

# THE FALLOON POST



KEEPING YOU POSTED ON LOCAL NEWS

TheFallonPost.org | Vol. 7 No. 10

\$2.00 | The Week of January 9, 2026

## Happy 105th Birthday Fallon Community Theatre

By Leanna Lehman

One hundred and five years ago, on Dec. 30, the newly completed Rex Theatre, Fallon's first theatre, celebrated its grand opening. And very grand it was.

Constructed in 1920 as the New Rex Theatre, the building now known as the historic Fallon Theatre was designed as a place of elegance and modern entertainment at the heart of a growing desert community. Vaudeville performers John W. and Maybelle Flood built the New Rex to replace their original Rex Theatre, established in 1912. In an era when paved highways were scarce and automobiles still a novelty, audiences traveled from Reno and beyond to attend performances in Fallon.

The Floods commissioned Nevada architect Frederic DeLongchamps to design what was billed as "the finest theatre in Nevada," sparing no expense. With seating for approximately 800 patrons across a grand main floor and an elegant balcony, the theatre opened Dec. 30, 1920, to an audience that included prominent northern Nevadans, rivaling those of much larger cities.

As motion pictures evolved, so did the theatre. In 1930, with the arrival of "talkies," the New Rex was purchased by theater operators Stone and Hull. Recognizing Fallon as a strategic stop on the film circuit, they invested in a complete redesign, removing the balcony and reshaping the interior into a single sloped auditorium seating about 500. When it reopened Sept. 1, 1930, it was among the largest theatres in Nevada and one of only two built specifically for sound motion pictures.



Rex Theatre interior. Photo courtesy of Fallon Theatre and Churchill County Museum.

The theatre endured fires in 1939 and 1943 and withstood a major earthquake in 1954. Its structural stability was credited to DeLongchamps' engineering expertise and the Floods' insistence on quality construction.

Ownership changed hands in 1978, when Bob and Mary Beth Erickson and Bill and Nancy Janess purchased the theatre and later updated it with twin auditoriums and modern projection and sound systems. In 2014, community

[ Happy 105th Birthday continued on page 5 ]

## High Stakes at Eight Seconds: Top Gun Bull Riding Rings in the New Year

By Leanna Lehman

Fallon rang in the New Year at Rafter 3C Events Complex in Fallon in full western style. With a sold-out crowd packing the house and standing room only for latecomers, 32 of the toughest cowboys in the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association and Professional Bull Riders Association took on some of the rankest bulls in the sport.

This year's Roughy Top Gun Invitational New Year's Eve Bull Riding, produced by Chad Denton of Busted Up Productions, did not disappoint. "It was the best one yet," Denton said. Drawing on his experience hosting New Year's Eve bull ridings in 2023 and 2024, Denton continues to deliver a top-tier PRCA Xtreme Bulls event, attracting riders from across the nation.

This year's event payout totaled \$32,900 and paid out over eight places. Taking home nearly \$13,000 for two eight-second rides was Colten Fritzlan of Rifle, Colorado, who marked 174 points on two rides. His first



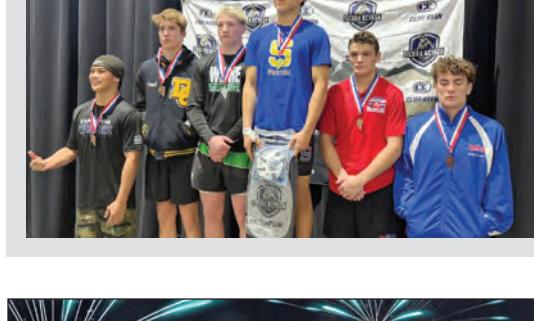
Event winner Colten Fritzlan. Photo by Alexix Cady, Wild Rodeo Photography.

ride scored an outstanding 87.5 aboard Western Rodeo's bull Uh-Oh, followed by an 86.5 in the final go-round.

Following closely behind was Lane Vaughan of Klamath Falls, Oregon, earning \$8,656 on two rides. Vaughn scored 84 points in the first round and an impressive 87 in the final round. Third place went to Hudson Bolten of Milan, Tennessee, the 2025 Professional Bull Riders Rookie of the Year. Bolten scored 86.5 in the first go-round, earning \$5,634 in prize money, despite being bucked off in the final round.

Three riders tied for fourth place, all scoring 85 points in the first go-round, but not making eight seconds in the final go: Luke Mackey of Ignacio, Colorado; Wade Tuni of Rock Point, Arizona; and Ethan Skigquist of Elk River, Minnesota. Coming in seventh was Mossy Waite of New Plymouth, Idaho, with an 84.5-point ride, followed by Tyler Bingham of Howell, Utah, who scored 84 points.

[ Top Gun continued on page 2 ]



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## FROM THE PUBLISHER

## Captain's Log

## Let's Go Another Week

By Rachel Dahl

It is late on Tuesday, and the “where is your column” notes have started dropping in the team chat. Some days this happens – there is just too much going on, and I cannot get my brain to settle long enough to focus and write. Even at 4 a.m., 8, or now 10:40 a.m., our deadline is creeping closer.

On days like today, I resort to the idea file, hoping to find something, anything that jars loose some cogent thoughts that may be worthy of documenting.

There are some funny things in the notes file, the Idea Bin, if you will. We've covered this territory before as I dig around for things to write about – how things strike me and what in the world I was thinking when I captured some of it, but it's sort of entertaining in a “wow, this is what 57-year-old looks like” sort of way.

Here is one: “If the legend is better, write the damn legend,” said my dad’s old friend, Fletch Galper, one day when they were telling stories and talking about Dad writing his horse stories.

This one: “Six months and a road trip,” not really sure, but today it sounds like a formula for how to tell if your date is going to be worth spending eternity together.

[Top Gun continued from page 1]

During the intermission between the first and final go-rounds, youth bull riders took to the arena on mini bulls, including Fallon’s own Roslin Snow, who recently earned a third-in-the-world standing with a strong showing at the 2025 YETI Junior National Finals Bull Riding. Also making a solid showing was Fallon’s Beau Drake, who is currently ranked second in bull riding for the 2025–26 Nevada High School Rodeo season.

The evening kicked off with a western market and a VIP tri-tip dinner, as rodeo-goers filled the stands. After hours of high-adrenaline rides and buck-offs by some of America’s finest bull riders, accompanied by comic relief delivered by professional bullfighter Dwayne Hargo, the New Year was ushered in with cheers, laughter, and dancing during a live performance by Chad Bushnell.

Do not worry if you missed it. Chad Denton’s family-friendly Top Gun Xtreme Bulls event will be back next year.

Also treasures like, “Ephemera – write this into a book about life, all the little things that make us who we are,” and my favorite, “One More Week – The story of small-town newspapering.”

Which reminds me, we let the first of the year pass without recognizing our seventh birthday. On January 1, 2019, this experiment in local community news began on a wing and a prayer and a homemade website. Here we are seven years later with a printed weekly for our own community, two more community weeklies for our neighboring communities, an online, statewide, rural newspaper, and a national magazine. We have also added book publishing for two local authors, and a “front porch” to our media empire, the Great Basin Trading Co., on Maine Street in Fallon.

What a ride it has been.

What a scrappy little team that is holding it all together, and what a great community that has supported us through it all.

We are grateful.

So, with our hearts full and our resolve focused on seven or ten or maybe even fifty more years, let’s go another week, as always...

—Rach



Second place winner, Lane Vaughan. Photo by John Baker.

## PETS OF THE WEEK

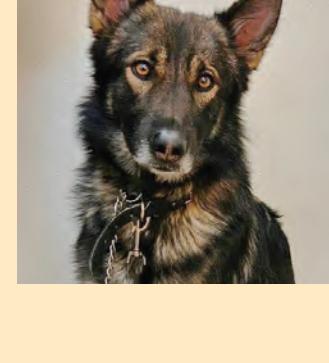
## Meet Axel (Round 2, Let's Do This Right!)

The Fallon Animal Shelter is seeking a special home for Axel, a gentle and thoughtful dog searching for trust and understanding. Described by staff as both smart and capable, Axel prefers to take his time before opening his heart to new people. Each day, he is revealing more of his sweet, vulnerable side, blossoming slowly as he feels safer in his surroundings.

Shelter staff believe Axel would thrive in a calm household with adults or older teens. The ideal adopter will be patient and willing to let Axel set the pace, understanding that deep friendships take time to grow. Axel is not stubborn or difficult—he is a sensitive soul who wants to feel secure before he fully commits. Anyone who values gentle trust and meaningful bonds will appreciate the excellent companion he can be.

Those interested in sharing their lives with a loyal friend are encouraged to contact the Fallon Animal Shelter at 775-423-2282 to learn more about Axel.

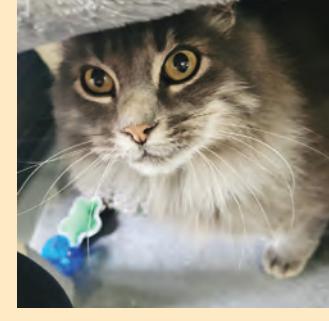
City of Fallon Animal Shelter | 1255 Airport Rd, Fallon | 775-423-2282



## Meet Foxy

Foxy is more than just a cat. She is a heartwarming bundle of joy waiting to be your best friend. With her soft fur and sparkling eyes, Foxy has a gentle spirit that shines through in everything she does. Whether she is curling up beside you for a cozy nap or playfully chasing her favorite toy around the room, Foxy is already spayed, vaccinated, and microchipped, so she is ready to move straight into her forever home and start making special memories with you.

If you have been dreaming about a loving companion to share your days and nights, Foxy is eager to add warmth, purrs, and a touch of magic to your life. Do not miss the chance to welcome this wonderful girl into your family. She is waiting for someone who will cherish her as much as she will cherish them.



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

## T.J. Gray Makes NFR History

By Nancy Chapman

With grit, determination, and a few broken bones along the way, T.J. Gray rode his way into the record books at the 2025 National Finals Rodeo, which took place in Las Vegas from Dec. 4 to Dec. 13, 2025. Gray, who entered the competition ranked fifth in the world, climbed to second overall by the final round on Dec. 13, securing the coveted bull riding average title and shattering earnings records with standout performances throughout the event.

Gray's run to the top was nothing short of remarkable. The Oregon native delivered clutch rides in three key rounds, posting a 90.5 on McCoy Rodeo's Blue Duck in Round 7, a 90.75 on Rafter G Rodeo's Doze You Down in Round 8, and clinching Round 10 with an 88.5 on Mr. Priefert, owned by Rosser Rodeo Co. Not only did he win the final round, but he also tied for first and second place that evening, cementing his place as a force in professional bull riding.

Since his second-place world finish at the NFR, Gray, 24, and his fiancée, Kalona Marr, have put down roots in Fallon, Nev. Marr is Gray's strongest supporter. Her family has also joined the ranks of Gray's growing fan base, cheering him on as he calls Fallon home.

Gray's journey from the small, unincorporated community of Dairy, Ore., to NFR stardom was paved with dedication and adversity.

"From the time I got on my first calf, I knew this was my sport,"

Gray recalled. Starting at age 5 in junior rodeos, he gravitated toward bulls, inspired partly by his older brother, Levi, who rode bucking horses. "I would see him and his friends get bucked off, and it looked like it really hurt, and I did not like horses all that well, so I stayed with the bulls," Gray said with a grin.

He rode his first bull at 13 and, by 2019, purchased his PRCA card, just as the COVID-19 pandemic shuttered events and limited opportunities for up-and-comers. Injuries followed, including a 10-month setback from torn abdominal muscles in 2020, a broken collarbone in 2021 and a shattered foot in 2023. Despite these blows, Gray persevered, missing multiple NFR appearances but never losing sight of his goal.

2024 proved to be a turning point. Gray ended the regular



T.J. Gray with Kalona Marr.  
Photo courtesy of T.J. Gray.



T.J. Gray in the tenth round of the 2025 NFR on Mr. Priefert. Photo by Lara St. Jacques.

**"From the time I got on my first calf, I knew this was my sport," Gray recalled.**

season atop the PRCA bull riding standings, but under the NFR's intense pressure he dropped to fifth place. Instead of folding, he doubled down on training and returned to Las Vegas in 2025, this time ready to make history.

Gray's resilience was on full display this year as he battled through a lingering injury that will require corrective surgery in early 2026. The operation means a late start to next season, he will have just 68 rodeos to qualify for the NFR, compared to his usual 105. Still, the Fallon community is already rallying behind him as he sets his sights on a return to the big stage for the 2026 NFR.

No matter what the next season brings, one thing is certain: T.J. Gray's story is just getting started, and Fallon will be cheering every step of the way.

## Happy 80th Birthday, Gary Imelli

Staff Report

Gary Imelli, a pillar of Fallon and a familiar face to generations as a coach, educator, entrepreneur, and steadfast community supporter, marked his 80th birthday on Friday, Jan. 2, in Saint Patrick's Catholic Church, surrounded by family, friends, and former colleagues.

The evening, bathed in laughter and reminiscence, drew dozens from across Churchill County. Guests mingled over a hosted bar, sampled hors d'oeuvres catered by the Slanted Porch, and enjoyed a set by The Coaches, a local band whose members include retired Churchill County School District staff, many of whom counted Imelli as a mentor or teammate in classrooms and on the field.

A series of speeches punctuated the celebration, with stories and memories shared by former colleagues and friends, some recalling Imelli's decades shaping young minds and others highlighting his service beyond the school walls. The sense of community ran deep, as attendees reflected on his enduring role in local education, sports, and civic life. The gathering underscored Imelli's legacy and the bonds he has cultivated throughout the years, making the milestone birthday not only a personal celebration but also a testament to his lasting influence in Fallon.



L-R: Jane Moon, Heidi Imelli (Gary's daughter), Gary Imelli, Carole Imelli Rogers (Gary's sister), Susan Imelli, and Steve Moon. Photo courtesy of Jane Moon.

**CATCH 21**  
Fridays 7pm - 11pm  
BONANZA CASINO  
FALLON • NEVADA

SUN	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
<b>FROSTY'S COLD CASH</b> 12PM - 4PM	<b>REDNECK REBATE</b> 6PM - 10PM	<b>JACKPOT BASH</b> 6PM - 9:30PM	<b>CATCH 21</b> 7PM - 11PM	<b>CASH BINGO</b> 12PM - 4PM <b>SPIN TO WIN</b> 7PM - 11PM

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WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
<b>PICK SANTA'S POCKETS</b> 11AM - 3PM	<b>FROSTY'S COLD CASH</b> 7PM - 10PM	<b>CASH BINGO</b> 12PM - 4PM	<b>SENIORS FREE PLAY</b> ALL DAY

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS



## First Baby of the New Year

### Lucas Braddley Ebbing

The New Year baby, Lucas, was born at Banner Churchill hospital to Alyssa Smith and Ashton Ebbing on January 1, 2026, at 3:34 a.m., weighing 7 pounds 7 ounces and measuring 20 3/4 inches long. Dr. Zubernis delivered Lucas.

The last baby born in 2025 at Banner was a baby girl, Riley, born December 31, 2025, at 6:27 p.m. to Olivia and Cody Wilson. She was also delivered by Dr. Zubernis.

## December 2025 Marriage Licenses

Nov. 26	Gerald Steven Hall, 65, to <b>Debra Ann Labelle</b> , 68, both of Fallon
Nov. 30	Gage Douglas Muffett, 20, to <b>Elena Rachel Holt</b> , 19, both of Fallon
Dec. 4	Keith Bernard Schwartz, 53, to <b>Mary May McIntosh-Baker</b> , 50, both of Fernley
Dec. 5	Jonathan Hunter Day, 23, to <b>Shaylie Ann Morgan Mansfield</b> , 22, both of Fallon
Dec. 9	Vanessa Fabiola Macaas, 21, to <b>Geymi Lisbhet Moreira Castillo</b> , 19, both of Fallon
Dec. 10	Timothy Paul Strasdin, 54, to <b>Trisha Darleen Scobert</b> , 50, both of Fallon
Dec. 10	Wesley Van Styles, 38, to <b>Kendra Rae Flower</b> , 43, both of Fallon
Dec. 10	Troy Douglas Otterraen, 34, to <b>Angelena Elizabeth Howland</b> , 34, both of Fallon
Dec. 14	Johnathan Irvin Kriner, 35, to <b>Hannah Rose Campbell</b> , 25, both of Fallon
Dec. 14	Tyler McIlree Alger, 31, to <b>Christine Cecilia Barrett</b> , 32, both of Fallon
Dec. 17	Dave Nelson Thacker, 58, to <b>Megan Nevada Brehm</b> , 37, both of Fallon
Dec. 19	Nathaniel Rowdy Dowling, 18, to <b>Chloe Rae Konvolinka</b> , 18, both of Fallon
Dec. 19	Jason Andrew Bennett, 36, to <b>Monique Raylynn Sanders</b> , 30, both of Fallon

Congratulations!



### MEETINGS

January 2 – 16, 2026

**Advisory Board to Manage Wildlife**  
155 N Taylor Street  
Next Meeting: Jan. 21 at 7 p.m.

**Central NV Health District**  
155 N Taylor Street  
Next meeting: Jan. 15 at 1:30 p.m.

**Board of County Commissioners**  
Meets the first Thursday and third Wednesday of each month  
155 N. Taylor St  
Next Meeting: Jan. 21 at 1:15 p.m.

**Library Board of Trustees**  
Meets the third Thursday of each month at 3 p.m.  
155 N. Taylor Street  
Next Meeting: Jan. 22 at 3 p.m.

**CC Communications**  
Meets the first Thursday of each month at 11 a.m.  
155 N. Taylor Street



**Churchill County School Board**  
690 S. Maine Street  
Next Meeting: Jan. 13 at 5:30 p.m.



### WATER LEVELS

Measurements Taken January 5, at 9 a.m.

Lahontan Reservoir	110,900 af
Carson River Below Lahontan	3.22 cfs
Truckee Canal at Wadsworth	438 cfs
Truckee Canal at Hazen	412 cfs
Carson River at Ft. Churchill	800 cfs

January 5, 2024      January 5, 2023      January 5, 2022  
219,535 acre feet      49,427 acre feet      69,368 acre feet

Cfs - Cubic Feet per Second | Af - Acre Feet | TCID.org & Water Data.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, Jan. 12

Grilled Cheeseburger  
WW Bun  
Lettuce & Tomato  
Baked Beans  
Mandarins

#### Tuesday, Jan. 13

Chicken Fettuccini Alfredo  
Steamed Broccoli  
Spiced Apples  
WW Breadstick

#### Wednesday, Jan. 14

Chicken Nuggets  
BBQ Sauce  
Au Gratin Potatoes  
Garden Veggies  
Green Salad  
Cinnamon Peaches

#### Thursday, Jan. 15

Split Pea Soup  
Turkey Wrap  
Fresh Orange

#### Friday, Jan. 16

Mediterranean Shrimp  
Lemon Couscous  
3 Bean Salad  
Honey Baklava  
WW Roll

### FALLOON DAILY BREAD

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

Meals are served Mondays and Thursdays from 5 - 6 p.m.

#### Monday, Jan. 12

Pot Pie  
Bread & Dessert

#### Thursday, Jan. 15

Pizza  
Salad & Dessert

#### Monday, Jan. 19

Lasagna  
Salad, Bread & Dessert

#### Thursday, Jan. 22

Chicken Stir Fry  
Rice & Dessert

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

## OBITUARIES

## PAUL FRITCHER

September 19, 1956 – December 11, 2025



On Dec. 11, 2025, Paul Fritchier died peacefully at his home in Fallon, Nevada. He was preceded in death by his parents. Survivors include his wife, Athena; children, Richard Fritchier and Alicia Stine; five grandchildren, Logan, Candice, Abby, Jordan, and Junior; stepchildren, Brandon Reidenbach and Jeralynne Reidenbach; grandchildren, Mason and Taylor; and one great-grandchild, Kaycee Adams. He also leaves a brother, Ron, as well as many cousins and friends.

Paul was born Sept. 19, 1956, in Detroit to Frances Ruffino. At age 18, Frances and Paul moved from Detroit to Gardena, California. In 1958, Frances married Joe Fritchier, and two years later, they had a second son, Ronald. Around 1963, the family moved to Lone Pine in the Owens Valley.

Paul had an aptitude for mechanical engineering, starting with building bicycles — favoring the Schwinn Stingray. In his early teens, he became interested in electronics and assembled many RadioShack projects, a passion that lasted his whole life and led to becoming a ham radio operator. He also enjoyed model trains.

His mechanical skills developed into building cars, particularly a 1965 Mustang. The engines he favored in these years were the 289 small block and the 351 Cleveland, and his cars grew faster over time.

His attention to detail and skill led to years as a helicopter mechanic with a company in Long Beach, California, which acquired wrecked Hughes 300 training helicopters and reassembled them. Paul was a certified airframe mechanic and could also pilot an airplane.

His career path led him back to the Owens Valley, where he hired on with a geothermal company. He started with them when they began building the Coso geothermal power plant. This gave him an encyclopedic knowledge of the workings of a steam plant. Years later, Paul transferred within the company to the Dixie Valley plant outside of Fallon. Paul could also frame a building.

Paul was an avid hunter and a lifetime member of the Stillwater Firearms Association. During his teen years, he was introduced to a lifestyle of hunting by horseback, pack train, and several-day camping trips. These were yearly events led by his father into the Sierra Nevada. Later, as Paul settled into Fallon, he maintained that passion for hunting. He and Athena favored hunting in Northern Nevada, where they enjoyed the spectacular scenery and bounty of game. He will be greatly missed.

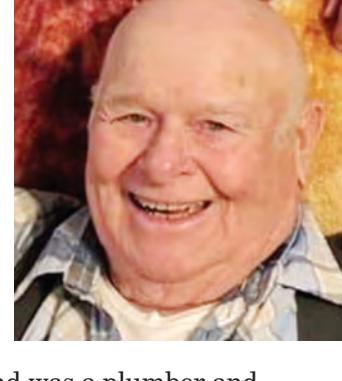
A gathering in Paul's memory is scheduled for Saturday, Jan. 17, 2026, at the Eagles Lodge, 7977 Reno Highway, Fallon. Please contact 775-423-4354 after Jan. 3 to confirm the time of the service.

## ERSAL CARL HALLMARK

October 5, 1934 – December 29, 2025

In Ersal Carl Hallmark passed away on December 29, 2025, with his family by his side. He was 91 years old.

Ersal was born on October 5, 1934, in Emmett, Idaho, to Benjamin Isaac and Gladys Fern (Smith) Hallmark. He joined the Navy after high school as a pipefitter. He joined the Plumbers Union in 1956 and was a plumber and pipefitter for his career. He was a proud member until the day he died.



The family moved to Reno, where he went to grade school and graduated from Reno High School in 1953. Ersal moved to Fallon around 1960. He always had a smile on his face and was loved by all those who knew him. He was active in the High School Rodeo during his children's rodeo years and even served as a Rodeo Clown for a few years before getting married.

Ersal married Aneeta Boyd on December 1, 1962. They were married for almost 50 years when Aneeta passed away in 2012.

Survivors include his brother Darrel (Patti) Hallmark, four children; Jeannie (Les) Riddle, Theresa (Mike) Better, Steven (Debbie) Hallmark, and Kristine (Jay) Turley; 9 grandchildren; Shamelia Brown, Dustin Brown, Heather Torres, Renee Crouch, Jonathan Hallmark, Christopher Hallmark, Paul Hampton, Trent Hampton, and CJ Turley, 16 great grandchildren, and numerous nieces, nephews and cousins.

He was preceded in death by his wife, parents, and his older brother Deo Hallmark.

The family will have a celebration of life in June.

## WILLIAM ALANSON "LANNY" SCOFIELD

April 3, 1950 – Dec. 28, 2025

William Alanson "Lanny" Scofield, 75, died at home Dec. 28, 2025, in Fallon, Nev. He was born April 3, 1950, in Oak Ridge, Tenn. He was preceded in death by his parents, Robert and Barbara Scofield of Kingston.

Survivors include his wife of 51 years, Gloria; siblings Paula Kaye and Tara, both of Lithia Springs, Ga.; Robb of Bethlehem, Ga.; and Debbie of Colorado Springs, Colo. Scofield was a 1969 graduate of RCHS. He joined the U.S. Navy in 1970, where he taught and trained maintenance personnel on the A-7E light attack aircraft. Later, he was assigned to the F/A-18 Super Hornet fleet introduction team. He served on the USS Oriskany and USS Coral Sea and was stationed at Da Nang Air Base during the Vietnam War. He retired from the Navy after 21 years of service as a senior chief petty officer. After retiring from the Navy, he worked in the civilian sector for the Navy until his second retirement in 1991. He was a resident of Fallon, Nev., for 40 years.

[Happy 105th Birthday continued on page 5]

members formed Fallon Community Theatre Inc., a nonprofit dedicated to preserving the theatre's legacy. The organization acquired the building in 2017 and continues to operate the Fallon Theatre as a community-centered venue.

On Dec. 30, 2020, Mayor Ken Tedford visited the Fallon Theatre and issued a proclamation naming the day Fallon Theatre Centennial Day. He has continued to recognize the theatre annually, acknowledging its history, community importance, and status as Nevada's oldest continuously operating theatre. He returned to the theatre this year for public tours and an anniversary visit.

As renovations continue, the "Great Seat Exchange" began Monday, Jan. 5. According to Theatre Board Secretary Glen Perazzo, the board purchased 270 seats from a recently closed movie house in Mesquite. "The seats, I think, are going to be really exciting," said Perazzo. With cup holders and added cushioning, audiences will enjoy greater comfort.

"Jesse Morrow and his crew are replacing one row at a time," Perazzo said, "as there are enough seats for both theaters." Work on the upper theatre will require additional remodeling.

"The aisles are currently too narrow," he said.

The Theatre Board welcomes Taylor Espinosa of First Independent Bank (Western Alliance Bank), who will organize the 5Ks (5-kilometer races), Show 'n Shine, and other events previously led by Karla Kent. Kent recently stepped down as vice chair after serving the organization since its founding in 2014. Kent will continue to volunteer, however. "She has a great crew of former high school friends," said Perazzo, "and they work the concession stand during Friday and Saturday movies twice a month." Also, new to the theatre family is Crystal Chavez, who works with Espinosa at First Independent and will be helping her with her events.

Upcoming events include the annual 5K on Feb. 7, followed by a Valentine's Day concert by the Domestic Man Band. The second Western Heritage of the West event will also return, featuring folk dancers, cowboy poetry, story-telling, and western heritage performances,

primarily organized by Jessica and Tron Huckaby. This year's event will include a film festival and filmmaking contest tied to America's 250-year anniversary.

The community thanks the Fallon Theatre Board for its continued service. Stu Richardson serves as chairman, Glen Perazzo as secretary, and Nancy Upham as treasurer. Board members include Star Olsen, Jessica Huckaby, and Pam Meister. Support roles include Mike Berney as publicity chair, Robbie Lind as membership chair, and Kelli Perez as social media specialist. Michele Berney serves as a volunteer, while Tron Huckaby is recognized as a theatre supporter. Crystal Chavez and Taylor Espinosa assist with the 5K and Show 'n Shine events. Additional support is provided by Onika Crook, sanitation engineer; Jane Moon, City of Fallon representative; Bill Leslie, sponsor recruitment and parade coordination; and David Morgan, sound specialist.

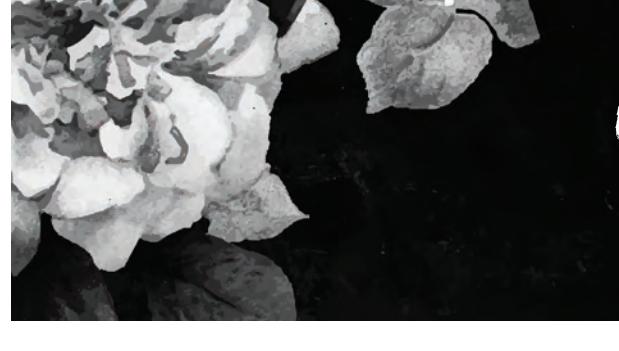
"Thank you to every volunteer, donor, sponsor, moviegoer, performer, and supporter who has helped keep this theatre alive and thriving," wrote Fallon Theatre on its 105th birthday. "Here's to honoring our past while continuing to create magic for generations to come!"



Rex Theatre on Maine Street. Photo courtesy of Fallon Theatre.

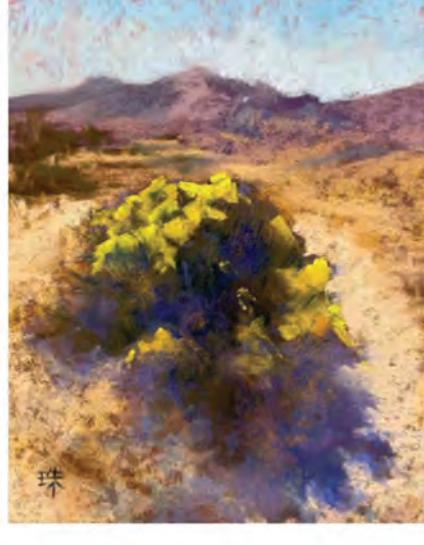
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## COMMUNITY

## Churchill County Museum Artist Opening



### The Gravity of Landscapes

Tamami Tokutake

Opening January 2026

Reception Sat January 17th 3 - 5 pm



By Sydney Trainor

The Churchill County Museum is highlighting a new art exhibit titled "The Gravity of Landscapes," which will open Jan. 14, with an artist reception scheduled for Jan. 17 from 3 to 5 p.m.

"The Gravity of Landscapes" was created by Tamami Tokutake, a self-taught artist based in Reno. This show celebrates the Great Basin's beauty through pastels—many of her art pieces center on landscapes, particularly in northern Nevada. Tokutake said, "I love painting the beauty of northern Nevada; there's an indescribable absoluteness. Standing still, surrounded by nature, I am trying to find that special something that makes paintings ring to your soul and mine."

Tokutake is affiliated with the Red Rock Pastel Society of Nevada, the Latimer Art Club, and the Artists Co-op Gallery of Reno. She has won many awards, including first place for pastels and the People's Choice Award at the 2022 Latimer Art Club 15th annual Miniature Art Show.

The museum will host this show from January through April 2026 and invites the community to view the new art exhibit. The Nevada Arts Council supports this project.

## Scottish Singer Julie Fowlis to Perform at Barkley Theatre

Julie Fowlis, the internationally recognized Scottish folk singer whose voice soared in the Disney-Pixar film "Brave," will bring the sounds of Gaelic tradition to the Barkley Theatre on Saturday, Feb. 7, 2026. The concert, presented by the Churchill Arts Council, is set to begin at 7 p.m., with doors opening at 6 p.m.

Fowlis is known for her luminous vocals and her ability to blend centuries-old Gaelic songs with modern sensibilities, captivating audiences regardless of their familiarity with the language. Her performances are celebrated for their warmth and emotional depth, bridging cultures and generations.

The event is presented in appreciation of Miss Margie, whose dedication to the arts has helped make cultural experiences like this one possible for the community, organizers said.



Photo by Craig Mackay.

Fowlis has received numerous accolades, including BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards and Musician of the Year at Scotland's Trad Music Awards. She has performed on stages across Europe and North America, and her voice has been streamed more than 120 million times on Spotify. One of her songs was even included on an official NASA astronaut playlist, sending her music into space.

The Churchill Arts Council said presenting Fowlis aligns with its mission to bring world-class artists and culturally significant performances to the region, enriching the community with unique artistic experiences.

For more information or to purchase tickets, visit [churchillarts.org](http://churchillarts.org) or follow the Churchill Arts Council on social media. Organizers encourage advance ticket purchases, as the performance is expected to attract a large audience.

## Broadway Revue Auditions Announced

The Performing Arts of Churchill County (PACC) is calling on singers, actors, and musical theater enthusiasts to audition for its upcoming Broadway Revue, set to feature a dozen show-stopping numbers from the Great White Way.

Open auditions will take place on Saturday, Feb. 14, from noon to 4 p.m. at the Fallon Theater on Maine Street. Each audition should last about five minutes, and individuals or groups may sign up for a 30-minute time slot at [paccnv.org](http://paccnv.org). Those unable to attend in person can submit a video audition, no longer than five minutes, to [ms.pattyfleming@gmail.com](mailto:ms.pattyfleming@gmail.com).

The Broadway Revue will showcase approximately 12 musical performances selected from the best auditions. Actors of all ages are welcome to try out, either as soloists or as part of an ensemble, and may choose any song or scene from a Broadway musical. Selected cast members must commit to all four scheduled performances.

The show debuts at the Dini Cultural Center in Yerington at 6:30 p.m. on Saturday, May 9. Audiences in Fallon can catch the revue at the Barkley Theater with evening performances at 7 p.m. on Friday and Saturday, May 15 and 16, and a 1 p.m. matinee on Saturday, May 16.

For more information about auditions and performance details, visit the PACC website at [paccnv.org](http://paccnv.org). Break a leg!



## FALLON COMMUNITY CALENDAR

## Senator Rosen's Staff Outreach

Churchill County Library  
Jan. 8, 1 p.m.

## Final day for Fallon on Ice

South Carson Street  
Jan. 11

## Ukulele for Beginners

Western Nevada College  
Jan. 20 - Mar. 10, 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

## Father-Daughter Dance

Churchill County High School  
Jan. 31, 6 to 8 p.m.

## Lunchtime Book Club

Churchill County Library

Jan. 9, 12:15 p.m.

## Chamber Ambassadors' Breakfast

Boys &amp; Girls Club, 8955 Mission Road

Jan. 13, 7:30 a.m.

## Conversational Spanish (online)

Western Nevada College

Jan. 21 - May 13, 4 to 6:45 p.m.

## Fallon Chamber Awards Dinner

Convention Center

Feb. 6, 6 p.m.

## Health &amp; Safety Institute

Western Nevada College  
Jan. 9, 5 to 9 p.m.

## Smash Burgers \$8

American Legion Post 16

Jan. 9, 6 to 8 p.m.

## Fallon on Ice Country Night

South Carson Street

Jan. 9, 6 p.m.

## Fallon Chamber of Commerce Luncheon

Churchill Arts Council, 151 E. Park St.

Jan. 15, 11:45 a.m.

## Artist Reception for Joanna Taylor

Churchill County Museum

Jan. 17, 3 to 5 p.m.

## Pups N' Popcorn

City of Fallon Animal Shelter

1255 Airport Road

Jan. 17, 12 p.m.

## Book Sculpting for Beginners

Western Nevada College

Jan. 24, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

## Author Talk with Megan Russ

Churchill County Library

Jan. 27, 6 p.m.

## Taylor Swift Eras Tour Fundraiser, Class of 2026

Fallon Theatre

Feb. 7, 11 a.m. and 2:30 p.m.



## BUSINESS

# Andy's Arcade Brings Family Fun

By Nancy Chapman

Daniel and Shannon Anderson opened Andy's Arcade with a clear mission: to create a safe, fun environment for children to enjoy interactive entertainment. The name honors Daniel's grandfather, Harold "Andy" Anderson, and pays tribute to the family while welcoming the community.

The arcade features classic coin or bill-operated cabinet games, including pinball, air hockey, boxing, and basketball, as well as video games. Toy vending machines, a perennial favorite among children, offer surprises with every turn, and a snack bar is available for refreshments. For convenience, the facility includes a change machine and an ATM.

Andy's Arcade operates weekdays from 3 p.m. to 8 p.m., Friday and Saturday from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m., and is closed on Sundays.

Located at 365 Front Street, formerly Corky's Soap and Suds which was a bar and laundromat, the arcade now occupies the bar area. The laundromat next door, The Clothesline, which the Andersons have also reopened, remains in service with eight washers and 16 dryers. It is managed by on-site staff who reside in the attached apartment. Plans are underway to expand the laundromat by adding more machines. The laundromat is open daily from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m.

Andy's Arcade welcomes birthday parties and celebrations of all kinds. Anderson encourages guests to bring their own food, to make their event special. Gift certificates are available in any amount.

For more information, visit Andy's Arcade on Facebook or call Shannon Anderson at 775-815-9047.



Toby Anderson, left, and Zowie Anderson play air hockey at Andy's Arcade, 365 Front St. Photo by Shannon Anderson.



Proper tree care helps preserve Fallon's historic cottonwoods and elms. Photo by MD Tree Surgery.

## Fallon's Tree Care Matters

By Marco DiGiacinto, MD Tree Surgery

On a quiet drive through Fallon, it's impossible not to notice the towering cottonwoods and old elms that give our streets character and shade. Many of these trees have stood longer than the homes beneath them. Just as noticeable, though, are the harsh cuts, flat-topped crowns, and stressed silhouettes that tell a different story, one of good intentions gone wrong. Too often, these trees were entrusted to someone claiming to be an "arborist," but lacking the education or credentials to earn that title.

The truth is simple and vital for Fallon residents and business owners. Anyone can call themselves an arborist, but not everyone truly is one. A real arborist is educated, evaluated, and credentialed through an accredited organization such as the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA). Certification is not handed out lightly; you cannot sit for the exam without at least three years of experience under a certified arborist. Once certified, continuing education units are required to maintain the credential. This ensures ongoing learning, accountability, and adherence to industry best practices.

In the Lahontan Valley, one of the most damaging practices conducted by untrained operators is tree topping. It cannot be stressed enough: Tree topping is the absolute worst thing you can do to a mature tree. It weakens structure, invites decay, and often leads to premature death. Sadly, many of Fallon's beautiful old-growth trees have been irreversibly damaged this way, often due to greed, ignorance, or both. These losses affect not only individual properties but also the character, safety, and value of our entire community.

This is where professional, science-based care makes all the difference. MD Tree Surgery brings decades of hands-on experience, backed by education, proper equipment, and a deep understanding of tree biology. Trees are not just landscaping features; they are living assets that can quickly become liabilities if neglected or improperly maintained. Large cottonwood, elm, and poplar trees require precise, informed pruning and, when necessary, careful removal — never topping — to remain safe and healthy.

Beyond technique, safety is paramount. Professional arboriculture is about more than chainsaws and climbing gear; it's about informed assessment and risk management.

Work performed in compliance with ISA, TCIA, and ANSI Z133 safety standards protects not only the crew on site, but also your home, your business, and your family. From identifying structural defects to evaluating fall zones and traffic exposure, educated decision-making is what separates professionals from pretenders.

The team at MD Tree Surgery includes multiple ISA-certified arborists and qualified power line clearance arborists, with additional certifications in first aid/CPR, aerial rescue, traffic flagging, aerial lift operation, and advanced safety protocols. With more than 35 years of experience and vetted, highly trained employees, they are equipped to serve Fallon's residential and commercial properties with services that include tree risk assessment, hazardous removals, precise pruning, improved aesthetic appeal, and increased overall property value.

Fallon deserves healthy, well-managed trees and honest professionals who respect both science and the responsibility of tree care. When the next cut is made on your property, will it be by someone who uses the title — or by MD Tree Surgery? This team has truly earned it.

An advertisement for Depot Casino &amp; Diner. It features a large image of the building with a clock tower and a train sign, followed by the text "Depot Casino &amp; Diner" and a logo. Below this are images of a bingo card, a burger, and a slot machine.

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## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

# Churchill School Board Launches Superintendent Search

By Rachel Dahl

The Churchill County School District Board of Trustees has formally launched its search for the district's next superintendent, approving a timeline that targets finalist interviews in March and a July 1 start date, along with a public stakeholder survey and an updated salary range intended to make the district more competitive in Nevada's rural superintendent market.

Superintendent Derild Parsons is set to retire on June 30.

Trustees took action during a special board meeting to direct Modern EducateHR, the firm assisting with the search, to proceed with recruitment and advertising immediately following approval of the candidate profile, salary range, survey, and application process.

According to the proposed search timeline included in the meeting packet and a presentation by Keith Lewis, lead consultant, the superintendent position is expected to post on Dec. 30, 2025, with applications open for a minimum 45-day window closing Feb. 14, 2026. During that period, consultants plan a broad advertising campaign plus targeted outreach through regional and national networks to encourage qualified candidates to apply.

The timeline also includes a community stakeholder survey running Jan. 6–Jan. 27, followed by screening and preliminary review Feb. 16–Feb. 27. Lewis said they will schedule to bring the board a slate of finalists, "not to exceed five candidates" at a board meeting around March 3, with finalist interviews proposed for March 12–13 or March 18–19. Contract development and board approval would follow, to finalize an agreement at the board's March 31 meeting if possible, or at a special meeting in early April.

Lewis also outlined "transition and entry planning" between April and June, including initial goal-setting and a smoother handoff ahead of July 1.

As part of the process, trustees approved a stakeholder input survey open to parents, staff, community members, and students aged 14 and older.

The survey asks respondents to rate leadership qualities such as integrity, trust, transparency, communication, and community visibility, as well as professional experience areas including budgeting, rural district experience, labor relations, safety and crisis management, and familiarity with Nevada regulations. It also asks participants to select their top three priorities for the next superintendent's first two to three years, including academic outcomes, staff recruitment and retention, financial stability, safety, and community trust, followed by open-ended

narrative questions.

Survey responses are intended to be anonymous, with any comments naming specific individuals redacted before results are shared with trustees.

The superintendent candidate profile approved by trustees outlines a leader expected to be a strong instructional and organizational leader, a careful steward of district finances, and an active presence in schools and in the community.

The profile states the board seeks a superintendent who respects the distinct roles of trustees and administration, makes difficult decisions when necessary, and is skilled in Nevada school finance and long-term sustainability.

One of the district's non-negotiables remains residency: the candidate profile specifies "willingness to become a resident of Churchill County within six months of accepting the position."

The packet also details the required application materials: a completed application, a letter of interest, a résumé, and a signed waiver related to Nevada's Open Meeting Law notice requirements.

The waiver is intended to help the board consider applicants and conduct the selection process without delays caused by statutory notice requirements when professional competence is at issue.

Trustees also approved an updated salary range for recruitment — \$175,000 to \$185,000 — after reviewing a compensation analysis showing Churchill's current superintendent base salary is below the rural median.

The salary analysis from Modern EducateHR reports that the median rural superintendent base salary for 2025–26 is approximately \$187,000, while Churchill's current base salary is \$167,238, placing the district below the rural median and below many similarly sized or slightly larger comparison districts.

The compensation study also notes Churchill's overall package is lean compared with peers, with relatively limited "add-ons" included in other districts' superintendent contracts.

In addition to approving the timeline and salary range, trustees directed the search firm to include a minimum of five years of administrative experience as a requirement for applicants. That requirement is intended to help ensure candidates are sufficiently seasoned for a district-wide leadership role.

With the approved direction in place, Modern EducateHR is expected to move quickly to post and recruit as the board works toward selecting a new superintendent for the 2026–27 school year.

**As part of the process, trustees approved a stakeholder input survey open to parents, staff, community members, and students aged 14 and older.**

# School District Budget up \$1.8 Million

By Rachel Dahl

The Churchill County School District is entering the second half of the fiscal year in a stronger financial position than anticipated after trustees approved an augmented budget reflecting nearly \$2 million in additional funds.

During a recent school board meeting, trustees unanimously approved Resolution No. 25-04, which increases the district's general fund based on a higher-than-expected ending fund balance from the prior fiscal year, along with proceeds from the sale of a student-built home and additional state and federal grant funding.

Superintendent Derild Parsons and Comptroller Amanda Hammond presented the revised budget, noting that the district's ending fund balance for fiscal year 2025 was approximately \$1.8 million higher than projected.

"With the information we had, the ending fund balance was higher than anticipated, and that was able to be brought into the budget," Parsons said. "That's a good thing for us and helps us as we finish out this year and begin planning for next year."

Hammond told the board that she reviewed all budget areas to ensure accuracy and alignment, noting there were no major surprises or unexpected shortfalls that would require significant changes.

"The ending fund balance for FY25 came in about \$2 million higher than expected, and that definitely helped us out for this year and going forward," Parsons said. "We've also received several more state and federal grants than were originally budgeted for."

One factor contributing to the increase was the sale of the Churchill County High School house project, which sold at a profit. The home was constructed by students as part of the district's construction and career-technical education program.

"It's been a wonderful thing for the community, and we're glad it sold," Parsons said. "We hope the new owners are really enjoying the house our students built."

While the augmented budget reflects improved numbers, Parsons cautioned that the district is not out of financial danger as it looks ahead to the next fiscal year amid flat state funding.

"Our ending fund balance from last year came in higher than we expected, and that is represented in the augmented budget," Parsons said in a statement following the meeting. "That is a good thing, and now that we have that number, we are working hard to identify our base for next year."

He added that difficult decisions may still lie ahead.

"While it helps, it does not mean we are out of the woods yet," Parsons said. "We will soon know how much we need to cut from our budget for next year to deal with flat funding. We have been very frugal and are trying very hard to be as efficient as possible with our funds."



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## COURT

## Tenth Judicial District Court

*The Tenth Judicial District Court convened Tuesday, Dec. 30, with Judge Steven Kosach presiding, sitting in for Judge Thomas Stockard.*

By Teresa Moon and Leanna Lehman

**Kevin Jay Chico** was not present for a Competency Hearing as he continues to decline to appear in court. To be deemed competent in criminal cases, defendants must be able to understand the legal proceedings, including the charges filed against them, communicate with their lawyer, recall facts, and assist in their own defense.

Judge Kosach stated that the court was in possession of evaluations by Drs. Pierson and Patterson who found Chico not currently competent, but likely able to be restored to competency.

Chico was charged in 2024 with Petit Larceny, Robbery with a Deadly Weapon, Robbery of an Elderly Victim, First Degree Kidnapping, Own or Possess a Firearm as a Prohibited Person, Assault with a Deadly Weapon, and Grand Larceny of a Motor Vehicle.

Senior Deputy District Attorney Chelsea Sanford stated the state wishes to traverse the findings (review for the purpose of formally challenging or disputing the evaluation findings) and requested an Evidentiary Hearing.

Churchill County Public Defender Jacob Sommer said that, based on the evaluation findings, he would like his client placed at Lake's Crossing for competency-restoration treatment.

Judge Kosach ruled that an Evidentiary Hearing was needed and stated a date would be set administratively.

**Cory Michael Cone**'s sentencing on two Category B Felonies was continued to January 6.

Cone was charged with Attempt to Commit Murder, punishable by 2-20 years in prison, and First Degree Arson, punishable by 2-15 years in prison.

Court documents state that on or about Oct. 3, 2024, Cone did, with malice aforethought, deliberately and with premeditation, attempt to kill Robert J. Shivner by setting fire to a dwelling, house, or other structure. Specifically, the Criminal Complaint alleges Cone placed gasoline under Shivner's home and ignited it, resulting in a fire that engulfed the dwelling.

Hearings for **Susan Lynch** and **Lauren Nicole Gilmore** were continued with dates to be set administratively.

## Munoz Pleads Not Guilty to Murder, Trial Set for Aug. 3

By Leanna Lehman

Daniel Lee Munoz of Fallon and Reno pleaded not guilty to Open Murder on May 3, 2025, in Reno's Second Judicial District Court before Judge David Hardy, upon which the court set a jury trial for August 3, 2026.

The case began on Nov. 20, 2024, when the Reno Police Department (RPD) and Churchill County Sheriff's Office both received calls regarding a missing 40-year-old woman last seen alive between Nov. 8 and 9, 2024.

RPD initiated a joint investigation with Churchill County, which led to the discovery of the body of Xiaoxia Zhang, the wife of Daniel Munoz, the following day. Zhang was buried under the trampoline in the yard of the couple's Del Rio Drive home in Fallon and was believed to have been killed in their residence in the 6100 block of Pleasant Oak Trail in Reno.

During the course of the investigation, detectives believed that Xiaoxia Zhang, known to her friends and family in the U.S. as Shawna Munoz, was likely killed in Reno and then transported to Fallon. Munoz was identified as a suspect, arrested in Churchill County, and later transferred to the Washoe County Jail.

The case originated in the Reno Justice Court, where Washoe County Deputy District Attorney Adam Cate requested that bail be set at \$10 million, with bond only. Defense attorneys Orrin Johnson and Robert M. Draskovich argued against the high bond, noting that such an amount was nearly impossible to secure and asserting that the risk was too high for surety companies, even with collateral.

Reno Justice Court Judge Ryan Sullivan set bail at \$5 million, which was posted through Abel Bail Bonds on March 7, 2025. Munoz was released from custody, placed on house arrest, and ordered to surrender his passport.

Following a preliminary hearing on April 29-30, 2025, Judge Sullivan found that enough evidence existed for the case to proceed. Justice

Court preliminary hearings, unlike trials, do not require proof beyond a reasonable doubt. Instead, the court determines whether probable cause exists that a crime was committed and that the defendant committed it. An estimated 85% to 95% of cases meet this threshold and are bound over to district court, as was Munoz's case.

On April 30, the case was bound over to the Second Judicial District Court in Washoe County. Munoz was arraigned on May 15 before District Court Judge David Hardy, at which time he again pleaded not guilty and waived his right to a speedy trial. In August and again in November, forms for substitution of counsel were filed. On Dec. 11, his attorney filed a motion for bail reduction, despite Munoz being out of custody. Judge Hardy denied the motion.

Several issues have plagued the case since Munoz's arrest in Churchill County. Jurisdiction was heavily contested early in the case. Munoz's attorneys argued that the matter should be heard in Churchill County, where his wife's body was discovered, asserting there was no forensic evidence indicating Shawna Munoz was killed in Washoe County. They maintained that proper jurisdiction lay where the body was found.

"Strikingly, there is no direct forensic evidence which would establish that any criminal activity happened in Washoe County at all," they wrote. "There is nothing to indicate a violent murder was committed in the Reno home — no evidence of large blood stains or recent cleanup, broken furniture, signs of struggle, bullet holes, etc."

According to the defense, the Nov. 21 search of the Fallon property yielded little evidence apart from a bleach odor and a chemical stain on Munoz's pants. Munoz told police he had been cleaning his pool. Police seized the pants, but "no matching evidence of a half-cleaned crime scene was discovered."

"Even if, for the sake of argument, Mr. Munoz had killed Shawna, the available evidence suggests that this act occurred wholly within Churchill County," the defense wrote in bail arguments.



*Daniel Munoz at his arraignment in Reno Justice Court Nov. 26, 2024. Image from court video footage, courtesy of Reno Justice Court.*

Additionally, the defense argued that the medical examiner's report, released Jan. 17, 2025, did not identify a specific cause of death, listing only "homicide." According to the defense, the report noted decomposition but found no signs of gunshot wounds, stabbing, strangulation, blunt force trauma, or poisoning.

"There were no obvious wounds or broken bones which would explain the death," said Johnson and Draskovich in their motion. The medical examiner classified the death as a homicide "based solely on the circumstances of the death," not physical evidence.

"Even an intentional killing in self-defense is not a crime at all," continued the defense. However, according to police interviews, Munoz initially told investigators, "There were no problems in the marriage, mental health issues, fears of threat or of suicide, and the family was financially stable."

These issues were addressed by both the state and the defense during the April 29-30 preliminary hearing and will likely be revisited at trial.

## Released Without Bail on Violent Charge, Why?

By Leanna Lehman

When someone is arrested on charges involving violence, sexual assault, or crimes against children, public reaction is often swift and emotional. When those same defendants are released without posting bail, outrage often follows. "How can someone charged with something that serious be released?" is a question heard frequently.

The answer lies in due process.

While the phrase "innocent until proven guilty" does not appear verbatim in the U.S. Constitution, it is embedded within, particularly in the Fifth, Sixth, Eighth, and Fourteenth Amendments. The presumption of innocence is not a loophole or technicality. It is a foundational protection designed to ensure punishment follows proof, not accusation.

Churchill County Public Defender Jacob Sommer, who has practiced criminal defense for more than 20 years, explains why that matters. "Most of the time, law enforcement officers and prosecutors do an excellent job in complying with their duties as agents of the government, but whether we like it or not, mistakes are sometimes made. Constitutional and legal protections are in place to help ensure those mistakes cannot result in the tragedy of punishing innocent citizens. The presumption of innocence is chief among those protections."

That principle is most difficult to accept when the allegations are severe. Sexual crimes against

children, homicide, and violent assaults evoke fear and anger, and understandably so. But Sommer cautions against abandoning constitutional protections in emotionally charged cases. "Standing firm in these protecting principles does not make someone a proponent of crime. Rather, it makes someone a proponent of protecting the innocent. That might come at an emotional cost because we cannot satisfy our desire to grab the pitchfork, but it is the price we must pay to ensure all of us are protected from governmental overreach."

Much of the confusion surrounding pretrial release stems from a 2021 Nevada Supreme Court decision known as Valdez-Jimenez. In that ruling, the court reaffirmed that pretrial release is the normal and expected course of action, not the exception. "Every accused person has the right to reasonable bail, and the bail set must not be excessive," Sommer said. "This means that the amount of bail cannot be an amount that is more than an accused person can reasonably be expected to afford. If it is, it would be an unconstitutional denial of bail."

Prior to that ruling, courts often set high cash bail in serious cases. John J. Piro, Clark County's Chief Deputy Public Defender, explained that this practice effectively jailed people before trial simply because they could not afford release. Courts were "keeping presumptively innocent people in jail – essentially equated to a denial of bail."

Today, judges across Nevada are required to follow that decision. At a bail hearing, the state must present clear and convincing evidence that no combination of non-monetary conditions can reasonably ensure public safety or a defendant's appearance in court. If the state cannot meet that burden, release on one's own recognizance (OR), is required. The sole exception is murder, in which bail may be denied.

OR release does not mean unconditional freedom. Judges consider criminal history, ties to the community, prior failures to appear, and potential flight risk. Lacking any of those, defendants are often released, but with conditions. These often include Court Services supervision, drug testing, GPS monitoring, and strict no-contact orders when victims are involved. Violating those conditions can result in immediate detention and the imposition of bail.

Sommer hopes the community will pause before rushing to judgment. "For the sake of liberty, protection of the innocent, and effective justice, we cannot afford to compromise – even a little – on these important constitutional rights. May I humbly suggest that when we hear a conversation, read a story, or encounter a situation that prompts us to condemn, malign, or vilify someone, we pause. As someone I respect very much recently said, 'Anger never persuades. Hostility builds no one. Contention never leads to inspired solutions.' — R.M. Nelson."

## EDUCATION

## Bighorn Bulletin

By Angela Viera, with photos courtesy of Oasis Academy.

## FUTURE FEST FUNDS INVESTED IN HANDS-ON LEARNING AND STEM INNOVATION

Funds raised during April's STEM-focused Future Fest are already making a meaningful impact across Oasis Academy, with several projects underway that directly support student learning in science, technology, engineering, and math.

One of the first investments has been replacing obsolete LEGO Robotics equipment for grades 4 through high school. The updated robotics kits enable students to engage in more advanced coding, engineering, and problem-solving, better aligning classroom learning with current technology standards and real-world applications.

In addition to upgrading classroom resources, Future Fest proceeds are also being used to renovate a new STEM classroom located in the Gordman's Space. This transformed area is designed to serve as a hub for innovation and creativity, providing students with a dedicated environment to explore technology and engineering concepts.

Once completed, the new STEM classroom will house LEGO Robotics, 3D printers, and other technology tools. The space will support a variety of technology and engineering electives, providing students with up-to-date hands-on experiences that encourage collaboration, critical thinking, and innovation.

School leaders expressed gratitude to everyone who supported Future Fest, noting that community involvement is vital to expanding opportunities for students. Thanks to the event's success, students across multiple grade levels will benefit from upgraded equipment and a modern learning space designed to prepare them for future careers in STEM.

"I am extremely grateful each day to our generous donors and supportive families," said Dane Nott, K-12 School Leader. "These donations and fundraisers are the lifeblood for Oasis Academy. These funds positively impact our ability to implement programs such as STEAM, transforming classroom dreams into tangible tech, tools, and experiences, ensuring every child's curiosity sparks innovation and bridges funding gaps for essential, future-focused learning."

## MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS MAKE THE CASE FOR NEVADA'S BEST COUNTY

Middle school students in the Project Citizen/Community elective recently put their research, creativity, and presentation skills to the test during a project that asked one big question: Which of Nevada's 17 counties is the best?

As part of the assignment, student groups selected a Nevada county and delivered timed presentations highlighting what makes their choice stand out. Each presentation explored key aspects of county life, including local economies, tourist attractions, outdoor recreation opportunities, and annual events that draw visitors and residents alike.

Students researched industries that drive each county's economy, from agriculture and mining to tourism and small businesses, and explained how those industries support local communities. They also highlighted popular tourist destinations, sharing why specific landmarks, attractions, and historical sites make their county unique.

Nevada's vast outdoor recreation opportunities played a significant role in many presentations, with students discussing hunting, hiking, camping, fishing, skiing, and other activities available across Nevada's diverse landscapes. In addition, students examined annual events such as festivals



New LEGO Robotics kits for STEM classes.

(Cowboy Poetry Festival, Burning Man), fairs, and community celebrations (Armed Forces Day), explaining how these gatherings bring people together and contribute to local culture.

The project not only strengthened research and public speaking skills, but also helped students gain a deeper appreciation for Nevada's geography, history, and economic diversity. By the end of the presentations, students had gained a better understanding of what makes each county special—and discovered that choosing the "best" county often depends on what individuals value most.

## YEARBOOKS NOW ON SALE ONLINE

Oasis families are invited to purchase this year's school yearbooks online at [yearbookforever.com](http://yearbookforever.com). Yearbooks capture the memories, milestones, and moments that make the school year special, giving students a keepsake they will cherish for years to come.

When placing an order, parents are reminded to carefully select the correct yearbook option—K-8 or high school—to ensure their student receives the appropriate book. Ordering early helps ensure you receive a copy of this year's edition before it sells out.

For more information or to place an order, visit [yearbookforever.com](http://yearbookforever.com) today. Call the school at 775-423-5437 with any questions.

## Veritas Preparatory School: Classical and Christian Advent Week at Veritas

By Gretchen Felte with photos courtesy of Veritas.



Students at Veritas Preparatory School gathered for an Advent breakfast hosted by the United Parent Group.

The week before Christmas was filled with joyful activity and meaningful reflection at Veritas Preparatory School, as students, families, and staff came together to celebrate the season of Advent.

The week began on Monday morning with a festive Advent breakfast hosted by the Unite Parent Group and supported by numerous parent volunteers. Students gathered as an entire school community, sitting with their classmates and teachers to share a warm meal of fruit, casseroles, and pancakes. The breakfast provided a welcoming start to the week and a tangible expression of fellowship and gratitude.

Following the meal, the school transitioned seamlessly into the first Advent chapel of the week. Each morning thereafter, classes met in the chapel for a 15-minute devotional time focused on the theme "The Music and Art of Advent." During these chapels, students were introduced to a significant work of art related to the Advent story and invited to reflect on how it pointed to the hope and meaning of Christ's birth.

Each chapel concluded with the introduction of a new Christmas carol, allowing students to learn and sing a different song each day. These daily moments of worship helped create a rhythm of reflection and celebration throughout the week.

The festivities culminated on the final day before Christmas break, when parents joined students and faculty in the chapel for a school-wide carol sing. Together, the community sang all of the carols learned throughout the week, joyfully marking the beginning of the Christmas holiday and sending students into the break with hearts and voices lifted in celebration.

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## SPORTS

*Wrestlers of the Week*

# Garcia, Sitzer, Anderson Honored



Evan Garcia, Tommie Sitzer, and Nathan Anderson. Photo courtesy of the Churchill County School District.

Evan Garcia, Tommie Sitzer, and Nathan Anderson were named Wrestlers of the Week for their standout performances at the Earl Wilkins, Lovelock, and McQueen tournaments, respectively. Each athlete demonstrated outstanding skill, perseverance, and sportsmanship throughout their matches, impressing coaches and teammates alike. Evan Garcia dominated the mats at the Earl Wilkins Tournament, highlighting both technical mastery and determination in every round. Tommie Sitzer brought his A-game to the Lovelock tournament, securing key victories and earning praise for his relentless drive. Nathan Anderson stood out at the McQueen tournament with a combination of agility and strength, making him a formidable opponent and a deserving honoree. The Gubler Family generously donated T-shirts in recognition of their achievements. Special thanks to Sue Segura for providing the information. These awards not only celebrate individual accomplishment but also foster a sense of community and encouragement within the wrestling program.

## Greenwave Crushes Debbie Smith CTE Academy

Staff Report

The Churchill County Greenwave made a strong statement on Saturday, Jan. 3, rolling past Debbie Smith CTE Academy 76-9 in a non-conference varsity boys' basketball matchup.

The Greenwave dominated the boards, pulling down 19 offensive rebounds, and improved their record to 8-3 with the victory. Maxton Richardson led the Greenwave with 13 points, adding five rebounds and five steals to fuel the rout. Blake Dinneen also chipped in with 11 points.

Next up, Churchill County hits the road to face Fernley in a 3A Northern - East test Tuesday, Jan. 6. Tipoff in Fernley, Nev., is scheduled for 7 p.m.



Pictured third from the left, Carson Melendy takes second place at Sierra Nevada Classic. Photo courtesy of Greenwave Wrestling.

## Lady Greenwave Basketball Rebounds

Staff Report

The varsity Lady Greenwave basketball team faced a setback against the Liberty Patriots (Henderson, Nev.), falling 49-38 on Dec. 30. Karlie Simper led the Lady Greenwave with 10 points and three steals, while Kortnie Simper added 13 points in the hard-fought contest. The loss dropped Lady Greenwave's record to 11-2.

Just days later, Lady Greenwave bounced back convincingly, routing Debbie Smith CTE Academy of Reno, 55-4, in a non-conference game on Saturday, Jan. 2. The victory improved their record to 12-2 as they head into the heart of the season.

Lady Greenwave will look to maintain momentum when they travel to Fernley to face the Vaqueros on Jan. 6 at 6 p.m.

## Melendy Earns Silver in Reno

Staff Report

Carson Melendy, a senior at Churchill County High School, powered his way to a second-place finish in the 165-pound weight class at the 2025 Sierra Nevada Classic wrestling tournament, held Dec. 29-30 at the Reno Events Center.

Melendy, a Greenwave varsity wrestler, competed in a challenging field at the annual tournament, which drew top talent from across the region and featured divisions for High School Boys, High School Girls, and Youth. Wrestlers vied for podium spots before a packed crowd.

Churchill County's team showed depth and determination, with several athletes posting winning records. Wyatt Lambert, Manuel Barros, Braylon Byrd, Andre Green, and Joseph Romero each finished the tournament at 3-2, contributing to the Greenwave's overall strong showing on the mats.

The Sierra Nevada Classic remains one of the premier events on the high school wrestling calendar, providing valuable experience and exposure for athletes as they head into the heart of the season.

## Young Wrestlers Show Grit at Sierra Nevada Classic



Medals galore for the Fallon Outlaws at the Sierra Nevada Classic. Photos courtesy of Fallon Outlaws.



Fallon Outlaw wrestler competes at the Sierra Nevada Classic.

Staff Report

The local youth wrestling team put together a strong showing at the Sierra Nevada Classic, turning in a full day of hard work, growth, and lessons on the mat.

While several wrestlers earned 1st-, 2nd-, and 3rd-place finishes, coaches said the bigger win

was seeing athletes test themselves against tough competition and identify areas to sharpen as the season continues.

"This was a great measuring stick for us," coaches said. "We saw progress, effort, and the kind of grit that leads to improvement."

Representing the team at the tournament were first place: Harleigh, Kaidan, Hudson, Kyp-

ton, Raymond, Landon, Baylee; second: Zack, Clace, Bradley, Mickey, Zayden, Connor, Cole, Jazmine, Hunter, Easton; third: Remi, Finn, Lucas, Anthony, Chael, Wyatt, Peyton, Breyson, Atticus, Karson, and Maudie.

With medals earned and experience gained, the team now turns its focus to getting back in the practice room and building on what they learned.

## COLUMNS

## What's Cooking in Kelli's Kitchen

## Setting Intentions Not Making Resolutions

By Kelli Kelly

Every January, we are invited, sometimes loudly, to make resolutions.

Lose the weight.  
Save the money.  
Fix the habit.  
Become a better version of ourselves by February.

I have made plenty of resolutions over the years. Some worked. Most did not. Even the ones that did came with a quiet sense of failure when life inevitably got in the way. A missed day. A busy week. A hard season.

This year, I decided to try something different: instead of making resolutions, I am setting intentions.

That shift might sound subtle, but it feels meaningful. Resolutions tend to be rigid and time-bound, often framed as pass-fail tests we administer to ourselves. Intentions feel more like orientation points. They do not demand perfection; they invite practice. An intention allows us to say: This is how I want to move through the year. Not flawlessly, but honestly.

As part of that shift, I spent time reflecting on what I want 2026 to feel like, not just what I want to accomplish. I asked myself a few simple questions.

What feels fragile right now?

What deserves more care?

Where have I been rushing instead of listening?

What do I want to still be tending a year from now?

What do I need to set down?

Out of that reflection came a word.

My word for 2026 is stewardship, not in a grand or abstract sense, but in the everyday one. Stewardship is about care, responsibility, and continuity. It is about tending what is already in your hands rather than constantly reaching for something new.

It is not a checklist. It is a compass.

Some days, stewardship might look like saying no to one more commitment. Other days, it might mean staying late to finish something that matters. Cultivating what endures asks a longer question: Will this still matter in five years? If not, maybe it does not need all of today's energy.

This time of year is often framed as a reset, a clean slate. But hope works better when we treat it as a practice, not a feeling. Hope is not just optimism. It is the quiet decision to keep showing up. It is choosing to invest care even when outcomes are uncertain. That is one reason I keep coming



**That shift might sound subtle, but it feels meaningful.**  
**Resolutions tend to be rigid and time-bound, often framed as pass-fail tests we administer to ourselves.**

back to cooking as a metaphor for hope.

When you cook for someone, you are making a small bet on the future. You assume they will be there to eat the meal. You trust that the effort matters. You turn simple ingredients into something nourishing, even though the dishes will need washing, and tomorrow you will be hungry again. Cooking is repetitive. It is imperfect. It does not solve everything. And yet, it is deeply hopeful.

So is tending a garden in winter.

So is mentoring a young person.

So is sticking with a community through hard seasons.

If resolutions have left you feeling discouraged in the past, I invite you to try something gentler this year. Instead of asking, "What do I want to fix?" try asking, "How do I want to show up?" Instead of setting a rule, try naming an intention. You do not need to choose the "right" word. You need one that feels like it can walk with you through the year, meeting you where you are on both the good days and the hard ones.

If you are looking for a tangible way to begin the year, I recommend starting with a pot of soup. Not a rushed one. A slow one. Something that simmers while the house fills with warmth—a simple chicken and rice soup. A lentil soup with onions and garlic softened patiently in olive oil.

A vegetable stew built from whatever is left

in the fridge. Soup is forgiving. It improves with time. It makes enough to share or to save for later.

I do not know what 2026 will bring.  
None of us do.

But I do know this: intentions give us room to grow without the constant threat of failure. They let us return, again and again, to what matters without shame for having wandered.

So instead of resolving to be better, I am intending to be more present.

More thoughtful.

More deliberate in what I care for and what I let go.

If that intention leads to a fuller pot, a stronger table, and a little more hope in the year ahead, that is a pretty good way to begin.



Kelli Kelly, Slinger of Produce.  
Slurper of Dumplings.  
Person of the Bean.

## Allison's Book Report

## Rest and Read Recommendations

By Allison Diegel

Aloha! This week, I am writing from my annual break from winter in beautiful Maui. I am spending the next few days sitting on the beach, inhaling the fresh saltwater air, and soaking up the sunshine. From my spot on the sand, I watch humpback whales breach in the distance, adding to the peaceful atmosphere. I may pick up a book to read for a while, and then perhaps take a nap. While some might say that I am "doing nothing," resting is not nothing. Everyone needs a moment to pause and recharge from time to time.

I will be back soon with a new book pick, but until then, I encourage you to find a moment to rest this week as well. If you are looking for book recommendations to enjoy during your downtime, feel free to visit my Instagram, [allison.the.reader](#), where I share suggestions to tide you over until my next post.

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.



Allison Diegel and her family relax on the beach in Maui, Hawaii. Photo by Allison Diegel.

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## COLUMNS

## Movies &amp; More

By Kelli Perez

The Fallon Theatre is welcoming the new year with a full slate of community events, live music, and movie screenings to bring warmth and entertainment to local audiences.

On Friday and Saturday at 6 p.m., the theater continues its six-week franchise marathon with "Despicable Me 2" (2013), a family-friendly animated film about Gru adjusting to life as a dad while getting drawn back into a world of secret

agents and mischievous Minions. The PG-rated movie runs 1 hour, 38 minutes.

Following at 7 p.m. both nights is "Captain America: The First Avenger" (2011), sponsored by Tedford Tire as part of the nation's 250th anniversary celebration. The Marvel origin story, rated PG-13, runs 2 hours, 4 minutes, and follows Steve Rogers' transformation into a World War II hero.

Later this winter, the lineup continues with "Space Cowboys" and "Spies Like Us" on Friday, Feb. 20.

Live music returns to the Fallon Theatre stage on Friday, Jan. 30, at 7 p.m. with The Kindred North. The acoustic duo, founded in 2025 in Fallon, features Raena Blais and McKenzie Warren, who blend folk, country, and rock with heartfelt harmonies and original music. Admission is \$12.

February brings a Galentine's Show on Friday, Feb. 6, and Saturday, Feb. 7 at 7 p.m. The one-hour performances feature the Domesticated Man Band and offer free admission—ideal for a girls' night out or anyone looking to celebrate with friends.

Arrive early to enjoy a complimentary glass of wine.

The theatre's annual Valentine's Day 5K fundraiser is set for Saturday, Feb. 7, starting at 71 S. Maine St. Registration opens at 8 a.m. and closes at 8:50 a.m.; the race begins at 9 a.m. Pre-register by Jan. 20 to secure a commemorative T-shirt. Registration costs \$25 for individuals or \$40 per couple. Day-of prices are \$30 and \$50. Forms are available at Western Alliance Bank, Kent's Supply Center, or online. For more information, contact Crystal at 775-304-9975 or Taylor at 775-316-0952.

Looking ahead, the Fallon Theatre will host "Heritage of the West" on Saturday, March 7, 2026. The free event celebrates regional history with performances, cowboy poetry, dance, and oral histories. Those interested in participating can email huck\_salt@yahoo.com or call 775-423-2055 or 775-217-4142.

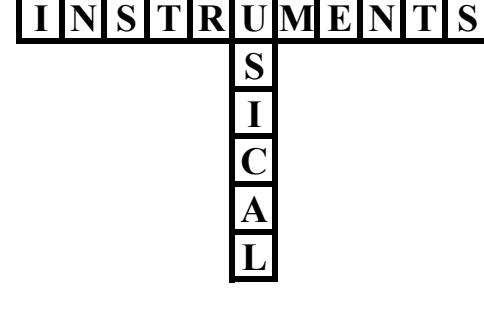
The Fallon Theatre remains committed to offering free movie screenings when possible. Concessions include popcorn and candy. To rent the theater or feature a message on the marquee, call 775-423-6210 or email thefallontheatre@gmail.com.



On Friday and Saturday at 6 p.m., the theater continues its six-week franchise marathon with "Despicable Me 2" (2013).

## Crossword

By Peanut

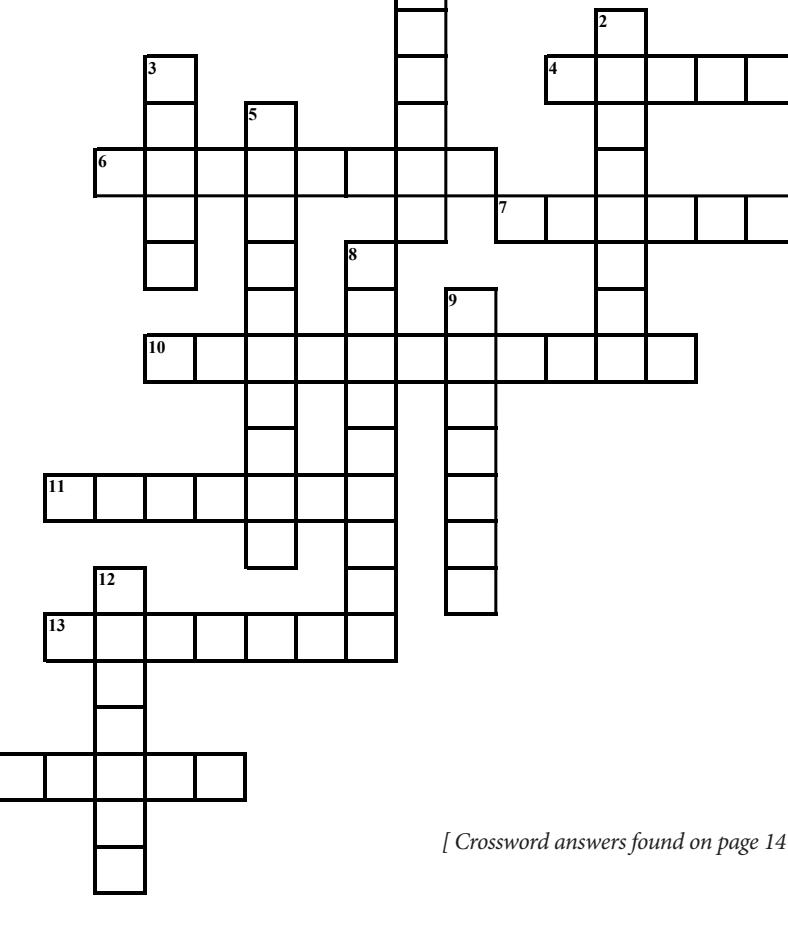


## Across

- Signaling brass
- Set of bells played on keyboard
- Tubular bells
- Baroque keyboard
- Double reed woodwind
- Latin rattles
- Russian guitar?

## Down

- Afro-Cuban drums
- Zither, psaltery cousin
- Trap drum?
- Australian woodwind
- Handheld clackers
- Ceramic vessel flute
- Scottish woodwind



[ Crossword answers found on page 14 ]

PostCards: Will be back in February

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## LEGAL NOTICES

### CITY OF FALON'S NOTICE OF INTENT TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT OR OTHER ARRANGEMENT FOR FIXED-BASE OPERATION SERVICES AT THE FALON MUNICIPAL AIRPORT

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, pursuant to Nevada Revised Statute 496.090, that the City of Fallon intends to enter into a contract or other arrangement with FLYINTIZ AVIATION, LLC for the provision of Fixed-Base Operator services at the Fallon Municipal Airport ("airport"), which may include, but not limited to the following:

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- Conferring the privilege of supplying goods, commodities, things, services or facilities at the airport or air navigation facility or other facilities.
- Making available services to be furnished by the City of Fallon or its agents or by other persons at the airport or air navigation facility or other facilities.

NOTICE IF FURTHER GIVEN that a regular meeting of the City Council will be held on January 20, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. in the City Council Chambers, 55 W. Williams Avenue, Fallon, Nevada, at which meeting any interested person may appear.

Published in  
*The Fallon Post*  
 Dec. 26, 2025 and Jan. 2, 9, and 16, 2026  
 Ad #6411

### 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.

Published in  
*The Fallon Post*  
 Jan. 9, 16, 23, 30, Feb. 2 and 13, 2026  
 Ad #6415

### NOTICE

NOTICE is hereby given that the Churchill County Board of Equalization will meet during the month of February 2026. The meetings will be held in the Churchill County Commission Chambers, Churchill County Administration Complex, 155 N. Taylor Street, Suite 145, Fallon, Nevada.

Persons wishing to appear and be heard at these meetings for the purpose of seeking adjustments on assessed valuation must obtain a Petition for such with the Churchill County Assessor at the Churchill County Administration Complex, 155 N. Taylor Street, Suite 200, Fallon, Nevada and return the petition to the County Assessor on or before 5 p.m. on January 15, 2026. The County Board of Equalization shall conclude business on or before February 28, 2026.

Published in  
*The Fallon Post*  
 Dec. 26, 2025, Jan. 2, and 9, 2026  
 Ad #6397

CASE NO. 25-10DC-1239

Dept. No. 1  
 AMBER L. MELLO  
 58 Venturacci Lane  
 Fallon, Nevada 89406  
 775-225-8229

IN THE TENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT OF THE STATE OF NEVADA IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF CHURCHILL

In the Matter of the Estate of SCOTT ALLEN MELLO, Deceased.

### NOTICE TO CREDITORS

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the undersigned has been duly appointed and qualified by the above-entitled court on the 6th day of January, 2026 as Administrator of the Estate of SCOTT ALLEN MELLO, deceased. ALL CREDITORS having claims against said estate are required to file the same with the proper vouchers attached, with the clerk of the court within SIXTY (60) days after the first publication of this Notice.

DATED: This January 6, 2026.

/s/ AMBER MELLO  
 Administrator for the Estate

Published in  
*The Fallon Post*  
 January 9, 16, and 23, 2026  
 Ad #6417

CASE NO. 25-10DC-1239

Dept. No. 1  
 AMBER L. MELLO  
 58 Venturacci Lane  
 Fallon, Nevada 89406

IN THE TENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT OF THE STATE OF NEVADA IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF CHURCHILL

In the Matter of the Estate of SCOTT ALLEN MELLO, Deceased.

### NOTICE OF FILING PETITION

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT: AMBER MELLO, having filed with the clerk of this court their Petition for Probate of Estate, Issuance of Letters of Administration upon the estate of SCOTT ALLEN MELLO, the hearing of the same having been fixed by said court for the 6th day of January, 2026, at 9:00 o'clock a.m. of said day, or as soon thereafter as Petitioner may be heard, at the courtroom, 73 North Maine Street, within Fallon, Churchill County, Nevada, and all persons interested in the said estate are notified then and there to appear and show cause, if any they have, why the said petition should not be granted.

DATED:  
 This 23rd day of December, 2025  
 /s/ AMBER MELLO

Published in  
*The Fallon Post*  
 January 2, 9 and 16, 2026  
 Ad #6414

### CROSSWORD ANSWERS

*Crossword found on page 13*

BAGPIPE  
 BALALAIKA  
 BASSOON  
 BONGOS  
 BUGLE

CARILLON  
 CASTANETS  
 CHIMES  
 DIDGERIDOO  
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