



July 1, 2023

THE CONEJOS COUNTY MESSENGER

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In this issue:

- Sheriff's Dept. Life Saving Award, Pages 1
- Treasurer, Assessor, Department of Social Services and Commissioner's Articles

Welcome to our **third year** of the Conejos County Newsletter! As elected officials and county department directors, our goal is to inform our citizens of news stories, information and data through the periodic publication of a newsletter. The previous editions of newsletters are archived on the county website, conejoscounty.colorado.gov

In an effort to gain more exposure, we are posting this same file on Facebook, the Citizens for a Better Conejos County page.

Conejos County
Website QR Code



Sheriff Crowther Presents Life Saving Awards to Undersheriff Blake Crowther and Deputy Tristen Crowther



Sheriff Garth Crowther began the Life Saving Awards presentation by reporting on Feb. 14, at 20:25, the Sheriff's Office received a Spot SOS signal with longitude and latitude coordinates. After plotting the coordinates it was determined the signal was coming from an area above Trujillo Meadows Reservoir. The Sheriff and the Undersheriff responded by driving up La Manga Pass in blizzard conditions and found the vehicle covered in snow at the Trujillo Meadows turn off. There were no occupants in the vehicle. Due to the blizzard like conditions at approximately midnight, a decision was made to return to the Sheriff's Office and form a search and rescue

team that would be at the scene at daylight.

The Search & Rescue Team arrived at daylight the following morning, knowing they had a two-hour window of non-blizzard weather as confirmed by the National Weather Service. The team consisted of three United States Forest Service employees, Sheriff Crowther, Undersheriff Crowther and Deputy Crowther. The Team used the snow cat and snowmobiles to make the climb west of Trujillo Meadow Reservoir to the location of the coordinates. They found a sleeping bag and other personal belongings but no skier. The Team went further west to the Trujillo Meadows yurt and found a 72-year-old male that confirmed that he had been the one that sent out the signal and had been skiing alone. (Continued on next page)

Upon initial examination the Team recognized the gentleman was suffering from moderate to severe hypothermia. Undersheriff Crowther and Deputy Crowther immediately loaded the gentleman into the snowcat while the rest of the team loaded his belongings. Deputy Crowther immediately started rendering first aid. Undersheriff Crowther used his professional abilities to drive the snowcat to an ambulance that was waiting on Highway 17. Sheriff Crowther stated, "having taught outdoor survival in the past and hypothermia being a part of the training there is no doubt in my mind this gentleman wouldn't have made it very much longer before very severe hypothermia and death took over. The actions of Undersheriff Crowther and Deputy Crowther save the life of this person."

The Board of County Commissioners thanked the services of the Search & Rescue Team, Deputy Crowther and Undersheriff Crowther for their life saving skills and thanked Sheriff Crowther for the leadership he has shown leading the Sheriff's Office.

Commissioners Proclaim April 2023 National Child Abuse Awareness and Sexual Assault Awareness Month



Commissioner Jarvies, Nadia Flores, Commissioner Baroz, Tiffany Martinez, Mari Avila, Commissioner Garcia

At the April 6 BOC meeting, Ms. Nadia Flores, Conejos County Violence Reduction Unit Coordinator, Tiffany Martinez and Mari Avila, Tu Casa, Inc. employees presented the Commission with two proclamations, asking Conejos County proclaim the month of April as National Child Abuse Awareness and Sexual Assault Awareness month. Both Proclamations were posted on the county website in their entirety.

The National Child Abuse Prevention Proclamation ended with the following language, "Now, Therefore, We, Commissioners Jarvies, Baroz, and Garcia, do hereby proclaim April

2023 as National Child Abuse Prevention Month in Conejos County and urge all citizens to recognize this month by dedicating ourselves to the task of improving the quality of life for all children and families."

The National Sexual Assault Awareness Prevention Proclamation ended with the following language, "Now, therefore be it resolved. that the Board of Conejos County Commissioners, on behalf of all residents of Conejos County, does hereby proclaim the month of April 2023, as National Sexual Assault Awareness Month in Conejos County, to keep our community members safe from this crime and to stand with survivors and victims of sexual assault. The Commissioners thanked all three ladies for working locally in the prevention of these types of crimes.



CONEJOS COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

They can't.
You can.
Be their voice. Make the call.
1-844-CO-4-KIDS
1-844-383-2399



Greetings,

The Conejos County Department of Social Services would like to wish all of our Conejos County citizens a safe and happy summer!

Congratulations to our scholarship winners Annalise Gallegos and Peyton Willett. We wish you the best of luck in your future endeavors and we are proud of all of our graduating seniors across the county. CCDSS offers a total of six scholarships every year across our school districts. Upcoming graduates, keep an eye on your school announcements for information on how to apply.

The Conejos County Department of Social Services will be giving away school supplies and backpacks to our TANF eligible families again this year. In addition, this year will be doing a drawing for gift certificates to Foot Locker. This year we will have our giveaway on August 11th at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish Hall in Conejos. All TANF eligible families are encouraged to stop by!

Want to make a meaningful impact to our families in Conejos County? Come join our team as a Child Welfare Caseworker. We offer competitive pay, fringe benefits, and a hiring and retention bonus to our newly hired staff member.

Keep an eye out for these summer programs that can be utilized locally in the San Luis Valley.

<p>GET FREE FRUITS & VEGETABLES WITH YOUR SNAP/ FOOD ASSISTANCE!</p> <p>TEXT YOUR ZIP CODE TO 1-844-383-2399 FOR A LOCATION NEAR YOU VISIT DOUBLEUPCOLORADO.ORG OR CALL: 720-573-3617</p> 	<p>OBTÉN FRUTAS Y VERDURAS GRATIS CON SU SNAP/ASISTENCIA ALIMENTARIA</p> <p>MANDE SU CÓDIGO POSTAL VÍA TEXTO A 1-844-383-2399 PARA LA UBICACIÓN MÁS CERCANA VISITE DOUBLEUPCOLORADO.ORG O LLAME: 720-573-3617</p> 	<table border="0"> <tr> <td data-bbox="776 1451 966 1575"> <p>1. BRING Your EBT card to a participating location. At a farmers market booth, find the info booth.</p> </td> <td data-bbox="966 1451 1156 1575"> <p>1. TRAE Su tarjeta EBT a una ubicación participante. Busque la cabina de información, en el mercado de granjero.</p> </td> <td data-bbox="1156 1451 1453 1575">  </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="776 1575 966 1659"> <p>2. BUY SNAP-eligible foods.</p> </td> <td data-bbox="966 1575 1156 1659"> <p>2. COMPRA Comida elegible para SNAP.</p> </td> <td data-bbox="1156 1575 1453 1659">  </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="776 1659 966 1883"> <p>3. GET For every \$1 spent in SNAP/FOOD ASSISTANCE you'll receive \$1 to spend on Colorado-grown fruits & vegetables. (up to \$20 per visit)</p> </td> <td data-bbox="966 1659 1156 1883"> <p>3. OBTÉN FRUTAS Y VERDURAS GRATIS Por cada \$1 que compre en SNAP/ASISTENCIA ALIMENTARIA recibirá \$1 para comprar frutas y verduras cultivadas en Colorado. (hasta \$20 por visita)</p> </td> <td data-bbox="1156 1659 1453 1883">   </td> </tr> </table> <p>DOUBLEUPCOLORADO.ORG</p> 	<p>1. BRING Your EBT card to a participating location. At a farmers market booth, find the info booth.</p>	<p>1. TRAE Su tarjeta EBT a una ubicación participante. Busque la cabina de información, en el mercado de granjero.</p>		<p>2. BUY SNAP-eligible foods.</p>	<p>2. COMPRA Comida elegible para SNAP.</p>		<p>3. GET For every \$1 spent in SNAP/FOOD ASSISTANCE you'll receive \$1 to spend on Colorado-grown fruits & vegetables. (up to \$20 per visit)</p>	<p>3. OBTÉN FRUTAS Y VERDURAS GRATIS Por cada \$1 que compre en SNAP/ASISTENCIA ALIMENTARIA recibirá \$1 para comprar frutas y verduras cultivadas en Colorado. (hasta \$20 por visita)</p>	 
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Commissioners Present Annual Scholarships to Four Conejos County Graduating Seniors



On May 23, at the Jack Dempsey Park in Manassa, Commissioners' Joseph Baroz, Carlos Garcia and Mitchell Jarvies presented a \$1,000 scholarship to 2023 graduating Senior students, Analise Gallegos and Coby Thomas, Centauri High School and Kenedie Crowther and Jonathan Gardunio, Sanford High School. This is the third annual scholarship the commissioners have presented to graduating Conejos County high school students. The scholarship covers books and tuition at post-secondary learning institutions. The Commissioners personally fund the annual scholarships. There were no applicants from Antonito High School.

Conejos County Treasurer's Office

Happy Summer 2023 from the Conejos County Treasurer's Office! Our office has just completed the 2nd half payment collection which was due June 15, 2023. Thank you to all those who have paid their taxes in full. Upcoming delinquent tax notices are scheduled to be mailed July 3, 2023. Real estate taxes need to be paid by September 30, 2023 to avoid advertising charges. For mobile homes and personal property taxes, please pay by August 31, 2023 to avoid advertising charges. Our annual tax lien sale is currently scheduled online for Wednesday, November 15, 2023.

A reminder you can still make online payments until October 31, 2023 at our county website at: conejoscounty.colorado.gov Please note this year we are in the process of a computer conversion and do appreciate your patience. If you have any questions regarding your taxes, please call our office at (719) 376-5919. Thank you and enjoy the rain & sunshine of summer 2023!

Mack Crowther, Conejos County Treasurer and Public Trustee

Commissioners

- ◆ At the April 20 board meeting, the commissioners proclaimed the week of April 23-29 as National Crime Victims' Rights Week. The Proclamation reaffirmed Conejos County's commitment to creating a victim's service and criminal justice response that assists all victims of crime during Crime Victims' Rights Week and throughout the year; and expressing our sincere attitude and appreciation for those community members, community service providers, and criminal justice professionals who are committed to improving our response to all victims of crime so that they may find relevant assistance, support, justice and peace.
- ◆ At the April 20 board meeting, the commissioners approved a Minor Subdivision Moratorium until October 6, 2023. Some of the reasons that led to a moratorium are minor subdivisions do not require the owner or developer to develop a water resource plan as compared to major subdivisions as per the land use code, how does the county continue developing in an orderly fashion while protecting our water resources, and the recent communications with the Division of Water Resources and the agency's regulations.
- ◆ At the April 20 board meeting, the commissioners discussed in open meeting the recent Council of Governments work on 1041 regulations/exportation of water outside of the San Luis Valley. The commissioners as a body do support 1041 regulations concerning this subject, but decided after consultation with the county attorney to set a work session and begin the work on declarations and the total 1041 document. Then the county and the commissioners will be better prepared to sign off on the Interagency Governmental Agreement with the other five San Luis Valley counties.
- ◆ At the May 18 board meeting, the commissioners nominated Steve Salazar, Conejos County Veteran Recognition Program. Mr. Salazar was nominated for the time and personal expenses he has contributed to veteran projects in the county over a number of years.
- ◆ At the May 18 board meeting, the commissioners approved the first reading of a proposed resolution of Off-Highway Vehicles on public roads in unincorporated Conejos County. The next step in the process is the notice of a public hearing once a week for four consecutive weeks in the Valley Courier and thereafter a second reading of the proposed amended resolution at a regular commissioner's meeting and a vote to adopt at the same meeting.
- ◆ At the Special Board Meeting on June 27, the commissioners adopted by reference the International Building Code (2018 Edition); The International Residential Code for One and Two Family Dwellings (2018 Edition); The International Energy Conservation Code (2018 Edition), Published by the International Code Council Inc., with specified amendments. The June 27 special meeting was a continuance of the June 15 public hearing, which notice had been published once weekly for four consecutive weeks informing the public of the availability of the inspection of the codes text and further informing the public about the public hearing before the Conejos County Board of County Commissioners on the proposed adoption of the codes on June 15, 2023, at 5:30 p.m. The Land Use Office has the complete copy of the adopted codes.

Commissioners Baroz, Garcia, and Jarvies



Jake Skifstad, a former Colorado Springs Police Officer saw a need for equipment in the Law Enforcement Community. Jake was involved in a serious active shooter incident at an abortion clinic in Colorado Springs. Observing officers in need of equipment during that terrifying call, Jake promptly started the Shield 616 Program. The program runs from donations given by individuals and companies in our communities. The donations go toward buying bullet proof vests for law enforcement officers. Upon hearing of the program and in need of vests the Sheriff's Office contacted Shield 616 and explained our need. In less than a week we were notified the program had secured enough money to buy a new vest for each Conejos County Deputy.

On May 3, 2023, Jake and his team presented each Conejos County Deputy with a new rifle rated ballistic vest. Jake explained how the program originated and how it continues to operate and supply equipment to law enforcement agencies across the United States.

Approximately a month and a half after receiving our vests a Conejos County, a deputy was attacked by an individual with a knife. The deputy sustained several wounds in the attack, however due to the protection provided by the new vest our deputy was able to go home to their family when the incident ended.

We at the Sheriff's Office would like to thank Jake and the 616 Program for the vests they provided our deputies and for the lives they save.

The Sheriff's Office is happy to welcome our new hire, Deputy Geno Nava recently graduated from the TSJC Law Enforcement Training Academy. Deputy Nava is currently on the FTO phase and will be working on his own shortly. We are still in need of deputies with four positions that need to be filled.

Sheriff Garth Crowther

Conejos County Emergency Managers Report

Serving as the Chair of the SLV Local Emergency Preparedness Committee I have been developing emergency plans for the chemical facilities and local fire departments.



Public awareness and community preparedness

Awareness and education of all community members:

Low public awareness of the need for preparedness can undermine local governmental support for preparedness programs, can foster lower attention to individual safety at home and in public spaces and can decrease safety precautions in the workplace. The point of preparedness is to minimize the impact of a chemical accident through the actions of all community members, rather than the actions of only facility and response agencies.

- Preparedness includes awareness and education for all community members that could be impacted by a chemical accident and creates expectations for the actions of all community members should an accident occur.
- Support is needed from all levels of government in providing tools and assistance to heighten public awareness of the importance of preparedness.
- All levels of government need to have high expectations for the participation of the general community members in their own preparedness. Success requires education on risks and the expectations of the community on general preparedness capabilities.
- There is a great potential benefit to facilities, communities, emergency planners and emergency responders in developing a common understanding of the chemical hazards and accident preparedness capabilities present in their communities.

Preparedness is based on:

The community developing a broad awareness and understanding of the risks that are present, locally. A community-wide evaluation of which community members are most vulnerable to risks, the mechanisms or pathways of risks, and the existing capabilities to address those risks should an accident occur.

I have held several meetings with different groups of our citizens to address their need for personal preparation and I am available to speak to other groups when invited.

Rodney King, Conejos County Emergency Manager

Conejos County Public Health



Back row: Eagle Air Med Pilots, Dr. Clint Sowards, Jessica Juarez, Annarae Smith, Denise Jirón, Joni Turner, Austin Chavez, and Garret Storm. Front row: Connie Ricci and Jurice Montoya

Happy Summer! Public Health has been busy transitioning into the summer months as we continue to provide resources and services to our County. The last few months we have been busy planning and hosting a health fair as well as educating our community members. On May 13, 2023, CCPH along with 365 Health (formerly 9 health) hosted a very successful health fair at the Centauri Junior High Gym. This health and resources fair provided a variety of services at a low cost to the community. As it has been doing for 43 years, 365 Health, coupled with CCPH, provided critical health screenings, access to resources and educational services. Additionally, our Health Fair also had a resource component where various SLV agencies and programs were able to present information on health, education, insurance, social assistance programs, emergency management, oxygen needs, nutrition, durable medical equipment as well as senior programs and food programs. We had many several health care providers on site to answer questions, provide resources/ referrals and complete health screens. Amongst the many medical providers volunteering, Conejos County natives, and brothers, Dr. Martin Sowards and Dr. Clint Sowards were two of the medical providers on site providing resources to our county. This fair was a huge success led by CCPH's Health Navigator, Austin Chavez. Austin did an amazing job and we are very excited for next year's fair!

Lastly, as we navigate summer, please kept yourself protected against mosquitos as they can carry the *West Nile Virus*. Most people get the West Nile Virus from the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected birds. Infected mosquitoes can then spread the virus to humans, birds, and other animals such as horses. Warmer weather in Colorado brings more opportunities for fun outdoor activities with friends and loved ones, but it also means an increased chance of exposure to the West Nile Virus. West Nile Virus is most commonly spread by infected mosquitoes and has been regularly reported in Colorado since 2002. We can take simple precautions to reduce their chance of acquiring the West Nile Virus. The risk to humans occurs primarily from June through early September when mosquitoes are most active. However, Colorado often continues to see the West Nile Virus reports through the month of October when lower temperatures cause mosquitoes to go dormant until spring. The risk of infection is highest for people who work outside or participate in outdoor activities, because of greater exposure to mosquitoes. Use insect repellents when you go outdoors; avoid standing water and wear loose clothing, long sleeve shirts and again, use insect repellent! Have a Happy and Safe Summer in Conejos County!
Denise Jiron, Public Health Director

Road and Bridge Department

Has summer made it here yet?

As you all are aware either by traveling down some of our county roads or receiving a call warning about several flooded or closed roads in our county, this year's high water runoff has wreaked havoc on several of our county roads forcing road closures. We have had to wait until the water receded and roads dry out before we could get some repairs done. We still have a few roads that are saturated or have water flowing across them. We have one bridge that was washed out that will need to be replaced. There are several culverts that have been exposed and hundreds of tons of road base that will need to be hauled to the damaged roads. Please use caution when traveling on these roads and respect our road closure signs.

While doing normal maintenance and flooded road repair we are in the process of repaving some of our county roads starting at the southern part of the county and working our way north. Please pay attention when traveling on these roads. We have heavy equipment, trucks traveling in and out of the work zone and many areas are congested. We have flaggers directing traffic to keep our crew and the public safe. Please follow the flagger's directions.

We utilize the majority of our crew during our paving efforts and this leaves a lot of our normal road maintenance in arrears. When paving we have 3 crew members working throughout the county grading roads, working on culverts and bridges in an effort to maintain all county roads. We anticipate the resurfacing of county roads to be completed by the end of July or early August and the crews will get back to our normal road maintenance schedule.

Late summer plans are to replace the bridge at the intersection of County road 12 and L. and another bridge north of Los Sauces on County road 28. During bridge repairs we will be required to close the roads to for several days.

Have a safe and great summer.

Donnie Martinez, Road & Bridge Director



Road & Bridge Dept. Re-surfacing Seasonal Operations

