

San Miguel Basin Forum

EDUCATION

Elementary celebrates new space, activities

By REGAN TUTTLE, Editor

Sara Bray, principal of the elementary grades at the new Nucla school, told the Forum things seem to be going well for students. They've been in the brand-new space for nearly a month. With 165 kids enrolled in the lower grades, Bray is the head of school for pre-K through sixth grade, but Kristin Parrino is the lead teacher for the infants and toddlers. Parrino is director-qualified and does all compliance and leadership duties for the little ones.

Bray said regarding celebrations, just being in the new facility is big for everyone.

"Our students and teachers have adjusted so well, and the students are reaping the benefits of state-of-the-art technology, spacious classrooms, an amazing gymnasium, art room, and library," she said last week.

Bray said Mrs. Mallory Hainey has begun teaching students how to use the linear climbing wall that was installed last week in the auxiliary gym. Bray said the students appear to love it.

Reading Camp, an after-school reading intervention program, has resumed, and many students are receiving small-group reading intervention every week by a highly-qualified staff member.

Bray agreed there was a high number of students receiving special education services in West End Public Schools District. Those students are getting the supports they need, but in addition, the intervention room exists for those not identified with a learning difference but needing help.

And, Battle of the Books, a state-wide competition that focuses on reading multiple books and then answering questions about them, now has two local coaches: long-time coach Kristi Wheeler and newcomer Sonya Ralstin. Students are broken into age-level groups, and they read as many books on the list as possible. They practice answering questions about the books they've read. Later this spring, the students participating will compete with all the other teams in the UnBOCES, and winners will move on to a regional competition. Nucla students are already meeting now to practice questions for Battle of the Books.

On another note, the school's gifted and talented coordinator, Gin Randolph from the UnBOCES, is meeting once a week with "Genius Hour" students and helping some prepare for the first annual STEM Fair that Randolph has created. Students are working on various

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HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS

Nucla, Norwood total 8 state wrestling qualifiers

By REGAN TUTTLE, Editor

Both Nucla and Norwood are sending guys to the state wrestling tournament this weekend. A combined eight wrestlers — four from each school — will head to what was formerly known as the Pepsi Center, now called Ball Arena.

At the regional tournament over the weekend that happened in Cedaredge, Nucla's Arthur Connelly and Paxtin Caruso took first in their brackets. JW Nasland was second, and Jack-

son McCabe was third.

The guys take off Wednesday morning.

Head coach for the Mustangs Rob McCabe is pleased and had been planning for state qualifiers this season.

"We had a great weekend of wrestling," he said after regionals. "I believe it's the best regional finish as a team in quite some time — and the most guys we have qualified as well. Arthur and Paxtin were both regional champions."

McCabe said Connelly walked through the tournament "in dominating fashion." He added that

Caruso, who'd been battling an illness for several weeks, finally got over it and "looked amazing." He said Caruso's regional performance was the best he's wrestled all year. Coach said Nasland, who finished as the runner-up, lost a tightly contested match in the finals.

"We look at that match as a possible state finals rematch, in which we know we can make the adjustments and come away victorious," McCabe said.

McCabe, coach's son, finished third in his bracket. He lost to the

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COMMUNITY

A remarkable 42-Year legacy: Mary Watson bids farewell

By ANNIKA KRISTIENSEN,
San Miguel Basin 4-H
Coordinator

After an astonishing 42 years of dedicated service, Mary Watson, the backbone of the Colorado State University (San Miguel Basin) Extension Office, is set to retire. Colleagues, friends and community members will gather at the Lone Cone Library on March 1 from 3:30 to 6:30 p.m. to celebrate her remarkable career and bid farewell to a woman whose commitment has left an indelible mark on the community.

Watson began her career as an administrative assistant at the Extension Office in 1982, and over the years, she became an integral part of the organization, known for her unwavering dedication and exceptional work ethic. As she embarks on this new chapter of her life, her colleagues and the community are taking a moment to reflect on the impact she has had.

During her tenure, she played a crucial role in supporting the Extension Office's mission to provide valuable resources and education to the community. Her organizational skills and attention to detail were unmatched, ensuring that the office ran seamlessly and efficiently. Colleagues describe her as always ready to lend a helping hand with a warm smile.

"Mary has been a consistent presence in the Extension Office for four decades," Extension Office Director Yvette Henson said. "Her steadfastness, positive attitude, commitment to excellence and to serving the people in our area with a smile have been shining lights throughout her time here."

Henson and Watson have worked collaboratively to offer programs such as Colorado Master Gardener, Native Plant Master and many other local food programs.

"We have always agreed that the best part of our jobs is the privilege to meet and work with many wonderful people," Henson said. "I consider myself fortunate to have had the gift of working with her for the past 18 years."

Among Watson's many accomplishments and efforts, the Extension Office recognizes her for her assistance on the Colorado State Forest Service Seedling Plant Sale, Environmental Appreciation Day in the Forest (a program for area fifth graders), the San Miguel Basin Regional Seed Library, Plant and Seed Potato Shares and with local plant diagnostics. In addition to this, she has spent many long,

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A full house

Flying Bear Pizzeria had a packed house for the Ridgway International Film Festival (RIFF) presentation Feb. 10. (Photo by Daiva Chesonis)

COLORADO

What's happening with the mail?

By REGAN TUTTLE, Editor

The San Miguel Basin Forum was alerted last week to regional changes in the U.S. Postal Service. An anonymous tip was received in the form of a letter that stated the Grand Junction mail processing plant is closing. The letter, which seems to have credibility, is on letterhead from the mail labor union.

The letter states that Grand Junction's processing plant will close and operations will be moved to Denver. It encourages people to contact their state legislature and let them know how such changes could negatively affect them. The

letter states that as a result of the upcoming closure, mail delays will happen, jobs will be lost and the economy will be impacted.

The Forum began reaching out to local post offices to try and discuss the issue. In the West End, one post office employee did not respond. In Norwood, Randy Crawford directed the Forum to speak with postmaster Jamie Romaine. Romaine said employees have been asked not to speak about the issue and that inquiries must be directed to a USPS media representative.

In this way, it appears that USPS employees cannot verify the truth of the letter, share their feelings about possible changes, or speak to

what it could mean for those on the Western Slope.

Last week, Romaine said she could forward the Forum's questions onto USPS higher ups. After doing so, James N. Boxrud, of Denver, replied to the Forum.

Boxrud, a media specialist for the USPS on the Front Range, said the Grand Junction closure won't happen.

"What I can tell you is the facility will not be closed," Boxrud wrote. "There will be no career employee layoffs, and post offices and delivery services will not be affected."

Boxrud sent a copy of a press release to the Forum, and said it's

Cont. on Pg. 4

MIDDLE SCHOOL SPORTS

Colt wrestlers have high hopes



Jonah Richardson takes second place against his Mancos opponent at the Ignacio tournament. (Courtesy image)

By **KEIRAN BRAY,**
Forum intern

The Nucla Middle School wrestling team started their season strong, preparing for the regional and state tournaments that happen in March. There are 15 boys on the mats this year, with three eighth graders: Jace Bonaquista, Collin Johnson and Ryker Collins.

The seven seventh graders are Slade Carver, Dallas Wallace, Hunter Johnson, Theodore Flores, Jonah Richardson, Quentin Wyatt and DJ O'Connell. Four sixth graders — Austin Shurtz, Jaron Bonaquista, Owen Garvey and Tristan Rodriguez — are also on the team.

Head coach for the middle school team (and the high school team too) Rob McCabe is hoping to see some of the girls from the middle school basketball team join as well, after their season on the court is over.

The team is receiving much support this year with five coaches. Assisting McCabe are Dustin Garvey, Tony Bonaquista, Lars Naslund and Freddie Smith.

All have expressed they're excited to help coach the middle school Colts to their respective and team victories.

Practice started for the group of wrestlers about a month ago, on Jan 17. Their season will run until the middle school state tournament happens, and that is scheduled for March 23. The regular middle school season will end March 9, and then it's off to the postseason

tournaments for Colt wrestlers.

The guys are currently practicing five times a week, for about an hour and a half each day, preparing for their upcoming tournaments.

"Everyone is working hard and getting better. That's the team's goal right now, to get better everyday," coach Bonaquista said in an interview last week.

He added the boys are "sure taking strides to get the job done."

So far, the middle school wrestlers have made their way to Monticello, Ignacio, Norwood and Cortez. They've been successful at all tournaments. Hunter Johnson was undefeated in Ignacio at 105 pounds, winning the tournament. Slade Carver and Xaden Caruso followed suit winning their respective brackets at 75 pounds and 105 pounds.

The team went to Cortez this last weekend and did not disappoint. Owen Garvey placed first at 95 pounds, Jace Bonaquista placed second at 95 pounds, Jaron Bonaquista was also second at 105-110 pounds, Austin Shurtz placed fifth at 75 pounds, Collin Johnson placed fifth at 125 pounds, Jonah Richardson placed sixth at 115 pounds and Dallas Wallace placed seventh at 85-90 pounds.

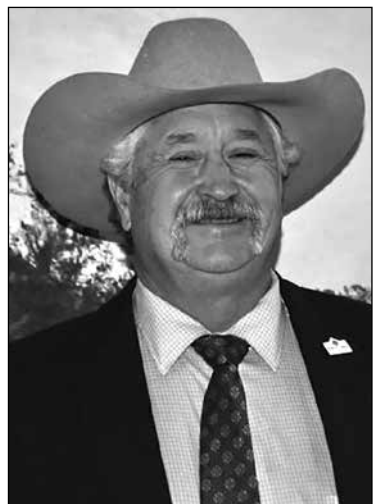
The team was set to travel to both Dove Creek and Gunnison this week in the hopes of continuing their victories. Coaches agree the Colt wrestlers are willing and ready to take on the challenge of the upcoming meets to make it to the regional and state tournaments this year.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Public invited

Dear Editor,

The Lone Cone Republican Women will hold their monthly meeting on Feb. 21 at noon at the Oliver House in Norwood. New members are always welcome. This month Mark Roeber, candidate for Colorado House District 58, will be speaking. He's a fourth-generation cattle rancher from Paonia. He will be speaking regarding his views on managing the state's natural resources. The public is invited to come meet this candidate.



Mark Roeber (Courtesy photo)

Cyndy Vrabec
NORWOOD

History: Rimrocker Historical Society Flour mills come to the West End, Part 3

By **JANE THOMPSON,** *Rimrocker Historical Society*

By the end of 1912, there was talk of Norwood building a flour mill. The flour mill in Redvale was doing good business and had been going strong for the last half of 1912. In April of 1913, according to The Montrose Enterprise, a representative from Kentucky arrived in Norwood for a meeting to discuss the possibility of a flour mill for Norwood. In order to raise the \$5,000 needed for the mill, Norwood farmers and businesses were asked to commit to a subscription of \$100. Some of the names of the first subscribers were definitely boosters of the Wright's Mesa area, such as Galloway, Dunham, Morgan, Reddick, McKeever, Langford, as well as the Ruble-Orendorf Mercantile.

In May, the committee in charge held a meeting to choose the location of the mill site, selecting the contractors to build the mill and voting in officers. Alfred Dunham was chosen as president, John R. Galloway as treasurer and F. B. Ruble as secretary. Enough money had been subscribed, and the mill would be built in time to take care of the fall wheat crop.

The local farmers were planting more acreage to wheat and making ready for the new flour mill in Norwood. The Norwood Post of July 18, 1913 stated that "John Mock is out to take all the prizes in sight for wheat this fall. He has the finest wheat this writer has ever seen." John Mock had already been a large contributor to the Redvale flour mill. An interesting article in the Montrose Press a year later about Mock showed the persistence of

the farmers to grow the best crops of wheat possible:

"For the past two seasons, John W. Mock has been growing a kind of wheat new to this section of the country, and he has found it much better adapted to the climatic conditions existing here than any other wheat he has ever grown. This is the Turkey Red NO. 17, which is a hard, winter wheat and is beardless. He claims it is superior to winter wheat in yield and the quantity of flour that may be obtained from the grain ... It is also claimed that it is a good drought resister, and valuable as a dry-farming crop. He will have about 600 bushels of this kind of wheat this year, which he will sell at \$2 per 100 pounds."

Also, from The Norwood Post from Aug. 18, 1913: "O. Thompson reports that he has harvested his wheat on the mesa near town reservoir and that it will average about 15 bushels per acre. This wheat was raised without irrigation, and this has been an exceptionally dry year, proving that dry farming can be made a success here."

And, this is from The Norwood Post of Sept. 12, 1913: "James Nix is an enthusiastic booster for the Norwood flour mill and advances some invincible arguments why every ranchman on the mesa should become a shareholder in the enterprise."

The Montrose Daily Press of Dec. 5, 1913 shared an article from The Norwood Post: "The directors of the Norwood Flour Milling Company announced that the machinery has been ordered and that the mill will be in operation soon after the first of the year. The contract for the erection of the building to house the machinery and also for building a warehouse was awarded to T. M. Wiley.

The Norwood Post of Dec. 19 says, "Norwood may congratulate herself on a growth as healthy as it is vigorous, and upon a future that is here to long give her a place among the cities of the Western Slope."

A force of workmen has been employed for the past few days, and the work will be rushed to completion at an early date as possible, according to the terms of the contract."

As the close of the year came, hopes were

high for Norwood. They talked of clearing a block for other industries, such as a creamery, and residence properties were in great demand. The Norwood Post of Dec. 19 says, "Norwood may congratulate herself on a growth as healthy as it is vigorous, and upon a future that is here to long give her a place among the cities of the Western Slope."

Next week, a heartbreaking catastrophe will happen at the beginning of the new year of 1914 that will change the flour mill story in a huge way.

(Newspaper Articles taken from Colorado Historic Newspapers Collection, Colorado State Library.)

Elementary community

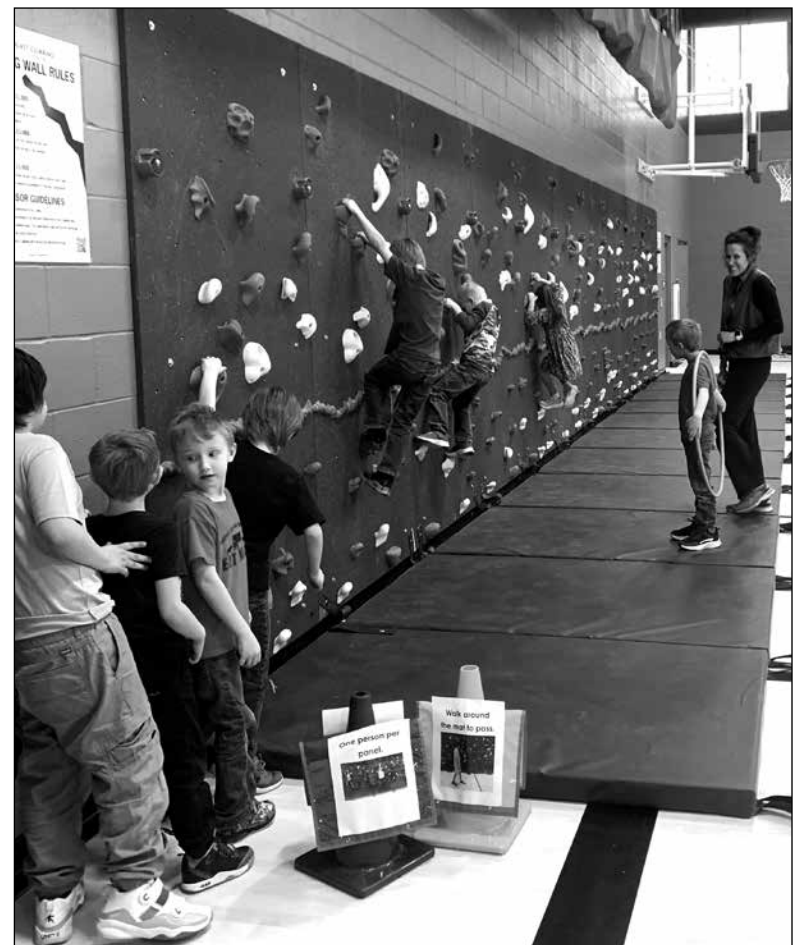
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STEM projects that include 3-D printing, coding and design.

With so much going on right now, Bray agreed everyone is busy, "but happy, as the learning opportunities continue to thrive in our elementary school."

The Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) had a meeting planned for Feb. 12. Bray said the PAC tends to cycle with regard to membership, activity and enthusiasm. Currently, the PAC is very active. Their first meeting in the new Nucla school included an agenda that focused on a review of organizational goals. Bray said they planned to discuss the possibility of also combining some committees or organizations across the school. Presently, the middle school doesn't have an active PAC, but their Booster Club seems to be thriving, and it raises funds for things like sports. While the PAC focuses more on academics, Bray wonders if there's a way the two could support each other in certain ways.

"We're talking about sharing people and responsibilities and fundraising," she said. "That (was the) Monday meeting."



Students learn to navigate the climbing wall in their new school with Mrs. Mallory Haines. (Photo by Sara Bray)



Nucla wrestlers celebrate four of them heading to Denver for the state tournament. (Photo by Megan Caruso)

8 state wrestling qualifiers

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champion in the semi-finals, and then had to battle in his next two matches, where he “scrapped out to one-point wins.”

McCabe said he was proud of the other guys too. That includes Jacob Davis, the heavyweight, who finished sixth at regionals.

“I’m super proud of how far he has come in the few months that we had him,” he said.

Derrick VanDellan and Hunter Brier both lost out in the “blood round.” Cole Bray, Nolan Cressler and David Quigley finished 0-2.

Looking at the state brackets, coach said Connelly, Nasland and

Caruso are set up pretty well to advance far into the tournament. He’s banking on matches in this Saturday night’s finals.

He did say McCabe has a tougher road with a bummer of a draw and “having to face a couple of the state’s premier wrestlers” in the first two rounds.

But, he said he and his guys are excited for a short school week and to get to Denver and start wrestling.

In Norwood, headed to state are Jackson Dinsmore, Coulter Shumway, Colton Kepley and Kannon Sherman.

“I am very excited to get four of our seven wrestlers qualified for

state,” head coach for the Mavericks Kyle Dinsmore said. “I would have loved to have everyone qualified, but, all in all, it was a successful weekend for our team.”

Dinsmore said Sherman had a great day where he made the finals while recording two pins. That was before Sherman lost in the finals to Nucla’s Arthur Connelly. He added that Dinsmore (his son), Shumway and Kepley are good at putting up a fight.

“They all show lots of heart in their matches by never giving up when things get difficult,” he said.

The Norwood guys also leave Wednesday.

A remarkable 42-Year legacy

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hot hours running errands for the annual San Miguel Basin Fair, and her dedication to the 4-H program and its youth is unmatched.

“Much of Mary’s work is behind the scenes,” Henson said. “There is too much to list that goes unseen.”

And so, the retirement party promises to be a memorable event, filled with laughter, heartfelt speeches and a chance for the community to express their gratitude to Watson. Colleagues, friends and well-wishers are encouraged to attend and share their fondest memories of working with her over the years.

Watson said she is well ready for retirement.

“I am excited to hang out at home, savor my coffee each morning, read a book, exercise with my husband and visit my grandbabies. I am ready to spend time on myself,” she said.

As she leaves her post, Watson has only good things to say of the job. She felt that working for Colorado State University Extension Office was deeply meaningful and important work.

“I felt like a part of a team that was both local and regional,” she said. “I enjoyed meeting, talking with and supporting our community members.”

Mary’s retirement marks the end of an era at the Extension Office, but her legacy will undoubtedly

endure. Her dedication, passion and kindness have left a lasting mark on the community, and her influence will be felt for years to come.

As a token of appreciation, the Extension Office has created a “Fun Fund” for Mary and is collecting small donations to go toward her life after work. In addition to this, an online memo board has been created to collect notes and anecdotes from those whose lives she has touched. The community is invited to contribute their messages, showcasing the widespread impact Watson has had on the lives of San Miguel Basin residents. Please contact Yvette by email at yvette.henson@colostate.edu to contribute.

San Miguel Basin Forum

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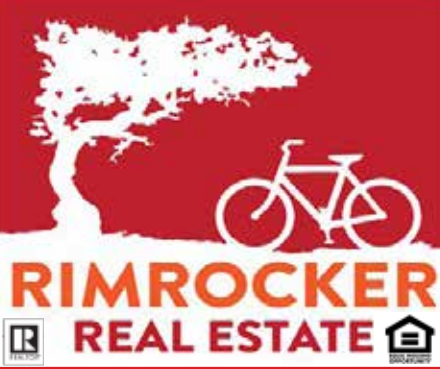


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U.S. Postal Service

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the only information he's able to share at this time.

"More details will be communicated in the coming weeks as the review moves forward," Boxrud said in his reply.

The press release states that there's "a \$40 billion investment strategy to upgrade and improve the postal processing, transportation and delivery networks" and that "the U.S. Postal Service is conducting an evaluation of current operations and potential future uses of its Grand Junction Processing and Distribution Center (P&DC) facility."

The press release says that there is a definite review taking place.

"The USPS 10-year Delivering for America (DFA) plan includes initiatives to improve organizational and operational processes and actively make the postal service an efficient, high-performing, world-class logistics and delivery

provider. Improvements to postal operations will enhance the level of service provided to the public; drive innovation and enable a broader array of postal products and services; enhance organizational competitiveness; improve efficiency and lower the cost to operate; and provide better workplaces and careers for postal service employees," the release says.

It adds that "this specific facility review will inform the best allocation of resources and strategies to improve customer service and to achieve significant cost savings through operational precision and efficiency. Business mail entry, post office, station and branch retail services are not expected to change, and delivery services will be unaffected throughout this review. The evaluation is a first step in the postal service review and investment process in this facility and will not result

in this facility's closure or career employee layoffs."

It says the beginnings of the review support the facility staying open, but also that some mail needs to be transferred to Denver.

A public meeting will be held on Thursday, Feb. 22, at 3 p.m. at Colorado Mesa University, located at University Center, 110 N. Ave in Grand Junction. There, USPS officials will share the initial results of the study and allow members of the community to provide oral feedback and perspectives on the recent facility review.

A summary of the review will be posted on about.usps.com at least one week prior to the public input meeting. Members of the local community may submit written comments at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/mpfr-grand-junction-co> through Mar. 8. The public's input will be considered prior to a final decision.

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Agenda

- Uravan Bridge Update
- CASA Housing Project and Proposals
- Potential Naturita School Purchase and Plan Discussion



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