

METRO & NM

SECTION C | TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2013 | ALBUQUERQUE JOURNAL

DUST STORM

Intense dust storms that cause highway wrecks, such as the one last week that killed three people, are not uncommon in the town of Picacho, Ariz., between Tucson and Phoenix.



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Behavioral health provider cuts staff

Ariz. firm blames 'revenue shortfalls'

By DEBORAH BAKER
Journal Capitol Bureau

An Arizona company brought in by the Human Services Department to replace some New Mexico behavioral

health nonprofits is laying off staff.

Valle del Sol, which provides services in communities including Los Lunas, Bernalillo, Espanola, Taos and Raton, confirmed it has reduced its workforce but refused to provide details.

CEO Kurt Sheppard said the decision was based on "revenue" and "rightsizing opera-

tions in New Mexico."

"Current consumer census did not justify maintaining current staffing patterns," Sheppard told the Journal in an email.

He said Valle del Sol has 120 staff in New Mexico, and as services "are stabilized and continue to grow" additional staff may be recruited.

The Human Services

Department halted Medicaid payments to 15 nonprofits in June after an audit that the department said showed over-billing, mismanagement and possible fraud. Arizona firms brought in by HSD took over 12 of those operations.

Advocates for the mentally ill and addicted say the ensuing upheaval in the system has interrupted services to clients.

Edward Church, a therapist in Los Lunas with Valle del Sol — formerly Valencia Counseling Services — was laid off effective Oct. 24. The letter he received from Valle del Sol said the company had hoped to keep all its employees, but "unfortunately, this is not possible due to revenue shortfalls."

Church said eight employ-

ees were laid off at the Los Lunas site, including three therapists. He also contended that the client caseload in Los Lunas has dwindled to less than 400, and that it used to be upwards of 1,000 under Valencia Counseling Services.

Church said the layoffs leave the Los Lunas office with the

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WINTER VISITORS SETTLE IN



ROBERTO E. ROSALES/JOURNAL

The deep-throated calls of sandhill cranes fill Albuquerque's North Valley as the big birds adjust to their cold-season residence at Candelaria Farms, adjacent to the Rio Grande Nature Center. The first birds were spotted in early October flying over and have now settled in, according to Nature Center Director Beth Dillingham.

Catholic Church urges support of abortion ban

Analyst says stance could boost turnout at the polls

By JAMES MONTELEONE
Journal Staff Writer

Religious leaders are taking a front seat in Albuquerque's debate of the proposed ban on abortions after 20 weeks that voters will decide at the polls on Nov. 19.

New Mexico's top Catholic Church leader threw his support behind the proposed ordinance on Sunday and urged churchgoers to head to the polls to help pass the referendum.

Archbishop Michael J. Sheehan, who heads the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, celebrated a "pro-life" Mass in Albuquerque on Sunday and called on Catholics to help restrict abortion laws that he said currently attract women from around the country to Albu-

querque to receive later-term abortions.

"I encourage all the people of Albuquerque to support the proposed ordinance to ban late-term abortion after the 20th week. These children are able to feel pain and suffer greatly when aborted," Sheehan said in a statement.

Sheehan commended the effort of political organizers to collect sufficient petitions and get the proposed ordinance on a city ballot. Early voting has begun.

The archbishop said debate over the ordinance has helped educate the public about the issue.

The Catholic Church typically does not



SHEEHAN: Debate has helped educate public

weigh in on election debates to endorse candidates, but the church routinely has advocated its stance on issues such as its strong opposition to standing abortion policies.

New Mexico political analyst Brian Sanderoff, president of Research & Polling Inc., said the advocacy from the Catholic Church could boost turnout at the polls.

"People will make up their own minds based on their own values, regardless of what their bishops or priests might say," Sanderoff said. "However, many of the faithful could be inspired by the priests' and bishops, and that could increase turnout."

Meanwhile, a coalition of opposition groups organized against the proposed 20-week abortion ban known as "Respect ABQ Women" has highlighted a number of local religious leaders who oppose the ban.

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Full reservoirs buoy optimism of farmers along Pecos

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By JOHN FLECK
Journal Staff Writer

Farmers in Eddy County are planting hay this fall, a gesture of optimism on the lower Pecos River in southeastern New Mexico after three years of record drought. The planting, on land that has been left fallow in recent years because of a lack of water, comes after massive September rains filled reservoirs on the Pecos.

"They know we'll have water next year," Dudley Jones, manager of the Carlsbad Irrigation District, said of his district's farmers.

Located at the southern end of the Pecos in

New Mexico, the Carlsbad farming district has had a tough few years. Precipitation from Oct. 1, 2010 through Sept. 30 was the driest three-year stretch in the region since record-keeping began in the late 1800s, according to federal weather records. Conflicts with the district's upstream neighbors have been one of the results, as Carlsbad-area farmers pushed this year for the state to curtail water use in the Roswell-Artesia area in an effort to try to ensure that more water makes it downstream.

Heavy September rains caused the turnaround, according to Greg Lewis, Pecos Basin manager for the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission. Every Nov. 1, Lewis looks at the amount of water currently in

storage in the four major Pecos reservoirs upstream of Carlsbad and makes an initial projection of how much water will be available for farmers next year.

Last year at this time, the amount of water was "practically nothing." This year, Lewis said Monday, there's already enough water to make it likely the Carlsbad Irrigation District will get a full allocation of water even if there's a bad winter.

That also is good news for Lewis' agency, which is under fire because of problems with a state program to pump water from the ground to augment the river's flow during dry years.

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Education chief: Evals not fed issue

U.S. secretary: 'You have to look at multiple factors'

By MIKE BUSH
Journal Staff Writer

In an interview last week with a New York school teacher, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan went out of his way to praise New York state's teacher evaluation system, which bases only 20 percent of its evaluation on student achievement.

He did not mention New Mexico's controversial teacher evaluation system in which 50 percent depends on student achievement — even though he was asked specifically about it — but said the federal government would never impose a particular standard on the states.

Many teachers in New Mexico are unhappy with the state's new system because they say the 50 percent requirement places too much weight on student achievement. New Mexico's two teachers' unions either have taken, or are considering taking, legal action to halt the program, and many teachers and officials with Albuquerque Public Schools — the state's largest district — have been outspoken in their opposition to the evaluation program.

In a video circulated widely among New Mexico's educational establishment on Monday, Joiselle Cunningham, a teacher from



DUNCAN: System 'shouldn't be top down'

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City Council OKs seizing cars used in prostitution crime

By DAN MCKAY
Journal Staff Writer

Pimps, johns and prostitutes may soon face more than just an arrest when caught by Albuquerque police.

An ordinance approved by city councilors late Monday would allow officers to seize any motor vehicle used in a prostitution crime. It was sponsored jointly by councilors Roxanna Meyers and Ken Sanchez.

"This is a citywide problem," Meyers said, pointing out sting operations conducted throughout Albuquerque.

Sanchez said he sees prostitutes every day on West Central, where he works. Police need more options for attacking the problem, he said. "It's almost impossible to stop," he said.

Albuquerque police Lt. Les Brown said he doesn't expect to target the prostitutes themselves. Instead, he'll focus on seizing the vehicles of pimps or johns when the vehicle is used in the course of the crime.

The council voted 8-1 in favor of the ordinance, with Rey Garduño in dissent.

Garduño raised questions about people wrongly accused of a crime and the possibil-

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Free listings online offered

Got an event you want people to know about? Use the free listings on ABQjournal.com — types of calendars include charitable events, concerts, sports, worship and others. You can list your event and include a photo and website link. Go to the Venue tab for the calendar link.



Flying the colors

The flag should be flown at full staff today.

'The Language of Architecture'

Daniel Libeskind, an internationally acclaimed architect, will speak on "The Language of Architecture," at the University of New Mexico's Woodward Hall at 5:30 p.m. Thursday. The event is free and open to the public. Libeskind's buildings include the Jewish Museum in Berlin, the extension to the Denver Art Museum and the Ground Zero Master Plan in New York.

'Remorseful animal lover'

Defense attorneys in closing arguments said John McCluskey, convicted of killing an Oklahoma couple, is a "remorseful animal lover" damaged by an abusive childhood and brain defects.

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Help for the Holidays

Nonprofit organizations are invited to submit their holiday volunteer and donation needs to the Albuquerque Journal for inclusion in the annual Help for the Holidays column to run Sundays, Dec. 1 through Dec. 22. Each item will be published once. All submissions are due by 5 p.m. Nov. 18. Include a brief description of the nonprofit's services, its need for volunteers and its need for donations, as well as address, phone number and possible website. Email items to mbrown@abqjournal.com or mail to Madelon Brown, Albuquerque Journal, P.O. Drawer J, Albuquerque, NM 87103.

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Quote of the day
“I'll take responsibility for what I do, and I want you to take responsibility for what you do.”
— Bernalillo County Commissioner Debbie O'Malley to county Treasurer Manny Ortiz, subject of the commission's no-confidence vote.
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