

Vol. 140, No. 151

THE FINE PRINT

LAS ANIMAS COUNTY FAIR
TUES-SAT: Fun for the whole family
 at the annual LA County Fair that will
 be held at the Fairgrounds on N. Linden
 St. Info: www.coopext.colostate.edu/
 lasanimas/
FRIDAY
 8 a.m. / Swine Show
 1:30 p.m. / Round Robin Showmanship
 5 p.m. / Youth Day
SATURDAY
 10:45 a.m. / Round Robin Awards
 11 a.m. / Market Livestock Sale
 1:30 p.m. / Buyers Barbecue
 2:30 p.m. / Ranch Rodeo

Today's Quote

**"Never, never,
 never give up."**

~ Winston Churchill

WEEKEND—JULY 29-31

SUMMER ART TREK
FRI. (5-8 p.m.) The 5th Downtown Annual Summer Art Trek will be held the last Friday of every month thru October. Relax dining out with friends, listen to great music and revel in terrific artwork. Enjoy 'Merchant Specials' for evening shoppers.

TRINIDAD LAKE
 All activities are rain or shine, and are free to the public. All vehicles are required to have a park pass. Info: 719-846-6951.

FRI. (6:30 p.m.) Campfire Ranger Talks at the amphitheater.

SAT. (7 p.m.) Homo and the Hispanic Culture presentation includes sample foods cooked in an authentic homo at the amphitheater.

HOLY TRINITY CLASS OF 1956
FRI.-SUN.: Group will celebrate their 60th class reunion at the Holiday Inn on Santa Fe Trail Dr. Weekends activities include a mixer, dinner and Sunday Mass at Holy Trinity Church followed by a barbecue. Info: JL Gerardi, jlgerardi@aol.com

FARMER'S MARKET
SAT. (8 a.m.-Noon) Don't miss the 16th Annual event held every Saturday in Cimino Park — runs thru mid-October. Info: Joyce Cuccia, 719-680-0184.

FIRST RESPONDERS
SAT. (11 a.m.-2 p.m.) Food, games and bounce house "Celebrate Community First" event will be held in the Walmart parking lot. Info: Junie Verquer, 719-846-6886, ext. 104.

MONDAY—AUG. 1

THS BAND CAMP
MON.-FRI. & AUG 8-12 (8 a.m.-3 p.m. each week) Band students will have their mandatory music camp at the THS Band Room. Info: Director Jocelyn Ames, 719-846-2971.

TRINIDAD AREA ARTS COUNCIL
MON. (5:15 p.m.) Trinidad Area Arts Council will meet in the Gallery Main, 130 E. Main St. Info: 719-846-1441. Public is welcome to attend.

PUBLIC SERVICE

PUBLIC NOTICE: Please be advised that the water main break in Valdez has been repaired and all area water restrictions have been lifted. Info: Mike Valentine or Linda Vigil, 719-846-9843 ext. 124. More info online at thechronicle-news.com

THS BAND CAMP
AUG 1-5 & AUG 8-12 (8 a.m.-3 p.m. each week) Band students will have their mandatory music camp at the THS Band Room. Info: Director Jocelyn Ames, 719-846-2971.

ASK-A-LAWYER DAY
AUG 2 (9-5 p.m.) Walk-in for a free 20-minute consultation (anything other than criminal cases) with an experienced attorney at the Las Animas County Courthouse, 200 E. First St. Reservations & info: CJ Montoya, 719-680-7333.

FNB SCHOOL DRIVE
AUG. 5 DEADLINE: Supplies needed include pencils, erasers, 12-inch rulers, crayons, glue, scissors, backpacks and notebook paper — cash donations are also accepted. Drop off at The First National Bank main bank on Main Street, at the motor bank on First Street or at the Wal-Mart Branch. Info: 719-846-9881.

2016 LA VETA STUDIO TOUR
AUG 6 & 7 (11 a.m.-4 p.m.) Free self-guided tour of 15 area artists' studios starts at the SPAOe Gallery, 132 W. Ryus, La Veta. Info: Kathy Hill, 719-742-5756.

CARNEGIE PUBLIC LIBRARY
 Check out the local library (202 N. Animas) for great summer programs and events every week for kids of all ages all summer long. Info: 719-846-6841.

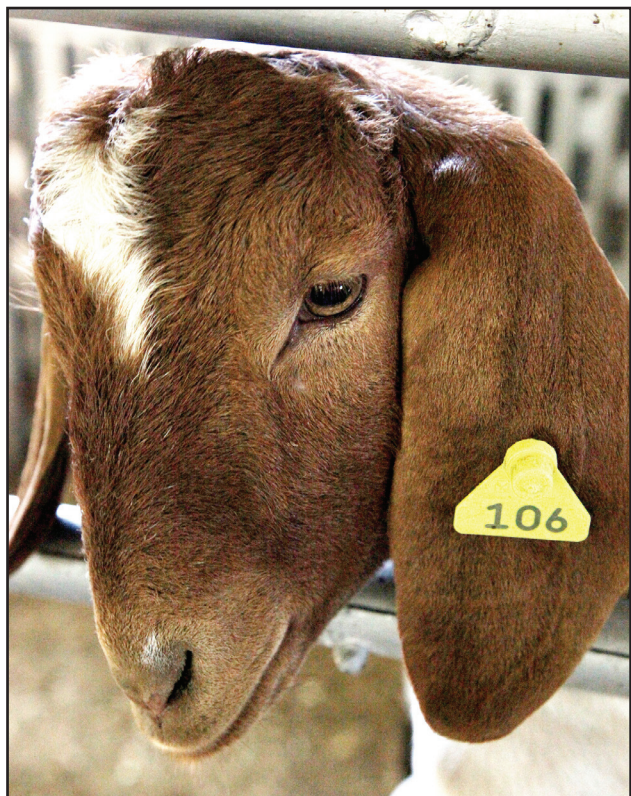
AGUILAR LIBRARY
 For a schedule of exciting events please call Linn Baker, 719-941-4426.

RIVER CALL

Purgatoire River Call as of:
 07/28/2016. Hoehne Ditch: Priority # 20--- Appropriation date: 10/07/1865.

Trinidad Reservoir Accounting:
 Release 330.45 AF
 Inflow 123.66 AF - 62.34 CFS
 Evaporation 21.21 AF
 Content 27,726 AF
 Elevation 6,193.57
 Precipitation 0

Down stream call: Highland Canal: 05/31/1866.



Brad Kirby / The Chronicle-News

Competitions keep kids busy at the county fair

The action continued at the Las Animas County Fair on Wednesday with the goat, sheep and horse shows rounding out the day. Tuesday's events included the garden and flower shows, as well as the baking judging and awards ceremony. **See more photos on Page 5.**

FEDERAL FUNDING

Rural development program in place to help dreams come true

Low-interest loans and grants help turn dreams into reality for many people

Steve Block
 The Chronicle-News

Many people would like to own a home of their own, start a new business or do something that benefits their community but don't have the money to make any progress toward reaching those goals. For those people, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Rural Development Program is there to help with low-interest loans and grants that can help turn those dreams into realities.

Charles Thompson, a senior loan officer for Rural Development spoke to the County Board of Commissioners Tuesday about all the ways the program could help people and communities with limited financial resources achieve their goals. Thompson cited many examples

of success stories in southern Colorado achieved by using the resources available through Rural Development. The South Central Council of Governments (COG) built its Early Learning Center on Rosita Avenue by using multiple resources available through Rural Development, he said.

"One of my favorite stories is the Early Learning Center, where COG has its younger children," Thompson said. "We had a Guarantee Community Facilities Loan, a Direct Community Facilities Loan and a direct grant. We used all three of those sources of funding in that program to help make that come about. If I can ever point to anything, I can say that I helped to do that. That's one of our better projects."

Thompson said Rural Development

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NEED LEGAL HELP?

Ask-A-Lawyer Day returns Tuesday, Aug. 2

Eric John Monson
 News Editor
 The Chronicle-News

Ask-A-Lawyer Day, an opportunity for local residents to receive free legal consultations with local attorneys, will be held Tuesday, August 2 from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. at the district courtroom in the Las Animas County Courthouse.

According to Third Judicial District Judge Leslie Gerbracht the inaugural event was wildly successful a year ago. "The response last year was amazing," said Judge Gerbracht. "But we were full. So, if I was going to stress anything this time around it would be for people to call ahead to get a spot (phone number provided below)."

The last Ask-A-Lawyer Day in February 2015 served 32 clients. Among those clients, there were 15 inquiries that were domestic related (divorce, custody, child support), 10 inquiries were civil (evictions, money cases, guardianship) and seven cases were for probate (estates, wills, trusts). The court reported that 22 of the clients reported an income level below the poverty line. There were 42 dependent children across those 32

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Eric J. Monson / The Chronicle-News

Third Judicial District Court Judge Leslie Gerbracht and Family Court Facilitator Sam Benson.



Sweet Hearts of the Rodeo



Photo by Tim Keller / The Chronicle-News

Last year's junior and senior Trinidad Round-up Rodeo queens, Michell Walton and Anne Sporleder, won crowns that took them all the way to a major feature in Western Horseman magazine. The 2016 competition is taking entries now from young horsewomen ages 8 to 21.



In a fast changing world, rodeo queens are still Western horse culture's best ambassadors

Tim Keller and Christina Boyce
 The Chronicle-News

Part 1 of 2 Parts

Sugarite Canyon Ranch straddles the high border east of Raton Pass, touching both Colorado and New Mexico. Michell Walton is the fifth generation of her family here, growing up on horseback, working cattle since she was six. Now 12, she helped her guest Anne Sporleder choose a horse last January for a winter ride up the canyon. Avoiding the deep

Continued on Page 3 ...

WEATHER WATCH

Friday: A 10 percent chance of showers and thunderstorms after noon. Mostly sunny, with a high near 87. West southwest

wind 5 to 10 mph. **Night:** A 10 percent chance of showers and thunderstorms. Partly cloudy, with a low around 59. South southeast wind 5 to 10 mph.

Saturday: A 20 percent chance of showers and thunderstorms. Mostly sunny, with a high near 90. Southwest wind 5 to 10 mph. **Night:** A 20 percent chance of showers and thunderstorms. Partly cloudy, with a low around 60. South south-

west wind 5 to 10 mph.

Sunday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 91. West southwest wind around 10 mph. **Night:** A 10 percent chance of showers and thunderstorms. Partly cloudy, with a low around 61. Southwest wind around 10 mph.

Monday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 90. South wind 5 to 10 mph. **Night:** Mostly cloudy, with a low around 61. West southwest wind 5 to 10 mph.

Weather Sponsored by:

Inn & Suites
 Wellness
 Hotel
719-845-0102

Sweet Hearts of the Rodeo *Life as a Rodeo Queen*



... Continued from Page 1

snow on the slopes, the girls rode along a snow-packed road and around a frozen lake.

They ride easy and well, not surprising to anyone that saw them sprint their horses around the Las Animas County Fairground arena last Labor Day weekend when Anne carried the flag as Trinidad Round-up Rodeo Queen and Micheli was the junior queen. Anne is fourth generation on her family ranch near Walsenburg and, at 18, she's been riding much longer than Micheli.

"I've been riding since day one," Anne says. "In fact, my mom rode throughout her pregnancy. We went riding the day before I was born." Now a barrel racer and avid photographer, she enters college this fall to become a trauma or surgical nurse. "My family, we're all so close that I think I can be a nurse and still be a cattle rancher," she says.

With impressive horsemanship and ranch skills, and long lists of other accomplishments, Anne and Micheli are ideal representatives of Western ranch and rodeo culture. It's not surprising that they emerged from the rigorous competition to become the queens of the rodeo.

Except that there was no competition. No one else entered.

TRINIDAD ROUND-UP

In its 106th year, the Trinidad Round-up Rodeo Queen competition is open to girls from six counties—four in southeastern Colorado, two in northeastern New Mexico. Last fall the A.R. Mitchell Museum of Western Art mounted a window display of past queens going back 105 years. "A few of my aunts and cousins were queens," Micheli says. Yet, from six counties, only Anne and Micheli entered last year's competition.

December's Miss Rodeo America pageant in Las Vegas drew representatives of 33 states, up from 27 just two years earlier, but participation at state and local levels has fallen not just to single-digit numbers, but sometimes to ones and zeroes.

"We are losing numbers," concedes Dayna Jenkins, former rodeo queen and now executive assistant at Miss Rodeo America. "And we're in danger of losing our culture if we don't fight for it. Rodeo queens are uniquely positioned to represent not only rodeo but ranching and the Western lifestyle. Rodeo contestants don't have time to serve as representatives of rodeo because they're busy competing and earning paychecks and moving on to the next rodeo. It's the rodeo queens that are available to meet the fans and make personal appearances and represent the rodeo."

Long active in the Miss Rodeo Nebraska program, and sister to a former Miss

Rodeo America, Tricia Schaffer has been director of the National High School Rodeo Association queen contest for more than 20 years. "NHSRA membership now includes 42 states, 5 Canadian provinces and Australia for a total of 48 potential contestants, making it the largest rodeo queen competition in the world," she says. "These are the best kids. They're responsible and hardworking. They're been taking care of horses. They're from great families. The product they're selling is rodeo."

But the world is changing. "Girls participate in a lot more activities these days," Schaffer says. "Schools used to have volleyball for the girls but now they're in sports and other activities all year. The decline in queen programs in recent years is a social phenomenon, too. Media doesn't promote the good girls. It promotes the bad girls. Look at magazines and ads. It's not a wholesome look. Girls don't want to look like their grandmas."

"People stereotype rodeo queens," says Miss Rodeo USA judge Jamie Rauch, "as dumb blonde pretty girls in pretty shining shirts, a girl that can't ride a horse to save her life." The author of "Teach the Teachers: A Guide for Rodeo Queen Committees" runs Rodeo Queen University & Bible Camp each summer in her home state of Washington. "Rodeo queens are more than cowboy hats and rhinestones," Rauch says.

Schaffer adds, "Nine out of ten of our high school rodeo queen contestants are also entering rodeo events. They can look pretty and also ride and rope." Big smiles and beautiful outfits are part of the package, but if you can't ride a horse you can't enter the ring.

COLFAX COUNTY QUEEN

Ashlee Rose Mills started life without horses. "Mom watched John Wayne movies and I fell in love with the horses then," she says. "I've always been drawn to them." Her dad arrived in northern New Mexico's Moreno Valley as a new teacher drawn by the area's rich hiking and fishing opportunities. He's now the longtime principal of Eagle Nest Elementary and Middle School.

"One of Dad's teachers offered to teach me to ride in exchange for cleaning stables and other chores," Ashlee says. "I got my first horse in the second grade." Soon she was in 4-H, then entering several events in a bi-weekly summer youth rodeo series. "My love of horses grew into my love of rodeo," she says.

At 15, Ashlee began an eight-year run of rodeo queen competitions that included two reigns each as Cimarron Maverick Rodeo Queen and Colfax County Fair & Rodeo Queen in addition to Eastern New Mex-



Photos by Tim Keller / The Chronicle-News

Micheli Walton is cowgirl through and through. A working horsewoman since the age of six, she is last year's Trinidad Round-up Rodeo Junior Queen. Applications are currently invited for this summer's competition, with an August 16 deadline and August 20 contest. Ashlee Rose Mills parlayed a long and successful rodeo-queen career into a KRTN radio program and a weeklong Miss Rodeo America competition in Las Vegas, NV; already a municipal judge, she'll graduate from UNM law school next year.

ico State Fair Queen and, finally, Miss Rodeo New Mexico, which sent her to Las Vegas to represent her state at the 2013 Miss Rodeo America pageant. The other MRA contestants voted her "Miss Congeniality," which went alongside the horsemanship award she won at the New Mexico State Fair.

When she won Miss Rodeo New Mexico in 2012, Ashlee Rose Mills was the only contestant.

That's become common around the country. For the past four years, Miss Rodeo Mississippi has had only one contestant, or none. DeShannon Davis was Miss Rodeo Mississippi 1998. She's since earned a PhD, been Miss Rodeo Mississippi national director for eleven years and a member of the Miss Rodeo America executive board for seven.

"Having only one contestant has not stopped our queens from doing well on the national level," Davis says. Her state's queens won Miss Rodeo America in 2010 and 2014, with a top-ten finish in 2013. The falling numbers may threaten the existence of rodeo queen programs, but the quality of today's rodeo queens reflects the strength of the Western horse culture they represent, its families and ranches and the sport of rodeo. Mississippi's queens, along with Micheli Walton, Anne Sporleder, and Ashlee Rose Mills—these young women represent what's best about America.

Read the second half of "Sweet Hearts of the Rodeo" in next Friday's Chronicle-News.

"Tough Enough to Compete," first appeared in *Western Horseman* magazine, June 2016.



Micheli Walton helps new friend Anne Sporleder, below, gather a horse for a winter ride on the Walton family ranch last January. Anne Sporleder, left, and Micheli Walton enjoy a winter ride at 8000 feet where the Walton ranch hugs the Colorado-New Mexico border above Sugarite Canyon State Park.

