similar to a 2024 transfer it approved at its Dec. 12 meeting.

Burns noted that he also added \$10,000 to the wastewater enterprise fund budget to account for revisions to the district's rate study.

Walsh expressed approval for the changes, particularly for the revisions to the CIF revenues to match current market conditions.

Burns commented that the decreases in the wastewater rate and CIF revenues were notable and that the adjustments to the rate study would need to incorporate these changes and diversify the district's

revenues to ensure that PAWSD has sufficient revenues for its planned capital projects.

"We've been through one year of the rate study, we've gotten what we got, we've made some adjustments along the way, but I think next year's going to require some more adjustments," Burns said.

Walsh commented that the district has been able to reduce the costs to customers of the required regulatory upgrades to the Vista Wastewater Treatment Plant through discussions with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and discovery of an alternative, less-costly approach to meeting its regulatory obligations.

The board also discussed the district's affordable housing fee waiver policy and budgeting, although it ultimately did not make any changes to the policy or budget.

Walsh concluded the discussion by commending PAWSD staff for the work on the budget and efforts to reduce the size of the rate increase.

The board then unanimously approved the PAWSD budget for 2025.

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Sports

WRESTLING

Manzanares takes second at Warrior Classic

By Clayton Chaney
Staff Writer

The Pagosa Springs High School Pirate wrestling team traveled to Grand Junction last week to compete in the annual Warrior Classic tournament held on Dec. 20 and 21 at Central Grand Junction High School.

The Pirates finished in the middle of the 56-team field, according to coach Dan Janowsky.

"We were towards the middle ... a little bit below half," he said.

Anthony Manzanares was the highest-placed Pirate for the second consecutive week, earning second place in the 106-pound weight class.

"He has really started to find himself," Janowsky said, adding Manzanares has worked to stay in his current weight class.

Manzanares had a first-round bye and was able to pin his opponent in the second-round match in two minutes and 18 seconds. He then won his quarterfinal match by an 8-3 decision and went on to pin his opponent in the semifinal match in 1:50.

"He put in a lot of work this weekend, on and off the mat, to make that happen, 'cause it's something he really wants," Janowsky added, explaining that Manzanares is currently the No.

3 ranked wrestler for the 106-pound weight class in the state.

Janowsky mentioned that Manzanares matched up against the second-ranked wrestler in the state at the tournament and "had quite a tussle."

Manzanares lost the first-place match by a decision of 4-1.

Janowsky explained that Manzanares missed a few opportunities toward the end of the second and third periods to earn points "that could've gone our way and changed the whole thing."

He added that Manzanares has been working hard on diversifying his attacks "and you can tell ... he puts his whole heart into it every time."

Janowsky also spoke about Colton Lucero's performance over the weekend, noting that Lucero made it to the semifinal match in the 150-pound weight class.

Lucero pinned his first two opponents, the first in 39 seconds and the second in 4:42. He then won his quarterfinal match by a decision of 7-5.

Lucero lost his semifinal match after getting pinned in 3:13, sending him to the consolation semifinals.

Janowsky explained that Lucero forfeited the semifinal match due to an injury.

"We're just being cautious,"

Janowsky said, explaining there is still a lot of wrestling left in the season.

"We need to get it evaluated before we throw him back out there," Janowsky added, noting that otherwise Lucero had another quality outing.

"There's a lot of really good wrestlers" in the 150-pound weight class, Janowsky explained, adding, "He's one of them."

Janowsky went on to mention that Taylor Hancey was absent due to illness as the Pirates did not fill the 165-pound weight class.

Janowsky added that he is confident Hancey would have been able to earn points for the Pirates.

Eric Smith competed in the 120-pound weight class, losing his opening-round match by an 18-9 major decision. He was then pinned in his second round match in 33 seconds.

Stetson Osborn wrestled in the 132-pound weight class, losing his opening-round and second-round matches by getting pinned in 1:15 and 2:43, respectively.

Devin Gonzales competed in the 157-pound weight class and was pinned in his first-round match in 2:49. He then lost his second-round match by getting pinned in 1:07.

Jesus Serratos competed in the 215-pound weight class and lost his

opening-round match by getting pinned in 44 seconds. He then received a second-round bye and went on to lose his third-round match by pin in 1:34.

Antonio Quezada received a first-round bye in the 285-pound weight class, and was pinned in his second-round match in 1:02.

Quezada then lost his third-round match by pin in 52 seconds.

Janowsky explained that Quezada is wrestling underweight and is closer to the 230-pound weight, adding that Quezada is "fighting hard against guys that are clearly bigger than him."

Janowsky explained that the Pirates were able to score points and win certain stretches of matches, but that the focus now is learning how to feel and wrestle out of danger.

"I'm not in the least bit disappointed," Janowsky said, noting that it's tough for the Pirates to have to deal with losing, "but from a coaching stand point, what they're trying to do and what we're learning is gonna take some time."

Janowsky added that this year's roster has some inexperience at varsity level and that they were "thrown into a really, really tough tournament."

He also mentioned that, due to the size of the tournament, there were other wrestlers sent to a junior varsity tournament.

"I want them to learn how to score points," Janowsky said, explaining that the wrestlers are not afraid of a challenge.

"We'll put together a more solid lineup here down the stretch hopefully," he added.

The Pirates will not be back in action until after the new year starts, when they will host the Rocky Mountain Duals and Rocky Mountain Invite on Jan. 10 and 11, 2025, at Pagosa Springs High School.

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Lady Pirates take 10th at Warrior Classic

By Clayton Chaney
Staff Writer

The Pagosa Springs High School Lady Pirate wrestling team placed 10th in a field of 31 teams across three different states at the Warrior Classic tournament held in Grand Junction on Dec. 21.

Three Pirates placed in the tournament, with Laykyn Baxstrom leading the way by taking second place in the 235-pound weight class.

Baxstrom received a first-round bye and then was able to pin her opponent in the quarterfinal match in 43 seconds. She won her semifinal match with a 14-5 major decision, sending her to the first-place match.

Baxstrom lost narrowly in the final match by a decision of 4-3.

Coach Dan Janowsky noted she "lost a very, very close match."

He added that Baxstrom may only be a sophomore, but he believes she can make a run in the state tournament, mentioning she has been the highest-ranked Pirate for two weeks in a row after claiming second place the week prior in the Bloomfield, N.M., tournament.

"She has the look of someone that can go to state and bring home a medal," Janowsky said, adding that is what Baxstrom needs to start preparing for.

He added, "She looks to be ready to fight for that spot. She's worked hard to get there ... pretty gratifying to see."

Madi Stretton and Bella Jackson also placed for the second consecutive week, with both earning fifth in their respective weight classes.

"It's very encouraging," Janowsky said, explaining the Warrior Classic tournament features lots of higher-division schools, making it a great opportunity to see how they match up, "and they're right there."

Stretton competed in the 110-pound weight class and, after losing her opening-round match, Stretton then won her next two matches by a 13-5 major decision and by pinning her opponent in one minute and 55 seconds.

Stretton lost in the consolation semifinal match, sending her to the fifth-place match, where she won by a 16-6 major decision.

Jackson wrestled in the 105-pound weight class and won her opening-round match by pinning her opponent in 4:45.

She then won the quarterfinal match by pinning her opponent in 3:21, sending her to the semifinal match, where she was pinned by her opponent in 50 seconds.

Janowsky mentioned that Jackson lost in a closely battled consolation semifinal match by a decision of 9-8,

sending her to the fifth-place match, where she won by a 17-1 technical fall in 2:55.

Janowsky added that the Pirates are pushing toward the top of the pack and that there are a few wrestlers who are "certainly ready to qualify for state and test themselves up there."

Janowsky commented on the work that the Lady Pirates have put in, noting that he's seen "tremendous improvement from the beginning of the year."

He mentioned that the wrestlers are beginning to see what it takes physically and mentally to compete at the higher levels, adding that the task can still seem daunting at times, but the Lady Pirates are starting to adjust.

"You can see it every match," he said. "They're getting better all the time."

Janowsky went on to mention that Aspen Sandoval and Kylie Matyniak "both wrestled really well, too."

He mentioned that even though Matyniak and Sandoval weren't able to win as many matches as hoped, they were however able to dominate in certain stretches of matches while making each match competitive.

Janowsky noted that Sandoval and Matyniak are both "closing in on getting their hand raised more often."

■ See Wrestling A11

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Outdoors

Colorado's 2025 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan released

Colorado Parks and Wildlife

On Dec. 19, Gov. Jared Polis and Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) released the 2025 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), which outlines a path to ensure Colorado's exceptional outdoor experiences remain world-class for current and future generations.

"Outdoor recreation is a major economic driver in Colorado, and this report shows just how big of an impact outdoor recreation has, supporting 40,000 jobs and generating billions in revenue. This plan lays out a strategic path forward to ensure that everyone can enjoy our great outdoors while building on this economic success. Through this plan, CPW and our administration will continue to improve recreational opportunities that ensure Coloradans and visitors are able to enjoy our world-class outdoors and beautiful landscapes while conserving our resources for future generations," said Polis.

According to the report, in 2023 outdoor recreation generated \$65.8 billion in economic output; \$36.5 billion in gross domestic product, or GDP (8.5 percent of the entire state GDP); supported 404,000 jobs (12.5 percent of the labor force); and generated \$11.2 billion in local, state and federal tax revenue.

Following the release of two economic reports showing the importance of outdoor recreation to Colorado's economy — a SCORP study and the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis Outdoor Recreation Satellite account — the SCORP presents a five-year action plan with four key priorities for ensuring that recreation remains world class in the state.

These priorities are:

1. Access and opportunity.
2. Stewardship.

3. Land, water and wildlife conservation.

4. Financial sustainability. "With this statewide plan, Colorado Parks and Wildlife conducted extensive research and stakeholder engagement in order to better understand how outdoor recreation resources meet the needs of Coloradans, as well as the challenges and opportunities faced by land managers," said CPW Director Jeff Davis. "As the 2025 SCORP confirms, outdoor recreation is essential to Colorado's economy and quality of life, and CPW looks forward to putting this plan into action to ensure that recreation remains outstanding for future generations."

This plan was written with extensive input from land managers, outdoor recreation providers, user groups, nonprofit organizations and other stakeholders.

Priorities and action items reflect the top issues identified by extensive partner engagement.

As part of the plan's development, 479 land managers participated in a survey earlier this year representing local parks, open space, and state and federal public lands.

According to the survey, land managers identified trails as a top priority, including the need to invest in maintenance, development of new trails and connections for existing trails through loops and networks. Managers also identified visitor safety, the need for improved access and infrastructure for Americans with disabilities, and the need for more capacity and funding for management and infrastructure.

While growth in outdoor recreation has slowed since the COVID pandemic, people are still enjoying Colorado's outdoors in growing numbers.

According to the 2025 SCORP public survey, 72 percent of Coloradans recreate outdoors once a week or more.

The SCORP applauds Coloradans getting outdoors and spending time in nature, while also presenting actions to ensure that the outdoors support wildlife, species biodiversity and ecosystem function.

Since the last SCORP was released five years ago, Colorado has seen extensive wildfires, drought and flooding which have caused trail closers and displaced recreational activities.

Among the priorities presented in the 2025 SCORP, strategies call out building a stewardship ethic, integrating climate resilience into recreation planning and management, and building capacity for government and nongovernmental organizations that provide for and support outdoor recreation in Colorado.

"Colorado Parks and Wildlife is greatly appreciative to the contributions of everyone involved in the creation and publication of the 2025 SCORP, including members of the Colorado Outdoor Partnership and the many other organizational partners who provided valuable input," said Fletcher Jacobs, assistant director for CPW Outdoor Recreation and Lands. "Together, the partners identified priority areas and outlined the goals, objectives and strategies necessary to balance the needs of those who live and recreate in Colorado with the needs of the wildlife and landscapes that make Colorado recreation exceptional."

Colorado continues to advance nation-leading outdoor recreation and conservation efforts, and the 2025 SCORP is both informed by and informs coordinated efforts such as the ongoing work with Colorado's outdoors strategy among many other

efforts.

To read the full SCORP, including priorities and research findings on outdoor recreation in Colorado, go to cpw.state.co.us/plans-and-reports.

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Updated AirNow app allows public to receive air quality forecasts via push notification

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has updated the AirNow mobile app to allow users to receive optional push notifications of their local Air Quality Index (AQI) forecasts for the next day.

State and local air agencies issue AQI forecasts as a public service to help people plan their outdoor activities. The agencies provide them to EPA, which shares them on the AirNow app and AirNow.gov website.

Until now, AirNow users had to remember to check the app or website to see their forecasts; with the updates to the AirNow mobile app, people can opt to be notified when the daily forecast reaches an AQI category of their choosing.

AQI forecasts predict overall air quality for the next day for ground-level ozone and/or particle pollution. For ozone, forecasts are based on the eight-hour period with the highest ozone levels; for particle pollution, they predict an average of the next 24 hours. Some agencies provide a forecast for several days at a time.

The forecasts can be useful planning tools — especially for people who are at risk from ozone or particle pollution.

For example, if the next day's ozone forecast is unhealthy for everyone (Code Red), someone without much flexibility in their schedule may decide to move their outdoor activity indoors for that day. But because air quality can change throughout the day, people with more schedule

flexibility can use the forecast as a reminder to check current air quality before heading out for a walk, a run or even doing strenuous work in the garden.






Setting up push notifications in the updated app is easy. First, make sure you've turned on notifications for the AirNow app in your smartphone settings. Then, open the app and tap the menu icon on the upper left of the screen. Select "Notifications" from the list. From there, you can choose to receive forecast notifications for up to 10 locations.

You can download the app on the Apple App Store or Google Play Store.

Don't have a smartphone? You can check your AQI forecast and current air quality at the AirNow.gov website.

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Business second place: Pagosa Craft.



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Storefront window second place: Goodman's Department Store.



Storefront window third place: Uncle's Bar and Social Club.



Residential first place: 506 Morro Circle.



Residential second place: 184 Sweetwater Drive.



Residential third place: Shenandoah Drive.

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ARTS & LIFE



2025

• HAPPY NEW YEAR •



Photo courtesy Healthy Archuleta

Food collected at a Healthy Archuleta food drive.

Food pantries supported for holiday season

Healthy Archuleta

It's no secret that many local families have been struggling with the costs that come with putting food on the table.

In a community survey analysis Healthy Archuleta conducted this year, we found that nearly one-third of the population in our county is worried about not being able to afford food over the next year.

This survey also found that one-quarter of county residents are just getting by financially.

This highlights that some people in our community are struggling to get by financially and are worried about

where their next meal will come from.

The local food pantries have been serving many of our community members throughout the year. Food insecurity is especially prevalent during the holiday season, which is why it's so important to help our neighbors in need of extra support this time of year.

Luckily, we live in a community that greatly understands this need and has, therefore, stepped up to meet it this holiday season.

Throughout the season, organizations have hosted food drives in support of the Archuleta Food Pantry Network to help many local families and individuals put **See Food on next page**

Live Performers



Thursday

The Pagosa Bar: Karaoke, 7:30 p.m.
The Springs Resort lodge atrium: Dustin Burley, 5 p.m.

Friday

The Springs Resort lodge atrium: Bluegrass Cadillac, 5 p.m.

Saturday

The Springs Resort lodge atrium: San Juan Mountain Boys, 5 p.m.

Tuesday

The Springs Resort lodge atrium: Jackson Mountain Ramblers, 5 p.m.

Wednesday

The Springs Resort lodge atrium: Jason Rose, 5 p.m.

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KSUT to pause Four Corners Folk Festival in 2025

KSUT Public Radio

KSUT Public Radio will pause the Four Corners Folk Festival in 2025, Executive Director Tami Graham announced Dec. 20.

She cited a series of factors that have sprung up since the radio station acquired the two festivals previously presented by FolkWest in October 2019.

"For 28 years, the Four Corners Folk Festival has been about more than just putting on a festival," said Graham. "It has always been driven by our passion for music discovery, supporting the businesses of Pagosa

Springs, and shining the spotlight on some of the best bands and musicians in the nation, region and local communities. We have not been driven by profit or bottom-line, and only made a profit once at the 2021 Four Corners Folk Festival."

Upon acquiring the festivals from previous executive directors Dan Appenzeller and Crista Munro in the fall of 2019, KSUT immediately booked a strong lineup for the following spring and put tickets on sale that December, only to see the pandemic cancel

both festivals in 2020 and Pagosa Folk N' Bluegrass in 2021.

Once festival production resumed with the 25th annual Four Corners Folk Festival in 2022, KSUT faced skyrocketing production costs that left it in a serious financial hole. These costs included unexpected increases in insurance, equipment rental, lodging, catering and other production costs.

KSUT also saw decreased attendance yearly, from nearly 3,000

■ See Festival on next page



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Food

■ continued from previous page

food on the table.

The Archuleta Food Pantry Network is made up of seven local food pantries in the county.

The pantries located in Pagosa Springs include the Community United Methodist Church food pantry, Pope John Paul II Catholic Church food pantry, St. Patrick Episcopal Church food pantry, Socorro Senior Housing food pantry and Our Community Eats food pantry. The Amazing Grace Community Church food pantry is located in Aspen Springs, while the TARA Community Center food pantry is located in Arboles.

All of these food pantries have seen an increase in people relying on them for food support this year, and it is no different this holiday season.

Just a few days before Thanksgiving, LPEA, in collaboration with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, held a food drive in support of the Food Pantry Network.

This food drive took place at Natural Grocers and City Market. Thanks to the efforts of all the volunteers and food pantry coordinators that day, 2,015 pounds of food was donated, and \$280 in cash was collected.

A few days later, on Dec. 8, our local RE/MAX Eagle's Nest office also held a food drive in support of our food pantry network. They collected 229 food items for distribution among the seven local food pantries.

Pagosa Springs Middle School has also been hosting a food drive throughout the month. Students have enjoyed being able to donate food items and support the local pantries.

Healthy Archuleta would like to acknowledge these organizations for their generosity toward the community. We are very grateful to be able to live in a community where neighbors look out for each other and support one another's needs. This generosity will help families have a brighter and more secure holiday season.

To learn more about the efforts of Healthy Archuleta, please visit our website at www.foodcoalition4archuleta.org or email us at fsfearchuleta@gmail.com.



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Free cookie decorating events set for next two Fridays

By Carole Howard

PREVIEW Columnist, and the library staff

All ages are invited to join us for tasty fun at free cookie decorating events tomorrow, Dec. 27, and next Friday, Jan. 3, both from 1 to 2:30 p.m. Sugar cookies and standard frosting will be provided.

Holiday closures

Please note your library will close at noon on Dec. 31 and be closed all day Jan. 1 for New Year's.

All-ages movie

Come to the library tomorrow, Friday, Dec. 27, when participants will choose between a selection of PG-rated movies to watch between 3 and 4:30 p.m.

Adult knitting Saturday

Join new and experienced knitters Saturday, Dec. 28, for our free Knitters Circle from 1 to 3 p.m. It is aimed at anyone over the age of 18 who would like to knit together or get some help if you are stuck on your project.

Writers Guild

Every Thursday from 9 to 11 a.m., the Ruby's Writers Guild welcomes writers looking for opportunities, support, resources and camaraderie with other writers at this free gathering.

ESL classes

Free in-person evening classes

Library News

take place on Tuesdays and Thursdays, with 4 to 5 p.m. reserved for beginners, 5 to 6 p.m. for intermediate and 6 to 7 p.m. for advanced students. Please help us share the word about these classes.

Tech Time

Free in-person slots are available from 10 a.m. to noon Tuesdays and 2 to 4 p.m. Thursdays. Judy helps you with basic questions relating to computers, smartphones and tablets, and also provides assistance in accessing the library's online resources.

No appointment is needed for these drop-in sessions, but please bring your device's charger and passwords with you.

Pagosa Adult Learning Services (PALS)

Join Mark or Sally for free PALS sessions Tuesdays and Thursdays from 5:30 to 8 p.m. to help with high school equivalency, GED, college prep, financial aid, tutoring and more. No appointment is necessary.

Activities calendars

Pick up monthly events calendars

at the library so you don't miss any of the free activities available to you and your family.

Downloadable books

CloudLibrary has a wide variety of downloadable e-books and audiobooks for all ages. To access this free digital collection, download the cloudLibrary app, answer a few simple questions, select AspenCat Union Catalog for the name of your library, then enter your library card number and four-digit PIN. Library staff are happy to help you set up your device if you need assistance.

DVDs

"The Forge" is a faith-filled story about a young man with no job and no direction. "Iceland" by Jennifer Verdolin is a four-disc Great Tours guide. "Leonardo Da Vinci" is the Ken Burns documentary from PBS. "Godzilla Minus One" is set in Japan.

Books on CD

"Blood Bounty of the Mountain Man" by William W. and J.A. Johnston is the latest in the Mountain Man western series. "Challenger" by Adam Higginbotham is a minute-

■ See Library on next page

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Festival

■ continued from previous page

people in 2021 to less than 2,000 in 2024. This decrease can, in part, be attributed to competition from newer festivals such as Billy Strings' Renewal and Tico Time Bluegrass, as well as established events around the state and region, including Phish's Labor Day concerts at Dick's Sporting Goods Park in the Denver area.

Attendees may also have discovered or renewed their passion for activities such as rafting, cycling, hiking, camping and fishing during the shutdown during the pandemic.

NPR released an article this past September exploring "The Year the Music Festival Died," revealing a similar list of factors to what KSUT has faced.

Among the national festivals to go fallow in 2024 were Desert Daze, a psychedelic rock fest in Southern California; Sierra Nevada World Music Festival, a reggae fest in Northern California; Kickoff Jam, a country music festival in Florida; Blue Ridge Rock Festival in Virginia; Sudden Little Thrills, a multigenre festival in Pittsburgh; and Float Fest in Austin, Texas.

Regionally, Telluride Jazz, Telluride Blues and Brews, and Moab Folk Festival all saw decreased ticket sales from prior years. The Ride, a mid-summer rock festival in Telluride, has been forced to present a much

smaller indoor festival since the pandemic. Pagosa Folk N' Bluegrass and the Tico Time Jam Festival have both shut down operations.

The NPR article cited decreasing consumer confidence in an overall willingness to spend on entertainment and activities.

"Due to the cost-of-living increases and higher interest rates, many of the usual festivalgoers are tightening their belts and refusing to fork over as much money for expensive festival tickets and all the accompanying costs of attending festivals," it wrote. "We're also seeing similar downturns in other leisure and hospitality sectors, including theme parks, air travel, hotel chains, and Airbnb."

Graham and her KSUT team are viewing 2025 as a short-term shutdown while the station looks to find solution opportunities to recover from the significant revenue losses as a result of producing the festivals.

KSUT plans to announce ways festival attendees and other donors can contribute to the station's general operations. Once the station's general ledger is back in the black, fundraising activities for the Four Corners Folk Festival will commence.

KSUT plans to continue its annual Party in the Park and collaborate with the city of Durango's Fourth of July street dance, and will explore a handful of small venue concerts.



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■ **continued from previous page**
by-minute story of the space shuttle disaster. "Now or Never" by Janet Evanovich is the latest in the Stephanie Plum bounty hunter mystery series. "A Calamity of Souls" by David Balducci recounts a murder case in 1968 in southern Virginia.

"Framed" by John Grisham and Jim McCloskey is a collection of true stories about wrongful convictions. "Life After Power" by Jared Cohen looks at the lives of seven former presidents from Thomas Jefferson and John Quincy Adams to Jimmy Carter and George W. Bush after their presidencies. "Sonny Boy" by Al Pacino is the actor's memoir, which he reads on this CD. "The Light Eaters" by environment and science editor Zoe Schlanger explores the hidden world of the plant kingdom and the astonishing capabilities of the green life all around us.

Local authors

"Bears Ears: Landscape of Refuge and Resistance" is an exploration of the history of this national monument by Andrew Gulliford, award-winning author and professor of history at Fort Lewis College in Durango.

"Our Story: 78 Years Married" is a memoir by Bill and Glenda Clark, who retired in Pagosa Springs after an amazing lifetime together that took them from being Ohio farm kids to careers in one school system after another and then back to their Ohio roots.

How-to books

"The Ultimate Guide to Butchering, Smoking, Curing, Sausage and Jerky Making" by Philip Hasheider offers step-by-step instructions and illustrations. "American Hemp

Farmer Adventures and Misadventures in the Cannabis Trade" by Doug Fine is a how-to for growing hemp. "The Ecological Gardener" by Matt Rees-Warren shows you how to create beauty and biodiversity from the soil up.

"Soil Science for Gardeners" by Robert Pavlis is a science-based guide to healthy soil. "The Complete Guide to Restoring Your Soil" by Dale Stricker gives you the tools you need to heal damaged soil. "Barns, Sheds and Outbuildings/4th edition" is a Creative Homeowner Guide with step-by-step building and design instructions.

Other nonfiction

"Africa's Top Wildlife Countries" by Mark W. Nolting is a guide to help you plan your ultimate safari. "Using Artificial Intelligence" by Michael Miller is billed as an "absolute beginner's guide." "Daughter of the White River" by Denise White Parkinson follows a woman avenging her father's murder. "The Last Stand of the Pack" by Arthur H. Carhart explores the past and future of wolves in Colorado. "The Roots of the Federal Reserve" by Dr. Laura Sanger is an investigative journey into our money system.

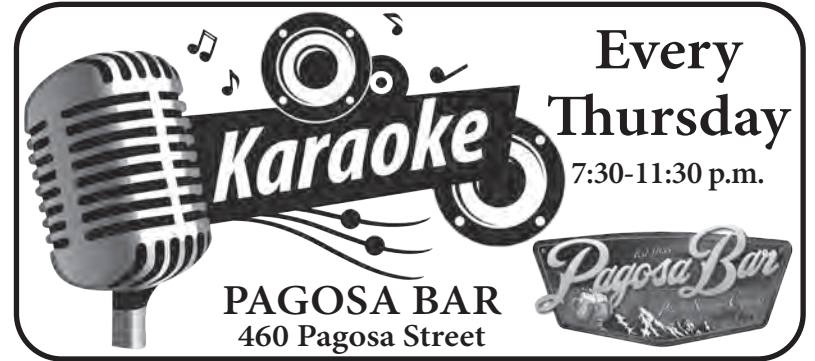
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When we are open, material donations are accepted for the Friends of the Library at the front desk — not down the outside returns slot at the library or the drop box at City Market, please.

Guidelines for donations: Yes to popular fiction books published in 2013 or later, nonfiction books published 2018 or later, and children's and young adult books — all in excellent condition, please. No to CDs, DVDs, Blu-ray, VHS or cassette tapes; textbooks, outdated travel books or

■ **See Library on page 7**



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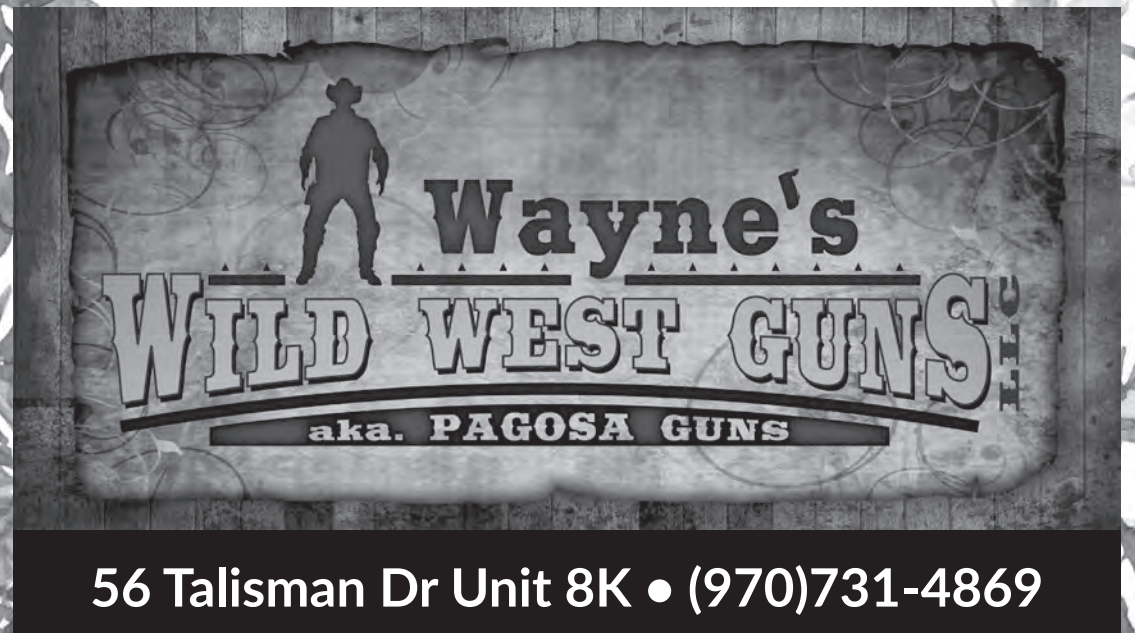
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PAGOSA SCENE . . .

FRIENDS OF THINGAMAJIG THEATRE DINNER

Photos courtesy Carole Howard and Robert Neel

Scene ... Friends of Thingamajig Theatre host a homemade dinner Dec. 10 for the holiday cast of "All is Calm: The Christmas Truce of 1914" at the Pagosa Springs Center for the Arts. Professional actors from across the country are performing this remarkable true story through Dec. 28, told in the words and songs of Allied and German soldiers. It opens as German soldiers initiate an extraordinary informal truce by emerging from the infamous trenches of No Man's Land singing "Stille Nacht." Tickets are available at pagosacenter.org or by calling (970) 731-SHOW (7469).



Meaningful connections from your home to kick off 2025

By Rose Chavez
PREVIEW Columnist

As we move deeper into the chilly days of winter and the start of 2025, many of us find ourselves inside more often, and you may also be looking for ways to connect, have fun and try new things.

Check out a wide range of complimentary discussions, hands-on art projects, guided wellness classes and more from our partners at the Mather Institute.

One thing these offerings have in common: they provide endless opportunities to explore. From mindfulness and brain health to aromatherapy, various discussion topic groups from forgotten women of history to the surprising stories of famous artists and artworks, to creative arts and art making and movement and dance, there is usually something for everyone. Embrace your creative side this season.

Senior News

Find more information and register for all programs at mather.com/programs.

ASI winter fundraiser

Thanks to the kind donation of a matching grant provided by an anonymous benefactor, your generous donation during our winter fundraiser will be doubled up to \$5,000 through the end of December.

Donations can be made directly to ASI, located in the Ross Aragon Community Center at 451 Hot Springs Blvd., or by mail to P.O. Box 3444, Pagosa Springs, CO 81147.

We also take donations by phone — please call (970) 264-2167 — or

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■ See Senior on next page

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A Reflection on Hot Springs Fest: Celebrating Community & Hot Springs

The Springs Resort

Hot Springs Fest 2024 was more than just a festival— it was a celebration of community, connection, and the healing power of Pagosa Springs' world-renowned waters. Held annually in November, this beloved three-day event marked its fifth anniversary with a vibrant lineup of activities and community collaborations that showcased everything wonderful about our town and its iconic hot springs.

This year's festival logo, designed by local graphic designer Abigail Karas through a Call to Artists, captured the spirit of Hot Springs Fest and highlighted the community's creative talent. The Pagosa Springs Town Council further celebrated this connection by declaring November as Hot Springs Month, honoring the vital role hot springs play in the town's culture and identity.

The 120 hot springs enthusiasts who participated enjoyed access to over 40 hot springs pools at all three local hot springs resorts: The Springs Resort, Healing Waters, and Overlook Hot Springs. From aqua yoga and contrast

bathing to a forest hike and restorative tea ceremonies, there was something for everyone. Locals enjoyed discounted tickets and free community events, ensuring everyone could enjoy the festival's inclusive spirit. This dedication to keeping the festival accessible to all locals will remain a cornerstone of future events.

The Robe Parade was a new event this year. After a Gratitude Ceremony at the Mother Spring, participants marched through downtown, all wearing the traditional hot springs "attire" - cozy robes. The procession was led by Native American drummer Jake Vicenti and his family. Local business owners, including Mayor Shari Pierce, were on hand to judge participants in three categories, with the grand prize winner receiving a full year of soaking at all three venues.

"Hot Springs Fest 2024 was such an amazing and unforgettable experience," said area visitor Mili Rodriguez. "This will now be [an]... annual trip. Everyone was so friendly!"

The festival also included live music from local bands Won-

derbread and Happy Campers, creating lively evenings that brought people together over shared tunes and good company. For those exploring beyond the pools, over a dozen local businesses from Riff Raff to Footprints, Pagosa Baking Company, and Hidden Track, offered exclusive discounts to festival participants, further embedding Hot Springs Fest into the town's broader community fabric.

This festival is quickly becoming a part of the culture and fabric of Pagosa Springs. It grows in size and popularity every year. It brings people together, emphasizes social wellness, and fosters community. This festival is a true gem, and it will surely continue to give both locals and visitors a chance to celebrate our town and our love for the hot springs. We can't wait to see how Hot Springs Fest evolves in 2025, and invite you to join us in 2025 for another incredible year.

For event inquiries, please reach out to Mary Cocke at mcocke@pagosahotsprings.com to learn how you can be part of next year's celebration.

Library

■ continued from page 5

reference books because they do not sell. No more than two boxes at a time because of space constraints.

Quotable quote

"We would always ask, 'Mama, how did you make this so good?' And she would always answer, 'I made it with love.'" — Singer-songwriter Dolly Parton, who has written a new

cookbook called "Good Lookin' Cookin'" with her sister Rachel, which is available at your library.

Website

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Senior

Meals on Wheels volunteers needed

For more than 50 years, the Senior Center (established in 1971)/ASI (established in 2013) has been meeting the social and nutritional needs of older adults (age 60 and better) in our community.

We serve thousands of nutritious meals annually in Archuleta County, and volunteers deliver Meals on Wheels and friendly visits/wellness checks to homebound older adults.

We depend on more than 50 volunteers annually to help us serve and deliver meals and provide other wrap-around services.

The cost of each meal is \$10.50, but we only ask for a suggested donation of \$6 per meal. Meal recipients are asked to contribute what they can afford, and no one is ever turned down.

Meals are delivered Monday through Friday. Participants must be at home to receive meals. Meals will not be left.

Meals on Wheels volunteers receive background checks and training prior to delivery. Typically a volunteer shift is one day a week from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. depending on the size of the route. Staff works closely with volunteers to allow for periodic breaks.

If you are interested in volunteering, please stop by the ASI office at 451 Hot Springs Blvd. to pick up an application. Questions? Please call ASI at (970) 264-2167.

Healthy aging and yoga therapy classes

The Healthy Aging Yoga Series continues to be offered in person at the Senior Center on Mondays from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m.

It is structured by therapeutic yoga tools and techniques with chair movement, standing stretches, gentle postures, breathing practices and reflective meditative moments.

Monthly themes for the series include topics such as sustainable strength for healthy aging individuals, brain health, heart and cardiovascular health, mental and emotional well-being, community connections, and stress management, to name a few.

Classes will be educational for participants to utilize practices in daily life and are meant for all levels of experience with yoga.

Mats and chairs will be provided at the Senior Center. Some blocks and Therabands are available, too. The addition of yoga props is always welcomed.

We request that individuals new to the series arrive early for intake inquiries and to please communicate with our instructor, Kimberly Anderson, directly by email at zinkgraf@gmail.com.

Stretching and mobility class

Community members are invited to attend free weekly classes every

Tuesday this fall and winter from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. at the Senior Center.

The stretching and mobility classes for older adults (age 55 and up) are designed to help build balance in the body through functional exercises that aim to improve mobility and flexibility.

Participants will have the opportunity to enjoy a variety of techniques that can help enhance overall movement efficiency.

Though not necessary, a mat is recommended for this class.

The program is instructed by local ballet dance instructor Dee Pitchon, who will provide modifications to ensure the safety and effectiveness of the exercises.

Bingo

The Senior Center will be hosting bingo twice a month on Friday afternoons from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m.

Bingo will be on Dec. 20.

Participation is free, and we ask you bring yourself and a friend for joyful fellowship. We will provide prizes from local businesses for all winners, and snacks will also be provided.

No RSVP is required; just show up. All ages are welcome, but we ask those 18 and younger to come with an adult chaperone.

For more information, contact us at (970) 264-2167.

T'ai Chi Chih

The Senior Center offers T'ai Chi Chih with accredited instructor Patti Popovich each Thursday from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. to support older adults who want to discover purpose and fulfillment in this transitional phase of life. Meet in the Senior Center dining hall.

T'ai Chi Chih is not a martial art, but rather a tool for self-healing. Softness, flow and effortlessness are the guiding principles in this practice.

All classes will be free for older adults (age 60 and better) and will last approximately one hour.

No special clothing or equipment is required.

For more information, call (970) 264-2167.

Senior Conversations

Join us Mondays at 1:15 p.m. for a series of Senior Conversations with local Bill Salmansohn.

Salmansohn brings to our conversations a variety of topics designed to stimulate discussions within a safe and comfortable environment as we explore our well-being and shared experiences.

This is a unique opportunity to connect with others living within the Archuleta community for friendship and togetherness.

Snacks will be provided.

Afterward, hosted by Robin Williams, is a get-together created for those who wish to continue the conversation. This opportunity is typically from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m., following Senior Conversations.

The group occasionally recon-

venes as an informal gathering at various local restaurants.

Share lunch Monday through Friday

Join us at the Silver Fox's Den, aka the Community Cafe, in person for daily hot/cold meals Mondays through Thursdays at the Community Center between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. It is open to all. Pickup is available all week.

Our dining hall is open to all ages and welcomes you all with kindness and warmth. We provide hot/cold meals for anyone in the community interested in a nutritious and delicious meal. For those 60 or older we request a suggested donation of \$6, but no one will be turned away. There is a \$10.50 charge for guests under the age of 60.

Meals include a main course, side dish, fruit/dessert, garden salad plus beverage.

To reserve your meal for the day, please make your reservation via text or phone call to (970) 264-2167 by 9 a.m. weekdays.

Community Cafe menu

Thursday, Dec. 26 — Pork posole with cabbage, radish, lime, flour tortilla, garden salad, fruit and milk.

Friday, Dec. 27 — Herb-roasted chicken, couscous, broccoli hollandaise, garden salad, fruit, blueberry cobbler and milk.

Monday, Dec. 30 — Beef pot roast with mushroom gravy, mashed potatoes, roasted cauliflower, garden salad, raspberry fluff and milk.

Tuesday, Dec. 31 — Closed for New Year's Eve.

Wednesday, Jan. 1 — Closed for New Year's Day.

Thursday, Jan. 2 — Thai chicken with peanut sauce, sugar snap peas, quinoa brown rice, green salad, fortune cookies and milk.

Friday, Jan. 3 — Navy bean and bacon soup, focaccia bread, blueberry cobbler, green salad, muffin and milk.

Grab-N-Go meals

Dine-in and Grab-N-Go meal reservations and cancellations are required. Please call or text by 9 a.m. the morning of the day you want to pick up a meal. A suggested donation of \$6 helps to sustain our program. For ages 59 and younger, the cost is \$10.50. No one will be turned away for their inability to donate. Please call or text us at (970) 264-2167 to make a reservation.

Meals on Wheels

We deliver fresh Meals on Wheels five days a week (and provide frozen Meals on Wheels for weekends) to homebound Archuleta County residents. Call or text us at (970) 264-2167.

Mobile food pantry service

Older adults needing a ride to a
See Senior on next page

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Gardening for winter interest and pollinators

By Ethan Proud
PREVIEW Columnist

Winter interest refers to plants which enhance the winter landscape by remaining above the snowline.

They add both visual and nutritional value.

In Archuleta County, not many plants have winter interest after December as the snow piles up higher than all but the tallest of shrubs.

Evergreens like spruce and pines retain their needles and conjure up imaginations of Christmas and powder turns.

Other evergreen plants like creeping mahonia add a splash of color to the garden before they are covered up with snow. Creeping mahonia doesn't drop its leaves, despite the chlorophyll degrading as the day lengths shorten. Instead, its leaves turn from green to maroon until the following spring.

Grasses like blue grama have showy seed heads that can be paired with forbs like Mexican hat to add vertical and horizontal patterns before they are swallowed up by the rising tide of snow.

By gardening for winter interest, you are also gardening for pollinators and wildlife, as the seeds and berries are a food source for insects, birds and rodents. Insects also lay eggs in the stems of plants and in the duff.

Extension Viewpoints

It's important to note that if you have a pest problem, trimming back the garden and removing the infected and affected shoots can get rid of the next generation of pests.

When gardening for pollinators, planting native is important as plants and insects evolved side by side and have specific relationships. For example, the yucca plant is pollinated by the yucca moth, and milkweed species are the monarch butterfly's larval host. Most adult pollinator species are generalists and can feed on the nectar from many flowers, but lay their eggs or feed their young on only a few species.

Selecting native plants for your garden can be a daunting task, but Colorado State University and the Colorado Native Plant Society have resources to help get you started.

Archuleta County Weed and Pest is your local resource for managing noxious weed populations and controlling other pests.

CPR and first aid classes

CPR and first aid certification classes are offered every other month

at the CSU Extension office, generally on the third Monday and Wednesday from 6 to 10 p.m. The cost for the classes is \$80 for combined CPR/first aid and \$55 for CPR, first aid or recertification. Call the Extension office at (970) 246-5931 to register.

Check out the online option on our website, <https://archuleta.extension.colostate.edu/>.

Trinity Anglican Church



*An angel appeared to Joseph:
"Take Mary to be your wife.
She shall bear a son
who's name shall be called JESUS."*

246 Harman Park Dr.
trinityanglicanchurch.org

Senior

continued from previous page
local food pantry should contact the MET to schedule a ride with its para-transit service. For more information, contact Lavonne at (970) 264-2250.

Text reservations

Don't forget that we offer a convenient texting service for you to communicate with us. Text us at (970) 264-2167. When texting, please include your name, phone number and the days you want a meal. If you are canceling a reservation, please include your name, phone number and the days you want to cancel.

Texting services are available for dine-in meal reservations, Grab-n-Go meals and Meals on Wheels recipients.

Mahjong

Mahjong is a 19th century Chinese tile-based game that is commonly played with four players. Each player receives 13 tiles with a goal to make matching sets and pairs (like poker). To win, a player must form four sets and one pair.

Come to the Senior Center to learn or play every Tuesday at 1:15 p.m.

Medicare call by appointment

For anyone who needs help enrolling and navigating Medicare plans, the San Juan Basin Area Agen-

cy on Aging helps with parts A, B and D. They can also help you with fraud concerns and troubleshooting any billing issues you may be having. By appointment only. Please call the Medicare line at (970) 264-0501, ext 2.

Mindful drawing

Mindful drawing is an easy-to-learn, relaxing and fun way to create beautiful images by drawing structured patterns. Join our friendly instructor, Roberta Strickland.

Classes are every Wednesday at 1:15 p.m. in the Senior Center. This activity is open to all ages. Help us create an intergenerational community. For those under 18 and/or with disabilities, you are welcome to join us, but we kindly ask you to please bring an adult chaperone with you.

Bridge

The longest-played bridge game in Archuleta County takes place on Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 1:15 p.m.

Board vacancies

The ASI Board of Directors has multiple vacant positions open. The terms are three years with an option to renew for an additional term.

Potential candidates should be at least 21 years of age or older and must have a passion for adult and aging services.



Rendering courtesy Reynolds, Ash and Associates, photos courtesy Jeff Laydon

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PAGOSA SCENE . . .

COMMUNITY HOLIDAY PARTY

Photos courtesy Archuleta Seniors Inc. Scene ... Archuleta Seniors Inc. host a community holiday party celebration on Dec. 18 at the Pagosa Senior Center. More than 100 community members joined for lunch and shenanigans with Santa Claus, enjoyed the music of Acoustic Picnic, and participated in the games and activities organized by the staff and board of Archuleta Seniors Inc.



Aunt Judy, a beautiful human

By Mark Thompson
PREVIEW Columnist

My Aunt Judy passed away the other day. She was a favorite with me and my brothers, and her passing brought up many memories.

Many years ago — I'm guessing I was in eighth grade and my brother Joel was in 6th — we had one of those infrequent miracles occur in south-east Colorado: a snow day.

We had gotten up that morning, noticed that a snowstorm was roaring (lots of wind, a little snow and zero visibility), turned on KLMR and heard the miraculous line of the school closures in Springfield. (I don't believe this was the time I called Mr. Wells at his home at 6:30 a.m. to ask him if we were having a snow day. Being the coolest superintendent on the planet he said, "I don't know, Mark, what do you think we should do?" I said, "snow day." "OK", he said, "sounds good". With an adult's perspective I know that the snow day was already called, but now I also know that Mr. Wells was a public relations genius.)

In any event, Joel and I were excited to go out and perform good deeds with a snow shovel. You see, that fall our dad had found some snow boots for us at some sort of military surplus store up in Denver or someplace like that.

When you looked inside of these things they said, "U.S. Marines, Rated -40 degrees F." What? We couldn't believe our good fortune that we had snow boots that would keep our feet toasty warm up to 40 degrees below zero.

Joel's and I's goal was simple and clear. Put on our snow gear, including the boots (which were each roughly the shape and weight of a gallon of milk), grab snow shovels and trudge the six blocks or so to rescue my Aunt Judy — and her family — from the blizzard.

Once outside, our upper body was instantly miserably cold wearing our thinnish coats and hats, but before we had reached the bottom of our front steps, our feet had begun to sweat profusely.

A Matter of Faith

We made it to Judy's house, entered by the side door, without knocking of course. I was a full-grown adult before I realized doorbells were there for a purpose. As we entered the door we were assaulted by a few distinct things: the strong smell of coffee (Coffee was always on. I have visited Aunt Judy as a full grown adult and as I showed up to the house at 10:30 at night, the first line was, "Let me put on a fresh pot of coffee."), the welcoming cry of Aunt Judy, "My goodness. Come in. What a nice surprise. Take off those wet clothes." and the smell of homemade chicken noodle soup.

Who would have thought there was so much depth to homemade noodles? I looked up the recipe in several places. Here are the ingredients: eggs, flour, milk and salt. That's it. The deal is, if you had Aunt Judy's homemade noodles when she made chicken noodle soup on a cold day, the taste was indescribable. She must have added a secret ingredient.

It's just coming to me at this moment. I know what it was. Maybe you know, too.

The secret ingredient was ...

Well, I certainly didn't want to use a cliché in this essay, but I just couldn't see any way around it. Just because it is a cliché doesn't mean it is not true.

My brother and I knew: mission accomplished. We had successfully rescued Aunt Judy and her kids from the unbroken monotony of a snow day without company and the burden of eating the delicious meal all on their own.

The deal is, there are a lot of terrific, miserable blizzards that blow in a life and most of them aren't made of snow. If we are fortunate, someone will suit up, get out their shovel and show up.

There is a beautiful scripture in

Psalm 68:6: "God places the lonely or the solitary in families".

There is an unstated subtext here. For every lonely or solitary person or orphan who wants to be placed in a family, you have to have a parent in a family who says yes: "Yes, I will take you and make you part of my family. I will make room for you in my heart. I see you."

No one was better than this than Aunt Judy. I actually think that her way of moving through the world was to say "yes" before she even knew what was asked.

Her more than 27 years of working the hallways of Springfield's schools were nothing more than opportunities to adopt more children and make sure they knew they had at least one caring adult in their life, who actually saw the value in them, the gifts in them and believed in them.

Look, I had a good family with great parents, and I got adopted by Aunt Judy.

The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians, "For you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many Fathers".

Or as I want to say, "Fathers or Mothers."

Judy was a mother to her community.

In the book of Luke, Jesus said that all of the law and the prophets hang on two things: Love God with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. In that same place, he told a story that clarified that "Your neighbor" is the one who you encounter who is in need (we call this clarification, "the parable of the good Samaritan").

To maintain my metaphor, when Judy saw someone in need, she met them in any way that she could. This was her version of showing up with a shovel on a snowy day. She was a beautiful aunt, mother and loving human. She was a great example. I miss her.

This column may include both fiction and nonfiction, and views expressed do not necessarily represent those of The SUN. Submissions can be sent to editor@pagosasun.com.

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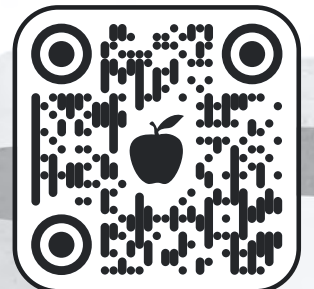
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Holiday Church Events



All events listed in the holiday church events calendar are free of charge. Submit events to editor@pagosasun.com.

Sunday, Dec. 29

Carol Service. 10 a.m., St. Patrick's Episcopal Church, 225 S. Pagosa Blvd. Share in one liturgy as we worship with our annual carol sing.

Wednesday, Jan. 1

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God Mass. 9 a.m., Pope

John Paul II Catholic Church, 353 S. Pagosa Blvd. For more information, visit ihmjp2.org.

Sunday, Jan. 5

Epiphany Service. 8 a.m., St. Patrick's Episcopal Church, 225 S. Pagosa Blvd. Celebrate the end of the Christmas season as we gather for worship, remembering the journey of the Magi, and considering our own dreams and callings.

Burning Bowl and Intentions Ceremony. 11 a.m., Spirit-Fire Inspirational Living Center, 3505 W. U.S. 160.

HUD Publisher's Notice



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The heart of truth

By Betty Slade
PREVIEW Columnist



"Back behind me on the trail of time, there is a place that is sacred to me. Sometimes I go there in my mind and I look upon it thankfully," Steve Chapman wrote in one of his lyrics.

There were times, when looking back, we would like to slam the door on 2024 and not revisit it again. But, wait: There were sacred places for some of us in all the nonsense. Buried in the ashes, we sift through the debris and find those sacred moments and relationships worthy of remembering. And there we find the heart of the truth in 2024.

Last year, truth was on the altar. It was being sacrificed, cunningly spun into whatever fit a person's narrative. People's words tried to convince us what we saw wasn't really what we saw.

But God guarded the truth. Truth rose from the ashes and took flight like the phoenix.

There is a new spirit breathing through our hearts. An element of truth has kept us alive and the One we believed in remains strong in our hearts. I have learned that truth put to the test will soar in the face of adversity. Today we have a stronger wind under our wings for the new year.

Stepping into 2025, who would've thought it would be my 17th year of writing "The Artist's Lane" column for The Pagosa SUN? This column has been one of my sacred places. My life has been filled with beautiful people who have responded positively to my faith in Jesus and laughed at stories about my Sweet Al and my crazy family.

2008 seems like yesterday when Karl Isberg, then the editor of The SUN, called me, "We are revamping The PREVIEW and thought of you for a weekly column. We are concerned you might not be sustainable."

At the time, my response to Karl was, "The Lord is my sustainer, if Jesus gives me something to write, I'll write it." He must have thought I was a religious nutcase. Somehow, he opened the door and believed in me and gave me carte blanche to write what was in my heart.

Each week I started with a blank canvas. Even when nothing exciting happened on the Lower Blanco, God

was faithful to give me words to write. Seven hundred and nineteen articles later, I have sustained and not missed a deadline.

I would like to think my words will have longevity. Only God can protect our words of truth and give life to them over time, like a favorite classic and devotional, "My Utmost for His Highest" by Oswald Chambers. I have read this daily Christian devotional many times over the years. His words are still as fresh to me as the first time I read them in 1981. They still carry a heart of truth that came from Chambers' preaching to students and soldiers.

The author passed away, but God wouldn't let his words die. His widow's heart saw the truth in her husband's words. She first self-published his writings in 1924. Other editions followed. God will protect the truth in bad years and good years. He has used a widow to feed millions of people for a hundred years, and I'm sure many more to come. God's truth will stay the test of time.

Final brushstroke: The heart of truth will always be current. Jesus is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. God will protect His Word. I believe that is the main reason this column is still read today. I have not shrunk from the faith I have in Jesus when I said yes to the editor. And today's editor has let me write the truth that is in my heart and the column has remained relevant for those readers hungry for truth. Lord, thank you for another year.

Send your comment to bettyslade.author@gmail.com.

Views expressed do not necessarily represent those of The SUN.

**Community
news.**

The Pagosa Springs SUN
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SUDOKU

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

Level: Beginner

Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

Here's How It Works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

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

ANSWER:

Division of Insurance asks Coloradans to be careful when shopping for health insurance

By Vincent Plymell
Colorado Division of Insurance

The Colorado Division of Insurance (DOI), part of the Department of Regulatory Agencies (DORA), offers a reminder that open enrollment for individual market health insurance (for people that don't get their insurance from an employer) continues until Jan. 15.

The DOI encourages people who haven't chosen coverage for 2025 to take advantage of this time to enroll in plans that meet the robust benefit requirements of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), because quality health insurance is a key component in maintaining one's health and the health of one's family.

At least 80 percent of people currently enrolled in health insurance through the state's marketplace, Connect for Health Colorado, will be eligible for financial assistance in 2025 that will help to make their insurance more affordable.

And that financial assistance can be significant, as 77 percent of those customers getting assistance will be able to find a plan with a premium less than \$100 a month, and 62 percent will be able to find a premium under \$25.

However, the DOI cautions Coloradans that some plans marketed to consumers offer only limited coverage and do not meet the requirements of the ACA. These might be short-term plans, limited benefit plans, trade association plans, discount plans or even plans that claim to be employer plans without being connected to an employer. And these types of plans and products are not sold through Connect for Health Colorado.

The low monthly costs of such products can make them look attractive, but these plans can stick consumers with huge medical bills from doctors and hospitals as the plans deny and limit health care coverage in ways such as the following:

- Limiting coverage regarding the treatment for pre-existing conditions.
- Limiting prescription coverage.
- Limiting coverage for hospitalizations and emergency rooms.
- Limited or no coverage for mental health/behavioral health treatment.
- Limited or no coverage for pregnancy-related care and delivery.
- Limiting coverage for outpatient/same-day surgery.

"Open enrollment is a valuable time for people buying health insurance — a time to shop and compare the options that meet their needs," said Colorado Insurance Commissioner Michael Conway. "We're sharing these tips so people don't get stuck with thousands of dollars in medical bills when it turns out the plan they purchased wasn't what they thought it was."

Look for these red flags to show the product may limit coverage and would not meet ACA requirements:

- Aggressive and high-pressure sales tactics from an insurance broker or the company.
- Being told that the coverage is "just as good as the ACA" or that the plan "offers the same types of coverage as the ACA."
- Use of words such as "limited benefit plan" or "supplement plan." Limited benefit plans and supplemental plans are intended to be used in conjunction with a major medical plan, but are not intended to be a type of standalone health insurance coverage.
- The plan pays you a set amount for your care, rather than paying a doctor, hospital or other health care provider.

How can you avoid these products? Before buying or signing up, ask for plan details in writing, such as how coverage works when visiting a doctor for tests and follow-up care, how the plan covers pre-existing conditions, how it would cover emergency care or how the plan might cover a hospital stay that would include labs, surgery and specialists. Know that you have the right to ask questions and get details in writing, and you shouldn't be pressured into a decision.

Don't provide banking information or a Social Security number before you've had a chance to review the materials and get your questions answered.

Here are other questions to ask before buying:

- Is this a short-term, limited duration plan or other limited-coverage plan? Is it sold through an association you are required to join or pay a membership fee to? Do you have to sign a partnership agreement in order to enroll? Typically, such products offer limited coverage and are not ACA-compliant.
- What is the name of the insurance company underwriting the coverage and is it licensed in Colorado? This can also be confirmed with the Division of Insurance.
- Does it cover your prescriptions?
- Does it cover pre-existing conditions? What benefits and services doesn't the plan cover?
- Does the plan have deductibles? What are they?
- Is there a maximum out-of-pocket amount for the year, meaning the most you'll have to pay for the year?
- For services that are covered, how much will the plan actually pay?
- Is there a limit on the total amount the plan will pay per person, per service or per year? Know that ACA plans do not have a yearly or lifetime cap that the insurer will pay.
- Will the plan pay you directly or send payment to the health care provider?
- Does the plan have a provider

network of doctors, hospitals and other health care workers? If yes, ask for information about the network. Is your doctor or hospital in the network?

Asking these types of questions helps you know that you are getting

■ See Insurance on next page

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MLS 791582 ■ \$1,650,000



19 Navajo Trail Drive
5,700 sq. ft. building at busy intersection. Building only.
MLS 801267 ■ \$1,250,000



229 Hills Circle
3 bd, 2 ba. Backs to greenbelt, across from National Forest, 3-minute drive to fishing lake.
MLS 819751 ■ \$525,000



20 Sunset Trail, Arboles
Commercial property, established bar and restaurant, one mile from Navajo Lake State Park.
MLS 810227 ■ \$380,000



59 Green View Drive
Great build site
MLS 818681 ■ \$300,000



63 W. McCabe Street
Spacious mountain views from this 5 acre parcel. Connecting property with home also for sale.
MLS 802696 ■ \$250,000



1112 Gun Barrel Road
1.03 acres with incredible views, 1080 sq. ft. garage with concrete floor and power. Older mobile.
MLS 813722 ■ \$195,000



17580 Highway 151
1.48 acres, water tap available, great place for business, many other possibilities.
MLS 810113 ■ \$99,000



32 County Road 982
1.19 acre parcel, one mile from Navajo Lake Marina
MLS 810112 ■ \$99,000

1.17 acres with RV, water cistern and generator in place. MLS 816068, \$75,000.

1.17 acres, privacy and seclusion, no HOA. Off-grid. MLS 816067m \$70,000

.29 acres, Arboles. MLS 911917, \$55,000.

.35 acre on your way to Navajo Lake State Park. MLS 811916, \$55,000.



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Deborah S. Archuleta

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Connect for Health Colorado celebrates record-breaking open enrollment period

By Michelle Mendoza
Connect for Health Colorado

Connect for Health Colorado, the state's official health insurance marketplace, is celebrating a record-breaking open enrollment period, with 256,051 Coloradans enrolled in health coverage that begins Jan. 1.

To date, the number of Coloradans who enrolled in health insurance plans for plan year 2025 is more than the total number of people (237,107) who enrolled through Connect for Health Colorado last year.

"I couldn't be happier to say that a record number of Coloradans will have access to affordable health coverage on Jan. 1," said Kevin Patterson, CEO of Connect for Health Colorado. "Year over year, we continue to break enrollment records and provide high-quality support to our customers. We've seen incredible

demand during the first part of open enrollment — and we're not done yet. While the deadline for Jan. 1 coverage has passed, Coloradans have until Jan. 15 to enroll in health insurance for plan year 2025."

Customers are encouraged to begin the application process as soon as possible to explore available health insurance plan options and financial assistance.

"It's not too late," Patterson said. "If you don't have access to affordable health insurance through your job, Health First Colorado (Colorado's Medicaid program) or Medicare, enroll now for coverage to begin Feb. 1. Financial assistance is still available, and we have several free resources to help people navigate enrollment. We're here to help every step of the way."

Connect for Health Colorado's network of certified assisters and insurance brokers are still available to help

Coloradans enroll by Jan. 15. They are located throughout Colorado, provide free support in multiple languages and can help Coloradans apply free of charge. There's no obligation to buy a plan when contacting an expert.

Six health insurance companies — including Anthem, Cigna, Denver Health, Kaiser Permanente, Rocky Mountain Health Plans and Select Health — will offer medical plans for 2025. Additionally, dental and vision plans are available from several providers.

The Quick Cost and Plan Finder tool allows customers to browse plans and see what financial help they may be eligible for without having to create an account.

Those who need health care insurance are encouraged to learn more about open enrollment, plan options and financial help at ConnectforHealthCO.com or by calling (855) 752-6749.

About Connect for Health Colorado

Connect for Health Colorado is the state's official health insurance marketplace. Its mission is to increase access, affordability and choice for individuals, families and small employers purchasing health insurance in Colorado. It is the only place where residents can qualify for and receive financial help for their health insurance.

Insurance

■ continued from previous page

a health plan that protects you and your family, and not being sold a plan that doesn't provide appropriate coverage for your health care needs.

The DOI encourages Coloradans to shop for individual plans through Connect for Health Colorado, where you can be connected to insurance brokers, assisters and online resources to get help selecting a plan that can best meet your needs.

If you or a family member need help determining what kind of questions to ask when considering health insurance, or you just want some assistance decoding the language of a health plan, contact the Division of Insurance Consumer Services Team at (303) 894-7490, DORA_Insurance@state.co.us or doi.colorado.gov

(click on "File a Complaint").

About the DOI

The Colorado DOI regulates the insurance industry and assists consumers and other stakeholders with insurance issues.

Visit doi.colorado.gov for more information, or call (303) 894-7499 or (800) 930-3745 (toll free).

About DORA

DORA is dedicated to preserving the integrity of the marketplace and is committed to promoting a fair and competitive business environment in Colorado. Consumer protection is our mission.

Visit dora.colorado.gov for more information, or call (303) 894-7855 or (800) 886-7675 (toll free).



Robert D Scott, CFP®, AAMS®
President
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anthonydoctor@scottstrategicinv.com

189 Talisman Drive, Ste. D | Pagosa Springs CO 81147
970-731-3070 | scottstrategicinv.com

One of the real joys of the holiday season is the opportunity to say thank you and to wish you a new year of prosperity and happiness.



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Looking forward to our 49th year in business here in Pagosa Springs, we would like to thank the community for your continued support. As Pagosa's oldest flooring store, we have seen our town change since our parents started the business in 1976.

As more people discover the beauty of Pagosa, our community will continue to grow. We look forward to the opportunities the future holds for our area. We appreciate your patronage, giving us the opportunity to take care of your flooring needs.

Sincerely,
Dan Wirth & Jared Wirth

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Unique New Year's celebrations across the globe

Special to The PREVIEW

It is time to turn the page on one year and usher in another. Each Dec. 31, people all over the world reminisce, celebrate, plan and party in honor of the changing calendar.

Many are likely familiar with some of the common ways to ring in the new year, which include champagne toasts, fireworks and watching the ball drop in Times Square. Yet, there are many other ways to celebrate this occasion and welcome a new year with hope and good luck.

Enjoy these ways to commemorate the start of 2025:

- **Make some noise.** Although fireworks are commonplace on New Year's Eve in various locales around the world, in Thailand it once was traditional to fire guns to frighten off demons. National Thailand reports that it is no longer legal to fire weapons during New Year's Eve festivities, but other noisemakers can simulate the ancient tradition. Thailand also has its own new year celebration in April called Songkran, a three-day

event. It's customary to splash water and shoot colorful water guns, which is another idea for ringing in the new year.

- **Smash pomegranates for luck.** Many have heard of smashing grapes to make wine, and the band Smashing Pumpkins has millions of devoted followers across the globe. The comic Gallagher used to smash watermelons on stage. But, in Turkey, smashing a pomegranate outside your front door is said to bring good luck. The fruit is seen as a symbol of prosperity, abundance and health.

- **Make some good luck "Hoppin' John."** Hoppin' John is a traditional New Year's Day dish from regions of the southern United States. The dish is made with black-eyed peas and pork bacon and is said to bring good luck to those who consume it for the new year, according to the Old Farmers Almanac.

- **Choose honey-dipped apples.** People can take a page from the Jewish new year tradition, which sees celebrants dipping apples in honey for a sweet new year. Rosh Hashanah

takes place in late summer or early fall because it follows the Hebrew lunisolar calendar. However, anyone can apply similar customs to the New Year's celebrations taking place each Jan. 1.

- **Put on some polka dots.** In the Philippines, wearing polka-dotted clothing on New Year's Eve is a tradition said to bring good fortune in the new year, according to Philstar Life.

- **Watch a sunrise.** Chances are many revelers are staying up late on New Year's Eve and into the next day, so they'll have ample opportunity to catch the sunrise. In Japan, watching the first sunrise of the new year is called "hatsuhinode" and is a practice thought to bring good fortune.

- **Grab some cash.** There's a perpetuating superstition that it's better to have some extra money in your wallet to enter the new year full of financial prosperity. Also, it's best to wipe out any unpaid debts before Dec. 31 disappears; otherwise, the months ahead might not be financially sound.

New Year's traditions have persisted throughout the years and are borne of customs from all over the world.

Make baking fun for the entire family

Special to The PREVIEW

Family fun can entail many things, but producing delicious food in the kitchen is a popular way for adults and children to get together and let loose.

Teaching kids how to follow a recipe and produce a finished meal imparts important lessons in everything from measuring to math to science. Cooking also shows kids that follow-through can lead to delicious results.

Any recipe will do when cooking with kids. However, baking desserts may be particularly enticing to youngsters who won't want to wait to dig into a sweet treat. Plenty of things can enhance the enjoyment factor of baking for children. Families can explore these ideas to make baking more fun:

- **Accept the mess.** Expecting baking to be a tidy process is setting yourself up for failure. Kids, particularly younger children, may not have the dexterity needed to keep everything neat and clean. Prepare for spills, flour trails on counters, poorly cracked eggs and sticky situations. Keep a damp cloth nearby and go with the flow. Dress baking participants in clothes that can get soiled or invest in matching aprons.

- **Assign age-appropriate tasks.** Young kids will want to get in on the action, so figure out which tasks they can safely handle. These include measuring ingredients, mixing with a spoon, scooping batter into pans or tins, and adding chips or sprinkles to items. Adults should man electrical equipment and knives, and handle tasks that involve a stove.

- **Let kids choose flavors and colors.** Cater the recipe to the kids' likes

and tastes. They will be more likely to participate fully if the end result features flavors they enjoy.

- **Explore the sensory experience.** Enable kids to feel the different textures of the ingredients, from the coarse sugar to the silky flour. Talk about how ingredients change in texture when they are blended together and baked. Let kids watch baking soda bubble when an acid is added to it.

- **Try smaller tools.** Invest in a set of kid-sized baking tools, such as spoons and spatulas, to make them easier to maneuver with small hands.

- **Encourage creativity.** Let children come up with funny names for their creations, and don't cringe if they combine food colors or shapes that might not turn out so pretty. Be encouraging of the process and the results so kids want to continue baking in the future.

- **Listen to upbeat music.** Music can help set the tone of the baking experience. Have children pick some of their favorite songs and let that playlist run in the background. Bounce and dance along while ingredients are being combined.

Baking is an activity that family members of all ages can take part in. The process is more fun for children with some planning.

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The Pagosa Springs SUN
264-2100



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Holiday lights

Residential

506 Morro Cir
 150 Lassen Dr
 42 Ruby Ct
 385 Stagecoach Ln
 585 Shenandoah Dr
 184 Sweetwater Dr
 305 Snow Cir
 155 Pike Dr
 18 Bienvenido Cir
 601 Stevens Cir
 954 Monument Ave
 660 Apache St
 344 Capricho Cir

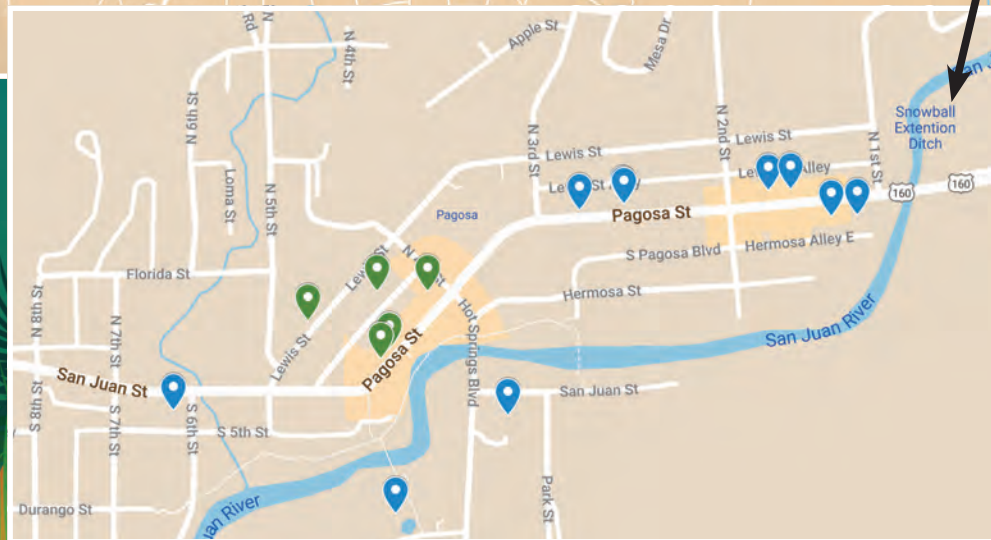
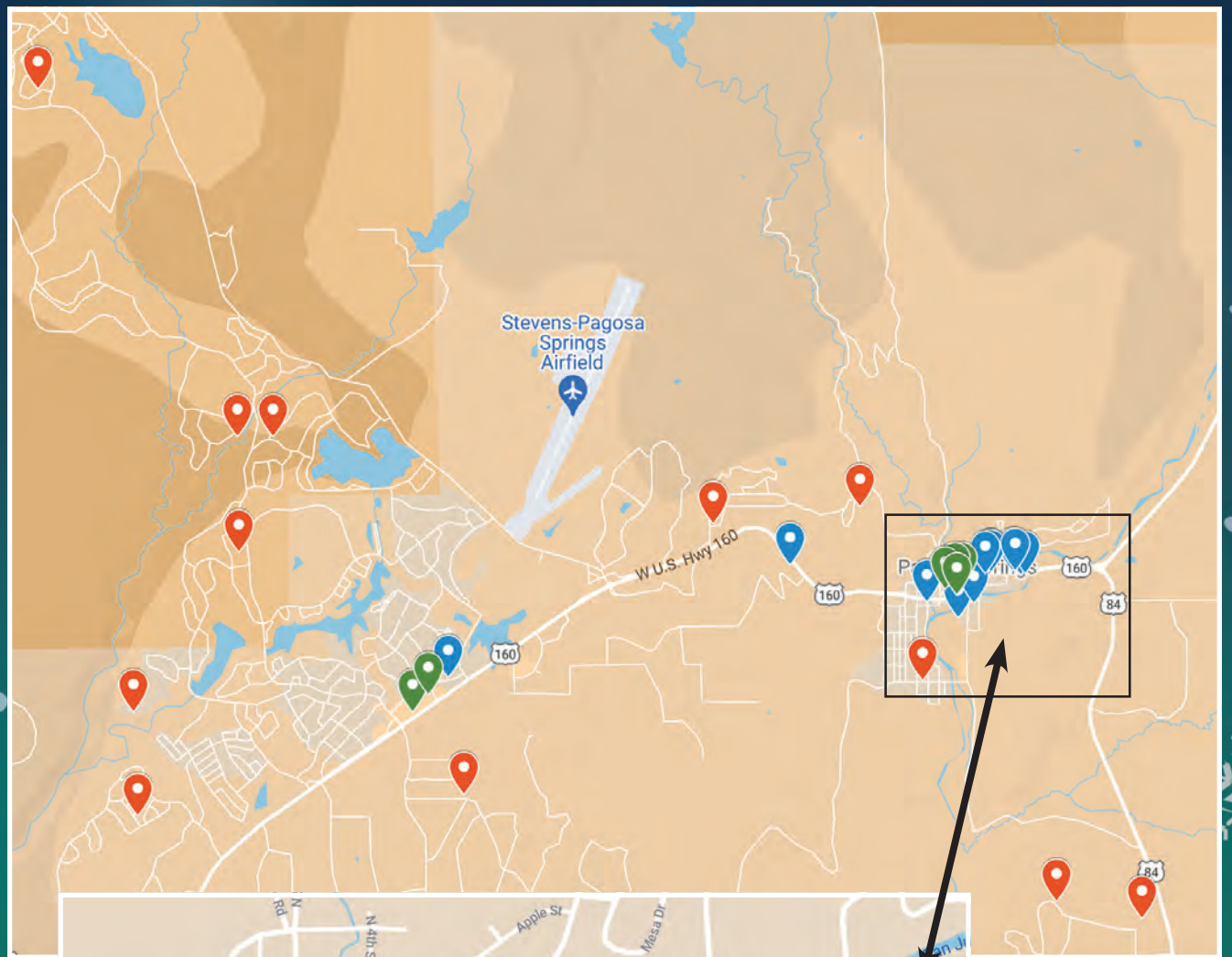
Winners of the 2024 Pagosa Springs Area Holiday Lighting contest have been announced, with participants turning on their lights for viewing every evening from 6 to 8 p.m. between Nov. 24 and the end of the year.

Business

Wyndham - 538 Village Dr
 The Springs Resort - 323 Hot Springs Blvd
 Healing Waters Resort & Spa - 140 Hot Springs Blvd
 Pagosa Mountain Sports - 162 Pagosa St
 PJ's Fine Bamboo Rods - 262 Pagosa St Unit 103
 Kips Grill & Cantina - 121 Pagosa St
 Pagosa Springs House of Jerky - 262 Pagosa St Unit 102A
 Rainbow Gift Shop - 611 San Juan St
 Engel & Volkers Pagosa Springs - 286 Pagosa St
 You Deserve This Massage + Wellness - 103 Main St
 Cork & Board - 150 Pagosa St
 Pagosa Craft - 127 Goldmine Dr

Storefront window

Happy Trails Ladies Boutique - 454 Pagosa St
 Goodman's Dept. Store - 402 Pagosa St
 Community United Methodist Thrift Store - 427 Lewis St
 Two Old Crows - 468 Lewis St
 Chow Down Pet Supplies - 100 Country Center Dr A/B
 Foot Prints - 456 Pagosa St
 Uncle's Bar & Social Club - 56 Talisman Dr Unit 8C



Bird of the Week



Photo courtesy Charles Martinez

This week's Bird of the Week, compliments of the Weminuche Audubon Society and Audubon Rockies, is the northern flicker.

Flickers don't behave like a typical woodpecker. While most woodpeckers are adapted to extract insects from wood and spend their time foraging in trees, northern flickers spend a lot of time on the ground. They are the most widespread woodpecker in North America and are found in almost any habitat type as long as there is some open ground for foraging and trees for nesting.

Northern flickers are built for finding their favorite food — ants. They make use of a slightly curved bill to probe into soil, anthills and rotting wood to unloodge ants, grubs and other insects. Their tongues are extra long, extending 2 inches or more past the tip of the bill. Sticky alkaline saliva that coats the tongue traps unlucky ants and neutralizes the formic acid which causes the sting of their bite.

Intricately patterned plumage decorates this large, brownish-gray bird with black barring on the back, a spotted belly and a black bib. From the Rocky Mountains west, birds of the red-shafted race have red shafts on the flight feathers and tail. The eastern yellow-shafted race replaces the red color with yellow. A bold white rump patch flashes in flight. Western males display a red facial swoosh that is absent in females.

The flicker is as noisy as it is flashy. In spring, nesting territory is established by drumming, with the object being to make as loud a noise as possible. Sometimes, to the dismay of homeowners, a flicker discovers that a metal stovepipe is perfect for broadcasting its presence.

Their loud vocalizations are unmistakable. In spring and summer, when pairs are forming, forests resound with their rolling song. Single-note and rhythmic calls are also used to communicate with each other.

The fate of bird populations is intricately tied to that of the insects that they rely on for food. Pesticide applications on lawns and golf courses may be a contributing factor in the slow, steady decline of this woodpecker species.

For information on events, visit www.weminucheaudubon.org and www.facebook.com/weminucheaudubon/.

Lighting contest winners announced

Special to The PREVIEW

The Pagosa Springs area has been bright with holiday cheer this season. The Pagosa Springs Area Tourism Board and The Pagosa Springs SUN are pleased to announce the winners of the 2024 holiday lighting contest.

We want to thank all of the participants. Voting was conducted online, with 249 votes submitted between Nov. 29 and Dec. 22.

Contest entrants will have their lights on from 6 to 8 p.m. every evening through the end of the year.

Residential category

It was a close race for the residential lighting contest, with a difference of only four votes between first and third place. The winners of the residential lighting contest are the following:

- First place: 506 Morro Circle.
- Second place: 184 Sweetwater

Drive.

Third place: 585 Shenandoah Drive.

Business category

The winners of the business lighting category are the following:

- First place: Wyndham Pagosa.
- Second place: Pagosa Craft.
- Third place: Kip's Grill and Cantina.

Storefront category

The winners of the storefront window display category are the following:

- First place: Chow Down Pet Supplies.
- Second place: Goodman's Department Store.
- Third place: Uncle's Bar and Social Club.

Thanks again to all of the participants. We are already looking forward to next year's contest.

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The Pagosa Springs SUN
264-2100



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Happy New Year

from our family to yours

As the holidays near, we remember the year behind us and look forward to the new year ahead. We are excited to share new memories and endless possibilities with our friends, families and neighbors of this great community.

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Preview Calendar

All events listed in The PREVIEW Calendar are free of charge unless otherwise noted.

Thursday, Dec. 26

Ruby's Writers Guild. 9-11 a.m., Sisson Library. Ruby's Writers Guild welcomes writers who are looking for opportunities, support and camaraderie with other writers. Members will provide support, resources and guidance for each other.

T'ai Chi Chih. 1:30-2:30, Senior Center. Free for those 60 and better.

Tech Time. 2-4 p.m., Sisson Library. Basic questions related to computers, smartphones, tablets, etc. Bring your device charger. We provide assistance with accessing any of the library's online resources. Call (970) 264-2209 for more information.

English as a Second Language. 4-7 p.m., Sisson Library. Your library offers English as a second language classes. These classes are free. Call (970) 264-2209 or email for more information. Beginning students are encouraged to attend from 4-5 p.m., intermediate students from 5-6 p.m. and advanced students from 6-7 p.m.

PALS Adult Education. 5:30-8 p.m., Sisson Library. Pagosa Adult Learning Services, or PALS, can help you with high school equivalency, GED, college prep, financial aid, tutoring and more. Mark can help you develop a plan to achieve your education goals. Call (970) 264-2209 for more information.

'All is Calm: The Christmas Truce of 1914.' 7 p.m., Pagosa Springs Center for the Arts. For tickets and show information, see pagosacenter.org or call (970) 731-SHOW (7469).

Friday, Dec. 27

Indoor Pickleball. 8-11:30 a.m., Ross Aragon Community Center.

Cookie Decorating. 1-2:30 p.m., Sisson Library. Join for some tasty fun. Sugar cookies and standard frosting will be provided.

All-Ages Movie. 3-4:30 p.m., Sisson Library. Participants will choose between a selection of PG-rated movies.

'All is Calm: The Christmas Truce of 1914.' 7 p.m., Pagosa Springs Center for the Arts. For tickets and show information, see pagosacenter.org or call (970) 731-SHOW (7469).

Saturday, Dec. 28

Knitters Circle. 1-3 p.m., Sisson Library. Join new or experienced knitters to get help with your project, or sit and knit.

'All is Calm: The Christmas Truce of 1914.' 7 p.m., Pagosa Springs Center for the Arts. For tickets and show information, see pagosacenter.org or call (970) 731-SHOW (7469).

Monday, Dec. 30

Indoor Pickleball. 8-11:30 a.m., Ross

Aragon Community Center.

Line Dancing. 9:30-11:30 a.m., PLPOA Clubhouse, 230 Port Ave. Beginners meet at 9:30 a.m. and the advance group meets at 10:15 a.m. If you haven't attended before, please call Beverly at (970) 264-2064 for more information.

Senior Conversations. 1:15 p.m., Senior Center.

Healthy Aging and Yoga Therapy Class. 2:30-3:30 p.m., Senior Center.

Deepening the Faith Classes. 6-8 p.m., Pope John Paul II Catholic Church classrooms.

Tuesday, Dec. 31

Pagosa Springs Stitches. 10 a.m.-noon, Community United Methodist Church, 434 Lewis St. Bring your current stitching project and a snack/drink if you wish, and enjoy the fellowship of other stitchers. All are welcome.

Veterans for Veterans of Archuleta County. 10 a.m., Pagosa Bible Church, 209 Harman Park Drive. Veterans and family members are invited to share experiences with vets of all ages. Find out about the latest in vets benefits, vets news and community-focused events. Contact (970) 880-8387 for more details. A holiday potluck lunch will follow the meeting.

Tech Time. 10 a.m.-noon, Sisson Library. Basic questions related to computers, smartphones, tablets, etc. Bring your device charger. We provide assistance with accessing any of the library's online resources. Call (970) 264-2209 for more information.

Men's Fellowship. 6 p.m., Pope John Paul II Catholic Church classrooms.

Thursday, Jan. 2

Ruby's Writers Guild. 9-11 a.m., Sisson Library. Ruby's Writers Guild welcomes writers who are looking for opportunities, support and camaraderie with other writers. Members will provide support, resources and guidance for each other.

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PALS Adult Education. 5:30-8 p.m.,

■ See Calendar on next page

The Weekly Crossword

by Margie E. Burke

ACROSS

- 1 Angry bull's sound
- 6 Pronto
- 10 ___ of Wight
- 14 Kitchen gadget
- 15 Indian royalty
- 16 Oracle
- 17 Like Nebraska's legislature
- 19 Complication
- 20 Lifelong local
- 21 Religious chants
- 23 Fluff up, as hair
- 25 Like some drinks
- 26 Golden girl Getty
- 29 Kind of oil
- 32 Pasture sound
- 33 Coolness, in the 'hood
- 36 Caribbean cruise stop
- 39 Sticky stuff
- 40 Fictional Swiss miss
- 41 Like some fears
- 44 Have ___ at
- 45 Lady Bird's spouse
- 46 Store freebies
- 49 Charitable gifts
- 50 Bocelli, for one
- 51 Enhance, as a recording
- 54 Phonograph inventor
- 58 Kiln
- 59 While away
- 61 Make whole
- 62 Nero's 57
- 63 Resell illegally, as tickets
- 64 Hill dwellers
- 65 Actress Redgrave
- 66 Short and sweet

DOWN

- 1 Surprise greatly
- 2 Spanish girl
- 3 Skip past

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
14						15					16			
17						18					19			
20							21				22			
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32						33		34	35					
36			37	38		39				40				
41						42				43			44	
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			49					50						
51	52					53			54			55	56	57
58						59			60					
61						62				63				
64						65					66			

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- 4 Perform, as a poem
- 5 See the world
- 6 "Who ___ we kidding?"
- 7 Beetle Bailey's boss
- 8 Not fully closed
- 9 Jack of "City Slickers"
- 10 Release
- 11 Like some races or candidates
- 12 Sharon of "Dreamgirls"
- 13 Work units
- 18 Part of room and board
- 22 Life partner?
- 24 Free-for-all
- 26 Text alternative
- 27 Word of regret
- 28 March Madness, e.g.
- 30 Pigeon's perch
- 31 Parting word
- 34 Took off
- 35 Obliterate
- 37 South Dakota region
- 38 Molecule makeup
- 42 Impart, as values
- 43 Strike zones?
- 47 Not apt to crow
- 48 "Let's Go Crazy" singer
- 50 Get into shape
- 51 Tomato type
- 52 Roulette bet
- 53 A deadly sin
- 55 Commendation
- 56 Museum pieces
- 57 Neck part
- 60 Storage cubby

Answers to Previous Crossword:

W	I	T	C	H		C	A	S	T		S	I	L	L	
I	D	A	H	O		A	L	T	O		O	L	I	O	
M	O	R	A	T	O	R	I	U	M		P	L	O	W	
P	L	O	P		T	E	E	N		B	R	I	N	E	
			L	A	T	E	N	T	H	E	A	T			
M	A	D	I	S	O	N		M	A	N	N	E	R	S	
A	G	E	N	T			M	A	R	J	O	R	A	M	
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Preview Calendar

continued from previous page

Sisson Library. Pagosa Adult Learning Services, or PALS, can help you with high school equivalency, GED, college prep, financial aid, tutoring and more. Mark can help you develop a plan to achieve your education goals. Call (970) 264-2209 for more information.

Friday, Jan. 3

Indoor Pickleball. 8-11:30 a.m., Ross Aragon Community Center.

Cookie Decorating. 1-2:30 p.m., Sisson Library. Join for some tasty fun. Sugar cookies and standard frosting will be provided.

Murder Mystery. 3-5 p.m., Sisson Library. Everyone is a suspect. Solve the clues to discover who the real murderer is. Registration is required.

Saturday, Jan. 4

LEGO Play. 11 a.m.-noon, Sisson Library. Bring your own or use the library's LEGOs to free build.

'Frozen KIDS.' Noon, Pagosa Springs Center for the Arts. For tickets and show information, see pagosacenter.org or call (970) 731-SHOW (7469).

'Frozen KIDS.' 2 p.m., Pagosa Springs Center for the Arts. For tickets and show information, see pagosacenter.org or call (970) 731-SHOW (7469).

Sunday, Jan. 4

'Frozen KIDS.' Noon, Pagosa Springs Center for the Arts. For tickets and show information, see pagosacenter.org or call (970) 731-SHOW (7469).

'Frozen KIDS.' 2 p.m., Pagosa Springs Center for the Arts. For tickets and show information, see pagosacenter.org or call (970) 731-SHOW (7469).

Monday, Jan. 6

Indoor Pickleball. 8-11:30 a.m., Ross Aragon Community Center.

Women's Fellowship. 9 a.m., Pope John Paul II Catholic Church classrooms.

Line Dancing. 9:30-11:30 a.m., PLPOA Clubhouse, 230 Port Ave. Beginners meet at 9:30 a.m. and the advance group meets at 10:15 a.m. If you haven't attended before, please call Beverly at (970) 264-2064 for more information.

Senior Conversations. 1:15 p.m., Senior Center.

Healthy Aging and Yoga Therapy Class. 2:30-3:30 p.m., Senior Center.

Deepening the Faith Classes. 6-8 p.m., Pope John Paul II Catholic Church classrooms.

Tuesday, Jan. 7

Veterans for Veterans of Archuleta County. 9 a.m., Pagosa Bible Church, 209 Harman Park Drive. Veterans and family members are invited to share experiences with vets of all ages. Find out about the latest in vets benefits, vets news and community-focused events. Contact (970) 880-8387 for more details. A holiday potluck lunch will follow the meeting.

Stretching and Mobility Class. 9:30-10:30 a.m., Senior Center. A stretching and mobility class for those age 55 and up.

Pagosa Springs Stitches. 10 a.m.-noon, Community United Methodist Church, 434 Lewis St. Bring your current stitching project and a snack/drink if you wish, and enjoy the fellowship of other stitchers. All are welcome.

Tech Time. 10 a.m.- noon, Sisson Library. Basic questions related to computers, smartphones, tablets, etc. Bring your device charger. We provide assistance with accessing any of the library's online resources. Call (970) 264-2209 for

more information.

Bridge. 1:15 p.m., Senior Center.

Hand and Foot Card Game. 1:15 p.m., Senior Center. No experience is necessary, so come willing to learn.

■ See Calendar on page 21



Happy New Year!
I want to thank Pagosa and beyond for decades of patronage. Wishing you love, health, joy and peace for this season and throughout 2025.

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HEALTHY SELF EXERCISE BUILDS YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM

Orange is the new black, 40 is the new 20, and exercise is the new prescription.

If today's health is the result of yesterday's habits, then incorporating regular exercise is a must. Learn how to boost your immune system with today's excerpt.

The more physically fit and active you are, the less likely you are to suffer colds in the winter months. That's the conclusion of US researchers, who studied about 1000 adults and found those who exercised the most were least likely to suffer from colds in the winter months. The researchers, from the Appalachian State University and the University of North Carolina, have published their results online in the British Journal of Sports Medicine.

They followed a group of 1002 healthy adults aged from 18 to 85 years, over a 12 week period during the US autumn and winter seasons in 2008. At the beginning of the study, the subjects were examined, and questioned on their diet and lifestyle, including how much exercise they did and how fit they perceived themselves to be. Then, every day over 12 weeks, each participant reported any symptom of respiratory illness they experienced (such as sneezes, coughs, fever or other symptoms) and its severity, according to a standardized scale called the Wisconsin Upper Respiratory Symptom Survey.

Over the 12 weeks, the subjects reported experiencing symptoms of an upper respiratory tract illness (URTI) on average for 13 days in the winter and 8 days in the autumn. But those who were fit and exercised frequently were much less likely to develop a cold, and when they did, it was much less severe.

Those in the top quarter for fitness levels (who did five or more days of exercise a week) experienced 43 % fewer days with URTI symptoms than those in the lowest 25 % of fitness levels (who did one day or less of exercise). And when they did get cold symptoms, the symptoms were less severe. URTI symptoms were 32% less severe in the top 25% of exercisers compared to the bottom 25%.

Source: "Study proves exercise boosts immune system." By Peter Lavelle. <http://www.abc.net.au>

Bonus Tip: Visit <http://www.AmazingFacts.org> for spiritual refreshment every week!

"Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways." Proverbs 4:26 NIV

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PAGOSA SCENE . . .

THE STORYBOOK NUTCRACKER

PREVIEW photos/Randi Pierce

Scene ... Dancing through "The Storybook Nutcracker" with Pagosa Springs Dance Academy. The local dancers presented their own take of the classic Christmas tale over two performances.



Preview Calendar

■ continued from page 19

Mahjong. 1:15 p.m., Senior Center.
English as a Second Language. 4-7 p.m., Sisson Library. Your library offers English as a second language classes. These classes are free. Call (970) 264-2209 or email for more information. Beginning students are encouraged to attend from 4-5 p.m., intermediate students from 5-6 p.m. and advanced students from 6-7 p.m.
PALS Adult Education. 5:30-8 p.m., Sisson Library. Pagosa Adult Learning Services, or PALS, can help you with high school equivalency, GED, college prep, financial aid, tutoring and more. Mark can help you develop a plan to achieve your education goals. Call (970) 264-2209 for more information.
Men's Fellowship. 6 p.m., Pope John Paul II Catholic Church classrooms.
Order of the Eastern Star Peace and Harmony Chapter #158. 7 p.m., Masonic Lodge, 277 Lewis St. Call Donna at (970) 946-8201 for more information.
Wednesday, Jan. 8
Indoor Pickleball. 8-11:30 a.m., Ross Aragon Community Center.
Introduction to Pickleball. 8:30-11 a.m., Ross Aragon Community

Center. Register on the Pagosa Springs Parks and Recreation page at <https://secure.rec1.com/CO/pagosa-springs-co/catalog>.

Kids Kare. 9:30-11:30 a.m., Pagosa Bible Church, 209 Harman Park Drive. A weekly club for 3- to 5-year-olds where the Bible is taught with songs, stories, object lessons, games and more. For more information, email Frank and Connie Porter at ceflittlekids@gmail.com.
Family Storytime. 10-11 a.m., Sisson Library. Join us for great stories, fun songs, and plenty of reasons to get up and move. It's a great way for kids to have fun while building the skills they need to become independent readers. For all ages. Call (970) 264-2209 for more information.
Bridge. 1:15 p.m., Senior Center.
Mindful Drawing. 1:15 p.m., Senior Center.
Elementary Tutoring. 3:30-4:30 p.m., Sisson Library. After-school tutoring in reading and math for grades 1-3. Registration required. Call (970) 264-2209 for more information or to sign up.
Thursday, Jan. 9
Ruby's Writers Guild. 9-11 a.m., Sisson Library. Ruby's Writers Guild

welcomes writers who are looking for opportunities, support and camaraderie with other writers. Members will provide support, resources and guidance for each other.
T'ai Chi Chih. 1:30-2:30, Senior Center. Free for those 60 and better.
Tech Time. 2-4 p.m., Sisson Library. Basic questions related to computers, smartphones, tablets, etc. Bring your device charger. We provide assistance with accessing any of the library's online resources. Call (970) 264-2209 for more information.
English as a Second Language. 4-7 p.m., Sisson Library. Your library offers English as a second language classes. These classes are free. Call (970) 264-2209 or email for more information. Beginning students are encouraged to attend from 4-5 p.m., intermediate students from 5-6 p.m. and advanced students from 6-7 p.m.
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Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally, and backwards.

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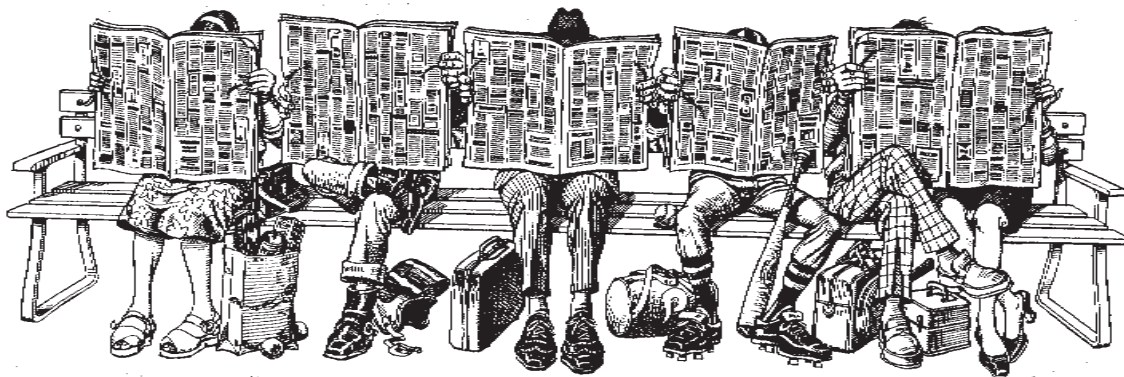
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Get ready for tax season with key updates, essential tips

Internal Revenue Service

With the 2025 filing season quickly approaching, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) is encouraging taxpayers to take key steps now to prepare for filing their 2024 federal income tax returns next year.

The IRS continues to improve taxpayer services to help people prepare for tax season with more digital tools and options available.

The IRS encourages taxpayers to sign up now for an IRS online account to make tax season easier and help safeguard their tax information.

There are a number of things taxpayers can do to get ready as the end of 2024 nears and the start of the 2025 tax season approaches. Taking action now can reduce stress and ensure a smoother filing process next year.

The IRS's Get Ready page on IRS.gov offers practical tips and resources to help taxpayers prepare. It highlights key updates and important steps for taxpayers to consider to make tax filing easier in 2025.

Do more with an IRS online account

Individuals can create or access their IRS online account at <https://www.irs.gov/payments/online-account-for-individuals>. With an IRS Online account, they can:

- View key details from their most recent tax return, such as adjusted gross income.
- Request an identity protection personal identification number (IP PIN).
- Get account transcripts to include wage and income records.
- Sign tax forms like powers of attorney or tax information authorizations.
- View and edit language preferences and alternative media.
- Receive and view more than 200 IRS electronic notices.
- View, make and cancel payments.
- Set up or change payment plans and check their balance.

Get an IP PIN

An IP PIN is a six-digit number that prevents someone else from filing a federal tax return using an individual's Social Security number or individual taxpayer identification number. It's a vital tool for ensuring the safety of taxpayers' personal and financial information.

New for the 2025 filing season, the IRS will accept Forms 1040, 1040-NR and 1040-SS even if a dependent has already been claimed on a previously filed return, as long as the primary taxpayer on the second return includes a valid IP PIN. This change will reduce the time for the agency to receive the tax return and accelerate the issuance of tax refunds for those

with duplicate dependent returns.

The best way to sign up for an IP PIN is through the IRS online account. If an individual is unable to create an online account, alternative methods are available, such as in-person authentication at a taxpayer assistance center.

More information on how to sign up is available at <https://www.irs.gov/identity-theft-fraud-scams/get-an-identity-protection-pin>.

Deadline for 2024 last quarterly estimated payment is Jan. 15, 2025

Taxpayers with nonwage income — such as unemployment benefits, self-employment income, annuity payments or earnings from digital assets — may need to make estimated or additional tax payments.

The Tax Withholding Estimator on IRS.gov can help wage earners determine if they need to make an additional payment to avoid an unexpected tax bill when filing their return.

1099-K reporting changes

Taxpayers who received more than \$5,000 in payments for goods and services through an online marketplace or payment app in 2024 should expect to receive a Form 1099-K in January 2025. A copy of this form will be sent to the IRS as well.

Although the IRS is taking a phased-in approach to implementation of the Form 1099-K reporting threshold, there have been no changes to the taxability of income.

All income, including proceeds from part-time work, side jobs or the sale of goods and services, is taxable. Taxpayers must report all income on their tax return unless it's excluded by law, whether they receive a Form 1099-K or not. The law doesn't allow taxpayers to avoid taxes on income earned just because they didn't get a form reporting the payments received.

It is important for taxpayers to understand why they received a Form 1099-K and how to use it along with their other records to figure and report the correct amount of income on their tax return. It is also important for taxpayers to know what to do if they received a Form 1099-K but shouldn't have. In either situation, good recordkeeping is key. Having good records will help make tax filing easier.

Prepare to include digital assets on taxes in 2025

Just like previous filing years, taxpayers must report all digital asset-related income when they file their 2024 federal income tax return.

A digital asset is property that is stored electronically and can be

bought, sold, owned, transferred or traded. Examples include convertible virtual currencies and cryptocurrencies, stablecoins and non-fungible tokens (NFTs).

If a taxpayer had digital asset transactions last year, they should be sure to keep records that prove their purchase, receipt, sale, exchange or any other disposition of the digital assets and that includes the fair market value, as measured in U.S. dollars of all digital assets received as income or as a payment in the ordinary course of a trade or business.

When filing 2024 federal income tax returns, taxpayers will be asked to answer "Yes" or "No" to the following question:

"At any time during the tax year, did you:

"(a) receive (as a reward, award or payment for property or services); or
"(b) sell, exchange or otherwise dispose of a digital asset (or a financial interest in a digital asset)?"

Taxpayers should be prepared to

■ See Tax on page 25



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2025

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We will reopen on Thursday, January 2nd to serve you.

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What's the Difference?

Find the four difference between the pictures.

A



B



Answers: 1. Garland on mantel 2. Missing candle 3. Dog bed under fireplace 4. Missing present under tree

THIS DAY IN HISTORY



1795: Construction of Yonge Street begins in York, Upper Canada.

1846: Iowa is admitted as the 29th U.S. state.

1944: Maurice Richard becomes the first player to score 8 points in an NHL game.

Book FACT:

This author penned a poem that is typically recited each year at Christmas.

Answer: Clement Clarke Moore

NEW WORD

YULE

an archaic word for "Christmas"

How they say that in...

English: The holidays

Spanish: Fiestas

Italian: Le festività

French: Fêtes de fin d'année

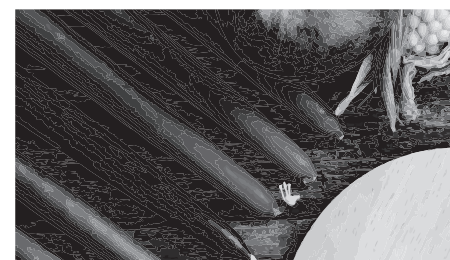
German: Feiertage

Did You Know?

Travelers usually travel 50 miles or more from home over the 10-day, year-end holiday season to spend time with family and friends.



Get the PICTURE?



Can you guess what the bigger picture is?

Answer: Kwanzaa candles

SpiritFire Inspiration Living Center announces upcoming events

By Shayla McClure
SpiritFire Inspirational Living Center

Spiritual topics are discussed every Tuesday at the SpiritFire Inspirational Living Center.

Upcoming events

Jan. 1, 2025, 5:30 p.m.: New Year's Day sacred prayers for 2025 in a cacao tea ceremony with Jenelle Syverson. Call/text (970) 510-0309 for your reservation.

Jan. 5, 2025, 11 a.m.: Burning

Bowl and Intentions Ceremony with Shayla Azriel. A love donation will be accepted.

Jan. 7, 2025, 5 p.m.: Illuminations presentations.

Jan. 8, 2025, noon: Health and Wellness presentation with Azriel.

About us

SpiritFire Inspirational Living Center is a 501(c)(3). We are an all-inclusive community honoring all lifestyles, cultures and religious paths to the Divine. We are the "Good Vibe

Tribe" who practices Science of Mind principles of positive thinking.

SpiritFire Inspirational Living Center events are held at 3505 W. U.S. 160, on the second floor of the Pagosa Lodge (elevator available).

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Tax

■ continued from page 23

answer the question by reviewing the digital assets landing page and FAQ available on IRS.gov.

In addition to checking the "Yes" box, taxpayers must report all income related to their digital asset transactions. Information on how to report digital asset transactions, including calculating capital gain or loss, determining basis and reporting the income on the correct form can also be found on the digital assets landing page.

Understand refund timing and how to avoid delays

Several factors can influence the timing of a refund after the IRS receives a tax return.

While the IRS issues most refunds in less than 21 days, taxpayers are advised not to depend on receiving a 2024 federal tax refund by a specific date for major purchases or bill payments. Some returns may require additional review and take longer to process if there are possible errors, missing information, or indications of identity theft or fraud.

Additionally, under the PATH Act, the IRS cannot issue refunds for tax returns claiming the Earned Income Tax Credit or the Additional Child Tax Credit before mid-February. The IRS must hold the entire refund — not just the portion associated with these credits — until the review is complete.

Gather and organize 2024 tax documents

To make tax time easier, taxpayers should establish an effective record-keeping system, either electronic or paper, to organize all important documents in one place.

This includes year-end income forms such as Forms W-2 from employers, Forms 1099 from banks or other payers, Forms 1099-K from third-party payment networks, Forms 1099-NEC for nonemployee compensation, Forms 1099-MISC for miscellaneous income, Forms 1099-INT for interest income and records of all digital asset transactions.

Having all necessary documentation ensures taxpayers can file an accurate return and reduces the likelihood of processing delays or refund issues.

Use direct deposit for a faster refund

Filing electronically and selecting direct deposit remains the fastest and safest way for taxpayers to receive their 2024 tax refunds. Direct deposit ensures quicker access to refunds compared to receiving a paper check.

For those without a bank account, resources are available to help. Individuals can learn how to open an account at an FDIC-insured bank or use the national credit union locator tool. Veterans can explore the Veterans Benefits Banking Program for financial services at participating banks.

Tax refunds can also be deposited onto prepaid debit cards or through mobile payment apps, provided they have routing and account numbers. Taxpayers should confirm with the mobile app provider or financial institution which numbers to use when completing their tax return.

Free filing options

Seventy percent of all taxpayers can use free brand name tax software to prepare and file their federal income tax return electronically using IRS Free File. All taxpayers, regardless of income level, can also use IRS Free File Fillable Forms.

Taxpayers living in participating states with relatively simple tax returns can use Direct File and file their tax return online directly with the IRS. The Direct File program is another option for taxpayers to file their taxes. Taxpayers can see if they are eligible for Direct File at <https://directfile.irs.gov/>.

Older adults, members of the military and many other taxpayers — depending on their income — may also qualify for free tax return preparation and electronic filing by IRS-trained volunteers through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance or Tax Counseling for the Elderly programs.



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Get a head start on New Year's resolutions

Special to The PREVIEW

After the rush of the holiday season has largely ended and the excess of the season starts to weigh on celebrants' minds, it is customary for many people to start thinking about the changes they want to implement in the new year.

According to a Pew Research Center survey of United States adults conducted in January 2024, 30 percent of people reported making at least one resolution, with half of this group making more than one.

The survey also found that young adults are the most likely to make New Year's resolutions, with 49 percent of those between the ages 18 and 29 saying they have made a resolution.

It's never too early to start thinking about what to improve upon in 2025, or which goals to set.

Here are some common resolutions and how to implement them:

• Exercise more. Getting in shape is one of the most popular New Year's resolutions every year. Gym memberships spike and people often invest in home exercise equipment around this time of year. According to the American College of Sports Medi-

cine, wearable technology continues to be a top trend in fitness and has been a mainstay since 2016. While Fitbit and the Apple Watch series have remained strong contenders, one also may want to invest in the Garmin Vivomove, which boasts wireless charging. Tracking fitness goals can keep those resolutions going strong.

• Improve mental well-being. Getting in shape is not the only health-related goal this time of year. Mental health also comes into play when people make their resolutions. Taking opportunities to slow down and be more mindful can help. One way to do so is through journaling. Human behavior expert and author Natalie Friscia Pancetti says journaling reduces stress, helps with anxiety, encourages confidence and can improve perceptions.

• Quit smoking. Quitting smoking is a worthy goal. Health care experts know smoking is the leading cause of lung cancer and has been linked to more than 27 diseases. Many people want to quit smoking, but the Mayo Clinic says only about 5 percent of people who try to quit succeed without a smoking cessation product. Nicotine-replacement items are

some of the most popular smoking cessation tools. For those who want to go drug-free, Füm is a device that addresses the three major components of habit formation that occur with smoking. Employing flavored air, the device replaces the fixation of the hand-to-mouth habit with nonaddictive plant extracts that are inhaled, simulating smoking without the negative effects.

• Learn a new language. Learning a new skill or language is another popular resolution. Today there are many apps available to help people learn one or more new languages. From Duolingo to Babbel to Memrise, there are programs available whether one is a visual learner or wants to jump right into specific phrases.

Many people get a jump-start on identifying their resolutions in early- to mid-December so they'll be ready to move forward come New Year's Day.

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How to organize a home's interior

Special to The PREVIEW

The dawn of a new year marks a convenient time to turn over a new leaf.

Much attention is paid to individuals' intentions to eat healthier and exercise more at the start of a new year, but those goals are not the only ways to embrace positive change come January.

A quick look around a home's interior may lead some to conclude that their home environments could benefit from a little less clutter and some improved organization.

A more organized home may be easier to navigate and can even have a positive impact on residents' mental health.

In fact, a 2021 study published in the journal Comprehensive Psychoneuroendocrinology found that women who cared for infants in cluttered homes experienced higher levels of physical stress than those whose homes were more organized. That study suggests an organized home is a less stressful environment, which itself can pay numerous dividends, as the Mayo Clinic notes chronic stress increases a person's risk for various health problems, including anxiety, depression, digestive issues, heart disease and weight gain, among others.

With so much to gain from an organized home, individuals can consider these strategies to make interior spaces around the house less cluttered:

- Avoid procrastinating. A weekly, if not daily, routine that involves

cleaning up spaces like the kitchen and living room can ensure a home is not overtaken by clutter before residents even realize it. Each day, go through the mail and discard papers like grocery store circulars and junk mail so they don't pile up. Parents of school-aged children can organize papers kids return home with each day so all that homework and event announcements does not create clutter.

- Purchase an entryway shoe rack. It might seem simple, but an entryway shoe rack can set an organized tone in a home. Whether the primary entryway is through the front door or a side door, a shoe rack just inside the door can ensure shoes are not strewn about and reduces the chances that floors are muddied.

- Consider furniture that doubles as storage. Many people utilize storage furniture so common spaces like living rooms are not overwhelmed by clutter. For example, a storage ottoman can hold blankets, pillows and other creature comforts so these rooms project a clutter-free vibe when not in use. Similarly, storage benches at the end of beds in each bedroom can help to establish a serene, clutter-free vibe, which can promote a better night's sleep.

- Discard older items. Clutter can pile up when storage areas like closets, dressers, nightstands and home offices fill up with items people tend to accumulate over the years. For example, a linen closet can be overrun by bath towels that are rarely used, while nightstands can become junk drawers over the years. Periodically

go through these areas and discard older items that are no longer used. These tasks won't take long, but can free up ample space throughout the home.

These are just a handful of the many ways individuals can effectively organize their home interiors and reap all the rewards that such efforts produce.



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NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS MEETING. Wednesdays, 5:30 at Pagosa Bible Church. Use side entrance. Call Bailey for details at (719)588-7572.

PAGOSA AA: M-W-F 5:30p.m. Mens' meeting Tuesday 5:30p.m. Saturday and Sunday 10a.m. Tuesday and Thursday at noon. 315 N. 2nd St., County Road 200 (.2 miles off 160). Zoom Sunday 10a.m. Zoom Thursday noon women only; ID 858 319 763, password 754 234. Call Kathi (970)946-1482 or Central Office (888)333-9649.

THERE IS A SOLUTION GROUP of Alcoholics Anonymous meets Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays, 5:30-6:30p.m. Pagosa Bible Church, 209 Harman Park Drive. Questions? Richard: (970)903-1456. Diamond: (970)264-1073. More resources: www.aa.org, www.aa-westerncolorado.com, (970)245-9649, (888)333-9649 (24 hours).




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What Westerners cared about in 2024

By **Betsy Marston**
PREVIEW Columnist

Writers on the Range, an independent opinion service based in western Colorado, sent out close to 50 weekly opinion columns this year. They were provided free of charge to about 150 subscribing publications large and small, each of which republished dozens of the columns.

Writers on the Range has a simple two-part mission. One is to engage Westerners in talking to each other about issues important to the region. The other aim is to entice readers to look forward to these fact-based opinions, with the hope they'll then want to keep their local journalism outlet alive and flourishing.

Our opinions this year covered a wide range: avalanche deaths that might have been prevented, by Molly Absolon; Ben Long's profile of Diane K. Boyd, whose innovative career studying wolves in the wild covered four decades; Zak Podmore's description of how dead pool is a strong possibility for Lake Powell. We're happy to report that Megan Schrader of The Denver Post said that Long's and Podmore's opinions were among the paper's most-viewed columns.

But it was what happened to wildlife in the state of Wyoming that garnered the most response from readers, who wrote letters of outrage or made our opinion go viral on social media. Wendy Keefover of the Humane Society of the USA was involved in both.

Her first opinion column, published in April, revealed that in Wyoming coyotes can be legally killed — though in this case the animal run over by a snowmobiler was a wolf.

We know a wolf suffered this assault because the snowmobiler showed off the dazed and muzzled animal at a bar, where it was photographed splayed out on the floor. Many readers were appalled, especially as the penalty for what amounted to torture was a minor fine.

The second column by Keefover was written with Kristin Combs of Wyoming Wildlife Advocates, and it covered the sudden death of grizzly bear 399, Wyoming's most famous bruin.

Starting in 2004, this prolific mother bear raised 18 cubs amidst the millions of visitors and residents of Jackson Hole and Grand Teton National Park.

Her death, after colliding with a car, resulted in an outpouring of grief. The writers' opinion calling for greater protection for grizzlies was shared on social media by more than 20,000 readers who visited our website on the first day it appeared.

We're also pleased to report that a "Writers on the Range" column helped quash the state of Utah's plan to allow a 460-foot telecommunication tower in the heart of Bears Ears National Monument. In his opinion, Mark Maryboy, former delegate to

Opinion: Writers on the Range

Each of our writers — who are paid — is eager to start a conversation because they care about the West, and in particular, the public land that makes this region unique.

the Navajo Nation Council, blasted the state's proposed tower as "a spear in the heart of the monument." The Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance told us that Maryboy's column, which ran widely in the state, was a "major component" in the tower's defeat.

A more recent column, by Jennifer Rokala, head of the Center for Western Priorities, was shared by many readers. Rokala insisted that no matter what exploitation the Trump administration planned for public lands, conservationists would fight back. As a reader put it in a letter to the editor of the Aspen Daily News: "You're providing factual and great journalism that inspires and gives

hope."

We were inspired by several columns about Westerners trying to change the world, including Katie Klingsporn's profile of a Wyoming principal, Katie Law, who never gives up on students at Arapaho Charter High School. Law was rewarded by seeing 14 students graduate this year, the largest class in the school's history. Why did she work so hard? "I want to see these students succeed, and I'm going to do what it takes."

There were other columns about extraordinary people or the novel ways writers understand the West, including Dave Marston's piece about Amory Lovins, who insists that the energy gap can be closed, and others by Rebecca Clarren, Shaun Ketchum Jr., Rick Knight, Jacob Richards and Laura Pritchett. Marston, the publisher of Writers on the Range, also revealed his struggle with bipolar mental illness.

Each of our writers — who are paid — is eager to start a conversation because they care about the West, and in particular, the public land that makes this region unique. And we suggest never skipping a column by Grand Canyon educator Marjorie "Slim" Woodruff, who can't help noting the many foibles of tourists.

For example, whenever a hiker asks her on the trail: "Was the hike worth it?" Woodruff confesses she'd love to answer: "No, turn around now."

Betsy Marston is the editor of Writers on the Range, writersontherange.org, the independent nonprofit opinion service that seeks to spur lively conversations about the West. She lives in Paonia, Colo. Views expressed do not necessarily represent those of The SUN.



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