

THE FALLOON POST



KEEPING YOU POSTED ON LOCAL NEWS

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\$2.00 | The Week of January 30, 2026

Bill and Korena Mewaldt Honored at Nevada Farmers Forum

By Rachel Dahl

Farmers whose work helped lay the foundation for organic certification, tribal food systems, and small-farm agriculture in Nevada were honored last week during the Nevada Farmers Forum, a two-day gathering focused on practical education and peer-to-peer learning.

The forum was hosted by the University of Nevada, Reno, on Friday and Saturday, Jan. 23-24, at the Joe Crowley Student Union on the UNR campus. Designed to bring together farmers, ranchers, and agricultural leaders from across the state, the event emphasized hands-on learning, networking, and strategies to strengthen small-farm agriculture in Nevada.

“Join Nevada’s farmers, ranchers, and agricultural leaders for two days of education and community building, by farmers for farmers,” the event description stated. “Discover practical methods and innovative strategies to strengthen small farm agriculture.”

A highlight of the forum was the recognition of several “founding farmers,” producers whose long-term contributions helped establish critical agricultural infrastructure in the state. Among those honored were Fallon-area farmers Bill and Korena Mewaldt, who were recognized for their early leadership in Nevada’s organic agriculture movement.



Gary Romano, Reggie Primo, Ray Johnson, Steve & Marcia Litsinger, Korena & Bill Mewaldt. Photo courtesy of Kelli Kelly.

According to forum organizer Ann Louella, the recognition focused on farmers who were instrumental in advancing organic certification in Nevada, including early legislative advocacy and collaboration with state agencies at a time when organic farming had little formal recognition.

[Farmer Forum continued on page 3]

Great Basin Bull Sale Week is Back Feb. 13-15

By Leanna Lehman

The Great Basin Bull Sale is back and shaping up to be one of the largest events to date. With buyers and sellers expected from across the West and more than 200 bulls consigned for sale, the event is poised to surpass last year’s million-dollar milestone.

Besides the sale, the family-friendly event offers a ranch rodeo, ranch bronc riding, a Joe Nichols concert, stock dog trials, a western market, a Bull Sale mixer, and the “Sophia Strong” benefit.

Held annually near Valentine’s Day, Fallon’s Bull Sale week is a premier event for the region’s cattle industry. In addition to Nevada ranchers, the event draws buyers and sellers from Northern California, Southern Oregon, Idaho, and Utah.

Now in its fourth year, the Great Basin Bull Sale continues Fallon’s tradition dating back to 1966. Lucy Rechel of Snyder Livestock and the Nevada Cattlemen’s Association managed it until



Eagle Bettis, one of the sale’s featured bulls, from 1-1 Farms. Photo courtesy of Great Basin Bull Sale.

2022, when Charlie Hone, Kris Gudel, and Dave Holden took over to continue the tradition.

Through the years, the Bull Sale, now a video sale, has drawn ranchers to Fallon to purchase high-quality bulls from breeders raising range cattle bred to withstand extreme conditions and rough terrain. According to Nevada cattleman Davy Stix, the bull sale has always involved

“sifting,” a process that eliminates bulls that fail to demonstrate range readiness. Armed with checkbooks, ranchers study each bull’s performance “resume,” looking for strong genetics to improve their herds’ overall health and longevity.

According to Rafter 3C Arena Operations Deputy Jesse Segura, this year’s sift includes 272 bulls, with at least 200 expected to make it to the ring — a significant increase from 63 in 2025. With record-high cattle prices and most bulls bringing more than \$6,700, the event is also likely to report record-high sales.

Last year, the Great Basin Bull Sale recorded \$1.2 million in sales. Segura also reported an overall economic impact of \$580,000 for Fallon, with 3,165 visitors attending. He said 1,000 of those visitors were from out of town, accounting for 791 overnight stays. With more sellers, buyers, and visitors expected this year, local businesses can look forward to a much-needed boost during the winter tourism slowdown.

Kicking off the event is Joe Nichols, live in

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THE FALON POST

The Week of January 30, 2026

FROM THE PUBLISHER

Captain's Log

First Things Last

By Rachel Dahl

I forgot to write the Captain's Log, and now here we are, everyone, waiting on me. Out of ideas and in a rush, and since my grown children and their spouses are all running at the mouth on the family group text this morning, I asked for ideas.

They jumped at the chance for input, and their thought processes are hilarious.

We went from families on vacation collecting fridge magnets to no kidding, the price of gold and silver. "I got a new shekel today. I'll send you guys pics later," reads one text bubble.

I have raised a whole passel of entrepreneurs, and they can't even have a conversation without discussing some sort of business idea. One daughter-in-law just got her certificate of ownership from the Secretary of State for her new business, and one son is currently filing paperwork to create his latest venture. The other son and wife just opened their new chiropractor practice last week and have been packed every day since seeing patients.

The son-in-law is very practical and suggested writing about the struggles of a small-business owner juggling time and money – my favorite topic and one that could take up this whole space.



And then the baby daughter, new to domestic bliss, and the best natural hustler in the group, suggested writing about, "the Super Bowl is on Valentine's Day next year. You could predict higher divorce rates for 2027 and be ahead of the times."

One is preparing for her midlife crisis, and of course, someone went from the price of gold and silver to tea in China. We knew that was coming.

So, while I get to enjoy one of the true joys in life, having grown children, you actually really like, and being a part of their cross-country, daily banter, I'll always be right here...

...Keeping you Posted.

—Rach

[Great Basin Bull Sale continued from page 1]

concert, Thursday night from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. The multi-platinum country star brings hits such as "Sunny and 75," "Gimme That Girl," and "Tequila Makes Her Clothes Fall Off" to Fallon for a night of country music. Tickets are \$65 for general admission, \$115 for floor access, or VIP tables are available for \$1,500. Doors open at 5 p.m.

A free admission Ranch Rodeo begins around 10 a.m. Friday, showcasing classic ranch rodeo events. A hot iron branding competition is set for around 3 p.m., followed by Ranch Bronc Riding. "The ranch rodeo is a qualifier for the Western States Ranch Rodeo Finals," said Segura, noting that several contestants are coming from out of state to participate. "It's 100% payback." The rodeo includes an added purse of \$500 in the women's events and \$1,500 in the men's events,

with \$2,000 added in Ranch Bronc Riding. Following the rodeo is a Bull Sale mixer and a no-host bar.

Saturday morning features stock dog trials from 8 – 11 a.m., followed by a complimentary registered buyers' luncheon, and the bull sale beginning at noon.

The "Sophia Strong" benefit takes place at noon. Proceeds help Sophia Behimer and her family with medical expenses. As part of the benefit, Tyson and Emily Torvik have donated a calf for auction.

Bulls will be available for viewing on Friday and Saturday, with the sale beginning at noon on Saturday. Check out the Great Basin Bull Sale week and experience one of Fallon's oldest and most beloved traditions.



PETS OF THE WEEK

Athena is Available for Adoption

Athena, a lively and intelligent dog with a knack for Houdini-like escapes, is now seeking her forever home. Known for her ability to scale 6-foot fences and climb trees with ease, Athena brings both adventure and loyalty to every day.

Despite her impressive skills, Athena's recall is described as "immaculate," making her a reliable companion for those ready to keep pace with her playful spirit. She rarely barks, is affectionate, and loves car rides and splashing in the water.

Athena has proven herself with livestock and gets along with other dogs, confidently setting boundaries when needed. Her intelligence and confidence shine through, making her a standout candidate for an active household.

The ideal adopter will appreciate Athena's adventurous nature and deep loyalty. She's best suited for families with older children who can match her energy and respect her boundaries.

For more information about Athena or to arrange a meeting, please contact the shelter directly.



City of Fallon Animal Shelter | 1255 Airport Rd, Fallon | 775-423-2282



Meet Max

Max is a 2-year-old, handsome brown tabby with a heart as soft as his fur. He adores being petted and enjoys the occasional playful moment, but his true talent is lounging like a cozy loaf and quietly exploring his kingdom (aka your home). Max is dreaming of a calm, peaceful household where he can share all his love and affection. He is fixed, vaccinated, microchipped, and fully ready to pack his tiny suitcase and come home with you.

Questions? Call 775-217-4745

Fallon Animal Welfare Group is a 501(c)(3) charity supporting the welfare of cats in Churchill County, Nevada.

FEATURES

Legal Intervention Filed to Protect Dixie Valley Toad

By Sydney Trainor and Riggan Stonebarger

On Jan. 13, 2026, the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Fallon Paiute Shoshone Tribe filed a legal intervention to protect Dixie Valley toads from a Nevada geothermal plant. The intervention asks the court to allow these groups to argue against a lawsuit brought by the geothermal company, Ormat, that would strip the toad of Endangered Species Act protections.

A legal intervention is a formal request by an outside party to join an ongoing lawsuit. The party must demonstrate that the court's decision could have a direct impact on its legally protected interests.

The Dixie Valley toad is found only in Dixie Meadows, a 760-acre wetland in Churchill County. It is unique for its complete adaptation to the warm geothermal springs of Dixie Meadows. According to U.S. Geological Survey studies, the toads actively seek out the warmest waters, particularly during breeding season in spring and during winter brumation, a hibernation-like state. While other western toads burrow underground to survive winter, Dixie Valley toads remain in the warm spring waters to avoid freezing.

In 2017, the Dixie Valley toad was one of the first new toad species to be discovered in the United States in nearly 50 years. At around 2.2 inches long, it is the smallest member of the western toad family. Unlike other species that breed in water and then move to dry land, the Dixie Valley toad is highly aquatic and rarely found more than 46 feet from water. In Dec. 2022, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) officially listed it as endangered.

During a May 2022 public hearing, Patrick



Dixie Valley Toad. Photo courtesy of the Center for Biological Diversity.

Donnelly of the Center for Biological Diversity argued that protecting the toad was about more than one species. According to Donnelly, "The Dixie Valley toad might just seem like a tiny little toad in a remote marsh somewhere, but it is a piece of Nevada's incredible biodiversity." In 2023, USFWS proposed designating approximately 930 acres in Dixie Meadows as critical habitat. About 63 percent sits on U.S. Navy land as part of Naval Air Station Fallon, with the rest in Bureau of Land Management territory.

In 2025, Ormat sued the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in an attempt to remove protections for the Dixie Valley Toads. If the recent court-approved intervention to protect this species is approved, the motion would allow the Center for

Biological Diversity and the Fallon Paiute Tribe to join the USFWS in defending Dixie Valley toads against the Ormat lawsuit.

"We've been standing with our tribal partners to fight for this toad for almost a decade," said Donnelly. "Ormat's cynical lawsuit flies in the face of established science and is based on flawed legal interpretations. We won't back down in our fight to save the Dixie Valley toad."

The Dixie Valley toad is found only in Dixie Meadows, a 760-acre wetland in Churchill County.

[Farmer forum continued from page 1]

"These farmers were among the first to step forward and push for systems that didn't yet exist," Louella said. "They helped build the framework that today's organic farmers rely on."

The forum was hosted by Grow Organic Nevada and supported through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Transition to Organic Partnership Program, part of the USDA Organic Transition Initiative administered by the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service National Organic Program. The event was also funded in part by California Certified Organic Farmers, reflecting the regional roots of early organic certification efforts.

In addition to the Mewaldts, other farmers recognized for their contributions to organic agriculture included Gary Romano of Sierra Valley Farms, Ray Johnson of Custom Gardens, and Steve and Marcia Litsinger of Churchill Butte Organics. Collectively, the group represents some of Nevada's earliest certified organic producers, many of whom worked directly with legislators to formalize organic standards statewide.

The forum also honored Reggie Primo, a Native American farmer from Owyhee, for his work expanding food production on tribal lands across Nevada. Primo was recognized for helping build hoop houses on reservations throughout the state, improving access to fresh food and



Photo courtesy of Korena Mewaldt.

strengthening local food systems in rural and tribal communities.

The two-day forum featured a structured schedule combining education and networking. Friday began with a welcome and opening ceremony in the early afternoon, followed by lectures and seminars focused on small-farm strategies. An evening social mixer at Liberty Food and Wine Exchange offered participants an opportunity to connect informally with fellow farmers and presenters.

Saturday's programming included additional sessions, lunch, and a keynote address by author and farmer Ben Hartman, who shared examples of successful farms from around the world

and discussed his "more with less" approach to agriculture. Sessions continued through the afternoon, rounding out two days of farmer-driven education.

Sponsoring organizations included the Nevada College of Agriculture, Biotechnology, and Natural Resources, the Great Basin Community Food Co-op, and the Local Food Group of Reno. UNR partnered with Holley Family Farm and the Desert Farming Initiative to make the forum possible.

Organizers said recognizing founding farmers was an important reminder that today's agricultural systems did not emerge by accident.

"These farmers don't just grow food," Louella said. "They built the groundwork that continues to support Nevada agriculture today."

Applications Now Open for Abbi Agency's "Do Good Stuff" Initiative

By Sydney Trainor

On January 26, The Abbi Agency announced that it is now accepting applications from nonprofit organizations for the 2026 Do Good Stuff marketing initiative. This annual program allows nonprofits based in Nevada, California, Montana, and New Mexico to apply for marketing assistance. Assistance may include public relations, social media strategy, creative services, website support, event marketing, and paid media. Applications are open until Feb 6, 2026.

The Do Good Stuff initiative was launched in 2008 and is part of The Abbi Agency's broader commitment as a certified B Corporation to support community-focused organizations through pro bono projects, nonprofit work, and charitable giving. The program is intended to help nonprofits expand their outreach and

better serve communities using professional marketing expertise.

"Since The Abbi Agency's infancy, we've wholeheartedly believed that marketing is a powerful tool to be used for good," stated Abbi Whitaker, co-founder and CEO of The Abbi Agency. "Do Good Stuff allows us to stand alongside organizations that change people's lives and inspire others to make a difference."

Selected nonprofits will work directly with the agency to tailor marketing services to their specific goals. Applicants can apply through The Abbi Agency's website by providing basic information about their organization, mission, and how pro bono marketing support would advance their work.

Alexis Keith, public relations account director and B Corp lead at The Abbi Agency, said, "Our Do Good Stuff pro bono partnerships are

some of the most important ways we put our values as a B Corp into action."

In 2025, four organizations were selected to receive pro bono services through the Do Good Stuff initiative, including The Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada, Spread the Word Nevada, LEAD with Horses, and the Karma Box Project. These organizations focus on areas surrounding tribal sovereignty and services, childhood literacy, equine-assisted therapy, and outreach to un-housed individuals across Northern Nevada.

According to Keith, "Through this program, we've partnered with numerous impact-driven organizations across a wide range of causes, and we're excited to continue building new relationships with nonprofits doing important work this year."

For more information about the Do Good Stuff initiative, or to apply, visit theabbiagency.com.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

It's Scholarship Application Time

Staff Report

Scholarship deadlines have been announced, including the Banner Churchill Community Hospital (BCCH) Auxiliary scholarships, for which applications are now available.

BCCH Auxiliary is offering medical scholarships ranging from \$500 to \$2,000 to full-time, hardworking Fallon residents who are currently enrolled in or have been accepted into a college or medical trade school.

Scholarships include the Mae Haden Memorial High School Applicant for potential college students, the Certificated Professional Applicant for CNAs, EMTs, medical technicians, and similar fields, and the College Student Applicant for existing college students. Applications are due by 4 p.m. Feb. 19, 2026.

Recipients must have a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.0 and provide documentation detailing their school or program. Scholarship funds are for college or medical trade school expenses. Applications became available Jan. 19, 2026, and must be returned no later than 4 p.m. Feb. 19, 2026. Both Auxiliary-run stores, Rainbow Treasures and Stuf n' Such, are open until 4 p.m. Applications will not be accepted after the deadline.

Applications will be reviewed by a panel of BCCH Auxiliary volunteers, with decisions made by April 3, 2026. Awardees will be notified by phone, text, or email.

Applications are available at the Rainbow Treasures Gift Shop in the Banner Churchill Community Hospital lobby, the Stuf n' Such Thrift Store at 99 S. Nevada Street, through high school or Western Nevada College counselors, or on the Auxiliary Facebook page. Completed applications may be returned to either store, emailed to thestore@ccomm.net, or mailed to: Banner Churchill Community Hospital Auxiliary, Attn: Scholarship Committee, P.O. Box 1707, Fallon, Nevada 89407.

Oasis Academy High School recently released information about upcoming scholarships and application deadlines for students. Several scholarships are also listed and available at Churchill County High School and are accessible to homeschooled students. "Be mindful of deadlines, especially for Nevada Fund Accounts," said Mr. Lenon, Oasis Academy Vice Principal for grades 7-12.

JANUARY & FEBRUARY DEADLINES

- Jan. 31: International Women's Day Scholarship
- Feb. 1: Alyce McCracken Memorial - Oasis General application, to be submitted to Mr. Lenon, National Gardens Club, application to be submitted online, RevPart STEM Scholarship - online.
- Feb. 11: Fisher House Scholarship - Online.
- Feb. 14: Foundation for Rural Services (CC com provider) - online.
- Feb. 15: Recorders Association of Nevada
- Feb. 17: McDonald's HACER Scholarship - online.
- Feb. 19: BCCHA Scholarship - Email to the listed address above or to your school.
- Feb. 20: Call To Action Scholarship - Online, Taryn Lenon Photography Scholarship
- Feb. 23: Don Campbell Memorial FFA Scholarship



- Feb. 25: Optimist of Reno Scholarship
- Feb. 28: WTA Foundation Scholarship, DeWalt Trade School Scholarship, Reno Rodeo Scholarship, all to be submitted online.

MARCH DEADLINES

- Mar. 1: Gemini Engineering Scholarship, AWS Welding Scholarship, Nevada ACTE Scholarship, American Agriculture Scholarship, all submitted online. UNR Fallon Alumni Scholarship.
- Mar. 7: Philanthropic Education Organization (PEO) Scholarship.
- Mar. 8: Fallon Rotary - Oasis General, submit to school with a 250-word essay.

- Mar. 9: Jiffy Lube Teen Driver Scholarship - online.
- Mar. 11: American Association of University Women.
- Mar. 12: Federal Employee Scholarship submitted - online.
- Mar. 13: Luther Hook Memorial Flight Scholarship.
- Mar. 15: GoSkills Scholarship - online.
- Mar. 15: Nevada Agricultural Foundation, Thurman Hiskett Memorial Scholarship, Oasis General, and Churchill County Arts Council.
- Mar. 20: Battle Born Keystones Scholarship. Mail in.
- Mar. 25: CC Communications. Submit to school or CC Communications.
- Mar. 26: Sara Swenson Performing Arts - Google Form/link
- Mar. 28: UNR Nahas Scholarship Endowment - Mail in.
- Mar. 29: Greater Nevada Credit Union - online.
- Mar. 31: Nevada Telecommunications Scholarship, L. Ron Hubbard Illustrator Scholarship, L. Ron Hubbard Writers Scholarship, Ray Roberts Baseball and Softball Scholarship, all to be submitted online.

APRIL DEADLINES

- Apr. 1: Churchill County Farm Bureau, Fallon Chamber of Commerce, Celeste Bass, Don Hardy Memorial Scholarship, Juanita Good Deeds Scholarship, Dave Fulston Scholarship, NHF Scholarship, Italian Catholic Federation Scholarship, Phil Pomeroy Trade School Scholarship, Fallon Free Masons Lodge 26, Fallon Free Masons Lodge 53.
- Apr. 1: Colvin Production Agriculture Scholarship - online.
- Apr. 2: Nevada Cattlemen's Association Marvel Andrade, Nevada Cattlemen's Association NCA, Nevada Cattlemen's Walt Leberski.
- Apr. 3: Jim Regan Scholarship. Submit to school or at the City of Fallon.
- Apr. 10: Daisy Moyle Memorial Scholarship.
- Apr. 13: Financial Horizons Scholarship, Future Fest Scholarship.
- Apr. 15: Fallon Golf Course Scholarship.
- Apr. 15: NVACD - Online Google form.
- Apr. 17: Dream it Be it Soroptimist Scholarship.
- Apr. 19: NVSM.
- Apr. 21: Soroptimists.
- Apr. 30: Nevada Independent Order of Oddfellows.
- Apr. 30: Agriculture Future Scholarship - online.

MAY DEADLINES

- May 1: Angus Foundation Scholarship - online.
- May 5-10: Luther Hook Flight Lesson Scholarship

MEETINGS
February 5 – March 19, 2026

Board of County Commissioners

Meets the first Thursday and third Wednesday of each month
155 N. Taylor Street
Next Meeting: Feb. 5 at 8:15 p.m.

Library Board of Trustees

Meets the third Thursday of each month at 3 p.m.
155 N. Taylor Street
Next Meeting: Feb. 26 at 3 p.m.



CC Communications

Meets the first Thursday of each month at 11 a.m.
155 N. Taylor Street
Next Meeting: Feb. 5, at 11 a.m.

Churchill County School Board

690 S. Maine Street
Next Meeting: Feb. 17, at 5:30 p.m.

Central NV Health District

155 N Taylor Street
Next meeting: March 19 at 1:30 p.m.



WATER LEVELS

Measurements Taken January 26, at 8 a.m.

Lahontan Reservoir	144,500 af
Carson River Below Lahontan	4.03 cfs
Truckee Canal at Wadsworth	474 cfs
Truckee Canal at Hazen	463 cfs
Carson River at Ft. Churchill	334 cfs

January 26, 2024 January 26, 2023 January 26, 2022

229,785 acre feet 100,086 acre feet 81,636 acre feet

Cfs - Cubic Feet per Second / Af - Acre Feet / TCID.org & [Water Data.USGS.gov](http://WaterData.USGS.gov)

SENIOR CENTER MENU

WILLIAM N. PENNINGTON LIFE CENTER 952 S. MAINE STREET, FALLOON, NV | 775-423-7096

Lunch Served Monday - Friday 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. | Lunch is \$6 for those under 60 and a suggested donation of \$3 for those 60 and older.

Monday, February 2

Shepherd's Pie
Baked Beans
Northwest Vegetable Blend
Bran Muffin

Tuesday, February 3

Chicken Tenders
Au Gratin Potatoes
Peas & Carrots
Diced Pears
Bread Pudding

Wednesday, February 4

BBQ Pulled Pork Sandwich
WW Bun
Apple Coleslaw
French Fries
Fruited Jell-O

Thursday, February 5

Chicken Fried Steak
Country Gravy
Whipped Potatoes
WW Roll
Green Beans
Chocolate Pudding

Friday, February 6

Lemon Baked Fish
Peas
Brown Rice
Tossed Salad
Seasonal Fruit

FALLOON DAILY BREAD

WOLF CENTER | 457 ESMERALDA AVE., FALLOON NV | 775-423-4714

Meals are served Mondays and Thursdays from 5 - 6 p.m. All meals are subject to change. All are welcome.

Monday, February 2

Sausage, Rice
Carrots & Onions

Thursday, February 5

Meatloaf
Potatoes & Veggies

Monday, February 9

Turkey Bacon Melt
Baked Potato & Veggies

Thursday, February 12

Neapolitan Baked Pasta
Salad & Dessert

Volunteer groups needed

to help serve once per month,
3 p.m. until 6:30 p.m.
Call for information.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Riggin Stonebarger Advances with Climate Change Speech

Staff Report

Riggin Stonebarger, a senior at Churchill County High School, won the first round of Fallon's local Lions Club Student Speaker Contest, held Thursday evening at Eagle's Hall. Stonebarger earned the \$75 top prize and will advance to the next round of competition scheduled for Feb. 18.

Five high school students participated in the contest, representing Churchill County High School and Oasis Academy. Contestants were required to deliver speeches of 5 to 10 minutes on climate change and global warming.

The annual student speakers contest aims to foster independent thinking and build public speaking confidence among youth. This year's topics challenged participants to address current and future global issues, encouraging research and personal perspectives.

In his speech, Stonebarger discussed long-term planning for irrigation schedules in the

Lahontan Valley, the local effects of human emissions on wildlife, and the impact of agricultural practices. He highlighted sources of greenhouse gas emissions in the region, including refuse burning, data center cooling ponds, and factories burning fossil fuels.

Stonebarger said educating the audience on complex topics was one of the most rewarding parts of the contest, noting that it allowed listeners to better understand and solidify their own views.

He credited his background in public speaking to extensive involvement in Future Farmers of America (FFA), particularly through judging activities. Stonebarger has also interned at Fallon Media Co. for the past nine months, focusing on local government and environmental reporting.

Following graduation, Stonebarger plans to pursue a Bachelor of Science in Accounting at a University of California campus and eventually attend law school,

with aspirations to become a crisis manager in political campaigns.



From left, Riggin Stonebarger (CCHS), Corie Kandee (Lions Club member), Brooklyn Dunlap, John Dunkin, Kamah Roose, and Keagan Coday (Oasis Academy). Photo courtesy Lucy Carnahan.

LES Honored for MTSS Efforts

Staff Report

Lahontan Elementary School is among the 73 schools across Nevada being recognized for their outstanding efforts in promoting student success, positive behavior, and inclusive practices through the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) during the 2024-2025 school year. Lahontan earned a gold rating for its commitment to proactive behavior support, data-based decision-making, and fostering an inclusive school culture. This achievement will be formally celebrated at the statewide conference in February 2026, where Lahontan Elementary and other honorees will be recognized for their dedication.

The MTSS recognition program underscores Nevada's ongoing efforts to support effective educational strategies and inclusive environments for all students.

Churchill County Launches Superintendent Search

By Sydney Trainor

Churchill County School District has begun its search for a new superintendent and is partnering with Modern Educate HR, an executive search firm specializing in educational leadership, to guide the process.

The district is seeking input from parents, staff, students ages 14 and up, and community partners through a stakeholder survey. The feedback gathered will help the Board of Trustees identify the qualities and priorities needed for the next superintendent. The survey closes Friday, Jan. 30.

More information is available at churchillesd.com. To participate in the survey, visit bit.ly/SuperintendentStakeholderSurvey2026.

Reviving RHAN: Call to Action

By Robin and Stefanie Moxley

Over the past few years, participation in the Reining Horse Association of Nevada (RHAN) has declined, making it increasingly challenging to keep the club active. That has been disappointing for many of us—RHAN has been a valued part of the Northern Nevada horse community for decades, and the shows were always fun, welcoming, and conveniently close to home. At the same time, we truly understand the time, effort, and dedication it takes to keep a club running, especially when participation drops.

To gauge interest and gather ideas for rejuvenating the club, we've scheduled an informal meeting for Thursday, Jan. 29, at 6 p.m., Jerry's Restaurant, 1801 W. Williams Ave., Fallon, NV 89406.

Churchill School District Seeks Volunteers for Life Skills Curriculum Review

Staff Report

Churchill County School District is inviting families, educators, and community members to participate in a voluntary Curriculum Review Committee focused on Life Skills classrooms.

The committee will review supplementary instructional materials and provide input to help ensure the curriculum best meets the needs of students with extensive support needs. Participants will view presentations from multiple curriculum vendors and have time to ask questions during each session. To ensure a thorough and informed review, volunteers are asked to commit to attending all scheduled meetings.

All meetings will be held at the District Office, second-floor training room, from 3:30 to 5 p.m. Meeting dates are Jan. 28, Feb. 4, Feb. 11, and Feb. 18, 2026. Professional development hours will be provided to educators who attend outside contract hours.

Those interested are asked to RSVP so the district can plan accordingly. For more information or to participate, contact Carissa Parsons at parsonsc@churchillesd.com or Shannon Urquhart at urquharts@churchillesd.com.

District officials said family and community involvement is an important part of the review process and thanked volunteers for supporting teachers, students, and families.



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Jan. 20 - March 10, 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

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Father-Daughter Dance

Churchill County High School

1 Greenwave Cir.

Jan. 31, 6 to 8 p.m.

Valentine Craft Fair

The Wolf Center

457 Esmeralda St.

Feb. 6 from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m.

and Feb. 7 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Lunchtime Book Club

Churchill County Library
553 S. Maine St.
Feb. 6 at 12:15 p.m.

Fallon Chamber Awards Dinner

Fallon Chamber of Commerce
100 Campus Way
Feb. 6 at 6 p.m.

Taylor Swift Eras Tour fundraiser, Class of 2026

Fallon Theatre
71 S. Maine St.
Feb. 7, 11 a.m. and 2:30 p.m.

Bad Art: Junk Journaling

Churchill County Library
553 S. Maine St.
Feb. 9 at 2:30 p.m.

Applied AI series

Churchill County Library
553 S. Maine St.
Feb. 17 at 6:30 p.m.

Joe Nichols

Rafter 3C Arena
325 Sheckler Road
Feb. 12 from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Valentine's Dinner

Fallon Golf Course
2655 Country Club Dr.
Feb. 14 from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Crafting for Adults

Churchill County Library
553 S. Maine St.
Feb. 19 and 21 at 4 p.m.

Author Talk: Jessica Rowe

Churchill County Library
553 S. Maine St.
Feb. 24 at 6 p.m.



COMMUNITY

Buchanan Nominated for National Honor

Theresa "Teri" Buchanan, longtime H&R Block owner in Fallon, is nominated for the 250 Women Who Shaped the Nation honor. File photo.

Staff Report

Theresa "Teri" Buchanan, longtime owner of H&R Block franchises in Fallon, has been nominated for recognition among the 250 Women Who Shaped the Nation for her decades of community service and leadership.

Buchanan, 79, is credited with helping strengthen Fallon's local economy and supporting families, small businesses, and community initiatives through her mentorship and charitable work. She is widely respected for her integrity, direct leadership style, and commitment to empowering others, notably assisting the Latino community with tax preparation and overcoming language barriers.

Known for her resilience and tireless work ethic, Buchanan's influence is felt across Fallon, where her dedication has uplifted individuals and fostered inclusivity. Her legacy includes guiding others to pursue their goals and investing in the growth and stability of the community she calls home.

Buchanan's nomination celebrates her courage, contributions, and enduring impact, reflecting the spirit of influential women who have shaped the United States over the past 250 years.

Where are They Now – Tony Vierra

By Sydney Trainor

Former Fallon police officer Sgt. Tony Vierra was recognized by the Ocean Shores Police Department with the Recreational Boating Safety Life Saving Award for his lifesaving actions and dedication to boating safety.

On Jan. 14, the department announced Vierra's award, which was presented after nominations by Police Chief Neccie Logan and Sgt. Daniel Fode. Vierra's recognition stems from several saltwater rescues he performed in 2025, as well as his continued efforts to strengthen the department's water rescue policies and training.

On April 3, 2025, Sgt. Vierra rescued a 61-year-old person on a jet ski who had become stranded on Protection Island after tides created a current that cut off access to the mainland. Following the incident, Sgt. Vierra started developing a new water rescue policy that allows Marine Patrol Officers, based on their training and experience, to use Ocean Shores Police vessels for saltwater rescues at the mouth of the Chehalis River.

On June 16, 2025, Sgt. Vierra responded to another saltwater rescue in the Oyhut Recreational Area, involving a 61-year-old kayaker, who began sinking due to a hole in his boat. Another rescue occurred on Aug. 11, 2025, when Ocean Shores police helped the Grays Harbor Sheriff's Office with reports of a missing 79-year-old kayaker. According to the report, a couple had been kayaking when the tide began pulling them out. While one kayaker made it back to Protection Island, currents prevented them from reaching the mainland, and they lost sight of their partner. Sgt. Vierra successfully rescued the stranded kayaker via jet ski, though the spouse could not be located at that time.

Along with rescues, Sgt. Vierra has also helped the department through his contributions to marine safety. He played an important role in helping the department acquire two water rescue drones. Also, Vierra is currently developing a joint police and fire training program to improve both freshwater and saltwater rescue capabilities.

According to the Ocean Shores Police Department, "For his lifesaving efforts, leadership, and dedication to boating safety and rescue preparedness, Sergeant Tony Vierra is truly deserving of the Recreational Boating Safety Life Saving Award."



Sgt. Tony Vierra receives the Recreational Boating Safety Life Saving Award for his lifesaving actions in Ocean Shores. Photo courtesy of Lance Lattin.

Oasis Academy Students Fundraise at Tree Lot

Laynee Diaz, Dahlila Creer, Rusty Diaz—holding the donation check—Olivia Kutansky, and Grace Laca. Photo courtesy of Oasis Academy.

By Carrie Sheldon

The Oasis Academy College Prep Class of 2026 participated in a unique community partnership this holiday season by helping sell Christmas trees at the D50 Custom Designs Christmas Tree Lot. The fundraising effort supported the class's first-ever Safe and Sober Grad Nite.

Seniors and their families volunteered their time to assist customers, sell trees, and help load purchases. In return, the senior class received a percentage of tree sales along with tips earned during the event.

The opportunity allowed students to gain hands-on experience working with a local business while developing communication and customer service skills as they helped community members select the perfect Christmas tree.

The Class of 2026 expressed sincere gratitude to Dan and Rusty Diaz, owners of D50 Custom Designs Christmas Tree Lot, for their generosity and support. The partnership resulted in a \$1,686.00 donation, bringing the senior class closer to hosting a safe, memorable graduation celebration.



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BUSINESS

Valentine's Dinner at Middlegate



Middlegate Station, a historic stop on U.S. Highway 50 in Nevada, will host a Valentine's Day dinner. Photo by Nancy Chapman.

By Nancy Chapman

Located in rural Nevada, Middlegate Station is a historic stop along U.S. Highway 50, often referred to as "The Loneliest Road in America." Established in the 1800s, it originally served as a stagecoach station and rest stop for travelers crossing the vast Nevada desert. Over the years, Middlegate has evolved into a beloved local restaurant and gathering place, known for its warm hospitality, unique atmosphere, and ties to the region's pioneer heritage.

Historic Middlegate Station will once again serve up a special Valentine's Day dinner, offering a choice of prime rib, rib steak, or Malibu chicken, accompanied by garlic mashed potatoes, spring salad, and chocolate mousse. Co-owners Travis Anderton and his mother, Carol-Lynn Dinus, said the regular menu will also be available throughout the day for those seeking other options.

The popular restaurant's bar will be open all day, and guests are welcome to stop in for breakfast and lunch prior to the evening's festivities. Anderton emphasized that no reservations will be taken on Valentine's Day, with dinner service beginning at 5 p.m. on a first-come, first-served basis.

Middlegate Station remains a favorite local spot for holiday gatherings, promising a warm atmosphere for both couples and families this Valentine's Day.

Ribbon Cutting Held for Station 50 Sip and Swirl



Front row, from left: Shania Brown, Fallon Chamber; Paul Harmon, City of Fallon; Councilwoman Kelly Frost, City of Fallon; Chief of Staff Bob Erickson, City of Fallon; Mayor Kenneth Tedford, City of Fallon; Addison Diaz, manager, Station 50 Sip and Swirl; Rusty Diaz, co-owner, Station 50 Sip and Swirl; Sarah Lee; Ryder Diaz; Jessica Diaz; and Piper Lee. Back row, from left: Dan Diaz, co-owner, Station 50 Sip and Swirl; Linda Rasmussen; Duane Davis; Ruby Davis; and Tomas Diaz. Photo by Nancy Chapman.

By Nancy Chapman

Station 50 Sip and Swirl, a family-owned drink and dessert shop, officially opened its doors with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Wednesday, January 21, attended by city officials, community members, and the Diaz family, owners of the new business.

The event drew local leaders, including Fallon Mayor Kenneth Tedford, Chief of Staff Bob Erickson, Councilwoman Kelly Frost, and representatives from the Fallon Chamber.

The Diaz family, co-owners Rusty and Dan Diaz, manager Addison Diaz, and other relatives, welcomed guests and introduced the shop's offerings, which include customizable soft drinks, teas, coffees, and a variety of pastries and muffins.

Station 50 Sip and Swirl sets itself apart with a menu boasting 30 flavors that can be mixed into drinks, available in cream base, Red Bull, or club soda. The shop also serves vanilla and chocolate ice cream from a machine originally used at Bob's Root Beer Drive-In, connecting the business to local tradition.

The name "Station 50 Sip and Swirl" reflects the family's deep roots in Fallon: Dan Diaz serves at Federal Fire at NAS Fallon and volunteers with the Fallon Churchill Fire Department, while "50" is part of their D-50 Honey Ranch brand.

Rusty Diaz, who counts Dr. Pepper with a splash of lavender and blackberry among her favorite drink combinations, wanted the business to reflect both his personal and professional life. The shop's atmosphere is welcoming, with Addison Diaz greeting customers with a smile and helping newcomers design their perfect beverage.



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LOCAL GOVERNMENT

County Commission Meeting Wrap Up

By Sydney Trainor

On Jan. 21, 2026, the Churchill County Commissioners received updates from various departments, including the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the Fallon Range Training Complex, and more. They approved the previous meeting minutes and had no public comment.

BLM representatives reported limited progress on several items, including the Sand Canyon Road realignment, which is awaiting a county-Navy maintenance agreement. Updates were also given on grazing permit negotiations, Section 2907 land conveyances, prescribed grazing projects for wildfire mitigation, and the recently signed Record of Decision for the sage-grouse land use plan amendment.

Other reports covered wild horse and burro management, geothermal and mineral exploration projects, and other infrastructure efforts, many of which had no significant changes since

the previous meeting. As a result, commissioners agreed to shift BLM updates from monthly to quarterly.

Next, commissioners heard from Vietnam combat veteran Stuart Cook. Cook requested \$750 for a Vietnam Veterans Day event on March 29 to recognize Vietnam veterans and local fallen service members. The event will be expanded from last year's event, with plans including a flyover, a ceremony, and education outreach. Funding was approved unanimously.

Commissioners also got an update on the Fallon Range Training Complex. They reviewed B16, B17, and B20 range expansions, as well as road development, grazing and mining negotiations, and long-term timelines. This was an informational update only, with no formal action taken.

The board also adopted several resolutions. This included Resolution 1-2026, which authorized the Churchill County Clerk-Treasurer to sell properties held in trust due to unpaid property

taxes. Resolution 2-2026 was also approved, establishing updated travel expense and allowance policies for Churchill County employees. This set the mileage reimbursement rate at 72.5 cents per mile, while the county's per diem rate was set to \$68 per day.

Commissioners reappointed Bob Getto, Tom Riggins, and Alan Kalt to serve as members of the Churchill County Board of Equalization. They also approved a Fleet Service Vehicle Replacement Policy to guide planning and budgeting for future county vehicle replacements.

For the Planning Department, the board approved recruitment for a planning technician, associate planner, and senior planner. Commissioners agreed that the county could either hire two associate planners or a combination of an associate planner and a senior planner, depending on availability.

The next Churchill County Commission meeting will be held on Feb. 5, at 8:15 a.m.

Fallon Range Training Complex Update



NAS Fallon pilots fly over B17 Range. Photo courtesy of U.S. Navy.

By Sydney Trainor

An update on the Fallon Range Training Complex (FRTC) was provided during the recent Churchill County Commissioners' meeting Jan. 12. The updates focused on range expansions, road relocations, land acquisitions, and agreements. Ongoing negotiations on grazing and mining were discussed, along with progress reports on

Sand Canyon Road, Lone Tree Road, State Route 361, and Pole Line Road.

The B16 Range lies in the Sand Canyon Area. For this project, grazing permit negotiations remain unresolved, with offers made but no finalized agreements. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Sand Canyon Road clarified that the Navy would be responsible for maintenance and liability for the road, while the county

would maintain right-of-way access.

Fencing and gates along Sand Canyon Road are being repaired, and the Navy has agreed to keep the gate open. Staff clarified that under the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), area B16 remains open to the public until Sand Canyon Road is fully completed and all legal requirements are met. Requirements include completing roads, providing grazing compensation, making mining payments, and more. The county is also planning to install educational signage and maps to clarify public access.

The B17 Range, which falls under the Gabbs and State Route 361 Area, is also undergoing expansion. The Navy is currently working on private land acquisitions and has sent out letters notifying landowners of two-year grazing permits. These letters will start the process for grazing compensation negotiations. Mining claim payments are also being discussed, and negotiations are ongoing.

State Route 361 currently passes through the expansion area for the B17 range. The Nevada Department of Transportation has analyzed this issue and selected a preferred relocation route. This will involve about 13-17 miles of highway and is expected to be a significant long-term process.

The B20 range lies within the Pole Line Road area. For this expansion, the Navy must acquire 62,000 acres of private land. Negotiations on grazing permits and discussions on mining compensation have not started yet.

Along with these project updates, an MOU with the Department of the Interior was received. The MOU outlines how the county and federal agencies will work together to address checkerboard landownership, in which public and private lands are mixed. This outlines each party's responsibilities and the role of private landowners in the process. The agreement still needs to be reviewed before it is finalized.

Nevada Vested Water Rights Must Now Be Claimed

By Sydney Trainor

On Jan. 9, 2026, the Central Nevada Water Authority board held a meeting to discuss claims of vested water rights. Jeff Fontaine, staff representative for Central Nevada Regional Water Authority, presented new state law requirements for formally claiming vested water rights.

According to Fontaine, vested water rights are "rights for water that were put to beneficial use or were used prior to the enactment of water laws in the state of Nevada." In Nevada, laws were enacted in 1905 for springs and streams, in 1913 for artesian wells, and in 1939 for all groundwater.

A change in state law now requires these vested water rights to be formally claimed, rather than relying solely on historic or assumed use. If a claim is not filed, the right can be challenged, lose priority, or potentially be lost altogether.

According to information found in the background materials provided with agenda documents, "Any claimant of a pre-statutory water right must submit proof of the water use to the Nevada State Engineer on or before December 31, 2027, pursuant to NRS 533.087. If a claimant fails to submit such proof by the deadline, the claim is deemed abandoned."

Additionally, the background information said that "Domestic wells used for household purposes are exempt from many water right requirements under Nevada law. Proof of Appropriation for domestic wells will not be required unless specifically requested by the Nevada Division of Water Resources."

Claims must document location, source of water, type of usage, and proof that the usage existed before laws were made. Fontaine suggested filing claims sooner rather than later to avoid a possible rush before the deadline, saying, "There are lots of opportunities for participation if you file the vested claim to make your voice known."



Lahontan Reservoir, 2023. Photo by Leanna Lehman.

Claims must document location, source of water, type of usage, and proof that the usage existed before laws were made.

COURT

Tenth Judicial District Court

The Tenth Judicial District Court convened Tuesday, Jan. 20, with Judge Thomas Stockard presiding.

By Teresa Moon

Stephanie Torres Herrera, after pleading guilty on Nov. 18, 2025, appeared for sentencing on Possession of a Controlled Substance (methamphetamine), a Category E felony, punishable by 1-4 years in prison, in which probation is common in first and second offenses.

Churchill County Public Defender Jacob Sommer told the court that Herrera's plea did not mandate probation due to her criminal history. He asked Judge Stockard to consider placing Herrera in the Western Nevada Regional Drug Court as a condition of probation, noting that her acknowledgment of needing additional tools, counseling, and support amounted to informed consent.

Herrera told Judge Stockard, "I'm doing good so far. It's just that I don't trust that I can keep going without ... drug court, on my sobriety."

Judge Stockard told Herrera it was appropriate that she was honestly assessing where she stood, noting that based on her criminal history, the case could easily have resulted in a prison sentence.

Stockard granted Herrera probation on a suspended 19-48-month sentence, ordered her to obtain and follow the recommendations of a substance abuse evaluation, and placed her in Drug Court.

Gabriel Otto Marckstadt appeared for sentencing on the Category C felony of Battery Causing Substantial Bodily Harm, punishable by 1-5 years in prison, to which he pleaded guilty on Nov. 18. According to court records, Marckstadt punched and kicked another person in the jaw, causing prolonged pain.

Churchill County Alternate Public Defender Wright Noel told the court that Marckstadt turned himself in to the Churchill County Sheriff's Office following the incident and has fully accepted responsibility. He said his client understands that this offense was serious and recognized the gravity of his actions.

Noel asked the court to consider probation with a substantial underlying sentence, noting that Marckstadt's substance abuse evaluation recommended outpatient counseling, that he has remained sober since the incident, and that he is in a better place than he was at the time of the offense.

Marckstadt addressed the court, stating, "I'm very sorry for how I acted that night and for what I did. Like my lawyer said, if I could go back and do it all over again, I would." He added, "I would like to take this chance to apologize to the victim and I'm deeply sorry for what I did that night."

A victim impact statement was read in which the victim described ongoing physical and emotional effects from the assault. "First and foremost, the things I never used to have to think about — chewing, showering, talking — have become a daily struggle," the victim said. He stated that he no longer eats in public, avoids conversation, and experiences severe pain with basic movements. "Yawning is incredibly painful," he said, adding that any movement stretching his face causes shooting pain.

"But none of that is comparative to how it has



affected my family," he continued, remarking that hugging and kissing his wife is now painful, "even if there was no pain, my lips are numb. Imagine spending the rest of your life not being able to enjoy kissing your spouse."

The victim also said his family lives in constant fear that Marckstadt could return while he is at work, noting the toll on his wife's mental health and the financial strain. "And finally, missing out on holidays," he said. "Imagine not being able to eat with your family on Thanksgiving and Christmas. And all because I decided to try and help somebody."

Judge Stockard granted Marckstadt probation on a suspended 24-60-month prison sentence and ordered him to obtain and follow the recommendations of a substance abuse evaluation.

Brett Jesse Michael Fearn appeared for sentencing on charges of Assault with a Deadly Weapon, a Category B felony punishable by 1-6 years, and two gross misdemeanors: Injuring or Tampering with a Vehicle and Injury to Another's Property, all to which Fearn pleaded guilty on Nov. 18.

Senior Deputy District Attorney Chelsea Sanford reported that Fearn brought a \$1,000 cashier's check toward restitution. As a result, sentencing proceeded on Count III, Injury to Another's Property, with sentencing on Counts I and II continued for one year pursuant to the plea agreement.

Sanford said that Fearn was 18 years old at the time of the offense. "Yes, this defendant is young," she said, noting that his age, naivete, and influences in his life contributed to the situation. Referring to statements made by Fearn in the Pre-Sentence Investigation (PSI), Sanford told the court, "This defendant thinks he's Batman," adding that he is not.

"At 5 a.m. an elderly man ... hears aggressive knocks at the front door," Sanford continued, explaining that the man's son also heard the knocking. She said the door was splintered, the defendant was angry and holding a knife, but "when push comes to shove," he dropped the knife and ran away.

According to Sanford, Fearn was identified through a neighbor's Ring camera. She said he

initially denied involvement but later admitted his actions, claiming he was justified because he believed he needed to teach the victim a lesson. Sanford described the incident as "an ugly situation that this defendant created," also reporting Fearn had slashed the victim's vehicle tires before damaging the door.

CCPD Jacob Sommer acknowledges that "Mr. Fearn has done some ill-advised things and ... said some ill-advised things." However, he has also shown recognition that the behavior was inappropriate and compromised public safety. Sommer asked Judge Stockard to follow the joint recommendation of the plea agreement, stating, "Mr. Fearn has a lot of things to do to prove that he is going to grow and move on from this; and I believe that he will do that as the next year, and the next two, unfold as he complies with this agreement."

Fearn addressed the court, stating, "I regret everything I done that night. If I could go back and change it, I absolutely would, 110% ... I'm sorry for the victims."

Judge Stockard told Fearn, "I'm worried about you. You're a young man that ... thinks that everything that goes wrong is someone else's fault." Stockard described the plea as "one heck of a deal," stating that Fearn's conduct was "outrageous, and prison worthy," but also acknowledged, "You did come up with \$1,000 today. That's impressive."

On the gross misdemeanor count of Injury to Another's Property, Judge Stockard granted Fearn probation on a suspended 364-day jail sentence and ordered restitution of \$1,915.76, with monthly payments of \$100 or more. Stockard also ordered Fearn to complete his high school diploma or GED by August, have no contact with the victim or the victim's father, and to obtain full-time employment by Feb. 1. If Fearn fails to get a job, he must complete 40 hours of community service for each month he is unemployed, beginning March 1. Sentencing on the felony and remaining misdemeanor count was continued to Feb. 16, 2027.

Heidi Kelley's sentencing was continued to Feb. 10.

Fallon Man Intends to Fight Lewdness Charges

By Leanna Lehman

Felipe Antonio Rodriguez-Martinez, in custody, appeared in Fallon's New River Township Justice Court before Judge Benjamin Trotter on January 15, 2026. Rodriguez-Martinez was arraigned on four counts, including Lewdness with a Child Under 14, a Category A Felony punishable by life in prison with parole eligibility after 10 years, and three counts of Lewdness with a Child Under 16, Category B Felonies, each punishable by 1-10 years. If convicted, Rodriguez-Martinez would be subject to lifetime supervision and sex offender registration.

An arrest warrant was issued on January 14, with Rodriguez-Martinez charged and arraigned the following day. Bail was set at \$450,000.

According to the Criminal Complaint, Count I alleges that on or about Oct. 23, 2024, Rodriguez-Martinez engaged in lewd or lascivious acts not constituting sexual assault with a victim who was 13 years old at the time.

Count II alleges that between Nov. 27 and Nov. 28, 2024, Rodriguez-Martinez committed similar acts with a 14-year-old victim. Counts III-IV allege the same, which were said to have occurred on Jan. 17, 2025, and between Feb. 1 and Feb. 28, 2025.

During the Jan. 15 arraignment, Rodriguez-Martinez appeared without official counsel. Churchill County Public Defender Jacob Sommer was on hand to advise, assisted by court interpreter Maria Davis. Rodriguez-Martinez stated



Felipe Rodriguez-Martinez. Photo courtesy of Churchill County Sheriff's Office.

he understood the charges against him and chose not to waive his right to a preliminary hearing within 15 days. He also told the court he intended to fight all charges.

Judge Trotter found him public defender eligible and assigned the Churchill County Public

Defender's Office to represent him. Sommer said that Rodriguez-Martinez scored a zero on the risk assessment conducted by Churchill County Court Services and requested that he be released on his own recognizance (OR).

Senior Deputy District Attorney Chelsea Sanford opposed an OR release, stating that the nature of the crime itself presented a risk to the community and children.

Rodriguez-Martinez agreed to appear for all court hearings. Judge Trotter granted his release, subject to the conditions that he have no contact with the victim, no missed court appearances, weekly contact with counsel, and no new criminal violations. Should Rodriguez-Martinez violate these conditions, he will be returned to custody and face a cash-only bail of \$450,000.

Sanford clarified for the record that Rodriguez-Martinez would not be subject to Court Services supervision, which the court confirmed.

On Jan. 22, Rodriguez-Martinez appeared for a status hearing, represented by Churchill County Alternate Public Defender Wright Noel, at which time Noel indicated a conflict of interest and the need for another attorney to be appointed. Rodriguez-Martinez, who will be assigned another attorney, again maintained that he does not want to waive his right to a preliminary hearing within 15 days.

A status hearing was set for Feb. 5, 2026.

EDUCATION

Bighorn Bulletin

By Angela Viera, with photos courtesy of Oasis Academy.

SENIOR SPOTLIGHT: NATALIA MARTINEZ DE LA CRUZ



Natalia Martinez de la Cruz's journey at Oasis Academy began in third grade and has been shaped by friendship, growth, and meaningful connections. She describes her senior class as a uniquely supportive and close-knit group, saying, "From the time I entered Oasis to now, my entire class has felt like one big group of friends...a very loving, goofy, caring group of kids."

Looking back, it's the simple moments with classmates and teachers that stand out. Among her favorite memories are the freshman-year lunches spent laughing and sharing food around the picnic tables with friends.

Natalia also cherished her classes with Mr. David Springfield, calling him an "amazing teacher/mentor" who always brought laughter and support, even as she moved on to college coursework.

She credits many mentors at Oasis for their positive influence, including Mrs. Berenice de Leon, Mrs. Meg Antoniono, Mrs. Shayna Byrd, and Mr. Jose Ramirez. Mrs. de Leon, her aunt, helped her discover a love for reading. Mrs. Antoniono and Mrs. Byrd provided comfort and a welcoming classroom whenever needed. Mr. Ramirez, whose Spanish class was always a safe and welcoming space, was a source of both humor and understanding throughout her school years.

Natalia shared that Mr. Ramirez always opened his classroom to her, making her feel understood and supported, even when she was not officially in his class.

Outside the classroom, Natalia participated in volleyball her freshman year, served on Student Council for two years, and dedicated herself to Ballet Folklórico throughout her school years. Her instructor, Elizabeth Medina Palacios, helped her grow through dance and instilled life lessons.

Natalia is deeply grateful to her parents for their unwavering support and involvement—attending every event and providing encouragement throughout her education. She said, "A mis padres - los quiero mucho y les agradezco todo lo que han hecho por mí. Gracias por enseñarme que todo es posible con Dios a mi lado." She translated, "To my parents - I love them very much, and I thank them for everything they have done for me. Thank you for teaching me that anything is possible with God by my side."

After graduating in May with both her high school diploma and an Associate of Arts from Western Nevada College, Natalia plans to move to Reno

with her older brother. There, she will attend the University of Nevada, Reno, in Fall 2026 to pursue a bachelor's degree in Primary Education.

Natalia offers advice to future students: "First, don't let school consume you. Enjoy your time with your friends, family, activities, and sports, because once you graduate, you'll either be thankful for the memories or regret not participating more."

"Second, throughout school, there will be drama and opinions about you. It's important to learn that you decide whether those opinions shape who you are, how you think, what you do, and who you become."

SAVE THE DATE: EXCITING SCHOOL EVENTS AHEAD

Families are encouraged to mark their calendars for a series of engaging school events coming up this spring. Students will kick things off with the National History Day Showcase on February 5, followed by K-6 Math Night on February 10, an evening of hands-on learning and problem-solving fun. Literacy takes center stage at Literacy Night on March 3, and budding scientists will shine during the Science Fair on March 11. Community fun continues with Movie Night! on April 9, and the season wraps up with Future Fest on April 17, a dinner to raise money for Oasis Academy STEAM programs.

Please remember to check the school website regularly for event details, times, and any updates, or contact the school with any questions at 775-423-5437.

WINTERFEST WEEK CELEBRATED AT HIGH SCHOOL

The high school student council wrapped up the fall semester on a sweet note by hosting Winterfest, a weeklong celebration that brought school spirit, creativity, and Candyland-themed fun to the halls and dance.

Throughout the week, students participated in themed spirit days. Festivities kicked off with Crazy Sweater Day, followed by Tutu Tuesday, then Winter Wonderland Wednesday, and finished with Candyland Character Day, where students dressed as their favorite characters inspired by the classic board game. The week concluded with the annual Winterfest Dance.

"Spirit days and weeks are a great way to promote school spirit and community because everyone can participate," said Eric Grimes, Academic Advisor and Student Counselor Advisor. "This year's Winterfest dance was great, and the students really enjoyed the theme. We had incredible support from students and parents, which is great for the student community. We especially want to thank Elizabeth Medina for helping the Candyland theme come to life even more with her decorations."

CCSD Cool School News

Compiled by Kaitlin Ritchie with photos courtesy of CCSD.

CCHS

Students in Jaime Sammons' Plant Science program are taking the lead in transforming the campus front entrance into an interactive, welcoming green space that reflects Greenwave pride and Fallon roots. The students are designing and creating a new landscape that will enhance curb appeal while providing a space for students, staff, and visitors to enjoy. The project features Nevada-adapted plants, interactive elements, and thoughtful design that is both functional and visually engaging. It is student-driven and intentionally reflects the school, the community, and the learning happening in classrooms every day. Work began over Winter Break with site preparation and will continue throughout the school year. Last week, Plant Science students met with Aaron Holt's Game Development class to collaborate on design and planning, combining plant science, creativity, and technology. This partnership highlights strong cross-curricular connections and provides students with experience applying classroom learning to a real-world project. The front entrance transformation demonstrates student leadership, teamwork, creativity, and problem-solving, offering a lasting impact on the campus and a powerful example of Career and Technical Education in action.

CCMS

The CCMS Hope Squad recently welcomed members of the CCHS Hope Squad to the Gerka Café for an afternoon of collaboration. High school students mentored younger leaders through real-world scenarios, inspiring growth and connection. The CCHS members were impressed by the CCMS squad's understanding of their mission and commitment to supporting peers. The program is already making an impact, with students reaching out to members they do not know personally, showing that the Hope Squad is becoming a visible source of support on the CCMS campus.

NUMA

Last week, Aspen Johnson's students conducted an exciting experiment exploring chemical reactions. The class tested two unknown substances with vinegar, making careful observations and measurements to determine whether mixing them created a new material. Not only did this experiment meet key science standards, but students were very enthusiastic about the observations they made. "It was cool, and I liked the reactions it made," student Burrell Wood said. Another student, Raegan

Amerine, shared that her favorite part was the sizzling sound and the reaction itself. "Overall, my whole class enjoyed this experiment, and they are all ready to learn more about reactions this upcoming semester," Johnson said.

E.C. BEST

Students in Lynnel Campos' class are exploring 2D shapes, from circles and rectangles to hexagons and diamonds, as part of a hands-on math unit. Children are learning to spot these shapes in everyday surroundings, count sides and corners, and identify angles. The class is also experimenting with combining basic shapes to construct larger figures, bringing geometry to life in practical lessons.

LAHONTAN

Julieann Chappell's students reviewed suffixes last week using the Tribes strategies Milling to Music and Give One, Get One. These interactive activities allowed students to move around, share ideas, and practice together in an engaging way. The lesson combined teamwork with learning, making the review both fun and memorable for the class.

Veritas Preparatory School: Classical and Christian

By Gretchen Feltz with photos courtesy of Veritas.

This past week, Veritas students participated in the school's annual schoolwide Spelling Bee, showcasing their hard work, focus, and love of language. Each class competed within its grade level in a spirited contest of vowels and consonants, advancing through multiple rounds of increasingly challenging words tailored to their grade level.

To emerge victoriously, students had to spell each word correctly under pressure. Finalists were then required to spell an additional word accurately to secure their place among the school's top spellers and earn a spot in Veritas' spelling history.

The Spelling Bee reflects Veritas's strong emphasis on the literary arts. As a classical Christian school, Veritas prioritizes reading, grammar, and language as essential tools for learning and understanding the world.

"Language is critical to our ability to think, reason, and understand God," said Headmaster Jill Rosario. "Reading and comprehension are essential skills, and our curriculum decisions at Veritas reflect our commitment to excellence in language education."

At Veritas, students begin studying Latin before fifth grade. Latin serves as a foundational language for many Western languages and provides important insight into the roots of English vocabulary. Students also begin learning cursive handwriting in second grade, with assignments requiring completion in cursive by third grade. Even kindergarten students take part in building these early language skills.

"Our winning word in kindergarten was 'crust,'" said kindergarten teacher Ms. Kelsey. "The students did an excellent job and have really demonstrated strong language development since the beginning of the year."



Kindergarten Spelling Bee winners, from left: Finley Lengyel (1st), Sutton Hammond (3rd), and Caroline Miller (2nd), celebrate their achievements at Veritas School.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OUR SPELLING BEE WINNERS:

Kindergarten: 1st - Finley Lengyel, 2nd - Caroline Miller,

3rd - Sutton Hammond

1st Grade: 1st - Lily Ernst, 2nd - James Bice, 3rd - Chase Holtmeyer

2nd Grade: 1st - Audrey Schilling, 2nd - Kinsley Babiarz,

3rd - James Holtmeyer

3rd-4th Grade: 1st - Luca Draper, 2nd - Trent Hallisey, 3rd - Royal Mora

5th-6th Grade: 1st - Mercedes Martinez, 2nd - Maverik Martinez,

3rd - Madeleine LaValley

7th-8th Grade: 1st - Anthony Meleen, 2nd - Adam Mikulak,

3rd - Kian Green

SPORTS

CCHS Wrestlers of the Week



Braylon Byrd. Photos by Sue Segura.



Cooper Gubler.



Owen Holcomb.



Alijah Juarez.



Carson Melandy.

Staff Report

Churchill County High School has named several members of its wrestling team as this week's standout athletes in recognition of their exceptional performances and dedication during the 2025-2026 season.

Selected as "Wrestlers of the Week," these student-athletes are being honored for their achievements, sportsmanship, and commitment, both on and off the mat, at recent tournaments held in Nevada and California.

Churchill County High School recognized

Alijah Juárez for his performance at the Sierra Nevada Classic, Cooper Gubler at the Sparks Invitational, Owen Holcomb at the Kiwanis Spring Creek Tournament, Brayton Byrd at the Douglas Invitational, and Carson Melandy at the Morro Bay Tournament as its Wrestlers of the Week.

Each athlete demonstrated pride, determination, and integrity as they represented Churchill County High School against tough regional and out-of-state opponents.

The wrestling program also extended a special thank you to the Gubler family of Fallon for

purchasing team T-shirts. Their ongoing support has played a significant role in encouraging and uplifting student-athletes throughout the season.

As the season progresses, the Churchill County High School wrestling team is gearing up for the Regional Duals and the State Wrestling Tournament, set for Feb. 13-14. The Greenwave wrestlers remain focused, motivated, and committed to finishing the season on a high note.

Congratulations to the Wrestlers of the Week. Best of luck to the entire CCHS wrestling program as they move into postseason competition. Go Greenwave!



Lady Greenwave girls' varsity player Kortnie Simper, shoots from the court.



Greenwave boys' varsity player Calin Anderson with a beautiful layup from behind the basket.

Greenwave Splits Senior Day Games

Story and photos by John Baker

The Churchill County High School Greenwave celebrated Senior Day on Saturday, Jan. 24, with a slate of basketball games against Dayton High School. The festivities began with the junior varsity girls, who overcame a slow start to defeat Dayton 52-32. The junior varsity boys followed with a hard-fought contest, ultimately securing a 49-40 win for the Greenwave.

Prior to the girls' varsity matchup, the Greenwave honored its senior athletes and dance team members. The Lady Wave wasted little time asserting itself, jumping out to a 22-4 lead after one quarter and holding the Lady Dust Devils scoreless in the second. Churchill led 41-4 at the half and, aided by a running clock, cruised to a 51-7 victory.

The boys' varsity also recognized its seniors before tipoff, but momentum was fleeting as Churchill clung to a 32-31 edge at halftime. Dayton regrouped after the break, and the Greenwave struggled to find their rhythm, falling 77-68 to the Dust Devils in the day's finale.

Oasis Sports



Jackson Snow leaps for ball during Oasis game. Photo by Taryn Lenon Photography.



7th and 8th-grade girls' volleyball teams pose for a photo. Photo courtesy of Oasis Academy.



Grace Laca, left, and Emma Lewis of Oasis Academy. Photo by Taryn Lenon Photography.

MIDDLE SCHOOL VOLLEYBALL TEAMS OFF TO A STRONG START

The middle school volleyball season is off to an exciting beginning as both the 7th and 8th-grade teams have delivered impressive performances in their early matchups.

The teams played over Martin Luther King Jr. weekend at a tournament in Yerington, where they faced strong competition from schools across the region. The 8th-grade squad put together a solid showing, finishing the tournament with a 2-1 record. The 7th-grade team dominated the court, sweeping all their opponents to earn a perfect 3-0 record in tournament play.

Building on that momentum, both teams returned home to face Pershing County Middle School. The 7th-grade team won three competitive sets to defeat the Colts, while the 8th-grade team secured a decisive two-set win. The victories highlighted the teams' continued growth, strong serving, and improved communication on the court.

The teams now prepare for upcoming matches against Coral Academy, Pyramid Lake, and CCMS, hoping to continue their winning ways and build on an already impressive start to the season. The Bighorns are coached by Jalana Bell, Stacie Bogdanowicz, and Shayna Byrd.

OASIS BASKETBALL MIDWAY THROUGH SEASON

As the winter sports season reaches its midpoint, Oasis Academy basketball continues to show determination and growth on both sides of the program.

The Oasis girls' team has been in a bright spot this season, riding an impressive six-game winning streak. Their hard work and chemistry on and off the court have paid off, placing them third in the competitive 2A North standings. With strong defense, unselfish play, and consistent effort, the Lady Bighorns have established themselves as a team to watch as the second half of the season unfolds.

On the boys' side, the season has presented challenges, as the team sits in ninth in the 2A North. Despite the record, the Oasis boys have continued to compete, gain experience, and show resilience against tough opponents. With a new coaching staff and plenty of season still ahead, the focus remains on development, teamwork, and finishing strong.

The team's next home game at Venturacci Gym is Jan. 28 against Pershing County. JV girls' tip-off at 3 p.m.

Greenwave Youth Hosts Wrestling Tournament Success

Staff Report

The Greenwave Youth Wrestling Club hosted a successful wrestling tournament this past weekend, bringing together youth athletes and families from across Northern Nevada and surrounding areas for a spirited showcase of talent and community.

The event, which featured wrestlers of all ages, packed the gym with a weekend full of competition, sportsmanship, and community support. Local athletes took to the mats alongside out-of-town clubs, creating a lively atmosphere and highlighting the camaraderie found within the sport. The tournament not only celebrated athletic achievement but also contributed to a busy and positive weekend for Fallon.

Organizers credited the tournament's success to the steadfast support of volunteers, families, and community partners. Their efforts ensured the event ran smoothly and provided a welcoming experience for all participants. "We appreciate the continued support from our volunteers, families, and community partners who helped make the tournament possible," event organizers said.



A Greenwave Youth Wrestling Club member celebrates a win during the tournament in Fallon. Photo by John O'Donnell.

COLUMNS

What's Cooking in Kelli's Kitchen

By Kelli Kelly

If you are a regular reader of this column, you are familiar with my friend and colleague Erik. He joins us once a month as a guest columnist and approaches the kitchen with the curiosity and discipline of a culinary student, purely for his own personal development and enjoyment. Erik loves technique, precision, and the idea that dinner is an experience worthy of time and attention. He is also, quite famously, skeptical of one-pot meals, which he has gently side-eyed here in the past.

This difference of opinion has evolved into a friendly kitchen rivalry rooted in shared respect for good food, even if we occasionally disagree about how many pans it should require. I love Erik. He is not wrong. But he is also not the person staring into the fridge at 6:17 p.m., wondering how dinner quietly became tonight's unscheduled crisis.

My view is simpler. Cooking should happen most days, not just on the good ones. When time is short, energy is low, or dishes feel like a personal affront, I would much rather see someone make a solid one-pan meal than default to takeout. These recipes are not about cutting corners. They are about keeping the habit alive. One pot, one pan, minimal cleanup, real food, still satisfying. Consider this my gentle rebuttal to

Erik and an open invitation to cook anyway.

So far in 2026, my schedule has left me with little time to plan or execute complicated meals, which has made simple, one-pot dinners feel less like a compromise and more like a gift. If you have found yourself in similar circumstances, here are a few simple, delicious recipes with the added benefit of easy cleanup.

ONE-POT ORECCHIETTE WITH ITALIAN SAUSAGE, PEAS, AND LEMON RICOTTA SAUCE

Ingredients

Serves: 4 | Time: about 30 minutes

12 oz	Orecchiette pasta
1 lb.	Italian sausage, casings removed
2 cloves	Garlic, minced
2 tbsp.	Olive oil
1 cup	Whole-milk ricotta
1/2 cup	Freshly grated Parmesan cheese, plus more for garnish
	Zest and juice of 1 lemon
1 cup	Reserved pasta cooking water
1 cup	Frozen peas
	Salt and freshly ground black pepper
	Red pepper flakes
	Fresh basil leaves, torn

DIRECTIONS

1. Bring a large pot of well-salted water to a boil. Add the orecchiette and cook until just al dente.
2. Drain the pasta, reserving 1 cup of the cooking water. Set the pasta aside.
3. Return the empty pot to the stove over medium heat. Add the olive oil and sausage, breaking it up with a spoon. Cook until browned and cooked through.
4. Add the garlic and cook for about 30 seconds, just until fragrant. Reduce the heat to low.
5. Stir in the Parmesan, ricotta, lemon juice, and lemon zest. Add at least 1/2 cup of the reserved pasta water and stir vigorously until a smooth, creamy sauce forms. Add more pasta water as needed to loosen the sauce. Season with salt and black pepper.
6. Return the pasta to the pot and stir to coat evenly.
7. Add the peas and cook just until heated through, 1 to 2 minutes.
8. Remove from heat. Garnish with red pepper flakes, additional Parmesan, and torn basil leaves. Serve warm.

The sauce will thicken as it sits. A splash of pasta water brings it right back.



Photographer Brie Passano, Food Stylist Annie Probst.

SHEET-PAN GNOCCHI WITH CHARRED BROCCOLI, BURST TOMATOES, AND ITALIAN SAUSAGE

Ingredients

Serves: 4 | Time: about 30-35 minutes

1 lb.	Shelf-stable potato gnocchi
12 oz.	Italian sausage links
1	Large head of broccoli, cut into florets
1 pint	Cherry or grape tomatoes
3 tbsp.	Olive oil
3 cloves	Garlic, minced
	Salt and freshly ground black pepper
	Red pepper flakes
1/4 cup	Grated Parmesan cheese, plus more for serving
	Fresh basil, torn
	Squeeze of lemon or drizzle of balsamic glaze

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat the oven to 425°F. Line a large, rimmed sheet pan with parchment paper if desired.
2. Add the gnocchi, sausage, broccoli, and tomatoes to the sheet pan. Drizzle with olive oil, add the garlic, and season generously with salt, pepper, and red pepper flakes. Toss directly on the pan and spread into a single layer.
3. Roast for 20 minutes, then stir and flip a few pieces to encourage even browning.
4. Return to the oven and roast for another 10 to 15 minutes, until the gnocchi is crisp on the outside, the broccoli is charred at the edges, the tomatoes have burst, and the sausage is cooked through.
5. Remove from the oven and sprinkle with Parmesan and fresh basil. Finish with a squeeze of lemon or a light drizzle of balsamic glaze, if using.
6. Serve hot, straight from the pan.

You can swap the sausage for chicken thighs or shrimp. Adjust cook time as needed. If the pan looks crowded, use two pans. Crowding steams instead of chars.

Movies & More

By Kelli Perez

This Friday and Saturday at 6 p.m., the Fallon Theatre screens "Minions: The Rise of Gru" (2022), an animated feature set in the 1970s. The film follows young Gru's quest to become the world's top supervillain, with the Minions causing plenty of mischief. Rated PG, the movie runs 1 hour and 27 minutes.

Friday at 7 p.m., The Kindred North performs live. Founded in Fallon in 2025, Raena Blais and McKenzie Warren blend folk, country, and rock, creating heartfelt harmonies and thoughtful arrangements. Their mix of favorites and original songs creates an intimate atmosphere. Tickets are \$12—a great way to support local talent and enjoy a night out.

Saturday at 7 p.m., the theatre showcases "Operation Haylift" (1950), a dramatic retelling of Nevada's historic 1948-49 snowstorms. The film, 1 hour and 13 minutes, highlights the airlift from Fallon and Ely that saved thousands of stranded cattle, celebrating teamwork and resilience.

The theatre's seat upgrade project is progressing thanks to dedicated volunteers. New seats from Mesquite feature cup holders and swivel arms for added comfort, and the community's support is transforming the theatre experience.

In February, enjoy the Galentine's Show on Feb. 6 and 7 at 7 p.m., featuring the Domesticated Man Band. These one-hour performances promise upbeat entertainment and laughter—ideal for a girls' night or fun with loved ones. Admission is free; arrive early, enjoy a glass of wine, and settle in.



The annual Valentine's Day 5K returns Saturday, Feb. 7, starting at 71 S. Maine St. Registration opens at 8 a.m., and the race starts at 9 a.m. Pre-register by Jan. 20 for a commemorative T-shirt. Fees: \$25 individual, \$40 couple; day-of: \$30/\$50. Sign up at Western Alliance Bank, Kent's Supply Center, or the theatre's website. For info, contact Crystal at 775-304-9975 or Taylor at 775-316-0952. Celebrate the holiday, support the theatre, and stay active with family and friends.

Also in February, catch Kat & Dave: The Acoustic Rock Experience on Thursday, Feb. 12, at 7 p.m. With seven years performing together, Kat and Dave deliver an intimate acoustic show of classic rock favorites. Admission is \$10.

Looking ahead, the Heritage of the West celebration is Saturday, March 7, 2026—a free tribute to the region's songs, stories, and traditions. Performers, historians, and storytellers are invited to share music and oral histories. To participate, contact huck_salt@yahoo.com or call 775-423-2055 or 775-217-4142.

The theatre launches its first annual Oasis Film Festival, "An Oasis for Storytellers." Submit PG-rated short films (max 15 min) inspired by the America 250 theme by March 2; \$20 fee. Twelve finalists screen on Sunday, March 8, with an awards ceremony. Film production and acting workshops are available to participants.

The Fallon Theatre remains committed to free movie screenings whenever possible. The concession stand offers favorites like popcorn and candy. For theatre rentals or marquee messages, call 775-423-6210 or email thefallontheatre@gmail.com.

COLUMNS

PostCards:

Will be back in February



During the County Commissioners meeting held on Wednesday, Jan. 21, Commissioners Matt Hyde, Eric Blakey, and Myles Getto demonstrated their support for local veterans by presenting a \$750 donation to Stuart Cook of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). This contribution will help fund the upcoming Vietnam Veterans Benefit, an event dedicated to honoring and supporting those who served in the Vietnam War.

Photo by Anne McMillin.

Allison's Book Report

"The Love Haters" By Katherine Center

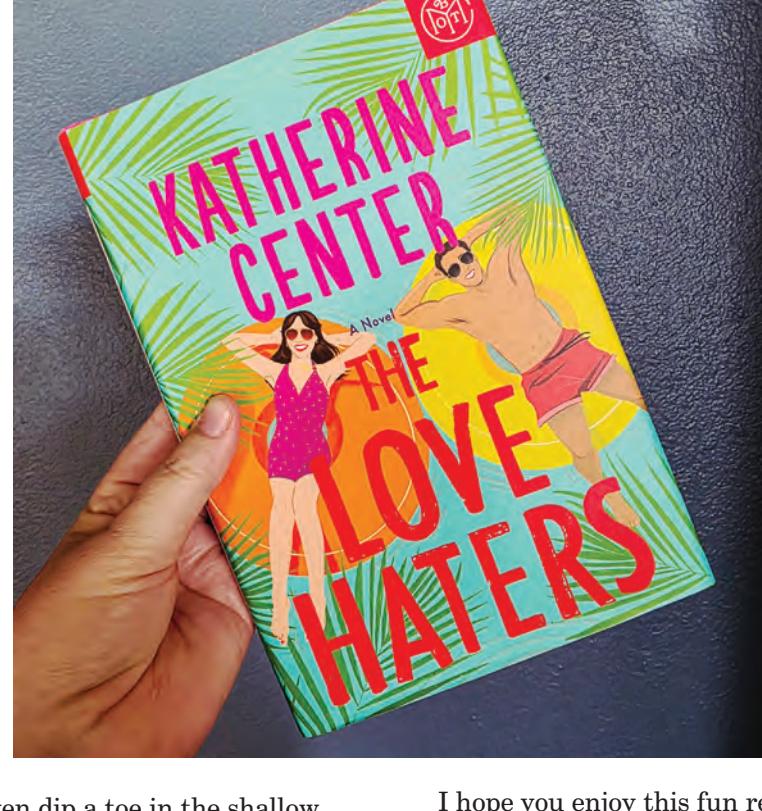
By Allison Diegel

Another week, another book report. We all know that I love a good rom-com and that I have so many favorite authors in this genre – Emily Henry, Abby Jimenez, and Christina Lauren, among others. This week's book is from one of those must-read favorites, Katherine Center. Her latest, "The Love Haters," follows her usual winning blueprint – laugh, cry, feel the feels, repeat – while adding a refreshing splash of salt water and high-stakes career drama. If you've ever felt like you were faking it through your adult life, this story is going to hit close to home.

Meet Katie Vaughn. She's a video producer whose professional life is currently hanging by a very frayed thread. With massive layoffs looming at her company, Katie is desperate for a win. She accepts a make-or-break assignment: fly to Key West to film a profile on Tom "Hutch" Hutcheson, a viral Coast Guard rescue swimmer who is as heroic as he is handsome.

There's just one tiny, glaring problem. Katie is terrified of the water. Like, "won't even dip a toe in the shallow end" terrified. But to save her job, she's willing to fake her way through a tropical assignment, even if it means hiding a lifelong phobia from a man whose entire life is dedicated to the ocean.

As Katie arrives in the Florida heat, she realizes this isn't just a simple profile. She's stepped into a family minefield. Hutch is a self-proclaimed



"love hater," protecting himself with a wall of cynicism, while his estranged brother, Cole, is the one pulling the strings behind the scenes.

The chemistry between Katie and Hutch isn't just about physical attraction; it's a collision of two people who have built massive emotional fortresses to keep from getting hurt again. Katie is still reeling from a public, messy breakup with a now-famous musician that left her hiding in oversized black clothes, trying to remain invisible. Hutch, meanwhile, uses his bravery in the water as a shield against the vulnerability of life on land.

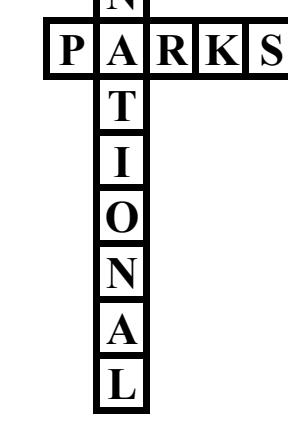
Center masterfully uses the setting—complete with a giant Great Dane named George Bailey and a literal hurricane—to force these two characters into a corner. Katie eventually has to trade her armor for a swimsuit and her fear for a chance at a real life. It's a gorgeous reminder that being brave isn't about the absence of fear; it's about doing the thing that scares you anyway because the alternative is just staying stuck.

I hope you enjoy this fun read – or whatever else you're reading – this week. Don't forget to pop over to my Instagram @allison.the.reader for more book talk and more fun recommendations!

Allison Diegel is the Executive Chaos Coordinator at the Diegel Home for Wayward Girls. She has been reading since before she could talk, and now she likes doing lots of both.

Crossword

By Peanut

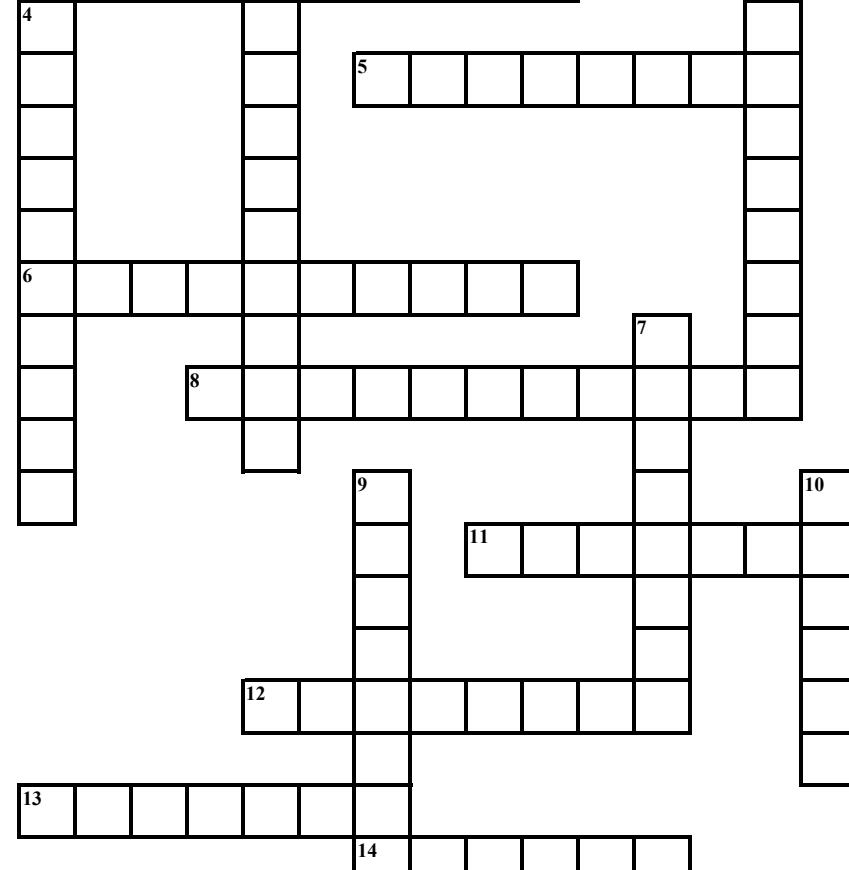


Across

- Cinder cones & geese
- Buttes & bison
- Blue Ridge & black bear
- Geysers & boiling mud pots
- Rainforests & glaciers
- Mangroves & manatee
- Mt Whitney & Gen'l Sherman
- Glaciers & grizzlies

- Pythons & gators
- Puebloan cliff palace
- Missiles & dunes
- El Capitan & Half Dome
- Caverns & bats
- Cadillac Mt & cranberry bogs

[Crossword answers found on page 14]



COLUMNS

Fallon Indivisible Protests Trump



Members of Fallon Indivisible protest the Trump administration at Centennial Park on Jan. 20. Photo courtesy of Maddi Hill.

By Sydney Trainor

On Jan. 20, at Centennial Park, the Fallon Indivisible group gathered to protest Trump. Fallon Indivisible is a smaller chapter of Northern Nevada Indivisible, which is a left-leaning volunteer activism group based in Reno. The event was organized to mark one year since Trump's inauguration and was held in preparation for the next "No Kings Day." (No Kings Day is a symbolic event observed by some groups to emphasize a commitment to democracy and the rejection of authoritarian leadership.) A total of 16 people showed up.

The leader of Fallon Indivisible said the main objective was to bring together individuals with similar perspectives in a balanced setting and

encourage meaningful discussion. She emphasized that the protest focused on fostering a sense of community by initiating conversations and giving participants a platform to share their views.

Josh Hebert also attended the protest. Hebert is running as a democrat in Nevada's 2nd congressional district this year. He cited ICE as one reason for protesting, saying, "ICE and Customs and Border Patrol have essentially become like an internal secret police of this administration... And they're behaving in a completely lawless manner." In regard to federal agents such as ICE, Hebert stated, "It seems like they're just there to create a conflict, which is what this regime is trying to do...and I don't think that's what most Americans want."

LEGAL NOTICES

PUBLIC NOTICE

A child was born to Meranda Bufkin in December 2023 in Fallon, Nevada and is now two (2) years old. The identity and whereabouts of the child's biological father are currently unknown.

If you believe you may be the father, or if you have any information that may assist in identifying or locating the father, please contact:

Sharlee Bufkin: 775-217-8394
Josh Bufkin: 209-968-2782

All information will be handled confidentially.

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Jan. 9, 16, 23, 30, Feb. 2 and 13, 2026
Ad #6415

CROSSWORD ANSWERS

Crossword found on page 13

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