



## PDL association pays off loan early

Needs more funds for water expansion, emergency repairs

By Curtis Michaels  
*The Communicator*

The Puerto de Luna Mutual Domestic Water Consumers & Mutual Sewage Works Association elected its board of directors on Sunday at the PDL Senior Center.

Of the three positions, only one was contested. Robert “Bobby” Harrison received 28 votes and Andrew “Drew” Flores got 33 for their uncontested bids, while Flugencio Saiz beat William Dudrey 23-6. There were no provisional votes.

Mark Padilla, association

treasurer, gave the budget review. He handed out the interim ledger, they submitted in December and said that in March they can make necessary changes.

Padilla said that, in 2000, the association took out a \$220,000 loan at 4.75% to be paid over 40 years. They recently paid the remaining \$61,847, saving approximately \$61,000 in interest.

“We were paying \$1,044 a



The PDL association's leadership sits up front for the annual membership meeting at the senior center (Photo by Curtis Michaels, The Communicator)

month,” he said. “We no longer have that bill to pay.”

“Mr. Padilla got a grant that enabled us to pay the loans off,” Cordova said.

Cordova addressed the

long-overdue audits that had limited what the association could do.

Padilla said that in the last meeting, they had talked about audits completed for 2010 through 2012. “We followed that up,” he said. “We entered into a contract with Axeon to complete the audits

for 2013. They sent it to me for accuracy. I sent it back with comments. It's now been with the State Auditor over the past 10 months or so.

“The state of New Mexico is trying to catch up with organizations that are behind on audits,” Padilla said. “Vincent and I met with the State Auditor about assistance for backlogged audits. The state approved funding to pay for our audits. The contract is between the State Auditor's office and Axeon. We gathered all the documents through 2022. That's \$35,000 to \$40,000 we don't have to pay.”

Padilla said he expects the audits to be completed in February or March.

“The takeaway,” he said, “is one, we're going to catch up with the backlog. Two, the community doesn't have to pay for it. And three, we have a solid rapport with the state. We've

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## PUSH AGAINST FAKE ELECTORS



Prosecutor Sean Sullivan, left, Attorney General Raúl Torrez and Secretary of State Maggie Toulouse Oliver discuss the findings of an investigation of the 2020 fake presidential elector scheme with the Senate Judiciary Committee on Jan. 17. See article on Page B6. (Photo by Austin Fisher, Source NM)

## Vaughn's mayor talks EMS, more

By Curtis Michaels  
*The Communicator*

The only person to make public comments before the Guadalupe County Commission at the courthouse last Thursday (Jan. 25) was the recently re-elected Vaughn mayor, Roman Garcia.

Garcia addressed the need to have emergency medical services (EMS) transferred to the county as soon as possible.

“I know we're working on EMS for the county,” he said, referring to plans to transfer Santa Rosa EMS to Guadalupe County. “Just this week, they had a terrible accident; some guy with the wind turbines, and we were called. We have a couple of guys that are handy as first responders, but late-

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## Traveling canine makes it home

Family reunited with their Melrose pet at SR shelter

*The Communicator*

A dog was found last week between Santa Rosa and Fort Sumner after escaping from her Melrose home in Curry County and reunited with her family — thanks to some diligent animal lovers and their social media post.

Crystal Trujillo, Santa Rosa's animal control director, told the story to The Communicator in an email:

“Rebecca Kerby was driving down US 84 about 20 miles away from Santa Rosa when she saw a dog running on the side of the road. She stopped to help and the dog ran to Rebecca and jumped in her vehicle.

She brought the dog to Santa Rosa Animal Control, where they scanned the dog for a microchip, “but she was not chipped,” Trujillo said. “She didn't have tags so we did the next best thing. We posted her on Facebook and hoped to find her owner.”

Hours after the post, Molly Hickok of Melrose called and said it was her dog, named Mamas, who had escaped from their yard.

“They had searched for her with no luck and posted on Facebook that she was missing. Someone saw her post and saw our post and connected the

>> See Reunited, Page 2



Mamas is reunited with her owner, Molly Hickok of Melrose, after a 60-mile trek across parts of Curry, De Baca and Guadalupe counties. (Courtesy photo from Crystal Trujillo, to The Communicator)

## County hears about Opioid Remediation Collaborative

By Curtis Michaels  
*The Communicator*

Treatment

Shauna Hartley, consultant for the Opioid Remediation Collaborative (ORC), spoke to Guadalupe County's commissioners last Thursday (Jan. 25) about a concerted effort to stem the tide of additions with prevention and treatment with a seven-county effort.

Guadalupe County is one of those counties, along with Valencia, Socorro, Sierra, Hidalgo, Catron and Cibola.

“I started this position about six months ago,” Hartley said, “and thus far my strategy has been to research all the best-practice opioid resources in New Mexico for the seven counties.

“I'm in the process of setting up a community listening session,” she said, “so we can hear from individuals in each community about their concerns regarding opioid addiction.”

She said that at the moment she's focusing on the gaps in prevention and treatment, but has plans to move forward in her efforts.

“The opioid settlement dollars are specified in the categories of treatment and prevention,” Hartley said. “When I'm doing my research and talking to stakeholder groups, we're looking at how the dollars can be spent.”

Examples of authorized use of the funds, according to Hartley, include expanding Naloxone training for schools and first responders and covering the uninsured for any type of MAT (Medication-Assisted Treatment) services and/or Naloxone or Narcan services.

MAT, according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, is the use of medications in combination with counseling and behavioral therapies, which is effective in the treatment of opioid use disorders (OUD) and can help some people sustain recovery.

Hartley said the settlement money can be used to improve services for pregnant women and their children, expanding warm hand-off programs which include navigator models.

“Quite a bit of people are seeking treatment,” she said, “and they don't know where to go or how to access that care. This would be a system that would engage them and hold onto them until they get to that next stop, and perhaps engage again when they're discharging from a hospital or treatment program.”

She also talked about supporting the needs of the incarcerated.

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## Wolf-dog pack sets residents on edge

TAOS — While waiting for a friend to drive him to work, the last thing Scott Downs expected was to be surrounded by a pack of wolf-dog hybrids in his typically quiet neighborhood in the fertile Embudo Valley south of Taos.

Defenseless, he set down a backpack containing his lunch, hoping it would divert the animals' attention. His friend arrived in time for Downs to reach the safety of a car, but he and other area residents say the pack is still around — owned by a neighbor who says the animals are, to her, like family.

Speaking with The Taos News this month, Tiffany "Azlan" White, the owner of

the animals, said she moved to the area a few years ago with her pack of wolf-dogs. She said her ownership of the animals, and particularly her desire to let them roam with limited restrictions, has caused trouble for her in the past, leading her to pick up and relocate multiple times in the past 10 years.

In Embudo, that story seems on course to repeat itself.

White said the hybrids are descendants of a red wolf that bred with a Newfoundland dog, and residents in Embudo say they appear to be very large.

Traveling in packs, they have been sighted regularly by locals, who have expressed their concerns to Rio Arriba

County law enforcement and to White, who said she has responded by installing raised electric fencing to prevent the animals from escaping. Rio Arriba County animal control officers have taken several reports, locals say, but little action otherwise.

Several years ago, White said she established a non-profit called Global Relief Resources Inc. with an original goal to improve domestic water security and abolish female genital mutilation in Kenya. However, after struggling to find funding, she renamed the nonprofit "GRR Inc." and changed its mission to helping her raise her wolf-dog hybrids.

—The Taos News

## Reunited

Continued from Page 1

two and alerted Molly that her dog was all the way in Santa Rosa," Trujillo said. Hickok and a friend then traveled to Santa Rosa to be reunited with Mamas.

"No one knows how Mamas got so far away from home, but we are all so happy she was reunited with her owners," Trujillo said.

The dog was found on Jan. 22, she reported.

Hickok and her friend Bill gave a monetary donation to the Animal Control kennels, which went to food and treats for the dogs, Trujillo said. Even the dog's rescuer, Kerby donated two large bags of dog food to the city's kennels.

## BLOTTER

*From SRPD reports. Suspects are considered innocent unless proven guilty.*

### Arrests

Kevin Joseph Wagner, 51, of Rancho Mirage, California, was arrested at 10:20 p.m. Jan. 25 at the Circle K for alleged battery against a household member. He was taken to jail in De Baca County.

Austin Kenji Griffin, 25,

of Sherwood, Arkansas, was arrested at 11:44 p.m. Jan. 23 near the Love's truck stop on a warrant out of Guadalupe County Magistrate Court. He was taken to jail in De Baca County.

Ernesto Andres Marquez, 37, of Santa Rosa was arrested at 10:56 a.m. Jan. 23 on a warrant out of Guadalupe County Magistrate Court. He was taken to jail in De Baca County.

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## S&W bidding out Salt Cedar, Russian Olives removal

The Communicator

Salt Cedar and Russian Olive trees along the Pecos River, and south of Santa Rosa are to be removed and burned soon, according to the Guadalupe Soil & Water Conservation District.

Vincent Cordova said they will be accepting bids for the work after a mandatory pre-bid meeting at 10 a.m. Feb. 5, at the GSWCD office, 586 S. Ninth St. in Santa Rosa.

Licensed contractors are encouraged to register for the pre-bid mandatory meeting. Sealed bids will be opened and reviewed at 10 a.m. Feb. 15 at the GSWCD office. To register, contact Gloria Gage at 575-472-5401, Extension 3.

There will be no bids accepted after that time. The GSWCD retains the right to reject any and all bid proposals.



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**PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT REGARDING PET SURRENDERS**

Recently, there has been an abundance of dogs and puppies that pet owners are unable to care for, which they are trying to rehome or surrender. The City of **Santa Rosa Animal Control IS NOT EQUIPPED** to take in the large volume of dog surrenders.

**PLEASE FOLLOW THESE TIPS TO REHOME OR TO SURRENDER YOUR DOG**

1. If you adopted a dog from a rescue or shelter, please contact them to **return the dog**.
2. Reach out to friends and family to see if anyone is **willing to adopt your dog**. Post on social media to reach a larger audience.
3. Here is a list of **shelters to contact** to surrender your dog:
  - Animal Humane in ABQ: **505-938-7861**
  - Watermelon Mountain Ranch in ABQ: **www.wmrranch.org** click on resources, click cat and dog surrender, follow prompts.
  - Santa Fe Animal Shelter and Humane Society: **505-983-4309 Ext. 1606**

Call Crystal for more info at 575-512-5893 or email her at [ctrujillo@srnm.org](mailto:ctrujillo@srnm.org).

**SPAY and NEUTER your pets to prevent unwanted animals.**



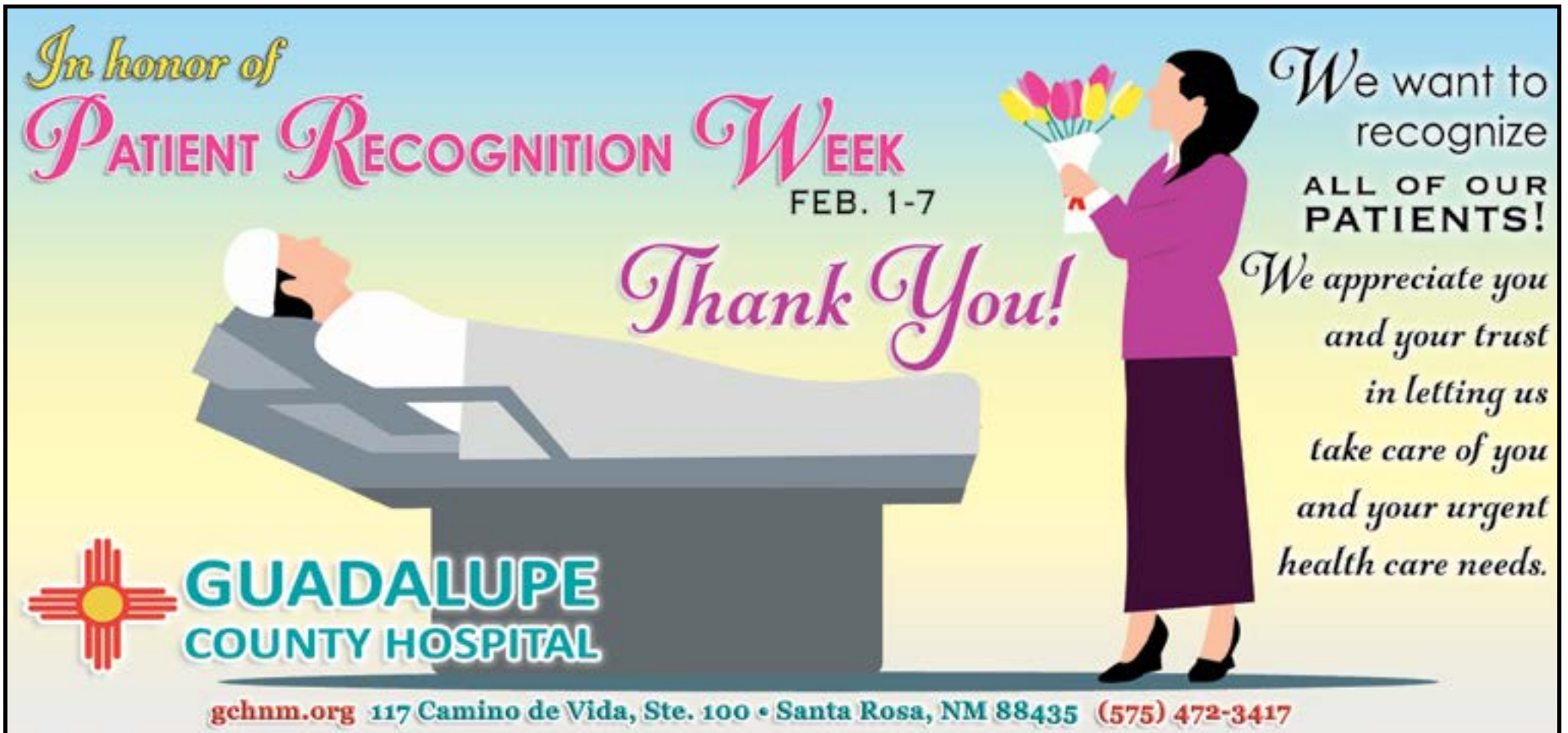
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**JOB ANNOUNCEMENT  
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The City of Santa Rosa is accepting applications for Full Time Certified or Uncertified Police Officers. Full Time Certified Officer starting wage is \$25.00 per hour. Full Time Uncertified Police Officer starting wage is \$20.00 per hour. Applications are available at City Hall, 244 South 4th Street in Santa Rosa, NM (575) 472-3404.

Applications will be accepted until the positions are filled.

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To have your event included in the Community Calendar, email [tmcdonald.srnm@gmail.com](mailto:tmcdonald.srnm@gmail.com) or call 575-472-3555. All events are subject to change; contact the event's organizer for updated information.

Note regarding sports events: Plans and schedules may change because of continuing shortages of officials and bus drivers, along with weather and unforeseen circumstances.

Saturday, Feb. 3

■ Military and Veterans Day at the 2024 Legislature, with a ceremony at noon at the Capitol Retunda in Santa Fe. Military veterans, National Guard/Reserve and active service members will be honored by the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (DVS) and the New Mexico National Guard.

Veterans, active service members, their families, and the public are invited. Doors open at 9 a.m. for exhibits and informational tables. For more information, contact Ray Seva, public information officer for the New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services, at 505-362-6089 or [seva@dvs.nm.gov](mailto:seva@dvs.nm.gov)

Tuesday, Feb. 13

■ Santa Rosa City Council meeting, 2 p.m. at the Blue Hole Convention Center.

Wednesday, Feb. 14

■ Valentine's Day

Tuesday and Thursday, Feb. 13 and 15

■ Hiring fair for full-time positions to support the claims process and assist with compensating claimants

impact by the Hermits Peak/Calf Canyon Fire. Available positions include claims navigators, staff assistants, advocates, and attorney advisor, with salaries ranging from \$57,672 to \$152,775. Job seekers are invited to drop by one of two hiring events — at the David Cargo Public Library in Mora, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Feb. 13, and at the Santa Fe Higher Education Center from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., on Feb. 15. FEMA Claims Office staff will accept resumes and conduct on-the-spot interviews.

Thursday, Feb. 15

■ Guadalupe County Commission meeting, 9 a.m.

Monday, Feb. 19

■ Presidents Day. No school.

Wednesday, Feb. 21

■ Santa Rosa Consolidated Schools board meeting, 6 p.m.

Tuesday, Feb. 27

■ Guadalupe Community Development Corporation, 3 p.m.

Sunday, March 10

■ Daylight Saving Time begins. Move clock forward one hour.

March 11-15

■ Spring break for Santa Rosa Consolidated Schools.

Friday, March 29

■ Good Friday pilgrimage, Santa Rosa to Puerto de Luna.

Sunday, March 31

■ Easter Sunday

ONGOING

■ The Mason Lodge #51 holds its regular meeting at 7 p.m. on the first Thursday of each month at the lodge. Members are welcome; if interested in joining, call 575-799-5995.

■ Free straw for outdoor dogs in the winter. Available Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the City of Santa Rosa Animal Control, 1073 Blue Hole Road (behind the Blue Hole Convention Center). If you have a doghouse in need of some straw or know someone who does, use this resource and help a cold dog survive the winter. Call Crystal for more info at 575-512-5893.

■ Blockheads Quilt Club meets from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on the third Saturday each month at the Campos

Senior Center. Beginners always welcome, with monthly projects and classes available.

■ Santa Rosa Garden Club meets at 2 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month at various locations around town. Call Colleen at 575-472-3699 for the month's location.

■ St. Rose Charity Store is now open from noon to 3 p.m. on Fridays, Saturdays and Mondays, at South Fourth Street and Lake Drive in the former Catholic school classroom. Used clothing, household items, toys, Lions shirts and many collectibles available. Everyone welcome. For more information, call 575-472-3724.

■ Seniors Day at the Pecos Theatre, 1:30 p.m. on the first Thursday of every month.

County

Continued from Page 1

ly we've had calls far out from our municipality and these two people are open to serving as first responders. They're also in our public works crew. We're limited. Our workforce in Vaughn is weak.

"Any time we pull those people away," he continued, "the other public works operations suffer. I ask them to use good judgment. If it's a matter of life and death, we'll serve and then deal with it if changes need to be made."

He then addressed the needs of Vaughn's seniors. "Our nutrition program

is going well. We've put in our request, and you've been receptive. We appreciate that. They tease me and ask, 'Hey, Mayor, why don't you come to the senior program?' I said, 'Well, I do, but I'll be there more frequently whenever I get to be a senior,'" he quipped.

He also spoke of Vaughn's utilities and the progress they're making. "Just this week, we signed an agreement," he said. "We're going to get electronic meters and are on the first phase of the water upgrade from the wells. Our wells are 26 miles west of Vaughn, 6 miles west of Encino and so it's going to be a state

system. We're replacing valves and meters. The plan is to have 14-inch pipes all the way."

As for the town's street project:

"Vaughn is enjoying nice streets, especially on the south side, and now we have an in with NMDOT (New Mexico Department of Transportation). We're working with Francisco, the District 2 engineer. "We're hoping we get funded in the next go around. That will give pretty much all of Vaughn new streets. We're currently working on Hardie Street, the one by the post office. That's going to pave three blocks of Hardie Street, so little

by little, we're making a gain."

Presentation

Shauna Hartley, former administrator of Turquoise Lodge Hospital in Albuquerque and now coordinator of the Opioid Remediation Collaborative (ORC), presented a progress report on the ORC's work. The ORC is a collective of seven New Mexico counties, including Guadalupe, working together to combine their opioid settlement funds in the hope of more effectively reducing addictions in their counties.

The other counties involved in the collaborative are Valencia, Socorro, Sierra, Hidalgo, Catron and Cibola. They're working on prevention, treatment,

response, cost and long-term impact on individuals and communities, to include generational issues. (See related article beginning on Page 1.)

Action items

In action items at last week's meeting, commissioners approved:

- Several procedural resolutions, including acceptance of parliamentary procedures, the Open Meetings Act, Inspections of Public Records Act, public participation, signature authority, establish depositories, delegation of authority to the county manager and signature authority on county checks.

The Inspection of Public Records Act prompted discussion about the manhours required to ful-

fill requests for public records. Attorney Prato suggested keeping a log of those hours to present a case for hiring more staff, which met with unanimous agreement.

- County Clerk Robert Serrano's request for approval of a Memorandum of Understanding with the City of Santa Rosa for its municipal election on March 5.
- Resolutions regarding the Anton Chico Fire Department, the Bureau of Elections and a budget adjustment for the county's auction proceeds.

- The voucher list from Dec. 16 to Jan. 19, totaling \$286,454.92.

The next meeting of the Guadalupe County Commission is scheduled for 9 a.m. Thursday, Feb. 15.

AI now being used for cattle intake

The first system using artificial intelligence (AI) to predict cattle feed intake and make feeding recommendations has been announced by Precision Livestock Technologies (PLT).

The system generates daily quantitative feeding predictions based on hundreds of data points gathered from PLT's machine vision Bunk Management System and external data sources, taking into account feeding rates, feeding times, feeding cycles, cattle behavior, ration type, weather and other factors.

—Clovis Livestock Market News

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# Ernesto Chavez, 1929-2024

Ernesto Chavez of Santa Rosa passed away peacefully at his home on the ranch, surrounded by his loving family, on Friday, January 26, 2024. He was 94 years old.

Born Nov. 9, 1929, in El Alamo, to Jose Inez Chavez and Esmeralda (Segura) Chavez, he lived in Clovis and Roswell before settling on the Chavez Ranch in 1959. He was married to the former Evelyn Montoya for 71 years and was an active parishioner at St. Rose of Lima Catholic Church and



a member of the Knights of Columbus.

He retired as a school bus driver and worked in countless jobs as a construction

worker. In his spare time, he loved to ride horses, taking care of his cattle, hunting, camping, picking piñon, and traveling the U.S. with his wife Evelyn. However, his greatest joys were working on the ranch and spending time with his family.

He is preceded in death by his grandparents, Victor and Antonia Chavez; parents Jose Inez, Esmeralda Chavez and Erlinda Chavez; his wife Evelyn; daughter Mary Jane; son Gene Chavez; daughter-in-law Elena Chavez; grandsons

Leo Jr. and Geno Jr.; and his siblings, Abelino Chavez, Freddy Chavez and Julia Baca.

Survivors include his children and grandchildren, Joe (Roberta) Chavez, Billy (Frances) Chavez, Michael Chavez, Marie Chavez, Leo Chavez, Robert Chavez, Steve (Yolanda) Chavez, Ernie Chavez, Jerry (Rita) Chavez, Jeanette Chavez, Gabriel (Felicia) Chavez and Reyna Chavez (P.J.). Also surviving are his siblings, Johnny (Rosalia) Chavez, Victor (Patsy

Chavez, Rose Chavez, Jane Sanchez and Toni Chavez, and numerous family and friends.

Visitation for family and friends was Tuesday (Jan. 30) at Chavez Funeral Home in Santa Rosa, followed by recitation of The Most Holy Rosary. The Mass of Christian Burial was Wednesday (Jan. 31) at St. Rose of Lima Catholic Church in Santa Rosa, with Father Sotero Sena officiating the service.

He was laid to rest at the Santa Barbara Cemetery on the family ranch, with

Michael Steven Chavez, Guillermo Chavez, Miguel Chavez, Jaclyn Madrid, Gabriel Chavez, Robert Chavez, Jr., Delano Chavez, Charlie Chavez and Marco Coca serving as pallbearers.

Honorary pallbearers were all his grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren.

Services were under the direction of Chavez Funeral Home in Santa Rosa, 575-472-3369. To place an online condolence or tribute, visit [www.chavezfuneralhome.com](http://www.chavezfuneralhome.com).

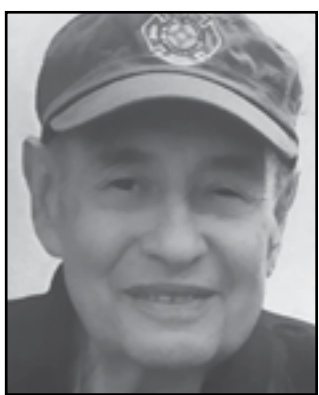
# Evaristo ‘Evy’ Marquez, 1935-2024

Evaristo “Evy” Marquez passed away on Wednesday, January 17, 2024. He was 88 years old.

Born Nov. 21, 1935, in Milagro, to Ramon and Erinea Marquez, his father passed away when he was 4 years old. He grew up in Santa Rosa with his maternal grandfather, mother and two sisters.

He joined the Albuquerque Fire Department on

Feb. 13, 1957, he loved his job and made many friends in the department. He took part in the organization and establishment of the Firefighters Union and is on the original Charter for IAFF Local 1455, serving Albuquerque for nearly 30 years, retiring on Dec. 30, 1986; his sons, nephews and grandson followed in his footsteps, making firefighting a



family legacy, and he

was very proud of those accomplishments.

He met Julia, the love of his life, cruising Central, and they were married on Sept. 19, 1959.

He enjoyed hunting, fishing, camping and boating, and made lots of wonderful memories traveling with his family throughout New Mexico and beyond. He enjoyed Spanish music, was passionate about

politics, and loved going to the casino, especially Sandia. He also loved gambling at the horse races.

He had a great sense of humor and if he teased with you then you knew he loved you. He loved to laugh, tell stories and have a good time.

A Rosary will be held at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 7, with a Mass

to follow at 11 a.m. all to be held at Our Lady of Assumption Catholic Church, at 811 Guaymas Pl. NE in Albuquerque. Burial will follow after services to Gate of Heaven Cemetery.

Honorary pallbearers are Luke Marquez, Gabriel Marquez, David Garcia, Phil Garcia, Richard Sanchez, Al Lucero and Joe Nelson.

# William Anaya, 1936-2024

William Anaya of Santa Rosa passed away peacefully on Monday, January 29, 2024. He was 87 years old.

Born Nov. 9, 1936, in Pastura, to Moises Anaya and Adela (Tapia) Anaya, he was raised in Pastura and attended school in Vaughn.

He married the former Cynthia Griffith on Dec. 15, 1975, in California. He worked as a Glazer for 40



years in California and was a union member of South-

ern California Glazers. He moved back to New Mexico in 2000, making his home in Santa Rosa, and was also a parishioner at St. Helen’s Catholic Church in Pastura.

In his spare time, he enjoyed fishing and hunting, and stayed busy around the house. However, his greatest joy came from the time he spent with his family.

He is preceded in death by his wife Cynthia; his

parents, Moises and Adela; his siblings Odela Gurule, Frocela Hidalgo, Herbert Anaya and Bob Anaya; and his granddaughter, Gemina Amaro.

Survivors include his son, James (Dawn) Anaya; his daughter, Cindy Anaya; his grandchildren, Ashley Anaya, Daniel Amaro, Destiny Apodaca (Leon Weatherford) and Silviano Apodaca; his great-grandchildren, Braelyn and Triz-

tyn; his siblings Gilbert Anaya and Corrine Iacobellis; as well as numerous nephews, nieces, family and friends.

Visitation for family and friends will be noon to 2 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 3, at Chavez Funeral Home in Santa Rosa. Following visitation at 2 p.m., recitation of The Most Holy Rosary will take place.

Interment will take place at St. Helen’s Cemetery in

Pastura at 11 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 10, 2024, with Anthony Anaya, Richard Gurule, Curtis Anaya, Douglas Lobato, Ricky Chavez, Leon Weatherford and Silviano Apodaca serving as urn bearers.

Services are under the direction of Chavez Funeral Home in Santa Rosa, 575-472-3369. To place an online condolence or tribute, visit [www.chavezfuneralhome.com](http://www.chavezfuneralhome.com).

## PDL

Continued from Page 1

been chipping away at details as a group. It took the whole board to get it back on track.”

Cordova addressed the City of Santa Rosa’s rate increase.

“You saw the announcement that the city is going to raise the rates,” he said. “We don’t know what it’s going to cost us. But since we’ve reduced output by paying off loans, we will not add to your minimum bill until we see (the) cost of leak repairs.”

Cordova said that the city had changed all their meters last year. “The main meter by Perch Lake measures the water delivered to Puerto de Luna,” he said. “It measures output by the hour, and is helping us to learn about a major water leak in the system.

“We have a tool that shows how much water we use every hour,” he said. “We looked at the meter reading and what Yolanda Flores, billing clerk, billed. Every month there was a difference of 100,000 to 300,000 gallons.

“Richard (Chavez, water works operator) would turn off the meter at his mom’s house,” Cordo-

va said. “Everybody upstream of that meter got water from the city. Everybody downstream still showed 100,000 gallons. We got up to (Frank) Tenorio’s house (near where a major cutoff valve is located, according to Cordova). Fixed the leak. Problem solved. Then it came back. We’re searching still.

“We have a problem with valves,” he said. “They weren’t shutting off completely.”

He said one problem is they get the reports from the Perch Lake meter once a month.

“We installed a new valve at the shutoff,” he said, “and we intend to buy another meter this year to see where the leak is coming from. We want to measure the water coming out of the tank. We plan to isolate that problem.”

Cordova said that meters at people’s houses are outdated, too.

“We’re requesting capital outlay to get new meters. So we’ll put strategic meters in place to isolate the leak and new meters at each house so we can see who is using the most water during leak times.”

He said the leak is cost-



A crowd gathers at the Puerto de Luna Senior Center for the PDL water/sewer association’s annual meeting on Sunday. (Photo by Curtis Michaels, The Communicator)

ing the consumers \$10 per month.

“If we find that leak, it’s like getting rid of another loan,” he said. Cordova said the board welcomes all ideas and efforts to fix the leaks.

**Agua Negra**

The next item of business was the Agua Negra Project extension update. Cordova said, “Three to four years ago, we got a

\$350,000 water trust board grant to run water to Agua Negra from existing lines.”

Due to the overdue audits, the state required the association to find a fiscal agent, Cordova said, and the delay it caused set them back.

“The state took back all the money except \$50,000. We used it to initiate an engineering contract with (State Rep.) Martin Zamora. He gave us the capital outlay of \$70,000

to create the engineering report. We assigned the contract to Souder Miller.”

The federal government initially gave the association \$700,000 for the project, but due to Congress being unable to get much done lately, the money has been delayed, according to Cordova.

“I don’t expect that money until September or October of this year,” Cordova said, “but by then we’ll have the engineering report.”

Cordova emphasized that the funding is expected to come without causing the customers a rate increase. He said that Agua Negra would get drinking water lines only. “We will provide a 3-inch line to provide drinking water,” he said.

## Operator report

Richard Chavez reported that his biggest concern is clean water. The association submits bio-samples each month for testing.

Chavez said they installed two 6-inch valves and had three major water leaks.

“The system is aging,” Chavez said. “The emergency funding has to be larger than before because hydrants are starting to fall apart. We’re going to need a lot of funding for emergency repairs.”

## Other business

Cordova said there were two items in the bylaws to vote on. The first change is that if someone wants a meter, they must own an occupied house on that land. The second change would allow members to vote by mail.

Both changes were approved by the members.

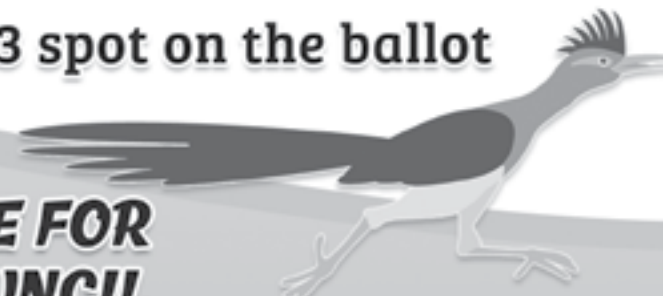
VOTE – LUISA CHAPPELL

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**PUBLIC  
NOTICE**

2024 Open Meetings Act Resolution

WHEREAS the Puerto de Luna Domestic Water Consumers & Mutual Sewage Works Association (PDLWC & MSWA) Board met in regular session at 1031 Paisano Road, Puerto de Luna, New Mexico, 88435 on January 14, 2024, at 1:00PM. as required by law; and

WHEREAS, Section 10-15-1(B) of the Open Meetings Act (NMSA 1978, Sections 10-15-1 to -4) states that, except as may be otherwise provided in the Constitution or the provisions of the Open Meetings Act, all meetings of a quorum of members of any board, council, commission, administrative adjudicatory body or other policymaking body of any state or local public agency held for the purpose of formulating public policy, discussing public business or for the purpose of taking any action within the authority of or the delegated authority of such body, are declared to be public meetings open to the public at all times; and

WHEREAS, any meetings subject to the Open Meetings Act at which the discussion or adoption of any proposed resolution, rule, regulation, or formal action occurs shall be held only after reasonable notice to the public; and

WHEREAS Section 10-15-1(D) of the Open Meetings Act requires the PDLWC & MSWA to determine annually what constitutes reasonable notice of its public meetings.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the PDLWC & MSWA that: First and foremost, 1031 Paisano Road, Puerto de Luna, New Mexico, 88435 follow the guidance of the Department of Health and other health officials to ensure the health and safety of both members of PDLWC & MSWA and of the public:

1. All meetings shall be held at 1031 Paisano Road, Puerto de Luna, New Mexico, 88435 at 1:00PM or as indicated in the meeting notice.

2. Unless otherwise specified, regular meetings shall be held each month on the second Sunday. The agenda will be available at least three days prior to the meeting at 1031 Paisano Road, Puerto de Luna, New Mexico, 88435.

3. Special meetings may be called by the President or a majority of the members upon three days' notice. The notice shall include an agenda for the meeting or information on how members of the public may obtain a copy of the agenda. The agenda shall be available to the public at least twenty-four hours before any special meeting.

4. Emergency meetings will be called only under unforeseen circumstances that demand immediate action to protect the health, safety, and property of citizens or to protect the public body from substantial financial loss. The PDLWC & MSWA will avoid emergency meetings whenever possible. Emergency meetings may be called by the President or a majority of the members upon twenty-four hours' notice unless threat of personal injury or property

damage requires less notice. The notice for all emergency meetings shall include an agenda for the meeting or information on how the public may obtain a copy of the agenda.

5. For the purposes of regular meetings described in paragraph 2 of this resolution, notice requirements are met if notice of the date, time, place, and agenda is placed and posted in the following location: 1031 Paisano Road, Puerto de Luna, New Mexico, 88435

6. For the purposes of special meetings and emergency meetings described in paragraphs 3 and 4 of this resolution, notice requirements are met if notice of the date, time, place, and agenda is provided by telephone to newspapers of general circulation in the state and posted at 1031 Paisano Road, Puerto de Luna, New Mexico, 88435

7. If you are an individual with a disability who is in need of a reader, amplifier, qualified sign language interpreter, or any other form of auxiliary aid or service to attend or participate in the hearing or meeting, please contact the PDLWC & MSWA President at 513-953-7253 at least one (1) week prior to the meeting or as soon as possible. Public documents, including the agenda and minutes, can be provided in various accessible formats.

8. The PDLWC & MSWA may close a meeting to the public only if the subject matter of such discussion or action is excerpted from the open meeting requirement under Section 10-15-1(H) of the Open Meetings Act.

(a) If any meeting is closed during an open meeting, such closure shall be approved by a majority vote of a quorum of the PDLWC & MSWA taken during the open meeting. The authority for the closed meeting and the subjects to be discussed shall be stated with reasonable specificity in the motion to close and the vote of each individual member on the motion to close shall be recorded in the minutes. Only those subjects specified in the motion may be discussed in the closed meeting.

(b) If a closed meeting is conducted when the PDLWC & MSWA is not in an open meeting, the closed meeting shall not be held until public notice, appropriate under the circumstances, stating the specific provision of law authorizing the closed meeting and the subjects to be discussed with reasonable specificity, is given to the members and to the general public.

(c) Following completion of any closed meeting, the minutes of the open meeting that was closed, or the minutes of the next open meeting if the closed meeting was separately scheduled, shall state whether the matters discussed in the closed meeting were limited only to those specified in the motion or notice for closure.

(d) Except as provided in Section 10-15-1(H) of the Open Meetings Act, any action taken as a result of discussions in a closed meeting shall be made by vote of the PDLWC & MSWA in an open public meeting.

January 14, 2024, passed on this day, by the PDLWC & MSWA.

Open Meetings Resolution effective January 14, 2024 through December 31, 2024.

Vincent R. Cordova, President

Ernesto Salazar, Vice-President

Mark Padilla, Treasurer

Andrew Flores, Secretary

William Dudley, Member

*Published in the Guadalupe County Communicator on Jan. 26 and Feb. 2, 2024.*

**PUBLIC  
NOTICE**

IN THE FOURTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT COUNTY OF GUADALUPE STATE OF NEW MEXICO

N O : D - 4 2 4 - PB-2024-00001 JUDGE: Abigail Aragon

IN THE MATTER OF

THE ESTATE

OF JOHNNY MARVIN MARTINEZ, JR., Deceased

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT JUANITA WOOTTON has been appointed Personal Representative of this estate. All persons having claims against this estate are required to present their claims within four (4) months after the date of the first publication of this Notice or the claims will be forever barred. Claims must be presented either to the undersigned Personal Representative at c/o Bigbee, Curtis & Best, LLP, 908 Colonial Parkway, Clovis, New Mexico 88101, or filed with the Fourth Judicial District Court, 420 Parker Avenue, Suite 5, Santa Rosa, NM 88435

DATED: January 12, 2024.

/s/ R. Max Best

BIGBEE, CURTIS & BEST, LLP  
By: R. MAX BEST, Attorney for JUANITA WOOTTON, Personal Representative of the estate of JOHNNY MARVIN MARTINEZ, JR. Deceased  
908 Colonial Parkway Clovis, NM 88101  
575/762-7748  
575/763-5434 (Fax)  
max@bigbeecurtislaw.com

*Published in the Guadalupe County Communicator on Jan. 19, Jan. 26, and Feb. 2, 2024.*

**PUBLIC  
NOTICE**

REQUEST FOR BIDS – SALT CEDAR REMOVAL ALONG PECOS RIVER

The Guadalupe Soil & Water Conservation District will be accepting bids for the removal and burning of Salt Cedar and Russian Olive trees in areas along the Pecos River and south of Santa Rosa. A mandatory pre-bid meeting will be conducted at 10AM, Monday, February 5, 2024 at the Guadalupe Soil & Water Conservation District Office, located at 586 South 9th Street, Santa Rosa, New Mexico 88435.

Any New Mexico licensed contractor interested in submitting a bid can contact Gloria Gages at 575-472-5401, Ext 3 for register for the pre-bid mandatory meeting. Sealed bids will be opened and reviewed on Thursday, February 15, 2024, at 10AM, at the GSWCD Office. No bids will be accepted after that time. The Guadalupe Soil & Water Conservation District retains the right to reject any and all bid proposals.

*Published in the Guadalupe County Communicator on Jan. 26 and Feb. 2, 2024.*

**PUBLIC  
NOTICE**

Attention All Land Owners in the Pintada Watershed, the Guadalupe Soil & Water Conservation District is proud to announce that \$1,650,000 in State and Federal grant funds have been secured, to specifically assist landowners within the Pintada Watershed to address soil and water conservation issues. The funds obtained are as follows: \$250,000 from the New Mexico Soil & Water Conservation Commission, \$400,000 from the New Mexico Water Trust Board, and \$1,000,000 from that USDA - National Resources Conservation Service.

All landowners in the Pintada and Milagro area who are interested in obtaining soil & water conservation funding for their properties and learning about other planned soil erosion control projects are encouraged to attend an information and planning meeting on Sunday, February 4, 2024 at 1:00PM at the Blue Hole Convention Center. Important information will be shared with all land owners.

*Published in the Guadalupe County Communicator on Jan. 26 and Feb. 2, 2024.*

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You may pick up an application at the Guadalupe County Administration office, 130 South 4th Street, Santa Rosa, New Mexico 88435

For more information, please call 575-472-3306.

Deadline to submit application will be

**Monday, February 12, 2024, at 2:00 p.m.**

You may also contact the Administration office to have application faxed or emailed.

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POSTED ON THE WEBSITE: [GUADALUPECOUNTYNM.ORG](http://GUADALUPECOUNTYNM.ORG)

*Publishing in the Guadalupe County Communicator on Feb. 2, and Feb. 9, 2024.*

**PLATEAU**

**SCHOLARSHIPS**

Plateau's Education Foundation is offering over **\$230,000** in college scholarships to graduating high school seniors.

Applications and eligibility requirements are available on the Cooperative's website at [www.plateautel.com/company/scholarships](http://www.plateautel.com/company/scholarships)

For more information, call 1.877.752.8328 or 1.575.389.4387.

Completed applications must be postmarked by **February 16, 2024.**



Opioid

Continued from Page 1

She said that research reveals that a person who could have an opioid condition could be stopped from getting necessary medications, temporarily, which could lead to them returning to previous self-destructive behaviors.

She said the ORC, “would be consulting with detention centers and jails to support best practice MAT for individuals who become incarcerated.”

Prevention

“Under the prevention options,” Hartley said, “we have media campaigns to prevent opioid use.”

She said they can support MAT training for first responders and medical providers. They have drug disposal programs.

“We have funding for training for first responders in a pre-arrest diversion program and what that would look like. Often, when a first responder responds to someone who has OD’d, that person might be narcanned, but at that point, treatment is not discussed with that individual so EMS’s role is to intervene and support that person but this post team would get them to treatment.”

Harm reduction is a subset of prevention, according to Hartley, and syringe swap programs are expanding. “Fentanyl strips, which can be used to test heroin for fentanyl,” she said, “so the

user can make choices.”

Hartley said that youth prevention is a priority for all seven counties. She said federal guidelines recommend this across the board.

“All the counties were interested in media campaigns for youth,” she said, “for education and prevention of abuse.”

She said that all the counties agreed on ongoing training for the citizens, with first responders on Narcan use, as it could motivate people to care.

Recovery

Hartley said that she’s working to team up with existing resources. “The closest treatment option for you guys is New Mexico Rehabilitation Center in Roswell.”

She said she’s meeting with hospital administrators to identify challenges with getting clients from Guadalupe County into the various systems throughout the state.

“Looking at recovery, non-medical transportation seems to be a big barrier,” she said. A workaround she suggested would be to create a general fund bucket that behavioral health providers in each county could access to cover that need.

Hartley ran the Turquoise Lodge Hospital in Albuquerque for 10 years. Turquoise Lodge is a substance abuse hospital.

“What you learn is that, if someone comes into your hospital, it’s taken all their courage to get there,” she said. “They’re there for a

medical withdrawal stay which is somewhere between seven and 12 days. If they want to go into the social rehabilitation program that’s another 30 days. So, often people have a 45-day intervention. But then when they go back to their communities, they can’t continue their recovery, which is the most significant piece.

“Recovery is for the rest of their life. If they can’t do that in their community with support, then they’re more at risk of relapse.”

Hartley said they need to take a look at the behavioral providers in each town.

“Drilling down on the reasons why they can’t get reimbursed for their services,” she said, “or people can’t access MAT, and creating a solution for that. If they don’t have sustainable recovery then the chances of them getting better long-term is low.”

County Commission Chair Dr. Randal Brown said, “There’s a lot of stigma associated with behavioral health, so being able to interact via video reduces barriers.”

Care improvements

Hartley said that when she was at Turquoise Lodge, the abstinence-based programs weren’t as effective as they’d hoped. Incorporating MAT and behavioral health treatment increased success rates.

“When MAT was introduced, people stayed in treatment,” she said. “They were better able to be a part of the program we were

providing to support their recovery. It’s really important to make sure that the behavioral health providers are trained in this paired model which is really a medical model. MAT combined with therapy is a relationship. It’s not one or the other.”

Hartley said that they need to continue looking for gaps in existing resources. “Then we can put together a one-year plan, a five-year plan, a 10-year plan. Over time, these dollars are going to make a difference.”

Brown asked what timeframe Hartley was looking at to start executing this program.

Hartley said she is finishing up her community listing groups to identify a resource leader in each county.

“That person is a liaison,” she said. “This individual is aware of all the resources in each county.

“They can participate in a monthly meeting with all the resource leaders and myself,” she said. “We’re continuing to get new information about what’s happening in each community. We can relay those messages as needed.

“Once I’m done with my communication listing,” she said, “I want to come back to my stakeholder group and go through all the data. What did each county request? What did your community say? Then share, on a quarterly basis, the outcomes of the direction we want to go.

“I want to include the communities in this process,” she said. “They

would be good guides for how to spend these dollars.”

Target demographic

Councilman Ernie Chaves asked what age groups she was looking at.

Hartley said that, for prevention, the targeted age is classified from ages 13 to 18, but that there’s a transition age up to 21 that they want to include. She said they have bigger plans as well.

“That would be one group of individuals that we would be focusing our prevention efforts on that would be different than the adults,” she said.

“The typical person that came into our hospital was addicted to at least four different substances, she said. Alcohol, opiates, benzodiazepines and methamphetamines. The complexity of the detoxes we were doing was very much more complicated when I first started that job.

“The age range we were mostly dealing with was probably 18 to 40,” she said. “But there were a lot of retired people who had started drinking were on opiates for pain, for back injury or surgery, and they ended up becoming addicted to opiates and started switching the drugs they were using.”

Recognizing that the problem is generational, Hartley included yet another age group.

“A lot of research I’ve done was in elementary schools,” she said. “People think that nobody from kindergarten to sixth grade

is using, but we’re finding that their families are. I would advocate that we look at prevention for K through eighth grade. We also look at family intervention in that age range because that is our next generation.”

Legal and social concerns

Brown brought up the fact that a diagnosis of substance use disorder, in a medical record, can haunt a person for life, limiting their future treatment potential, among other problems. “If we’re going to treat opioid use, Brown said, “we have to get access to the medicine in an affordable fashion. As soon as you put opioid use disorder in their chart and they try to get life insurance, it’s hard to get. So it’s just another area we struggle with trying to get Suboxone covered.”

Suboxone is indicated for treatment of opioid dependence, according to the FDA.

“If there were funds available for that,” he said, “we could get patients on Suboxone. It’s a very fine line. How do you define that?”

“I work with an addiction doctor who’s been doing this about 40 years,” Hartley said. “We just teamed with the New Mexico cancer system because there’s a lot of people who have been prescribed opiates, who are in remission, and she wants to transition them to Suboxone. I’m in the process of creating a curriculum that could be tied to that process and that might be a workaround with this.”

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# Roch: Lawsuit prepared against 5-day school plan

Quay County Sun

TUCUMCARI — The superintendent for Logan Municipal Schools told his board the state superintendents association was prepared to file a lawsuit to block the state education department from implementing a five-day school week.

Logan superintendent Dennis Roch, a member of the New Mexico School Superintendents’

Association, said the proposed rule by the state’s Public Education Department to raise instruction to 180 days a year conflicts with state law.

The proposal would force many rural schools, including all four in Quay County, to go from a four-day to five-day instruction schedule per week.

Roch said if a rule conflicts with state law, state law prevails. He said the PED’s proposed 180-day rule conflicts with state law that speci-

fies 1,140 hours of instruction time.

State law also specifies that professional instruction time for teachers will be included in those hours. The proposed rule does not.

Roch cited another state law that allows school boards to choose whether to have four- or five-day weeks.

“If the law already authorizes that choice, then the PED can’t take that choice away,” he said.

He said an attorney for the su-

perintendents association looked at the proposed rule and state laws, and he concluded it was an “open and shut” case in favor of school districts.

“We’re preparing litigation on behalf of the superintendents association,” Roch said.

Roch also said the PED’s proposed rule was supposed to be implemented on Jan. 16, but it wasn’t published on that date.

“I have strong suspicion they

don’t want to issue that rule during the legislative session,” he said, noting the Legislature’s education and appropriations committees strongly oppose it.

Roch said PED also is required to state reasons it cannot accept public comments that oppose the five-day rule. Because of “overwhelming response” to the proposal, he said the agency likely needed more time to write its responses.

## NM ROUNDUP

### Local news from around the state

New Mexico Community News Exchange

#### Police find grenade, fentanyl at hotel

TUCUMCARI — Law officers found fentanyl, two guns and a grenade Jan. 23 in a Tucumcari hotel room while conducting a welfare check, State Police said.

Raul Villalobos, 39, was arrested on an outstanding warrant and new charges that include trafficking a controlled substance in a school zone and possession of an explosive or incendiary device.

The suspect was booked into the Quay County Detention Center, according to an NMSP news release. The NMSP Bomb Team was called in to dispose of the grenade.

—Eastern New Mexico News

#### Agreement for MVD office considered

FORT SUMNER — This village is being considered for re-establishment of a Department of Motor Vehicles field office, Mayor Louie Gallegos announced at a special meeting Jan. 22.

In a letter from MVD Bureau Chief Anthony Sandoval, the Village’s request to reopen the facility is moving forward.

The state letter makes some general requests for information, including the planned location for the MVD office.

Gallegos has been working with state officials to reopen the office since the De Baca County MVD Field Office was closed by the County Commission last September, following the departure of office manager Tina Gonzales, who took a job in Clovis. The MVD office was originally located at City Hall before the embezzlement of funds by two city employees was discovered and the office was closed Dec. 7, 2016. In an agreement with the State of New Mexico, The county remodeled an office at 277 East Ave. C and opened a new MVD field office in July 2018, operating it at a deficit it for five years. After receiving Gonzales’ resignation, the Commission made the decision to close it — despite protests from De Baca County residents.

Since that time, Gallegos has been seeking to reopen the facility in Village Hall, where staff can be cross-trained to cover both MVD and Village duties; and to provide consistent coverage when an employee is sick or on vacation.

Gallegos said he is waiting to see what the agreement the state requires will entail and whether the village can comply with all of its terms.

—De Baca County News

#### State Police to do warrant round-ups

The New Mexico State Police is planning to conduct warrant round-up operations statewide this year to apprehend individuals with outstanding warrants.

In a news release, NMSP encouraged those with outstanding warrants to take this opportunity to address their legal matters voluntarily. By doing so, they can avoid unexpected visits from law enforcement to arrest them on their warrant.

“Our goal is to create a safer environment for all residents of New Mexico while ensuring accountability for those who break the law,” said Troy Weisler, NMSP chief. “Conducting these warrant round-up operations allows us to take wanted criminals off the street. Hopefully, it encourages those individuals with outstanding warrants to take care of their legal issues before encountering my officers.

Those with outstanding warrants can contact their local law enforcement agency or the appropriate court to inquire about the necessary steps to resolve their cases.

—Hidalgo County Herald

#### New board members join FOG board

The New Mexico Foundation for Open Government has elected two new members to its Board of Directors: Wende Schwingendorf, the managing editor of Albuquerque Business First, and Barbara Vigil, former Supreme Court Justice and District Court Judge.

In addition to the new members, the FOG board elected new officers for the 2024 year. They include Jessica Onsurez, news director for the USA TODAY Network-New Mexico, as president; Lucas Peerman, Albuquerque Journal sports editor, vice president;

>> See Roundup, Page B5

## Judge ‘Scooter’ Mitchell retiring



District Judge Albert Mitchell Jr. prepares to take a seat in the Quay County District Courtroom in Tucumcari. Mitchell is scheduled to retire on March 1 after 15 years on the bench. (Photo by Ron Warnick, Quay County Sun)

### 10th Judicial District jurist submits departure, begins March 1

By Ron Warnick  
Quay County Sun

TUCUMCARI — On Feb. 29, Judge Albert J. Mitchell Jr., the only jurist in the sprawling 10th Judicial District, will hang up his robe for the final time after 15 years on the bench.

Mitchell sent a one-page letter on Jan. 10 to Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham and New Mexico Supreme Court Chief Justice Shannon Bacon, stating he would resign effective March 1.

“I am privileged to work with fine people in the Tenth Judicial District, as well as my judicial colleagues statewide,” Mitchell wrote. “In addition, the support of the Executive and Legislature are fundamental to the

success of the judiciary.

“I look forward to the next stage of my life,” he concluded in his letter.

A state committee will consider applications for Mitchell’s replacement and issue recommendations to the governor later this year. Mitchell’s eventual successor will be up for election in 2026.

During a recent interview in his office at the Quay County Courthouse in Tucumcari, Mitchell said he decided to retire after shortly turning 65.

“I think it’s a really good time for me to do other things,” he said. “I have friends that have died on the bench. I have friends that expected me to do the same thing, to be a workaholic

until the end. I’m looking forward to surprising them.”

Mitchell said he’d been thinking about retirement for a while.

“It’s been a challenge of a job,” he said. “We are asking our judges to do so much more. And for the smaller districts, they’ve given us no more resources. At some point, the mule gets tired.”

Mitchell, who estimated he presides over 600 to 800 court cases a year, noted his district, which also encompasses De Baca County and his native Harding County, is the only one in New Mexico with just one judge.

“You figure each of those cases affected two people, at least. See 1,600 people a year, times 15 years. That’s 24,000 people I’ve touched

... sometimes as jurors, sometimes as witnesses.”

Mitchell later added: “It’s truly an honor to be a judge. The amount of trust that our community put into our judges, it’s a lot. It’s been a real honor to do it.”

Mitchell estimated he once spent 30 days per year in a car driving to and from courtrooms in Fort Sumner, Mosquero and Tucumcari. With videoconferencing becoming more widespread during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, that time in the car has dropped but is still “a ridiculously large number.”

“We have more miles than any other judicial district” in

>> See Judge, Page B6

## ENMU boss could see \$50K bonus

By Grant McGee  
Eastern New Mexico News

CLOVIS — The new contract for Eastern New Mexico University Chancellor James Johnston provides him a \$1,000 per month car allowance and opportunity for a \$50,000 retention bonus in addition to an annual salary of \$301,125.

ENMU regents announced in a news release last week that Johnston’s contract had been extended from Jan. 2, 2025, to Jan. 2, 2028.

Regents did not vote publicly on the agreement, but university spokesman John Houser said they “conducted a personnel evaluation, and the board and president were mutually interested in extending the president’s contract.”

Regents’ President Trish Ruiz said in a news release that regents unanimously supported the contract extension.

“The Board of Regents continues to witness enrollment increases as evidenced by the largest enrollment



James Johnston

growth in over a decade on our campuses,” Ruiz stated in the news release.

“We eagerly remain dedicated to partnering and collaborating with Chancellor Johnston in advancing our collective goals. ... We enthusiastically support the contract extension.”

The News obtained a copy of the contract from ENMU after filing a public information request.

Johnston was hired a year ago. His original contract called for an annual salary of \$268,000 and a \$600 per month car allowance.

Both agreements also provide the ENMU system’s top executive with insurance benefits, use of the university residence at 1600 W. Cherry St. in Portales, with most of those expenses also covered by ENMU, and other benefits.

The opportunity for a \$50,000 retention bonus was not part of his original contract. The latest agreement states he will receive that money if he remains employed as the chancellor/president of ENMU on Jan. 2, 2028.

Records obtained by The News also show Johnston received a pay raise from his original salary last July.

ENMU spokesman John Houser said the state Legislature and Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham agreed to a raise of 6% for all state employees, which accounted for that increase from \$268,000 to \$284,080.

“Dr. Johnston is a state employee, and he, therefore, gets the same raises as all state

employees,” Houser wrote in an email to The News.

Records also show Johnston was originally supposed to receive up to \$10,000 in moving expenses when he came to ENMU last year. A Jan. 18, 2023, amendment to his contract changed the reimbursable amount from \$10,000 to \$13,500.

Regents cited the recent enrollment growth among Johnston’s accomplishments in his first year.

Declining enrollment plagued ENMU from 2015 to 2022, with much of the blame placed on the COVID pandemic.

Records show the Portales campus saw enrollment decline from a record 6,279 students to just 5,078 in the fall of 2022. Last week’s university news release stated enrollment has grown 3.3% in Johnston’s first year with an overall enrollment now at 5,398.

Johnston is ENMU’s 12th president and the school system’s third chancellor.

*Santa Rosa vs. Laguna Acoma*



ABOVE: Lady Lions Dakotah Lucero and Bailey Johnson set up their defense in Saturday’s game against Laguna Vista. Santa Rosa fell 56-33 to the Lady Hawks. RIGHT: The Lions huddle up during a first-quarter timeout, en route to a 62-51 win over the Hawks. (Photos by Tom McDonald, The Communicator)

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# SANTA ROSA



— roundup —

# Santa Rosa cagers open district play this week

By Davy Delgado  
*The Communicator*

Most of the winter season preliminaries are over and Santa Rosa High School's Lady Lion and Lion cagers opened District 6AA play at Pecos yesterday evening (Thursday, February 1, late) and challenge the Wolverines in Texico Saturday.

SRHS enjoyed a rare three-game homestand in their Den last weekend, hosting Tucumcari, Estancia and Laguna Acoma before going on the road again. The Lions swept the visitors while the Lady Pride resumed rebuilding with the quickly rising Lady Panthers and perennial state champion contending Lady Wolverines foremost on their minds.

### Lady Lions

While the Lions have played-out their pre-District 6AA schedule, the Lady Pride plays the Mora Rangerettes one more time, unless they should meet again in the playoffs.

Head coach Abby Campbell-Gudgell stated, "We played a strong

first half against Laguna Acoma Saturday, but came out flat in the third quarter. We are peaking at the right time and working as a team on defense. We just need to continue to trust each other and stay disciplined."

Kasydi Chavez remains the only senior with significant experience, but in recent years, NM prep hoops has shifted from experience-laden squads to younger, somewhat more finesse teams such as Class A's Roy/Mosquero Lady Longhorns. Frosh standout Danika Madrid hasn't returned after suffering an injured ACL.

For the first time in 2023-2024, the Lady Pride took an opening quarter from a top opponent in their Den Saturday evening, outscoring former state champion Laguna Acoma 12-9. Dakota Lucero put practice to work, lighting the path with three and two-point field goals while the Ladyhawks focused on senior Kasydi Chavez, sending her to the free throw line after her first field goal to hit 3-of-5 free throws, and then 3-of-4 and another field goal

in the second go-round. Hawks Brianna Carrillo (who finished with 14) and Gianna Carrillo (with 13), however, cranked up Laguna Acoma's storied scoring machine. While the Lions managed another double-digit quarter, the visitors took a 29-21 halftime lead. SRHS's Willow Johnson and Bailey Johnson countered with a few field goals in the third but the Hawks answered with 17 in the third and 11 in the fourth for a 56-33 win, with Ladyhawk Laysie Garcia adding nine points.

Both Pecos and Clayton have seen marked improvements through this mid-winter stretch in 3-team 6AA and should rate high in early March should they continue their trend.

### Girls

Class AA Top 10:  
1) Tatum, 18-1, beat Jal, 44-14 and Eunice, 55-17.  
15-3 Mesa Vista beat Escalante, 50-14.  
12-6 Pecos beat Penasco, 56-36.  
11-5 Clayton Yellowjackets lost to Tucumcari, 44-33.  
10-8 Dulce beat Questa, 45-38.

13-5 Questa beat Escalante, 51-32, lost to Dulce.

11-3 Menaul beat Monte del Sol, 50-11.

11-4 Estancia beat the Lady Lions, 32-26.

10-8 Penasco beat Mora, 52-12.

6-10 Texico lost to Melrose Buffalo Gals, 29-21.

Class A:

1) 14-1 Roy Mosquero beat Cimarron 57-25.

16-4 House/Fort Sumner Vixens beat Logan, 46-28 and Grady, 58-36.

15-2 Melrose beat Texico, 29-21

12-6 Logan lost to Vixens.

### Lions

With the defending state champion Pecos Panthers and Texico Wolverines treading on decline and decreasing regular season victories, Joseph Esquivel's No. 3-ranked Lions have positioned themselves as prospective "Final Four" contenders anxious to kickstart a run to the playoffs.

"Our district schedule is complete, and we're excited to begin district play. I'm hoping our pre-6AA schedule has prepared us for district

action," the head mentor excitedly pronounced.

Head coached by Arthur Gonzales, defending state champ Pecos Panther seniors are guards Lorenzo Gonzales, captain Xavier Valencia, Lawrence Ragland and Joshua Gonzales; and forwards Nicolas Ruiz and Ryan Herrera.

Head Texico coach Craig Cook's Wolverine seniors include point guard Blake Curtis, captain Datlyn Cain, 6'0 Kyle Gosner, and 6'4 captain Cade Figg. Junior Alex Fuentes is a co-captain.

With no significant matchups scheduled through the end of the regular season, current top dog ATC may also have the opportunity to run the table and clinch the No. 1 seed throughout the playoffs. And with the NMAA refusing to budge on many fans' desires to see a more-equitable state playoff structure instead of the lowest-ranked teams facing near-automatic elimination against top-ranks, they're also in the driver's seat.

### Boys

Class AA Top 10:  
1) ATC, 15-2, beat Estancia, 76-25 and Menaul,

67-41.

13-4 Tularosa beat Hatch, 61-48.

15-4 SRHS Lions beat Estancia, 77-37, and Laguna Acoma, 62-51.

14-5 Eunice beat Tatum, 70-49.

13-4 Rehoboth Christian beat Crownpoint, 71-49, and Thoreau, 67-41.

13-4 Mesa Vista beat Escalante, 50-47.

12-7 Pecos beat Penasco, 77-40.

8-10 Texico lost to ATC, 44-38, in Texico, beat Melrose, 69-53.

10-7 Loving beat NMMI, 46-37.

10-7 Escalante beat Questa, 74-40, lost to Mesa Vista, 50-47.

Also: Clayton, 9-11, beat Tucumcari, 62-51, and Raton, 55-46.

Class A:

1) 18-2 Logan lost to House/Fort Sumner Foxes, 76-52.

15-1 Melrose beat Texico, 76-53.

17-1 Magdalena beat Hatch Chile Bears, 58-16, and MVC, 47-29.

15-3 Des Moines beat Roy/Mosquero, 65-56, and Wagon Mound, 66-27.

5) 16-3 House/Ft. Sumner Foxes beat No. 1 Logan, and Grady, 85-25.

## Montano wins with big trout at fishing derby in Eagle Nest

Santa Rosa native Mark Montano won the Trout Division of the 2024 Eagle Nest Lake, Ice Fishing Derby for a 24-7/8 inch catch last Saturday.

Montano enjoyed years of fishing along the Rio Pecos

just a hike away from the Joe and Petra Montano family home overlooking the cliffs.

After graduating from Santa Rosa High School and the University of New Mexico, the young artist taught Art and continued hunting,

fishing and other outdoor life on weekends and holidays throughout New Mexico and Colorado. About 1,750 enthusiasts were enjoying the day with the 729 participants.

The Pecos rarely freezes

but a few venture out onto semi-thick ice to try their luck (literally) on Santa Rosa Lake. Montano recently retired from teaching in Denver and resides in El Prado (Taos County).

According to KRTN-FM

in Raton, the derby is sponsored by the Friends of Eagle Nest Lake and Cimarron Canyon State Park, in cooperation with New Mexico Department of Game and Fish and the State Parks.

—The Communicator

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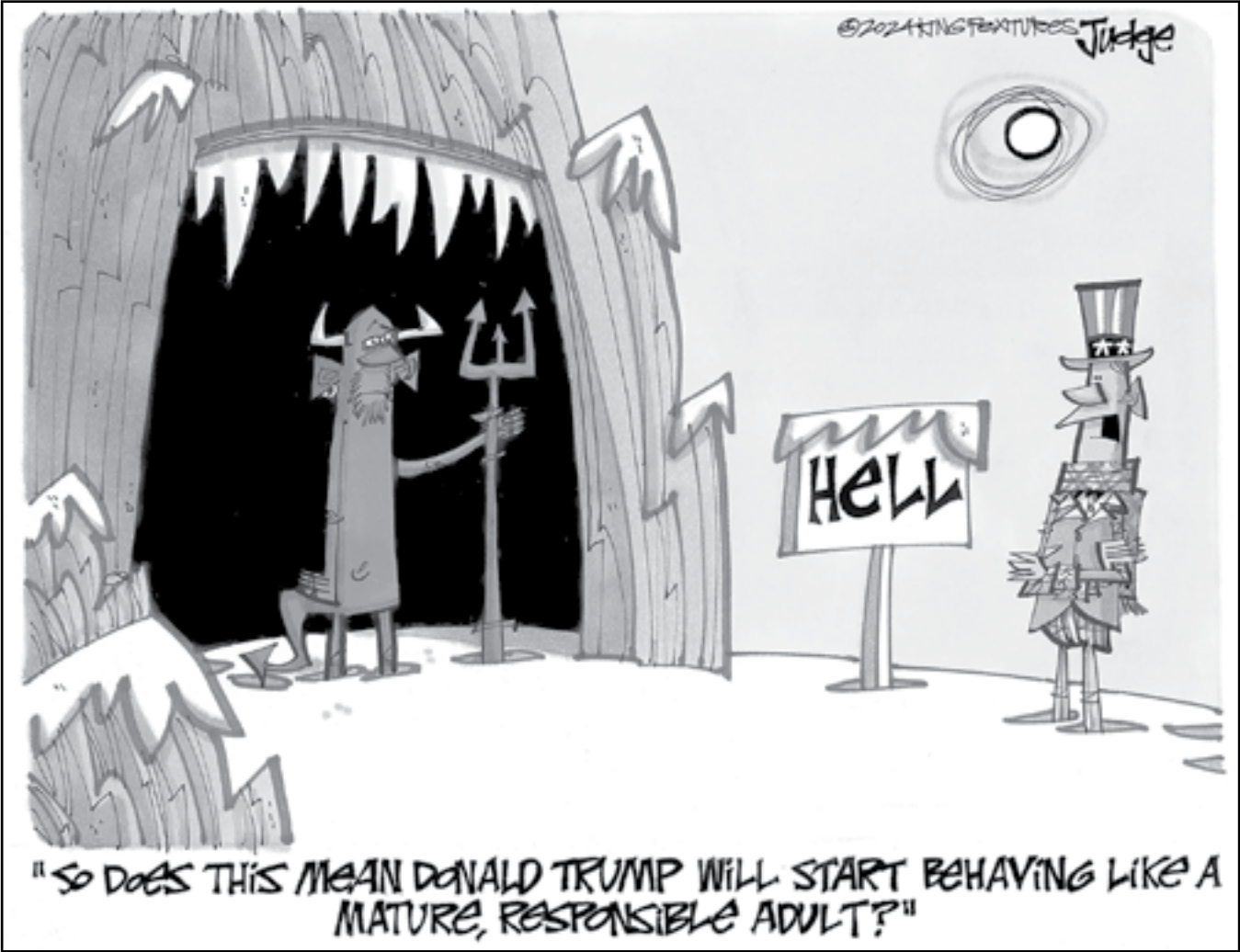
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**THE GUADALUPE COUNTY COMMUNICATOR**



DISPATCH NEW MEXICO

Politics and government

By Tom McDonald  
Gazette Media Services

SANTA ROSA, N.M. — Seems to me that Nikki Haley is a bigger problem for Donald Trump than he’s letting on. She’s exposing a rift in Trump World, one that might just get him defeated.

I still say she’s the one who can beat Biden, but Trump appears ready to run roughshod over the Republicans’ nomination process to claim the crown. Then he’ll ride herd over another thumping at the polls, up and down the nation’s ballot.

It’s almost funny to say, but I think the two biggest issues on 2024 ballots will be Trump and abortion. And on both those issues, the Republicans just can’t catch a break — or more accurately, they can’t capture a majority.

As for Biden, he’s playing it all wrong. Instead of getting younger, which most voters would prefer, he keeps getting older instead! That just feeds into the perception that he’s just too ancient for the job.

Of course, I’d wager on a reality, that at 81 years old, Biden is still in better shape than the 77-year-old obese Trump. Physically and cognitively. I mean, can you picture Trump riding a bike, as we’ve seen Biden doing? And slow down sometime and listen to each of them string a few sentences together, beyond their usual sound bites. Biden sounds like a gentle but firm grandpa;

Trump like an obnoxious uncle who loves the sound of his own voice.

Of course, Haley makes both of them look like old geezers. But her party would rather bow to King Donald through another failed election cycle than win with a younger and far-brighter candidate.

Of course, that’s all just politics. It’s in government where the rubber hits the road, and right now the Republicans are “governing” pitifully. The GOP appears to have lost its ability to separate petty politics from good governing.

Take Trump’s latest effort to blow up a legislative effort to responsibly address the immigration issue so he can blame Biden for failed policies and practices at the border. Trump’s efforts are so nakedly and morally wrong, even some leading Republicans are criticizing him for it.

Meanwhile, in Santa Fe, the politics of governing is running strong, with the New Mexico Legislature about halfway through this year’s 30-day session. Unlike Congress, which struggles just to keep federal government’s doors open, the Roundhouse is still operating basically as it should.

Sure, it’s lopsided. We have an aggressive and partisan governor who’s determined to muscle through a left-leaning agenda, but what do you expect with one-party rule? It’s that way because the GOP has lost its way and

most of the state’s voters have noticed.

I think two strong political parties tend to produce the best governance, but New Mexico hasn’t had that in about six years — and that imbalance is likely to show in the legislation to come out of this session. For better or worse, the Democrats will continue to own politics and government in New Mexico. The Republicans need to become more than “loyal opposition” — they need to stand for something more than fossil fuels and fabrications.

The late George Carlin, cynical comedian that he was, once said the Democrats are interested in people, while the Republicans are interested in property. That explains a lot, including how Trump captured the GOP. That and fearmongering.

Of course, such partisan values are not across the board. There are money-grubbing Democrats just as there are people-loving Republicans.

As they say, politics makes strange bedfellows. And, as others have sarcastically said, government is “here to help” — but of course, whether it actually does depends on who wins at politics.

Tom McDonald owns and operates the New Mexico Community News Exchange and the Guadalupe County Communicator in Santa Rosa. He can be reached at [tmcdonald.srnm@gmail.com](mailto:tmcdonald.srnm@gmail.com).

THE ONE PERCENTER

The seven deadly sins, and cursing

By Don McDonald  
For The Communicator

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — My 11-year-old buddy, Mike, likes to play games and have group chats with his friends. This is the age where a lot of new interests and behaviors are emerging, some of which are not good.

One of the bad behaviors that is becoming more common is the use of curse words. I try to discourage it but sometimes I think it is a losing battle, partly because it is like a person with a beer in his hand telling a teenager to stop drinking.

Commonly we ask, what’s wrong with this younger generation? You would think they could control their mouth better. Me personally, I never curse, you \$%#@\*%^&#!

No wonder kids often ignore parents.

At least Mike is smart about his cursing. To my knowledge, he has never got into trouble at school.

But I hear his friends cursing on phone group chats frequently. When I do so, I march into Mike’s room and scold his friends and it stops temporarily. Mike to his credit, joins into my scolding, saying such things as, “What’s wrong with you, boy?” Or, if it’s a girl, “I don’t know what got into you? Surely, your mom taught you better!”

Mike was so convincing in his disap-

pointment, I was beginning to believe that maybe, he was really taking in what I said.

I cannot recall my dad or mom ever cursing in front of us. Yet, one of my brothers told me that he heard Dad, in his later years, get angry and curse. My brother reminded Dad, a Methodist minister, that he has preached against cursing, to which Dad responded, “I’m retired now.”

However, knowing Dad, he cleaned up his language and recommitted himself to better language.

Now, back to Mike:

One day, when he had for or five friends over in his house, I heard a loud scream, “HELL NO!” Everybody heard me get off my chair and start walking to Mike’s room. As soon as I stepped into the room, everyone was pointing to Mike, who gave me this look of confusion as if he had no idea why they were pointing at him.

Obviously, this is a fight that never ends. But I will not quit. Because if I do and say, “OK, talk how you want,” I fear it will lead to more problems.

Pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, wrath and sloth are called the seven “deadly” sins. Why are these called “deadly”? It is because these sins lead to further sins which lead to further sins ... and, not uncommonly, death.

The Lord’s Prayer has the famous

words, “and lead us not into temptation.” Temptation to do the wrong things is a never-ending battle that gives justification to daily use of The Lord’s Prayer.

On the other hand, I have been told by a number of recovering alcoholics and drug addicts that temptations can make you stronger.

You heard me right. They are glad they have been tempted.

The fight to stay sober involves taking a personal inventory of their faults and weakness, making amends, forgiving and being forgiven, being humble because of past failures yet selfish in their desire to get healthy, and perhaps most importantly, a newfound willingness to help others.

The struggles they have waged resisting temptations have made them into better people. As they have explained to me, relapsing feels terrible but being sober feels great. It is a “victory” over temptation.

The seven deadly sins really can be deadly.

But, on the other hand, resisting these sins can feel “pretty doggone good!”

Dr. Don McDonald is a psychiatrist who lives in Memphis and works across the Mississippi River in the Arkansas Delta. He may be reached at [macbiz1679@aol.com](mailto:macbiz1679@aol.com).

EDITORIAL

Municipal voting

The Communicator

Early voting in Santa Rosa’s upcoming municipal election is starting next week, but unless you’re absolutely sure of the two candidates you’re going to vote for, you might want to wait a few days. The Q&As are coming out next Friday.

By Q&As, I mean the “Question & Answer” survey we sent to all five candidates on Monday, for them to return over this coming weekend for us to publish next Friday, Feb. 9. In it, we asked the candidates substantive questions, regarding the mayor’s successes and failures over his six years in office, along with the City Council’s performance during that time; what they think is broken at city hall and how they’ll work to fix it; and their priorities if elected. Their answers should be illuminating for anyone seeking to see beyond the candidates’ family ties and work status. The questions are intended to draw out more than what we already know; their answers should give us a better idea of what they’ll work to accomplish as councilors.

In case you’ve been living under a rock, this is a pretty big election year. Wouldn’t it be nice if all voters actually did their homework, using fact-based resources, before casting their ballots? Some will and some won’t, but for the undecided in this municipal election, the Q&As can be just that kind of homework. Hope you make use of it.

And please, voters, don’t just cast your vote out of selfish interests only. Let’s remember that it’s the greater good that’ll move this town, state and nation forward.

—TKM

OPINION

U.S. can’t rely on China for mining needs

By Jim Constantopoulos  
To Eastern New Mexico News

PORTALES — Rare earth minerals are more abundant than their name suggests.

Mineral-rich deposits are scattered around the United States, but our country has only one rare earth mine, in Mountain Pass, Calif. There are other potential mineable deposits, but they are many years away from starting production.

To meet our increasing need for rare earths, we rely on imports, mainly from China -- and that’s boneheaded given the brittleness of U.S.-China relations and our own resources.

U.S. policymakers are well aware of the peril to our national security and economy from our heavy reliance on China’s minerals. This danger was underscored last month when China banned the export of technologies used in the mining and processing of rare earths.

Earlier, China cut off exports of gallium and germanium, which are used to produce semiconductor chips. And it also banned exports of graphite, a key metal needed for EV batteries and the storage of wind and solar power in our nation’s electricity transmission system.

Let’s be on the level. We can pay no attention to all the danger signs until assembly lines slow down and companies stop producing batteries for weapons systems, reindustrialization, and clean energy technologies. Or we can try to act with a sense of urgency and do something about preventing a shortage of rare earths and other critical minerals such as lithium, cobalt, and nickel.

Now is the time to ask: What are the most useful things the government can do to reduce our dependence on China and bolster our mineral security?

To the Biden Administration’s credit, in 2022 it signed into law a climate measure that includes provisions aimed at shortening the government’s labyrinthine permitting process. But the Administration has yet to implement the changes. It has adopted an “anywhere but China” policy, taking steps to help finance the construction of new mines in friendly countries overseas but doing nothing to meet the acute need for more mines in the United States.

It’s nonsensical that mining companies must wait 20 years on average from the time an idea for a new mine is floated to first production. Mining in the United States is not the problem; it is the best answer to dependence on China.

Jim Constantopoulos is a geology professor at Eastern New Mexico University. Contact him at [jim.constantopoulos@enmu.edu](mailto:jim.constantopoulos@enmu.edu).

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REMEMBRANCES

‘The copper-riveted machine’

By Davy Delgado  
*The Communicator*

It has been said that a lot of things “happen by accident.”

That was certainly true when I happened to notice and select one of the oldest books in Moise Memorial Library while seeking historical information about farm and ranch villages north of the Guadalupe-San Miguel county line.

It’s title, “Las Vegas and Uncle Joe,” was completely unassuming. It began as a collection of 99% true stories about growing up in the nearby town by later distinguished Bryn Mawr (liberal arts college in Pennsylvania) educator Milton Nahm, Ph.D.

Nahm was a young newspaper

reporter who happened to receive the assignment of covering a town meeting where citizens were expressing their views about then Albuquerque newsman Carl Magee one century ago. Nahm supposed it would end pretty quickly and he’d soon be enjoying chile pepper steak with his uncle.

Fourth Judicial District Judge David Leahy (an ex-Union Army officer) had just jailed Magee for allegedly libeling elected San Miguel County official Secundino Romero. In no time, newspapers were questioning and widely publicizing the fact that (strangely) the newspaper that Magee worked for was located in the Duke City.

San Miguel County Sheriff Lorenzo Delgado (a first-cousin

of Romero and cousin of this reporter’s grandfather, then-Guadalupe County Commissioner Rudolfo Delgado) wasn’t about to deny Magee certain rights such as allowing him to continue writing scathing editorials about the GOP’s “copper-riveted machine” in his cell. A New Mexico State Tribune page would then forward them by train to Albuquerque.

Magee had founded Magee’s Independent in 1922, which changed its name to the State Tribune in 1923. In 1924, while covering a political meeting in a Las Vegas hotel, Judge Leahy decked Magee in the lobby. Magee then shot at Leahy, missed, and killed an innocent bystander.

Back in his Vegas jail cell,

Magee often likened the corrupt political cabal to “a copper-riveted machine,” and the idea of a inventing a parking meter began forming in his mind.

A brigade of the state’s most brilliant Democratic lawyers (including future U.S. Sen. Dennis Chavez) represented Magee. He was acquitted of manslaughter and joined the bar (became a lawyer) at some point and moved to run the Oklahoma News.

Magee joined the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce’s Traffic Committee in 1933, where he was credited with co-designing his later-patented parking meter model. He partnered with Gerald Hale to form a company that became POM Inc.

The first parking meters were

installed in downtown Oklahoma City in 1935. Added benefits of local government revenues quickly influenced other cities to install their own “copper-riveted machines.” Through about Y2K, cities were banking \$1.2 million per annum from parking meters alone.

The buck stops here. Today, we’re still a one-horse town and downtown Santa Rosa still doesn’t have a single parking meter — or a bank.

Thankfully, an updated version has never been published — or titled “Las Vegas and Uncle Lorenzo.”

Davy Delgado writes for *The Communicator*. He can be reached at [davydelgado34@gmail.com](mailto:davydelgado34@gmail.com).

COMMENTARY

ENMU regents’ actions were sleazy

By David Stevens  
*Eastern New Mexico News*

CLOVIS — Eastern New Mexico University’s president and system chancellor has a new contract. You’ll see no complaints from this space regarding the terms of that deal. James Johnston has proven himself a capable leader over the past 12 months.

But the manner in which Johnston’s contract was awarded last week by university regents was sleazy at best.

Beyond the flagrant disregard for the state’s Open Meetings Act — the law that requires “public business be conducted in full public view” — regents’ actions lead to questions about what else they might be doing without public knowledge.

Records obtained late last week by The Eastern New Mexico News show Chancellor Johnston has had at least two pay increases in the past year, one the public was never specifically told about, the other never voted on by regents in a public meeting as the law requires.

Officials’ explanation for the violations of the Act need explanations of their own.

Agenda offered no action item

The stench from regents – Johnston’s supervisors — became evident when they met in Santa Fe with an agenda that included discussion “pertaining to the Pres-

idential contract renewal” in executive session. There was no action item on the agenda following the executive session, meaning no authority to act on the president’s contract.

Somehow, the university announced in a news release that Johnston had been awarded a contract extension through Jan. 1, 2028. The decision was reached “unanimously,” according to the news release.

Documents obtained by The News through a public records request show the contract calls for a \$17,045 annual raise, opportunity for a \$50,000 retention bonus, and \$4,800 more annually (from \$600 monthly to \$1,000 monthly) for a car allowance.

Asked why regents violated the Open Meetings Act — no public vote and no action item on the agenda — university spokesman John Houser responded:

“I think there is some confusion here. There was no vote taken. The Board conducted a personnel evaluation, and the board and president were mutually interested in extending the president’s contract.”

Yes, there certainly is some confusion here.

‘Mutually’ agreed — a vote?

Melanie Majors, executive director of the New Mexico Foundation for Open Government, is less confused. “(T)he Open Meetings Act

clearly states that no, NO action may take place in executive session,” she wrote in an email in response to regents’ actions. “The item may be discussed, but the actual vote must, MUST be made in public — no exceptions. This is a violation, a definite violation.”

And now we know it wasn’t the first time Johnston has received a pay raise since he was hired last January. Records obtained by The News show that on July 1 Johnston received a pay increase from \$268,000 annually to \$284,080. A document reporting the increase was signed by Phillip Bustos, who was regents’ president at the time. ENMU officials said all state employees received a 6% raise at that time, which was reflected in minutes from an April meeting. But no one mentioned — in the meeting minutes or otherwise — that included a \$16,080 mid-year pay hike for the president.

University officials said the latest pay raise and contract extension approved by regents will be reflected in the minutes of the regents’ next meeting.

That should be interesting, because it’s not at all clear how that pay raise came about.

When was contract approved?

At one point, university officials said Regent Lance Pyle announced regents approved the new contract in a public statement after the executive session ended. When Pyle

denied that happened, ENMU said it would “make the correction.”

So it looks like ENMU will try to have us believe regents “mutually” agreeing to something is somehow different than a vote, which, by law, must be done in public.

This is also interesting: Johnston’s new contract became effective Jan. 3 — two weeks before discussion of the president’s contract renewal was on the regents’ agenda. He began seeing the higher salary with his Jan. 19 paycheck.

Our newspaper on Jan. 22, along with the Foundation for Open Government, filed formal complaints with the state’s Office of Attorney General asking it investigate regents’ pompous disregard for the state’s government-transparency laws.

This space is intended to shame them into being more responsible stewards of taxpayer money. The AG has authority to help them understand the state’s sunshine laws are actual laws, not just good ideas, by fining them each up to \$500.

Slippery slope needs spotlight

Some may say this was not a big deal, just a “slippery slope” argument from a stickler for details. Regents can still comply with the state law by holding another meeting and voting in public as they should have done last week. But if nothing is said, and re-

gents think they can “mutually” agree to funnel tens of thousands of dollars to the president without a public vote, can they also “mutually” agree to raise tuition or call a bond election without voting?

And if ENMU can “mutually” agree to hand out pay raises or increase taxes without voting in public, can’t the city of Clovis do the same thing?

What’s perhaps most infuriating about the actions of these regents is that Johnston doesn’t deserve to be at the center of their antics.

By most accounts, he’s done a nice job leading the university back from COVID and into a new period of growth.

Regent Pyle, who supports the contract he said was negotiated with Regents President Trish Ruiz, declined to speak publicly about how this has all played out. But he spoke openly about the job he feels Johnston has done in his first year.

“He and his wife Stephanie have done outstanding in connecting within the community, building relationships and promoting ENMU,” Pyle said.

“I look forward to seeing his leadership and the direction he takes ENMU in the years to come.”

Let’s hope Johnston’s leadership is not brought into question by the shameful actions of his bosses.

David Stevens is editor and publisher of Clovis Media Inc. Email him at: [dstevens@thenews.email](mailto:dstevens@thenews.email).

New Mexico News

Roundup

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Rashad Mahmood, New Mexico Local News Fund co-director, secretary; and Sammy Lopez, executive director New Mexico Press Association, treasurer.

As immediate past president, Karen Moses, retired Albuquerque Journal editor, is also a member of the board. Additionally, Daniel Yohalem, Santa Fe attorney, and Mary Lynn Roper, retired general manager of KOAT TV 7, are at-large board members.

As an advocate for transparency in government, FOG is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that serves the open government interests of the general public, the business community, elected officials, journalists and lawyers. Call the FOG hotline at 1-505-764-3750 for questions or concerns regarding Inspection of Public Records Act of the Open Meeting Act.

—Union County Leader

MCC’s economic impact nearly \$14 million

TUCUMCARI — Mesalands Community College added almost \$14 million to the region’s economy and supported nearly 250 jobs during the 2021-22 fiscal year, a report stated.

The economic impact report by Lightcast, a global labor market analysis firm, was presented during the college’s board of trustees meeting on Jan. 16 by Joel Kiser, vice president of academic affairs.

Kiser said the New Mexico Independent Community Colleges organization wanted economic studies of all its members, and the state’s Higher Education Department said the data would be beneficial.

The report states that during FY2021-2022, the college’s operations spending led to an economic impact of \$5.3 million. Student spending led to an effect of \$3.5 million. Impact by Mesalands alumni led to another \$5.1 million in economic effects.

The total was \$13.9 million, with the college sup-

porting 247 jobs during that fiscal year.

The report also stated that Mesalands and its students supported one of every 26 jobs in the service area, which includes Quay, Harding and Union counties.

For every \$1 invested in Mesalands, New Mexico residents received \$8.20 in return, the report stated.

Interim President Allen Moss said the economic effect of Mesalands was higher than at other community colleges in the state.

—Quay County Sun

Former career police officer arrested

TUCUMCARI — A former police officer and one-time candidate for sheriff was arrested and briefly jailed after being accused of using force on a city cop and menacing another.

Herman Isidro Martinez, 50, of Tucumcari was detained on a warrant on charges of battery upon a peace officer and assault upon a peace officer.

The battery charge is a fourth-degree felony that can lead up to 18 months in prison and up to a \$5,000 fine. The assault charge is a misdemeanor.

Magistrate Judge Noreen Hendrickson issued the arrest warrant on Martinez. According to logs by the Quay County Detention Center, he was booked into the jail and then released the next day on a \$2,000 appearance bond. Martinez made his first appearance in magistrate court Jan. 19.

No attorney for Martinez was listed in online court records.

Martinez ran for the Republican nomination in 2022 for Quay County sheriff. Dennis Garcia defeated Martinez in the primary election by a more than 4-to-1 margin. Garcia went on to win the general election.

Martinez retired that year as a corporal from the Tucumcari Police Department. He once was a sheriff and undersheriff in Harding County, a member of the the New Mexico Mounted Patrol and was an officer at Roy, Springer and New Mexico Highlands University, according to an candidate questionnaire he submitted

to the Quay County Sun in 2022. He spent 30 years in law enforcement.

Martinez also was one of two city officers during a 2021 arrest in Tucumcari where a suspect was body-slammed to the ground. A bystander captured the arrest on cellphone video.

The officers were cleared after an internal review, though the suspect later filed a lawsuit against the officers, city and police department. The lawsuit was dismissed in 2023.

—Quay County Sun

Sonic boom felt in eastern NM, west Texas

TUCUMCARI — An apparent sonic boom from military aircraft shook a wide swath of the region on the afternoon of Jan. 19.

Dozens of residents in Quay County and beyond reported to authorities and on social media about rattling windows and shaking homes, making several think it was an explosion.

The boom was felt in Conchas to the north and as far east as Amarillo.

Quay County Sheriff Dennis Garcia said he received no reports of damage.

He said he was informed by dispatchers that military aircraft from an Air Force base were in the region at the time.

A public affairs officer at Holloman Air Force Base said none of its aircraft were in the area at the time. Emails to the Cannon and Kirtland bases, seeking clarification, hadn’t been answered.

Garcia said sonic booms are rare in the area. He said he last experienced one decades ago, when he was a sixth-grader at the long-closed Granger Elementary School in Tucumcari.

Federal law prohibits civilian aircraft from breaking the sound barrier over land. The Air Force discourages sonic booms except at 30,000 feet over water, though its aircraft can fly at supersonic speeds in designated areas.

—Quay County Sun

# Governor directs lawmakers to consider fake elector crimes

By Austin Fisher

Source New Mexico

SANTAFE—New Mexico’s governor has given state lawmakers the go-ahead to consider closing what the state’s top prosecutor says is a loophole in election law that allowed the 2020 fake electors in the state to escape criminal liability.

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham on Jan. 24 signed an executive message allowing the Legislature to consider a bill “creating the election offenses of disrupting election results and falsely acting as a presidential elector.”

New Mexico Attorney General Raúl Torrez is asking lawmakers to change election law to prevent another fake presidential elector scheme like the one in 2020.

Maddy Hayden, a spokesperson for the governor, said the executive message was in response to the New Mexico Department of Justice’s findings from a two-year investigation of the scheme.

This month the Office of the Attorney General rebranded itself as the New Mexico Department of Justice.

Torrez and the prosecutor who investigated the scheme on Jan. 17 explained to the Senate Judiciary Committee they didn’t pursue charges against New Mexico’s fake electors because the certificate of electoral votes they signed did not say they were the legitimate presidential electors, and because the state’s election law doesn’t include that record in the definition of “false election documents.”

Judiciary committee chair Sen. Joseph Cervantes (D-Las Cruces) said he wanted Lujan Grisham to put the bill “on the call” during the short session. He was not immediately available for comment on who will carry the legislation in the Senate.

The bill will start in the House of Representatives. As of Jan. 25, it had not been introduced. It will appear here when a lawmaker does introduce the proposal.

Torrez said on Jan. 17 there is “a potential sponsor” but did not identify them.

# CYFD, General Services, looking to avoid shortfall in settlement fund

Source New Mexico

ALBUQUERQUE — New Mexico taxpayers will likely pay nearly \$17 million in the near future to settle seven lawsuits against the state’s child welfare agency, agency officials revealed in recent committee hearings during the ongoing legislative session.

The expected \$16.9 million set to cover upcoming lawsuit settlements more than doubles what the state’s insurance division has paid in total on behalf of the Children, Youth and Families Department over the last five years.

According to the General Services Department, which insures the state government through the Risk Management Division, that total over the five-year span is \$14 million.

Risk Management Division oversees the New Mexico liability fund, which uses taxpayer money to settle claims in court either through voluntary agreements, or court-ordered settlements.

The General Services Department Secretary Robert Doucette asked lawmakers for additional money to prevent a shortfall in the liabilities fund at a Jan. 23 presentation to the Senate Finance Committee. The Legislative Finance Council said in its budget request for the 2024 session that the Risk Management Division fund is short of projected liability by \$86 million.

“We’re making sure that if we owe, that we pay what we owe,” Doucette said.

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham’s budget asks for \$24.8 million special appropriation in the executive budget for the Risk Management Division. An additional \$20 million special appropriation for settlements involving CYFD would also go to the fund, according to the executive budget proposal.

Waiting on a budget

The House Appropriations and Finance Committee moved to adopt the Legislative Finance Committee Recommendation for the General Services Department during a meeting on Jan. 17.

The total budget for the agency is about \$160 million dollars. The differences between the Legislative Finance Committee recommendation and the executive budget are about \$145,000, a difference of 1%.

Doucette said the agency performs an assessment to

## Judge

Continued from Page 1

New Mexico, he said.

While adjudicating criminal cases, Mitchell obviously deals with defendants who are having a very bad day. But those cases bring rewards, as well.

“I’ve seen a lot of felons who have done very well,” he said. “We hear about all the failures. People don’t spend any time on the successes. More people successfully complete probation than fail. More families function as a family with a custody order in place than not. So there’s a lot of successes.

“The reality is, when somebody comes up to me in the grocery store and says, ‘You sent my family member to prison’ or ‘You sent me to prison,’ it’s normally a very positive conversation,” he added. “When I started, I really didn’t expect that. But after a while, I’ve learned that when someone approaches me and says, ‘You sent me to prison,’ almost never are they angry.”

Mitchell said the most challenging part is “predicting the future of human beings” during court cases.

“I get to see people for a day, two days, and then I’m supposed to predict what they’re going to do in four years,” he said.

District Attorney Tim Rose stated that Mitchell was “an invaluable asset to our legal system.”

“It isn’t always easy to preside over our small community — with its quirks and characters — but Judge Mitchell handled it with a steady hand,” Rose wrote in an email. “He knows the lay of the land, the folks and the unique challenges we face. Along the way, Judge Mitchell presided with a sense of fair play, impartiality, and a real care for the people he served. His contributions have played a crucial role in maintaining justice in the Tenth Judicial District.”

Those 15 years on the bench weren’t without bumps along the way. He wasn’t retained as judge in 2014 after he received less than 50% of the vote. However, then-Gov. Susana Martinez reappointed him a few months later.

Mitchell defeated Donald Schutte by 7 percentage points in the 2016 GOP pri-

mary and was unopposed in the general election. Voters then retained Mitchell in the 2020 election.

In 2019, the New Mexico Supreme Court censured Mitchell for violating the Code of Judicial Conduct. He was accused of saying he would ask the governor to veto capital outlay funds due to Quay County because of a dispute with county officials over court-security funding.

Asked about the censure, Mitchell said: “I think that I was passionate about my staff being physically threatened, and I expressed that to the county manager in a way that the Supreme Court believed is inappropriate.”

Mitchell, who received his initial degree at Stanford and juris doctorate at the University of New Mexico, was asked what prompted him to be a judge after years in private law practice.

“When I was in college, I decided I didn’t want to work for someone,” he responded. “I was a mechanical engineer, and a lawyer is in charge of their life. I got at law school and I moved to Tucumcari, and I found out that my clients believed they were in charge of my life. Instead of having one boss and one supervisor, I ended up with 30 or 40 bosses and supervisors at a time.

“But I love problems, and human beings and our relationships with each other, it’s a fun thing to try and solve,” he said of being a judge. “I’ve enjoyed trying to find workable solutions to human interaction.”

Mitchell mostly is known around the region by his nickname, “Scooter,” which his father gave to him when he was 6 months old, scooting around the crib.

Being better known by a nickname sometimes has drawbacks.

“After one of the elections where I didn’t win, a friend of mine came up to me and he was mad, angry. And he says, ‘They didn’t put your name on the ballot. I wanted to vote for you, Scooter. There’s some guy named Albert, but I couldn’t find you anywhere on the ballot,’” Mitchell said, smiling.

“Most people know me as Scooter,” he added. “I’m looking forward to having Scooter back as my name.”

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\*\*Dates and times are not inclusive of the City  
Observed Holiday on Monday, February 19, 2024\*\*

OUR HEARTFELT THANKS

Dear friends and family,

It is with heavy hearts that we express our deepest gratitude to each and every one of you for the overwhelming support, love, and kindness extended to our family during this difficult time. Your presence and contributions have made a mark on our hearts, and we are truly grateful for the warmth and strength you’ve provided.

Losing the matriarch of our family has been an incredibly challenging journey, but your unwavering support has been a beacon of light guiding us through the darkest days. From the bottom of our hearts, thank you for standing by us, offering your condolences, sharing memories, kind words and gestures, and lending a helping hand in various ways.

As we navigate the days ahead, we find solace in knowing that we are not alone. The collective strength of the Santa Rosa community has been a source of inspiration, and we are deeply moved by the compassion and empathy you have shown.

Please accept our heartfelt thanks for your support and helping us to celebrate the beautiful life she lived. Mrs. Tenorio would undoubtedly be touched by the outpouring of kindness and love that you have shown to her family.

In God’s name, let us continue to support and uplift one another. We pray for continued blessings for our Santa Rosa community and all our families.

WITH LOVE

The family of

MRS. MARIA TENORIO

DECEMBER 29, 1933  
— JANUARY 12, 2024

