



WEEKEND EDITION  
FRIDAY, SATURDAY  
& SUNDAY  
MAY 13-15, 2016

# THE CHRONICLE-NEWS



50 CENTS  
TRINIDAD  
COLORADO

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## THE FINE PRINT

### WEEKEND—MAY 13-15

**TRINIDAD STATE**  
**FRI. (10 a.m.)** Graduation ceremonies will be held in the "Pit" outside the Berg Building on the campus. Refreshments will follow in the Sullivan Center.

**SPBC FIRE DISTRICT**  
**FRIDAY (10 a.m.)** The Spanish Peaks/Bon Carbo Fire Protection District Board of Directors will meet in Century Financial Group Building, 109 W. Main St. Info: Dana Phillips, 719-846-2080.

**TRINIDAD MUSIC ASSOCIATION**  
**SAT. (7 p.m.) & SUN. (4 p.m.)** Group will present a free concert "Rock 'n Roll Blast" at the Massari Theater, corner of Broom and State Streets. Info: Kirsten Nelson, 719-846-3720.

**GUADALUPE SOCIETY**  
**SUN. (after 11 a.m. Mass)** Group will serve light refreshments at Saint Joseph's Hall on Goddard St. Info: Rose Mes-tas, 719-846-3647. Community is invited.

**FREE PLANTING PICNIC**  
**SUN. (1-4 p.m.)** The Good Food Project will host a free event at the Community Garden on Hwy 12, Mile Marker 68 in Jansen. Join us for lunch and to learn about sustainable gardening. Info: Olympia Gioulekas, 716-310-4294.

## Today's Quote

**"Live all you can; it's a mistake not to."**

-Henry James

### MONDAY—MAY 16

**CITY OF TRINIDAD**  
**MAY 16 (1:30 p.m.)** City Council will hear a Geothermal and Crustal Earth Observatory presentation and discussion at City Hall, 135 N. Animas St. Info: 719-846-9843.

**TOWN OF STARKVILLE**  
**MON. (6 p.m.)** Board of Trustees public meeting in the Fisher's Peak Fire Department boardroom, 8361 County Road 69, Starkville. Info: Crick Carlisle, 719-680-7199.

### TUESDAY—MAY 17

**SAMARITAN CLINIC**  
**1st & 3rd TUES. (9 a.m.-4 p.m.)** Here to serve the under-insured and non-insured community with free health care and low-cost lab work, 413 E. Frost and corner of Linden Ave. Info: 719-846-3536.

**HOLY TRINITY ACADEMY**  
**TUESDAY (5:30 p.m.)** School board meeting at the school, 613 Prospect St. Info: Jasper Butera, 719-846-4522.

**CITY COUNCIL**  
**TUES. (6 p.m.)** Regular session will be held in Council Chambers, City Hall, 135 N. Animas St. Info: Audra Garrett, 719-846-9843.  
**CITY COUNCIL:** Mayor: Phil Pico and Council Members: Joe Bonato, Pat Fletcher, Carlos Lopez, Anthony Mattie, Michelle Miles, and Liz Torres.

### PUBLIC SERVICE

**NOAH'S ARK**  
**TODAY:** Check out the amazing number of FREE and LOW COST services the Animal Shelter provides for the community. Help is available for practically everything pet related. Info: 719-680-2385.

**TRINIDAD WATER FESTIVAL**  
**MAY 19 (all day)** 5th annual event for area kids will be held on the campus of Trinidad State. Spectators are welcome. Info: Linda Perry, 609-751-2539.

**ART SCHOLARSHIP**  
**THRU MAY 20:** Scholarship available for high school senior. Apply at Gallery Main, 130 E. Main St. Info: 719-846-1441.

**ALANO FUNDRAISER**  
**MAY 21 (7 a.m.-Noon)** Group will host a Yard and Bake Sale benefit at the Alano Club, 120 W. Kansas. Info: 719-220-0850.

**GRANT FUNDING PROGRAM**  
Planning an arts- or culture-based project in Trinidad? Funds are available through the Arts & Culture Advisory Commission. Application forms available at City Hall on Animas St. Info: Marilyn Leuszler, 719-845-1433.

**WILDFIRE RISK WORKSHOPS**  
Sponsored by the Stonewall Fire Protection District at the Station, 7375 Hwy 12. Free admission, refreshments served and reservations required. Info: 719-869-2249.

**MAY 25 (1-5 p.m.)** Wildland Fire Risk Reduction Mitigation Site Tour

**THS BASKETBALL TOURNEY**  
**MAY 28 & 29 (8 a.m. registration-9 a.m. game time)** Sign up now for the Lady Miners 2016 Basketball 3 on 3 Tournament at the THS Donnelly Gym. Info: George Dasko, 719-846-0367 or Jenny Garrison, 719-680-1574.

## RIVER CALL

Purgatoire River Call as of: 05/11/2016. Enlarged South Side Ditch: Priority #80 --- Ap-propriation date: 04/07/1877.

**Trinidad Reservoir Accounting:**  
Release 0.14 AF  
Inflow 271.05 AF - 136.65 CFS  
Evaporation 14.91 AF  
Content 33,185 AF  
Elevation 6,199.81  
Precipitation 0

Down stream call: Amity Canal: 02/21/1887.



## DEPT. OF HUMAN SERVICES

# Report says Food Stamp usage limited in Colorado

Steve Block  
The Chronicle-News

A recent report titled, "Food Stamps fuel a Healthy Colorado," says the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is underperforming in Colorado in terms of effectiveness and efficiency as compared to national statistics.

SNAP provides eligible families with modest monthly funds to purchase food us-

ing a pre-loaded Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card.

The nutrition program not only provides access to the fuel needed for healthier lives but also helps create jobs, increase grocery sales and support local food producers. Every program funded by taxpayers should be transparent and accountable to the community and those it seeks to serve. Nationally, food stamps is one of the most vigorously regulated benefits with 92 percent of federal program spending going directly to those in need and a fraud rate of only about 1 percent.

The report is available online at the website: [www.hungerfreecolorado.org/impact-reports](http://www.hungerfreecolorado.org/impact-reports). It contains statistics for each county showing which ones meet federal guidelines and national averages, and compares counties with similar size populations to measure the effectiveness of the SNAP program. The report's data is based on statistics from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Some of the highlights of the statewide data in the report include that Colorado con-

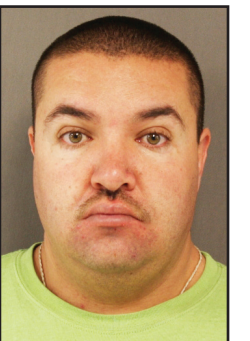
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## CRIME

# CSP arrests Albuquerque man after I-25 high-speed chase through Trinidad

Steve Block  
The Chronicle-News

An Albuquerque, N.M. man has been arrested and is being held on multiple charges at the Las Animas County Jail after a high-speed chase Tuesday morning in the northbound lane of Interstate 25. Jose Cervantes, 34, was driving a silver, 1990 GMC SUV at 9:39



Courtesy LA Co. Sheriff  
Jose Cervantes

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## Exploring the San Luis Valley

Keller's Travels  
5th in a series of 5



## COLORADO TRAVELOGUE

# Colorado Gators: Amazing entertainment for kids of every age

### Where does an alligator go after he's been banished from Los Angeles?

Tim Keller  
Correspondent  
The Chronicle-News

When Los Angeles authorities removed Jaxson from his Sylvan Street home in the San Fernando Valley last

year, he made the front pages of newspapers across the country and caught my eye. My father had grown up on Sylvan Street back when Van Nuys was mostly citrus groves. Later, after the Valley had grown to a population of millions, I lived on Sylvan Street for one semester while attending college.

Jaxson moved to Sylvan Street after I'd left but he still had 37 years to enjoy his home before the authorities came to re-

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Photos by Tim Keller / The Chronicle-News

Morris the Alligator retired to Colorado Gators in 2006 after a 30-year career working in Hollywood where he appeared in dozens of TV shows and films, including *Happy Gilmore*. More than 10-feet long and 500 pounds, Morris now shares his indoor pond with another retired movie-star alligator that appeared in *Dexter* and several Lubriderm commercials.

## ELDERCARE

# Trinidad Inn celebrates Nursing Home Week

Trinidad Inn Nursing Home  
Special to The Chronicle-News

In observance of Nursing Home Week, May 8 to 14, 2016, Trinidad Inn Nursing Home has been celebrating special events during the week that are meant to encourage residents, families and others to engage with their loved ones, family members or neighbors. The American Health Care Association (AHCA) has designated the theme to be "It's a Small World, with a Big Heart."

"Our staff wants to make this a special time and organized an indoor fun fair with games and goodies to entertain everyone,"

stated Assistant Nursing Home Administrator, Carol Riggio. "We want staff, residents and families to enjoy the activities and the feelings encouraged by the theme," said Kaylynn Fransua, Social Services Director.

It has been a busy week. The facility celebrated many events to highlight the fun fair week. Activities included:

Mother's Day Brunch on Monday celebrated residents who are mothers and bring wisdom and cheer to the facility.

Taco Tuesday Bingo provided a dose of bingo fun and was filled

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The Chronicle-News / file photo

## WEATHER WATCH

**Friday:** Sunny, with a high near 77. West southwest wind 5 to 10 mph. **Night:** Partly cloudy, with a low around 44. East

wind around 5 mph.  
**Saturday:** Mostly sunny, with a high near 73. West wind 5 to 10 mph. **Night:** Partly cloudy, with a low around 48. South southwest wind around 10 mph.

**Sunday:** Partly sunny, with a high near 74. Southwest wind 5 to 10 mph. **Night:** Mostly cloudy, with a low around 45. **Night:** Mostly cloudy, with a low around 46. South wind 5 to 10 mph.

**Monday:** A chance of showers and thunderstorms. Partly sunny, with a high near 68. Southwest wind 5 to 10 mph. **Night:** Mostly cloudy, with a low around 44. Southwest wind 5 to 10 mph.

**Sunday:** A 20 percent chance of showers and thunderstorms after noon. Partly sunny, with a high near 72. Light wind 5 to 10 mph. **Night:** A 20 percent chance of showers with a low around 46.

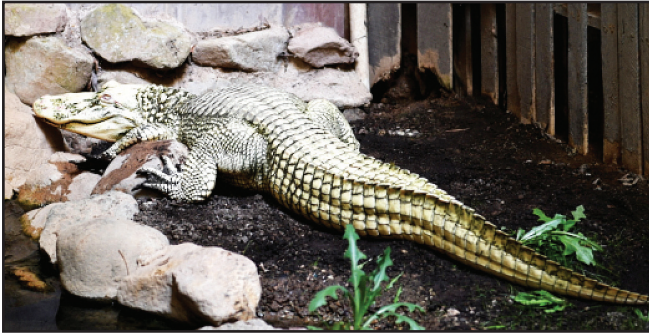
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# Exploring the San Luis Valley

Keller's Travels  
5th in a series of 5



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Mr. Bo Mangles shares a comfortable pen with his girlfriend, Elvira (out of view). There are only about 50 known albino alligators in the world; five of them live at Colorado Gators.

## COLORADO TRAVELOGUE

# Colorado Gators: *Amazing entertainment for kids of every age*

## Where does an alligator go after he's been banished?

move him. He was an illegal alien. He was—he is—an alligator.

Where does an alligator go when he's been banished from Los Angeles? Colorado.

Colorado Gators Reptile Park isn't much to look at from outside, a ramshackle jury-rigged ranch-like operation covering 80 remote acres just off Highway 17, 17 miles northeast of Alamosa. At 7500 feet in elevation, the high-desert groundcover consists of yucca and cactus. Driving across this desert to see alligators feels incongruous.

But the San Luis Valley's desert surface is underlain with a warm geothermal aquifer producing abundant water at a balmy 87 degrees year-round. At Colorado Gators, alligators cross January snow to dip into their warm marsh-like pools where they loll in contentment throughout the day.

went.

She was right. After Great Sand Dunes, Colorado Gators may be the most popular tourist attraction in the valley.

No sooner did I pay my admission and walk through a door than I was immersed in a lush green world of reptiles. Two giant tortoises were under foot, a huge boa constrictor wound around an employee's neck, and two parents watched with some alarm as their daughter held a small alligator.

The staff of young men is well trained in customer service, which here means to get customers to hold animals and watch their initial fear turn to uneasy laughter, then fascination.

Chris points to the small gator in the girl's hands and tells me, "That's Stumpy. He got in a fight with another gator at the Albuquerque zoo and lost his right front leg. We took

your own certificate." I did, and he did, and Stumpy validated it. I liked it.

In 1974, none of this was here when Erwin and Lynne Young moved to Alamosa from West Texas with their four children. Erwin learned of the valley's geothermal water and hatched a plan to raise tilapia, the second-most eaten fish in the world. In 1977 he bought his 80 acres, tapped the aquifer and became a successful tilapia farmer.

Ten years later he'd developed a refuse problem with an accumulation of dead fish and the bones of filleted fish. Adding 100 baby alligators solved that problem, but people started coming to gawk at his alligators. In 1990, the Young family opened Colorado Gators to the public.

The family farm has grown into "a family-oriented educational facility that focuses on full use of natural and recycled re-



Photos by Tim Keller / The Chronicle-News

Journalism sometimes requires courage. Stumpy "validates" Tim Keller's Certificate of Bravery, earned by holding Stumpy after photographing him. After losing his right front leg in a squabble with another alligator at the Albuquerque Zoo, Stumpy came to Colorado Gators where, once a week, he pulls a shift greeting the public.



George is one of two huge turtles enjoying an easy life on the floor where visitors have to step around him at Colorado Gators. Almost 50 years old, George shares his meals with Durango, an African Sulcata Tortoise only 16 years old. Colorado Gators takes in rescued animals from throughout the U.S., with employees sometimes driving to the Denver airport to receive animals in shipping crates.

Still, I was unconvinced. My three-day San Luis Valley exploration produced five travel features but barely scratched the surface of the valley's rich artistic, cultural and natural attractions. With so much to choose from, why choose an alligator farm?

Credit Chronicle-News features editor Cathy Moser. She'd never been to Colorado Gators but had seen fun pictures and heard great stories. She hoped I would go — she edits and builds these features so I

him in and he's become one of our picture gators.

"We have about 19 of them outside and each comes in to work about one day a week."

Work for a picture gator consists of posing for pictures with visiting families, then validating each resulting Certificate of Bravery with a stamp consisting of the holes of his teeth.

As I photographed the Denver girl's newly "stamped" certificate, Connor said, "If you touch Stumpy, I can give you

sources," according to its mission statement. "Our goal is to maintain an integrated ecosystem while providing educational opportunities and viable farm products."

Thus the fish fertilize rainforest plants while alligators get star billing but countless other animals fascinate and entertain visitors. Most of the animals are rescues from zoos, homes and neighborhoods around the country. "Some of them are shipped straight here," says Connor, "but a lot of times we

drive up to the Denver airport and bring them back in a shipping crate."

Snakes include a reticulated python, an Albino Burmese Python, prairie rattlesnakes and Western Diamondbacks. There's a blue-tongued skink, a Sudan plated lizard, iguanas and geckos. Fish include an iridescent shark catfish. All around are signs both educational and humorous. (One alligator's sign says, "Send more hunters—the hikers are still too crunchy.")

Denver mother Lisa Doane points at a black widow spider in a jar and asks, "Is she pregnant?" Chris replies, "No, we just feed her really well. She's a Northern Black Widow, very rare this far south. She was found in the owner's house last year."

Through another door is a cavernous indoor rainforest where the tilapia and plants are grown and harvested. Outside are many warm shallow pools crowded with alligators. (Sign: "People caught

2006 and living with a fellow Hollywood retiree that starred in *Dexter* and a series of Lubriderm commercials.

It's easy to spend a couple hours here, and they only close two days a year, Thanksgiving and Christmas. Now open daily from 9 to 5 (and to 6 p.m. when summer hours begin May 21), the \$15 adult admission helps support the multi-faceted ecological operation—remember, the outside view demonstrates that no one here is getting



Jaxson lived for 37 years in a custom backyard pen with pond, heated box, tortoises and cats in Van Nuys, in Los Angeles' San Fernando Valley, as Laura Mattson's beloved pet. Last year LA Animal Services arrived to investigate when neighbors suspected Jaxson of eating pet cats. Mattson insists Jaxson ate only raw chicken and hot dogs. Authorities sent Jaxson to a comfortable adoption at Colorado Gators, where the eight-foot gator gets the star treatment with his own press clippings.



Outdoor ponds are home to countless alligators of all sizes at Colorado Gators where underground geothermal wells provide abundant water at a constant temperature of 87 degrees, making for very happy alligators. After Erwin Young arrived in Alamosa with his family in 1977, he became intrigued with the area's underlying geothermal wells with 87-degree water. In 1980, the family bought 80 acres and established a tilapia farm, growing the popular food for sales to grocery wholesalers. Visitors see today's tilapia operation in an indoor rainforest. In 1987, the Youngs added alligators to dispose of dead fish and the remains of fish fillets.

throwing objects at the alligators will be asked to retrieve them.") Just beyond these pools and the parking lot is a wide blue aqueduct called Two Mile Creek, provided by the Youngs as a wildlife habitat and attractive picnic area for visitors.

Sharing one comfortable indoor pen are albino alligators Mr. Bo Mangles and his girlfriend Elvira. Sharing another are two former movie actors, including Morris the Alligator who starred in *Happy Gilmore*. He appeared in dozens of movies over his 30-year Hollywood career. Ten feet long and 500 pounds, Morris is now about 55 years old, retired at Colorado Gators since

rich. Besides, young and old pay far less—\$7.50 for ages 6-15 and 65-79, and free to those under age 6 or over age 79. Additional information is at [ColoradoGators.com](http://ColoradoGators.com) or (719) 378-2612.

As much as I liked Stumpy, the highlight for me was coming up to a pen holding "Valleygator." From LA's San Fernando Valley, it was Jaxson. As I read his press clippings from last year, I remembered his whole story. On Sylvan Street, "Everybody knew Jaxson," his owner's brother-in-law told the Los Angeles Times. As I pondered my dad's years on Sylvan Street, and my semester there, I photographed Jaxson. I swear he smiled at me. ▼

Read Tim's previous travelogue stories "Chasing Billy the Kid," "Exploring Bent's Fort," "Going Up the River — A first timer's experience of the Highway of the Legends" and the entire series "Exploring the San Luis Valley" that were first published in *The Chronicle-News* at the [chronicle-news.com](http://chronicle-news.com), or enjoy those and his other work and photography, at [TimKellerArts.com](http://TimKellerArts.com).