

Union Fights Hospital Over Wage Increase

Designation of 'regular employee' at heart of fight

By Tierna Unruh-Enos,
Sandoval Signpost

A labor union is fighting for the right of some nurses and hospital staff at the University of New Mexico Sandoval Regional Medical Center (SRMC) to receive a wage increase that employees at UNM Hospital (UNMH) in Albuquerque and other clinics were given.

On Aug. 9, UNMH announced that all regular employees of UNMH and its clinics, including some employees at the SRMC would receive a 3% general wage increase. The increase comes as a result of a newly increased Medicaid reimbursement.

The wage increase did not apply to employees at SRMC that the United Health Professionals NM division of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) is seeking to represent.

It's part of an ongoing fight between the union and hospital administration over the designation of "regular" employees. According to New Mexico's labor laws, a regular full-time employee is normally scheduled to work at least 40 hours per week. A regular part-time employee is hired for an indefinite period of time and is scheduled to work less than 40 hours per week.

Currently, AFT represents nurses and some hospital staff at SRMC, but

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Bernalillo May Get \$20M for Wastewater Plant

Funding clears U.S. House, moves on to Senate



Bernalillo Wastewater Treatment Plant. (Source: Town of Bernalillo)

By Jesse Jones, Sandoval Signpost

U.S. Rep. Melanie Stansbury has secured \$20 million for improvements to Bernalillo's wastewater treatment plant in the House of Representatives' version of the Water Resources Development Act.

On July 22, the House passed the act by a vote of 359 to 13, authorizing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to enhance the nation's water resources infrastructure.

"Modernizing wastewater treatment plants and systems is crucial to ensure clean water supplies in our communities," Stansbury said in a statement to the *Signpost*. "Leveraging federal funding is one of the most powerful tools we have to make investments in our districts."

However, this is just the start, as the bill must still pass the Senate and be signed into law by President

Joe Biden before the funds can be released. Bernalillo Mayor Jack Torres was unaware of the funding until contacted by the *Signpost*.

"We didn't know it had even gotten through the House yet, which is kind of weird to me, usually staff will let you know right away," Torres said.

If approved, the funding will be spent on a "total overhaul of the entire wastewater plant," Torres said. "It would, essentially, from my point of view, give us the equivalent of a brand-new plant."

According to the 2021 Wastewater Treatment Plant Master Plan developed by Molzen Corbin, the Bernalillo treatment plant was built in 1960 and was fully overhauled in 1980. The plant underwent minor upgrades in 2002. A new plant was constructed in 2009 in response to capacity improvements identified in a 2004 report.

The master plan has identified several critical areas for improvement, including service life replacements, capacity upgrades, safety enhancements, deferred maintenance and equipment failures. The highest priority was replacing the UV disinfection equipment, with installing new technology for post-treatment aeration as the second-highest priority.

Other funding

In addition to Stansbury's funding, Sen. Martin Heinrich — whose spokesperson provided a statement to the *Signpost* — has also been pursuing funding for local initiatives.

"Senator Heinrich has fought hard to secure funding for wastewater infrastructure and management projects," Heinrich's spokesperson said. "As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Heinrich locked in \$2.5 million for the Army Corps' environmental infrastructure program to support projects like the one being pursued by the town of Bernalillo in the FY25 Energy and Water Development Appropriations Bill."

Stansbury also appropriated \$1.5 million in community-directed funding that will support the construction of a new fire station in Bernalillo. The funding will come to the town through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development program.

According to Torres, the \$1.5 million in funding for the fire station will only be released once the project is fully funded. This will happen after the town receives an estimate, gets contract bids and the USDA confirms that sufficient funds are available.

"We'll have to come up with additional funding before we get our hands on the \$1.5 million," he said.

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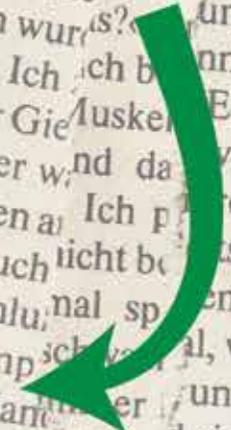
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— UNION from page 1

would like to include PRN employees into their membership. PRN is Latin for “pro re nata” which translates to “as the need arises.” While PRN employees may work full time, they are only required to work at least one weekend per month. UNMH administrators say they don’t believe PRNs fall under the state law of regular employees, and therefore should not be represented by a union.

“We believe that PRNs are very valuable to our hospitals,” said Chris Ramirez, director of communications for UNMH. “But we stand by state law though that they are not regular employees, and are not considered as such at any hospital in New Mexico. It’s a shame that the union is standing in the way of many SRMC staff receiving the same wage increase we’re proud to give our regular employees.”

Just before the public announcement of the wage increase, United Health Professionals of New Mexico sent a media alert criticizing the decision.

“This is a crass and petty ploy to get us to forsake our unions,” said Adrienne Enghouse, an organizer for

the United Health Professionals of New Mexico in a release. “Having a union means fighting for a contract that includes not only wages workers deserve, but also provisions to improve the quality of patient care and working conditions.”

Kyle Arnone is the director of collective bargaining for AFT in New Mexico. He says UNMH administrators just want to fight.

“They [PRNs] work in the same departments and same shifts and they do the same work,” he said. “In other places where we have representation around the country, if we don’t represent PRNs, the hospitals extend it anyway.”

Currently, there are hundreds of PRNs working at New Mexico hospitals. According to Medicare data provided by Arnone, contract labor costs for SRMC in 2023 were over \$11 million.

“They want to use PRNs to fill staff, but they don’t want to give them the benefits afforded to other employees,” Arnone said.

Ramirez says UNMH has reached bargaining agreements with all other unions that represent hospital employees, and AFT is the last holdout. “UNMH stands firm that we’re following state law.”

Meetings Schedule

SANDOVAL COUNTY

To view the agendas for upcoming meetings and read past meeting minutes, visit sandovalcountynm.gov/commission/scemeetings/

*Sandoval County
Commission*

Aug. 28, 6 p.m.

*1500 Idalia Rd., Building D
Bernalillo*

PLACITAS

To view the agendas for upcoming meetings and read past meeting minutes, visit placitaslibrary.com/get-know-pcl/library-board/

*Placitas Library Board
meeting*

Sept. 19, 6 p.m.

*Placitas Community
Library*

BERNALILLO

To view the agendas for upcoming meetings and read past meeting minutes, visit tobnm.gov/government/town_council/agendas_and_minutes.php

*Town Council
Aug. 26, 6 p.m.*

Bernalillo Town Hall

VILLAGE OF JEMEZ SPRINGS

To view the agendas for upcoming meetings and read past meeting minutes, visit jemezsprings-nm.gov/meetings/

*Village Council
Aug. 20, 6 p.m.*

*Village Administration
building*

*Lodger’s Tax Advisory
Board*

Aug. 20, 9 a.m.

*Village Administration
building*



Ready, Set, Prepare

Placitas and Sandoval County brace for the fall fire season

By Jesse Jones, Sandoval Signpost

As the country grapples with escalating wildfires, Sandoval County communities in high-risk areas like Placitas are bracing for a possible fall fire season as drier conditions loom.

Despite a recent lull in fire activity, forecasts by the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) predict that New Mexico will face intensified wildfire threats through September and October, with dry conditions and above-normal temperatures expected.

In its fall outlook, the NIFC warns of increased wildfire risk in parts of New Mexico. In response, Sandoval County is prepared with measures that include specialized training for firefighters, public education initiatives for residents, and strategic collaborations with neighboring fire departments. As fire risk increases, county officials are stressing the importance of community involvement and vigilance to mitigate potential devastation.

“Placitas is kind of unique in that we want to make sure that each homeowner understands that part of this is on them,” said Dan Heerding,

Sandoval County emergency manager. “The homeowner needs to have a little bit of stake in this too, and make sure their property is right and they are ready to go at a moment’s notice if something happens.”

According to Heerding, the county’s firefighters receive wildland fire training and hold certifications from the Incident Qualifications and Certification System. The system issues “red cards,” which certify a firefighter’s fitness for wildland operations and specify the positions they are qualified to fill.

The county is equipped with specialized tools for managing wildland fires, including five Type 6 brush trucks designed for use in undeveloped areas. These trucks have thicker tires and higher clearance than standard fire engines.

The county also has six water tender trucks, often mistakenly called tanker trucks.

Ready, Set, Go!

The primary system for notifying Sandoval County residents of emergencies is CodeRED. The free system delivers time-sensitive alerts



Sandoval County Fire and Rescue personnel train for wildfire season. (Source: Sandoval County Fire)

and emergency information directly to residents via phone calls, text messages, and emails.

Sign up for CodeRED at public.coderedweb.com or download the CodeRED Mobile Alert app.

The county uses the Ready, Set, Go! program to help residents prepare for wildfires — ready by being informed, set by staying alert when fire threatens, and go by evacuating early

when a wildfire starts.

Heerding said in the event of a system failure, the county would deploy the sheriff’s department or other available resources to deliver notifications door-to-door.

[Read the full story at sandovalsignpost.com](https://sandovalsignpost.com)

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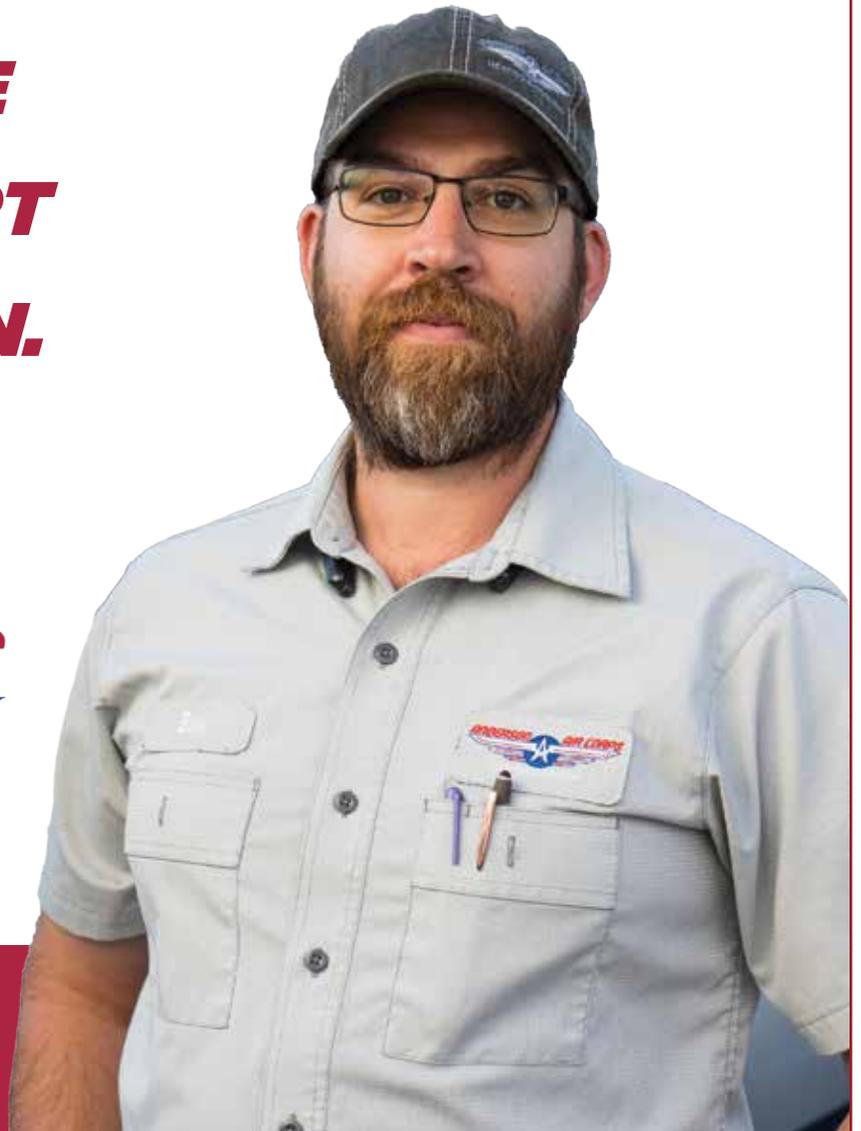
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Bernalillo Cleans Up Its Alleys

Town council votes to make alley maintenance a town priority

By Jesse Jones, Sandoval Signpost

At the Aug. 12 council meeting, the Bernalillo Town Council amended the weed ordinance, making the town responsible for alleyway cleanup instead of residents, to provide consistent maintenance and address safety concerns.

The Town Council, despite the absence of Mayor Pro Tem Dale Prairie and Councilor Vincent Montoya, was able to have a quorum, allowing Mayor Jack Torres to vote to amend the weed control ordinance.

The decision was prompted by reports from property owners about illicit drug paraphernalia, such as syringes, in the alleys, and homeowners who complained that they maintained the alleys behind their homes while others neglected them.

“Some homeowners are diligent and keep their area spotless, some are not,” Torres said. “People will call and say, I started cleaning, but there were needles here and I don’t know if there’s residual illicit drug stuff here, and I’m just not comfortable being

back there.”

Because the Public Works Department is equipped and trained to safely handle the cleanup, including the removal of potentially hazardous materials, the town was willing to take responsibility for the work. Planning and Zoning Director Stephanie Shumsky said the Parks Department already has a maintenance staff position posted to hire someone.

Torres said staff would clean the alleys one by one, so the process won’t happen immediately. He asked the council to have some patience.

“I’ve been assured by the public works director, that over time, we’ll be able to get caught up again,” he said. “So it’ll take us some time to get them all caught up.”

In other business

The council, despite being short-handed, approved an amendment to the Venada Plaza Shopping Center master plan for the Walmart parcel, allowing for the addition of a gas station, convenience store and



Highway 550 looking west in the Town of Bernalillo. (Roberto E. Rosales / Sandoval Signpost)

modified parking lot.

First introduced to the council at the July 8 meeting, Shumsky said it will be located in a vacant area of the Walmart parking area between Enchanted Hills Dentistry and Orthodontics and the Venada Plaza PNC Bank branch.

“Really nobody ever parks there,” she said.

The Coronado Little League and its softball All-Star teams received

certificates of achievement to recognize their successful seasons. Certificates were awarded to the players, managers, and volunteers for their contributions.

Get involved

The next town council meeting is at 6:30 p.m. Aug. 26 at the Town Hall Council Chambers, 829 Camino del Pueblo.

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Corrales and Placitas Secure State Funding for Local Trails Projects

Over 17 projects in New Mexico received grants

By Connor Currier, Sandoval Signpost

The Outdoor Recreation Division of the New Mexico Economic Development Department recently awarded \$3.2 million in grants to local trail projects in New Mexico.

The Trails+ Grant project announced Aug. 12 that 17 projects across the state had been given funding. The program funds essential infrastructure improvements to boost New Mexico's outdoor recreation sector. In 2019, the program was established by Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham with lawmakers to help projects that improve outdoor recreation opportunities. The projects include ADA-accessible outdoor spaces, adding signs, trail systems, wildlife observation areas and more.

In a press release, Economic Development Department Acting Cabinet Secretary Mark Roper said the grant program opens up more economic opportunities around the state.

"The Trails+ Grant is giving a significant boost to the state's economy and supporting the growth of local communities by creating jobs for New Mexicans, many living in Tribal and rural areas," Roper said.

Sandoval County trails

Las Huertas Plaza, LLC has secured \$59,000 for a project in Placitas, located along the heavily trafficked

Highway 165 cyclist route. According to the release, the project will create a safe pull-out area for hikers and bikers, featuring a bike repair station and a shaded rock wall seating area.

The Village of Corrales, in partnership with Corrales MainStreet, was awarded \$202,500. The grant money will be used to install new stand-alone public bathrooms at La Entrada Park.

The comprehensive plan from 2009 identified a need for public restrooms at the park, and a Parks and Recreation survey done in the last few years identified permanent public restrooms as the No. 1 most important park addition. The restrooms will be ADA compliant, unisex and accessible from La Entrada Park without reducing the park size. The restrooms will be connected to the Corrales wastewater system along Corrales Road.

According to Village Clerk Melanie Romero, this is part of the administration's plan to expand La Entrada Park into the Gonzales property north of the current park area.

"Information on the expansion of the park and the future use of the Gonzales property will be presented to the council sometime in the next few months, as Amy Bell from Ground Works Studio is working on finalizing the feasibility study she presented to the council on June 25," Romero said.

'Cuba is a Bit of an Island'

Nonprofit aims to support small businesses and boost workforce development



Village of Cuba. (Source: Wikipedia Creative Commons CCo 1.0)

By Jesse Jones, Sandoval Signpost

Many members of Cuba's business community attended an economic growth-focused event at the Eichwald Center on Aug. 5. Business owners and officials explored opportunities to boost the village's economy and support local businesses.

The event was organized by Congresswoman Teresa Leger Fernandez's office in collaboration with the Rural Development Corporation (RDC), a nonprofit dedicated to diversifying and strengthening the economy in northern New Mexico. RDC focuses on business retention and the expansion of existing or early stage businesses, making direct investments through various grant programs.

"We were there really for a couple of purposes," Pat Vanderpool, the executive director of RDC, said. "One was to talk to the community and listen to the community about what their goals are, and then the other was to start connecting with some of those small businesses that we hope we can provide some services to."

According to Richard Lavalley, RDC's business outreach specialist, approximately 22 people attended the event, including Cuba Mayor Denny Herrera, County Manager Wayne Johnson and several local business owners.

Conversations at the event highlighted the significant impact of the Navajo Nation on Cuba.

According to Vanderpool, the RDC plans to connect with local initiatives, such as supporting one woman's effort to start a growers' market. RDC has a partnership with the Santa Fe Farmers Market Institute, which serves the Cuba area, and will facilitate this connection to provide additional support.

"The first challenge is the fact that a community like Cuba is a bit like an island," Vanderpool said. "They feel disconnected from what's available."

He said Highway 550 is the "lifeline" of Cuba, with about 10,000 cars passing through daily. This high traffic volume presents numerous opportunities to expand services and offerings for travelers.

The next step for the RDC is to follow up with the businesses they connected with, assessing their needs and determining what support or funding they may require for community entrepreneurship programs.

For More Information

Businesses and community members interested in support opportunities can reach out to the Rural Development Corporation at info@rdcnm.org or 505-820-1226.

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Placitas Artists Series Returns With Renowned Classical Duo

By Sandoval Signpost staff

The Placitas Artists Series organizers took a much-needed summer vacation and are launching the 38th season on Sept. 22 with the renowned Patterson/Sutton Duo.

The cello and guitar duo has graced international festivals and concert series worldwide. They serve as Juilliard Global Visiting Artists and have released two acclaimed studio albums, “Cold Dark Matter” and “Still Life: Collected Music for Cello and Guitar by Stephen Goss,” featured on NPR’s “Performance Today.” The duo commissions new music, with their recent piece “Still Life” by Stephen Goss being nominated for a 2021 Ivor Novello Award.

The duo performs globally with recent performances at the Guitar Foundation of America Convention, New York City Classical Guitar Society, Cleveland International Classical Guitar Festival and at international venues in Vietnam, China and Slovakia.

Dedicated to educational outreach, the pair held a residency at the Afghanistan National Institute of Music in Kabul in 2014.

For tickets, concert programs, musician bios and more, visit PlacitasArts.org. K-12 students accompanied by an adult ticket holder are free.

Following the concert at Las Placitas Presbyterian Church, an artist’s reception will be held in the Fellowship Hall at the church, 7 Paseo De San Antonio Rd. Admission to the gallery is free. On exhibit will be the works of Kay Naranjo, painted native New Mexico rocks; Judith Roderick, hand-painted silk art quilts; Gail Sacharczuk, soft pastel on paper; and Nancy Schrock, pastel and colored pencil.

The exhibit is open to the public, free of charge, during church gallery hours, Tuesday-Friday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. These artists are on exhibit from Sept. 20 through Oct. 31. All artwork on display is available for purchase.



Patterson/Sutton Duo. (Source: Placitas Artist Series)



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"I HAVE TWO WORDS FOR LONG COVID: THE WORST!"

Albuquerque resident Eric T had been suffering from the lingering effects of Long Covid symptoms. That was until he met Albuquerque's Dr. Andrea Brogdon of Albuquerque Acupuncture & Integrative Medicine and got his life back!

While the initial alarm of the Covid-19 outbreak has subsided, the fallout from the pandemic is ongoing. Many continue to feel long term impacts from their infection. In fact, nearly 23 million Americans (and 100 million people globally) have learned that regardless of the severity of their initial infection, they may continue to experience debilitating symptoms for weeks, months or even years. In a number of these cases, symptoms worsen with time, even turning deadly.

"I got Covid early last year and it was pretty bad," shares Eric. "I was hospitalized for 9 days and there was a point where I wasn't sure I was going to make it. I'm still here so I guess God had other plans but months passed and I was still gasping for air. I couldn't do everyday tasks like cut the grass or work in the yard, much less enjoy a quick bike ride. And then there was what my doctor called, 'brain fog'. I'd lose my train of thought mid-sentence or forget words for stupid things like plates and toilet paper. It felt like I'd had a stroke more than it did a virus."

Officially dubbed Long Covid, the aftermath of the original virus has taken on a life of its own. Dozens of symptoms have been reported and include everything from shortness of breath and cognitive issues to a sudden onset of diabetes and cardiothoracic conditions. These symptoms are so well-documented and common that those suffering now qualify for disability assistance.

Unfortunately for Eric and so many others, the treatment options thus far have been limited. "I started with my primary care doctor and saw specialist after specialist. A pulmonologist finally told me, 'This is the best we can do for you, it's time you start thinking about how you're going to live with Long Covid.' Apparently, their best was letting me live what felt like half a life."

Eric wasn't satisfied with that and decided to do his own research, which is how he ended up at AAIM Albuquerque Acupuncture & Integrative Medicine in Albuquerque.

"I fully believe the human body has the ability to heal itself, but sometimes it needs a little push. I've used acupuncture in the past to help me through a bout of sciatica and just knew if anyone could help me with this Long Covid business, it was going to be Dr. Brogdon."

You might think that a novel virus needs a novel solution, but if so, you'd only be half right. While the staff at AAIM Acupuncture does use innovative solutions like ATP Resonance BioTherapy® to combat Long Covid, because it aids in the healing and repair of specific cells and tissues, it's a much more time-tested science that's getting patients back to living their lives.

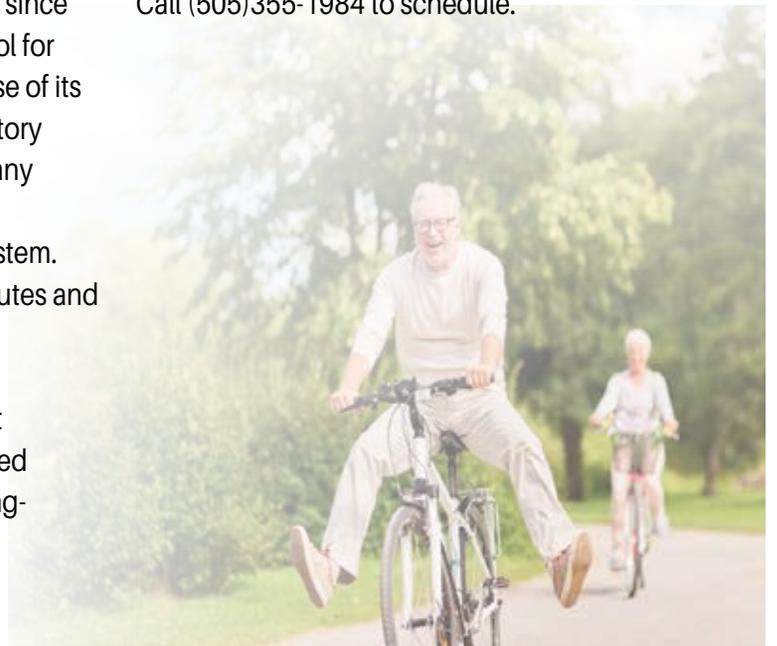
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"I'm in my second month of treatment and back to riding my bike and breathing better than before I even had Covid. Everyone [at AAIM] has been amazing! I really feel taken care of every time I walk in the door." says Eric.

Dr. Andrea Brogdon, AAIM's founder and leading practitioner, has been successfully treating chronic pain and complicated conditions for over two decades. She has pioneered effective protocols to treat seemingly hopeless conditions like peripheral neuropathy, fibromyalgia, and postherpetic neuralgia. When Covid-19 emerged three years ago, she and her team got right to work researching and developing therapies that would effectively address that complex virus. Based on the testimony of patients like Eric, it seems their efforts have been a smashing success.

For more information, visit AAIM-abq.com. In an effort to do their part in helping people through this difficult time, they are waiving the \$240 new patient consultation fee for Long Covid patients. Call (505)355-1984 to schedule.



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The Weekly Crossword by Margie E. Burke

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EVENTS

FRIDAY, AUGUST 16

Comedy

Andy Woodhull \$20-\$25 9:30-11 pm Quezada's Comedy Club at Santa Ana Star 54 Jemez Canyon Dam Road, Santa Ana Pueblo

Andy Woodhull \$20-\$25 7-8:30 pm Quezada's Comedy Club at Santa Ana Star 54 Jemez Canyon Dam Road, Santa Ana Pueblo

Community

Community Resource Fair and Sadoval County Hiring Event 10 am-1 pm Rotary Park Bernalillo 370 Rotary Park Rd. Bernalillo, Bernalillo

Dance

Desert Darlings Belly Dance 7:30-9 pm Kaktus Brewing Co. 471 South Hill, Bernalillo

Exhibit

Wild Hearts Gallery presents Artists Karl & Mary Hoffman: "Visual Memories" Exhibit of Ceramics, Painting & Linocuts All Day Wild Hearts Gallery 221 B Hwy. 165, Placitas

Film

Movies Under the Stars: Lady and the Tramp 7:30-9:30 pm Cabezon Community Center and Park 2307 Cabezon Blvd. SE, Rio Rancho

Markets

Bernalillo Farmers Market 4-7 pm Rotary Park Bernalillo 370 Rotary Park Rd. Bernalillo

Music

Big K & Blue Train 7-9 pm Casa Vieja Brewery 4541 Corrales Rd, Corrales

DJ Fishbowl 6-11 pm Tractor Brewing Westside 5720 McMahon Blvd NW bldg 5 ste a, Albuquerque

Max Gomez \$29-\$32 7:30-9 pm Old San Ysidro Church 966 Old Church Rd, Corrales

RJ Perez 7-9 pm Marble Brewery Westside 5740 Night Whisper Rd. NW, Albuquerque

SATURDAY, AUGUST 17

Comedy

Andy Woodhull \$20-\$25 7-8:30 pm Quezada's Comedy Club at Santa Ana Star 54 Jemez Canyon Dam Road, Santa Ana Pueblo

Andy Woodhull \$20-\$25 9:30-11 pm Quezada's Comedy Club at Santa Ana Star 54 Jemez Canyon Dam Road, Santa Ana Pueblo

Community

Audrey Trujillo for Senate Breakfast Fundraiser \$25 9-11:30 am La Entrada Park 84 West La Entrada, Corrales

Family/Kids

Ranger Read and Learn 10 am-12 pm Martha Liebert Public Library 124 Calle Malinche, Bernalillo

Markets

Cabezon Park's Shop Local Market 10 am-3 pm Cabezon Community Center and Park 2307 Cabezon Blvd. SE, Rio Rancho

Music

Joe Daddy Warner & Friends 12-3 pm Kaktus Brewing Co. 471 South Hill, Bernalillo

Saturday Night Barn Dance w/ The Dust Devils 6-9 pm Kaktus Brewing Co. 471 South Hill, Bernalillo

Stray Dawgs 7-9 pm The Range Cafe 925 S Camino Del Pueblo, Bernalillo

The Band N Co 7-9 pm Tractor Brewing Westside 5720 McMahon Blvd NW bldg 5 ste a, Albuquerque

Woodpeckers 7-9 pm Casa Vieja Brewery 4541 Corrales Rd, Corrales

SUNDAY, AUGUST 18

Food

Corrales Growers' Market 9:30 am-12 pm Corrales Parks & Recreation 500 Jones Rd., Corrales

Markets

Children's Entrepreneur Market 12-4 pm Haynes Park 2006 Grande Blvd. SE, Rio Rancho

Miscellaneous

19th Annual Rio Rancho Mayor's Sunday is Funday 12-4 pm Haynes Park 2006 Grande Blvd. SE, Rio Rancho

Music

Kaktus Kats Presents Levi Platero 2-5 pm Kaktus Brewing Co. 471 South Hill, Bernalillo

MONDAY, AUGUST 19

Games

Singo Music Bingo 7-9 pm Brew Lab 101 3301 Southern Blvd. SE, Rio Rancho

Trivia! With Trivia Mafia 6-9 pm Ex Novo Brewing 4895 Corrales Rd, Corrales

TUESDAY, AUGUST 20

Class / Workshop

Tuesday Tech Classes 1-3 pm Corrales Community Library 84 W. La Entrada, Corrales

Games

Chess Club 6-7 pm Corrales Community Library 84 W. La Entrada, Corrales

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 21

Food

Corrales Growers' Market 9:30 am-12 pm Corrales Parks & Recreation 500 Jones Rd., Corrales

Games

Geeks Who Drink 7-9 pm Tractor Brewing Westside 5720 McMahon Blvd NW bldg 5 ste a, Albuquerque

Music

Kaktus Kats Jazz Jam 6-9 pm Kaktus Brewing Co. 471 South Hill, Bernalillo

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