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Questa del Rio News

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See page 3 for details about our funding.

Questa BestCare Pharmacy License Revoked; Remains Operational Under Probation



Photo by E. Wilde

Interior of Bestcare Pharmacy located at 2349 NM-522, Questa

By MIKAYLA ORTEGA

The New Mexico Board of Pharmacy revoked the licenses of BestCare Pharmacies following a disciplinary hearing held July 14-16, citing repeated and serious violations of the state's Pharmacy Act. While the license has been revoked, Questa's only pharmacy will continue to operate under five years probation along with the Chama and Lordsburg locations. In an order obtained by the *Questa del Rio News*, the pharmacy will be subject to increased inspections for compliance to ensure it follows all laws and regulations. Additionally, any deficiencies must be corrected within 30 days.

The board found that multiple BestCare locations failed to comply with safety, inventory, and oversight regulations designed to protect patients. Documented in inspection reports dating back to 2019, the violations included missing barcoding systems, incomplete controlled substance audits, unsanitary conditions, and lapses in professional oversight.

The company's other locations in Mora, Angel Fire, Deming, and Springer had closed prior to the July disciplinary hearing.

State inspections across the BestCare network in 2022 uncovered a pattern of violations. A May 2022 audit of the Questa location found that the pharmacy lacked barcoding technology to verify prescriptions and that the designated pharmacist in charge had failed to sign mandatory monthly reports. Pharmacies in Angel Fire, Chama, Lordsburg, and Mora were cited for similar deficiencies.

In Deming, a March 2022 inspection revealed the pharmacy was operating without a functioning thermometer to monitor medications, and its controlled substance inventory had not been properly completed.

A June 2022 inspection in Chama found the pharmacy's designated pharmacist in charge, David Shoup, had died in November 2021, leaving the business without a licensed pharmacist's oversight for seven months. Additionally, inspectors noted that owner Ashok Pothula's license displayed an expiration date of 2018.

Further inspections at the Springer location in September and October 2022 found that controlled substance audits were not properly conducted, and inventory records contained unexplained edits.

In one of the final audits, conducted

in February 2024, inspectors found the Mora pharmacy in an unclean and unsanitary condition. Surveillance equipment required to monitor the dispensing counter was not operational and barcode technology remained nonfunctional.

The board concluded that BestCare violated four provisions of the New Mexico Pharmacy Act and 10 additional administrative rules, citing failures to maintain proper records, ensure the integrity of controlled substance inventories, and uphold sanitary and professional standards.

Under the order, all BestCare licenses are revoked for a period of five years. Any reinstatement will be contingent upon probationary oversight and increased inspections.

New Mexico's drug overdose rate, among the highest in the nation for the past two decades, has more than tripled since 1990, according to the state Department of Health.

The board continues to emphasize the important role pharmacies play in preventing the diversion and misuse of controlled substances.

BestCare Pharmacies could not immediately be reached for comment.

Questa del Rio News

NOTICIAS QUESTA DEL RIO

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Providing public access and representation for historically underserved communities in northern Taos County and the San Luis Valley, preserving the culture, history, traditions & stories of the people through strong, meaningful journalism.

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VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY

EDITORIAL: Questa 2014 to Now: A Mysterious Journey

By MALAQUIAS RAEL,
QEDF Chairman

On that fateful day June 14, 2014 Chevron announced that it would cease its mining operations in Questa for good. This announcement seemed like a death blow to the people of Questa and the surrounding communities. Would it end a way of life forever? It was an end of an era that sustained a citizenry of whom many were families that belonged to El Norte's original settlers. We are authentic. As one era ended, a new one began.

After a year or so our mourning ended. The sadness was replaced with determination and joy in what the future would bring. The announcement started with it all. We gathered together much like we did when our beloved St. Anthony's church collapsed. That same determination is what we are using to rebuild our community into something better and stronger. How will this new birth change us? How will it keep us the same? The choice is always ours to make. We have made the best choice. Save our community.

We received many visitors who offered help, support, and encouragement. We accepted. We are not going to allow the dust to gather and weeds to takeover. The 180 plus years of living in this area told us that another way forward was on its way here. The spirit of hope and strength will help us shake the chains of doubt and fear. There is no room for such emotions.

We decided that Questa needs to have a diversity that relies on the many resources available to us. We are truly blessed to be surrounded by beauty and opportunity. The old resources served us well but left us with much to clean up.

As the cleanup process has been going on, we have used the time to find ways to usher in the new era. The work has been challenging and difficult. But, as a mother

awaits the arrival of her newborn we are filled with joy. This community can expect to experience much activity as before. The difference is that the activity will be more diverse.

We know that our source of inspiration comes from God almighty. He has provided us with many tools to complete our tasks. Tools like agriculture, outdoor recreation and new innovations like green hydrogen. These tools will be used to rebuild Questa into a place we can present to the world.

More importantly to our neighbors and ourselves. Will it be perfect? Hah no. But it will be something we bring to the table, the town square, and to the altar that will cause others to look and wonder "how did they do it?" Simply put, we have taken advantage of the opportunities presented to us.

Agriculture and outdoor recreation are very beneficial. Yet, they are subject to seasons. Green hydrogen energy and new housing are more like planning a trip to Mars. Mars seems a lot closer now. These alternative opportunities may bring fear and doubt into our way of thinking. One should never self-impose a handicap doing something new and bold. We will walk and run with new shoes of hope and purpose. Imagine a community that will make us stronger than before. Imagine our children and grandchildren coming back to a place we restored and preserved for them. My friends, this is possible as long as we place our faith in Him who created us and has given us the means to get it done.

We have always been a people willing to see what change can do for us with values that keep us grounded. We will always rely on faith and reason to accomplish what we have started. We know we are guided by a greater source of wisdom and power than we ourselves could muster. Stay tuned, join the effort, say yes.



Photo by E. Wilde

“Todo Se Acaba”: Berlinda Trujillo Reflects on 96 Years

By MIKAYLA ORTEGA

At 96 years old, Berlinda Trujillo still remembers the smell of earth after a good rain in Llama, the small northern New Mexico village where she was born and raised.

“Todo se acaba,” she said softly — everything comes to an end.

Born on Sept. 30, 1929 in her family’s home with the help of a midwife from Questa, she grew up surrounded by family, neighbors, and tradition. Her parents, who lived with her grandmother in a large plazuela, raised her alongside three cousins — Orlando, Julie, and Loyola— whom she describes as her brother and sisters.

“There were 14 families in Llama,” she recalled. “And of course, Spanish people have big families. Cousins grew up as brothers and sisters.”

Trujillo attended a one-room school in Llama, where the teacher divided children by grade levels. Older students often helped younger ones learn their lessons — a method that taught both patience and responsibility. “We were told to speak English,” she said. “If you didn’t, you got marks. I don’t remember being spanked — but we learned quickly that we couldn’t speak our native Spanish language without getting in trouble for it.”

Like most northern New Mexico families of her generation, her family’s livelihood followed the rhythm of the land and the seasons. In the spring, men left for Wyoming to herd sheep. By summer,



Photo by Mikayla Ortega

Berlinda Trujillo

whole families traveled north to Colorado for the potato harvests.

“It was a caravan of families,” she said. “We’d go to Monte Vista to pick potatoes. The men worked the rows, and the rest of us followed behind with plastic sacks, picking and dumping them into the truck. I must’ve been 12 or 13.”

Those trips, she said, were hard but full of laughter, food, and community. “After a long hard day, I recall we’d sit down together and restore our energy as we’d eat a bushel of peas,” she said with a smile. “We didn’t have much, but we had each other.”

She graduated school in Costilla in 1950, where the Loretto nuns taught typing and bookkeeping. Soon after, she attended Highlands University in Las Vegas, N.M. — an experience she still fondly

BERLINDA TRUJILLO cont’d on page 6

Questa del Rio News fights to survive as local journalism faces financial strain



Photo by E. Wilde

Last day of the conference in Salt Lake City

By STAFF WRITERS

Questa del Rio News is dedicated to covering northern Taos County communities. Simultaneously, we are working to secure our future as financial pressures continue to threaten the survival of local journalism.

The newspaper recently received a grant that allowed staff to attend the Business of Local Conference, hosted Oct. 19–21 at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City by the Blue Engine Collaborative. The gathering brought together more than 100 small

publishers from across the country to share challenges and explore business models that can keep independent newsrooms alive.

Questa del Rio News Editor-in-Chief Mikayla Ortega said the support came at a pivotal moment for the paper, which has relied largely on a mix of grants, advertisers and community donations.

“We know our communities depend on us,” Ortega said. “We want to be

LOCAL JOURNALISM cont’d on page 10

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

BARBARA TRACY, BRYCE FLANAGAN, TONER MITCHELL, DUANE ABEL, ELLEN WOOD, J. ORTEGA, TAOS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, AEDAN HANNON, MELLIE RODRIGUEZ, PAUL PASSINO, BRENDALEE REIPLINGER, QUESTA PUBLIC LIBRARY, QUESTA CREATIVE COUNCIL, SHARON NICHOLSON, QUESTA POLICE DEPARTMENT, DJ MANDONADO, SOPHIE SMITH, FLAVIO CISNEROS, JOHN AND KRISTY FOSTER, CHARLIE AND LUCILLE GONZALES, JOHN ORTEGA, RED RIVER BREWERY, KIT CARSON ELECTRIC COMPANY, BERLINDA TRUJILLO, MILA LOVATO, BENITA LOVATO, CLAIRE COTÉ, SORCHÉ AND AUGUSTINE ROMERO

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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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- We are committed to transparency in every aspect of funding our organization.
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Business Profile

Enchanted Lock and Key

By LORA ARCINIEGA

If you've ever been stranded outside a locked car you know how critical it is to find a locksmith who responds quickly and professionally. In small communities like Questa and surrounding areas, the thought of being locked out with no reliable help coming is a nightmare. This is where Enchanted Circle Auto Lock & Key LLC saves the day. Founded by John and Kristy Foster, this 100% mobile locksmith service has been up and running, servicing the Enchanted Circle since January 2025. John and Kristy are dedicated to providing professional help right here in our area, without the long waits and high prices rural residents often face.

Kristy Foster's connection to Questa is strong; her family has had roots here for generations, and her grandfather, Federico Martinez, was born in the village. Federico is the brother of Gomersindo Martinez (Original owner of Questa Supermarket) and Virgil Martinez (owner of Sangre de Cristo Motel) –both of whom have been a part of Questa's history for generations. After years of visiting, John and Kristy decided to leave Albuquerque and settle in Questa full-time in 2023. "We love the natural beauty of the mountains and the tranquility of the open skies," said John, "but the best part of moving to Questa has been meeting and interacting with so many amazing people and becoming a part of this remarkable community."

With over 30 years in the industrial plumbing industry, John was ready for



Courtesy Photo

John and Kristy Foster

a change after the move. He quickly noticed a critical need: there was no dedicated, local locksmith in Questa or the surrounding areas. After establishing the business in July 2024 and spending the rest of the year dedicated to training, purchasing equipment, and studying techniques, John officially opened for business in January 2025. Enchanted Circle Auto Lock & Key is a 100% mobile service offering: Emergency Lockouts for vehicles and properties; Automotive Key Services, including car key cutting and programming, and remote/fob replacement; and Residential & Commercial lock replacements and key duplication.

For John, the inspiration for the business came from seeing the struggles faced by people in small, rural communities who often wait unreasonable amounts of time and pay high prices for locksmiths traveling from distant cities. "I established Enchanted Circle



Courtesy Photo

Enchanted Lock and Key Mobile

Auto Lock & Key LLC here in Questa to provide the members of our community with professional and reliable locksmith services at fair and honest prices," John explained. "Being 100% mobile means I can come to your home or business when it's convenient, and I am ready to respond quickly when emergencies occur."

When asked about the journey of starting a business, John pointed to the incredible local support. "Starting my business did require dedication and lots of hard work—it has been challenging but very rewarding," he said. He encourages new entrepreneurs to utilize the free local resources available, naming the Questa Business Bridge, the LOR Foundation, and the Questa Economic Development Fund. "It is so amazing to know that your community is behind you and wants to see you succeed!" The Fosters are one of the winners of the recent "Pitch Contest" that took place in

August sponsored by the QEDF where entrepreneurs pitch their business ideas to a panel of investors who then decide whether to invest their own money in the companies.

The Fosters look forward to continuing to learn and grow and to make connections, with a long-term goal of possibly opening a physical storefront someday. For now, John's favorite part of the job is connecting with people all over the Enchanted Circle. "I travel all over the Enchanted Circle and I get to enjoy beautiful scenery every day. But the most rewarding aspect is being able to help locals and visitors—it has truly been a blessing for me."

To reach Enchanted Circle Auto Lock & Key for services, you can contact John & Kristy Foster at (505) 235-7730. Their hours of operation are 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., seven days a week. Emergency after-hours service is also available.

Kit Carson Electric Cooperative Aids Members Affected by Federal Shutdown

By STAFF WRITERS

Following the ongoing federal government closing, Kit Carson Electric Co-op is being recognized for its efforts to support local families affected by furloughs and lost paychecks.

During the closing, the Taos-based co-op suspended disconnections for federal employees and offered bill payment assistance through its Members Helping Members Program. The co-op also

partnered with the Taos Community Foundation to provide grocery gift cards to eligible workers.

Luis Reyes Jr, CEO of KCEC, said the effort reflects the cooperative's long-standing commitment to helping its members through difficult times. "We know our members are our neighbors," Reyes said. "When our community faces hardship, we step up to make sure no one is left without essential services."



Courtesy photo

The initiative provided temporary relief for federal employees in Taos and surrounding counties, helping them stay connected and supported until government operations resumed.

Kit Carson Electric Cooperative serves members across Taos, Colfax and Rio Arriba counties. More information about the Members Helping Members Program is available by calling (575) 751-9064 or emailing csr@kitcarson.com

Localogy Named Taos Community Foundation Nonprofit of the Year

By MIKAYLA ORTEGA

Localogy is a collaborative network of grassroots organizations focused on building community resilience in northern New Mexico, has been honored as the Taos Community Foundation's Nonprofit of the Year. The non-profit is led by Executive Director Daniel Hutchison.

The group supports a wide range of community-led programs centered on youth development, local food systems, animal welfare, the arts and cultural preservation. Localogy leaders say their mission is to help move communities from passive consumption toward actively producing local livelihoods and culture.

"Our community faces challenges that are multifaceted and pervasive," the organization said in a statement. "Resil-

ient solutions are best achieved through a holistic systems approach."

Localogy serves as a cross-sector hub for charitable initiatives, pooling administrative support so program leaders can focus on direct impact. The model enables grassroots projects to develop organically and respond quickly to local needs, the organization said.

Among the initiatives operating under Localogy's umbrella are the Sangre de Cristo Youth Ranch, a farm and wilderness-based summer camp; Vida Camp, which offers summer programming for youth in Questa; and QuestaActive, a youth sports league. Other efforts include the Sala Reach arts and wellness program, the Questa Farmers Market, and Casas de Cultura, a center for creativity and community connection.



The network also supports projects such as Questa Stories, an oral history and storytelling initiative; Land Experience and Art of Place, an interdis-

iplinary arts effort; High Desert Hounds, which assists vulnerable dogs in Taos County; the Food Forest Movement of Taos, which encourages mutual-aid food forestry; and Cultivo, a program growing a resilient local food system.

The Taos Community Foundation annually recognizes nonprofits that show exceptional dedication to improving life in Taos County. Localogy officials said the award reflects the strength and creativity of the residents who guide its programs.

"We are incredibly proud of the work happening across our projects," the statement said. "Every initiative is driven by local people building solutions for their own communities."

More information about Localogy and its programs can be found at localogy.org.

Red River Distillery Earns National Vodka Honor for Fourth Straight Year

By MIKAYLA ORTEGA

Red River Brewery & Distillery's Silver King Vodka has been ranked among the top craft vodkas in the United States for a fourth consecutive year, earning the No. 5 spot in the USA TODAY 10Best Readers' Choice Awards.

The competition highlights the nation's top 10 craft vodkas as determined by readers of USA TODAY and 10Best.com.

Silver King Vodka is made with snowmelt water from the mountains surrounding Red River and produced at one of the highest-elevation distilleries in the

country. The spirit has earned 15 national awards to date, including a double gold medal and best of class recognition from the American Distilling Institute.

"Our pristine water and low-temperature distillation, made possible at this elevation, continues to give Silver King Vodka its smooth and subtle flavor profile," head distiller Gavin Whealy said. "To win four years in a row is an incredible testament to the consistent quality of our product."

Owner Michael Calhoun credited customers for the continued recognition.



Courtesy photo

"We are honored by the support and recognition from our fans," Calhoun said. "We're passionate about crafting high-quality spirits and deeply grateful for this award."

Silver King Vodka and the company's other products are sold in more than 400 liquor stores and distributed in New Mexico through Southern Glazer's and in Texas through Green Light Distribution.

Red River Brewery & Distillery, founded in 2018, is a family-owned business.

The full list of 10Best award winners can be found on USA TODAY's website.

Mixed fuel at Questa Sinclair Triggers Customer Alert

By MIKAYLA ORTEGA

A fuel delivery mix-up temporarily affected the premium and diesel pumps at the Questa Sinclair gas station on the town's south side at 2375 Highway 522 in Questa. This mixed fuel was available to customers on Tuesday, Oct. 14 into Wednesday, Oct. 15 into early afternoon.

According to station management, a delivery truck with Express Gasoline mistakenly mixed premium gasoline with diesel fuel during a recent delivery. Employees identified the issue quickly, limiting the number of customers affected. Employees identified the issue quickly, limiting the number of customers affected to approximately 10, according to sta-

tion management.

"We acted fast to handle the situation," the station management said. "There were minimal people affected, and we want to reassure customers that our current regular unleaded supply at the station has been tested and is fine."

The fuel supplier is assessing the incident and has accepted full responsibility for the error.

The Sinclair northside station remains unaffected. All grades of fuel there — regular, premium, and diesel — have been tested and are safe for use, the company said.

"We apologize for the inconvenience this incident has caused," the

statement read.

Anyone who may have been affected should go to the Sinclair station at 2375 Highway 522 and leave the following information:

- Name and contact details
- Time frame or date of purchase
- Vehicle make and model
- Product purchased
- Payment type
- Amount of purchase

Impacted customers can get updates by contacting the Great West Casualty Company Old Republic Insurance Group at (208) 898-3606. Their website is www.gwccnet.com. The claim number is Questa Two.



Courtesy photo

KCEC Addresses Public Concerns on Green Hydrogen Project

By LORA ARCINIEGA

Rael's coffee shop in Questa was flooded with interested public on Oct. 3 regarding the Green Hydrogen plant expected to break ground in 2026 in Questa. There was a slight divide in the room with many people seeking answers to the size, locality, water use, and overall safety of the green hydrogen plant. Kit Carson CEO, Luis Reyes and company addressed questions and followed up with key information about the new hydrogen energy project.

Mayor Ortega opened the meeting with the plethora of opportunities that a green hydrogen plant brings for the community. "Currently it costs \$1 million to pave one mile of road in Questa. The green hydrogen plant is expected to bring economic development to Questa through GRT taxes and job creation," Mayor Ortega said. "The Village wants to own the solar which is expected to bring an annual revenue source of 3 million to 3.5 million of revenue to Questa. Our current GRT is about \$1 million annually and this will give us three times what we have right now. This will allow us to hire more public work employees," Mayor Ortega stated.

CEO Luis Reyes recalled that following the Molycorp mine closure in 2014, KCEC sought ways to help offset the major loss of employment—some 300 jobs. By 2017, a group including KCEC, Chevron, and QEDF secured a grant to study local energy projects. The two-year study concluded that green hydrogen presented the best opportunity for a resilient workforce and clean energy future in Questa. KCEC was subsequently awarded a \$231 million dollar grant—the largest of its kind—for this three-plant project, with hubs planned for Questa, Taos, and Peñasco. Reyes



Photo by Lynn Skall

Coffee with KCEC at Rael's Market

cautioned, "The money is earmarked for Kit Carson—however, this doesn't mean we have it in hand."

When it comes to the infrastructure of the project, KCEC plans to keep the facility low-profile noting that the tallest parts, like the compressor sheds, will be about 26 feet high. This means they will be shorter than or about the same height as typical streetlights (30 to 50 feet). Nighttime lighting will be carefully controlled to follow local "dark sky" rules. As far as where water will come from for the plant, KCEC is currently working with Chevron to secure the water rights needed for the plant.

Other concerns raised by the public were noise and safety. KCEC mentions the project will follow all required local and federal rules for noise and safety and that noise from the equipment is similar to a busy street when you are close and drops quickly to a conversational volume (55 dBA) at just 100 feet away. Hydrogen storage tanks will be built to the highest standard to prevent leaks. The site will have leak detectors, fire sensors, and emergency response plans in place. A comment

from the crowd mentioned that it would be a good idea to contact other communities who are using green hydrogen and see how they like it. More concerns from the public meeting were around environmental issues, specifically nitrous oxide leaks, how much water will be used, where the water will come from, and how long the aquifer will last for the plant.

Location will be on one of the two Chevron superfund sites. Existing transmission lines will be used for the plant. To put it simply the process goes as such; KCEC will take water and pipe it into an electrolyzer which separates the hydrogen from the oxygen. The co-op will release the oxygen, and the hydrogen gas will then be compressed and placed in pressurized storage tanks until needed. As far as water rights are concerned, KCEC is currently working with Chevron to secure the rights necessary to draw water from an adjudicated deep well located near the proposed site.

However, skepticism remains. A strong comment was made by a gentleman in attendance who stated, "we don't have

the water, we don't have the money, and we don't have the technology to do that project... you're giving us all the benefits and none of the cost." He also noted the absence of Chevron in the room and expressed his concern for leaks. KCEC representatives pointed out that similar green hydrogen projects are already running in other places across the country, including facilities in Colorado and California, showing the technology is already in use. A question came up as to where the alternate water source will come from if an agreement can't be made between KCEC and Chevron. Reyes responded by saying "KCEC is looking at all water options."

Kit Carson representatives Bobby Ortega and Bernie Torres were both present and engaged in the conversation. Ortega mentioned, "I would never be in support of something that was not in the best interest of the people of Questa. Having toured a green hydrogen plant in Georgia really confirmed that this is something that we can do in Questa."

One of the last comments heard was an individual who expressed "I am very confident that the team we have in charge of Kit Carson is doing everything they can to enhance Taos County, not just Questa."

KCEC encourages the community to keep sharing feedback and questions about the hydrogen initiative and thanked the community for their questions, noting that public input helps guide the co-op's work to bring clean, dependable energy to the area. If you have additional questions please contact Luis Reyes at lreyes@kit-carson.com or (575) 741-0213 or Richard Martinez at rmartinez@kitcarson.com or (575) 758-2258.

BERLINDA TRUJILLO cont'd from page 3

remembers. "It was amazing to get the experience to leave our small community and attend college in Las Vegas. I didn't finish school, but just having the opportunity to go and experience this new life, it was something great," she recalled.

Trujillo recalls meeting her husband, Questa native Tony Trujillo, who at first, she developed a crush on. Her good friend would joke with her saying, "vamos hacerle pedo a Tony" suggesting that she flirt and joke with Tony to get his attention.

A love quickly developed, bringing Trujillo back to Questa where she started working at the local post office where her

husband served as the post master. She and Tony raised a family and together, they had four children, Tony, Lino 'LT', Jaynelle and Berna.

Her husband was instrumental in applying for funding to build a new facility, though construction didn't begin until after her husband's passing.

Trujillo recalls one year when she was working at the post office, her husband was contacted by the FBI. They informed him that they would need to surveil the office for a few weeks as a man had moved to Cabresto Road and was expecting a package from overseas. "I remember I was scared and nervous, but Tony told me I needed to act cool and calm, so I did." She recalls the agents would go by the Post

Office daily, in plain clothes waiting to intercept the package. One day, it arrived, and the agents swiftly apprehended the man and took the package away. "I don't recall ever hearing what it was, or who the man was, but it was one of the most memorable experiences I had working at the Post Office."

Her days were grounded in rhythm: beans and chile every week, casseroles cooked with love, and as a special treat for the kids, hamburgers and fries on Fridays. She recalls making biscochitos for special occasions and baked apples in the same oven she used for casseroles.

Asked what advice she would give younger generations, Trujillo didn't hesitate.

"Make sure family comes first," she said. "Community service second. Participate in the community. Respect, of course. And get a good education — because you're going to need it. Then come back home and serve the community."

Even as the years pass and Questa has changed, Trujillo's memories remain vivid: the laughter of cousins, the hum of harvest caravans, and the sense of belonging that only a small village can give.

For her, the meaning of life is simple. "Todo se acaba," she repeats — not as a lament, but as wisdom from a woman who has seen almost a century of change, and who knows that what truly lasts is love, community, and the stories we pass on.



LOR FOUNDATION
UPDATE
BY AEDAN HANNON

Listening First

We know that great ideas can come from anyone and anywhere. That's why at LOR we take a different approach: listening. If you've ever chatted with Questa community officer Maria Gonzalez, you know we don't have predetermined solutions or a checklist of projects we think Questa should pursue. Instead, Gonzalez sits down with residents, hears their ideas, and supports solutions that come from the people who know Questa best.

One Sunday at the Questa Farmers Market, Gonzalez found herself visiting with Claire Coté, founder of Land, Experience and Art of Place (LEAP), and Localogy's Daniel Hutchison. They shared a concern that many in the community have expressed: how can Questa preserve the stories, language, and traditions of its elders before they're lost? A few weeks later, Coté and Hutchison

came to Gonzalez with a solution: create the Voices of the Northern Rio Grande oral history project. With LOR's support, the project will record interviews with Questa's elders, host story-sharing events at the library, and create digital archives to preserve these voices for current and future generations.

"Listening is at the heart of everything we do," Gonzalez says. "We listen to Questa residents, and we find ways to help them make their solutions possible. The Voices of the Northern Rio Grande is exactly the kind of project we want to support because it emerged from truly listening to what matters most to our community."

Another recent LOR-supported project also aims to make sure that everyone in the Questa community is heard. Many parents and community members are deeply invested in the Questa Independent School District, but sometimes disconnects arise. School leaders have consistently heard from parents who want greater involvement and collaboration, so one principal came up with the idea to strengthen community connections through outreach and events. With funding from LOR, the district has begun hosting parent workshops, family engagement nights, and

community trainings that bring families, teachers, and residents together. The goal is simple: listening to the Questa community to create more opportunities for student success.

"The most powerful thing about listening is that it builds trust," Gonzalez says. "When schools, parents, and community members really hear each other, barriers start to come down. That's when collaboration happens, and that's when students thrive."

When Gonzalez talks with Questa residents, one challenge comes up again and again: affordable, accessible housing. Do you have a housing idea? If so, Gonzalez wants to hear it. Maybe it's a repair network, an exchange program, or a new approach to intergenerational housing. We know locals already have the solutions—they just need support. Reach out to Gonzalez at maria@lorfoundation.org or (575) 665-2001 to share your idea and learn how LOR can help. We know that every great community project starts the same way: with someone willing to listen.

LOR works with rural communities in the Mountain West to enhance livability and prosperity while preserving the character that makes each community unique.

Food Banks Brace for Shortage Amid Government Shutdown

By MIKAYLA ORTEGA

As concerns grow over interruptions to federal food programs expected to stop on Nov. 1 amidst the government shutdown, the North Central Food Pantry is doubling down on efforts to make sure local families don't go hungry.

"We buy food from the Food Depot in Santa Fe," said pantry director Jeannie Masters. "They had been limiting what we could order, but they've lifted those restrictions, so we're stocking up as much as possible."

The pantry recently secured a grant from the Taos Community Foundation to purchase turkeys for Thanksgiving — enough to feed hundreds of families in need. "We're hopeful to order 400 turkeys this year," Masters said.

While shelves are stocked for now, Masters said the organization is preparing for higher demand if federal food aid is

FOOD BANK cont'd on page 9



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Community Mourns Death of Off-Duty Questa Police Officer

By MIKAYLA ORTEGA

The communities of northern New Mexico are mourning the loss of off-duty police officer Anthony Martinez, who was killed on Friday, Oct. 17, when his motorcycle collided with another vehicle in Taos at the intersection of Albright Street and Paseo del Pueblo Sur.

According to Questa Mayor John Ortega, Martinez had served with the Questa Police Department since May of this year.

“This is a very sad and tragic day for the Village of Questa Police Department,” said Mayor John Ortega in a statement. “My thoughts and prayers are with Offi-

cer Martinez’s family. Our employees are like family and I pray for their safety daily. Anthony was a great addition to our team and family. Please keep Officer Martinez and all the QPD officers in your thoughts and prayers.”

Before joining the Questa department, Martinez worked for the Taos Police Department for two years and had previously served with the Taos Pueblo Department of Public Safety.

Taos Police Lt. and spokesperson Stephen Ortega said the crash remains under investigation. The passenger of the second vehicle involved was transported to the hospital with undetermined injuries.

“This was a difficult day for our agen-



Photo courtesy DJ Mandonado

Officer Anthony Martinez

cy,” Lt. Ortega said. “We all knew Martinez personally and kept in touch with him, even after he left Taos Police. He was a good man, a hard worker, and a great police officer. We’re mourning this loss.”

Volunteer Questa Firefighter DJ Mandonado said the whole first responder community is feeling this great loss. “Anthony was a part of our motorcycle group, Los Vaqueros Acero. Our group is dedicated to suicide awareness for first responders. Every time we would go out riding motorcycles, he was always out with us. We will miss him.”

Mayor Ortega ordered all flags within the Village of Questa to be flown at half-staff until Martinez’s funeral on Nov. 1.

Mid-October Storm Floods Homes, Triggers Mudslides in Questa Area

By MIKAYLA ORTEGA

A massive rainstorm swept through northern Taos County late Oct. 15 into the early hours of Oct. 16, flooding homes and forcing the closure of a key roadway between Questa and Red River.

Multiple residents across the Questa region reported waking between 2 a.m. and 5 a.m. to find water inside their homes as heavy rainfall overwhelmed drainage and runoff swelled into residential areas.

Between the evening of October 15th and the early morning of October 16th, a weather station in the Pinabete area recorded a total of 2.2 inches of rain. Specifically, 0.74 inches fell between 10:00 PM and 12:00 AM, and an additional 1.5 inches fell between 12:00 AM and 4:05 AM.

Village of Questa crews worked



Photo by Emily Wilde

through the morning clearing downed branches and debris from roadways to restore access and reduce hazards.

State Road 38 — the main route connecting Questa and Red River — was initially shut down after several mudslides blocked travel, according to the Taos County Sheriff’s Office. Authorities advised drivers to take alternative routes



Photo courtesy Taos County Sheriff’s Office

along the Enchanted Circle loop.

A 7 a.m. update from officials stated that one lane of the highway had reopened to alternating traffic, though delays were expected while crews continued clearing debris. The road fully reopened later in the day.

In the future, residents who experience flooding are urged to take precautions for

future storms. Recommendations include documenting damage with photos for insurance purposes, moving valuables to higher ground, keeping drains and gutters clear and preparing emergency supplies. Residents are also advised to ventilate and disinfect affected areas quickly after flooding to prevent mold and other health risks.

Village Employee Earns State Zoning Certification

By STAFF WRITERS

A Village of Questa employee has become the first from the municipality to earn certification from the New Mexico League of Zoning Officials (NMLZO), a distinction that recognizes professional achievement and commitment to fair and consistent zoning practices.

Jacob LaFore earned the NMLZO certification after more than three years of education, training, and professional development. The certification process requires applicants to meet a series of standards including formal education, continuing education, attendance at

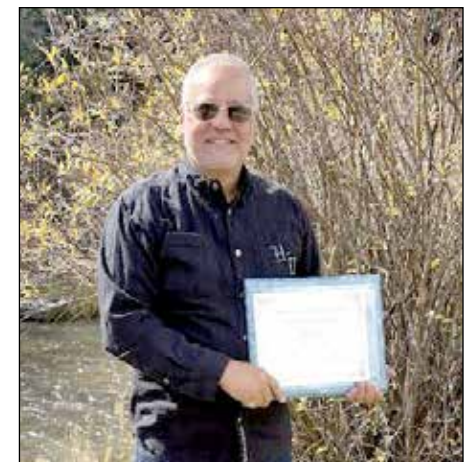
NMLZO training and conferences, relevant job experience, and active organizational involvement.

The NMLZO operates as a subsection of the New Mexico Municipal League and works to identify, foster and promote academic and technical educational programs for zoning officials, according to its mission statement. The organization also strives to maintain open dialogue among planning and zoning professionals across state, regional, and national levels.

LaFore said the certification ensures that zoning practices in Questa will be applied fairly and professionally.

“This certification means the guidelines of the Village’s zoning ordinance will be applied evenly to all zoning applicants,” he said. “It means zoning consistency and fairness, that I can respond to all applicant requests professionally and provide accurate information. Above all, it means the Village has a professional zoning department that can assist our constituents with their zoning needs.”

LaFore added that he looks forward to helping update the Village’s existing zoning ordinance and to collaborating with a future zoning commission and governing body to strengthen local planning efforts.



Courtesy Photo

Jacob LaFore stands with his newly minted certification

Volunteer Firefighters Shoulder Wide Range of Emergency Duties in Taos County

By MIKAYLA ORTEGA

Many residents may assume volunteer firefighters spend most of their time battling flames. Members of the Cerro-Latir Volunteer Fire Department say that is only a small part of what they do.

Less than 10 percent of emergency calls involve structure fires. The majority — between 75 and 80 percent — are medical emergencies, according to Sajit Greene of Latir Fire.

Volunteers also respond to mental health crises, vehicle crashes, wildland fires, search and rescue operations and natural disasters.

Local firefighters recalled calls over the years ranging from the unusual to the life-threatening: a persistent bear on someone's porch, a missing child later found under a house holding a puppy and a hiker who collapsed from heat stroke while climbing out of the Rio Grande gorge. Firefighters may even arrive to find a triggered smoke alarm with no fire at all, or a motorist who struck an elk on the highway.



Photo by E. Wilde

To handle such a broad scope of emergencies, volunteers undergo extensive and continuous training. Most of their service hours are spent learning — everything from hazardous materials response to medical aid, equipment maintenance and driving fire trucks. Training can be highly technical. A recent session titled “The Art of Reading Smoke” focused on how smoke color and movement can offer clues about fire behavior.

Firefighters also take on community education. During Fire Safety Month in

FIREFIGHTERS cont'd on page 11

FOOD BANK cont'd from page 7

disrupted by the ongoing government shutdown. “We’ll feed the community as long as we can,” she said. “This is in God’s hands, not ours. I’m writing grants, asking for money, reaching out to every business I can.”

State officials say local groups like the North Central Food Pantry are vital as New Mexico prepares to bridge gaps in assistance. Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham announced Wednesday, Oct. 29 that the state will allocate \$30 million in contingency funds to continue food aid through early November, after the federal government signaled it would pause the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program during the shutdown. Covering the entire month would cost

roughly \$80 million dollars. Governor Lujan Grisham hopes federal intervention will take place before then.

“We’re not waiting on Washington to act,” Lujan Grisham said at a news conference. “New Mexicans will not go hungry on our watch.”

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, which oversees the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, has said it will suspend benefits starting Saturday due to a lack of federal funding during the shutdown.

Residents who want to help can drop off nonperishable food items at the Red River Conference Center or send monetary donations to the North Central Food Pantry, P.O. Box 134 or P.O. Box 1076 in Questa. Checks can be made out to North Central Food Pantry.



Courtesy Photo

Volunteers coordinate food distribution at the North Central Food Pantry

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Cultivo Grows in Its Second Season: Youth, Farming, and Community

By CONTRIBUTING WRITER
GAEA MCGAHEE

The 2025 growing season marks the second successful year for Cultivo, our nonprofit youth farming and education program growing food at Cerro Vista Farm. Cultivo's mission is to connect new generations to farming while strengthening the local food system in northern Taos County. Through meaningful work and mentorship, local youth and people in their 20s, 30s and older gain hands-on experience in growing, harvesting and preparing produce for markets at an established and well-loved local farm, Cerro Vista.

We worked side by side with our lead farmer and teacher, Daniel Carmona, to learn the full cycle of vegetable production on a small farm. From the first seedlings to our fall harvest, our team worked in the fields transplanting, weeding, harvesting, washing and packing produce. Youth participants, both our younger teen interns and older teen apprentices, brought energy, dedication and curiosity to the farm.

Cultivo produce was sold at Questa Farmers Market where youth interns served customers. Our produce was purchased by Alys a La Cart in Taos, and by Farmhouse Café where you can eat our carrots long into the winter. The North Central Food Pantry purchased Cultivo vegetables increasing their clients' access to fresh, local food. These outlets help build a bridge between young farmers, local enterprise and community health.

Our small CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) program was a success with 28 members receiving weekly summer shares, and 30 members receiving a fall share. Many customers expressed their



Photo by Gaea McGahee

Big harvest crew working on carrots one Friday in Sept. 2025

appreciation for high quality produce and the opportunity to support young people learning to farm. This model strengthens local food security and employment especially for youth.

Alongside land, water and the sun's energy, the heart of Cultivo is the people. We extend deep gratitude to our participants and their families:

Cultivo Interns:

- Sierra Allen
- Dominik Anaya-Rael
- Amber Coté
- Trey Cloud
- Maddix Cloud
- Izyk Gallegos
- Emmanuel Medina
- Oddin Mikhaelsson
- Alma Lightman
- Bradley (Bo) Ortega
- Joel Santistevan
- Tulsi Shaw
- Kayd Stroh

- Nikkita Trujillo

Questa Farmers Market Interns worked at Cerro Vista Farm or supported us at the Sunday market:

- Aubrey Cisneros
- Maria Mercedes Vigil Flores
- Gracie Martinez
- Lyanna Vigil

Farm apprentices:

- Gilbert Alcorta
- Juliana Verderaime
- Dominic Verderaime

Thanks to our dedicated mentors:

- Justin Powers
- Heather Enders
- Mikhael Oskarsson
- Blaze Diamond
- Elias Quintana
- Esperanza Quintana
- Davy Vargo
- Farmer-educator Daniel Carmona

We witnessed young people become more confident, responsible and grounded in farming and cooperative work. Special thanks to Daniel Hutchison, Tallie Segel and Martha Morgan for their key roles in administration and program support. Thank you, too, community volunteers who helped throughout the season!

As we close up the farm for winter, we celebrate what we've grown in the field and in life: our skill sets and our shared wellbeing. Growing food on a small farm is a practice of resilience, creativity and hope for the future of farming in northern New Mexico, and beyond. Our produce is available now at Sangre de Cristo Valley Market! Carrots, cabbage and acorn squash are now in the store.

Our deep thanks to our 2025 grant funders for their generous support: Taos Community Foundation (Impact Grant and ARPA Grant), Community Foundation of Southern New Mexico's Rural Roots Initiative, the LOR Foundation, the Seay Foundation, the Questa Economic Development Fund and Kit Carson Electric Cooperative and the Uplift Fund with Taos Ski Valley. Their partnership makes this work possible along with continued support from our community. Special thanks to our donors! Secure, tax-deductible donations can be made through our website or by contacting us.

For more information, please visit CultivoProject.org or contact program director Gaea McGahee at cultivoprogram@gmail.com.

Email: cultivoprogram@gmail.com

Instagram: [@cultivo_keepitgrowing](https://www.instagram.com/cultivo_keepitgrowing)

Phone: (575) 224-2101 (text or leave a message)

Website: CultivoProject.org

Office: Yoga Sala, 2331 Hwy 522, Questa
A program of Locality 501(c)(3) Questa, NM

LOCAL JOURNALISM cont'd from page 3

here for decades to come, but the simple truth is that the business of local news is harder than ever."

Conference sessions focused on strategies that are working for similar operations nationwide. Among the take-aways: a sustainable newsroom needs a balanced blend of reader support, advertising revenue and grant funding. Participants also learned new ways to secure sponsorships, strengthen membership programs and use digital platforms more effectively to generate income.

Industry leaders from the Salt Lake Tribune shared real-world guidance

on everything from converting readers into paying supporters to improving the value of local advertising. A session featuring the Richland Source highlighted successful year-end fundraising drives, while other talks introduced funding opportunities such as the Media Resilience Fund Loan and initiatives from The Knight Foundation.

Ortega said the grant that funded the trip, made possible by Press Forward, provided access to insights that are typically out of reach for a publication with limited resources.

"This wasn't just about attending a conference," Ortega said. "This was about having a seat at the table where the future of local news is being built."

Alongside revenue planning, workshops addressed newsroom technology and education programs.

For *Questa del Rio News*, the stakes remain high. The paper publishes monthly and covers a wide rural region where larger media outlets have little presence. Without it, residents could lose essential coverage of government, schools, public safety, small businesses and local culture.

"We're hanging on by a thread, but we're fighting for that thread," Ortega said. "Local journalism keeps communities informed and connected. We believe this work is worth saving."

The newspaper plans to launch new fundraising and advertising initiatives

in the coming months, while continuing its mission to provide trusted, locally produced reporting.

"Our neighbors deserve to know what is happening in their own backyard," Ortega said. "We are determined to make sure they never lose that."

Our publication will be hosting our annual fundraiser in December. Readers may receive letters in the mail or may see our posts on social media, encouraging people to donate to our campaign. "Times are tough right now. Our publication exists so our people know they matter and they're not alone," Ortega said. "I am so grateful to our readers and supporters and am hopeful our December fundraiser will be a big success."

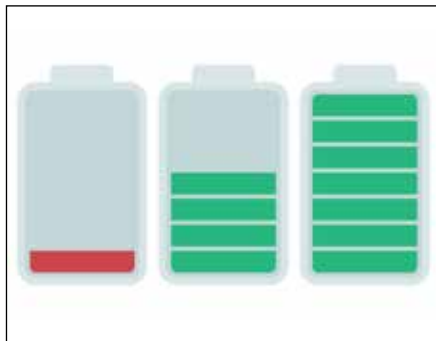
KCEC Advances Microgrid Project to Bolster Wildfire Protection in Northern NM

By MIKAYLA ORTEGA

Kit Carson Electric Cooperative (KCEC) reaffirmed its commitment Tuesday (Oct. 7) to a federally supported microgrid initiative designed to strengthen northern New Mexico's energy resilience, wildfire mitigation, and public safety.

The project, part of the U.S. Department of Energy's Grid Resilience and Innovation Partnerships (GRIP) program, received \$23 million in 2023 — \$15.4 million in federal funding and \$7.7 million from KCEC — to enhance grid reliability across the region. Despite recent uncertainty about federal support, KCEC says it is moving forward with preparations to protect communities from extreme weather events and wildfires, which remain the most significant threat to its infrastructure.

"This project is about more than energy; it is about protecting lives, safeguarding our communities, and ensuring the future of northern New Mexico," said Luis A. Reyes, CEO of KCEC. "Reliable electricity is essential



for public safety, for families who rely on medical equipment, for those who work and study from home, and for every member who depends on us."

KCEC has invested approximately \$4.6 million in battery energy storage systems (BESS) and microgrid equipment including weather stations, AI Smart Edge devices, and grid monitoring software. The cooperative has also secured land in Penasco, Taos Ski Valley, and El Rito West for battery installations and hired tax consultants to identify applicable credits.

The microgrid project aims to maintain local energy supply during wild-

fire-related power shutoffs. This will reduce fire ignition risks while keeping critical facilities — including fire stations, emergency shelters, and first responder bases — operational. It also addresses urgent public health needs by ensuring uninterrupted electricity for members who rely on medical devices, oxygen equipment, dialysis machines, and refrigerated medication.

Construction is scheduled to begin in June 2026, with completion expected by January 2027. Engineering is already 60 percent complete. KCEC officials say the initiative will modernize the cooperative's grid, integrate renewable energy, and provide long-term reliability for residents, small businesses, and remote workers.

KCEC has not received official notice of any federal funding cancellation and plans to continue exploring options to secure financial support for the project. Reyes emphasized that the DOE's investment validates the cooperative's vision and commitment to a resilient, modern energy system.

FIREFIGHTERS cont'd from page 10

October, the Cerro-Latir department hosted a family event to teach children about emergency preparedness. Young attendees met firefighters in full gear, toured an ambulance and practiced calling 911 with a dispatcher.

All responders are volunteers balancing service with regular jobs and family life. Overnight calls often end with volunteers reporting to their day jobs with little sleep. Emergencies interrupt family events, birthdays and dinners. Responders routinely face personal risk to protect neighbors and visitors.

"It takes a special kind of person to serve the community with this level of commitment," Greene says. "Their dedication strengthens our community and helps ensure resiliency during crisis."

Leaders say that commitment deserves respect, gratitude and support.

The Cerro-Latir Volunteer Fire Department is seeking new members, including both responders and auxiliary volunteers. Those interested can contact Chief Tyler Eshleman at lvfd.info@gmail.com.

"There's a job for everyone on our team," Greene said.

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Sophie Smith

By LORA ARCINIEGA

Sophie Smith, a 17-year-old senior at Questa High School and daughter of Kevin and Nicole Smith, is someone who most people can relate to. She's a bit shy, but with a great sense of humor and eagerness to get to know you, Sophie presents herself as a young lady with a quiet determination that's going places. As a studious individual and a person

with a tremendous imagination, her current interests include writing, creating art, and delving into Greek Mythology. Although you wouldn't know it now, her growing confidence and courage has been something Sophie has been working towards over the years all while staying true to herself.

Sophie and her younger brother Remmington moved to Questa from Idaho with their father in 2011 when she was two years old. Today, Sophie is the oldest and only girl among three younger brothers—Remmington (15), Wessen (4), and Ruger (2)—and her nurturing spirit has only grown since the birth of her younger brothers. Sophie said "I want to be the best big sister they can have. My little brothers have definitely increased the level of nurturing in me." Sophie shared a personal story of her biological mother who passed away when



Courtesy Photo

Sophie Smith

she and her brother Remmington were just babies. Her father later met Nicole, who she credits for their constant hard work and sacrifice over the years. Sophie noted that in the past her father often traveled for work, creating opportunities for family vacations wherever he was working. "We used to go on family vacations wherever my dad was working and that was a lot of fun. We recently made a weekend out of my brother's football game in Cloudcroft and I really enjoyed that." Sophie is inspired by her parents' dedication and hard work, noting that she aims to show them that their hard work was and is not in vain.

While currently involved in many activities, Sophie admits she started as a "homebody" and is a very shy person. Her eighth-grade year was challenging,

SOPHIE SMITH cont'd on page 19

Little Miss Rodeo - Mila Lovato

By LORA ARCINIEGA

At just seven years old, Mila Alena Lovato of Taos is the 2025 Little Miss Rodeo New Mexico. Mila is a big sister to little brother, Luke Lovato, and the daughter of Lucas and Benita Lovato who have family ties in Questa, Costilla, and Amalia. Mila is an active second-grade student at Taos Charter School and an energetic participant in swim, soccer, basketball, and softball. Mila is also involved with her church and looks forward to her weekly catechism lesson.

Mila's dedication to the Western way of life and agriculture is largely inspired by her grandparents. Her grandfather, Lawrence Lovato of Costilla, raises cattle, and Mila and Luke have their own cows they've helped manage since they were toddlers. Some of the things Mila enjoys doing is branding, baling hay, and irrigating alongside her grandpa Lawrence. Meanwhile, her grandfather, Carlos Martinez, is a generational sheep herder in Los Cordovas, and her Taos Pueblo native grandmother, Rae Lujan, teaches Mila "the old ways of living," including beading, cooking in the horno, and making fresh jellies. Carlos also raises pigs, chickens, rabbits, and turkeys on his ranch — animals and livestock Mila has always had access to.

Mila's love for the rodeo began by watching ProRodeo videos with her grandfather Lawrence and attending with him. At just two years old she

hopped on a horse and never looked back. As soon as she was old enough, Mila competed in Mutton Busting and loved the competition. "The thought of having her ride a sheep at just 5 years old scared me and I told her 'Mila you could break a bone,'" says Benita. Mila responded by telling her mom "Well it's a good thing you're a nurse Mom!" Benita noted Mila's determination and fearlessness being key characteristics.

It wasn't long before Mila was captivated by the Rodeo Royalty at local events. "The role was a natural fit for her bubbly, outgoing personality," says Benita. "She has no trouble getting out of her comfort zone and talking to anyone." She ran for the Little Miss Rodeo New Mexico title in Oct. 2024, competing over three days in categories including a personal interview, public-speaking, and modeling for "Fashion Forward" and "Western Elegance." She earned the crown and held the title until Oct. 4, 2025.

For anyone this is a big deal, for a 7-year-old this was everything. The honor meant becoming an ambassador for the state, promoting local rodeos, and supporting her Queen, Miss Rodeo New Mexico, Alyssa Sauter, as she prepares for the Miss Rodeo America competition. This impactful year, filled with parades, fundraisers, and public events, has helped Mila build confidence, poise, and public-speaking skills.

Some of the highlights Mila talks about are being able to meet rodeo fans



Courtesy Photo

Mila Alena Lovato

and how she loved being in the arena. Specifically, Mila enjoyed participating in twinkle light parades and fashion show fundraisers. "As a parent you love to see your child have positive role models and influences. The ladies involved

conduct themselves gracefully and respectfully and truly embody everything we could hope for our little girl," Benita and Lucas expressed. When asked what she'd tell other little girls who might want to someday become Little Miss Rodeo, Mila says with confidence, "I would tell them to be nice, and always pay attention to the big girls. Have fun, don't give up, and have the best time ever."

Mila and her family are profoundly thankful for the overwhelming support she's received over the past year. Mila is first thankful to God for all she has and the opportunities she has been blessed with, and her extended family—including her mom, dad, brother, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and friends—across the communities from Costilla to Taos. She is also very appreciative of the Miss Rodeo New Mexico Executive Board and Staff, specifically mentioning Mrs. Christina Mares Gallegos, Pamela Bishop, and Fiona Jolly, for their commitment to helping her shine this past year. Finally, local businesses like the Monte Carlo Grill, Duran's Gas Station in Costilla, and the Tiwa Kitchen at Taos Pueblo also provided support, including raising scholarship funds for Miss Rodeo New Mexico to complete her agricultural degree.

Though her reign is complete, Mila is already looking ahead, saving money through chores to purchase her own horse, and making sure people know her name in the world of rodeo.

SOPHIE SMITH cont'd from page 18

leading her to temporarily switch to homeschooling. Her return to school as a freshman was a significant turning point. "I was so happy when I went back freshman year and some people said they missed me. That really made me feel good. Like people noticed I wasn't there." Empowered by that feeling, Sophie made a conscious decision to get out of her comfort zone. "My confidence just started growing. I started to ignore the teasing and started to believe in myself as well as people who believed in me," she recalls. She specifically credits her mom and high school art teacher, Ms. Vialpando, for encouraging this personal development. "I forced myself to jump over that hurdle of being shy. I used to envy the people who could walk up to anybody and just say hi and start conversations with someone. Now I'm that person," Sophie says with confi-

dence and pride.

Though Sophie's not interested in playing sports, she serves as the cheer manager, a role she took on at the encouragement of her friends. "I became the cheer manager this year and I'm trying my best. I really like it." Her duties include assisting coaches and cheerleaders and managing the music for performances. "I just enjoy hanging out with my friends after school." In addition to cheer, Sophie is a member of the National Honor Society and was part of the Yearbook crew for 2024-2025 where she learned about photography and formatting pictures. Sophie is also an avid writer reflecting on the stories she would write as a child where she'd work herself into the story as one of the main characters. "I love writing and my favorite subject is English," she says, currently finding enjoyment in writing essays for her dual credit college course. Sophie is involved with community service projects and was recently a volunteer for

the "Kick it In Questa" event this past August. She is also a tutor for the Vida del Norte Coalition's after-school program. "I love being a tutor for the little kids. We help them with homework, play with them, and learn new, fun things together. After tutoring, I head over to cheer practice. My coaches are supportive of my tutoring and allow me to arrive a little late to practice because of it."

Upon graduation, Sophie plans to attend the University of Denver in Colorado and major in film and media, a choice fueled by her love of movies, writing, and imagination. "I have big plans for someone from a small town. I want to be on the big screen someday or direct movies." She will be the first in her family to attend college, choosing Denver for a balance of independence and proximity to home. "I want to try out Denver because I want to be on my own but I also want to be close enough to come home and visit on the weekends." When asked if she is a Denver Broncos fan, Sophie

laughs, saying everyone in her house loves football except her. "There are lots of rivalries in my house when it comes to football. My mom loves the Broncos and my dad loves the Patriots. Sometimes I just want to sit and watch a movie," Sophie says with a giggle.

When asked what advice she would give to younger students facing obstacles, Sophie's answer is a reflection of her own journey: "keep your head up. There are going to be obstacles you face that are going to feel impossible to get over. Just remember there are people in your life that'll lift you up. It's about seeing the big picture." She notes the turning point in eighth grade where she decided she "had to grow up and stop caring so much about what others thought about me. The challenge I thought I couldn't overcome, I eventually did. It was about making the change in myself first." Sophie confirms her growth and said, "I can say that I've changed myself for the better to the point where I'm proud of who I've become."

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Charlie I. Gonzales

By LORA ARCINIEGA

Being raised in a community where your history connects to every part of your present, it is 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 those who have pursued lives outside of the community—through our Representando series. This series is dedicated to those who are Representando communities in northern Taos County, in various facets of life.

The first impression one gets of Charlie I. Gonzales is that he wholeheartedly cares about Questa and its people. Charlie and his wife Lucille of 50 years, have created a life here. Over the years, Charlie has built a legacy that spans over 25 years of public service and a 24-year career as a safety manager at the Questa Molycorp Mine.

From the Molycorp mine to the halls of the State Senate and the Mayor's office in Questa, Charlie has dedicated his life to civic duty, driven by a strong belief in teamwork and a passion for helping his neighbors. While many people devote a term or a few years to their community, Charlie's 25 years of public service is a career in and of itself.

Even with all his professional and public service accomplishments, the first thing Charlie talks about is his family. Born in Ranchos de Taos in March of 1944 to Nelson, a teacher of over 30 years, and Mable, a devoted stay-at-home mom, Charlie's upbringing instilled a profound respect for community and education. Growing up, Charlie lived near both of his grandmothers, who were constantly teaching him and his four siblings lessons in respect. "We would always go to grandmother's house as kids, especially when we'd smell baking bread," Charlie smiles. As a child, Charlie started grade school in Ranchos de Taos, then moved to a one-room ranch

school in Park Springs, Las Vegas, N.M., and eventually attended Allison-James school in Santa Fe. When asked about his moves, Charlie laughs, explaining his parents sent him with his sister, a teacher, "to act as her bodyguard." Charlie noted his father as a key influence, someone involved in many community activities, including an all men's club called SPM-DTU (Trabajeros Unidos) who helped local elders. "My father was also very involved with the acequias. I learned from him how important it was to be part of the community and give back." This mentality of giving back, along with his mother's support set Charlie up for success in his future endeavors.

Charlie has five children—Charlene, Leroy, Rebecca, Juan Carlos, and Daniel—and their family continues to grow with seventeen grandchildren, three great-grandchildren, and two great-great-grandchildren. They spoke of the recent loss of their grandson William T. Gonzales who worked for Centinel Bank and passed away at only 42, two years ago and how difficult that has been for the family.

For the Gonzales family, tradition is key; Charlie and Lucille continue to honor the custom of Los Comanches, something Charlie has been involved with since he was a young man living in Ranchos de Taos. Specifically, Charlie is a singer and drummer for the group, something he enjoys immensely. This tradition celebrates Comanche dancers and plays songs on New Year's Day starting at St. Francis de Asís, and traveling to nearby communities visiting houses of those named Manuel or Manuelita, a tradition he now includes with his grandson Juan Carlos Junior.

Charlie graduated from Taos High School in 1961 and started working immediately. "I took some classes at UNM but ultimately I learned my trade from on the job training and the school of the hard knocks," Charlie laughs. "I was able to get so much training while working for the mine in safety, as an EMT, and even went to fire school in Reno, NV." One person that stands out to Charlie as a mentor was his colleague Miguel Sanchez, head of safety at the mine. "I think the best thing someone can do is pick the minds of people who know more than them. Learn from people and learn their best abilities and try to make them some of your own."

Charlie's professional career began at the Questa Mine (Molycorp), where his focus in safety and loss control involved creating protocols, inspecting vehicles, and ensuring the safety of the miners.



Photo by Lora Arciniega

Charlie and Lucille Gonzales

Charlie mentioned he was proud to work alongside Lucille, who worked for the Questa mine from 1967 to 2009 in business administration. "While at the mine we got to travel together and while I was in politics she was always there right by my side." Ultimately, Charlie spent 24 years as a safety engineer at Molycorp, where he was well-treated, recalling the camaraderie and how "Everyone who worked at the mine had a nickname." He also held high-level roles with the State of New Mexico Highway Department and American Smelting and Refining Company (ASARCO) in El Paso, where his team earned top safety honors for three consecutive years.

Over the years, Charlie has had his share of health scares, including battles with kidney and nose cancer, and is proud to be a cancer survivor. He spoke highly of the compassion shown by his employers when he was sick. Specifically, he recalls the people at ASARCO being supportive when a tumor was found on his kidney. He recalls his boss telling him to "take the time you need and come back when you start feeling better." "It's stuff like that you really appreciate," Charlie says. After suffering a heart attack in 2009, Charlie retired from the mine and decided to take a break from politics, though he eventually returned to his civic duties.

Charlie's civic duty achievements span both Taos County and the Village of Questa. He served on the School Board for one term, on the Blue Bus Board proudly assisting in acquiring \$7 million for a new maintenance complex in Taos, and on the Holy Cross

Hospital Board. He worked as a Taos County Commissioner where he helped establish the Veterans Cemetery, the Taos County Assessor, and spent eight years in legislative policy alongside the late Senator Carlos Cisneros, where he worked as his bill analyst. In the Village of Questa, where he served two terms as Councilman and one term as Mayor, his key accomplishments include the long-standing "Healing Field of Honor" tribute for veterans and securing critical infrastructure for the village during his time in office.

There is one thing Charlie reiterated that was important to him while serving our community and still holds true today: transparency for the people of Questa and the surrounding communities. "I worry about the people here because the people of this village became my family. I only want transparency for the people of Questa," he says. "The village must be fully informed, and citizens must have a right to approve or disapprove of its future," Charlie says with passion. "When we work together we are stronger. Relationships, camaraderie, and trust are what matter most. Share your knowledge, do things right, and don't hurt people."

When asked what he and Lucille do for fun, they both expressed how they love retirement and spending time with their children and grandchildren. Charlie also expressed how much fun work was for both of them. "We just enjoyed doing what we were doing," Charlie says, and Lucille agreed. He goes on to say, "Everything I did in life I loved doing."

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Questa Wildcat Football Team Ends Regular Season, Heads to State

By MIKAYLA ORTEGA

The Questa Wildcats football team closed out their 2025 regular season Friday night (Oct. 25) with a 54-16 road loss to the Clayton Yellowjackets, finishing the year at 4-5 in a season that showed growth and grit from a young roster.

Despite the setback, the Wildcats have earned the No. 10 seed in the state playoffs and are headed to face off against No. 7 seed Lordsburg on Nov. 1.

Clayton (3-6) jumped ahead early and held the lead throughout, capitalizing on turnovers and big plays. Despite the loss, Questa's season reflected steady progress from a team still developing under a largely underclassman lineup.

The Wildcats opened the year strong, posting back-to-back shutout wins— 60-0 over Navajo Pine on Aug. 23 and 54-0 at Dulce on Aug. 30. After a 20-6 loss at Sangre de Cristo in Mosca, Colo., Questa rebounded with a 56-6 win at Ramah on Sept. 20.

Questa was dealt losses in late September to Escalante with 46-12 and powerhouse Fort Sumner/House with 54-0, who



Courtesy photo

went on to have an undefeated 8-0 season.

The Wildcats roared back Oct. 11 with a 68-14 rout at Cloudcroft (1-8) before falling in a close 40-30 home game to Menaul (6-3) on Oct. 18.

The Wildcats graduating this year

will be offensive lineman and defensive tackle Joaquin Martinez, running back and defensive back Noah Rael, and running back, linebacker and safety Adam Gordon.

With most of the roster returning,

Questa is expected to contend for a winning season next fall.

The team was coached by head coach Dwayne Ortega and assistant coaches Justin Martinez, Mark Ortega and Ernie Griego.

Taos Local to Represent New Mexico at Mrs. United States Pageant

By MIKAYLA ORTEGA

A decade after falling in love with northern New Mexico's landscape and culture, Taos resident Sorché Romero will represent the state as Mrs. New Mexico United States 2025 at the upcoming national competition in Las Vegas, Nev.

Born in Florida and raised near the Tennessee/ Georgia border, Sorché Romero (pronounced Sorsha) said she had never heard of N.M. until a retreat brought her to the region ten years ago. "They told me, 'You need to experience Taos,'" she recalled. "I was living a nomadic life, traveling in my RV. When I drove through the canyon and over Blueberry Hill into Arroyo Seco, my heart just sang. I'd traveled all over the country, but I immediately fell in love and knew I needed to make this place home."

Sorché found her place in Taos' arts community, leading Hum Magazine, a publication that gives local artists, musicians, and creatives a platform to showcase their work.

In 2020, during the height of the pandemic, she met her husband, Augustine Romero, on TikTok. "He showed up on my For You Page and stopped me in



Photo courtesy Augustine Romero

Sorché Romero

my tracks," she said with a laugh. "He had thousands of followers and all these people commenting, so there was definitely some competition."

The two connected on Instagram, where their conversations deepened. They met in person the day before her 31st birthday. "We spent the evening talking the night away," she said. "That's when I knew something special was happening."



Courtesy photo

Augustine, Sorché, Ryo, (3) and Rayven (2) Romero

Today, the couple lives in Taos with their daughters, Ryo, 3, and Rayven, who turns 2 in December. Augustine's family has deep roots in Taos, and Sorché said she has grown to love the area's land, heritage, and traditions through both her own experiences and her husband's.

The mother of two says her pageant journey is rooted in community service and advocacy rather than competition. The Mrs. United States National Pageant, famously featured in the movie *Miss Congeniality*, is open to married women nationwide and emphasizes civic engagement, mentorship, and personal growth.

"For me, it's about being a woman of service," Sorché said. "This isn't just about beauty or dressing up. It's about

what kind of change you want to make in your community."

Since taking the title of Mrs. New Mexico, Sorché has logged more than 250 community service hours, surpassing her 200-hour goal. Her Platform Promise focuses on helping young adults navigate life after trauma through mentorship, creative workshops, and safe spaces for healing through art and entrepreneurship.

A survivor herself, she uses her experiences to help youth build self-sufficiency, confidence, and leadership skills. "I take my crowns with me and I pass out rhinestone tiaras to women of all ages girls, mothers, grandmothers. It has been a beautiful thing to see that royalty has no age limit and so many want to experience the crown. So this was my way of recognizing that we are all royalty," Romero says.

"I truly believe everyone is looking for a moment of recognition," Sorché said. "Punishment doesn't work — you have to build people up. Recognize the effort it takes to wake up every day and make good choices."

PAGEANT cont'd on page 13

PAGEANT cont'd from page 12

She believes many families struggle to make the right decisions because habits are often passed down through generations. "It's important to create safe, healthy spaces where children and youth can expand their lives," she said. "We have to show up with gratitude and encouragement — that's how confidence grows."

Through her programs, Sorché helps students build self-esteem through public speaking, creative expression, and taking pride in their appearance. "You have to see the potential in every person — every heart and soul," she said. "It starts small, with choosing to see people's humanity. In public, we can all reward bravery."

As she prepares to represent New Mexico on the national stage, Sorché said she's proud to carry the spirit of Taos with her.

"I want to make Taos and northern New Mexico proud," she said. "This pageant is so much more than a crown. It's a sisterhood of women from all over the nation using our voices to make real change in our communities."

The Mrs. New Mexico pageant will be livestreamed from Las Vegas, NV from Nov. 1-Nov. 4. To learn more, visit the website at unitedstatescrown.com/events/2025national

Questa Ladycats Continue District Dominance with Wins



Courtesy Questa Independent School District

The Questa Ladycats stand proudly with Annette Rael and Raulie Apodaca with their Dig Pink donations on Tuesday, Oct. 28

By MIKAYLA ORTEGA

The Questa Ladycats brought home another win in district playoffs on Oct. 28 at home against the Mora Lady Rangerelettes in four sets, securing another key district win.

With this victory, the Ladycats continue to build momentum late in the season, demonstrating their depth and determination as district play intensifies.

Senior Ariana Media leads the team serving 54 aces so far this season. Junior Esperanza Vallejos leads in total blocks

with 136. Sophomore Analea Cisneros has an impressive 484 digs this season and Sophomore Maliyah Dominguez leads with 217 assists.

Tuesday's (Oct. 28) night match-up also marked the Ladycats' annual Dig Pink game, an event dedicated to supporting cancer awareness and local community members affected by cancer. The team raised funds for local cancer champions Annette Rael and Raulie Apodaca, honoring their strength and resilience.

The heartfelt effort highlighted the Ladycats' commitment to giving back to their community while competing with passion and purpose.

The Ladycats sit 6-1 in district playoffs, 16-4 overall this season. The Ladycats sit 2nd in 2A District 5. The remaining games on the team's roster include Oct. 30 at Mesa Vista, Nov. 6 against Penasco at home, and Nov. 7 against McCurdy at home.

Vivian Vallejos is a contributor to our Questa Volleyball sports coverage.

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Questa Students and Teachers Celebrate Tradition, Harvest at Annual Cosecha

By MIKAYLA ORTEGA

Students across the Questa Independent School District gathered Thursday Oct. 23 for the annual Cosecha celebration, a community event that honors ancestral harvesting practices and the cultural traditions of northern New Mexico.

Hosted at Questa High School, the Cosecha brings together students of

all grades to learn how their ancestors planted, harvested and preserved food from season to season. The event encourages hands-on activities and sharing of traditional foods, music and teachings that have supported local communities for generations.

This year's celebration featured ceramics demonstrations, fresh homemade jam and jelly tastings, livestock presenta-

tion and handlings, and lessons on harvesting spices and drying herbs. Educators and local knowledge keepers guided students through the process of preparing seasonal crops for long-term use.

One highlight of the day included performances by Native American dancers from Taos Pueblo, who shared dances that pay tribute to the Indigenous peoples who have long stewarded the

region's lands and water. Organizers said the inclusion of Pueblo dancers offers students a deeper understanding of the historical significance of the harvest and the living traditions that continue today.

The annual Cosecha aims to strengthen community bonds and ensure traditional practices remain alive for future generations.



Demonstration with clay with Questa art teacher Jennifer Vialpando



Taos Pueblo dancers perform during the Cosecha on Thur, Oct. 23



Demonstration of of drying herbs and spices



Students make pinch pots



Kids make fresh jam and jelly tasting



Questa mariachi performs during the Cosecha

Photos by Audrianah León

Holy Cross Hospital to Host Veterans Day Brunch Honoring Local Service Members

By STAFF WRITERS

Holy Cross Hospital will host its third annual Veterans Day celebration next month, inviting Taos County veterans to gather for a free brunch in honor of their service.

The "Brunch With the Bravest" event is scheduled for 10 a.m. Nov. 8 in the Wheeler Peak Cafeteria at Holy Cross Hospital. Organizers expect another strong turnout after nearly 65 veterans attended last year's meal.

The brunch will be catered by the hospital's dietary staff, who are preparing a special menu as a gesture of appreciation. The event has become a tradition for local veterans to reconnect, share stories and enjoy time together during the holiday.

Holy Cross Hospital employs more than 560 people, including 15 veterans



Courtesy photo

who continue their service through healthcare. Hospital leaders said the event reflects their ongoing commitment to supporting veterans as both staff members and patients.

"As a veteran, I am proud that Holy Cross is hosting this event for the third

year in a row. I wanted to make sure that Holy Cross recognized not only the employees that are veterans, but also veterans in our community," said Vivian Santistevan, Major, U.S. Army (Retired), and the hospital's chief of human resources.

Santistevan said the gathering offers veterans a chance to connect across

branches of service and generations.

"This is truly a community event where you see old friends, eat a delicious meal and connect with fellow veterans. Please come and join us," she said.

Holy Cross began accepting TriWest Veterans Health Care two years ago, expanding access to medical services for veterans in the region.

All Taos County veterans are invited to attend the brunch and are asked to bring proof of service for recognition.

More information is available at [holycrossmedicalcenter.org](https://www.holy-crossmedicalcenter.org).

Brunch With the Bravest

10 a.m. Nov. 8
Wheeler Peak Cafeteria at
Holy Cross Hospital

Vito Trujillo Jr. Presents “The Music of Northern New Mexico”

By CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

The Taos County Historical Society (TCHS) is pleased to host Victor "Vito" Trujillo Jr., a distinguished Taos native, award-winning musician, producer, and DJ, for a special folklore presentation, “The Music of Northern New Mexico.”

Born in Los Alamos in March 1975 to Linda and Victor (Vito) Trujillo, Vito Jr.'s lifelong commitment to music began at the age of eight, when his father first taught him to play the guitar. By age 11, he was already performing professionally, joining his father in the band "Vito Y Alan" (1986 to 2000). He further honed his skills as part of the Taos High School Mariachi group (1990 to 1993).

Today, Trujillo continues to carry on his musical heritage. He is a key member of the "Time Machine Band," performing throughout Southern Colorado and Northern New Mexico since 2006. As an independent artist, producer, and songwriter, he founded Adobe Records in 2004, relaunching the record label origi-



Courtesy Photo

Victor "Vito" Trujillo Jr.

nally created by his father in 1973. His diverse musical influences span traditional Northern New Mexico, Mariachi, Tejano, Blues, Jazz, and Rock. Beyond performing, Trujillo is a dynamic radio DJ for NewMex Radio, a role that earned him the prestigious 2023 Mark Ipiotis Award (DJ of the Year) from the New Mexico Hispanic Music Association (NMHMA). Attendees will hear directly from this

influential figure about the broad genres and rich family history that have shaped his unique sound.

Trujillo's lecture will take place on Saturday, Nov. 1, 2025, at 2 p.m. in the Kit Carson Co-op Board Room at 118 Cruz Alta Rd. Taos, NM 87571.

Admission to TCHS Lectures is Free for Members. The lecture is available to the general public for a requested \$5 Donation. Please note that Admission is "first-come, first-Served" to the Maximum Capacity of 80, mandated by the Town of Taos Fire Department.

The TCHS is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded in 1952 and dedicated to the recording and preserving of the irreplaceable history and culture in Taos County. The Society encourages support through membership, which is open to anyone upon payment of dues. For additional information on TCHS programs, activities, and history, visit the Society's website at www.taoscountyhistoricalsociety.org.



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BIRD IS THE WORD

By Bryce Flannagan

Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Flamingos But Were Too Afraid to Ask

Stand at the edge of a salt marsh anywhere from the Yucatan to the Rift Valley, and you might witness one of nature's most absurd spectacles: thousands of neon-pink birds balancing on impossibly thin legs, heads plunged underwater and upside-down, stomping their webbed feet like they're auditioning for an avant-garde dance troupe. The flamingo—that lawn ornament comes to life—is far stranger and more brilliant than its kitschy reputation suggests.

The Physics of Looking Ridiculous

Watch a flamingo feed, and you'll swear it's doing everything wrong. The bird dunks its head between its legs, beak apparently facing backward, then opens and closes its bill in rapid-fire chattering while simultaneously stomping the mud like it's trying to put out a fire.

But here's where flamingos reveal their genius: they're not bumbling—they're conducting a masterclass in fluid dynamics. Recent research published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences reveals that every bizarre movement creates precise vortices in the water. When a flamingo bobs its head out of the marsh, its uniquely shaped bill generates a miniature tornado that stirs up prey and suspends it long enough for the bird to duck back down and scoop it up. The chattering motion pulls food upward toward the beak. Even those ridiculous foot-stomps serve a purpose: those webbed toes create paired vortices that push shrimp and algae toward the waiting bill.

The upside-down beak suddenly makes perfect sense—it's positioned to catch food pushed forward by the feet,

not whatever happens to be floating ahead. Flamingos aren't filter feeders bumbling through wetlands; they're hydraulic engineers manipulating water with surgical precision. Researchers now study flamingo feeding techniques to improve membrane filtration systems that constantly clog with debris the same size as flamingo food.

You Are What You Eat (Literally)

Here's a truth that deflates the flamingo's neon mystique: flamingos are born gray. Their iconic bubblegum-pink plumage is a dietary side effect, not a birthright.

Flamingos feast primarily on shrimp and algae rich in carotenoid pigments—the same compounds that make carrots orange and tomatoes red. As these birds strain thousands of tiny crustaceans through their remarkable beaks, those carotenoids accumulate in their feathers, skin, and even their eyes, transforming them into the fluorescent creatures we recognize. A well-fed flamingo in prime breeding condition blazes coral-pink; a malnourished bird fades toward white.

Six flamingo species paint wetlands worldwide, four throughout the Americas and two in Africa and Eurasia: the greater flamingo, American flamingo, Chilean flamingo, lesser flamingo, Andean flamingo, and James's flamingo. Each species sports slightly different shading depending on local diet—some lean salmon, others hot pink, a few nearly crimson.

The Mystery of the One-Legged Stand

If there's an image more iconic than a flamingo's color, it's a flamingo standing on one leg, often while asleep. This isn't showboating—it's survival.

Standing on one leg minimizes heat loss by tucking the raised limb close to the body's warm core. In the cold, alkaline waters where flamingos spend their days, this thermoregulation trick allows them to hunt for hours without hypothermia. Studies show it also reduces muscle fatigue; counterintuitively, balancing on one leg requires less energy than standing on two. The bird's anatomy includes a "stay apparatus" that locks the leg in place, allowing the flamingo to literally sleep standing up without toppling over.

The Filtering Factory

A flamingo's beak is an evolutionary marvel disguised as plumbing gone wrong. When submerged upside-down, the bird takes in both water and food.



Photo by Edrick Krozendijk

Flamingo

Hair-like structures called lamellae line the inside of the beak like nature's own colander, trapping algae and small crustaceans while the tongue pumps out water and mud. It's an organic sieve operating dozens of times a minute, processing gallons of brackish water to extract microscopic meals.

This feeding strategy makes flamingos ecological indicator species—when flamingo populations crash, it often signals broader wetland collapse. They're the canaries in the salt marsh coal mine.

Social Creatures of Spectacle

Flamingos don't do subtlety. They gather in colonies numbering tens of thousands—a gathering called, appropriately, a "flamboyance." These massive congregations serve multiple purposes: protection from predators, coordinated food finding, and one of nature's most elaborate courtship rituals.

During breeding season, thousands of flamingos perform synchronized dances involving wing-salutes (necks stretched, wings spread wide) and head-flagging (necks extended while heads turn side to side in hypnotic unison). Imagine a stadium crowd doing the wave, but with more neck involved and higher evolutionary stakes. These coordinated displays aren't just pageantry—they synchronize breeding cycles across the colony, ensuring chicks hatch when food is most abundant.

Crop Milk: The Flamingo's Crimson Secret

Here's where flamingos get truly alien: both parents produce a substance called crop milk to feed their young. Before you picture anything dairy-relat-

ed, understand that this is a blood-red secretion from the crop, a muscular pouch in the throat. It's not milk at all—it's a highly nutritious slurry packed with fat and protein that parents regurgitate directly into their chick's mouth.

This adaptation allows flamingo chicks to thrive in harsh, alkaline environments where insects are scarce and typical bird food is hard to find. For the first months of life, flamingo young subsist entirely on this eerie crimson fluid, gradually transitioning to filter-feeding as their beaks develop the specialized lamellae.

Wanderers and Refugees

Until around 1900, flocks of American flamingos regularly migrated from the Bahamas to Florida Bay, in what is now Everglades National Park. Today, most flamingos spotted in North America are assumed to be escapees from zoos and aviaries—the bird world's equivalent of non-native garden plants. However, some researchers believe a few birds appearing in Florida Bay and coastal Texas still represent genuine wild wanderers from Bahamian and Yucatan colonies, ghosts of an old migratory route not yet forgotten.

The Flamingo Paradox

Flamingos embody a peculiar contradiction: they're simultaneously everywhere and nowhere. Their image plasters everything from pool floaties to retirement community signage, yet wild flamingos remain strangers to most Americans. They've been abstracted into kitsch, their ecological importance and biological wonder obscured by plastic replicas.

But spend time watching actual flamingos—those ridiculous, brilliant, impossibly pink hydraulic engineers balancing on toothpick legs in caustic water—and you witness something the lawn ornaments never capture: resilience. These are birds that thrive in environments hostile to most life, that gather by the thousands in synchronized ritual, that transform their bodies with their food and feed their young blood from their throats.

Next time you see a pink plastic flamingo staked in someone's yard, remember: the real thing is weirder, tougher, and infinitely more wonderful than any human decoration could suggest. They're not just surviving—they're dancing, filtering, and painting wetlands pink across three continents, one microscopic shrimp at a time.



By Toner Mitchell

Autumn Blessings, Again

This was the autumn that never was, for me at least. I was caught up in the glorious mountains of clouds obscuring the peaks through so much of monsoon season, and I'd forgotten not only that all good things must end, but that many are often followed by other good things.

There were signs. Like the dark green grass becoming tawnier every day. The male brown trout I caught were becoming more and more yellow in anticipation of spawning this season. Speaking of breeding season, I'll never forget one early morning this September while driving by the Valles Caldera. As the sun's first rays crawled over the eastern rim of the volcano, the blanket of fog covering the entire valley floor changed from gray

to blinding white. Unable to stand it, I pulled over to snap some photos. The visuals were breathtaking. But it was the screams of randy bull elk emanating from beneath the fog that awakened me to the fact that autumn was upon us.

Watching the mountains around Santa Fe go from hot yellow to drab has triggered a powerful urge to make the best of what's left, to sit with my favorite spots like Flag Mountain, the Truchas Peaks the mountain behind my grandparents' house in Talpa and the pinkish jaras along the streams – and catch up to the season.

My last hurrah was yesterday when we drove up to Jack's Creek in the Pecos Canyon. It was a marvelously dreary day, the aspen leaves strewn across the forest floor like gold coins —further proof of nature's wealth.

It can never be said enough how much humans need the autumn season. We need to be reminded that life is a thing in motion, that moments must be savored as bites of a home-cooked meal.

"Don't look away," Autumn tells us. "This is what's important now."

I have to relearn this lesson every year. To realize something's changing when I wake up in the dark and not to sunshine



Courtesy Photo

Josey Wales in Columbine Creek

like in July. It seems only natural that this forgetting should occur, for autumn is like death, and who wants to live that each day? It's better to be reminded only once in a while.

But that's not the point, and we know it. The point is life. Even so, we also needn't keep that idea in mind all day every day, just once in a while. Hopefully, we'll just take things as they come with-



Courtesy Photo

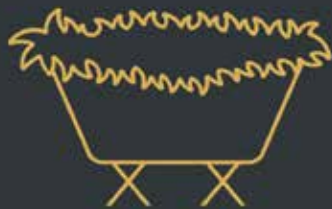
Valles Caldera fog

out thinking at all.

Green leaves turn yellow in September. They flutter to the ground, or, in the case of the cottonwoods along the Rio and the Chama, they drift a swirling path on water as on an Indian summer breeze. They come to rest and become soil, so that new leaves will pop out in the spring.

That's all there is to it. Nothing more. Nothing less.

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from the Librarian's Desk...

Sharon Nicholson

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While many know us for our books and quiet spaces, we offer a wide range of services that might surprise you. One of the valuable resources we provide is computer assistance. Whether you're trying to download photos to your phone or create a flyer for your next event, Library Assistant Audri Leòn is here to help. Audri is available Mondays and Wednesdays from 1:00 to 7:00 p.m.; and she's happy to dedicate time to your tech needs. You can give her a call at (575) 586-2023 or stop by the library.

If you've visited us in the past couple of years, you've likely noticed our beau-



Photo by E. Wilde

tiful garden, made possible by a grant written by the Friends of the Questa Public Library and awarded by "Trails and Outdoor Recreation." This peaceful space features benches, a conversation area, and picnic tables—perfect for a relaxing lunch or a quiet moment in the sun. Even as the weather cools, a few minutes in the mountain sunshine can do wonders for your well-being. We recently hosted our first wedding in the garden; How will you use this special space?

The library is a place for new connections and lifelong learning:

Chess Club: Every Wednesday from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m.; join fellow chess enthusiasts of all ages and skill levels. Whether you're a seasoned player or just learning

the rules, you're welcome here.

Caregiver Support Group: We are forming a support group for those caring for loved ones with Parkinson's, Alzheimer's disease, or other conditions that require ongoing care. This group will offer a space to share experiences, resources, and encouragement. If you're interested in joining, please let us know!

Spanish Classes & Conversation Group: These are currently on hold as we search for a new teacher and coordinator. If you or someone you know is interested in leading this program, please contact the librarian. A stipend may be available for this position.

Voces de Nuestro País: On the second Saturday of each month from 2:00 to 4:00

p.m.; join us for an afternoon of storytelling. Hear tales of family, history, love, adventure, and misadventures—told by the people of our own community.

At your library, the possibilities are endless. Explore, connect, and grow with us!

Contact Us:

(575) 586-2023

Library Hours:

Monday & Wednesday:

10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Tuesday, Thursday & Friday:

10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Saturday: Noon to 5:00 p.m.

Voces de Nuestro País: Kick-Off Success, Mark Your Calendar for Nov. 8

By CLAIRE COTÉ

Voces de Nuestro País:

Stories of family, history, love, adventures, and misadventures as told by the people of our area.

The first Voces de Nuestro País event took place on October 11. It was an expression of remembrance, faith, gratitude and humor, as Mark Sideris, who shared stories of his life, his experience leading the reconstruction of St. Anthony's Church in Questa with an all-volunteer crew and his discoveries about the original construction. Did you know that the adobe bricks used in the construction of the church in the 1840s and 1850s were made by families from different areas in the community? These bricks were many different sizes and colors and some were embedded with initials, names and even footprints. The full recording of the event at QuestaStories.org or on CD at the Questa Public Library.



Photo by Claire Côté

Mark Sideris and Michael Rael talk in front of the group on October 11 at the Questa Public Library

November's Voces de Nuestro País speakers will be Dino Archuleta and Fritz Davis. Hear Dino's crazy stories of growing up in Questa and Cerro which will have you asking, "Did this really happen?" Next, hear Fritz Davis share his life stories and adventures from the rolling hills of Kansas to the mountains of Red River.

Michael Rael is the MC and curator for this monthly gathering, which is hosted in collaboration with Questa Library and Voices of the Northern Rio Grande. Voices of the Northern Rio Grande is a program of Localogy, a local nonprofit 501(c)(3) that functions as a program-based community foundation for our rural area. Learn more about the

community archive and listen to stories from community members at QuestaStories.org and Archive.manitos.net.

Join us for our second Voces de Nuestro País event at Questa Library on November 8, from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. We plan to hold monthly story-sharing sessions on the second Saturday of the month at the Questa Public Library. We hope you can join us!

If you have any stories you'd like to share, please let Michael Rael know. You can often find him at Rael's Market or email him at rael870@gmail.com.

Voces de Nuestro País

Speakers: Dino Archuleta and Fritz Davis

Date: November 8, 2-4:00 PM

Location: Questa Public Library, 6- 1/2 Municipal Park Rd., Questa NM 87556

Contact: Claire Côté

(575) 222-9066, clairecote575@gmail.com

or Michael Rael, (575) 779-1169

Rael870@gmail.com

**QUESTA
CREATIVE
COUNCIL**



A Traditional Foods Cooking Class

The holidays are just around the corner, bringing thoughts of food, family, fellowship, and fun!

The Questa Creative Council is hosting a timely, FREE cooking class of traditional foods from 10 a.m. to noon on Saturday, Nov. 8 at the Living Word Ministries event building. Esteemed local cook Flavio Cisneros will be your guide.

An active member of the QCC, Flavio helped in finding the Questa History Trail, and during the Questa Art Tour he provided details on-site of St. Anthony's Church history, art, and restoration, which he helped with by cooking for the workers!

On the menu:

To begin the introduction to our very local cooking traditions, Flavio will bring his bread pudding, and Jeannie Mas-



Courtesy photo

Empanaditas

ters' "sopa de crackers" —a traditional dish believed to have originated right here in Questa.

EMPANADITAS:

These little deep-fried meat pies use lean pork ground together with seasonings and fruit sealed into a flaky crust. Flavio will have some already made, so you don't have to wait for a taste, and he will show us how they are made. Not long ago, his cousin's daughter told him, "I've always loved those empanaditas but I don't know how to cook them, will you teach me?" So he gave her an ingredients list to have ready, then went to her house and they cooked together. "It's very hands-on —grinding the meat and gathering and mixing everything for the filling," says Flavio.



Courtesy photo

Biscochitos

BISCOCHITOS:

Flavio's biscochitos have received many compliments, both locally and in other parts of New Mexico. He sends a plate off with his grandson Ernesto every Christmas to share with his workmates at the New Mexican newspaper's Santa Fe office. They get a big thumbs-up.

PRUNE PIE:

Flavio will demonstrate pitting, cooking, and mashing the filling and adding cinnamon and sugar, to a flaky crust. Prune pies will be available for sampling while you learn.

"When both my parents passed away I realized I had a craving for these foods and started making them by experimenting. I did not write them down while mom was

still alive, so my own taste buds told me if things were right or wrong," says Flavio.

What makes these traditional dishes so special? They are about family but also about this specific place. This place was a crossroads, explains Flavio, for Comanche, Kiowa, Apache, and Plains natives on their way to Taos Pueblo to trade. Crops and animals that were local lay the foundations for a regional cuisine born of necessity, which then became tradition.

"All is not lost... We can still share these things that are part of our past and teach others," says Flavio.

Come be part of continuing our community's traditions, on Nov. 8. Living Word Ministries' event room adjacent to the church at 12 Llano Rd, on the north side of Questa. Find more info at QuestaCreative.org or leave a message at (575) 586-5658.

NOTE: The Ceramic Cafe open studio remains active on Thursdays from 5 to 9 p.m. at the Youth Center, through November 20.

NOTE: It's time to think about reserving your space at our annual Alumbra Holiday Market. Several new ideas are afloat this year as we go to press. Stay tuned for details and options.

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Exercise Reshapes the Brain

Usually when we talk about exercise, we think of building our body with muscles, strengthening our heart, and burning calories. Exercise has a more powerful element that includes the mind and mental health.

Increased exercise improves our brains and enhances how we think and interact with others. As soon as we decide to exercise and change to our gym clothing, we will start to release good chemicals in the brain and our stress

hormones begin to change for the better. By exercising daily, we will start to reshape moods, cognition, and our overall mental health for the better. Exercise isn't the cure for mental illness, but is a powerful tool that can help improve the human body.

When we get stressed, our bodies release and elevate the cortisol hormone which causes damage to our bodies. If we exercise, we release endorphins and other brain chemicals that help improve our moods and mental focus. That's why we feel good physically and mentally after we exercise, we reduce stress and our thoughts begin to improve.

Exercise helps with depression because of the release of neurotransmitters which is closely related to happiness and other symptoms. Although exercise isn't the cure, it shows great improvement in individuals with depression because they start to see and achieve fitness goals which is a huge accomplishment and a sense of worthiness for an individual with depression.



With exercise, we also improve our memory, attention, and other skills involved in problem solving. When exercising, we increase blood flow to the brain, and deliver oxygen and nutrients that support activity. Older adults that exercise, have a better chance to slow down the process of cognitive decline. Adults in general that exercise have a sharper and higher focus ability.

Many more positive benefits of exercise include, sleep quality, boost

self-esteem and confidence, promotes social connection, improves emotional thoughts, protects against age-related mental decline, creates a natural sense of purpose, improves focus and attention, and increases overall life satisfaction.

Exercise is thought of as a physical element, but it is more mentally powerful and has many benefits as listed above. Exercise builds a body and reshapes the brain which in return gives you an enjoyable living experience. Exercise isn't a drug or prescription, but has a positive impact on your body and mental health. It all begins with a step, stretch, and breath that can add years to your life and well-being.

AS ALWAYS, STAY ACTIVE AND BE IN CONTROL OF YOUR MIND, BODY AND SOUL.

Paul Passino has a Bachelors of Science degree in human performance and sport with a health, education, and coaching minor, as well as 45 hours of sports administration and over 23 years of teaching P.E., weight training, and coaching.



THE Turkey your family will not forget! It's that time of year to create memories with our families and friends and maybe switch up the way we make our yearly classic recipes. At the very least, do not forget to brine your turkey this Thanksgiving. You will notice a difference! It can be difficult to brine a large turkey in a home refrigerator. I have brined turkeys overnight in a cooler (outside in NM is a good temperature to hold for 12-18 hours). Just make sure there is some ice in the cooler, you want to maintain a temperature of 41 degrees or below. But make sure not to freeze!



Soy-Butter Basted Roast Turkey with Lemon-Thyme Brine

Yield: 1 (14 lb) turkey

Turkey Brine

Ingredients:

1 gallon water
1 c kosher salt
1 c brown sugar
2 lemons, thinly sliced
4 bay leaves
1 Tbsp whole black peppercorns
3-4 sprigs thyme
7 lbs ice (or enough to cool liquid completely)

Procedure:

Place all ingredients (except ice) in a large pot with 1 gallon of water and bring to a boil.

Remove from heat and stir until salt and sugar are dissolved.

Pour the hot liquid over ice to cool completely.

Submerge the turkey in the cooled brine (use a brining bag, large non-reactive container, or even a cooler).

Refrigerate for 12-18 hours.

Remove turkey, rinse lightly, and pat dry before roasting.

Soy-Butter Basted Roast Turkey

Ingredients:

1 whole turkey (about 14 lb), brined and dried
Light salt and pepper
(optional — brine already seasoned)
1/2 c (1 stick) unsalted butter, melted
1/4 c soy sauce (low-sodium preferred)
2 tsp honey or maple syrup (optional, for extra caramelization)
1 head garlic, halved
1 onion, quartered
1 lemon, halved
Fresh thyme, rosemary, or sage (optional)

Procedure:

Preheat oven to 425°F

Stuff the turkey cavity with garlic, onion, lemon, and herbs.

In a small saucepan, combine melted butter, soy sauce, and honey (if using). Keep warm.

Place turkey breast-side up on a rack in a roasting pan. Roast for 30 minutes to brown the skin.

Reduce oven temperature to 350°F

Baste turkey every 30 minutes with the soy-butter mixture. Tent loosely with foil if skin darkens too quickly.

Continue roasting until internal temperature reaches 165°F in the thigh — about 3 to 3 1/2 hours total for a 14 lb bird. Do not overcook!

Remove from the oven and let rest 30-45 minutes before carving.

Brush over the turkey in the last 15 minutes of roasting:

2 Tbsp soy sauce
2 Tbsp melted butter
1 Tbsp honey

Creates a rich, golden-brown finish with deep flavor.

Brendalee (Vialpando) Reiplinger is a Questa native who has worked her way up the culinary ladder and is currently executive chef at The Lodge at Bodega Bay, located off the Sonoma Coast in CA. Brendalee credits her hospitality and joy of preparing food from her upbringing in Questa.

Recipe courtesy of Executive Chef Brendalee Reiplinger, from The Lodge at Bodega Bay, Bodega Bay, CA 94923



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HolyCrossMedicalCenter.org



Early Voting: October 7th - Nov 1st

**BODY
MIND
SPIRIT**

By **BARBARA TRACY**



**Why Have We
Come Here?**

While leafing through some of the many personal journals I have written over the years, I noticed the varied experiences expressed in my writing. Then I came upon words written on the edge of a page in a journal from 1996: Why have we come here? So, I have taken to heart those words and asked myself that very question. Of course, it would be impossible to list everything, but it has been a sweet self-assignment and perhaps some of my readers will choose to take on the same exploration. If you do, I know you will enjoy the journey.

Here is an offering of a few things that have come to heart and mind:
We have come to touch the ground of earth. To feel the cool grass under our feet or to sink our toes into the warm sand; to hike the trails and sit by the mountain lakes and the coastal oceans.

We have come to embrace the trees and plants, to see the wonder of their strength, beauty, purpose, and know that they are living beings that communicate within their own kind and with us. If we take the time, we can hear them in our imaginations.

We have come to see the moonlit sky with a lace of stars throughout and around it. To see a sunny day with drifting clouds and a brightly lit azure, blue sea above us. To see a sunrise, a sunset and feel the stirring awe in the heart and soul.

We have come to smell the air after a rainfall on a summer's day or perhaps in the early morning dawn. To watch the snowfall and catch a flake as it tumbles to earth. To know the wind, the storms and the upheavals of weather patterns as the seasons change. To sit by a fire-



Photo by E. Wilde

place in winter or bask in the sun on a summer day.

We have come to touch one another – To wrap our arms around a friend or beloved and hold them close in love and affection. To be caring and compassionate. To do unto others as we would have others do unto us.

We have come to embrace family life, birthing and rearing children, gathering on special occasions. We have come to laugh and cry together when life calls it forth.

We have come to listen to the sounds of life: children playing, wind in the trees, music, laughter or the voice of love. To listen carefully when called upon to hear a friend in need.


We have come to dance and sing, to cry and mourn, to live and die, to create and explore, to love and embrace all that comes our way as it brings us deeper into ourselves and brushes away the refuse of resistance.

We have come to see the ocean blue, the fish, the whales and the dolphins too. The animal kingdom upon the land under the care of the human hand. To know that all beings of life are of the same creator as us and to treat all life with kindness and caring.

We have come to hold babies and kittens and pups that open our hearts more to the light of love. To see the preciousness of life in all that is.

We have come to know we are more than this form of body and mind. That we are part of a far greater creative force. We have come to be Light on the path home, Once again.

We have come to love and be loved.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
3 Beef & Bean Burrito Green Chile Vegetable Medley Grapes	4 Sweet & Sour Pork w/Bell Peppers & Onion Brown Rice Stir-Fry Veggies Jello w/Pineapple Tidbits	5 Green Chile Chicken Enchiladas Pinto Beans Squash & Zucchini Pears	6 Meatloaf Parsley Potatoes w/Brown Gravy Green Beans, Tossed Salad Roll, Apricots	7 Fish & Chips (Beer Battered Cod & French Fries) German Coleslaw Roll Fruit
10 Pork Tamales w/Red Chile Spanish Rice Capri Blend Veggies Vanilla Yogurt Strawberries	11 CLOSED Veterans' Day	12 Green Chile Cheese Burger Lettuce, Tomato & Onion Potato Salad Orange	13 Mrs. Dash Grilled Chicken Breast w/Gravy Wild Rice w/Mushrooms California Blend Veggies Roll, Tropical Fruit Salad	14 Herbed Pork Chop w/Gravy Lemon Herb Orzo Winter Blend Veggies Roll Applesauce
17 Chicken Fried Steak w/Pepper Gravy Au Gratin Potatoes Chateau Blend Veggies Roll. Peaches	18 Chicken Salad Sandwich Cold Red Beets Three Beans Salad Sliced Pears	19 Fish Tacos Cilantro Lime Slaw Black Beans w/Corn & Red Peppers Mandarin Oranges	20 Thanksgiving Dinner! Turkey, Mashed Potatoes & Gravy, Cornbread Stuffing, Cranberry Sauce Green Beans, Pumpkin Pie	21 Chicken Chile Cheese Soup Tossed Salad Roll Fruit Salad
24 Fried Chicken & Waffles Herb Roasted Potatoes Italian Blend Veggies Orange	25 Boston Clam Chowder w/Vegetable Medley Salad Crackers Banana	26 Salisbury Steak w/Brown Gravy & Parsley Egg Noodles Broccoli Normandy Roll. Apricot Halves	27 CLOSED	28 CLOSED
DEC 1 All Meals Served With 8oz. 2% Milk as available	 <p>Happy Thanksgiving!</p>			

**SENIOR
MENU:
NOVEMBER
2025**

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 are encouraged.

Contact Numbers
Taos: (575) 737-8927
Chamisal: (575) 587-2778
Questa/Amalia: (575) 586-0508
PLEASE NOTE THAT THE MENU IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE



**LIVE
LOVE
LAUGH**

by Ellen Wood
a.k.a. Maruška

**Pros and Cons of
Meditation**

Some years ago I read a New York Times article about research on the effects of meditation on the brain — and it struck a chord in me. This study is the first to document meditation-produced increases over time in the brain's gray matter.

I was delighted to read that my daily “sitting” practice benefits my brain since I have the Alzheimer’s gene and I believe meditation is one of the things assisting me in keeping that APOE-e4 gene in the “off” position.

However, as pointed out in the article, there have already been numerous research studies showing that meditation can significantly help with symptoms of depression and anxiety; that it can reverse memory loss; that it can help alleviate

impotence caused by worry; that it can significantly relieve chronic pain and that it can provide improved sleep, blood pressure, sense of well-being and quality of life.

The article was very interesting, if a bit one-sided. After all, wasn't all the emphasis on the pros of meditating with no mention of the cons? After five decades of meditation (in earlier decades my practice was sporadic), I've discovered there are some things that you can't do when you meditate daily.

You can't squash bugs anymore. You automatically grab the clear plastic cup and postcard for their trip outdoors.

You can't worry that you might outlive your money or break a hip or get Alzheimer's because meditation jams up the worry-works in your brain.

You can't eat a steady diet of junk food because your expanded awareness makes you crave healthy, delicious food. On the other hand, meditation keeps you from being anal about it and lets you eat a cholesterol-laden, juicy cheeseburger once in a while - without guilt.

You can't be grumpy no matter how hard you try. Silly? Yes. But grouchy and grumpy can't stand that bliss and they're out of there.



You can't say, “Not tonight, dear. I have a headache,” because meditation keeps your libido from finding out what they say about hormones after menopause.

You can't hold a grudge because meditation makes everyone a mirror for what

you need to examine inside yourself.

You can't yell “Turn down that rock 'n roll!” to your grandson because your feet are already dancing.

You can't be a couch potato in front of the TV for hours because meditation makes your creative juices explode and you can hardly keep your pen or paintbrush moving fast enough.

You can't feel lonely or isolated, even if your partner divorced you or died, because meditation makes you feel whole and complete within yourself. Besides, you get the feeling there's a spirit buddy always hanging around, one who really cares about you.

And lastly you can't grow old because all the cells in your body are just too darned happy.

Ellen Wood of Questa, known artistically as Maruska, is an award-winning author celebrated for her transformative book series, The Secret Method for Growing Younger. Her latest release, Five Tibetan Rites – The Right Way, continues her mission to inspire youthfulness. All titles are available at www.growyoungerwithEllenWood.com. To connect with Ellen directly, email her at ellen@howtogrowyounger.com.

**JR (Malaquias) says:
“Have a hole
in your tire?
Come to NorthStar.**



Trust **NorthStar**
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**Have a hole
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heart?
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church.”**



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OBITUARIES



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(575) 758-4786
mtnhomehealth.com
630 Paseo del Pueblo Sur, Taos



Catherine "Cathy" DeHerrera-Taylor
d. Sept. 16, 2025

A beautiful woman with a generous and loving heart graduated to her heavenly home on Sept. 16, 2025. Catherine "Cathy" DeHerrera-Taylor was born on Nov. 8, 1957, to Valdemar and Consuelo DeHerrera in Taos, NM. Cathy grew up in Costilla, N.M., with her 5 siblings on a beautiful ranch where she learned the value of hard work and family.

After graduating from Questa High School in 1976, she left for California, where she attended school and received her dental assistant certification. She loved working in this particular field but did not return to school to pursue her nursing assistant certification which opened up a passion for caring for others. Cathy worked as a hospice caregiver for 14 years until her retirement in 2020. Even though she retired, she would still be doing what she was purposed for, but now it would be to help care for her elderly father.

Cathy's motivation for life, her true pride and joy, her greatest ministry, and heart's purpose was for her daughter Maria. Cathy would move mountains and sacrifice much for Maria to have the very best of everything. This is why Cathy and Maria moved to Alamogordo in the early 90's. It was an open door and opportunity for Maria to have the best education available. Little did Cathy know that not only would Maria thrive in her new environments, but Cathy would also receive one of her greatest blessings.

Cathy met the love of her life, Terry Taylor, in 2004 at the local county fair. From that day on, they were inseparable. They dated, fell deeply in love, and ultimately married May 16, 2009. Terry not only loved Cathy unconditionally, he reignited her faith, restored her trust, and created a contagious joy in her that left her with a permanent smile.

Cathy is preceded in death by her infant daughter Andrea, her parents Valdemar and Consuelo, and brother-in-law Curtis Clements.

She is survived by her loving husband Terry, beautiful daughter Maria, stepchildren Jonathan (Stephanie) Taylor, Marvin (Shanna) Taylor, and Kelly (John) Carpenter. Her grandchildren, Trevin, Xavier, John Michael, Kandace, Samantha, Lexie, Ellie, Lilly,

Terrie, and Nicholas, her siblings Lydia (Richard) Peterson, Juanita Clements, Valarie (Don) Rael, Valdemar DeHerrera Jr., Nancy (Stephen) Crochet, half-sister Bonnie Santistevan, adopted sister Linda Romero and many nieces, nephews, family and loved ones.

Cathy will always be remembered for her golden heart of compassion and generosity and her beautiful and loving spirit.

A celebration of life service was held on Sept. 26th at Mountain View Church in Alamogordo, N.M. Another celebration of life service was held on Oct. 18 at Living Word Ministries in Questa, N.M. at 10 a.m., Burial was at the Sacred Heart Cemetery in Costilla, N.M., followed by a fellowship meal at the Parish Center.



Elma Ortega
d. Sept. 5, 2025

Elma Diane Ortega, a resident of Questa, N.M. passed away peacefully at her home, surrounded by family on Sept. 5, 2025 after a lengthy battle with Parkinson's.

Elma was born May 14, 1943 to Jose Ruben Ortega and Maria Corina Rael-Ortega. She attended the Questa Schools until her graduation in 1961. Her classmates remember her beautiful voice and her graceful dance. She moved to Albuquerque, N.M. where she attended college and began her first job at 1st National Bank. From there, she worked at Paris Shoe Store and later to Western Warehouse in Albuquerque and Santa Fe.

Elma was a generous person who loved helping people in every aspect of their lives whether it be financial or physical or simply a gift of love. Elma had a warm and gentle spirit and incredible strength that came from her faith in God that we all admired. Her departure has left a void in the lives she touched but we will cherish the memories she left behind.

She was preceded in death by her parents Jose Ruben Ortega and Maria Corina Ortega; sister Elma Ervila Ortega; brothers Gabe Ortega and Ruben Ortega, Jr.; brothers-in-law Victor Gonzales and Chris Sanchez; maternal grandparents Jose Albino Rael and Andrellita Mandonado-Rael; paternal grandparents Jose Eulogio Ortega and Rosita Rael-Ortega;

and numerous aunts and uncles.

Elma is survived by her sisters Jane Gonzales, Betty Sanchez, Loretta Ortega, Angela Chavez and Reyna Gonzales (Daniel); sister-in-law Marcelle Ortega; brother-in-law Joe Chavez; nieces Antoinette Quintana (Manny), Annette Flores (Randy), Gloria Trask (Ron), Yvonne Reneau (Gerry), Kristine Christman (Joe), Renee Davis (Cecil), Erica Gonzales-Gallegos (Derik), Katrina Gonzales (Justin), Danessa Gonzales (David); nephews Dominic Sanchez, Leonard Sanchez, Chris Sanchez (Heather), Ruben Ortega (Kim), Steve Ortega (Lisa), Anthony Chavez (Victoria), Andrew Chavez; many beloved great-nephews and nieces, cousins and friends.

Rosary was recited on Friday, Sept. 19, 2025 at 6:30 p.m. Funeral Mass was on Saturday, Sept. 20, 2025 at 9 a.m., both held at St. Anthony's Catholic Church in Questa, burial followed at the San Pedro Cemetery.

The family of Elma Diane Ortega entrusted the care of their loved one to the caring staff of DeVargas Funeral Home of Taos. (866) 657-4019 www.devargastaos.com



Reynaldo Manuel Martinez, Jr.
d. Sept. 10, 2025

Courageously underwent surgery, but despite the best efforts of his medical team, he passed away on Sept. 10, 2025. During his hospital stay, he was surrounded by the love of his family and his faith. He left this world far too soon but left behind a legacy of kindness, love, and devotion. Reynaldo was born Feb. 8th, 1988, in Taos, N.M., to Rey Martinez Sr. and Frances Martinez. He was raised in El Salto, Arroyo Seco, N.M. He was married to the love of his life, JovAnna, for 15 years, and they had a beautiful family. He and his family served as active members of the church, where he enjoyed teaching alongside his wife, a year-one confirmation class in 2024.

He was a master barber who loved his craft. He worked alongside a great group of master barbers at Albuquerque Barber Lounge and enjoyed spending time with them and their families. He loved to BBQ and listen to New Mexican Spanish, oldies, and Reggae music. He was preceded in death by his paternal grandparents, Levinio and Betty Martinez,

and maternal grandparents, Frank and Rose Olonia; his sister, Lora Martinez; godfather, Felix Valencia; aunt, Ida Lujan; uncle, Toby Martinez; cousins, Stephanie Lujan, Matt Martinez, Nicole Sadoval, and goddaughter, Imani Medina. Reynaldo is survived by his wife, JovAnna Martinez and their four children; Kylani, Josiah, Ezra and Eva; his father and mother, Rey Sr. and Francis Martinez; his in-laws, Joseph and Lisa Muniz; his brother, Francisco Martinez (Brianna); sister-in-law, Marissa Mondragon (Josh), (niece and goddaughter) Amarah; nephews, Elijah (godson) and Nehemiah; godsons, Aiden Allalunis and Chris Armijo, Jr.; goddaughter, Amery Medina; godmothers, Josie Valencia and Sandra Rivera and godsister's, Jennifer Rivera, Bonnie Valencia, Beverly Armijo, Sonia Terrazas. He is also survived by countless friends, relatives through marriage, uncles, aunts, first cousins, and second cousins who all loved him dearly. Many of them were his regular clients at the barber shop and will hold the time spent in his chair close to their hearts. Serving as Pallbearers will be Francisco Martinez, Gavin Rivera, Aiden Allalunis, Marcos Terrazas, Tim Vigil, Virgil Vigil, Tom Totaro, Larry Rhodes, Marcus Martinez, and Matt Ortiz.



Anthony Rey Martinez
d. October 17, 2025

Anthony Rey Martinez, 27, a resident of El Prado, passed away unexpectedly on October 17, 2025.

He is preceded in death by his grandfathers, Anthony Duran and Eloy Lujan.

Anthony served in law enforcement in Taos since the young age of 18. Starting his career with Taos Pueblo, Taos Police Department and most currently with the Questa Police Department.

He is survived his parents, Carla Duran and Ross Lujan, his father Francisco Martinez, siblings, Reina and Francisco Martinez, his nephew Orion Martinez, and his grandmothers, Barbara Wagner and Lora Lujan, plus many other relatives, his brothers and sisters in blue and cherished friends.

Rosary will be recited on Saturday November 1, 2025 at 9am followed by the Mass of Christian burial at 10am at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church in Taos.



BY J. ORTEGA

WEAPONS

Starring Julia Garner, Josh Brolin, Alden Ehrenreich, Benedict Wong and Amy Madigan

Directed by Zach Cregger

Rated R

Streaming on HBOMAX

First Impression: Weapons offers a refreshing take on the horror-thriller genre. Director Zach Cregger, who first stood out with his previous horror film “Barbarian” has delivered once again. While some critics may categorize Weapons less as horror film, I believe it will ultimately be regarded as one of the year’s best films.

When you think about horror films most people either love or hate them. The folks on the side of hate usually complain about how formulaic horror films can be where the big bad villain, whether it be Jason, Freddy, Chucky, Alien, or Predator all seemingly meet their demise at the end of

the film only to be (spoiler alert) brought back repeatedly for countless sequels, prequels and reboots galore. While horror fans appreciate and admire these iconic monsters of horror most non-horror fans grow tired with the unoriginality that is derived from the countless sequels that follow them.

That’s where the new Film Weapons is refreshingly different. Even before the film rights were awarded it was reported that there was a bidding war for the script between heavyweight directors Jordan Peele and his studio Monkeypaw Productions (Universal) and Director Cregger, who had New Line Cinema. Eventually Cregger won the rights to the script, but it cost them a hefty 38 million dollars. After the famous bidding war Jordan Peele was supposedly so upset he fired his entire management team for being unable to secure the script.

So, with all that fanfare and hype for the script rights the film that was eventually made had a lot of prescreening hype among the critics’ community. After all the hype, I’m here to confirm that Weapons lives up to all of it and more. The film succeeds in ways where most horror films fail. It keeps you guessing who is good



and who is bad, who can be trusted and who can’t be. Director Cregger takes an interesting story technique and sets up the film as a series of chapters where each character gets to tell the story from their point of view and how they interact with other characters whose point of view is later showcased in the film. It’s an interesting technique and keeps the tension high and keeps audiences on the edge of their seat to see the main characters from multiple angles. The layered mystery and suspense unravel masterfully in the final act.

If it seems like I’m being deliberately vague it’s intentional. I want people to see this film with the least amount of knowl-

edge possible because it’s such a treat to see it unravel while you are watching. But in fairness I’ll give the plot of the film: “One night at 2 A.M., 17 children from Ms. Gandy’s class got out of their beds, went out the front door and went running into the night never to be seen again.”

That’s all I’m giving you if you want to see the crazy way the film ends you’re going to have to give it a shot.

Final Verdict 4.75 out of 5 Stars



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COMMUNITY CALENDAR • NOVEMBER 2025

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO EVERYONE BORN IN NOVEMBER!

NOV 3: MON 7-9 PM
FREE Mariachi Music Lessons (Beginner/Advanced) w/ Rachel León. (575) 779-0565 Ages 10 and Up. Cerro VFW See ad on page 7

NOV 5: WED 7-9 PM
FREE Mariachi Music Lessons (Beginner/Advanced) w/ Rachel León. (575) 779-0565 Ages 10 and Up. Cerro VFW See ad on page 7

NOV 8: SAT 10 AM
Brunch with the Bravest Wheeler Peak Cafeteria at Holy Cross Hospital, 1397 Weimer Rd, Taos, NM 87571 See article on page 18

2-4 PM
Voces de Nuestro País: Speakers Dino Archuleta and Fritz Davis, Questa Public Library 6 1/2 Municipal Park Rd. Questa. (575) 586-2023 for info. See article on page 22

NOV 10: MON 7-9 PM
FREE Mariachi Music Lessons (Beginner/Advanced) w/ Rachel León. (575) 779-0565 Ages 10 and Up. Cerro VFW See ad on page 7

NOV 11: TUE
Veterans' Day

4-6 PM
Free Veterans Dinner @ Cerro VFW hall. Mariachi plays 5 p.m. Donations accepted.

6 PM
Questa Village Council Meeting
 Village offices 2500 Old State Rd. 3 Questa, NM 87556 (575) 586-0694

NOV 12: WED 6-7:30 PM
The De La Tierra a la Cosecha Coalition invites local farmers, ranchers, acequeros, and land stewards to a Farmers & Ranchers Listening Session at the Village of Questa Council Chambers, 2500 Old State Road 3 in Questa. This community conversation is a chance to share what's working, discuss challenges, and help shape how agricultural support organizations can better serve northern New Mexico producers. A free dinner will be provided. For more information, contact info@tcgcd.org

7-9 PM
FREE Mariachi Music Lessons (Beginner/Advanced) w/ Rachel León. (575) 779-0565 Ages 10 and Up. Cerro VFW See ad on page 7

NOV 12-15: WED-SAT
11th Annual Frank Morgan Taos Jazz Festival from the Taos BeBop Society. Tickets and info at taosjazz.org See ad on page 13

NOV 14: FRI 10 AM - NOON
Questa Food Pantry: On top of the hill next to Questa Head Start and the Ancianos Senior Center on Embargo Road off Route 522. See Article on page 7, ad on page 15 for details.

NOV 15: SAT 2-4 PM
Lou McCall Book Signing, local author reads from her book, Meditation for Everyone: Your Secular Guide to Spiritual

Growth, 10% of sales benefit Friends of the Questa Public Library. All are welcome, refreshments. Questa Public Library, 6-1/2 Municipal Park Rd, Questa. (575)586-2023 See ad on page 23

NOV 20: THUR 8 AM - 2:30 PM
Thanksgiving Dinner at the Questa Senior Center, 148 Embargo Road Questa, NM 87556, (575)586-0508 See monthly menu on page 26

NOV 21: FRI 10 AM - NOON
Questa Food Pantry: On top of the hill next to Questa Head Start and the Ancianos Senior Center on Embargo Road off Route 522. See ad on page 15 for details.

NOV 25: TUE 6 PM
Questa Village Council Meeting: Village offices 2500 Old State Rd. 3 Questa, NM 87556 (575) 586-0694

NOV 27: THUR
Happy Thanksgiving!

Weekly Events

SUNDAY

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

3-6 PM
Open Mic at Noisy Water Winery, 518 E. Main St, Red River. A night of music, poetry, and laughter at Noisy Water Winery's Open Mic Night! Join us. Info: visit redriver.org/events/open-mic, or call (575) 754-9957

DINING GUIDE

Featured on *Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives*



COMING SOON: SECOND LOCATION!
 Opening December 2025
 El Prado - Northside Taos
 900 Paseo del Pueblo Norte



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 MON-WED CLOSED

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR • NOVEMBER 2025

MONDAY

10 AM (NO CLASS ON NOV 3)
Free/By Donation Community Seated Yoga Practice with Gaea, in person only. 2331 State Hwy 522 Questa, NM. More info visit yogasalaquesta.org

5 PM
Free/By Donation Community Yoga, gentle practice with Rae, in person only. 2331 State Hwy 522 Questa, NM. For more info visit yogasalaquesta.org

7 PM
Kickboxing, with Reto in person only, sliding scale \$5-15 **All classes free for teens**. 2331 State Hwy 522, Questa, NM. More info visit yogasalaquesta.org

TUESDAY

8:30 AM
Introductory Contemporary Dance with Monica, in person only, \$10-\$15. 2331 State Hwy 522, Questa, NM. More info visit yogasalaquesta.org

WEDNESDAY

9 AM
Gentle Morning Yoga w/ Gaea, in person only, \$10. 2331 State Hwy 522 Questa, NM. For more info visit yogasalaquesta.org

3:15 - 4 PM
Tiny Groovers w/ Monica. Ages 0-5 Movement & Music Class for toddlers & their parents/guardians in person only, **FREE/BY DONATION** 2331 State Hwy 522, Questa, NM. More info visit yogasalaquesta.org

4:30 PM
Kids' Dance Adventure - with Monica, in person only, **FREE/BY DONATION** 2331 State Hwy 522, Questa, NM. More info visit yogasalaquesta.org

5:30 - 7 PM
Chess Club, Practice Puzzles, Occasional lectures & casual play. All ages and levels. Starting Sept 3, Questa Public Library. 1/2 Municipal Park Road (575) 586-2023

7 PM
Kickboxing, with Reto in person only, sliding scale \$5-15 **All classes FREE** for teens. 2331 State Hwy 522, Questa, NM. More info visit yogasalaquesta.org

THURSDAY

5 - 9 PM
Ceramic Cafe is Back! Every Thursday from Oct 9 - Nov 20. @Questa Youth Center by the Questa Library. A project of the Questa Creative Council. Come play with Clay! questacreative.org. For more information contact Anna: (402) 525-7485 or questacreativecouncil@gmail.com By Donation. All are welcome.

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

FRIDAY

9 AM
Kundalini Yoga with Julian, in person only, \$10-15. 2331 State Hwy 522 Questa, NM. For more info visit yogasalaquesta.org

5:30 PM
Stretch & Balance, Gental Yoga w/ Gaea. In person only, \$10. 2331 Hwy 522 Questa, NM. For more info visit yogasalaquesta.org

SATURDAY

10 AM
Free Community Tai Chi, with Reto, in person only, 2331 State Hwy 522 Questa, NM. For more info visit yogasalaquesta.org



DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING FOR OUR CALENDAR? List your event online for free on the online calendar at questanews.com/questa-events, email events@questanews.com

CLASSIFIEDS

Help Wanted

Red River Brewery & Distillery is now hiring bartenders for our winter season. Have fun while you work at one of the busiest bars in NM or if a chill pace is more your style, we need bartenders for our tasting room! Apply at <https://www.redriverbrewing.com/about-us/#careers>

Notices

AA MEETING: Questa Sundays 10-11 a.m., Questa Youth Center

AA MEETING: Red River Tuesdays 7-8 p.m., 417 E. High St. (Erik's Workshop)

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

Free Transportation- Free transportation for qualified seniors is available Monday through Thursday. Donations are encouraged. Questa Senior Center, 148 Embargo Rd, Questa. Call (575) 586-0508 for information.

Food Pantry- North Central New Mexico Food Pantry: second and fourth Fridays, 10 a.m. to noon at 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 ncfpquesta.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).

Low Cost Spay/ Neuter- 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 CO 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.

CHURCH & TEMPLE DIRECTORY



River Community Church exists to glorify God and make disciples by sacrificially serving families in the Village of Questa, NM in a way that produces a culture of community.

www.rccquesta.org

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Sunday noon mass

MISSION CHURCHES OF ST. ANTHONY'S:

Costilla - Sagrado Corazon - Sunday 10 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

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.org (575) 586-1587

RIVER COMMUNITY CHURCH

Pastor Jesse Hardy, 65 S Kiowa Rd, Questa, NM 87556
List of events and services at rccquesta.org/community

THEOSOPHY

Northern New Mexico Alice Bailey Study Group.
Sunday and Wednesday 10 a.m. - noon on Zoom.
For more info, contact Francis at oeahoo17@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.

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For more info www.earthjourney.org or contact Gabrielle at info@earthjourney.org or (575) 770-1682

PATH OF LOVE

Sunday 7:30 a.m. class and meditation in-person north of Questa or on Zoom. For more info: gabrielle.herberson@gmail.com

AMALIA

SANTO NIÑO MISSION CHURCH

1st & 3rd Saturdays 4 p.m. April - September
12 Santo Niño Rd, El Prado, NM 87529

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

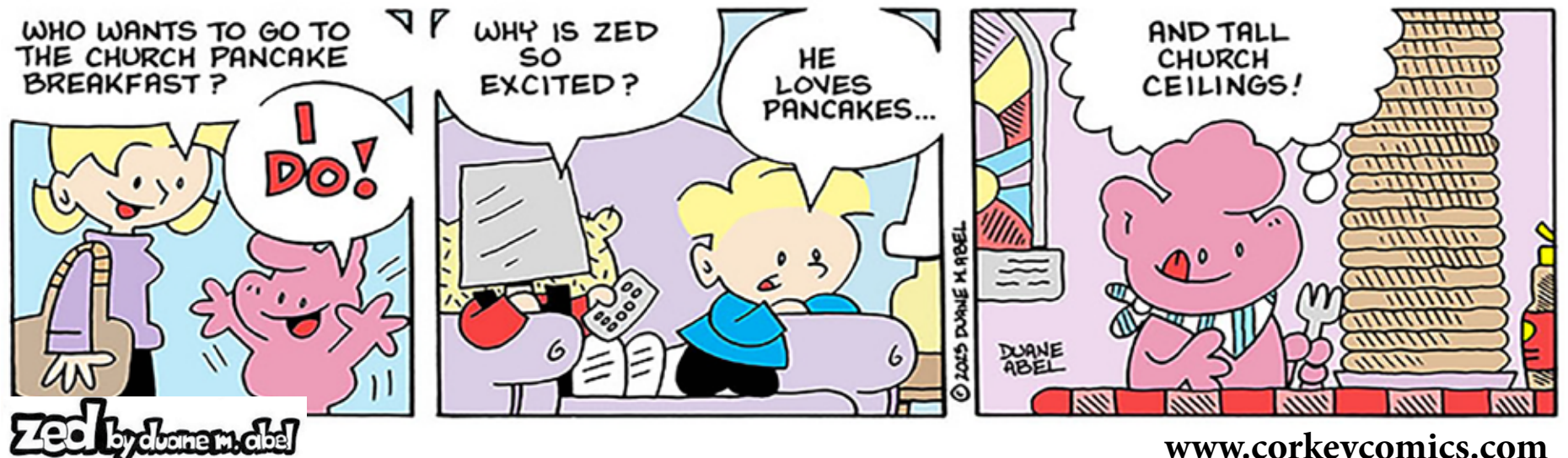
100 Copper King Trail, Corner of River St & Copper King Trail - Sunday 10:30 a.m.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF RED RIVER

103 High Cost Trail
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