

Questa del Rio News

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Family Comforted by Community After Losing Home to Fire



Courtesy Photo

The family home in the Taos Canyon is engulfed in flames on January 12, 2024

By MIKAYLA ORTEGA

Benita and Lucas Lovato, along with their two precious children Mila and Luke, lost everything in a house fire in Taos Canyon on January 12, 2024. Benita works as a lead nurse with the Taos Municipal Schools and at the emergency room in Espanola, while Lucas works with the New Mexico department of transportation in Eagle Nest.

It was January 12 and Lucas was on his 13th day in a row of working at keeping the roads clear of ice and snow. Benita and their children were home late after a two-hour delay. "I had made a fire that morning and we were just hanging out before it was time to leave for school," Benita recalls.

It was around 11:30 a.m. that she got a call from their next-door neighbors, telling her that their home was on fire. "I just remember rushing home and while I was on the road, calling my parents, Lucas' parents, and Lucas, to tell them..."



Courtesy Photo

Lucas, Mila and Luke pose with a snowman in front of their Taos Canyon home

When Lucas and Benita met their parents at their home, it was fully engulfed in flames. "We had to stand and watch our home and everything we owned burn from noon to about 5:30 in the evening." The trusses of the home

were on fire, which forced the roof to collapse inside.

Dealing with much guilt, Benita says she felt some relief when the fire marshal determined the cause of the fire was due to the back plate of the stove thinning out from repeated use, thereby starting a fire. Its spreading to the walls was inevitable. "He told me, if it hadn't started during the day, it would've started that night when Lucas left for work and me and the kids could've been sleeping—so really, the timing of the fire was a blessing," Benita says.

When the couple saw their kids that evening, they didn't realize how difficult it would be to break the news to them that their home and belongings were gone. "We told them, and we didn't think our 4-year-old Luke would take it so hard, but he ended up crying for an hour. His toys and stuffed animals were his life.

Got a story? Email us at editor@questanews.com

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OUR MISSION

To Inform, Inspire, Connect and Unite the Communities of Northern Taos County.

NUESTRO OBJETIVO

Es informar, inspirar, contactar, y unir a toda la comunidad del norte del condado de Taos.

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Critical Questions Help New Mexico Refocus and Move Forward

By CONTRIBUTING WRITER
JUAN CISNEROS

Senator George Muñoz (D-Gallup) is the Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, February 9, he stated, in a Santa Fe New Mexican article on February 9, "I want to be known as the guy that had agreements to move New Mexico forward."

Really? How has Senator Muñoz done that? Senate Bill 197, sponsored by State Senator Bobby Gonzales, and co-sponsored by State Representative Kristina Ortez and State Senator Pete Campos, passed the Senate Conservation Committee with an 8-1 vote on January 30, 2024.

From there, SB 197 went to Muñoz's committee and died while waiting for a hearing. This was a bill to appropriate \$12.7 million for water infrastructure in Taos County—including funds for acequias, mutual domestic water associations, the Village of Questa, and the Town of Taos. All these projects are shovel-ready. Two projects would have helped in implementing the crucial Abeyta Settlement, in partnership with Taos Pueblo—a top priority for the state of New Mexico.

Senator Muñoz chose to hear the following bills in his committee, instead of SB 197:

- SB 189 – Connie Mack World Series Advertising
- SB 106 – Declaration of Independence Anniversary
- SB 93 – Chile Harvesting Funds

While these may be good bills, do they really take priority over struggling

rural communities of Taos County? Communities that are in danger of losing their water rights due to a lack of sufficient water infrastructure?

A question I have for Senator Muñoz is, What's the process? How does the Senate finance committee determine what bills set precedence over other bills, what's important enough to get the attention of the committee, who makes that decision and how is it determined? What harm would there have been to simply hear SB 197 in his committee for the benefit of Taos County? It was passed 8-1 in the previous committee, so does that hold no merit? A vote like that tells me 8 out of the 9 Senators in the previous committee thought SB 197 was a good Bill and needed to go to the next level, was that not taken into consideration?

I had the honor of assessing the needs of the northern acequia associations, and helping Senator Gonzales draft SB 197, I have the honor of being one of his expert witnesses for the Senate conservation committee for this bill, as I stated before, passed 8-1. Although it is discouraging that SB 197 didn't make it to be heard in the Senate finance committee, we have to give a big thank you to Senator Gonzales for not giving up. Although the bill never moved forward Senator Gonzales is actively working with State agencies to get funds appropriated so the projects can be completed.

Juan Cisneros is a Questa school board member, business owner, and rancher in Questa, New Mexico.

THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THE MARCH ISSUE OF QUESTA DEL RIO NEWS!

DOMINIC APODACA, JUAN CISNEROS, TERESA DOVALPAGE, KELLY GARCIA, ESTEBAN GOMEZ, KATRINA GONZALES, LORI GONZALES, ERNIE AND REBECCA GRIEGO, AEDON HANNON, MAX KHUDIYAKOV, LUCAS AND BENITA LOVATO, KIMBER MACDONALD, DJ MANDONADO, LIAM MARTINEZ, GHOST WRITER MIGUEL, TONER MITCHELL, JOHN O'DONOHUE, J. ORTEGA, JOHN ORTEGA, DANIELLE PROKOP, LUIS REYES JR., MELLIE RODRIGUEZ, MERCEDES RODRIGUEZ, RACHAEL ROMERO, AMY SIMMS, PEGGY TRIGG, MARISA VIALPANDO,

ASSOCIATED PRESS, HIGH DESERT HOUNDS, QUESTA CREATIVE COUNCIL, TAOS HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

FAMILY HOUSE FIRE cont'd from page 1

Mila, our 5-year-old, has a strong faith in God, and she quickly jumped into action, consoling Luke and telling him God will provide," Benita continues.

Over a month since the horrible ordeal, Benita and Lucas are slowly working to piece their lives back together. The home was a rent-to-own property, therefore they still don't have a clear path forward on whether they'll be able to rebuild on the same property or what the insurance will cover. They moved in with their parents in Costilla and Taos in the wake of the fire's destruction, and are still going back and forth with their two children every week.

During the time of this interview, the family was in Albuquerque buying stuff for their new home. The family was able to find a home to rent in Taos, however, still have not been able to move in, as they do not have most of the necessities such as furniture, beds, sheets, comforters, etc.

When this incident occurred, the

community was quick to rally around the Lovato family, establishing a fundraiser for them on GiveSendGo. "The community has been nothing short of amazing. Right now, people have raised a little over \$10,000 for us and we have been met with constant support and prayers," Benita says.

"It's amazing how quickly your family shows up in a blink of an eye when you need them," Lucas says. "That has been the biggest part in all this, is to see how quick family and friends are there for you, to buy your kids clothes, or toys, or necessities. It's been a blessing."

Recently, the family decided to return to their burned home with their children to see and process what had happened. "It's just so devastating. There is about four inches of ice and insulation covering all of our belongings. We don't know if anything is salvageable, and we'll have to wait until the spring to really know. We don't think it will be, so we are literally starting from square one," Benita says.

The family is grateful for the out-



Courtesy Photo

The Lovato Family at Christmastime, a few short weeks before the devastating house fire

pouring of support from the community, however, they still have a very long road ahead of them. When asked how the community can continue to support them, they say donations and prayers is the best and surest way they will be able to continue carving their path forward. "We've had people ask if we needed things, but honestly, we don't even know what we need right now. We are starting to figure things out so the donations that have been given to us are being used to help us reestablish ourselves and our lives," Benita says. "Prayers and well wishes have also been a huge comfort for us. People have shown up for us in the most amazing ways so even when we are in the thick of it, we aren't alone. I can't even express in words what that means to us."

If you would like to support the family financially and stay updated on their story, you can donate at <https://www.givesendgo.com/GBKQY>. You can also mail checks to 24 Puesta Del Sol, Taos, NM 87571.

Local Man Reported Missing, Found Dead

By MIKAYLA ORTEGA

Daniel (Danny) Martinez, 75 of Questa, New Mexico was reported missing on February 21. He was last seen at the Alta Gas Station in Costilla at 11:30 a.m., headed northbound on 522. Daniel resided in Garcia, Colorado at the time of his disappearance and his wife had no knowledge of his whereabouts.

The Costilla County Sheriff's Office issued a missing person Facebook post on the February 22, including Danny's physical characteristics, advising the public that Danny was a diabetic and in need of medication. Many Questa locals took to social media, pleading with the community to be on the lookout for him. Groups of people joined together in search parties, looking for

Danny in the southern Colorado and northern New Mexico area.

On Saturday, February 24, Danny's family reported that his truck had been located in the San Luis Valley area, however, he still remained missing. According to his family, a Silver Alert had been issued for Danny. These alerts are a public notification system in to broadcast information about missing persons online and to the media— especially senior citizens with Alzheimer's disease, dementia, or other mental disabilities or medical conditions— in order to aid in locating them.

On Sunday, February 25, Danny's presumptive remains were located near the same location where his truck was found. His cause of death will be determined by the coroner.

We send our sincerest condolences to the family of Danny Martinez.



Courtesy photo

Danny Martinez

POEM OF THE MONTH

Ides of March

The Ides - denote a new full moon
On odd number months - swoon.
Julius Caesar met his timely doom
On the 15th, the Senate took room.
Despots (dictators) come and go
Congress stays for another show.
When Democracy turns into a joke
It might be better to stay *Woke.
Strange lights seen from Rio's rim
It's stabbing stars Marching on in.

* (Aware)

— Señor Miguel
Ghost Writer

Questa del Rio News is an editorially independent local news source published by the Questa Economic Development Fund, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that works in the public interest to advance a diversified sustainable local economy.

OUR JOURNALISTIC ETHICS POLICY

The Society of Professional Journalists declares four principles as the foundation of ethical journalism and encourages their use in its practice by all people in all media. We have adopted these principles as our own:

- Seek Truth and Report It.
- Minimize Harm.
- Act Independently.
- Be Accountable and Transparent.

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Der Markt Grocery Store

By MIKAYLA ORTEGA

The Red River Der Markt grocery store has been serving the Red River community since 1960. Owners Ted and Linda Calhoun made sure that food security was a priority for the residents and tourists of Questa's small neighboring community tucked in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains.

Questa native Rachael Romero has worked for the Calhouns since 1988. "I have been with the store since before I was a mom and this is the place I met my husband, Miguel," Rachael says. At the time she met him, he had already been with the store for several years, but when they realized they were a match, he decided to move on to pursue a career in local government. "It was good that he moved on, because we couldn't work together and go home together. There would be nothing to talk about if that were the case," she jokes.

When asked how Rachael has been with the store for so many years, she

is quick to point out that the Calhoun family has been good to her. Currently serving as the general manager, Rachael handles accounts payable, receivables, personnel, onboarding, training, ordering, and scheduling. While her job is mostly oversight for the business, Rachael says she is always ready to run the register as well as stock and face shelves.

"I work seven days a week; I don't take time off unless I need to... because sometimes it's more work than if I [had] just worked," she says. Running the store as if it were her own, Rachael takes pride in ensuring the store is clean, friendly, and has a variety of merchandise to ensure shoppers have what they need, right in town.

Rachael is a mother of four and grandmother of six. "I live for my family—family is always first—and this job has given me the opportunity to provide everything my family needed over the years," she says. "Now, I am hopeful I can still be working so my grandkids can also come work at the store," she says.

Der Markt has been a long-term employer of many Red River and Questa residents and Rachael is proud that Der Markt jobs have helped build opportunities for many generations of local residents as well as her own children, who have all worked in the store during their teen years, gaining valuable experience and work ethic to go on and establish careers for themselves. "People who have worked at our store have taken



Courtesy Photo

the skills they learned working here and put them to use. It's a great thing to be able to provide people the opportunities they need to provide for their family or to help them as they attend college or trade school."

While Rachael has been with the store longest, she has employees who have had equally long careers with Der Markt. "Lisa Cisneros has been with us since 1997, so 27 years! Her daughters Melissa and Martina have both worked for the store, too."

Currently, the store employs nine full-time and four part-time staff. "It's difficult to find employees these days. This job is demanding and labor inten-

sive. We have block[ed out] times during the year where you can't take time off because it's the busy season. One thing I can say for certain, however, is your hours will never get cut and you will make your 40 hours a week," she says.

Full-time employees start at \$15 per hour. The store also offers medical insurance, PTO, and sick leave. Retirement benefits are also available after a certain amount of time working for the business. Additionally, employees are sure to do 40 hours per week, with a high likelihood of overtime availability. If you're interested in working for the store, visit <https://www.dermarktfoodstore.com/employment/>.

DJ's Yard Strives To Serve Community

By STAFF WRITERS

DJ's Yard is a diverse business offering painting services, fencing, flooring, remodeling, house cleaning, lawn care, landscaping, drywall, woodwork, demolition, and snow removal.

DJ's Yard has been in operation since 2019. The owner, DJ Mandonado, says he has been working for four years and just recently started advertising the businesses services in an effort to grow and expand his venture into a full-time job.

DJ is always looking for ways to serve the community, or as he sees it, he gives when people need a helping hand. "I've always been one to want to help which is why I decided to join the fire department." For Halloween, DJ decided to purchase dozens of pumpkins and hand them out to kids in Questa.

"Now that I am a business owner,



I have found that I am able to take matters into my own hands and make things happen. I think our community needs community members who help each other, not just people who live in the same town."

Additionally, DJ recognizes that

elderly residents in Questa may not be able to clear snow from their driveways. "Of course, everyone likes to make money running a business but sometimes, taking a quick 30 minutes out of your day to help someone out who can't afford it or can't do it on their own, that is worth more than money."

Born and raised in Questa, DJ is proud that he is able to give back to his community, not only by running a business in town, but by investing in his community. "If there is anything I want people to know about what I do with my business and otherwise, it's pretty simple. We take pride in our work and will do whatever it takes to make our customers happy. We prioritize our customer and employee safety at every job."

To inquire about services, contact DJ at (575) 240-4316.

Green Hydrogen Project Awaiting News Of USDA Grant Funding

By DYLAN R.N. CRABB

A green hydrogen project, currently in development in our area, is waiting on a major funding source from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Empowering Rural America (New ERA) program.

Questa's green hydrogen project is competing with projects from all over the country for funding through this program. Kit Carson Electric Cooperative had submitted a letter of interest to the USDA in the application window last summer, and, according to Luis Reyes, CEO of Kit Carson Electric

GREEN HYDROGEN cont'd on page 9

Sangre de Cristo Valley Market Expands Options and Access for Customers

By MIKAYLA ORTEGA

The Sangre de Cristo Market has been open for nearly three months and is quickly diversifying their options and accessibility for locals in the northern Taos County communities.

Store owner Dominick Apodaca says the store is proud to now accept SNAP EBT and is working to get WIC approved for customers who use this as a payment for their groceries. This accessibility allows the store to diversify its customer base, serving as many people as possible.

Additionally, the store has received official approval to serve ready-made food. “We have the smoker going and right now, we’re serving ribs, chicken, pork chops, smoked salmon... just diversifying the options so people can have different choices of food for lunch or dinner.”

Apodaca is happy to report that he is slowly incorporating locally sourced



Courtesy Photo

and organic foods. “We are going to have farm-fresh eggs soon and I have identified that Cerro Vista Farms can provide cabbage and carrots.” While the meats are not yet locally sourced, Dominick says he is still working to get local ranchers their USDA certification, so he



Courtesy Photo

can sell their products.

“While our meats aren’t locally sourced yet, we are increasing the choices of meat we offer, including lamb chops and fresh fish.”

Dominick reiterates that this commitment to diversification does have

its challenges. “I am managing more logistics and running around because I am piecing together orders from locals, but it’s worth it because I know that the money is going directly to the local community. In rural communities, the economy is a challenge, so I am committed to reinvesting locally.”

Recently, Dominick was the recipient of a \$55,000 grant from the Healthy Food Financing Fund through the State of New Mexico. “I am so blessed for this funding. It will go toward new compressors. It’s a huge relief for me as I have done all other upgrades on my own, so this was amazing and welcome news.”

For the Valentine’s Day holiday, the store was able to provide flower bouquets and chocolate-dipped strawberries, a glimpse into ways the store is working to expand options for residents, saving locals a trip to Taos or Santa Fe.

To see periodic updates from the store’s offerings, be sure to follow them on Facebook under SDC Valley Market.

Party On Party Rentals: Booking Up Fast!

By STAFF WRITERS

Party On Party Rentals is a new Questa-run business, providing high quality party rental services to northern New Mexico communities. “We have chairs, tents, tables, [and] various things you would need to throw a big party,” co-owner (with her husband Larry) Lori Gonzales says.

Lori and Larry lived in Denver for

eleven years, and then decided to return home to be closer to their family. “I remember Larry had such a hard time being away from his dad, and I realized I want to be close to my granddaughters, so I told Larry, it’s time for us to move home... within days, I had our home packed up,” said Lori.

After moving back, they began planning a party, when Lori says she

realized they couldn’t easily find chairs and tables. “That’s when I realized that this is a resource people in northern New Mexico need... and that is why we decided to open our business.”

The company’s busiest times are summertime, so Lori encourages residents to book sooner than later to ensure they can adequately serve customers. To learn more, contact them at (575) 779-0906.



Courtesy Photo

A glimpse of Party On Party Rentals Set Up

Appreciation For Red River Ski Area Staff From Questa Students

By STAFF WRITERS

In early February, students from the Questa Independent Schools and participants in the Questa Snow Sports Program presented employees of the Red River Ski Area with gifts of appreciation for allowing them to shred on the mountain during the 2023-24 ski season.

A Facebook post from the QISD reports that the students worked in their

trades classes to create unique pieces for presentation.

“The art departments at Alta Vista Elementary and QJSHS painted the snowboards and QJSH Agriculture program created the plaque,” the post read.

The schools and Questa community send a hearty thank you and encourage readers to stop by and check out student work, next time you’re at the ski area.

See page 18 for our full coverage on Questa’s Snow Sports Program.



Courtesy Photo

Students and staff pose together as students show their appreciation to Red River Ski Area staff

Free Creative Business Workshops from March through May

By STAFF WRITERS

Three creative business development workshops will be held in Questa, Peñasco, and Taos between March and May, sponsored by a recent grant award won by Taos County.

Taos County was among 18 recipients of the inaugural Creative Industries grant award, funded by the New Mexico Economic Development Department. The grants flow from House Bill 8, passed during the 2023 Legislature, that establishes the Creative Industries Division as part of the Economic Development Department.

The newly announced grants will catalyze local communities and tribes to stimulate advancement or economic development through creative industries. A total of \$1.8 million was awarded.

Taos County's project is a two-pronged program that will expand upon and continue a youth internship program currently underway at the Taos Center for the Arts (TCA) that places

young people in paid internships with arts and cultural organizations.

The second part of the project will offer three in-person, weekend-long business development workshops across the county for artists, makers and creative entrepreneurs. The Taos Arts Council will administer the various projects within the grant, through their newly hired grant coordinator Lindsey Rae Gjording. Taos County and the Taos Arts Council are working with the Mid-America Arts Alliance (M-AAA) through their Artist Inc. Express program to deliver the three creative entrepreneur training workshops.

Creatives of all types—both new and those established in their careers—are invited to attend the workshops, which help with both personal branding and building business foundations for art and creative endeavors.

Free catered lunch on both days will be provided, along with stipend money to cover transportation, accommodation, childcare and elder care costs

that may be incurred in order to attend the workshop.

The workshop dates are as follows:

- Questa workshop on March 2-3
- Peñasco workshop on April 27-28
- Taos workshop on May 18-19

Additional information and registration for all workshops is available at <https://www.taosartscouncil.org/artist-inc-express/>

The Chamber of Commerce will be an important partner in cultivating and supporting the creative entrepreneurs who are seeking to build relationships with the broader business community.

Taos County is committed to equitable access to the creative business development workshops, and has dedicated funds in the grant budget for transportation, accommodation, child and/or elder care, and other needs that may arise that would otherwise prohibit individuals from participating and advancing their creative practices.

The two project pieces will offer a

continuum of direct workforce development opportunities that build the capacity of the County's cultural institutions for the long term, helping create a trained and sustainable workforce to enhance the fabric of its creative community. The workshops are specifically designed to serve artists and creative entrepreneurs from across disciplines and at all points in their career trajectories.

This opportunity will also allow Taos County and partners to explore the long-term viability of establishing its own creative entrepreneur program that could be led and operated locally, with revenue-generating opportunities for local partners.

This initial grant funding is a unique moment to provide high-quality training for local businesses and the County's own education as service providers to ensure business and workforce development programs such as these for the foreseeable future. Please email projects@taosartscouncil.org for additional information.



Dedrick Rael

By STAFF WRITERS

For our March issue, we are happy to recognize Dedrick Rael, son of Annette and Michael Rael Jr. and brother to Isabel Rael.

Dedrick is 16 years old and he is deeply entrenched in his community. He plays soccer, is a member of the Questa Mariachi, and he plays guitar in Miguel Rael's church choir at St. Anthony's Church. He is an active member of the St. Anthony's Youth Group and was an altar boy until 2020, when the pandemic eliminated altar servers.

Dedrick works at Questa Hardware

and in his free time, he enjoys visiting with his elders as they play music together at Rael's Jam Sessions on Thursdays. Additionally, Dedrick is committed to helping his grandma Maxine who lost her husband Fred in 2018.

"Dedrick is my mom's right-hand man. He keeps up with the park maintenance in the summer and sweeps the snow for my mom and the tenants of the park during the winter months. He saw how my dad's absence impacted my mom and he steps up to the plate," his mother Annette says. Additionally, Dedrick serves as a Junior Firefighter with the Questa Fire Department.

Dedrick was named for this recognition by a community member who saw him sweeping snow for the Questa Hardware mall.

Annette says Dedrick is special and has an old soul. "We will go to basketball games, and I'll look around for him, and he is usually at the top of the gym talking with adults in our community. He values that interpersonal connection with people," she says.



Courtesy Photo

Saint Anthony's Catholic Church Hosting Fundraiser

By STAFF WRITERS

Saint Anthony's Catholic Church in Questa is hosting a fundraiser to continue bringing in funds for reconstruction and upgrades to the new rectory.

Tickets are going for \$50 apiece and there will be a chance to win cash prizes as detailed below. Prizes include:

- Grand Prize of \$5,000
- 4 prizes of \$500 each
- 4 prizes of \$250 each
- 3 prizes of \$200 each
- 1 prize of \$150 each
- 2 \$100 gift cards to Smith's Grocery Store

The raffle will be held when the tickets are all sold or for the Feast of Saint Anthony in June.

To purchase a ticket, you can contact:

- Cynthia Rael-Vigil at Rael's Coffee Shop at (575) 779-9249
- Louise Gallegos at (575) 613-5490
- Saint Anthony's Parish at (575) 586-0470

LOCAL NEWS ANYTIME AT QUESTANEWS.COM



Katrina Gonzales

By MIKAYLA ORTEGA

Being raised in a community where your history connects to every part of your present, it's difficult to find the courage to leave. It is similarly difficult to forge a path and stay.

Questa del Rio News is committed to highlighting different members of our community, both those who have created their paths and planted their own roots in the community that raised them, and also those who have pursued lives outside of the community — through our Representando series. This series is dedicated to those who are Representando al Norte in various facets of life.

For our March issue, we spoke with Questa Village Councilwoman Katrina Gonzales.

At 17 years old, Katrina was a typical carefree teen living and enjoying life as a student athlete in Questa. She represented the Ladycats in North South Volleyball as an outside hitter and middle blocker. In 2002 she traveled to Hawaii where she performed as an All-American Cheerleader for the half time show for the Hula Bowl. It was then she noticed a change in her skin and the condition was not subsiding. Her life changed significantly when she was diagnosed with Vitiligo, an autoimmune disease that causes pigment-producing cells to die.

After graduating with honors in 2003, Katrina decided to embrace life fully as she moved to Albuquerque where she obtained a degree in cosmetology from CNM. Where she got the opportunity for a college internship at Walt Disney World in Florida.

Her assignment was Epcot Center on a boat exhibit called Living with the Land. "Being at Disney World was a blast! In addition to having culture shock, there was a lot of work involved. I had to memorize a 17-page script for a 40-passenger boat. I recited the script 30 times a day, it was a lot for a shy small town girl like me,"

she laughs. Katrina finally grew confident in her role and was soon recognized by management who arranged for her to attend princess auditions.

"There were hundreds of girls there. Slowly, we were dwindling down into smaller groups. Then, there were about 15 of us in a room and we all looked alike. It was so weird! We were casted as Pocahantas!" Gonzales made appearances in parades and on the grounds at Animal Kingdom. "We couldn't break character and had strict schedules to ensure we were never in the same place at the same time so we wouldn't ruin 'the magic'. That was one of my favorite experiences of all time."

Katrina decided to return to New Mexico after experiencing Hurricane Charlie.

Upon her return home, she decided to fully embrace her diagnosis even after her doctor told her she would likely never have children. "I remember my doctor saying, 'if your immune system is attacking your own skin pigment as something foreign, what do you think would happen with a developing fetus?' It was a devastating realization that children may never be in her, and partner, Justin's future. It was because of this, Katrina decided to change gears and work with at-risk youth with Teambuilders. "If I couldn't have kids of my own, then I would work with kids who needed help."

While at teambuilders, She simultaneously worked as a promotional model for Southern Wine and Spirits. "as a Jager girl, the goal was basically to help restaurants and bars increase liquor sales." Soon, Katrina was a top promoter in the state of New Mexico. "I was working with kids in the day and promoting at night"

It was in 2013 that Katrina found doctors aren't always right. She was ecstatic when she found herself expecting daughter Skarlet. "When I got pregnant, I knew I had to make a career change because although I loved my work, it was not a safe environment for me to carry my baby."

In 2014, Katrina applied to Dental Hygiene School. "They told me I was the 100th applicant to the program and they only admitted 30. Being an accelerated program, it was extremely competitive, but it was totally worth it." As if it weren't challenging enough, her first year into the program, to much surprise, Katrina was expecting their second child, Ezekiel. "I had



Courtesy Photo

Zeke on a Tuesday and was in class on Thursday for an exam. I studied while I was in labor. I couldn't miss too much time without having to completely reapply to the program the following year. That's how intense the program was."

Katrina graduated in 2017 and began her career with Heartland Dental where she showed her innate leadership abilities once again and became a regionwide mentor. "I had the same technical skills as my colleagues, but I knew how to connect with people. I was able to make my patients comfortable. I learned etiquette at Walt Disney World, I had experience working with kids, I knew how to thrive in fast paced environments, and I know what it's like to feel scared or insecure about your appearance. That's what I feel makes me a great clinician."

In 2020, Katrina and Justin made the decision to return home to Questa after experiencing Covid while living in the city. "Covid really opened our eyes to what was important. Food was scarce and all the conveniences of living in the city were taken away. It was time for us to come home. We always wanted to move back 'someday' so why not now?"

Coming home meant they had to build their home from the ground up with the help of her dad Dan, father-in-law Joe and partner Justin. "I don't know what we would have done without our family"

One day during the construction phase of their home, she recalled John Anthony Ortega stopped by to talk with her and Justin about their return home. "He was running for mayor at the time, and I was honest about everything that I felt needed to be improved in our small town. I shared my thoughts about everything from crime, to schools, to economy. I didn't hold back. When he left, Justin joked that John Anthony probably hated me for being so blunt," she says as she chuckles. In fact, her honest conversation did the exact opposite, leading to an appointment as a Village of Questa Councilwoman in April, 2022.

"When Mayor Ortega approached me, I didn't know if I was qualified or ready to take on that role, then I realized, I have integrity and a genuine interest in seeing Questa improve. I may still be learning government and politics, but my heart is in the right place, and I put in extra work to ensure I am acting in the best interest of my community," she says.

In 2023, Katrina worked tirelessly to revive the Fiestas de San Antonio de Rio Colorado. In 2022, she spearheaded efforts to collect necessities for the people of Mora who were affected by Calf Canyon Fire / Hermits Peak fires. "The kids went with us when we delivered the donations. They've also helped during community clean up days. We want them to learn and value the importance of serving their community."

"Being able to help people and contribute to the community that raised me, this is my biggest accomplishment to date," she says.

When looking back at her life, Katrina says she has learned through the years never to compare herself to others. "I am in certain places at certain times for certain reasons. All of us are. I know that where I am now, will serve me in the future and that stands true for everyone else if you just believe and trust in your journey. Every single experience I've had has prepared me for the next opportunity. I have always had an open heart to experiences, and they've led me directly where I needed to be, helping me gain meaningful lessons along the way," she says.

Katrina will be planning the Fiestas de San Antonio de Rio Colorado once again in 2024. If you're interested in being involved, reach out to her at kgonzales@villageofquesta.org.



Questa Wildcat's Season Recap

By C.W. MARTIN

The Questa Wildcats Boys basketball team entered the final week of the regular season with a tough road matchup in Espanola, to take on the McCurdy Bobcats. With just two games left on the regular-season schedule, and the district tourney beginning the following week, the Wildcats had a chance to continue developing their young talent, as well as a chance to let their Seniors finish their high school playing careers off on a strong note.

For a team in a rebuild under first year Head Coach Mike Rael, the attitudes have remained positive in a season where wins have been hard to come by. "Yeah, (we) finally came around – played well for 3 out of 4 quarters. Attitudes have been good...Happy down the

stretch, I think we have finally got our culture turned around," Coach Rael said.

Despite their 3-20 record beginning the week, there has been a noticeable improvement in certain aspects of the team and moments that stood out to reflect the progression. Two of the Wildcats' wins this season came over former district opponent, the Coronado Leopards, who had a record of 7-14 coming into the week. Questa's other win came at the Dual Cities Tourney in Santa Rosa over a good Monte Del Sol Charter school.

By comparison to the last few seasons, the Wildcats have won two more games than last year; not to mention, the Wildcats are also playing in one of the best districts in New Mexico Class 2A this season, with District 5 having four teams likely to make the state playoffs this season, which is the most from any 2A district in the state.

Senior Antonio Romeo has led the Wildcats all season, as a consistent scorer and defensive presence. Romero also crossed the one-thousand point mark for his high school playing career this season. Martin Rivera and Nathaniel Rael have also played well in moments for the Wildcats in their Senior seasons.

Wildcats fans should be looking forward to next season. Freshman Point Guard Covo Cardenas has stood out as one of the young players that is likely to



Courtesy Photo

make an impact in the coming seasons. Guard Carlos Ortega will be entering his Senior season. Ortega has made plays this season. The Wildcats also have a group of underclassmen who look like players that could develop into important parts of this rebuild.

The Wildcats played one of their best games of the season in their final home game of the season, with a chance to get Penasco without their starting Point

Guard, Angel Romero. Questa took advantage of the opportunity, leading 13-11 at the end of the first quarter.

The Wildcats continued playing well in the second quarter, even extending their lead to double-digits at one point, 24-14 before the Panthers tied it at the half. The Panthers jumped out early in the third, scoring the first seven points of the quarter. The Wildcats kept the

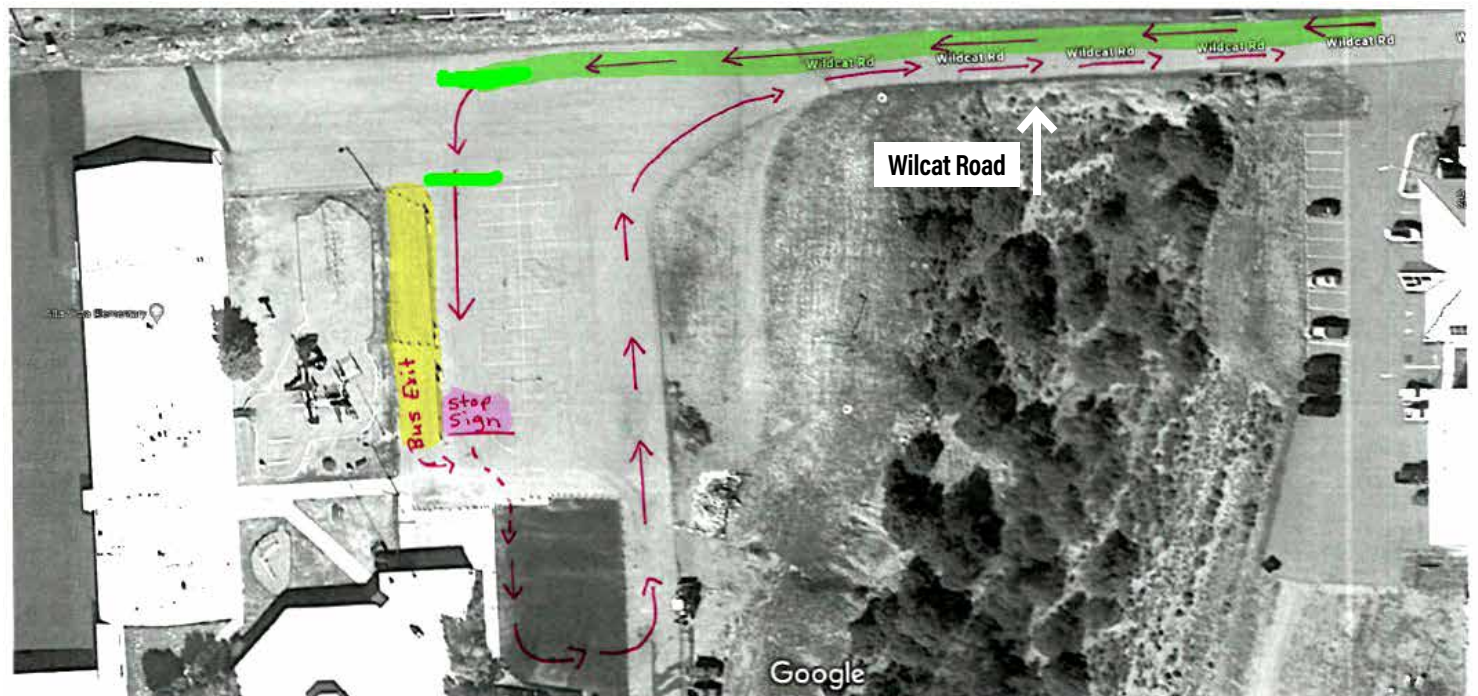
BOYS BASKETBALL cont'd on page 21

Questa School Map for Pick-Up and Drop-Off of Students

By STAFF WRITERS

In an effort to minimize confusion and stress during pickup times for drivers, bus drivers, and school personnel, Questa Independent Schools has shared this map, encouraging parents and guardians to follow the uniform flow of traffic as shown.

The instructions included with the map read: Pull alongside the fence, parallel to school buses and in front of parked cars. **DO NOT BLOCK THE BUS ENTRANCE.** You will need to wait for all buses to exit before pulling up to the drop-off/pick-up site. In addition, students will now need to enter and exit vehicles **ONLY** on the passenger side.



Pull alongside the fence parallel to the buses and in front of the parked cars.

DO NOT BLOCK THE BUS ENTRANCE

You will need to wait for all buses to exit before pulling up to the drop-off/pick-up site. Students will now be exiting/entering your vehicle on the passenger side.

Questa FFA Travels to State Contest in Albuquerque

By CONTRIBUTING WRITER
CLARA ADAMS

On October 26, 2023, middle school Future Farmers of America (FFA) members Jolene Segura, Allison Segura, Kacie Chapman, and Jessica Jackson traveled with their advisors, Mrs. Adams and Deyhle Adkins, to Farmington for district contests.

The four girls competed in the quiz contest and the creed speech. For that competition, the group had a successful trip and as a team, they placed First Place in the quiz contest (a 100-question quiz that includes questions about FFA and agriculture issues). In the quiz contest, Jessica Jackson placed first, Allison Segura placed second, and Jolene Segura placed third. In the Creed speech contest: a contest in which students memorize the 5-paragraph FFA Creed, present it to a panel of judges and answer questions related to the creed. Allison Segura placed First, Kacie Chapman placed third, and Jessica Jackson placed fourth.

The top three participants in each contest went on to compete at the state level last month in Albuquerque. The middle school FFA state contest was held in conjunction with the Leadership Conference from February 9-11. At state, the quiz contest is much like a jeopardy game in which students have to not only know the answers to the questions but be quick to the buzzer. Questa made it to the semi-finals



Courtesy Photo

Questa FFA members pose for a photo at state

but eventually fell to the Ft. Sumpter state champions.

Kacie Chapman and Allison Segura did their best performances of the year in the Creed speech contest but did not make the top 5 in the state.

Once the contests were complete, Questa FFA middle school members joined 740 other FFA members from across the state in the Leadership Conference. Members participate in workshops that encourage leadership and team-building activities.

Questa FFA is glad to be back in the district and looks forward to building the program and seeing just how far we can go as an organization.

BOYS BASKETBALL cont'd from page 20

lead to four points, by the end of the third, with the score, 43-39. Penasco pulled away late, extending their lead to 18 points by the end of the game.

In their final games on the court of the Mini-Pit, Senior Nathaniel Rael led the Wildcats in scoring with 11 points, and Senior Antonio Romero scored 9 points on the night. Freshman Covo Cardenas added 8 points for the Wildcats.

With the win, the Penasco Panthers improved to 7-18 on the season and 2-8 in district play. Solid win to close out the regular season for the Panthers, while missing one of their starters.

Questa might have played one of

their most complete three quarters of the season, before the Panthers pulled away in the fourth. The Wildcats fell to 3-22 overall and 0-10 in the district on the season.

The Wildcats' next game was the opening round of the 2A District 5 Tournament. Questa went on the road to take on the Mora Rangers. A loss in this game would end the Wildcats' season.

For more coverage of 2A District 5 and other Class 2A teams, as well as teams from around the state of New Mexico throughout the season, including recaps and game highlights, please visit cwmartinsports.blogspot.com and youtube.com/CWMartinSports.

All footage and photos come courtesy of Hudl.com and nfhnetwork.com.

Questa Ladycats Season Recap

By C.W. MARTIN

The Questa Ladycats basketball team have continued playing well this season, with a record of 16-7 going into their matchup with the district leading Mesa Vista Lady Trojans, on Saturday, February 17th. The Ladycats were ranked 7th in the state. Questa had won six of their last eight games and were in third place in the district behind Mesa Vista and Penasco.

Before Saturday's game with Mesa Vista, the Ladycats had been led in scoring this season by Sophomore Alyse Lovato, with 12.6 per game. Lovato also leads Questa with 6.8 rebounds per game and 5.3 steals per game. Kamryn Cardnas has also played well, scoring 9.5 points per game, as well as leading the team in assists with 4.3 per game. Alianna Gonzales has scored 8.8 points per game, also. Aliyah Santestevan has also scored 8.3 points per game. Aside from Lovato, these three players are all Juniors.

The future looks bright for the

Ladycats with four different scoring options, however, there is still a long way to go left in this season.

Questa's next game was on the road, visiting McCurdy on February 20th, and their regular season finale was at home on Saturday, February 24th, against Penasco.



Courtesy Photo

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Navigating the Legal Landscape: A Shift to Remote Work

By CONTRIBUTING WRITER
MARISA VIALPANDO

Covid, along with other factors, has prompted a reevaluation of our economic landscape. Remote work, facilitated by technological advancements, presents an opportunity for our community to diversify and thrive in the digital age. Yet, as we embark on this journey, understanding the legal aspects is of great importance.

Some key legal considerations for remote work include:

Employment Law Compliance

Even in a remote setting, while engaging in remote work, employees must be aware of employment laws such as wage and hour regulations, work-

place safety, and anti-discrimination laws. Employers must treat their remote workers as if it were an in-office job meaning they are subject to the same federal and state laws, this includes any risks or hazards, providing employees with a safe work environment.

Intellectual Property and Data Security

Data privacy is important for all digital work whether it is on work property or in your home. When collecting, processing, or storing data employees should be in compliance with encryption and access controls and understand the importance to prevent data breaches (intentional or unintentional). Complying with data protection laws and regulations varies by state. New

Mexico's Data Breach Notification Act requires notifying the owner or licensee of any data/security breaches as soon as possible.

Worker's Compensation

Regardless of the location of a job, employee injury or illness is compensable under worker's compensation if and only it arises in the course of employment. Proof of the injury being work-related is crucial in the case that an injury is being claimed outside of the workspace, according to [SHRM.org](https://www.shrm.org).

Remote Work Agreements

Depending on the company or employer, work rules and policies are to be applied to offsite locations. This includes some general expectations such

as avoiding alcohol consumption during work hours, distraction free environment, maintaining a workspace free of hazards, and giving undivided attention during virtual meetings. Avoiding disruptions to the workday leave room for a safe and hazard free remote work environment protecting employees and employers from any legal implications.

The effect of Covid and lack of work opportunities was undoubtedly a challenging moment for Questa. However, by embracing the potential of remote work, we can transform adversity into opportunity. Through community support, investment in digital infrastructure, and a commitment to adaptability, Questa can pave the way for a resilient and prosperous future.



Tackling Official Homeless Pet Practices In Taos County

Have you noticed the increase in homeless animals and overpopulation issues in Taos County? It is a concerning situation that has inspired us to take action. Our organization, High Desert Hounds, is dedicated to rescuing and caring for Taos County's unhoused and vulnerable dogs and puppies. Currently, we are seeing rural areas of Taos County lack the necessary resources and attention that are desperately needed, which is why our organization is stepping in to make a positive change.

Our mission is to provide routine and life-saving medical care, socialization, essential needs, and both temporary and permanent homes for animals left to fend for themselves. Since we started in November 2023, we have successfully rescued and helped save 35 dogs and puppies, providing them with spay, neuter, and medical services,

among other essential needs.

We believe that every animal deserves a safe and loving home. That's why we work tirelessly to help homeless animals in our community. Through our efforts, we hope to raise awareness about the importance of spaying and neutering pets, as well as the need for more resources and attention to rural areas in Taos County.

We hope to inspire others to join us in our mission to address the homeless animal and overpopulation issues in Taos County. Through our efforts, we hope to create a more compassionate and caring community for all animals in Taos County.

For more information, contact highdeserthoundstaos@gmail.com or call (469) 644-8323



Courtesy Photo

Taos Housing Partnership Begins Work on Housing Accessibility

By TAOS HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

The Questa Economic Development Fund (QEDF) is pleased to announce a new collaboration with Taos Housing Partnership (THP). The contractual project will begin with comprehensive study of the workforce housing needs facing the small, historic village. THP's approach to the initiative will follow a similar process Taos County took on in 2021, culminating in THP's 3-Year Recommended Housing Roadmap, which was adopted in September of 2023.

Questa conversations started several months ago following the publication of the Housing Roadmap. Local leaders including Mayor John Ortega, Pastor Gayle Martinez, and Community Officer Maria Gonzalez with the LOR Foundation all expressed interest in bringing the work of THP to Questa. Continued efforts were spearheaded by Lynn Skall, Director of the Questa Economic Development Fund (QEDF), who assisted in securing funding from Chevron Mines to get the project started.

During an initial presentation at the Village of Questa Council meeting on February 6, 2024, Skall noted "it is important that Questa isn't left out" of the housing conversation. "This housing assessment is essential to figure out what we need. It will be specific. We

will have a plan for our community moving forward," she added during her presentation.

In response to the needs of Questa, THP will focus largely on workforce housing in the area. As noted in a previous economic development report, the 2017 Questa Lodging Project, there is a connection between the lack of affordable workforce housing and the economic stability of the region.

Taos Housing Partnership will facilitate a series of community discussions, conduct individual stakeholder interviews, and review current building and housing ordinances. This information will be compiled into a community-driven housing needs assessment including suggestions for actionable steps to create more affordable workforce housing.

"We are in the start-up moment with a formal launch to take place in mid-March," noted Lisa O'Brien, Executive Director of THP. "Community engagement and local investment is crucial to create sustainable solutions and funding sources. THP is excited to lead the implementation of this work, while continuing to build out partnerships across all sectors. There is a role for everyone in the community to assist in this effort," O'Brien added.

For more information about this Questa housing project, contact lynn@questaedf.com or call (575) 586-2149



Questa Rallies Finding Effective Solutions

Here at the LOR Foundation, we're privileged to see the generosity and dedication of Questeños nearly every day in our work: Locals donate their time and energy to lead community projects that

make life better for everyone. But the ongoing renovation of of Questa's Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 9516 is something else entirely.

Questa's work to bring the building back to life—including the roughly \$25,000 locals donated—is inspiring. We are thrilled to support the restoration efforts and look forward to the day weddings, graduations, and baby showers return.

"It's extraordinary for the VFW to be on the cusp of being fully accessible and available," says Questa community officer Maria Gonzalez. "The absence of the VFW building has been hard for everyone, but the community support has been amazing and made this possible."

Gonzalez has seen other recent com-

munity solutions come from locals who are thinking creatively, too. In northern New Mexico and the rural southwest more broadly, water is always an issue. Yet, projects that tackle clean drinking water and water supplies can often feel out of reach. Connecting homes to village water can cost thousands of dollars, as can irrigation improvement projects.

Not all solutions have to be massive or expensive, though. Staff with the Village of Questa had a simple but crucial idea for shoring up local water supplies: new tools. Questa's Utility Department has lacked some of the tools needed to replace and repair water lines. Without that equipment, leaks have taken longer to fix, affecting Questa's municipal water system. With funding from LOR, the

department is purchasing tools such as underground pipe locators, portable generators, and a leak detector. Staff will be able to find leaks more quickly and repair them faster, strengthening Questa's water system.

"It's often the smallest ideas that have the biggest impact," Gonzalez says. As spring nears and with it, irrigation and planting, Gonzalez is hoping to hear more project ideas that reimagine water in Questa.

Community cleanup days are also around the corner, so if you have any ideas to help make Questa shine, learn more about how LOR can support your project by contacting Gonzalez at maria@lorfoundation.org or (575) 665-2001.

Red River's Economic Development & Tourism Director Awarded Esteemed Scholarship

By STAFF WRITERS

The Town of Red River is proud to announce that Director of Economic Development & Tourism Max Khudiakov has been awarded the International Economic Development Council's (IEDC) Diane Lupke Scholarship.

IEDC, the world's largest membership organization serving economic developers, annually grants four scholarships to assist professionals in advancing their careers and enhancing the economic vitality of their communities. The scholarship fund was established by Diane Lupke, CEcD, FM, HLM, with the goal of supporting economic development professionals in their pursuit of knowledge and skills that can be applied within their distressed communities.

Max Khudiakov emerged as one of the deserving recipients. "I am honored and grateful to be selected for the Diane Lupke Scholarship," said Khudiakov. "This scholarship affirms my commitment to improving economic development strategies for the benefit of the community, and to achieve this, I am eagerly working towards becoming a Certified Economic Developer."

The Certified Economic Developer (CEcD) credential is widely recognized as one of the most prestigious designations in the field, representing excellence and expertise. Max Khudiakov, dedicated to further strengthening Red River's economic landscape, hopes to expand his skill set and employ best practices in his role as Director of Economic Development & Tourism.



Courtesy Photo

opment & Tourism.

"We are immensely proud of Max's accomplishments and his drive to continuously improve as an economic development professional," said Red River

Mayor Linda Calhoun. "The Diane Lupke Scholarship is a testament to Max's commitment to our community and his determination to utilize his knowledge and skills for the greater good. This award also reflects positively on the Town of Red River, showcasing our dedication to fostering economic growth."

The Town of Red River is located on State Highway 38, 12 miles east of Questa, and like Questa, is nestled in the heart of New Mexico's Enchanted Circle Scenic Byway. Red River is known for its natural beauty, recreational opportunities, and thriving tourism. With Max Khudiakov at the helm of the economic development and tourism department, the Town is poised to experience further growth and progress.

GREEN HYDROGEN cont'd from page 4

Cooperative, the USDA was supposed to make an announcement for the awardees on December 15.

In a phone conversation with Reyes he explained, "We understand the big issue is that this program had \$10 billion in the fund and \$40 billion worth of applications, so they're doing a pretty thorough review and this

program to ensure funding is only for renewable energy."

The New ERA program "helps rural Americans transition to clean, affordable, and reliable energy. By reducing air and water pollution, New ERA funding improves health outcomes and lower energy costs for people in rural communities. New ERA program funding is available to member-owned rural electric cooperatives, which have been the backbone of America's rural

power delivery for nearly a century," according to the USDA. The New ERA program was earmarked for \$9.7 billion and was a part of President Joe Biden's Inflation Reduction Act, which passed both houses of Congress in 2022.

Reyes said that the USDA New ERA program is one of multiple sources of funding that they are looking at for the green hydrogen project. At this time, the project remains preliminary,

with no specific date set for the "shovel ready" phase.

"We're very optimistic; we have a very strong project," said Reyes. "It lines up with what Kit Carson is trying to achieve, which is a hundred percent renewable energy. It lines up with what the Village of Questa is looking for, which is a new economic base... It will never replace [the business brought in by the molybdenum mine]... I'm confident, it's a solid project."

LOCAL NEWS ANYTIME AT QUESTANEWS.COM



Village Council Listens to Speakers

ON LA CIENEGA, HOUSING, AND QUESTA-AREA ACEQUIA

By DYLAN R.N. CRABB

The Village of Questa Council held a regular meeting on the evening of February 13, 2024, during which they voted on infrastructure procurements and heard presentations from Taos Housing Partnership (THP) and Questa Economic Development Fund (QEDF).

Three people approached the podium during the initial public comment section of the council meeting to speak up in defense of saving the old La Cienega school building, which is being planned for demolition.

“Right now that building has asbestos, it has lead paint, the ceilings have caved in on portions of it, so it’s not an option,” said Mayor John Ortega on the old school. “It’s gonna take multi-millions of dollars just to clean it up in order to restore it.”

All the public speakers want to save the building for the historical significance it holds for community members. Mayor Ortega made it clear that he and the Council are “all ears” for potential solutions to keeping the La Cienega building.

After the public comment period, THP Executive Director Lisa O’Brien

presented a three-year plan for affordable housing advocacy and assistance. “Taos Housing Partnership came out of a group of us in leadership... primarily based in Taos County working with Taos Community Foundation about how to keep folks in their homes with rental protection assistance, when we were all faced with COVID,” explained Director O’Brien. “What came out of those conversations is... we hired a consultant, Jenn Lopez, [with Project Moxie] who is an absolute expert in affordable housing initiatives.”

This Taos Housing Partnership is three years in the making and is dedicated to a mission for affordable housing. In collaboration with Project Moxie, their three-year plan is organized into three phases involving (phase 1) community interviews and assessments, (phase 2) establishing branding and memorandums of understand (MOUs) with municipal governments, and (phase 3) implementing pre-development plans with established funding sources for affordable housing. The three-year plan is available at THP’s website, <https://tao-shousingpartnership.org>.

Director O’Brien explained that QEDF has contracted THP to specifically study Questa’s workforce housing and identify solutions for the area’s affordable housing needs. (*See the full story on page 8.*)

For more information about THP and the Questa study, contact lisa@taoshousingpartnership.org or call (575) 240-9673.

Councilor Louise Gallegos spoke up about water rights during O’Brien’s presentation. “This part of it I think is very important... because of where we live—water rights. Some of these people in this town are not up-to-date on their water rights so you need to incorporate that into your phase 1. As you’re looking

at the housing, look at the water rights that go along with the property.”

QEDF Executive Director Lynn Skall was the next to present. “I see my role in Questa is to make sure that Questa is specifically included in the initiatives happening in this county. Our situation in Questa is so different from any other part of the county that this housing assessment is essential to figure out what we need.”

Skall then pivoted to the new Questa-area acequia association in the works. “Over the past—not quite a year—we’ve had seven public meetings to talk about how the 15 separate acequias in our community, from San Cristobal all the way up to the Colorado border [can be brought] together to create one voice,” said Skall. “An organization that supports all of them... and that takes the lead on advocacy to the legislature even up to the federal level. It’s also to help with administration of water issues. By having a central association, very similar to what [Judy Torres] operates at the Taos Valley Acequia Association... she keeps her members up to date on water policies and regulation changes, this is what the our area-wide association would also do.”

Skall further explained that the point of this Questa-area association is to preserve the water rights that Questa and area residents already have and to utilize a stronger voice as a collective. The association will be moving forward with a steering committee which will be made up of one representative from each of the acequias, 15 people. Judy Torres will be the facilitator for the steering committee to assist in establishing the association and help form their leadership structure to operate the organization.

Director Skall can be reached at lynn@questaedf.com or at the QEDF offices co-located at the Questa Visitor

Center at the intersection of Highways 522 and 38.

After the presentations, the Council moved on to the action items, three of which passed through with no decisions, due to typos on the agenda. Action items A and B were listed on the agenda in reference to Embargo Road but in reality they relate to Cabresto Road. The Council felt it was best to pass on these action items pending reviews and revisions for the sake of transparency. Village Attorney Chris DeFillippo explained that simply tabling the items was not enough, because tabling would not allow for a change in the language on the agenda. The items will simply be added to an upcoming agenda with the proper language.

Village Clerk and Procurement Officer Valerie Vigil then took the podium to announce two procurement contracts with NV5 for infrastructure work for Shirley Drive and Llama Bridge as well as another procurement contract with NV5 for Village of Questa park equipment. All three contracts passed unanimously.

Last on the agenda was the nomination from the Council for the Holy Cross Hospital Nominating Committee. Councilor Jason Gonzalez volunteered for the nomination and was approved unanimously. Councilor Gonzalez served on the committee last year as well.

The recording of the 2/13 Council meeting is available at the Questa del Rio News’ YouTube channel.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6VYbSAHa04U>

Save the Date

State of the Village Address by Mayor John Ortega is set for April 1 at 6 p.m. at the Village Office. Tune in to Questa del Rio News Facebook for a live stream.

Village of Questa Reminds Residents to Opt-In to TextMyGov Alerts

By STAFF WRITERS

If you are a utility customer and live within the Village of Questa limits, you may have received a text message in February inviting you to opt-in to the Village’s new notification system.

TextMyGov is a state-of-the-art notification system that municipalities are utilizing throughout the U.S. in an effort to communicate openly, effectively, and in timely way with their residents to maintain a high level of transparency.

If you didn’t receive a text, it is not too late to participate in the Village of Questa’s text notification system. All you have to do is text VOQALERTS to 91896. When you get an automated text, reply with YES. This will opt you into the system.

By opting-in to the text alert system you will be notified of utility outages and interruptions, road closures and construction, village events, and beneficial announcements.

The Village of Questa says they will begin utilizing the alerts more as weather starts to warm and construction projects commence. These alerts will give you advance warning on which roads to avoid when these projects are happening.

While opting out of these alerts is discouraged, you can easily opt out if you move or are no longer interested in receiving the alerts by texting STOP to 91896.

Any questions about the system or the alerts can be directed to the Village of Questa’s Public Information Officer Jacob LaFore at (575) 586-0694 or by email at jlafore@villageofquesta.org.



QISD Student-Body President Esteban Gomez Addresses NM Legislature

By DYLAN R.N. CRABB

Questa Student Body President Esteban Gomez made an appearance at the New Mexico Legislature on Taos County Day, January 31, advocating for the importance of youthful Americans to participate in political processes and vote on election days.

“I am honored to represent the Questa school district here today and I thank you for the opportunity to see how those decisions are made,” said Gomez in the Roundhouse. “Only about 20 percent of New Mexicans turned out to vote in 2023. I believe our state can do better, which is why it is so important to continue outreach programs like this so that younger generations can see first-hand our state legislature at work and how important it is to be involved, to vote, to reach out to our representatives, and make our needs heard.”

Gomez advocated for a specific bill in his address to the New Mexico Senate. Senate Bill 197, Taos County Water Proj-



Courtesy Photo

ects, sponsored by NM Senator Robert Gonzales, NM Senator Senator Pete Campos, and NM Representative Kristina Ortez. SB 197 did not make it out of the Senate Finance Committee, although Governor Michelle Lujan-Grisham has told the public of the possibility of call-

ing for a special session later this year.

“I would be remiss not to mention Senate Bill 197 and express the gratitude my community has for this bill,” said Gomez. “The commitment to invest in Questa and the people’s need for clean water and the precious acequias to care

for animals and farms.”

Had SB 197 passed, it would have given \$1,000,000 to the Village of Questa for wastewater and water treatment, \$1,000,000 to Taos County for wastewater and water treatment, \$2,200,000 to the El Prado Water And Sanitation District for infrastructure, and \$380,000 to the Questa Citizens Ditch Association for infrastructure.

“It was a pretty good day,” Gomez told the Questa del Rio News, although he also said that he’s not sure if he made an impact or not.

According to polling conducted by Pew Research, 70 percent of Americans say that people within a particular lawmaker’s district have too little influence on said lawmaker. 83 percent of Republican Party members say that financial donors and special interest groups have too much influence on lawmakers, compared with 80 percent of Democratic Party members. So who really has the power in our governments?

Questions At Taos Community Development Matanza Meeting

By DYLAN R.N. CRABB

The Taos County Economic Development Corporation (TCEDC) held a packed public meeting on February 7 to discuss the new Matanza Project’s tentatively scheduled start of operations in autumn, 2024. The majority in attendance were in support of it.

The matanza is a project of the TCEDC to bring a small-scale meat-processing facility to Taos County, funded through the New Mexico Food Security Grant to the tune of \$1.4 million. The goal of the matanza is to improve local food security throughout Taos County and northern New Mexico as well as ease the burden on ranchers in transporting their livestock.

Currently the nearest slaughter operations are in Romero and Manassa, Colorado, on Colorado Highway 285 east of San Luis and south of Alamosa. This matanza will initially be able to process 50 carcasses with no more than three live farm animals being slaughtered at one time.

TCEDC Executive Director Mercedes Rodriguez explained the due diligence that TCEDC has been taking to address efficiency and self-sustaining profitabil-

ity, more so than the previous matanza, which ceased operation in 2012. This new matanza project has been in the works for over a year.

“The original plan for the New Mexico Food Security Grant through TCEDC was that we were going to upgrade... our commissary kitchen... for value-added processing; we were going to be making partners to address school lunches and local food being put into those institutional meals; we were going to develop a wash-&-pack facility for the growers to be able to come in and utilize the facility within our community; and we were going to develop out, plan out, and put into place a meat processing facility to enhance the mobile slaughter unit that TCEDC already owned,” explained TCEDC Director Rodriguez. “Now, [we’re dealing with] funding constraints: we requested \$1.6 [million], we received \$1.4. Everything was cut from the budget with the exception of meat processing.”

Rodriguez explained that the TCEDC will still be partnering with the Taos Municipal Schools now that they’ve received half a million dollars through an infrastructure grant, with help from TCEDC

and Taos County.

“Everything is being done by the book, everything is being addressed... to make sure that the infrastructure is in place for an economic and viable food system within our community,” said Rodriguez.

There was also much concern over the critics of this matanza and how the arguments made against it are allegedly reactionary and emotional. The sentiment at this meeting was in favor of better educating the public on the humane methods

of slaughtering farm animals for consumption and how local food processing centers make communities more resilient and self-sustaining. The public meeting crowd consisted of ranchers from Taos all the way to Costilla, and they all were in support of a more local slaughterhouse for their products.

Recordings of the 2/7 TCEDC meeting are available on the Questa del Rio News’ YouTube channel.

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Taos County Seeking Community Input: Survey

By STAFF WRITERS

Taos County has kicked off the planning process for an update to the county's Comprehensive Plan. As part of the planning process, the county's hired consultant, Consensus Planning, has created a community survey that asks a wide range of questions regarding the future of Taos County and community aspirations related to quality of life, employment, growth and development, transportation and infrastructure, and housing, among other topics.

The results of the community survey will be analyzed and provide direction for the preparation of the Taos County Comprehensive Plan. The community survey is available in both English and Spanish.

Hard copies of the community survey are available at Taos County Administration Complex, The Village of Questa Village Office, and Family Dollar in Penasco. The survey will need to be completed by citizens by March 31, 2024.

For further information, please contact:

- Rachel Romero: Taos County, rachel.romero@taoscountynm.gov or
- Jackie Fishman: Consensus Planning, fishman@consensusplanning.com
- English survey link <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/5H7DZVS>
- Spanish survey link <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/XKYP7VQ>

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Strategic Water Supply Taps Out: Governor Insists She Won't "Give Up"

By DANIELLE PROKOP,
The SOURCENM

After its reprise, an effort to push through the governor's plan to create a market of treated brackish water failed, after committees did not meet in the final hours of the New Mexico Legislative session.

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham expressed her disappointment in a press conference after the session adjourned Thursday afternoon, and said she'll keep fighting for the measure. "I won't give up on it," she said.

The Strategic Water Supply proposal originally asked for \$500 million in severance tax bond sales to purchase treated oil and gas liquid waste and pump brackish water from deep underground. The plan wanted to create a commodity market to sell the treated water to replace fresh water in manufacturing solar and wind components and in hydrogen fuel. It was presented as a bill in the last days of the legislative session, after being stripped from the capital outlay package of long-term construction projects.

The slimmed down version of the bill asked for \$100 million in bond sales and excluded oil and gas wastewater—often called produced water—for brackish water only. The effort faced long odds and was short on time. It stalled in the Senate Finance Committee.

Lujan Grisham said missteps came from messaging on the idea.

"Maybe I can change a bit about the messaging here... Look, any water that is unsafe ought to be cleaned up," she said, slapping her hands for emphasis. "How do you think we're going to do better on the jet fuel spill? How do you think we're going to take uranium out of the water? How do people think we're going to treat polluted water? We want more companies with more innovation."

She continued, "I used the word commodity, maybe that was a poor choice." "It is an economic developer... people do buy water, I guess I didn't talk about the purchase of water rights, we purchase water," Lujan Grisham said.

Lujan Grisham concluded by saying that the development of the treatment technology would be important to cleaning up contaminated water sources.

"Maybe I need to make it more about consumer protection to the House and to the Senate, and less about economic

development," she said.

It isn't over, she said. "Expect that to be a priority throughout my remaining tenure," Lujan Grisham concluded. She vows to meet with advocates and communicate better over the interim to prepare a bill for 2025.

Criticism and concern

Environmental and Indigenous groups, who lobbied against the bill, said they were confused why the legislation was brought forward with little public input. While pleased about the creative solution, the Strategic Water Supply proposal came as a surprise, said Rachel Conn, deputy director of water conservation nonprofit Amigos Bravos.

The idea needs vetting, and more public participation, she said, because of the potential impacts of more shallow, drinkable aquifers and concerns that there were no plans laid out for brine disposal after the filtration process.

One concern that came from the bill was that the public right to protest did not apply to permits for drilling deep wells to access brackish water.

"It [removes] a critical component of public oversight water out of the process... [if] it's not included in the process for this water, that's a concern," Conn said.

Other water solutions are not getting as much attention, said Tricia Snyder, the rivers and water program director at New Mexico Wild. In 2022, a task force made up of various water experts issued a 90-page report with 17 recommendations and more than 100 actions.

"Many of those remain unfunded," Snyder said. "I hope that as we move forward with thinking about these bigger and bolder ideas, we're also thinking about how we're moving forward on the things that we already know, [things] there's really broad consensus on."

All the advocates said working on the next bill with the environmental agencies and the governor's office is crucial.

The bill's final hours

Lujan Grisham said she had been "working to get the bill" into the Senate Finance Committee, which failed to meet after floor sessions on Wednesday.

One lawmaker, Rep. Meredith Dixon (D-Albuquerque) expressed her disappointment that the Strategic Water Supply failed.

In some of the final debates on the

House floor, Dixon asked Rep. Derrick Lente (D-Sandia) if there was any funding for brackish water treatment development in capital outlay, since it was stripped in the last weekend before the session. Lente, who sponsored the capital outlay package, said it was not part of the package, but that the governor sought \$250 million in severance tax bond sales for the state to use to purchase treated brackish and oil and gas wastewater.

Dixon responded that she is concerned about the "impending reduction of revenue" from the oil and gas industry.

"I am disappointed that the governor's initiative to support long-term water supply in this state and diversify the economy through water technologies is not something that this legislature was able to support," Dixon said.

What's next?

Advocacy groups said their plans are to work on educating the public and lawmakers over the interim session, anticipating the idea will be brought forward in the next session.

"I felt during the legislative committee hearings, there was a lot of uncertainty about New Mexico water law, about the ideas of commodification, the financialization of brackish and produced water," said Julia Bernal (Sandia), executive director with Pueblo Action Alliance.

Bernal said the next steps mean more planning from environmental groups.

"I imagine that in the interim, this will only try to strengthen itself, so we're gonna have to do the same," Bernal said.

They aren't the only ones planning on trying to connect.

In the halls of the Roundhouse Thursday, New Mexico State Engineer Mike Hamman told Source New Mexico there needed to be a more "comprehensive strategy around water," during the interim meetings before the 2025 session. He linked that effort to redoubling the work done by a previous task force that contributed to the 50-year water plan.

"There's a lot of disjointed water efforts on the legislative side, and maybe even on the advocate side," Hamman said. "I'd like to start to pull it all together in a real, concerted multifaceted water strategy."

Lujan Grisham enthusiastically said she would commit to meeting with groups who opposed the Strategic Water Supply.

Kit Carson Electric Announces Power Purchase Agreement for Solar Array Project in Amalia

By STAFF WRITERS

Kit Carson Election Cooperative (KCEC) announces a Power Purchase Agreement for the new solar array project in Amalia has been reached. The new solar array will be named Amalia II and will bring a renewable energy facility to the area. Kit Carson says the project should be completed in 2025.

The Amalia II facility will be the second largest solar facility in the almost 50 megawatt-area for KCEC's local solar power footprint. A unique aspect of the Amalia II renewable energy generation project was the coordination between KCEC and the Rio Costilla Cooperative Livestock Association (RCCLA).

The RCCLA membership of local

ranching, farming and hunting families owns and manages the land, known as Rio Costilla, where the Amalia II array is sited. Members of the RRCLA serve as caretakers of the land and their mission is to sustain and grow the abundant wildlife population in the area. Located near the Sangre de Cristo Mountain range, Rio Costilla is noted for spectacular mountain views of Latir, Mount Blanca and Ortiz Peaks.

This project was possible with joint coordination with RCCLA in order to preserve the beauty of the land. The project was carefully planned as to not impede any wildlife migration while creating the future possibility to leverage the array site for agrivoltaics (the use of land for both

agriculture and solar photovoltaic energy generation use).

"Amalia II is a great example of renewable energy development planning starting with discussion and listening in the local community. Understanding the goals and concerns of the land keepers, in this case RCCLA, was critical in getting project planning agreement," said Luis A. Reyes, Jr., CEO of KCEC. "The Amalia II project fits into the community vision and supports RCCLA's mission to support community agriculture, farming, ranching, logging and hunting while generating clean renewable energy for the community."

The renewable energy developer Lumina will build and maintain the Amalia

II facility. Guzman Energy will oversee all energy management including the dispatching of the battery storage system. Guzman Energy has been the wholesale power provider to KCEC since 2016, when the coop exited its contract with Tri-State Generation and Transmission in order to provide the coop with more control over its energy mix and give its members affordable and stable local energy.

The addition of Amalia II will further help KCEC meet its clean energy goals, including becoming one of the cleanest energy cooperatives in America. Amalia II will also contribute to the state of New Mexico's objective to achieve a statewide reduction in greenhouse gas emissions of 45 percent by the year 2030.

New Mexico Democrats Push to Criminalize Fake Electors before Presidential Vote

By MORGAN LEE,
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Santa Fe, N.M. — New Mexico Democrats who control the Legislature want to make it a crime to pose as a fake presidential elector in one of the few states where Republicans signed certificates in 2020 falsely declaring Donald Trump the winner.

Legislators advanced a bill Friday on a party-line committee vote that would make it a felony starting in the 2024 presidential election to submit a fake elector certificate "knowingly or recklessly." The Legislature's Republican minority would need Democratic support to vote down the legislation, which carries criminal penalties like those being considered in a handful of other states.

Republican electors signed certificates in seven states—mostly with battleground contests—indicating falsely that Trump had won the 2020 election, a strategy at the center of criminal charges against Trump and his associates.

In New Mexico, President Joe Biden won by 11 percentage points, or about 100,000 votes—the largest margin among the states where so-called fake electors have been implicated.

Last year, Nevada Republican Gov. Joe Lombardo vetoed a bill that would have made it a crime to sign certificates falsely stating that a losing political candidate has won, with penalties of between four and 10 years in prison. In Colorado, where there were no false elector certificates in 2020, the Democratic-led Legislature is considering a bill that would make participating in a fake elector scheme a crime and ban people who do from office.

In January, New Mexico Attorney General Raúl Torrez, a Democrat, announced his decision not to prosecute local Republicans who signed the elector certificates—while urging lawmakers to provide legal authority for prosecuting similar conduct in the future and enhance the security of the state's electoral process.

"We should recognize the seriousness of this conduct," he told a state Senate panel in January.

On Friday in Santa Fe, Republican state Rep. Bill Rehm of Albuquerque said the legislation is "politically motivated against a different party." He voted against it, noting that felony provisions are especially stiff. Violations would be punishable by up to three years in prison and a fine of up to \$5,000. Fake

electors didn't change Biden's win in 2020, he said.

"I do not think there was any intent in New Mexico to change the outcome," he said. "I think that if we could remove the politics that is the undertone of this, it would be a different situation."

In New Mexico and Pennsylvania, fake electors added a caveat saying the certificate was submitted in case they were later recognized as duly elected, qualified electors. That would only have been possible if Trump had won any of several dozen legal battles he waged against states in the weeks after the election.

Democratic officials have launched separate investigations in some states, resulting in indictments against GOP electors.

In December, a Nevada grand jury indicted six Republicans with felony charges in connection with false election certificates. They have pleaded not guilty.

Michigan's Attorney General filed felony charges in July 2023 against 16 Republican fake electors, including forgery and conspiracy to commit election forgery. For one of them, charges were dropped after reaching a cooperation deal. The top charge carried a maximum penalty of 14 years in prison.

Three fake electors also have been charged in Georgia alongside Trump and others in a sweeping indictment accusing them of participating in a wide-ranging scheme to illegally overturn the results of the presidential election. They have pleaded not guilty.

The New Mexico bill, from Democrats including Majority House Floor Leader Gail Chasey of Albuquerque, also would establish felony penalties for disrupting election results—defined as knowingly or recklessly suppressing, defacing, altering, forging or otherwise falsifying election documents, or preparing or submitting false election documents.

Republican Party of New Mexico Chairman Steve Pearce has accused the state attorney general of trying to criminalize a process "used by both Democrats and Republicans," referring to the 1960 presidential election. Democratic electors in Hawaii cast votes for John F. Kennedy despite that state initially being called for Republican Richard Nixon.

But the outcome of the Hawaii election was unclear, requiring a recount, and Nixon ended up losing the state. After the 2020 election, every court challenge the Trump campaign and its allies filed to contest his loss has failed.



New Youth Board Member: Karina Rael

The Questa Creative Council has added its first Youth Board Member. Our Questa Reina, Karina Rael, daughter of Martín and Victoria Rael, was officially voted in at QCC's quarterly board meeting in January. With a community service component to her Fiesta Queen reign, this seems a perfect collaboration for Karina. Her term of service with the Questa Creative Council is one year, with the option for renewal.

"I'm excited by this whole opportunity to speak for area youth," Karina reports. "So many Questa kids are not

involved with extracurricular activities, or with programs that inform about our culture. I think that learning about our culture can support whatever we choose for our futures."

The QCC has a mission to strengthen community through arts, culture, history, and education. The culture of northern New Mexico is unique in this country. The degree of isolation during Questa's history only heightened its development of a very specific way of life. Devotion to family, community, and faith helped guarantee security and endurance. Interconnectedness born of necessity is one reason the bonds with one another were traditionally very deep, and the loss of this can feel dismaying.

The years during which Questa did not hold Fiestas were tough ones for the community. Twenty-four years had passed since the last Fiestas in 2008. Despite the heroic efforts in 2023 of Fiesta organizer and Questa councilwoman Katrina Gonzales, much institutional knowledge was lost. Karina, our Reina, recalls a lack of detailed guidance on how to run, how to win, and serve.



Courtesy Photo

Karina Rael, QCC's First Youth Board Member

Happily, she has revealed herself to be a smart self-starter who is pretty good at making it up as she goes along.

Her new role with the Creative Council will also find her making up what exactly a Youth Board Member can bring to the table. Her official devotion to her culture will have many outlets here.

By establishing this position, the QCC creates a line of youth input, perspective, creativity, and experience

within the organization. "We are grateful for the commitment of time, energy and expertise from Karina Rael, to serve her community in this way," says Board Member Claire Cote.

Karina will attend quarterly board meetings that will provide her an overview of the organization and its inner workings. QCC hopes that the youth board member can be a multi-directional ambassador, helping the community get to know the non-profit while also helping the creative council better understand how to serve area youth.

Karina Rael is employed locally now, in Red River, and hopes to remain in the Questa area for at least the next little while. She never sees herself living in a city, but does plan to pursue welding at Trinidad State in Colorado. Karina was able to study this in her last year of high school when the program was inaugurated in Questa. Using welding to express artistry holds great appeal—work in creating sculptures really excites her.

We look forward to all that this dynamic young woman will accomplish this coming year and beyond.



Annual Spring Cleaning Book Sale at the Library

Friends of the Questa Public Library announces their annual book sale event! It begins Thursday, March 21, and continues through Saturday, March 23.

Each year the library receives book donations and removes old materials from its collection. These books are sold to our community at

"rock-bottom" prices.

Don't miss this opportunity to pick up some good reading! There is something for everyone. And you can shop in our warm, friendly library.

Are you a Friend of the Questa Public Library? Become a member for as little as \$10! For a \$25 donation, you can be a member and also receive a quality book bag... and fill it with used books from the sale. Now that is an offer you can't refuse!

If you have books to donate, they should be in good condition, and bring them in no more than two small boxes (per family) on March 16 through 20 during our regular business hours of noon until 5 pm. We are not open Sundays. We cannot accept textbooks, encyclopedias, or National Geographic magazines. We look forward to seeing you soon! READ ON!



Courtesy Photo

Library Display Opportunity: Artwork And Textiles

By Contributing Writer
PEGGY TRIGG

The Questa Public Library is seeking artists who would like to have a solo or small group show in our beautiful new display area. Currently we have openings for the months of September and October and are looking for artists to fill those slots. All you have to do is bring in your "ready to hang" artwork and we will do the display and promote your show for you. If you would like an "opening celebration," the Friends of the Library group will work with you to make this special event happen.

We are also getting ready to change out our 6-month textile display. The current items will come down at the end of March. Please help bring the warmth—and often history—of your beloved textiles to this community space. The textile displays last for six months. If you are interested, please drop off your textiles at the library the last week of March. Please make sure

to label your item with your name and contact information. We are looking for handmade quilts, weavings, crocheted and knitted items, as well as unique fashion items. There is no age or expertise limit.

If you are interested in participating in either of these opportunities, please contact the library at library@villageofquesta.org or our display coordinator at pegtrigg@gmail.com.



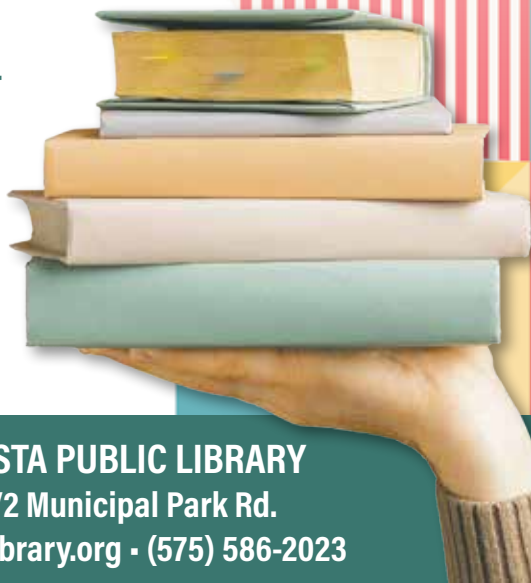
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Quilt detail by Peggy Trigg

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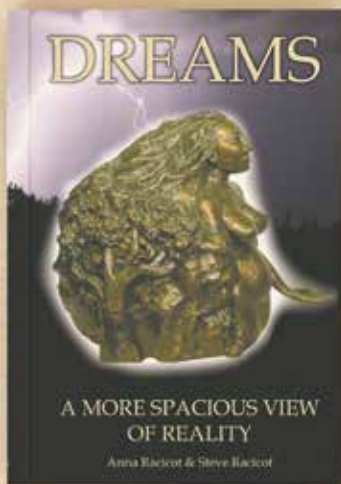


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By Toner Mitchell

On The Importance Of Staying Involved

Every now and then I wish I had my dog's life. Given food without having to work for it, getting my belly scratched for doing little more than lying in the middle of a floor. I can't imagine what it would be like to have such a carefree existence, to be thirsty and, unlike some afternoons these days, desperately crave water and not alcohol.

I feel the same way about trout, whose every day begins with a clear imperative of what needs to be done. As a trout, if I feel too much push from the current, I instinctively move to a calmer spot. If an insect drifts towards me, I eat it. I see a movement on the bank or a shadow on the water, and I swim to a dark cave

under a rock or the bank where I know I am safe. I really like those safe places, and can stay there for days; like a dog. I think of nothing if I think anything at all. I also don't mind being out in the open where, adopting a human perspective for a moment, I can gawk at all the pretty things around me, the peaks and the birds and the trembling green aspen leaves.

The absence of anxiety in my trout brain can not possibly be over-appreciated. There is only the present instant, just breathing and the occasional yummy grasshopper. There are no wars to worry about for my country, home, and son. There are no ubiquitous petty politics to make me wonder if I'm insane. And there's no TV. Lacking the ability for spoken language, I have no fear of giving offense in spite of kind intentions. I have no capacity to be offended, don't know what that means.

As I write this, trout around the world are unaware that they are even alive. Having no knowledge of mortality, they are, in a sense, immortal. Sounds like bliss to me.

I suppose one shouldn't fantasize like this without also addressing the significant drawbacks. How great is it, really, to be a slave to one's ambient temperature like a trout is? Unless I live in Eagle Rock (Nest) Lake, if I'm a trout in the northern New Mexico winter, I'm barely a pulse. Same



Courtesy Photo

in summer, when irrigation causes my stream to run hot. I might seek relief from my low, hot creek in an acequia, only to end up flopping and gasping in the middle of an alfalfa field under the hungry eyes of magpies, raccoons, and house cats.

Being blissfully unaware is empty consolation when motor oil, mine runoff, road salt, or septic tank leakage finds its way into my habitat. Or when delicious pink globs or flashy metal morsels yank me into the air where I can't breathe. Or when the tantalizing fake insect hooks my lip, makes me swim wind sprints, causes me to suffocate again, all before sending me back home exhausted and injured.

I guess being a trout might not be all it's cracked up to be.

Fortunately, fishing for trout is. Because where did I get all these silly ideas

if not through wading through the creeks and becoming mesmerized by fish going about their business? As simple as their lives must be, it's still profoundly inspiring to me to watch an animal stick so faithfully to what it was put on this earth to do. There's a lesson in that: simple is good.

To paraphrase Malaquias Rael, the gift of living in Questa isn't what is lacking but what is there. "Go look out your door," I'll never forget him saying. "You have a millionaire's view."

To take it a step further, someone living in Taos County might not be far off base by proposing that he or she already is, to some extent, a trout. Or a beaver or an elk, the mountains, a river, an acequia, or a plate of enchiladas. Everything in this beautiful place comprises us. It is us. We are it.



Questa Forest District Has New District Ranger

By STAFF WRITERS

The Carson National Forest announced that new permanent district rangers have been appointed: Amy Simms will lead the Questa Ranger District and Kelly Garcia will manage the Tres Piedras Ranger District.

Amy Simms, Questa District Ranger

Simms was raised in Taos. She has worked for the Forest Service for over 20 years, much of it on the Carson National Forest in recreation and fire. Some positions were as a fire prevention technician; the recreation and lands program manager; and, most recently for



Courtesy Photo

Amy Simms, Questa District Ranger

the last five years, as the public services staff officer, overseeing recreation, real estate, special-use permits and cultural resources across the forest. She was the acting Tres Piedras District Ranger for four months in 2022.

"The Carson has been my home forest all my life, and I'm so happy to be able to continue be one of its many stewards," said Simms. Simms has a bachelor's degree in natural resource recreation and tourism with an emphasis in park and protected area management from Colorado State University. She is a proud graduate of Taos High.

She enjoys running, biking, skiing and



Courtesy Photo

Kelly Garcia, Tres Piedras District Ranger

seeing her family. "Both sides of my family are from New Mexico," she said. "I have four younger sisters, and everyone lives within driving distance from each other."

Simms replaces former Questa district Ranger Adam LaDell, who last fall moved to Montana to be the Spotted Bear District Ranger on the Flathead National Forest.

Kelly Garcia, Tres Piedras District Ranger

Garcia hails from Mogote, Colorado, where he has been working on the Rio Grande National Forest as a rangeland management specialist. Like Simms, he's

a career employee, starting out as a volunteer in the late 1990s and building his career since. Most of his experience is in rangeland management, but he has also worked in botany, soils, hydrology, air pollution monitoring, wilderness, trails, travel management and stock/equine.

"I'm really looking forward to becoming part of the Carson family," said Garcia. "It really has some wonderful country and people."

Garcia earned his rangeland management qualifications from Colorado State University. He received a bachelor's degree in environmental science from Adam State University.

He enjoys hiking, backpacking, hunting, cross country skiing and most everything else outdoors. He also farms, focusing on hay for horses.

Indoors, he enjoys a good movie. A favorite of his is "A River Runs Through It." He is inspired by the footage, resembling "The Greatest Good" film, and gets a good chuckle during the scene when the father suggested a career with the Forest Service was a poor option. Garcia would have much different advice.



BIRD IS THE WORD

By Bryce Flanagan

The Spotless Black-Capped Chickadee

They are the most fearless visitor my bird feeders receive. When other birds fly away in a flock, the humble black-capped chickadee remains, hopping about the branch I attach the feeder to while I refill it, as if impatiently rushing me on. They move in snatches, darting from limb to limb before swooping down and extracting a morsel from the feeder, zipping off to store it somewhere, and then they're back for more, minutes later. Chickadees aren't common in New Mexico: their range dips just enough into the northern tip of the state for some lucky denizens of the Enchanted Circle to see them. Their range extends from the western coast of Alaska to the shores of New York, covering much of Appalachia and Canada in between.

Despite their tiny size, no bigger than a child's fist and weighing less than half an ounce, these are hardy birds that don't

migrate when winter winds begin blowing. Instead, they fluff out their feathers and band together in roost sites with dense vegetation or in crevices. Each winter the birds pack on an additional 10 percent body fat that they burn through on freezing nights, lowering their body temperatures from 107°F to just 53°F. This ability to drastically lower body temperature to conserve energy, called torpor, is a rare adaptation among birds, seen in some species of hummingbirds and the common swift.

This isn't their only transformation either, as the black-capped chickadee will add brain cells each fall as it prepares to store food for winter, increasing the size of the hippocampus by 30 percent. When spring arrives, these brain cells and their memories are discarded. Their other winter adaptation is simply to not be a picky eater. While they prefer peanut butter suet, insects, berries, and sunflower seeds, chickadees have no qualms about sharing some carrion with a neighbor crow when resources are scarce. These impressive adaptations don't mean that chickadees are fine on their own. In fact, a 1988 study by the Ecological Society of America found that chickadees with access to backyard feeders were twice as likely to survive extreme winters (defined as negative night-time temperatures for more than five days).

Deciding who gets to feed first is another matter altogether. Although they're happy to band together during winter, chickadees maintain a strict dominance hi-



Courtesy Photo

erarchy. Those of higher standing get first choice of feeding position. For example, if one side of a suet feeder is snow-covered, they'll get the clean side, and if two feeders are present, one with just sunflower seeds and the other with dried fruits and nuts, they're getting the fancier meal. These hierarchical relationships are embedded into memory and last for years without change. Considering most chickadees live only two to three years (though one male was recorded living for eleven years), these relationships are likely to last a lifetime. Dominance is determined by size, age, and gender. Despite this structure, chickadees work together with a communal alarm system, their iconic "chicka-dee-dee" call. This alerts their roost-mates and any other visitors to feeders that a potential predator is approaching, and the more "-dees" in a call, the more dangerous the threat is. I've personally noticed them echoing out their alarm whenever I step outside to fill the

feeders, and I'm of the opinion this call can also serve as a sort of dinner bell.

Thankfully, these adorable little birds are not in short supply, as last year's bird count showed an increase in population. This is likely due to both their exceptional adaptations to harsh temperatures and the large size of breeding clutches, typically six to eight eggs each season. The chickadees form monogamous pairs in late spring (save for a few Casanovas who will breed with multiple females) and build a nest together if they're unable to find a suitable tree crevice or unused woodpecker nest. The female incubates for about two weeks while the male gathers food and feeds his partner. After another two weeks the young are encouraged to leave the nest and begin their own lives.

Like most birds I've written about, science has only begun to scratch the surface of potential applications of chickadees in human life. Their memory was the subject of a talk given by neuroscientist Dmitriy Aronov, Ph.D. at Duke University last March. In his talk he described the "episodic" memory of chickadees, defined as forming memories within a specific context and with exact detail. This, alongside the ability to erase and expand memory, makes the study of chickadee neuroscience fertile ground for unearthing discoveries that could revolutionize the treatment of brain cell loss due to conditions like stroke or Alzheimer's. Perhaps one day we will say the term "bird-brain" with a totally different meaning.

"Bowling" as Illustrated by Mr. Spencer and his Wilderness Class

By CONTRIBUTING WRITER
JOHN WALSH

Recently, I was invited to Mr. Spencer's Wilderness Class to witness a class of students learn the art of bowl-making, "Wilderness Style." I showed up to his shop classroom to be welcomed by a group of enthusiastic middle school students. The first thing I noticed was 14 split sticks with a small piece of wood stuck into the center and both ends tied with some weird looking green string. I asked Jaylee what in the world were those branches used for? Her reply baffled me, she told me they were tongs for grabbing coals out of a fire pit which they use to make bowls out of pieces of juniper or pine wood stock. The green string is yucca strands woven together to make the string that supports the tong ends. At this point Mr. Spencer split up the class into sever-



Courtesy Photo

Joel practices the art of coal stimulation to produce maximum heat

al-person teams. One would cut wood for the fire, another would split the wood into kindling, the next would tend the fire making coals, and another would gather

up all the tools and paraphernalia like tongs, juniper wood blanks, and... soda straws? The straws part really threw me. Mr. Spencer invited everyone outside, and the students assumed their duties. Quickly a fire is going, Alya and Izzy are sawing away, keeping the fire fed. It takes a lot of coals to make fourteen bowls. As soon as a bed of coals appeared Mr. Spencer gave a demonstration of how to use the tongs to pick up coals and put them on the wood blank. He reminded everyone to put the coals where you wanted to create the hole. At this point he gave a few pointers for students to keep from burning themselves or putting holes in their clothing. Joel, Hector, and Lukas were the first group to begin the process, which I refer to as bowling. They took Mr. Spencer's advice to heart and safely retrieved a few coals from the bottom of the firepit with a set of tongs they had made. Each student went about

positioning some coals on their juniper wood blanks, holding them with their tongs as a straw is used to blow air directly on the coals which made them glow. They all started by blowing as hard as they could throw this tiny straw, and I thought they might blow their cheeks out. After a few minutes of this and trying not to pass out from being dizzy, it was suggested they try not to blow so hard. They got the same result and no dizziness. Mr. Spencer says this type of learning makes a lasting impression on a student. After the coals burn up or lose their glow it can be returned to the fire to get recharged. At that point the students used a small rock to break off all the charred wood from the juniper blank. Aha, a hole is started. Get some more charcoal and continue the process until it fits your needs. I came away from that class realizing that Wilderness Skills are more advanced than just camping!

Questa Continues Commitment to Access for Questa Students through Snow Sports Program

By MIKAYLA ORTEGA

The Questa Independent School District (QISD) Snow Sports Program is wrapping up another successful year on the slopes at the Red River Ski Area. The Snow Sports Program is a part of the district's Outdoor Experiential Education program, providing students access to exploring the outdoors that surround them.

The program is paid for by the district and the school works to obtain grants to supplement the cost. The district implements it into coursework for students in K-12. While the Red River Ski Area provides passes for students at a discounted rate, the district recognized that even with the discount, participation is not affordable for some families, which encouraged the district to pursue this opportunity for students to participate at no cost.

The QISD Outdoor Experiential Education Program is a budding program that builds on the efforts of several staff and community members to bring purposeful outdoor activities for students. "Some students participate in outdoor activities with their families, such as hunting, fishing, farming, and ranching, but many don't have the same access or opportunities, which could limit their education regarding the heritage and history of these traditions and the land where they live," says Kimber Macdonald, Principal at



Questa students pose for a photo while shredding on the mountain

Questa Jr./ Sr. High School. "We recognized that a vast majority of our students face barriers to many opportunities that are available to the tourists that visit our area. We committed to our budget as a district, and partnered with other funders, to erase these barriers, and to ensure all our students can participate."

The district's largest program is the Winter Snow Sports program, partnering with the Red River Ski Area in providing four trips for student skiers and snowboarders annually. Every student in the district is provided lessons, rentals,

transportation, lunch, and a day pass free of charge to them or their family for all four trips.

Liam Martinez is a 5th grader at Alta Vista Elementary School and he spoke with the Questa del Rio News about his experience with the program. "I've participated since I was in the first grade. I am a snowboarder." When asked how he likes the program, Liam says "it's fun and it takes some skills and practice. I have had to get used to balancing on my feet, on the board when they're strapped in," he says. Liam is happy to have the opportunity to



Courtesy Photo

Liam and his friend ride the chairlift up the mountain

participate in the program with the school. "Me and my friends really enjoy it, and we hope the program continues. We would be very sad if it ended."

While making memories and having fun is a big part of the experience, Liam says the confidence he has gained has been a big part of the experience. "I have gotten more confident because I have to be brave on the slopes. My advice to any kids wanting to snowboard is to be safe and patient because you will need to practice. Don't give up and don't hit anyone. Try not to stop in the middle of the mountain because safety and being considerate of other

SNOW SPORTS cont'd on page 19

Carson National Forest Service Encourages Residents to Have an Evacuation Plan!

By STAFF WRITERS

The Carson National Forest is working to continue to educate residents about the importance of being prepared for wildfire dangers and risks through their "2024 Wildfire Preparedness is Year-Round" campaign.

Officials say that regardless of where you live—in a rural area or in the wildland-urban interface area—preparedness is vital to ensure you're ready to evacuate at a moment's notice if necessary. The program's slogan is "Get to Know Ready, Set, Go!" Below are the steps of the program:

Ready – Get Ready

- Create a family disaster plan that includes meeting locations and communication plans and rehearse it regularly.

Include the evacuation of large animals, such as horses, in your plan.

- Put together an emergency supply kit or go-bag. The N.M. Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management's Preparedness Guide is a good resource for items to include. Keep an extra kit in your vehicle. Don't forget important family documents like birth certificates, wills, deeds and insurance policies.

Set – Be Prepared to Go

- Monitor fire weather conditions and fire status. See InciWeb and NM Fire Info. Stay tuned to local TV and radio stations for updates and check official information sources on the internet.
- Have an evacuation plan for your family

and pets in place, and make sure all family members have a copy of evacuation and contact information.

- Load your supplies and go-bags in your vehicle.

Go – Act Early, Evacuate

- Do not wait to be advised to leave if there is a possible threat to your home or evacuation route. Leave early enough to avoid being caught in fire, smoke or road congestion. If you are advised to leave by local authorities, do not hesitate. If you don't follow the Go order, understand that emergency services may not be able to assist you.
- Head to a predetermined location in a low-risk area, such as a relative's house, Red Cross shelter or evacuation center,

motel or school. Identify several routes in case your first choice is closed due to the fire.

The Forest Service says there are other helpful resources include the Ready, Set, Go! Program. (<https://www.emnrd.nm.gov/sfd/fire-prevention-programs/ready-set-go-new-mexico/>), video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fuAVdU1obH4>), Downloadable PERSONAL WILDLAND FIRE ACTION GUIDE in PDF format (https://www.emnrd.nm.gov/sfd/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/FINAL-new-mexico-RSG-guide-2017_000.pdf). You can also bookmark the wildfire preparedness webpage to follow the campaign throughout the year. (<https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/>)

Much of Taos County in Severe Drought

By MIKAYLA ORTEGA

The numbers are in, and they don't look good. According to the U.S. Drought Monitor, much of Taos County is presenting in "severe drought" conditions as of mid-February's reporting.

The U.S. Drought Monitor categorizes drought into intensity levels, which

correspond with degrees to which the level can impact environments.

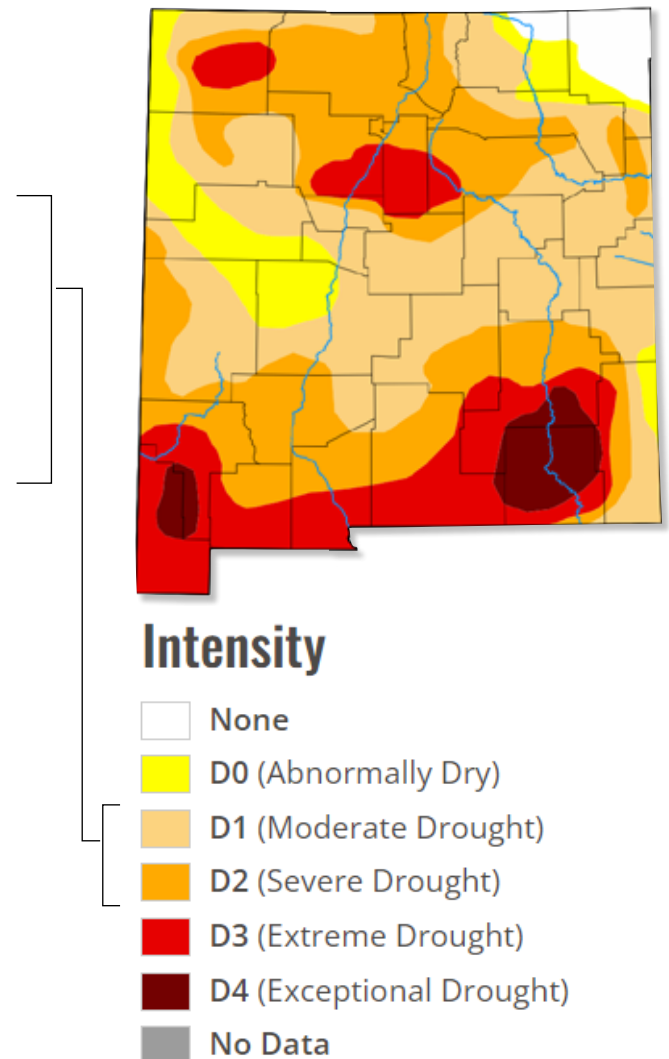
The current drought levels are a result of low snowfall, year after year. Taos County is a part of the 53 percent of the state currently in severe drought. To the east, Colfax County and Union County show positive indicators, sitting in levels of "abnormally dry" or no drought.

Mora County and San Miguel County share similar widespread drought concerns as Taos County, with much of their counties listed as in severe drought.

Eddy, Hidalgo and Grant Counties in southern New Mexico appear to have the worst drought conditions currently, with the majority of their counties in the "exceptional drought" level.

In light of this data, fire preparedness is essential in the springtime. Clearing out old brush and trash around your home will create a barrier against wildfires. To learn more about how to fireproof your home, visit <https://www.nifc.gov/fire-information/fire-prevention-education-mitigation/wildfire-mitigation/home>.

Category	Examples of historically observed impacts
D0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fire danger increases - Soil moisture is low
D1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Burn bans and firework restrictions begin - Livestock need supplemental feed and water
D2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Abundance and magnitude of wildfires may increase; fuel mitigation practices are in effect - Dust storms occur - Irrigated crops are stunted; dryland crops are brown - Pasture yield is limited; producers sell livestock - Well water decreases - Wildlife feeding patterns change
D3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fire danger is extreme - Irrigation allotments decrease - Livestock are suffering; producers are selling herds; feed costs are high; emergency CRP grazing is authorized; crop yields are low - Vegetation and native trees are dying
D4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bears encroach on developed areas; migratory birds change patterns - Federal lands begin to close for fire precautions; burn bans increase - No surface water is left for agriculture, farmers use private wells - Rio Grande and other large rivers are dry



A Meeting for Questa Residents on New Trails in the Area

By STAFF WRITERS

The Enchanted Circle Trails Association (ECTA) and the Questa Economic Development Fund (QEDF) held a public Meeting in Questa on January 24 to solicit feedback and input from Questa community members on proposed trails in the Largo Canyon area, near Moly Corp Field.

QEDF explained that a Trails Plus grant was received from the New Mexico Economic Development Department to draft conceptual plans for new trails that were identified in the Public Lands Solutions' *Questa Economic Outdoor Recreation Opportunity Report*.

Approximately 40 citizens attended the meeting, including landowners, acequia parciantes, trail users, and reps

from the USFS.

The public expressed concerns that new trails would bring in too many people, more Off Highway Vehicles (OHVs) would "over run" the area, destroy Vegetation, and not be monitored.

Many were supportive of the proposed new trails and felt they should be developed for non-motorized use only, while existing OHV trails be kept separate, with all trails being maintained.

A subsequent public meeting will be held to continue the conversation and a separate meeting will be held to discuss proposed beginner rock climbing routes in Red River Canyon.

For more information, contact lynn@questaedf.com or leave a message at (575) 586-2149.

SNOW SPORTS cont'd from page 18

people is important. Also, don't think negative thoughts. Just keep going until you learn how."

In addition to the Ski Sports Program, the district is excited to announce they are expanding their Wilderness Program. The Wilderness Program takes students from grades PreK-8 on guided hikes and other outdoor experiences, including river rafting and public land clean-up days, partnering with the Carson National Forest and the Rio Grande del Norte Monument staff to provide instruction and access. In the classroom, students are taught both the science behind

their experiences, as well as hands-on outdoor skills such as building traps, shelters, and other survival skills. This year, the district has added high school science experiences for both agriculture and biology classes to do field work in learning about acequias and water quality testing.

"Future plans for the program include creating outdoor learning spaces on our campuses, as well as exploring the creation of a mountain bike program," Kimber says. For more information about any of the districts programs, or to partner with the school as they work to expand opportunities for students, please reach out to Kimber MacDonald at kmacdonald@questa.k12.nm.us

Years of Service: Ernie and Rebecca Griego

For this issue, Questa Independent Schools Board Member Juan Cisneros nominated husband and wife couple Ernie and Rebecca Griego to be recognized for their Years of Service to Questa students. Ernie is the athletic director for Questa Jr./Sr. High School. Below are their separate interviews:

REBECCA GRIEGO

How many years have you been working with the student athletics program?

We have been working with youth sports in Questa for about 15 years.

What is the most fulfilling thing about working with students?

Seeing the kids grow and develop their skills in and outside of sports.

How did you get involved? What was your motivation or driving force?

We started when my nephew was in first grade—we started coaching the basketball teams for that class. We made the decision to move back to Questa when there were opportunities for us at the Molycorp (Chevron) mine. We knew this is where we wanted to raise our family and we knew that one trade-off from the city is there might not be opportunities for kids in youth sports. It's important that kids get involved in youth sports not only to develop fundamentals in sports, but it teaches them to work on a team and how to communicate with others.

What is the most challenging thing about being involved with student athletics?

We have coached basketball, baseball, and football. The hardest thing is that in this area there aren't always teams for the Questa youth teams to compete against. Our youth football program played in the Northern New Mexico Children's Football League in Santa Fe. And the traveling for families can be tough. The league was great at working with our teams and the experience has prepared the kids for competition at the middle and high school level.

Why did you choose to stay in Questa and work with the students?

Questa is my home and I wanted my children to have a small town upbringing because students who graduate from here really form lifelong friendships and support each other as they become adults and begin to have families of their own. Questa is a really special place.

Did you always think you'd be working with students?

For me, no, I have my job in finance which I enjoy. My impact with youth sports is just organization and making sure they have opportunities to play.

Is there anything you'd like people to know about why you do what you do?

Youth sports programs do not succeed without support from parents and the community. Fifteen years in youth sports: we are thankful for the parents, families, businesses, and schools who have supported our teams and the youth in Questa.

ERNIE GRIEGO

How many years have you been working with the student athletics program?

I can't tell you exactly how long. The only thing I know is that the first kids that I coached were in elementary—first or second grade—when I coached them, and now they are 22 or 23 years old and some of them have kids of their own! ...and their kids are now joining some of our youth sports teams here in Questa. So, it's been a long time.

What is the most fulfilling thing about working with students?

When kids first start out, they are just learning to dribble, catch and throw a ball. Seeing the joy and excitement in them when they make their first basket, first touchdown, or score in baseball: that is a special moment to be able to see and to be a part of. I get to see this every day as a P.E. teacher. I see their skills grow year to year. As the athletic coordinator in Questa, I get to see kids become Wildcat athletes for the Questa middle and high school programs. I sometimes think back to their first youth sport practice and it's amazing to see the growth in the kids. What I see in the kids of Questa is a lot of athletic talent and they are willing to work hard to become better students and better athletes.

How did you get involved? What was your motivation or driving force?

When we moved to Questa I was working at the mine, and our nephew's basketball team was looking for a coach and he asked me if I would help coach the team. Sometimes students who are from a small district like Questa get overlooked for opportunities to play sports beyond high school. I want to help students develop their fundamentals in all sports through our youth sports programs. But also, to be able to help them find opportunities to continue to play beyond high



Courtesy Photo

Ernie and Rebecca Griego, recognized for their years of service to the Questa schools

school. There is a ton of talented kids across all sports in Questa and they should have the opportunities that students in the cities and larger school districts have.

What is the most challenging thing about being involved with student athletics?

I really enjoy working with the students and I feel like this is what I was meant to do. And some days are challenging and tiring but I really enjoy being a P.E. teacher, coach and athletic coordinator.

Why did you choose to stay in Questa and work with the students?

When the mine closed in 2014, we had to make some decisions. I could have gone to work in another mine, but our kids were young, and I did not feel that was the best decision for my family. I started working as a custodian at the school and it was here that I really discovered that I enjoyed working with the students. Thankfully, Chevron worked with the government to offer laid off employees the opportunity to go to college through the Trade Adjustment Act. I took that opportunity to go to college and earn my teaching degree in

physical education with a concentration in sports and recreation management. I was given the opportunity to become the athletic coordinator for the Questa Schools. It is another part of my job that I absolutely enjoy.

Did you always think you'd be working with students?

After the mine closed, I was not sure what I was going to do but now that I am working with students, there is no other job that I could see myself doing.

Is there anything you'd like people to know about why you do what you do?

I want to see my students become successful adults who contribute positively to their communities. I believe that participation in youth and school sports helps kids to develop skills that they need not only to be successful on the field/court, but the skills learned in sports help kids become successful adults who can make the world a better place. If, as a teacher or a coach, I can make one kid's day a little better or have a positive impact on them; that is a win.



With Spring Comes New Beginnings

Here comes spring! New beginnings can happen with a change of place, going to college, moving away from home and your family, traveling to a foreign country, starting a new job, simply the rites of passage as you age. These are some situations that can be a new beginning. It can give you the opportunity to be a whole new person you did not know existed.

Change takes courage, thought and dedication to yourself and effects those you share your life with. Have you had an adventure with a beginning that has led you astray or did it empower you? How did it lead you to where you are now? Are you glad you tried?

Marta:

I have a new project coming up real soon. I will be the proud owner/ caretaker of three pregnant Navajo Churro ewes who will have babies. One reason is to produce the wool my daughter needs to make her felted rugs. Two is to make cheese and milk. Three is hopefully to get an agricultural exemption for having livestock that produce for you and help you survive financially. I also have bees and I pray every year that nothing will harm them, always trying to protect them. I appreciate their honey and how hard they work to produce it. Kids come and visit on this beautiful piece of property. I think sheep will be an exciting addition to our animal family.

I have another new beginning making red willow baskets. I gathered with a group of friends. We went and harvested the willow and we met again to make baskets. This is and was a healing experience. To pick each willow individually from the land was like getting blessed with love and appreciation. To weave the willows into a shaped basket is not easy. There have been many hours of learning and relearning the art of weaving willow. I am so proud of my basket so far and I have a ways to go before it is done for my sister's 60th birthday in April. My friend Andrea says, "baskets are open vessels for all things new. Put your wishes and dreams in them."

Frances:

I decided to get married. People knew my sweetheart and I was afraid to tell them. I was scared she would say no and I was scared she would say yes. This was a beginning I did start and I was terrified. I told people before I told her. The risk was it would be a horrific relationship and it would lead to disaster. I wanted to be married to her but was scared to do it. It went horribly. "It was a learning experience."

Crystal:

My new beginning led me to buy my land. It was and is a beginning of a whole new life. Every day feels new when the space you occupy is your own. Every detail is an art project watching the land grow and evolve with your presence. My new projects this year include a hoop house for growing food and flowers along with integrating more native plants to the land.

Michael:

What really hit me and is the big thing now, I need to organize my life work in music. This is time-related. I need to get this done. I need to pay better attention and not get more disorganized... Organize a new web site that has everything on it. Every single church service has been processed on YouTube. I have never even looked at how to bring all that work into the same room. What is your legacy? My legacy project is about to begin. The bell went off and said go!

Miles:

I have had a new beginning. I got married and started a business. Sweet Grass Earthworms is my business title. With my new business, I have freedom of expression and financial independence... More ways to grow in ways I want to instead of getting involved in bureaucratic systems. Being in deep relationship with another is like a mirror to give you more awareness and purpose in life.

Isabel:

One of my new beginnings was entering a whole new world with Richard, my husband of 40 years. I met him at my first job in advertising. With Richard came a whole new world with his family and Judaism. His family was a conservative Jewish family, a serious form of religious practice which involved all the celebrations, a kosher home, separate dishes and two sets of silverware. Going to the temple for all the holidays was an eye-opener. This was the first time in my life I felt like a minority, very few people in the Temple were not Jewish. Over time I felt comfortable. It was like learning a foreign language... Culturally and socially a whole different world I grew to love.

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**BODY
MIND
SPIRIT**



By **BARBARA TRACY**

**Reverence
For Nature**

EARTH, WATER, FIRE, AIR—the four life-creating and life-sustaining gifts of nature, and they are free—no prescription needed.

When we live our lives in recognition and understanding of these four wondrous gifts of nature, we can live our lives more consciously and have the

opportunity to create better physical and emotional health.

In the following months, I will share with you vital information about each element that can help you see the wisdom in acknowledging each of them and how they reveal themselves in your own life. Because there is so much to say in this exploration together, it will be necessary to look at each element at the rate of one per month.

Our bodies are an intricate weaving of the four elements of human life: earth, water, fire, and air. They are considered the fundamental building blocks of nature. When these elements are out of balance, our whole life is out of balance. We, who dash about doing this and that, scattering our energies to the four directions, are mostly unconscious of these elements and the important function of each one. Each element nourishes the other elements and when in harmony

with each other, there is greater health and happiness.

There is an important correspondence of these elements to the nervous system. Our nervous system organizes itself into plexus, a bundling of intersecting nerves in areas along the spine. The torso has four of these nerve plexuses. Each of these plexuses correspond to the functions of specific organs and structures. They also correspond to energy centers of the body called chakras which are considered archetypal components of consciousness. And lastly, they all correspond to the four elements of earth, water, fire and air. As we explore each element, we will look at the related organs and structures of the body: the related emotions, the negative and the positive energies that may be present, the challenges, the imbalances that may be present due to an excess or a shortage of specific elements and then suggestions

of how you can bring more balance.

It's exciting to write about these elements and their place in our lives and how we can benefit through understanding them. Remember, as I have spoken in previous writings, the body has the ability to heal itself. The mysterious mechanisms that make up the human system of existence are miraculous and we, each of us, have the opportunity to awaken to and understand where we may be out of balance and apply the wisdom of the elements as they point the way toward understanding how we can achieve a happier and healthier life.

In the meantime, think about the harmony of water when it meets an obstacle—it finds its way without anger, frustration or fault. Think about the healing energy from the earth when we stand upon her in our bare feet. Then there is the calming gift of breath and the energy and warmth of fire.

SENIOR MENU: MARCH 2024

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
All Meals Served With 8oz. 2% Milk as available	Taos County Senior Program (575) 737-8927 PLEASE NOTE THAT THE MENU IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE			1 Pasta Primavera, Spinach Salad w/ Lite Raspberry Vinaigrette, Crackers, Light Vanilla Nonfat yogurt
4 Beef Stroganoff w/ Noodles, Mushrooms, Green Beans, Wheat roll, Tropical Fruit	5 Ham and Scalloped Potatoes, Roasted Cauliflower, Tossed Salad w/ Light Dressing, Garbanzo Beans, Wheat roll, Apricots	6 Pork Loin Chop w/ Gravy, Sweet Potatoes, Broccoli, Wheat Roll, White Cake w/ Strawberries	7 Hot Beef Open Sandwich, Mashed Potatoes w/Gravy, Capri Vegetables, Tapioca Pudding	8 2-Black bean Green Chile Sour Cream Enchiladas, Tossed Salad w/ Light Dressing, crackers, Chocolate Chip Cookie, Diced Mango
11 Pork Posole, Tossed Salad w/ Light Dressing, Crackers, Orange Gelatin, Fruit Cocktail	12 Baked Chicken, Rice Pilaf Winter Blend Vegetables, Tossed Salad w/ Light Dressing, Wheat Roll	13 Green chili Cheeseburger, Potato Wedges, California Blend Vegetables, Pears	14 Chicken, Stuffing, Gravy, Roasted Brussel Sprouts, Mixed Green w/ Light Dressing, Wheat Roll, Mixed Fruit	15 Macaroni, Marinara Sauce, Mozzarella Cheese, Tossed Salad w/ Garbanzo Beans, Wheat Roll, Strawberry / Banana Compote
18 Hamburger Steak w/ Gravy, Brown Rice, Peas and Carrots, Wheat Roll, Fruit Salad	19 Pork Chop w/ Gravy, Mashed Potatoes, spinach, Wheat Roll, Bananas in Vanilla Pudding	20 Chicken Fajitas, Pinto Beans, Crackers, Peanut Butter Cookie	21 Meatloaf, Mashed Potatoes w/ Gravy, Peas and Onions, Wheat Roll, Orange	22 Spinach Lasagna, Black Beans, Tossed Salad w/ Light Dressing, Garlic Bread, Gelatin w/ Plums
25 Country Fried Steak, Mashed Potatoes w/ Country Gravy, Broccoli Salad, Wheat roll w/ margarine, spiced peaches	26 Orange Chicken, Brown Rice, Asian Vegetables, Tossed Salad w/ 2Ranch Dressing, Fresh Pear	27 Chili Dog, Potato Wedges, Italian Blend Vegetables, Berries w/ Whipped Topping	28 BBQ Pork Sandwich, Pasta salad, Cucumber & tomatoes, mixed fruit	29 CLOSED

This Senior Lunch Menu applies to all Senior Centers in Taos County. Meals are cooked fresh at each location.

Lunch donations recommendations are \$1.50 and up. Lunches for people under 60 years old are \$7.50 a person.

To qualify call the Ancianos at (575) 586-0508. They will fill out an assessment and file an application.

Currently, exercise classes are not available.

Donations for transportation is encouraged.



LIVE LOVE LAUGH

by Ellen Wood
a.k.a. Maruška

Life Is What Happens When You're Making Other Plans

I am blessed with the most awesome, loving, fabulous family and some years ago we all (except my son and his daughters) celebrated Christmas by pot-luck-ing at my house. There were 17 family

members gathered around my big table and harmony reigned as the house was full of happy chatter, laughing, eating, and clowning around.

Later that evening ten of them went home and six others set up camp in my house, while pillows and comforters and tri-fold mattresses came out of their closet home to add to the chaos. That's okay, I thought, tomorrow we'll have another day of fun and frolicking with the family.

What happened next proved once again that John Lennon was right when he said, "Life is what happens when you are busy making other plans."

Picture this—on second thought—don't picture it: the septic system backed up and my bathroom floor flooded. It was ankle-deep and since there's no lip on my walk-in shower, the fluids just continued winding their way under the cabinet and out into the hallway—soak-

ing my white carpeting.

You don't need the details of how I bailed and cleaned up for seven straight hours and ripped out the carpeting in the hallway. The real point of this story is that from time to time, life just sucks.

While dealing with this domestic disaster, I realized the most important "goal" every day is awareness consciousness—monitoring the state of my own consciousness—and totally accepting "what is." And that's what I did.

It didn't change what was happening in my manifested world but it certainly helped me keep a sense of humor and stay focused in the "now."

Stress, which upsets our ability to just live, laugh, love and stay healthy, doesn't come from what's happening to us, but from our reaction to what's happening.

The cells in our body respond to our consciousness, as the scientific field of epigenetics shows us. Prominent cell

biologists like Dr. Bruce Lipton tell us that our reaction to each new experience triggers genetic changes in our cells.

If what you're experiencing makes you want to tear your hair out and scream at the top of your lungs, go ahead. In the beginning. You don't want to suppress your frustration and have it explode with more force later.

But then start creating a habit of practicing awareness consciousness by watching your thoughts. You'll be amazed at how calm you can be with "what is"—no matter what stuff is happening when you're making other plans.

Ellen Wood of Questa is an award-winning author as well as an artist using the name, Maruška. The website for her books and paintings is <https://questacreative.org/ellen-wood/>. Contact Ellen at ellen@howtogrowyounger.com

La vida es lo que sucede cuando estás haciendo otros planes.

Siento que he sido bendecida con la familia más increíble, amorosa y fabulosa, y hace algunos años todos (excepto mi hijo y sus hijas) celebramos la Navidad compartiendo una cena en mi casa. Éramos 17 miembros de la familia reunidos alrededor de mi mesa, que es muy grande, y reinaba la armonía mientras la casa se llenaba de charlas alegres, risas, comidas y payasadas.

Más tarde esa noche, 10 se fueron a sus hogares y otros 6 se acomodaron en mi casa, mientras almohadas, mantas y colchones plegables salían de su sitio habitual en el armario para sumarse al caos. Está bien, pensé, mañana tendremos otro día de diversión y alboroto con la familia.

Lo que sucedió a continuación demostró una vez más que John Lennon tenía razón cuando dijo: "La vida es lo que sucede cuando estás haciendo otros planes".

Imagínate esto —o, pensándolo bien, mejor no te lo imagines—: el sistema séptico se desbordó y el suelo del baño se inundó. Los fluidos nos llegaban hasta los tobillos y como en la ducha no hay borde, simplemente siguieron su camino por debajo del gabinete y hacia el pasillo, empapando la alfombra blanca.

No quieras ni saber los detalles de cómo lo limpié todo durante siete horas

seguidas y arranqué la alfombra del pasillo. La moraleja de esta historia es que de vez en cuando, la vida simplemente te juega una mala pasada.

Mientras lidiaba con este desastre doméstico, me di cuenta de que el "objetivo" más importante cada día es estar consciente de lo que nos pasa—monitorear el estado de mi propia conciencia y aceptar totalmente "lo que es." Y eso es lo que hice.

No cambió lo que estaba sucediendo en mi mundo manifestado, pero ciertamente me ayudó a mantener el sentido del humor y a permanecer enfocada en el "ahora."

El estrés, que perturba nuestra capacidad para simplemente vivir, reír, amar y mantenernos saludables, no proviene de lo que nos está sucediendo, sino de nuestra reacción a lo que está sucediendo.

Las células de nuestro cuerpo responden a nuestra conciencia, como lo demuestra el campo científico de la epigenética. Biólogos celulares prominentes como el Dr. Bruce Lipton nos dicen que nuestra reacción a cada nueva experiencia desencadena cambios genéticos en nuestras células.

Si lo que estás experimentando te hace querer halarte los pelos y gritar a todo pulmón, adelante. Al principio. No querrás suprimir tu frustración y que explote con más fuerza después.

Pero luego comienza a crear el hábito de practicar el estar consciente de lo que pasa, observando tus pensamientos. Te sorprenderá lo tranquilo que puedes estar con "lo que es", sin importar qué cosa esté sucediendo cuando estás haciendo otros planes.

Ellen Wood de Questa es una autora galardonada y también una artista que usa el nombre de Maruška. El sitio web de sus libros y pinturas es <https://questacreative.com>.

[org/ellen-wood/](https://questacreative.org/ellen-wood/). Para comunicarse con Ellen escriba a ellen@howtogrowyounger.com

Traducción de Teresa Dovalpage

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ESOTERIC ASTROLOGY

SKYDANCE ESOTERIC ASTROLOGY by Charlene R. Johnson
MARCH 2024

PRECESSION OF THE EQUINOXES

“The leading end of physics is catching up to the tail end of metaphysics.” —Dean Radin

Mid-March, the Sun leaves the final sign of the zodiac, Pisces and begins a new cycle in the sign of Aries. This transition is also called the Spring Equinox on this side of the world, the Fall Equinox down under. We live on a unique little ball. Not only does the Earth spin and tilt; its spin is like a wobbly top because it is not perfectly round. Right now, the north pole points to the north star, Polaris, but that hasn't always happened, nor will it remain so in the future. This means a gradual shift in the orientation of Earth's axis of rotation in a cycle of approximately 25,800 (or so) years (2150 years per zodiacal sign which is where our Ages come from). This results in what we call the Precession of the Equinoxes. This is one of the most contentious points between present-day astrologers and astronomers because the Spring equinox is very gradually moving backward through the constellations, but not through the signs.

Ages ago, when the characteristics and descriptions of each sign were being put down on “paper,” (clay, stone, papyrus) the constellation of Aries truly was the constellation coming up over the horizon at the time of the spring equinox. But once the “signs” were set in their circle of 12, each one 30 degrees long—which of course does not apply to the constellations—the association with the constellations lessened. The Greeks were well aware of the precession of the equinoxes; however, as their system of astrology was based on the seasonal cycles, it did not concern them. Our esoteric scientists have checked out the continuing validity of the system and insist that it still works. The vibration of the system and how it affects us continues and so, we don't even try to deny the precession; we believe that the metaphysical complements the physical science and that astrology still works.

Everyone: Equinox on the 20th and a penumbral lunar eclipse on the 25th with the full moon.
The balance of change.

ARIES ♈ **Planet: Mercury** ♀ **MARCH 20 – APRIL 19**

Dynamic: Time to start something new.

Direction: Make it matter.

Soul Thought: What matters?

TAURUS ♉ **Planet: Vulcan** ♁ **APRIL 19 – MAY 20**

Dynamic: You have something to announce this month.

Direction: Determine whether it needs to be private or public.

Soul Thought: Within or without?

GEMINI ♊ **Planet: Venus** ♀ **MAY 20 – JULY 20**

Dynamic: You may feel that you need to hide something.

Direction: Be sure you aren't hiding it from yourself.

Soul Thought: “The real nature of each thing is accustomed to hide itself.” —Heraditus

CANCER ♋ **Planet: Neptune** ♆ **JULY 20 – JULY 22**

Dynamic: While all the world is shifting, you feel disquiet.

Direction: It's appropriate; find your center.

Soul Thought: On the point of a trident.

LEO ♌ **Planet: Sun** ☉ **JULY 22 – AUG 22**

Dynamic: At this moment of universal equality what can you do?

Direction: Be it!

Soul Thought: It's on the Soul's bucket list.

VIRGO ♍ **Planet: Moon** ☾ **AUG 22 – SEPT 22**

Dynamic: Even as you evolve that special project, you will feel it begin to fade a bit.

Direction: It's all part of the cycle; all is well.

Soul Thought: Stepping back sometimes helps the vision.

LIBRA ♎ **Planet: Uranus** ♁ **SEPT 22 – OCT 22**

Dynamic: As the pendulum swings to the other side, you stand foursquare.

Direction: Steady, solid; others are counting on you.

Soul Thought: Who is Atlas?

SCORPIO ♏ **Planet: Mars** ♂ **OCT 22 – NOV 21**

Dynamic: Someone in your life experiences an abundance of...

Direction: In order to benefit, be joyful for them.

Soul Thought: What is the Hawaiian word, Nui?

SAGITTARIUS ♐ **Planet: Earth** ♁ **NOV 21 – DEC 20**

Dynamic: You literally are all about balance this month.

Direction: Determine up from down, in from out, them from you...

Soul Thought: Is there a difference?

CAPRICORN ♑ **Planet: Saturn** ♄ **DEC 20 – JAN 19**

Dynamic: Some of the drag lessens this month.

Direction: One foot ahead of the other still works.

Soul Thought: “If you are going through hell, keep going.” —Winston Churchill

AQUARIUS ♒ **Planet: Jupiter** ♃ **JAN 19 – FEB 18**

Dynamic: An abundance of one thing is being challenged by an abundance of another.

Direction: Money, yours and another's, is at stake.

Soul Thought: Hmmmmm.

PISCES ♓ **Planet: Pluto** ♇ **FEB 18 – MAR 20**

Dynamic: Clandestine hopes and wishes, my dear?

Direction: As long as you practice harmlessness, all will be well.

Soul Thought: It's a spiritual imperative.



By J. ORTEGA

NAPOLEON

Starring: Joaquin Phoenix, Vanessa Kirby, Tahar Rahim and Rupert Everett

Directed by Ridley Scott

RATED R

Available to rent or buy on Apple TV and AmazonPrimeVideo



First Impression: “Napoleon” is a big budget epic from master director Ridley Scott that can at times soar to great heights, but mostly feels hollow in giving you the whole picture of one of the most intriguing characters in all of history—Napoleon Bonaparte.

Well, when Ridley Scott took on the project of bringing the life of Napoleon Bonaparte to the big screen he must have felt uniquely qualified, as he is the director that has brought us some of the most iconic and exhilarating action and adventure epics of the last half century. If you have enjoyed such films as “Alien,” “Blade Runner,” “Gladiator,” and “The Martian” you have Ridley Scott to thank. He’s a director who’s not afraid to take big swings and he usually knocks it out of the park with box office blow-outs like “Alien” to Oscar-winning triumphs like “Gladiator.”

But sadly, with “Napoleon” he mostly falls flat. I’m not saying it’s a complete dud of a film, but in my opinion a man like Napoleon and the era he lived in—The French Revolution—is so rich in details and intrigue that I think a 10-episode limited series would have done it justice. When you are dealing with the French Revolution, which noted historians have called “the Revolution of all revolutions,” that’s a lot of details and nuance to take in, and simply to dilute the history of the French Revolution and Napoleon’s role in it to a two-and-a-half-hour film simply isn’t going to get it done.

Although I was disappointed with the overall film, I enjoyed performances from Joaquin Phoenix and Vanessa Kirby as Napoleon and his beloved wife Josephine. The relation-

ship between the two characters is really the strong point of the movie. Whenever they are on screen together there is tons of chemistry and intrigue. Phoenix plays Napoleon as a confident underachiever, always with something to prove, begging his adversaries to underestimate him because it just makes his victories that much sweeter. Kirby’s Josephine plays the perfect counterpart to Phoenix’s Napoleon—cunning and elusive—she knows how to play a man like Napoleon. Eventually she ends up controlling him as he becomes more and more obsessed with her in their relationship. This obsession plays out in the most memorable part of the film, where Napoleon literally abandons his post in Egypt because one of his army confidantes reveals that Josephine is having an affair with another high-ranking military official.

What plays out next shows exactly how one-sided their relationship is. Napoleon is angry for five minutes but ultimately forgives her and wants to go on as if nothing has happened. So, you can see that when the relationship dynamic between the two is the high point of the film, and not the battles or the history—something isn’t right. The film is serviceable and is in no way Ridley Scott’s weakest picture, but it’s somewhere in the middle. It could be forgotten as a mediocre attempt to tell the story of a larger-than-life character in a strange and troubled time in history.

Final Verdict: 2 out of 5 Stars



To discover your Rising Sign, or for more information, contact Charlene R. Johnson, www.SkyDanceAstrology.com, or email: SkyDance@SkyDanceAstrology.com

Esoteric Astrology is focused on the rising sign more than the sun sign (we suggest you read both) and provides clarity, direction and answers for those seeking a higher level of life.



In this month's edition of Enchanted Eats... anti-inflammatory recipes! These recipes give you a little boost! Ingredients that are packed with antioxidants like blueberries help to fight inflammation; while healthy fats like almond butter or avocados help to reduce inflammation. Since inflammation can have a lot to do with diabetes, weight, and even your sleeping habits, adding anti-inflammatory recipes or ingredients to your meal routine is a great addition to create healthier eating patterns!

Salmon Patties

(previously published in *Questa Del Rio News*, March 2023)

- 1 (14.75 oz) can salmon, drained of all but 2 T of liquid, flaked
- 1 large slice bread, crust removed, shredded (1 C, 50g)
- 3 T green onion, chopped
- 1 medium garlic clove, minced
- 1 T fresh dill, chopped, or 1 t dried
- 3 T minced green bell pepper
- 1 T flour
- 1 large egg
- 1/2 t sweet paprika
- 1 t finely grated lemon zest
- 2 t lemon juice
- 1/4 t kosher salt
- Several turns of freshly ground black pepper
- 3 T extra virgin olive oil

In a large bowl, gently mix together salmon (including 2 T of can liquid), bread, green onion, garlic, dill, bell pepper, flour, egg, paprika, lemon zest, lemon juice, salt and pepper. Form 8 patties, about 1/2 inch thick. Chill at least 30 minutes (or longer) Brown in skillet: Heat olive oil over medium high heat in large skillet. Cook patties until nicely browned on both sides, about 3 to 4 minutes per side

Very Berry Smoothie

(Courtesy J. Carryer, Taos)

- 1 c unsweetened vanilla almond milk (or non-dairy milk of your choice)
- 1 banana
- 1/2 c fresh or frozen strawberries
- 1 T almond butter
- 1/2 c fresh or frozen blueberries
- 1/2 t ground turmeric
- Add your favorite protein powder or Greek yogurt (optional)

Pour milk into a blender. Add all ingredients Secure lid, and blend for 30 to 45 seconds

Carrots and Hummus!

Carrots

Hummus

To make this snack, slice up some carrots and dip them in your favorite hummus.

*Carrots are rich in beta-carotene, which has anti-inflammatory properties. Hummus, made with chickpeas, is also anti-inflammatory.



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If you have a recipe you would like featured in an upcoming issue of *Enchanted Eats*, please submit to assistanteditor@questanews.com

Editorial: Lent Brings Us Closer To God

By MIKAYLA ORTEGA

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” (James 1:2-4).

As we enter another sacred season of Lent, we find ourselves once again entering 40 days of prayer, sacrifice, alms giving, and prayer.

So often, when we find ourselves experiencing difficulties in life, we question, “Why, God?” and demand to know why we were chosen to carry struggles, trials, and tribulations. Perhaps struggles and trials pull you away from God. “If God loved me, why wouldn’t he make things right?” might be a common thought that comes into your mind in the midst of hardship.

Ash Wednesday is a reminder of our humanity, acknowledging that we are dust, and to dust we shall return. Entering

40 days of Lent, we take upon suffering and sacrifices in an effort to grow closer to God. It’s similar to Jesus’ 40 days in the desert, where he prayed and fasted before he met his ultimate destiny: the suffering and crucifixion on Good Friday.

Romans 5:3-5 encourages us: “We also give glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.”

Lent is a time to recognize that pain, suffering, and sacrifices are present ultimately bring us closer to God. As we journey through the struggle-filled season of Lent, it’s important for us to begin to see trials and storms in a new way.

Though we may still have a strong aversion to pain, we can see the hand of God when the winds of trial come, we can take solace in the fact that our struggles will ultimately help us cling tighter to him.

OBITUARIES



Pauline Lopez
d. December 15, 2023

It is with heavy hearts that we announce the passing of Pauline Lopez, a beloved mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, and friend. She departed from this world at the age of 83, leaving behind a legacy of love, compassion, and service.

Born in Questa, New Mexico in 1940, Pauline dedicated her life to making a positive impact on the lives of those around her. She earned her college degree, a testament to her commitment to education and personal growth.

During the 1970s, Pauline was an ardent advocate for social justice and human rights. She volunteered tirelessly for farm workers, the disabled, along with local and state communities, championing their cause and working towards creating a better and fairer world for all.

As a mother of four, Pauline instilled in her children the values of kindness, empathy, and the importance of standing up for what is right. Her nurturing spirit and unwavering support created a warm and loving home that will be remembered by all who were fortunate enough to be a part of it.

In addition to her dedication to family, Pauline touched the lives of many through her selfless acts of kindness and community service with affiliations such as LULAC and the Governor’s Council for the Handicapped/Disabled, to name a few. Her legacy lives on in the hearts of those she helped and inspired.

Pauline is survived by her children Richard (Mickey), Jackie, MaryAnn (Rick) Katz, Rob, Fedelia, grandchildren Richard, Michael, Keenan, Amanda, Janese, Ceara, Emma, and numerous great grandchildren and extended family. She will be dearly missed but forever remembered for the indelible mark she left on her family and the world.

A memorial service to celebrate Pauline’s life will be announced at a later date.

The family requests those wishing to be notified of the event to please send an email message stating so with contact information, to: paulinelopezlifecelebration@gmail.com

May she rest in eternal peace, surrounded by the love and gratitude of those she touched throughout her remarkable life.



Almira Fabiola Torrez
d. February 10, 2024

Almira Fabiola Tórréz, 81, of Arroyo Seco, passed away on Saturday, February, 2024 following a prolonged illness. In the 1970s, she moved to California but returned to her beloved New Mexico in 1981, where she lived ever since. Fab was involved with her community.

She was a member of the Optimist Club of Taos. She was a member of both the Arroyo Seco and Taos Guadalupanas Societies. Additionally, she completed the Chimayo Pilgrimage multiple times. She is remembered by friends for her sharp sense of humor. Close friend Sandra Vigil recalled mistaking her for a nun the first time they met. Fab replied, “Wait until you get to know me!” She lived life on her own terms. She was preceded in death by her husband, Julian Torrez, parents Euralia and Donaciano Torres, and son Daniel Torrez. She adored her dogs Pi (deceased) and Roxy. She is survived by her daughters Christine Torrez and Juliette Torrez; grandchildren Autumn Reid and Fabián Tórréz. Family, dear friends, and many other relatives will miss her smile and company.

The family thanks Mountain Home Health Care for taking care of her in her final days. Rosary will be recited on Thursday March 7, 2024, at 9 am followed by the funeral mass at Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Arroyo Seco. Private burial will take place. In lieu of flowers, donations in Fab’s memory to be made to the Four Corners Animal League in Taos: <https://fourcornersanimalleague.org> or P.O. Box 1163 Taos, NM 87571. The family of Almira Fabiola Torrez has entrusted the care of their loved one to DeVargas Funeral Home of Taos. www.devargastaos.com.

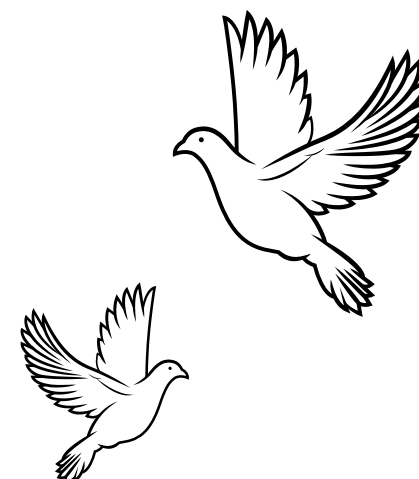
IN MEMORY OF OUR BELOVED MOM

Aida Isabel Trujillo

2/19/1926 – 1/10/2024

Isabel was born in Questa to Miguel and Christina Velasquez. She was the middle child and the only girl. She worked alongside her father in their general store and later, she lived and worked in Red River and Denver. She married her husband, Lino Trujillo on September 24, 1955, and they had two children, Jack L. Trujillo (Twana) and Angel J. Chamberlain (Chip) and four grandchildren: Alexander Trujillo (Audra), Samantha Chamberlain Lane (Jake), Valerie Trujillo and Gavin Chamberlain. Isabel was thrilled to know her first great-grandchild and namesake, Ada Trujillo. She was also excited about her two new great-granddaughters that are due this summer.

Isabel was an amazing cook. She worked in Red River and as a lunchroom cook but mostly, she loved cooking for family and friends. Everyone who visited was treated to freshly made tortillas and delicious meals. Isabel was a devout Catholic who attended mass and prayed the rosary daily. She was content sitting in her casita, in front of the fire, praying and solving puzzles. Although she will be greatly missed, she was blessed to leave this earth in the comfort of her own home, in her beloved Questa. She was loved dearly by all her family, including her nieces, nephews, and friends.



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2024 SEASON REGISTRATION

WHEN:

**MARCH 2, SATURDAY
1:00 P.M. - 4:00 P.M.**

WHERE:

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FEB 27 - APRIL 8, 2024

This grant opportunity is open to non-profit organizations serving the Questa area. Applications may be submitted for operational support or specific projects.

TO APPLY:

- Go to www.taoscf.org click "Grants Portal" at the top, apply under "Chevron Grants for Good"
- Applicants will first need to register by creating an account in the Grant Application System
- The Grant Application must be completed online
- It is recommended to submit grants early to avoid issues



QUESTIONS: Call (575) 737-9300

ELIGIBILITY:

You are eligible to apply if you meet the following criteria:

- Your organization or project must serve the Questa area. (this includes Amalia, Costilla, Cerro, El Rito, Lama, and Questa)
- Are tax-exempt under Section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code, are a public or governmental agency, a federally recognized tribe in the State of New Mexico, or have a fiscal sponsor.
- Employ staff and provide services without discrimination on the basis of race, religion, sex, age, national origin, disability, or sexual orientation
- Be current with all State and Federal reporting requirements: In Good Standing with the IRS, NM Secretary of State, and NM Attorney General.



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COMMUNITY CALENDAR • MARCH 2024

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO EVERYONE BORN IN MARCH!

MARCH 2 - 3: SAT - SUN NOON - 5 PM
Artists and Creative Entrepreneurs - Free Business Development Workshop for the Creative Economy. This 2-day workshop is funded by a Creative Industries grant received by Taos County from the State of NM. A maximum of 40 people are invited to register; food, snacks, and all materials will be provided at no cost. At Living Word Ministries Fellowship Hall, 12 Llano Rd, Questa. This is the first of three identical workshops being held in Taos County. To register for the Questa Workshop and get more information, contact Lynn Skall, QEDF at lynn@questaedf.com or leave a message at (575) 586-2149

MARCH 4: MON 6PM
 Questa Economic Development Fund board meeting at the Questa Visitor's Center, 1 NM-Hwy 38; also via Zoom. For the agenda, Zoom link, or more information, email lynn@questaedf.com or leave a message at (575) 586-2149

MARCH 6: WED 5:30 - 7:30PM
RDC + Businesses Dinner Presentation. Regional Development Corporation (rdcnm.org) is hosting a complimentary dinner for area businesses, come meet the RDC reps, learn about grants, funding, and business support services. Red River Conference Center, 101 River Street in Red River. RSVP to richard@rdcnm.org

6 PM
Questa Independent School Board Meeting, QSID Board Room, 2256 Wildcat Rd. # A. Info: (575) 586-0421

MARCH 8: FRI 10 AM - NOON
Food for All at North Central NM Food Pantry, 140 Embargo Rd., Questa. For more info: questafoodpantry.org or call (575) 586-0486 or (575) 779-9194

MARCH 10: SUN
Daylight Savings Time starts

MARCH 12: TUE 6 PM
Village of Questa Town Council Meeting at Village Town Hall, 2500 Old State Rd 3. For agenda: questa-nm.com/village-council-meeting-agenda, or call (575) 586-0694

MARCH 13: WED 6:30 PM
Kids Glowstick Parade and Fireworks at Red River Ski and Summer Area. Info: (575) 754-2223

MARCH 14: THUR 5 - 7 PM
Evening of The Arts Fundraiser at the Red River Community House, Supporting the Red River Valley Charter School. Info: (575) 754-2349

MARCH 16: SAT 10 - 11:30 AM
Sala Writing Group free, via Zoom, link upon request yogasalaquesta.org

2 - 4 PM
Book Signing and Reception, "Dreams: A more Spacious View of Reality" by local authors Steve and Anna Racicot at the Sala, 2331 Hwy 522. Info: yogasalaquesta.org

MARCH 17: SUN
Happy St Patrick's Day!

MARCH 18: MON 3 PM
Questa Library Book Club meets at the Questa Public Library, 6 1/2 Municipal Park Rd. Join the conversation. The topic will be Classics, either classics for your life or the 'classic' for your interests, hobbies or profession. Info: (575) 586-2023

MARCH 20: WED 6 PM
Questa Independent School Board Meeting, QSID Board Room, 2256 Wildcat Rd. # A. Info: (575) 586-0421

6:30 PM
Kids Glowstick Parade and Fireworks at Red River Ski and Summer Area. Info: (575) 754-2223

MARCH 21: THUR NOON - 4 PM
In-person, one-on-one, business advising in Questa at the Questa Visitor Center with Anwar Kaelin, Director of the Small Business Development Center at UNM-Taos. FREE and CONFIDENTIAL for anyone in any stage of business, anyone with a great idea. Make an appointment by visiting: calendly.com/sbdctaos

5 PM
Cerro VFW Post #9516 Monthly Meeting at 108 NM Highway 378 in Cerro. litameadphoto@gmail.com. Call to confirm meeting schedule (575) 586-2352

MARCH 22: FRI 10 AM - NOON
Food for All at North Central NM Food Pantry, 140 Embargo Rd., Questa. For more info: questafoodpantry.org or call (575) 586-0486 or (575) 779-9194

MARCH 24: SUN
Closing Day at Red River Ski and Summer Area. Info: (575) 754-2223

3:30 PM
Pond Skim at Red River Ski and Summer Area (Lift House). Info: (575) 754-2223

MARCH 26: TUE 6 PM
Village of Questa Town Council Meeting at Village Town Hall, 2500 Old State Rd 3. For agenda: questa-nm.com/village-council-meeting-agenda, or call (575) 586-0694

MARCH 30: SAT 9 AM
Walk the Stations of the Cross Meet in Questa Living Word Ministries 12 Llano Rd Questa at 9 am, or in San Luis at 10 am. More Info: lwmsite.org or call (575) 613-8010

1 - 2 PM
Easter Egg Hunt presented by the Village of Questa at the Questa Youth Center, near the library. For ages 0-12. Free food and books. Info: (575) 586-0694

MARCH 31: SUN
Happy Easter!
6:30 AM
Easter Sunrise Service at Eagle Rock Lake. Join Living Word Ministries for a time of worship. For info: (575) 613-8010

WEEKLY

SUNDAY

Area Church Directory is on page 31, please call to confirm service times

10 AM
Qigong event with Julian, online only, sponsored by Yoga Sala. More info and link: yogasalaquesta.org

MONDAY

Transportation for Qualified Seniors by donation, Questa Senior Center, 148 Embargo Rd. Call for more info and to make an appointment (575) 586-0508

5 PM
Free Community Yoga, gentle practice with Rae in person only, free classes at Yoga Sala, 2331 NM-522, in Questa. More info: yogasalaquesta.org

7 PM
Kickboxing, with Reto in person only, sliding scale \$5-\$15 classes at Yoga Sala, 2331 NM-522, in Questa. More info: yogasalaquesta.org

TUESDAY

Transportation for Qualified Seniors by donation, Questa Senior Center, 148 Embargo Rd. Call for more info and to make an appointment (575) 586-0508

4:30 - 5:30 PM
Free Kids Ballet with Miss Tuesday, in person only Classes at Yoga Sala, 2331 NM-522, in Questa. More info: yogasalaquesta.org

6 - 7 PM
BREATHE: Open the Gift of the Breath Classes at Yoga Sala, 2331 NM-522, in Questa. 4 week series, February only. More info: yogasalaquesta.org

7 PM - 8:30 PM
Japanese Martial Arts at the Red River Conference Center. \$10 Mat fee must be 18yrs and older. Info: (575) 754-1708

WEDNESDAY

Transportation for Qualified Seniors by donation, Questa Senior Center, 148 Embargo Rd. Call for more info and to make an appointment (575) 586-0508

9 AM
Gentle Morning Yoga, with Gaea, in person only, \$8 classes at Yoga Sala, 2331 NM-522, in Questa. More info: yogasalaquesta.org

10 AM - 2 PM
Repurposing Plastic Project: Come smash plastic and make wire walls! At the old "Movies at Home" building opposite the new Sangre de Cristo Valley Market on Hwy 522. Call or text (575) 224-7386

1:30 - 2:30 PM
Wildcat Kitty Club at the Questa Public Library, for ages 0-3. Older siblings and guests are welcome. Stories, songs, and play. 6 1/2 Municipal Park Rd. Call (575) 586-2023

5:30 PM
Power Hour Yoga with Gaea, in person only, \$8 at Yoga Sala, 2331 NM-522, in Questa. More info: yogasalaquesta.org

7 PM
Kickboxing, with Reto in person only, sliding scale \$5-15 classes at Yoga Sala, 2331 NM-522, in Questa. More info: yogasalaquesta.org

THURSDAY

Transportation for Qualified Seniors by donation, Questa Senior Center, 148 Embargo Rd, Questa. Call for more info and to make an appointment (575) 586-0508

2:30 - 4:30 PM
Dropped Stitch meets at the Questa Public Library, 6 1/2 Municipal Park Rd. We knit, crochet, laugh, teach and learn. Bring your projects. All skill levels are welcome. Info: (575) 586-2023

6 PM
Thursday Night Jam Session at Rael's Market & Coffee House; bring your instrument to jam or just bring yourself and enjoy. Free! 2430 NM-Hwy 522, Questa. Info: (575) 779-9249

7 PM - 8:30 PM
Japanese Martial Arts at the Red River Conference Center. \$10 Mat fee must be 18yrs and older. Info: (575) 754-1708

FRIDAY

10:00 AM
Free Community Qigong with Julian, in person only, free at Yoga Sala, 2331 NM-522, in Questa. More info: yogasalaquesta.org

10 AM - 2 PM
Repurposing Plastic Project: Come smash plastic and make wire walls! At the old "Movies at Home" building opposite the new Sangre de Cristo Valley Market on Hwy 522. Call or text (575) 224-7386

6 - 8 PM
Live Music every other Friday with Chris Arellano and family and friends, 101 Bar & Grill (formerly The Crazy Beaver), 101 County Rd 13.2, Garcia, CO 81152. Call to confirm: (719) 672-9022

SATURDAY

10:30 AM
Free Community Tai Chi with Reto, in person only, classes at Yoga Sala, 2331 NM-522, in Questa, More info: yogasalaquesta.org

7 PM
Torchlight Parade and Fireworks at the Lighthouse in Red River. March 16 and 23 will be at 8 pm



WELCOME TO THE NEW AREA ONLINE CALENDAR OF EVENTS!

The same area online calendar is now shared on all of the following sites...

QuestaNews.com
QuestaCreative.org
QuestaLibrary.org
Questa-NM.com
VisitQuesta.com

Now you can upload your event once on any of the websites and it will appear on all of the above sites for **FREE!**

Try it today!
<https://questanews.com/questa-events/#/show?distance=15>

CLASSIFIEDS

HELP WANTED

Support Services Specialist, US Forest Service: This position is located at the Questa Forest Service Ranger District with responsibility for accomplishing a variety of support services. Apply on [ZipRecruiter.com](https://ziprecruiter.com).

City Carrier Assistant, US Postal Services: As a city carrier assistant, you will sell stamps, handle incoming mail, sort and distribute mail, and execute clerical duties. Apply on [USPS.com](https://usps.com).

Environmental Technicians Wanted - Day Shift, Full Benefits & Travel Expenses Paid. Are you seeking an exciting opportunity for growth in fieldbased environmental work? Arcadis is hiring technicians to assist with our environmental projects in Questa, NM with travel to neighboring states. Overnight travel will be required 40-50% of year. Position responsibilities may include: sampling different materials including soil, groundwater, and air, maintaining and operating remediation systems and on-site construction work. If you are interested, please apply at the link below: <https://careers.arcadis.com/job/20270>

Vendors Wanted! The 2024 Questa Fiestas is being held Saturday, June 15 from 10am-10pm, we're looking for vendors – food, arts, and crafts!

Expecting over 800 ppl; \$45 fee. For more info or to sign up, contact Yolanda Acosta at (575) 586-2052.

NOTICES

Questa Senior Center Lunches. Lunches are no longer served to-go. Lunch is served from noon to 1 p.m. and the recommended donation is upward of \$1.50 each. 148 Embargo Rd, Questa. Call (575) 586-0508 for more information.

SLV Spay & Neuter Alliance Mobile Clinic offers low-cost spay and neuter services for cats and dogs in San Luis, Alamosa, and other towns in southern Colorado on a rotating basis. Surgeries include age-appropriate rabies and distemper vaccines. Microchips, bordetella vaccines, dewormer, nail trims, and mat removal are available at additional cost. Book appointments easily online at slvsna.org or call (719) 657-7076.

Free Transportation for Qualified Seniors Monday through Thursday. Donations are encouraged. Questa Senior Center, 148 Embargo Rd, Questa. Call (575) 586-0508 for more information.

Repurposing Plastic Project: Wednesdays & Fridays 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. Come smash plastic and make wire walls! Meet the team, work your body, lift your spirit, and help the planet! At the RPP World Headquarters, the old "Movies at Home" building opposite the

supermarket on Hwy 522. For more info, call or text (575) 224-7386.

North Central New Mexico Food Pantry: Second and fourth Fridays, 10 a.m. – noon: 140 Embargo Rd. in Questa. If you need an emergency food box or other information, please call: Jeannie Masters (575) 586-0486 or (575) 779-9194, or Nancy Parker (575) 586-2096 or (505) 699-7563. To make a donation, go to ncfquesta.com or mail to: North Central Food Pantry, PO Box 1076, Questa, NM 87556. For more information, please email wrmesquire2@gmail.com. If you would like to volunteer, please call Jeannie (numbers above).

Questa One-on-One In-Person Business Counseling with Director of the Small Business Development Center at UNM-Taos Anwar Kaelin. FREE and CONFIDENTIAL offered on the third Thursday of every month, 1–4 p.m., at the Questa Visitor Center. Business owners, independent contractors, and entrepreneurs in the Questa area can receive free one-on-one business consulting and support in planning, marketing, regulatory compliance, technology development, accessing capital, international trade, and more. Also offered via Zoom on the same day 2–3 p.m.: <https://zoom.us/j/5757376219>. Join by phone: (346) 248-7799 with ID (575) 737-6219. For an appointment, or more information, contact Anwar at anwar@unm.edu

CHURCH DIRECTORY

QUESTA

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Father Andrew Ifele (575) 586-0470
Sunday 8 a.m. only.

MISSION CHURCHES OF ST. ANTHONY'S:
Costilla - Sagrado Corazon - Sunday 9 a.m.
Cerro - Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe - 2nd & 4th Saturdays 4 p.m.
Amalia - Santo Niño - 1st & 3rd Saturdays 4 p.m.

FREEDOM CENTER CHURCH
(previously Harvest Questa)
Pastors Kristi & Johnny Gonzales
2558 Hwy 522, Questa
Sunday Service 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
(575) 770-1714
Visit us online: freedomquesta.com

LIVING WORD MINISTRIES
Pastors Peter and Gayle Martinez
12 Llano Road, Questa
Service: Sunday 10:30 a.m.
Nursery and Kids' Church at 10:30 a.m.
Wednesday Bible Study 7 p.m.
www.lwmsite.com (575) 586-1587

PATH OF LOVE
Sunday 7:30 a.m. class and meditation in-person north of Questa or on Zoom. For more info: (575) 770-1682 or gabrielle.herbertson@gmail.com

THEOSOPHY
Northern New Mexico Alice Bailey Study Group.
Sunday and Wednesday 10 a.m.- NOON on Zoom.
For more info, contact Francis at oeaohoo17@gmail.com

QUESTA CHURCH OF CHRIST
2 miles north of Questa on State Road 522
Sunday Bible Class Sunday 9:30 a.m.
followed by worship at 10:15 a.m.

KAGYU MILA GURU SANGHA
Tibetan Buddhism
Monday 11 a.m. Green Tara. Friday 1 pm Chenrezig both in-person and on Zoom. For more info www.earthjourney.org or contact Gabrielle at info@earthjourney.org or (575) 770-1682

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AMALIA

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1st & 3rd Saturdays 4 p.m.

ABUNDANT LIFE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP
Sunday Service 10:30 a.m.
Potluck & Fellowship 3rd Sunday of the month
Highway 196, Amalia
Pastors: Lorenzo & Arleen Lucero
(575) 770-5716

RED RIVER

FAITH MOUNTAIN FELLOWSHIP
Corner of River Street and Copper King Trail
Sunday 10:30 a.m.
First Baptist Church of Red River
103 High Cost Trail
Sundays 8:15 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.
Pastor Joe Phillips (575) 754-2882

ST. EDWIN'S CATHOLIC CHURCH
North end of Silver Bell Trail, Red River
Saturday 6 p.m. (Confession prior to Mass or by appt.)
Father Andrew Ifele (575) 586-0470



Happy Easter from our family to yours!
Questa del Rio News

AA MEETINGS
Honesty, Unselfishness, Purity and Love.

QUESTA: Sundays 10-11 a.m. Questa Youth Center	RED RIVER: Tuesdays 7- 8 p.m. 417 E. High St. (Erik's Workshop)
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QuestaFarmersMarket.org
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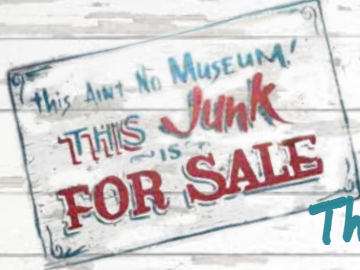


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