

San Miguel Basin Forum

NATURITA

Flying Bear announces new events, specials

By REGAN TUTTLE, *Editor*

Virginia Ericson, co-owner of Flying Bear Pizzeria at Naturita Bicycle Company, let the San Miguel Basin Forum know there are lots of things happening at the West End restaurant, plus new food specials she wants all to be aware of.

Over the weekend, on Saturday, the Flying Bear hosted a “Ganjola Pizza Party” with live music by Oscar Lars. Ericson said the night included free pizza and music from 5 to 7 p.m. And, “Ganjola,” she explained, is a social media account and group based in Telluride, which is dedicated to “all things gondola and pot-related inventions.”

Next up at Flying Bear is Miner’s Industry Appreciation Night, and that happens on Friday, Nov. 15, which is also the first of many smoked prime rib nights. Ericson said the evening is all about pub games (including a beer pong game), mining stories and community connections with the area’s beloved miners.

Flying Bear will serve prime rib with loaded baked potatoes and sides of broccoli. Ericson confirmed the prime rib is from the Western Slope, but if she can afford it, she will buy it from an even more centrally located source in the future.

Cost for the prime rib dinner is \$40, and folks can only dine-in for this.

“First come, first served,” Ericson said, though she added that people may call, text or email ahead of time to reserve a dinner. She said that’s not really required but it is recommended.

“Come out and share with fellow friends and neighbors in the industry,” she said. “We’re throwing a party for some of our most loyal regulars, who are miners.”

She added the prime rib special will continue on Friday nights this winter. She simply wanted to celebrate the miners for the prime rib’s debut.

Flying Bear is also the host of the West End’s poetry slam on the following night, an event that Ericson said was a huge hit last year. She’s happy to host it again on Saturday, Nov. 16, with doors opening at 6 p.m., and the readings starting at 7 p.m.

Then, area poets will read their work, including Ellen Metrick, Daiva Chesonis and Ruth Duffy. There is a \$5 cover charge; And, Open Mic Night happens right after, so that others can also read their work or perform. All are invited.

Ericson said there are other
Cont. on Pg. 4

BUSINESS

Tooker family buys Redd’s

By REGAN TUTTLE, *Editor*

After almost a year of Redd’s Mercantile closing and sitting empty, leaving locals without a real grocery store, and especially since Wild Gal’s Market moved to Naturita — although Good E’s has helped the community have access to food staples, like bread, milk and cheese — the space has sold. Christopher and Aimee Tooker, entrepreneurs and cham-

pions of the West End economy, have recently purchased the old grocery, which is located at 460 Main St. in Nucla.

The Tooker family, also of Nucla, owns and operates Tooker Electric, and they have Spirits of the Tabeguache, the liquor store in Nucla. They also own the Vestal House, the historic building that functions as a bed and breakfast, including Amy’s Place. Additionally, they have the old museum building on Main Street that was previously a visitor’s center and a

general store. In the last year, they bought the old Nucla Creamery too, though the future of that has yet to be determined.

Now the old grocery is also a part of the Tookers’ work, and to the relief of many who want to see a real food market in their town.

The Forum was alerted to the sale of Redd’s a few weeks ago and had reached out to Aimee Tooker to discuss. Then, the family was in the middle of hunting season and also had others details they were

Cont. on Pg. 2

PEOPLE

Local woman picks up trash for West End

By REGAN TUTTLE, *Editor*

Marta Siklosi — Siklosi is a Hungarian name — has been in the West End for the last six years. Previously she lived in Lakewood, CO, and for 18 years worked for the Developmental Disabilities Resource Center, helping individuals access their Medicaid, Medicare and Social Security benefits. She often helped disabled people in group homes or others living with their families. Her work involved navigating government systems and helping people complete their redetermination paperwork.

Life has changed for Siklosi dramatically since she retired from that field and then moved to the Western Slope. Now she’s just so happy to be living in Naturita that she picks up garbage — for free, using her own time, and only because it’s something she wants to do.

Locals have likely seen her working in between Naturita and Nucla, traversing Highway 97. They’ve also probably seen her on Highway 145, picking up trash the long way around to Nucla, and on the Nucla Loop. She’s been doing the clean-up the last two years.

She typically finds papers and plastics, thinks like empty Gatorade containers, along with discarded Pepsi bottles and more. She finds more beverage containers on the Nucla Loop, she said.

Siklosi works alone, and she’s fine with that. The state Department of Transportation gives her orange garbage bags to use. She’s not officially adopted the highways; she simply wants to help keep her community clean.

“I just want to help my community,” she told the Forum Saturday. “I’m so grateful to be living here in Naturita. Nucla and Naturita both are such cool, small communities.”

She said she also gets to experience all four seasons, though the wind can be “iffy” at times, and she gets her exercise by walking the roadside. Some have gotten to know her the last few years, and they wave when they see her. Siklosi said she almost always waves back, but sometimes her hands are full. She does use the “claw” device to pick up trash items.

She agreed the work is rewarding, and she likes the way local roadsides look when they’re free of debris.

“It looks good,” she said. “I’m happy to do it.”

Besides appreciating a lower cost of living in the West End, the
Cont. on Pg. 5



WEPS is awarded

West End Public Schools (WEPS) received a financial award from Black Hills Energy for the district’s work in using energy-efficient appliances, cost savings of energy use, and also greenhouse gas reduction. On Nov. 7, principal Sara Bray accepted a check on behalf of WEPS for \$32,988. (Photo by Tanner Nelson)

RECREATION

West End Run Club does half marathon in Moab

By REGAN TUTTLE, *Editor*

Members of the newly formed outdoor recreation group, the West End Run Club, successfully completed a half marathon in Moab.

Dani Acosta-Reyes, professional athlete and filmmaker based in the West End, founded the club. She said the main means of communication for the group has been Instagram, and West End runners started with the Nucla Range Loops on June 5. They’ve met up sporadically, more than 10 times, since then.

Acosta-Reyes said the club is inclusive and wants those who join to be able to run at their own pace, whether that’s quick hiking

or fast running. She added so far the group has been running “no drop,” which means everyone runs together. She said as the group grows, though, it will likely split into pace-based groups.

“It’s important to note the emphasis is building community,” she said. “That’s a foundational component of why we meet, and it’s important to me to not leave people behind.”

In the future, she’d also like to offer some skill-based workshops for speed or distance running in the West End.

For the Moab Trail Marathon and Half Marathon, held on Nov. 3, members completed the event in the rain and in temperatures of 40 degrees. That includes Jenny

Wheeler, Cara Pallone, Megan Urban, Zita Suprenant and Reyes-Acosta, the club’s founder. Honorary member Heather Sackett, formerly of Telluride and with ties to the local area, also joined.

Acosta-Reyes said every one of the ladies finished the 13.1 miles and that all were smiling is an indicator of the joy of running, but also the joy of running with community. She said the ladies truly embodied the “grit” that those in the West End have.

“Every single one of the participants finished strong and with a smile,” she said.

Megan Urban, of the West End, told the Forum she enjoyed it.

“The fact that we had six local
Cont. on Pg. 5

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Heartfelt congratulations

Dear Galena,

I want to extend my heartfelt congratulations on your victory in the San Miguel County District 3 County Commissioner race. This election has been a significant journey for both of us, and I truly appreciate the respectful and positive competition we've engaged in. It has been invigorating to exchange ideas and perspectives, and I believe it has enriched our community's understanding of the important issues we face.

I am confident that our working relationship will be a strong asset for District 3 and San Miguel County as a whole. Your commitment to serving our community is evident, and I look forward to collaborating on initiatives that pri-

oritize the needs and aspirations of our residents. Together, we can address the challenges ahead and create opportunities for growth and improvement.

I believe that fostering a collaborative spirit will not only benefit our district but also enhance the overall well-being of San Miguel County. I am eager to support you in your efforts and contribute positively to our shared goals. Our community thrives when we work together, and I am excited about the potential that lies ahead.

Thank you once again for your dedication and service. I look forward to the positive impact we can make together for the betterment of San Miguel County. Best wishes.

*Mayor Candy Meehan
NORWOOD*

Redd's Mercantile

Cont. from Pg. 1

still working out. Although they're still "secretive" about what they will be doing with the building, the Forum has confirmed that Redd's will indeed become a grocery store once again.

Aimee Tooker said her family had watched the building sit for sale for quite a while, and with the price-dropping but no takers ever putting it under contract and moving forward, the Tookers said they couldn't watch the building go to auction.

"Before the store went to auction, we were able to make an offer that the sellers' couldn't refuse, and we are so excited to dig in and start to bring the building back up to something the community can be proud of," Aimee Tooker said Monday morning. "People from other cities and states do not understand

the history and the importance a grocery store is to our remote area. We couldn't let the building go to someone that has no idea the value and the impact."

Those in Nucla likely have questions: Will deli sandwiches and the fountain drinks make a comeback? What about the Mexican Cokes in glass bottles? Will the space be renamed? What about the bags of ice? What about the exterior or inside? Might the Tookers completely change the space, like they've beautified other West End properties?

Aimee Tooker said there is no timeline for the grocery store's opening. The couple will take their time to ensure a renovation is done strategically and methodically.

"Just like Spirits of the Tabeguache, when you see the open sign turn on, you will know when we are open," Aimee Tooker said.

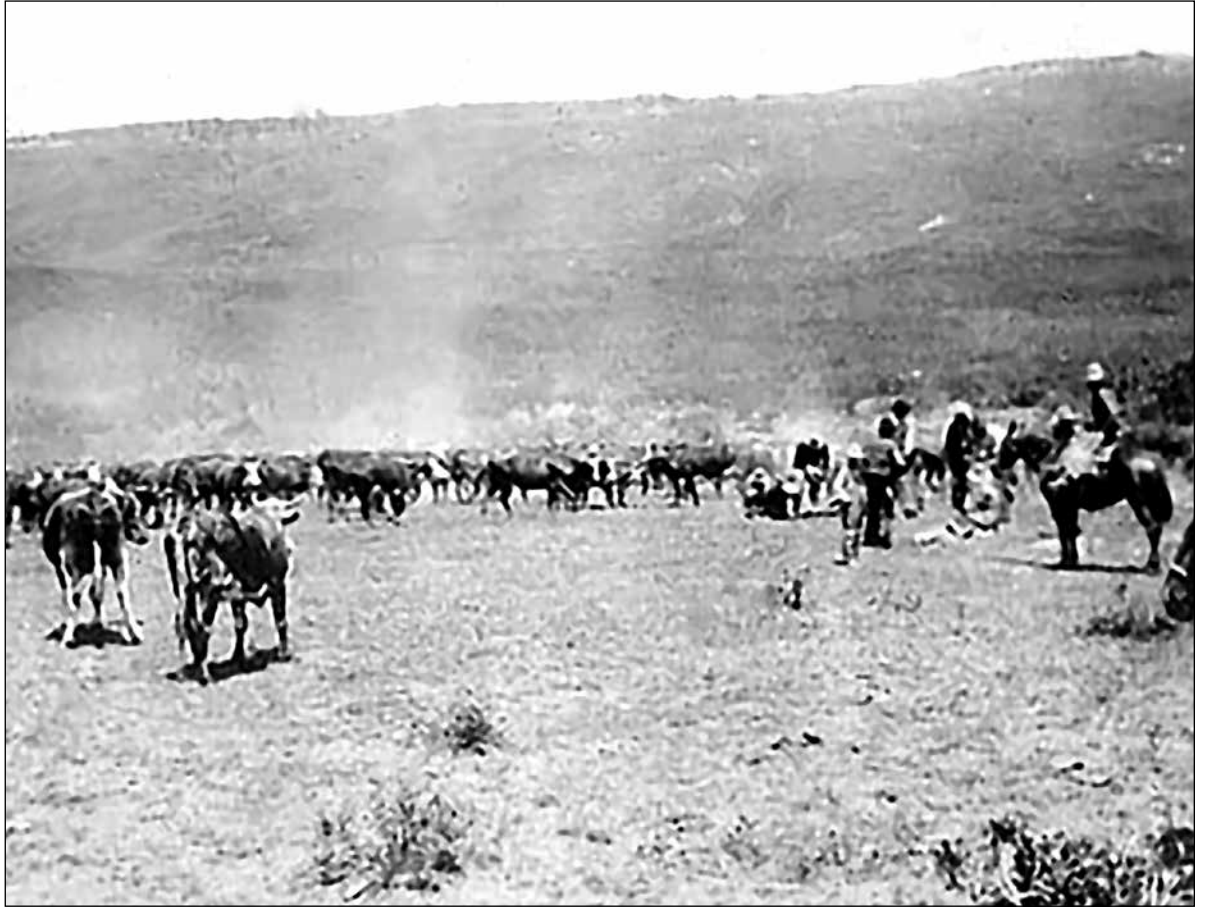


Teaching the next generation

Brenden and Blaine Schmalz got their deer during rifle season. (Courtesy image)

History: Rimrocker Historical Society Early cattlemen of southwest Colorado, Part 1

By JANE THOMPSON, Rimrocker Historical Society



This photo shows working cowboys on the job on the Uncompahgre in 1915, near the Copper King Mine. (Photo courtesy of the Standard Chemical Company Collection)

In the Forum of Sept. 4, 2014, Marie Templeton shared an article from the San Miguel Basin Forum, the centennial-bicentennial issue. It has some interesting history on some of the early cattlemen. Last week was all about the bull, so here is the story of the cattlemen who took the chance and became founders of these big cattle ranches:

"News of luxuriant feed and grasses came from the Hayden Survey made in the 1870s. Professor Hayden reported vast territories in southwest Colorado equal to any in the state for stock. Once the Utes were gone, cattlemen came into the area.

The first stock cattle in the Uncompahgre Valley were driven in from the Gunnison Valley the summer of 1876 by Alonzo Hartan, Sidney Jocknick and others. They were Ute cattle and were brought in to supply beef for the men who were getting out lumber and building materials for construction of the Indian Agency, which was soon to be moved.

Pumphrey and Loutzenheiser secured a contract from the government and drove 5,000 head of cattle into southwest Colo-

rado, trailing them from the San Luis Valley. After the Utes were removed in 1881, the stockmen went out of business and sold small bunches of stock for breeding purposes to contractors at mining and construction camps. Many of the present day herds were built from these early cattle.

In 1878, Fred Mayall brought the first herd into Paradox Valley. The next spring, he started for the Lone Cone country, but the Indians drove him out and he abandoned the cattle. Those that remained, after the Indians killed what they wanted, were later picked up by other stockmen.

In 1879, Frank Steele arrived in West Paradox. P.T. Stevens came that fall, and the two men formed the Stevens and Steele Cattle Company, which became a large outfit. They sold to Kinney and Kyle in 1900.

The next year, Wesley H. Nelsen moved in from the Gunnison country and located in Gypsum Valley. He brought a large herd of Shorthorns that he wintered in Gypsum and summered on the Lone Cone. M.W. Powell Cattle Company came in

from Texas with Steve Morgan as foreman. The cattle were branded with 'HF connected.'

In 1881, a man named Came located some placer claims on the San Miguel (at the Uravan Ballpark M.T.) Later, he met a Dr. Dearborn who had come west for his health. They became interested in raising cattle and organized the San Miguel Cattle Company. The doctor got R.W. Johnson and his brother of New Brunswick, New Jersey, interested and together they built up a large herd.

Dr. Dearborn died in 1884, and R.W. Johnson was elected president of the company. He hired C.E. 'Ed' Wetzel as foreman, who managed the company for 20 years.

Summer range was on the Uncompahgre Plateau at Spring Creek. The headquarters ranch was on the San Miguel four miles above the junction with the Dolores River. The brand was 'The Club,' after the ace of clubs, and the ranch was named the same. Alex Calhoun and Bill Selby bought the outfit in 1906. In 1922, Ed Lavender, who had been connected with W.E. Wheeler in the Pitch Fork Cattle Company, bought the Club Ranch.

Another big outfit was the Philadelphia Cattle Company near Placerville. Later, it was called the Cross Ranch. J.W. Tripler was general manager and Bill Doak foreman."

To be continued next week ...

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Showing her skills

Merrilee Gallagher, center, wins \$100 in a cover letter contest through True North Youth Program in Debbie Wytulka's senior seminar class. Seniors have been working on resumes, cover letters and more for workforce preparedness. Here she stands with True North's representatives Ashely Murphy and Ray Dahlstrom. (Courtesy image)

FORESTS

GMUG Christmas tree permits available Nov. 14

SPECIAL TO THE FORUM

It's that time of year. Christmas tree permits for the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison (GMUG) National Forests will be available to purchase over the counter and online through recreation.gov beginning Nov. 14. Information about designated cutting areas, cutting dates and types of trees that may be cut can be found online through the website.

Online permits will be available through recreation.gov for the 2024 season. In-person transactions may be available, depending upon the ranger district. For more information on office hours and vendor options, the public should visit the USFS website.

To purchase a Christmas tree permit, those interested should visit recreation.gov and search for Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests Christmas tree permits. Then, they should carefully review the overview and need-to-know information before purchasing the permit. Visitors will also need to set up an account or log into the recreation.gov site to complete the permit transaction.

Representatives of the USFS know it's a special thing for people. "Cutting your own Christmas tree is more than just a holiday tradition, it's a journey that creates lasting memories," said Chad Stewart, GMUG Forest Supervisor. "This holiday experience sup-

ports the resiliency of our national forests, transforming a tree into a cherished, handcrafted memory."

Experts say cutting a Christmas tree improves forest health. The permit system helps to thin densely populated strands of small-diameter trees. Local forest health experts identify areas that benefit from thinning trees that are the perfect size for Christmas trees. Removing these trees in designated areas helps other trees grow larger and can open areas that provide forage for wildlife.

For information on current fire restrictions, conditions and recreation opportunities, all may visit the forest website or www.west.slopefireinformation.com.

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San Miguel Basin Forum

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Flying Bear

Cont. from Pg. 1

ongoing winter specials the West End community should know about: Trivia Nights are happening on Saturdays; smoked wings are served on Sundays; "Lasagna Mondays" with salad and garlic bread begin at the end of the month; vegetarian protein bowls, featuring Wild Gal's Market vegetables and grains, happen every Wednesday; and a lunch — a pizza, soup or salad combo — takes place during the week. On Thursdays in the future, there will be live music and Open Mic Night, hosted by Johnny Dobbs.

And, there are sweets. "We've expanded our desserts to include cakes, double-chocolate right now," she said.

Those with questions should email virginia@pizza.bikesbeer.com.

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Members of the West End Run Club finish the half marathon in Moab Nov. 3. (Courtesy image)

West End Run Club

Cont. from Pg. 1

girls get together for a day of running in the cold is something I never would have seen, coming just five years ago, when I moved here," she said.

Urban added the West End Run Club is "very chill," and that any and all levels should feel welcomed to join.

Cara Pallone, of Norwood, said she loved the Moab run.

"It's one of my favorite half marathons, because it feels like an obstacle course with the sand and slick rock and desert landscape,"

she said. "This year was rainy and cold, but it didn't matter because we had the best crew."

She added that as a mother of a young child, the West End Run Club has been fulfilling for her.

"I never thought I'd get back into running, let alone be a part of this community of strong, wild women who lift each other up," she said. "There's a deeper bond that's forged through trail running because you have miles to share life experiences and memories and these intimate conversations that would never come up during, say,

happy hour or a dinner party. I love how we approach each run without judgement or expectations. It's about community, and that's a beautiful thing.

Acosta-Reyes said though winter is on the way, the group will likely still be meeting, though they'll stay flexible due to weather and daylight limits. She said already people are using the West End Run Club's Instagram platform to simply find running partners and a time that works, something she's happy about.

Men are also welcome to join the West End Run Club.

Trash

Cont. from Pg. 1

views are something she cherishes, and for her those views are even better garbage-free.

She added the San Miguel River and the burro pack race the Nuclea-Naturita Chamber of Commerce hosts in the spring are things she loves about the area.

Local EMT and executive director of Hoof & Paw Tonya Stephens has seen Siklosi hard at work for a while now.

Stephens said she agreed Siklosi's volunteerism is selfless and community-minded.

"I cannot get over how many times I see her out picking up trash that other people have thrown out," Stephens said. "I really appreciate what she does, and thought she needed to have recognition for

what she does as well."

Siklosi said she knows of Stephens. She said she commends Stephens in her work at the shelter and through EMS. Being a cat person, Siklosi said she couldn't do what Stephens does every day, because she'd want to adopt every cat she encountered.

She'll stick to roadside cleanup. "It's rewarding within itself, and people are so appreciative," she said.

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*** HEARING NOTICE ***

Notice is hereby given that a public hearing will be held by the Montrose County Planning Commission in the **Public Works Building 63160 LaSalle Road, Montrose, Colorado, on Thursday, November 21, 2024, at 6:00 p.m.** to consider a special use application filed by Cornelius Whitehead. Said application is a request to install a Wireless Telecom tower. Subject property is zoned General Agricultural and located on Parcel 429311201001, 37200 II RD, in Montrose County.

Legal Description
Subd: REDVALE CORNER MINOR SUBD Lot: 1 S: 11 T: 45 R: 14

THE PUBLIC IS ENCOURAGED TO OFFER COMMENT

The proposed application is available for review at Montrose County Planning and Development Office, 63160 LaSalle Road, Montrose, Colorado during regular business hours or on the Montrose Citizen Portal:

<https://co-montrose-co.smartgovcommunity.com/ApplicationPublic/ApplicationHome>
Search application: SU24-003

Written comment may be sent to Montrose County Board of County Commissioners, c/o Planning and Development Director, 63160 LaSalle Road, Montrose, CO 81401; or trichmond@montrosecounty.net.

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PLANNING COMMISSION

Published in the San Miguel Basin Forum November 13, 2024

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West End Montrose County Sheriff's Office Blotter

10/15/2024

1039 Hours - Jerimha Rathbun-Paraday, 38, was contacted in the 100 block of West Main Street in Naturita and issued a warning for speeding.

1214 Hours - Charles Barker, 53, was contacted in the 29200 block of 2800 Road near Nucla and issued a warning for speeding.

1236 Hours - Deputy was dispatched to the 700 block of West Eleventh Avenue in Nucla for an agency assist.

1533 Hours - Deputy was dispatched to the intersection of Highway 90 and Highway 141 near Naturita for an accident.

1753 Hours - Deputy was dispatched to the 400 block of Heron Street in Nucla to relay a message.

1 school zone
2 VIN inspections
1 directed patrol in County

10/16/2024

1753 Hours - Deputy was dispatched to the 26200 block of Z26 Road near Nucla for a welfare check.

2234 Hours - Deputy was dispatched to the intersection of Highway 90 and Highway 141 near Naturita for a traffic hazard.

1 VIN inspection
1 follow up report

10/17/2024

1035 Hours - Deputy was dispatched to the 200 block of West Fourth Avenue in Nucla for an information report.

1124 Hours - James Bishop, 68, was arrested in the 100 block of Payson Street in Naturita on an outstanding warrant.

1138 Hours - Deputy was dispatched to the 100 block of East Main Street in Naturita for an animal problem.

1207 Hours - Deputy was dispatched to the 26700 block of 2700 Road near Nucla for a disturbance. Kierra Chiles, 20, was cited for harassment.

1354 Hours - Deputy was dispatched to the 100 block of Payson Street in Naturita for a citizen assist.

1629 Hours - Deputy conducted a motorist assist in the 30000 block of DD31 Road near Nucla.

1758 Hours - Deputy was dispatched to the 200 block of West

Fourth Avenue in Nucla for a restraining order violation.

1931 Hours - Deputy was dispatched to the 100 block of West Main Street in Naturita for a lost property report.

2031 Hours - Deputy was dispatched to the 26500 block of 2650 Road near Nucla for a medical assist.

1 school zone
1 directed in Nucla

10/18/2024

1025 Hours - Marie Kiser, 63, was contacted on Highway 97 mm 3 near Nucla and cited for driving without a valid driver's license, expired registration and no insurance.

1140 Hours - Deputy was dispatched to the 200 block of West Seventh Avenue in Nucla for a disturbance. Mignon Chadd, 42, was cited for harassment and criminal mischief.

1223 Hours - Deputy was dispatched to the 500 block of West Seventh Avenue in Nucla for a civil matter.

1421 Hours - Deputy was dispatched to Highway 141 mm 52 near Naturita for an agency assist.

1430 Hours - Deputy was dispatched to the intersection of 2900 Road and CC Road near Nucla for a found property report.

1455 Hours - Levi Tatum, 66, was contacted on Highway 141 mm 58 near Naturita and issued a warning for failing to stop at a stop sign.

2121 Hours - Deputy was dispatched to the 300 block of East Tenth Avenue in Nucla for an information report.

1 VIN inspection
1 directed patrol in County

10/19/2024

1029 Hours - Deputy was dispatched to the 400 block of Adams Street in Naturita for a medical assist.

1918 Hours - Deputy was dispatched to Highway 97 mm 1 near Naturita for a welfare check.

10/20/2024

0054 Hours - Deputy was dispatched to the 26800 block of FF26 Road near Naturita for a noise complaint.

1052 Hours - Deputy conducted a ride along in the 100 block of West

Main Street in Naturita.

2 directed patrols in County
2 directed patrols in Naturita
1 civil process attempted/served

10/21/2024

0934 Hours - Deputy was dispatched to the 27100 Block of DD Road near Nucla for a medical assist.

2000 Hours - Deputy was dispatched to the area of CC Road near Nucla for an animal problem.
2 VIN inspections

10/22/2024

1759 Hours - Deputy was dispatched to the 900 block of Grape Street in Nucla for an animal problem.

1 VIN inspection

10/23/2024

0822 Hours - Deputy conducted court security in the 300 block of Main Street in Nucla

1127 Hours - Deputy was dispatched to the 500 block of West Sixth Avenue in Nucla for a welfare check.

1358 Hours - Deputy was dispatched to the 300 block of West Fifth Avenue in Nucla for an information report.

1924 Hours - Deputy took an information report in the area of Divide Road and Cow Camp Road.

Hours - Sheldon Tucksen, 31, was contacted on Highway 97 mm 2 near Nucla and cited for driving with a revoked driver's license and speeding.

1 civil process attempted/served

WEST END PUBLIC SCHOOLS Lunch Menu

Free For All Kids

Milk Served With All Meals

Monday, Nov. 18

Hamburger on Bun, Pork And Beans, Chips, Salad Bar, and Milk

Tuesday, Nov. 19

Fajita Chicken Wrap, Sweet Red Peppers, Salad Bar, and Milk

Wednesday, Nov. 20

Sausage Pizza, Bread Sticks, Marinara Sauce, Salad Bar, and Milk

Thursday, Nov. 21

Mac and Cheese w/Ham, Roll, Peas, Salad Bar, and Milk

WEST END PUBLIC SCHOOLS Breakfast Menu

Free For All Kids

Milk Served With All Meals

Monday, Nov. 18

Soft Pretzel, Oranges, Milk, and Juice

Tuesday, Nov. 19

Blueberry Muffin, Mixed Fruit, Milk, and Juice

Wednesday, Nov. 20

Pancake on a Stick, Animal Crackers, Peaches, Milk, and Juice

Thursday, Nov. 21

Waffle, Strawberry Bowl, Maple-Yogurt Dip, Milk, and Juice

Celebration of Life

There will be a memorial service for Mark Jones on Saturday, Nov. 23, at 1 p.m. at New Hope Church, located at 135 Crystal Dr. in Naturita. A potluck meal and fellowship will follow at Naturita Community Center.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Thank you

Dear Editor,

A huge thank you to Dana Saxton for the Veterans Day ceremony in Nucla on Monday. A big round of applause for all the kids at the school today for their songs and poems. What an amazing turnout. Thank you to all of the teachers and administrators for supporting this day. Without Dana stepping up, there would not have been a ceremony this year to honor our veterans. It takes willingness and determination to pull this type of operation off. Again, from all of us veterans, thank you, Dana, for making this happen. Job well done!

John Reed, QM/Adjutant for VFW Uranium Post 9058
NUCLA

YOUTH

At ease in the West End



The Nucla Middle School students had a dance last weekend. Here, kids come together for a line dance.



Owen Garvey, Wyatt Weimer, Lochlan Schultz, Jaron Bonacquista and Branson McCabe catch their breath.



Students sit on the ground for the tradition of "Fishin' in the Dark," a well-known country song. (Photos by Brandi McCabe)



Avery Sutherland can't resist jumping into a pile of fall leaves.



Emerald Williams heads into school on a snowy day.



Ava Mock is horse-crazy. (Courtesy images)