

Malano fills big shoes at RHS

By TIM KELLER
The Chronicle-News

When Justin Malano began his teaching career last fall at Raton High School, he took over the position of the very mentor who first inspired him. Trying to fill the shoes of RHS legend Dr. Ed Hockett was daunting but Malano has leaped in, body and soul.

"Señor" Hockett, popular RHS Spanish teacher for the past decade, surprised many by leaving for Trinidad High School last summer. Malano was hired to take over all four years of Spanish studies at RHS, inheriting the Spanish Club as well. After school, he took on the duties of football coach and middle-school basketball coach. Then, he volunteered to take over sponsorship of the National Honor Society chapter.

Born and raised in Raton, Malano graduated from RHS with the class of 2003, having no idea he'd ever return, much less as a Spanish teacher. "But Señor Hockett was just a great teacher," Malano recalls. "He helped me to gain a love of Spanish." Malano's grandparents spoke the language, and he found himself drawn to it. "When I got to Adams State College, I found Dr. Juan Gonzales to be just as enthusiastic and entertaining as Señor Hockett," Malano said. "I ended up adding a major in Spanish liberal arts on top of my exercise physiology

major."

After earning his bachelor's degrees at Adams State, he tried different things, including a three-month internship at a physical therapy clinic in Seville, Spain. When he heard that RHS was looking to replace Señor Hockett, Malano was detailing cars at Motor City in Colorado Springs. He applied for the Spanish teacher position - and got it.

"There are days when I absolutely love it," Malano says, "but for now, I think my age is too close to the kids - I'm only six years older than the seniors - so my biggest challenge is just gaining their respect, as a teacher." In fact, he's still working on his teaching certification, while simultaneously pursuing his master's degree in secondary education. "I'm learning a lot of these skills as I go," he says.

How does he handle four course preparations, six classes, coaching, two club sponsorships, and graduate school? "I work for my Spanish classes about six hours each weekend at home, and I get to school an hour early in the morning," he replies. Needless to say, it's a challenge.

"Going in, I knew I'd have to be well prepared and engage the students for a full hour. But I wasn't prepared for the sheer numbers of students and all the different personalities. Like most new teachers, I guess, my biggest challenge is classroom management."



Photo by Tim Keller

Raton High School's new Spanish teacher is getting used to being called Señor Malano.

Yet, despite the challenges, Malano is relaxed and affable around school. The students like him. And sometimes everything is just right.

He laughs as he recalls Señor Hockett's classes. "He'd always give you a high five if you got a right answer. If you got the

wrong answer, he gave you a high three. When it's working best for me, it's like that. When you're joking around and the kids are laughing and enjoying themselves, and they're actually learning the concepts of the lesson - at those times, I absolutely love my job."

Horse racing coming to Raton



Photo by Marty Mayfield

It's a cool, windy day but construction on the temporary Casino continues today in South Raton. It's a positive sign that progress is being made on bringing horse racing back to Raton.

County officials announce re-election bids

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with his experience he can help fight for Las Animas County taxpayer rights, as well as maintain the value of assessed valuations decreasing due to the slow down of the oil and gas industry. Espinoza added, "We were just notified that we could lose up to 17 percent of value which amounts to about \$22 million from our assessed evaluation. This could be a big hit but my department and other county assessors believe this is wrong and we are working hard to change it. I believe it is only around four percent and I am trying the fix the situation."

Sheriff Casias has been through a lot over the past year. He has overcome a number of very serious and life-threatening issues. He has worked hard to get his health up to par to get back to work and serve the people of this county. Casias is seeking to be re-elected to his third term.

"First I want to thank the citizens of Las Animas County," Casias said. "Being the incumbent, I believe I have the knowledge to serve you and remain the Sheriff of this great county."

Casias serves on many boards locally and at the state level that help adults and children.

His office networks with all law enforcement around the state of Colorado, including police, sheriff, and state agencies. His office continues to look for grants and monies that will improve the services his office provides.

Under his watch the sheriff's department had kept current with new technologies and the Justice Center is one of the top centers around, technology-wise.

Casias has served in law enforcement for 27 years and he believes he still has a lot to give back to Las Animas County.

Casias added, "I want to tell everyone thank you for all of your support over the years and for your prayers over the last year. I feel my experience and involvement locally and at the state level show my dedication to the office and is a key to being re-elected as your sheriff. I still have a lot to give and I hope the citizens of Las Animas County let me serve them again. I thank my Lord that I am here today, and that I am healthy again. I ask for your support and thank you for letting me serve our great county."

Bernard Gonzales, since his return from serving our country back in 1969, has served the county. For over 38 years, 15 as an employee and 24-plus years as the Las Animas County Clerk, Gonzales has worn many hats in the clerk's office including Clerk to the Board of County Commissioners, Chief Election Official and Head of Motor Vehicles. His office has also taken the responsibility of recording

deeds and maintaining marriage and liquor licenses.

Gonzales added, "Elections are always a challenge. I am fortunate to have a talented and hard-working staff. The clerk's office has been able to change with the time and upgrade to new technologies."

The Clerk's office, with Gonzales, has recently adapted to the new statewide voting system. They now use electronic filing on line, and they have installed a new credit card system that makes it easier on individuals with debit and credit cards to pay what they need to pay.

"Thanks to the voters of Las Animas County for your support," Gonzales said. "I ask for your support to continue serving you as your clerk. I have enjoyed being the clerk and I want to continue serving the citizens of Las Animas County. I have been honored to have served them. Thank you."

Raton Youth Theater to hold auditions

Special to the Chronicle-News

Auditions for the next production from the Raton Youth Theater are set for 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 21 at the Shuler Theater.

In "The Brothers Grimm Spectaculathon," the fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm are turned on their heads in this fast-paced, rollicking ride as two narrators and several actors attempt to combine all 209 stories ranging from classics like Snow White, Cinderella, and Hansel and Gretel to more bizarre, obscure stories like The Devil's Grandmother and The Girl

Without Hands.

Director Gail Willden says, "This play is a wild comedy with lots of audience participation and frankly, just madcap fun."

She is looking for children in grades 2nd through 12th who can have fun while working well with others. Rehearsals for this full-length comedy will be Mondays through Thursdays after school, and on a few Saturdays. The show will be March 5, 6, and 7. For information, please contact Bill Fegan at the Shuler at 445-4746.

Public meeting on south Raton interchange draws large crowd

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Several representatives from NMDOT and the contractor, Louis Berger Group, Inc. of Santa Fe, N.M., attended the initial meeting on Wednesday, beginning the process of gathering concerns, suggestions, and ideas from the public. The public input phase is expected to be completed by June, with the planning stage to follow.

Several large aerial photographs of the interchange and the surrounding land and buildings were placed throughout the entry room of city hall and the commission chambers in order for visitors to see the safety issues that have already been identified. Prior to the beginning of the meeting, several people in attendance had an opportunity to visit with members of NMDOT and the Louis Berger Group to ask questions and become more familiar with the proposed project.

During the meeting, Armando M. Armendariz P.E., Infrastructure Design - North Region, NMDOT, explained the process that would include the necessary environmental clearance, projected land use, and safety. Three possibilities for the interchange update are on the table: moving the interchange to Hereford Avenue, leaving it where it is, or going further south. NMDOT will take into consideration the environmental impact,

the cost, and the needs of the community. According to Mayor Joe Apache, that area of Raton is expected to see an increase in traffic because of the casino/racetrack that is currently under construction, and the projected residential growth.

Several key safety concerns at the 450 interchange have been identified by the NM DOT, some of which include the lack of merging lanes for entering and exiting the highway on both the south bound and north bound lanes, the sharp curves of the exits, and the poor visibility of oncoming traffic. The large amount of traffic on NM555, especially large trucks, and the need for better access to the Miners' Colfax Medical Center, as well as the need to make a quick turn from the north bound off ramp, were issues that were raised by those attending. The public is requested to send comments to Parametrix, Attn: Mariana Padilla, 8901 Adams Street, N.E., Suite D, Albuquerque, NM 87113, or contact the Parametrix information gathering group by phone (505) 821-4700, e-mail, mpadilla@parametrix.com, or fax, (505) 821-7131. More information is available online at <http://nmshtd.state.nm.us/main.asp?secid=11369>, District 4 listing.

School board discusses how best to govern

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Using this hybrid of policies has worked a lot better than policy governance over the past couple of years, board member Karen Montera said Tuesday night. Trinidad school boards were "running great" before policy governance came along, she added. Adopting and learning policy governance took lots of Fridays and Saturdays, sometimes until midnight, that amounted to about two years' time, she added. "We were spending too much time on policy governance rather than straightening out the problems in our district," Montera said.

Two different superintendents told the board that policy governance gave too much power to the superintendent and not enough to the board, she added.

About the guidelines, Tranter said, "We weren't using them in a meaningful way. We were using them to beat each other up."

Board member Vic Meyers agreed with Tranter, but added, "I don't believe in just setting policies aside when they're inconvenient."

Tranter added, "If you're not going to have them for the policy of governance, then why have them? We have not been governing by policy governance policy. This board has to decide if it wants to be in policy governance or not."

New board members Charlene Bertolino and Manuel Torres agreed to learn as much as possible about policy governance so that they could make more informed decisions on the policy at the board's next meeting, Jan. 26.

Former Raton chamber director appears in court

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expecting another child in six weeks. She also said that she currently is not working and receives about \$522 a month in food stamps. Wiseman told the court that she intends to look for a job soon after her baby is born.

Judge Walton asked Wiseman to bring in proof of her food stamps aid and that she would be mailed within the next two weeks the date for her next court appearance. The next step, Walton said, is to schedule a preliminary trial for her, during which the court would decide if there was enough evidence to pursue the case against her.

When asked in court Thursday, Wiseman said that she could not afford to hire an attorney. Walton then said that she automatically qualified for a public defender and would be assigned one, probably Ray Floersheim of Raton, who is next in the rotation. Walton said that Wiseman and her public defender would have the right to waive the preliminary trial, or go ahead and make the State prove probable cause.

Wiseman never was arrested and said she was never officially notified of Thursday's court date. She told the court that she learned of it after reading a newspaper story and then went online to verify that she was expected to appear

in court on Thursday.

With five spectators seated, Thursday's proceeding began with Walton playing a 10-minute video presentation on a large-screen television in the courtroom. In it, a judge and a defense attorney explain the defendant's rights and what the defendant should expect in his or her first appearance in court.

Following that, it took Walton at least twice that long to read through the charges against Wiseman and the possible penalties.

Each misdemeanor charge against Wiseman carries a fine of up to \$1,000 and up to 364 days in county jail.

Each third and fourth degree felony charge filed against her carries a fine of up to \$5,000 and up to three years (third degree) or up to 18 months (fourth degree) in the state penitentiary.

Charges of embezzlement against Wiseman include three third degree felonies, eight fourth degree felonies, three misdemeanors and one petty misdemeanor.

The remaining 21 charges are embezzlement, "or in the alternative," forgery, in which the State can charge either. Of these, 17 are either third or fourth degree felonies, and four are third degree felonies or misdemeanors.