Health care reform takes the stage at Medical Update Luncheon

On Thursday, June 20, more than 200 leaders from the business community gathered at the Las Cruces Convention Center for the Greater Las Cruces Chamber of Commerce’s annual Medical Update Luncheon.

Paul Herzog, CEO of Memorial Medical Center, and Denten Park, CEO of MountainView Regional Medical Center, shared the stage.

Herzog called the changes currently taking place in the health care field “transformational.” He used electronic medical records as an example.

“While it sounds like a good idea and sounds like a simple idea, it requires a tremendous amount of work,” he said.

Herzog said Memorial Medical Center certified last year for “Meaningful Use” (MU) Stage 1, the first phase of the federal government’s meaningful use incentive program, which requires the use of electronic health record systems by hospitals and health care professionals. The hospital is currently in the process of certifying for MU Stage 2.

He highlighted other accomplishments from the past year: the addition of 26 new positions, including 12 mid-levels (nurse practitioners and physician assistants); starting 100 patients on clinical cancer trials, and retaining 75 percent of graduates each year during the past three years in the hospital’s Family Medicine Residency Program. This year, the hospital received more than 1,000 applications for six internship spots.

“Our residency program has started to receive significant recognition,” Herzog said.

MountainView Regional Medical Center is moving in a similar direction.

“With health care reform, we’re moving forward … ish,” Park said with a laugh.

“They’re not producing enough doctors anymore to take care of our health care needs, so we’re trying to modify the system and reinvent health care every single day. We’ll do the right thing for our patient base to continue to provide exceptional care.

“Every day, we are required to do more, but are reimbursed less,” said Park, as he highlighted the hospital’s accomplishments.

He said in the past year, he successfully recruited a reconstructive plastic surgeon and introduced bariatric surgery to the hospital’s range of services. Park praised Dr. Frank Felts, MountainView’s board certified general surgeon who has performed more than 3,500 bariatric procedures.

“We’re excited to introduce this service to the community … to improve our citizens’ quality of life and help maintain their best health,” he said.

Park said there exists a friendly competition between Memorial Medical Center and MountainView Regional Medical Center, “but it’s a friendly competition where we work to ensure quality Las Cruces is, and will continue to be, very well served.”

Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA), commonly called “Obamacare” or the Affordable Care Act (ACA), was also on the luncheon’s agenda.

Herzog discussed the Health Insurance Exchange, a set of government-regulated and standardized health care plans from which individuals may purchase health insurance from private health care providers. This particularly impacts Doña Ana County, where 26 percent of the population younger than 65 years of age does not have health insurance, he said.

In January, following provisions of federal health care law, Gov. Susana Martinez announced plans to expand Medicaid in order to potentially provide medical services to an additional 170,000 low-income adults in the state.

Jose “Abe” Howard-Gonzalez, an associate from Kemp Smith Attorneys-at-Law, discussed the Affordable Care Act from an employer’s perspective.

“There’s over 1,000 pages of law,” Howard-Gonzalez said, “but the regulations are the meat.”

Howard-Gonzalez highlighted several
FROM THE CHAIR

Finding efficiencies

As we hit the halfway mark of 2013, I think we are beginning to see signs that the state and Las Cruces are moving out of the economic recession that has plagued the entire country for the past few years.

Going through hard times usually provides us with an opportunity for some kind of positive outcome. One of these silver linings (so to speak) I’ve noticed is an increase in workplace efficiency.

Efficiency describes the extent to which time, effort and/or cost are well used to accomplish your purpose. There are a lot of fancy ways to say this, but one of the simplest is probably, “How do you get from point A to point B in the fastest, least expensive and least labor intensive way?” Obviously, the term “efficiency” means different things in different disciplines.

In the last few years, I have noticed many examples of efficiency. A few bright spots among businesses and organizations (both public and private) that have survived – and sometimes even thrived in – the economic downturn include:

• Trimming the fat – i.e., any and all unnecessary waste or expense.
• More focused spending on a quality product or service.
• Greater and smarter networking with each other – joining together to create higher output.

Recently, I think we have seen a greater alignment between the public sector and the private sector. A perfect example is the partnership between the Las Cruces Public Schools and The Bridge of Southern New Mexico.

The Bridge is composed of leaders from private business and industry and public and private education. Its members were around the table and an important part of the conversation in the development of the first early college high school in the state – on the New Mexico State University campus right here in Las Cruces. A true success story, as evidenced by the fact that, after three years of operation, Arrowhead Park Early College High School still does not have a single dropout.

The governor is working to replicate the model across the state. Public-private partnerships are a prime example of efficiency – talking about maximizing resources (like precious tax dollars) and brain power, experience and the will to succeed.

What does efficiency look like to you?

Leslie Cervantes
Chair of the Board
Greater Las Cruces Chamber of Commerce

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Plan for Obamacare

Every fall, the Greater Las Cruces Chamber of Commerce develops what we term our “Program of Work” for the upcoming year.

It includes things such as our calendar of 50-plus events, division and committee priorities and budget. This establishes the framework that we work from to accomplish the goals we set for ourselves. It’s probably not markedly different from how you make your plans each year – after all, we are a business, too.

Having this in place allows us to take advantage of efficiencies that we uncover throughout the year. It also allows us to be nimble and react to things that are important to our members. As we move toward becoming an entity that is focused on advocating for our members at all levels of government and delivering programs that assist in the growth of our business community, we are seeing our organization move away from being a traditional chamber that is event centric.

However, that does not mean that we do not look for opportunities to deliver relevant information to our membership.

We are very excited to host our Affordable Care Act Briefing Luncheon on Tuesday, July 16. It is my understanding that this will be the first major event on this subject held in Las Cruces this year.

The Affordable Care Act, or “Obamacare,” certainly generated plenty of controversy while it made its way through the halls of Washington, D.C. However, there were probably few people who did not have an opinion while its merits were being debated by our elected officials.

Fast-forward to today. This legislation is about six months from implementation and there are still a number of unknowns concerning its impact on the business community.

Our briefing luncheon will feature Dr. Martin Hickey, CEO of New Mexico Health Connections, as our keynote speaker. I urge you to attend – he will deliver as much information as is currently available so you and your business can plan for this major change.

The Chamber will continue to monitor this issue and provide information that is important to you and your business as it becomes available.

Bill Allen
President/CEO
Greater Las Cruces Chamber of Commerce
Hotel Encanto de Las Cruces is a full-service luxury hotel, offering sophisticated living steeped in the grandeur of Spanish Colonial style.

The hotel originally opened in 1986 as the Hilton Las Cruces. In 1994, the Hilton was purchased by the New Mexico-based American Property Management Company (APMC). In 2005, APMC became Heritage Hotels and Resorts Inc., with the goal of developing independent hotels that preserve New Mexico’s rich cultural tradition and draw upon the Southwest’s unique and colorful heritage. In October 2006, after an extensive renovation, the Hilton was transformed into Hotel Encanto de Las Cruces.

“We are culturally distinctive,” said Hotel Encanto General Manager Belia Alvarez, who oversees the hotel’s planning, community relations, organization and control, from service to finance.

Seven years ago, when the hotel was still the Hilton, Alvarez served as the Director of Sales and Marketing.

“I rejoined this incredible company and have been thrilled with both the facility improvements and the quality of a team that I am more than honored to lead and work side-by-side with,” she said.

“When you’re here, you’ll enjoy a hotel that reflects the area while delivering an authentic and quality service experience through a warm and knowledgeable staff.”

The guest experience at Hotel Encanto is critically important to Alvarez’s team.

“We not only dedicate ourselves to ‘wow’ our guest, we strive to amaze them,” she said.

Hotel Encanto offers 202 rooms, including seven special suites, and features Garduño’s Restaurant & Cantina, successfully relaunched last summer, and Azul Nightclub & Lounge.

The hotel is most often complimented on its culture and authenticity.

“When people travel to Las Cruces or southern New Mexico, they think of Hotel Encanto,” Alvarez said. In 2012, Hotel Encanto expanded its commitment to the community’s cultural heritage by donating a portion of every room night’s revenue to the Friends of the Taylor Family Monument. The group is a registered nonprofit organization that supports the Taylor-Barela-Reynolds-Mesilla State Monument. Hotel Encanto’s donations helped develop innovative educational programs for elementary school children, conduct oral histories and prepare video presentations about Mesilla plaza. Underwriting these projects illustrates the commitment of Hotel Encanto, as well as that of Heritage Hotels and Resorts, to expand opportunities for public appreciation and enjoyment of our cultural heritage.

Alvarez said she is proud of the leadership of the Heritage Hotels & Resorts Executive Team, along with their founder and CEO, Jim Long, who was recently recognized at the state Legislature as one of New Mexico’s leading cultural entrepreneurs, focusing upon cultural preservation and advancement.

Long and his team currently are working with award-winning landscape architect Greg Trutza to design Hotel Encanto’s unique outdoor enhancements, adding a fresh, resort-style feel to the property, resulting in an oasis like nothing else in the region.

The enhancements include:
• Pool area with upper terrace
• Upper terrace garden
• 14 renovated upper terrace garden pool rooms
• New 20-by-60-foot pool lined with palm trees and an adjacent luxurious new jacuzzi
• Azul patio expansion and enhancement
• Jardín Sagrado, a new lush “sacred garden”

“We’re extremely excited about our soon-to-be completed outdoor enhancements,” Alvarez said.

Hotel Encanto expects the outdoor enhancements to be completed this summer.

“Stay with us awhile and we’ll stay with you for a lifetime.”
Poll shows support for immigration reform

Comprehensive reform will be good for economy, society

A new poll jointly released by Harper Polling and Public Policy Polling covering 29 states shows broad, bipartisan support for comprehensive immigration reform.

Politico reports on the poll, which was sponsored by the Alliance for Citizenship, Partnership for a New American Economy and Republicans for Immigration Reform: "Over the last few years, we’ve seen a country increasingly polarized across party lines when it comes to almost all attempts to move legislation. Yet, the compromise that’s been crafted on immigration reform is a rare exception to that rule. The bill that’s been constructed has broad support with every segment of the electorate in every part of the country,” wrote Tom Jensen, who heads the firm Public Policy Polling, and Brock Mc Cleary of Harper Polling.

Here are some other findings from the poll:

- An average of 68 percent of the likely voters across 29 states polled strongly or somewhat support bipartisan comprehensive immigration reform.
- 72 percent strongly or somewhat support a "tough but fair path to citizenship" like that in the Senate bill.
- 87 percent said it was very or somewhat important that our broken immigration system be fixed this year.
- 57 percent said they were more likely to vote for elected officials who support reform, while 22 percent said they would be less likely.

Comprehensive immigration reform is good for our economy and society, but it’s also good politics.

Exchanges behind schedule

Work needs to be done to be operational by Oct. 1

Governments are having a rough time implementing small business insurance marketplaces, according to the Government Accountability Office (GAO), and this could mean added frustration for small businesses.

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) creates Small Business Health Options Programs (SHOPs), online marketplaces established either by states or the federal government’s Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) where small businesses will, in theory, be able to buy health insurance for their employees.

Much work needs to be done to get them operational by Oct. 1 when consumers will begin signing up. GAO found that "many activities remain to be completed and some were behind schedule."

The agency warns, “Whether CMS’s contingency planning will assure the timely and smooth implementation of the exchanges by October 2013 cannot yet be determined.”

This news adds to the disappointment so far with SHOPs. The Wall Street Journal reports that in New Hampshire, only one insurance provider applied to "sell small group plans or individual policies through the exchange next year," and, "in Washington state, officials have had to postpone the exchange altogether because they couldn’t find a carrier willing to offer small-business plans for all parts of the state."

How will this turn out when Oct. 1 comes and real people will be using these exchanges? In the words of the Associated Press: “Nobody really knows.”

Small businesses won’t be comforted by the continued uncertainty.

Learn more about preparing for the health care law at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce’s Health Reform Law 101 webpage, www.uschamber.com/health-reform.

Pro-jobs scorecard for City of Las Cruces & Doña Ana County elected officials

The chamber is working to ensure the Mesilla Valley is a pro-jobs environment and will help identify pro-jobs elected officials who are assisting in that goal. Each month, this page will contain the chamber’s pro-jobs scorecard for elected officials with voting information on ordinances at the city and county level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discussion Item</th>
<th>Pro-Jobs</th>
<th>Mayor Ken Miyagishima</th>
<th>Councilor Miguel Silva</th>
<th>Councilor Greg Smith</th>
<th>Councilor Olga Pedroza</th>
<th>Councilor Nathan Small</th>
<th>Councilor Gail Song</th>
<th>Mayor Pro-Tom Shannon</th>
<th>Commissioner Billy Garrett</th>
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<th>Commissioner Wayne Hancock</th>
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<tr>
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Y: Yea vote, N: Nay vote, NA: Abstained from vote or not present, -: Vote not held

Note: All future ordinances and resolutions will be reviewed by an independent economist to determine the impact on jobs in the community.
Three years ago, Haciendas at Grace Village was just an idea. “We began to study the Las Cruces area and were astounded by the need for memory care, so we went to work,” said Grace Village Director of Operations Aubrey TeGrotenhuis. “Inspired by the need, but driven by very personal experiences with Alzheimer’s, we set about building Grace Village.”

TeGrotenhuis wanted Grace Village to feel residential and be located in a residential neighborhood—like a true home.

Haciendas at Grace Village, licensed by the New Mexico Department of Health, is an assisted living facility, specializing in Alzheimer’s and dementia care.

TeGrotenhuis moved to Las Cruces specifically to make Grace Village happen. “I am proud to have helped build Haciendas at Grace Village, because it’s exactly what I would have wanted to find for my grandmother who passed away from Alzheimer’s seven years ago,” she said. “She is the inspiration behind everything we do here. I now know that we can offer someone else the peace of mind our family had long searched for, and I am proud to be a place that she would have approved of.”

The philosophy of Grace Village ensures residents are not treated like Alzheimer’s patients, but as fellow human beings who are valuable and capable of living full lives. “A person with Alzheimer’s disease is still human,” TeGrotenhuis said. “They still have needs, wants, desires, emotions—everything that makes them a person.”

Certified Dementia Practitioners, with a combined 29 years of experience in the geriatric nursing, restorative nursing and Alzheimer’s care fields,

Grace Village staffs 15 employees and its residents are roughly 50 percent assisted living and 50 percent Alzheimer’s/dementia care.

TeGrotenhuis emphasized the daily challenges in working with people who have Alzheimer’s and dementia, but said her greatest struggle is helping others understand the effects of the disease on their loved ones.

“Alzheimer’s is, I believe, often a harder diagnosis to process, deal with and share because it does not just attack someone’s physical body,” she said. “Alzheimer’s can take away the essence of the person you love, morphing them into a different personality, and erasing you, someone who loves them deeply, from their mind and heart entirely. It is painful to watch, a challenging journey to walk, but we let the family and loved ones know that we are here to walk it with them.

“Too see someone move in scared, anxious, even angry, and then see them calm down, take ownership of their new home and love their caregivers and their family again … I wouldn’t change it for the world. I love to see our residents smiling at one another, laughing, and hugging their caregivers. I know their hearts feel loved and they feel safe—because they are. We also get to see the relief written all over the faces of their loved ones, knowing their loved one is safe, loved and with people who will care for their every need with an attentiveness and dedication as though they were a part of our own biological family. We have an opportunity to give a gift and be a blessing, and it is a calling that we take very seriously.”

TeGrotenhuis emphasized Grace Village is not a facility. “Haciendas at Grace Village offers a home where a loved one will be surrounded by care, treated with dignity and respect by highly trained and passionate caregivers and a comprehensively and specially designed community,” she said. “We are dedicated to continuing to learn and strive to give the best care, no matter what it takes. We say ‘Discover the Difference’ not to be catchy or cliché, but because we have fought from the beginning to be different, purposefully choosing everything from our location to our flooring, stovetops to individual caregivers, in order to be different.”
Progressive Residential Services

250 S. MAIN ST. • 575-523-8431 • WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/PRSNM

Mission:
Progressive Residential Services (PRS) assists people with disabilities to discover their unique gifts and find ways to contribute those gifts to the community.

Purpose:
To enable adults with developmental disabilities, who would otherwise live in institutional settings, enjoy the benefits and opportunities available to ordinary citizens of our community.

Key goals:
1. Through the provision of residential services, to assure safe and comfortable living in typical neighborhoods.
2. Through the provision of community support services, to help people in service experience true inclusion as active members of the community.

History:
PRS was established in New Mexico in 2001 to provide services to adults under the Developmental Disabilities (DD) Waiver. Recently, PRS has expanded to provide service to people with disabilities under other sources such as private pay and Mi Via Self-Directed Waiver.

As part of a network of organizations in New Mexico, Michigan and Alabama, PRS receives management consultation from Allied Human Services. Since PRS moved to its current location at 250 S. Main St., Suite A, the organization has intentionally sought to participate in and contribute to the culture of Downtown Las Cruces. In March 2012, it opened the Dennis Bell Disabilities Arts, Culture & Citizenship Center at 250 S. Main St., Suite B.

Key people to know:
• Kay Lilley, director
• Judy Smith, Guardian of the Year
• Rev. Joe Whitley and New Heights Faith Community, Neighbor(s) of the Year
• Dorothy Ziter, local artist

Events and activities:
PRS will continue to facilitate the thoughtful inclusion of the people in its service in the life of the community. Activities provided through PRS’s day program during the week, many of which are available to the public, include tai chi, gardening, day trips, art, “Percussion Discussion” (a drumming circle), Keep Las Cruces Beautiful and picnics, among others.

The Dennis Bell Disabilities Arts, Culture & Citizenship Center features “Belonging Through the Arts,” an endeavor to build connections among diverse people through community conversations and art projects.

Future plans:
PRS is looking to expand services to people with disabilities outside of the DD Waiver system and into other counties. In the meantime, the organization is available to serve DD Waiver recipients in Doña Ana County in its day program and also has residential openings.

On the list of activities coming up are a trip to the Albuquerque zoo and aquarium, a self-defense workshop and a legislative luncheon.

From 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday, July 29, the Dennis Bell Center will host an exhibit opening for area artist Sam Cueto. The center is available to exhibit the work of other artists with disabilities.

PRS is looking for other funding to continue the “Belonging through the Arts” endeavor and support other meaningful activities for the people receiving services.

Medical

Continued from page 1
requirements, including:
• The W-2 reporting requirement, mandating that employers report the cost of employer-sponsored health benefits.
• A non-discrimination requirement.

“...the most important regulation, in my opinion, is the nondiscrimination requirement,” Howard-Gonzalez said.

Health care reform applies nondiscrimination to all group health plans. In addition, starting in 2014, essential health benefits such as pregnancy and newborn care, along with vision and dental care for children, will be covered in all new individual, small business and exchange plans.

The exchanges also impact business owners. Employers covered by the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) are required to provide a notice to employees about the state’s health insurance exchanges.

Howard-Gonzalez set the stage for the Chamber’s Affordable Care Act Briefing from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Tuesday, July 16, at Ramada Palms de Las Cruces, 201 E. University Ave. Howard-Gonzalez will return to speak more in-depth, and Dr. Martin Hickey, CEO of New Mexico Health Connections, will serve as keynote speaker.

‘To RSVP, call the Chamber at 524-1968’
Balyoz reflects on time at White Sands Missile Range

By Miriam U. Rodriguez
Missile Ranger Editor

The 2nd Engineer Battalion at White Sands Missile Range welcomed its new commander during a transition ceremony from Commander Lt. Col. Andre P. Balyoz to incoming 2nd Engineer Battalion Commander Lt. Col. James R. Koeppen June 14, at the 2nd Engineer Battalion Parade Field.

"Sapper Steel Soldiers, the high standards that you have lived up to every day under the leadership of Lt. Col. Andre P. Balyoz and Command Sgt. Maj. DeVaridy L. Arnold are certainly reflective here today," said 36th Engineer Brigade Commander Col. David C. Hill.

"As we carry out this ceremony first and foremost in our hearts and minds are prayers and thoughts for the soldiers of the 40th Mobility Augmentation Company and the 595th Sapper Company as they carry out their mission in Afghanistan." Hill went on to say the colors should always remind them of the inspiring tradition of service and sacrifice this great battalion has carried through its long rich history, to include its most recent chapter in Afghanistan and at WSMR.

"We remember and never forget those who came before us, men like Sgt. Tristan Wade, who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to his country with the 573rd Clearance Company," Hill said.

"Much has been asked of the Sapper Steel battalion over the past two years and you have always delivered." Hill said the 2nd Engineer Battalion is a unit focused on combat readiness, training sappers to clear the way, developing disciplined, fit and confident soldiers, building agile adaptive leaders and supporting Army families and the surrounding communities.

"Under Lt. Col. Balyoz’s command, you successfully deployed all of your line companies to Afghanistan and those soldiers have excelled in every aspect of their very dangerous mission. They demonstrated excellence in exercises from NIE 12.2 and 13.2 to NTC 12-10," Hill said.

"Throughout the last two years, Lt. Col. Balyoz has led in ways that speak to his tremendous potential," Hill welcomed Koeppen and his family to WSMR.

"While it is always difficult to say goodbye, in my experience the Army always gets it right in selecting command teams to pick up the mission and continue forward. Jim and Tammy Koeppen are certainly the right team to lead the sapper steel battalion into the future," he said.

"Jim brings a wealth of experience to the command having served as the Military Assistant to the Deputy Chief of Staff Operations, Allied Joint Force Command Naples. He has served as an NTC trainer and has excelled in numerous other important leadership positions. Your incoming commander is a proven combat leader with the courage and spirit of a sapper," Balyoz thanked his family and the WSMR community for their support during the last two years.

"You only see three companies before you right now. This battalion still has two other companies, over 200 soldiers, deployed and conducting route clearance missions in Afghanistan. I regret that I have to leave while they are still overseas, but I know that they are in good hands and that they are doing an outstanding job of serving and representing this battalion and this nation," Balyoz said.

Balyoz said the past two years went by extremely quickly for him and for this battalion.

"I spent some time reflecting on some of my favorite moments over the past two years including watching the overpowered, outnumbered and outgunned Opposing Force defeat the 1st Armored Division Second Brigade Combat Team during NIE, welcoming home 573rd clearance, the time I spent teaching and mentoring our junior leaders and soldiers, marching in the Las Cruces Veterans Day Parade and feeling the tremendous support of the community, blowing up about 200 pounds of explosives here at WSMR and NTC and, finally, participating in the burning of the colors ceremony to remember the battle of Kunu-ri in Korea on Nov. 30, 1950, when the battalion was surrounded by hostile Chinese forces," Balyoz said.

"This battalion has such a rich and distinguished history and it has been such an honor to serve as the commander of the oldest and one of the most decorated engineer battalions in the U.S. Army," Balyoz thanked the WSMR command group for their support of the soldiers and their families. He also thanked all the soldiers of the 2nd Engineer Battalion.

"It was an honor to serve as your battalion commander and to build on the history and the legacy of this battalion. Don’t ever forget your Sapper Steel standard and don’t forget the importance of discipline and integrity, leadership, training and family," he said.

Balyoz welcomed Koeppen as the new commander.

"I can tell you that Lt. Col. James Koeppen is a great leader and is a perfect fit for the job of leading you for the next couple of years," he said.

Koeppen recognized all the soldiers standing on the field.

"You look outstanding," he said. "Your demonstrated professionalism honors all those who have served in this battalion before you. I would like to thank the families and the families of the deployed soldiers for everything that you do. We are here for you and we pray for the speedy and safe return of your soldier.

"To the leaders and members of the White Sands community, thank you for everything that you do for our soldiers. It’s truly a humble and honored experience to have the opportunity to be of service to the battalion. I look forward to get to know you and your families."
Dealing with the drought
State needs to think outside of the box

By Stephen L. Wilmeth

I met them in Deming. My rancher friend and his wife had the bulls in their trailer. Those young bulls were living, breathing products of years of work and strategy in genetics. He had called me earlier in the month and shared his idea. If I would take the bulls, he wanted bull calves shaped his decision and he had acted. He told me he was tired of feeding them and couldn’t afford to. Years of drought had reduced his forage like every other ranch across southern New Mexico. He made no attempt to hide his feelings.

“That is the kind of cattle he produces. That is just the kind of rancher he is. That is the kind of cattle he produces. That is the way he runs his life. We don’t live in a vacuum. Drought had shaped his decision and he had acted. He knew when he had to make the tough decisions. We had to manage for turf health. The drought has only worsened. The current index indicates we are in the worst drought area of the United States. Statistics are suggesting it is the area’s worst drought in recorded history.

By Stephen L. Wilmeth

On May 20, a full drought inspection for our ranch was scheduled. Our major landlord, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), called for the inspection. They wanted to know what our drought strategies were. For several reasons, I asked a number of experts to attend.

Aside from our ranch ownership, the group consisted of the dean emeritus from the New Mexico State University College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, a retired NMSU extension range specialist, our local Natural Resources Conservation Services district conservationist, our area representative from the State Land Office, the chairman of our local Soil and Water Conservation District, the president of the local chapter of Farm Bureau, a representative of our Congressman and the chair and vice chair of the Council of Border Conservation Districts.

If we were going to inspect drought strategies, it was important to get a full view of our program that included the infrastructure project we have built over the last decade.

Two major conclusions were reached. The first, offered by the dean emeritus (who is also a preeminent range scientist) was that our program would result in negative impacts to our cow herd before it would negatively impact turf health. The second, offered by the NMSU range specialist, was our system could sustain the cow herd until mid-August without relief of rains.

There was also a general agreement no one debated. If it doesn’t rain, no system can be sustained through the increasing drought.

The first phase of our drought strategy has been to have 20 to 30 percent of the cattle free during the monsoons. Implicit in that goal has been to have a sustained supply of 30 gallons of water per day for each mature animal in the pasture where the cattle are located. Since our rotation approach has become more around management, that means water supply and delivery are critical. We have invested heavily in infrastructure to make that happen.

The goal has been reached on most of the ranch. It is there our summer drought strategy is currently centered. If we are able to survive drought, societal and government assault on our business, future phases of drought management must expand. An example is in genetics.

Whereas carcass characteristics have largely driven herd genetics, our desert conditions dictate we focus on feed conversions. The difference in a traditional ratio of 8:1 (dry matter to pounds of animal gain) and the newer generation 5:7:1 conversions is revolutionary. The ability to produce a pound of gain with 40 percent less feed has huge drought implications.

The list goes on, but the point must be recognized. Drought strategies must be scored on the basis of what we can do, not on what we can’t do.

If allowed to act freely, independent stewards are abundantly capable and ingenious. Moreover, if strategies can work here in our desert conditions, it will work anywhere in the world.

Shades of past glory
Irrigated agriculture faces the same dire circumstances as our ranching community. Our local irrigation district, Elephant Butte Irrigation District (one of the best managed in the country), has a Conservation District, has a conservation supply for one application this season. Certain water user sustainability is a concern, but it is also apparent the district is addressing the long-term impact of that release on aquifer recharge. Stewardship is important to that board.

In his recent water strategy symposium, state Sen. Tom Udall addressed the drought issue. In assessing the presentations, the emphasis of the future water outlook was one of conservation and regulation. If there was a prevailing theme, it was past glory.

Leadership that preaches only conservation and regulation is increasingly tedious and obstructionist. Constraints are one thing, but they can be hugely important if they are solution driven rather than restrictive. Like so many resource policies, water infrastructure and supply plans are stalled. There has been no real investment in solutions in decades.

Unless New Mexico citizenry is content to play permanently from behind, that must change.

Grassroots planning
The board of supervisors of the Doña Ana Soil and Water Conservation District has an interesting concept. That district covers one of the most diverse agriculture production areas in the region, the Mesilla Valley. That universe of agriculture has been foundational in the terms of customs, culture and economy of the area. Water created it and water will sustain or diminish it.

One of its board supervisors was the primary author of a white paper prepared for U.S. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid of Nevada. Reid asked for assessment of the concept for the purposes of converting seawater for domestic use in Las Vegas and southern New Mexico. The project would be known as the Sea of Cortez water, desalinate it in a series of nuclear reactors and pipe the desalinated water to Nevada. That paper still exists.

Doña Ana County is an interesting place. If it is to remain a global farming and rural production area, it will need water. The intermodal facility being built at the port of entry at Santa Teresa will become the hub of commercial transportation, north-south-east-west, that qualifies such a claim. A rail link will connect Santa Teresa to the Port of Guaymas, in the Mexican state of Sonora on the Sea of Cortez.

The combination of networking yields a right-of-way directly from the sea to that inland port. Doña Ana County doesn’t have nuclear energy, but it has something as effective and conditionally safer. At 12,000 feet directly under the entire county lies another sea of 300 degrees, “energy” in the form of water and or heat sink in rock formations. Within those formations, there is a labyrinth of opportunities to deposit the salt that would be a byproduct of the desalination process.

The board’s concept is that the Sea of Cortez water is the future potable water for the Rio Grande corridor. It is there the majority of the state’s population lives. The relief provided by such an alternative would take pressure off the surface water sources that could be further dedicated to the agricultural and ecological needs for the future development of the water system in its current form.

Is this a viable concept? The question can be answered by asking another question. Would the area’s famous reclamation project, Elephant Butte Dam, viable in 1895?

New Mexico needs to start thinking outside the box. It needs to find leaders who actually demand “why not” solutions rather than “why” supposition detours.

With all the reoccurring drought reality to relative advantages ... for many tomorrows.

Stephen L. Wilmeth is a rancher from southern New Mexico.
Work continues on Armijo house

Conditions assessments show workers just what they’re dealing with

By Pat Taylor

When determining the structural repairs on any adobe building, a conditions assessment greatly helps in the estimating of the actual work.

This is standard procedure with adobe work we do regionally. We chose four areas of the Armijo-Gallagher House to open up – two interior and two exterior walls, measuring about 3 feet wide by 4 feet high each – to help us determine the conditions. Each of these areas was at the base of the walls. We removed the cement plaster and deteriorated material from each of these areas, documenting all the information we found as we went along.

The building was originally lime plastered, of which we saw plenty of evidence. It was later cement plastered and had concrete collars poured against the wall on the oldest part of the building in the rear. That’s when the moisture problems accelerated, with the cement plaster and collars not as permeable as the lime plasters.

Adobes are great sponges, and always wick moisture from the ground through capillary action. As the moisture moves upward through the adobe wall, it’s always looking for the easiest way to dry out. The less-permeable material of cement forces the moisture to stay in the wall longer, causing more damage.

Our repair work showed us that the interior had a fairly minimal amount of damage. The depth of the most severe interior damage averaged about 4 inches, which is easily repaired. However, there is enough moisture moving through the wall to rust out the electrical conduits.

CONQUISTADORE CORNER

Build a stronger foundation for our future

The Greater Las Cruces Chamber of Commerce consistently works toward meeting the needs of its members.

A few of these efforts include a new tiered dues structure to provide more benefits, restructuring the Small Business Workshops to be an innovative learning tool, a work force development program called Skill-Ready Doña Ana, a discount prescription drug card program, enhanced networking events and the creation of a Membership Advisory Committee to keep its members connected to the mission.

The Chamber hasn’t stopped there. Over the past two years, we have committed to preserving a valuable piece of Doña Ana County’s history and at the same time making it a valuable part of our community’s future. By partnering with both private and public sectors to rebuild the Nestor Armijo House, the chamber will expand its future home to better serve the community and preserve the legacy of an early businessman who impacted what Doña Ana County is today.

Each year, as the Goodwill Ambassadors for the Greater Las Cruces Chamber of Commerce, the Conquistadores raise awareness and funding to give back to the business community. The Conquistadores are proud supporters of the Heritage Foundation capital campaign, “Our Future is Our History.”

To date, we have committed $15,000 to this campaign. We know that we are helping to leave a legacy in the honor of our business community, as well as past and present Conquistadores who have given back to the community. More importantly, we are building a stronger foundation for our future.

It is important that we all – as business owners, employees and community members – support this campaign and be part of rebuilding the Armijo House. For more information or to find out how you can become part of the Chamber’s future, contact the Chamber at 524-1968 or visit www.lascruces.org.

Stacie Allen, Chair of the Council of Conquistadores 2013 Greater Las Cruces Chamber of Commerce

The exterior under the front porch was in the best shape of all four areas with a minimum of a couple of inches of deterioration that had occurred at the wall base. However, it is clear that the cement material was catching up with the building in trapping moisture, as is evident on the west wall that was additionally impacted by a leaky water line.

The oldest part of the house, in the rear of the building, had the worst damage. It appears we picked an area that had been the location of a previous kitchen, which had experienced serious damage at the wall base that had been in-filled with concrete. We have now removed the concrete and stabilized that area laying in new adobes, stitching them into good adobes to either side and above.

These areas give us a lot of information we write out in a report and that, in turn, helps us cost out the repair work necessary. It is clear the challenge is to get in and get this stabilization work done and behind us so the architectural work phase can proceed. As we’ve seen, the damage only continues to get worse with an adobe building encased in the less-than-permeable material of cement.

This one-of-a-kind building will play, once again, an important function in the business and cultural history of our area through the Greater Las Cruces Chamber of Commerce honoring its predecessors, the Armijo and Gallagher families.
Chamber looks at ACA
Intricacies of ‘Obamacare’ explained at luncheon

To raise awareness about the Affordable Care Act – commonly called “Obamacare” – the Greater Las Cruces Chamber of Commerce is hosting an Affordable Care Act Briefing Luncheon from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Tuesday, July 16, at Ramada Palms de Las Cruces, 201 E. University Ave.

The briefing luncheon will feature Dr. Martin Hickey, CEO of New Mexico Health Connections. New Mexico Health Connections is the state’s new nonprofit, consumer-oriented and operated health plan, focused on serving individuals and small businesses. New Mexico Health Connections is chartered by the Affordable Care Act to provide a nonprofit competitive health plan alternative in the New Mexico marketplace.

“The Affordable Care Act is already working,” Hickey said. “Rates being posted in New Mexico and other states demonstrate that open competition is resulting in lower rates than are currently available. Massachusetts, the blueprint for the ‘Romney/Obamacare,’ has reduced rates by 12 percent over the past two years and is projected to reduce them another 5 percent next year. Not only will rates decrease, there will be a progressive, transparent improvement in quality of care as well.”

Jose “Abe” Howard-Gonzalez, from Kemp Smith Attorneys-at-Law, will also speak. Howard-Gonzalez is an associate in the firm’s labor and employment department, focusing his practice on all aspects of employment law, including defending discrimination and retaliation claims and wage and hour disputes. He represents employers in federal and state courts in Texas and New Mexico.

“The Affordable Care Act is an all-encompassing law that affects nearly everyone, including business of all sizes. All employers need to know the main areas of the law, how it applies, and when it applies because, even though the law was passed in 2010, regulations will continue to come out for many years to come. Businesses need to be prepared to deal with the current rules and the future rules,” Howard-Gonzalez said.

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA), commonly called Obamacare or the Affordable Care Act (ACA), is a United States federal statute signed into law by President Barack Obama on March 23, 2010. The ACA is aimed at increasing the rate of health insurance coverage for Americans and reducing the overall costs of health care. It provides a number of mechanisms – including mandates, subsidies and tax credits – to employers and individuals to increase the coverage rate. Additional reforms aim to improve health care outcomes and streamline the delivery of health care.

The mission of the Greater Las Cruces Chamber of Commerce is to provide valuable services for our members, enhance and sustain the economy, promote the community and serve as the leading voice and public policy advocate for business in the greater Las Cruces region.

The Chamber is constantly looking for opportunities to help businesses, and health care has become a roadblock for many in this area. The Chamber’s discount prescription drug card program was recently launched as a member benefit to help businesses and, in particular, small and minority businesses, cope with the rising cost and uncertainty created by the PPACA.

For more information, contact Greater Las Cruces Chamber of Commerce President/CEO Bill Allen at 524-1968.

Class studies community topics
Leadership Las Cruces visits Mexican-American border

In June, the Leadership Las Cruces class studied community topics.

One of the features of this program is that it’s the class’ responsibility to design each month’s agenda. Typically, community topics include visits to the local nonprofit agencies, animal shelters, etc. – all of which receive support from the community.

This year’s class took a different approach. Participants desired to learn how safe and secure the region is and the steps taken to ensure that safety going forward.

The class heard from two representatives from the local FBI office. The agents talked about law enforcement issues one hears living so close to the border – drugs, human trafficking and kidnappings, as well as information on hostage negotiations.

The Leadership Las Cruces class commented on how candid the two agents were in discussing work, whether it was the drug cartels operate or the challenges of working cross-border crimes and the added complexity of having to satisfy demands of two separate governments.

The afternoon included a trip south to the U.S.-Mexico border, where the class heard from Border Patrol agents who discussed issues related to illegal immigrants attempting to gain entry into the United States. The class also toured the processing center where people trying to get into the country illegally are taken. Again, class participants said they truly appreciated how forthcoming the agents were, as well as the access they provided.

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*APR is Annual Percentage Rate. Other good on approved credit only. Must be a member of OSFCU. See credit union for details.
Beth Johnson of Las Cruces Homes and Land hosted the Greater Las Cruces Chamber of Commerce’s June Business After Hours Thursday, June 27.

Local band The Pink Elephants kicked off the evening.

The Business After Hours crowd enjoyed food catered by St. Clair Winery & Bistro.

Jennifer McElfresh with Cottonbloom Assisted Living and Memory Care, Chris Mitchell with the Las Cruces Convention Center and Lupe Rios and Joseph Chavez with Sagecrest Rehabilitation & Nursing

Cori Johnson with Las Cruces Homes and Land dances with C.O. Marrickle to the music of Remember Then ... A Class Act.

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RIBBON CUTTINGS

FIRST CONVENIENCE BANK – June 12, 3331 Rinconada Blvd. – District Manager Susy Grunsten and Executive Vice President James Chitti hold the proclamation while Branch Manager Delia Silvia and Senior Executive Vice President Oddis Pippin cut the ribbon.

MCDONALD’S – June 12, 3331 Rinconada Blvd. – Mike Lavin, owner, holds the proclamation while Maria Meyers cuts the ribbon.

LITHIA DODGE – June 4, 806 N. Telshor Blvd. – Sales Manager Ray Alderette holds the proclamation while General Manager Vince Armijo cuts the ribbon.

FLOWERAMA – June 20, 1300 El Paseo Road – Dave Watson, owner, holds the proclamation while Donna Watson, owner, cuts the ribbon.

WALMART – June 12, 3331 Rinconada Blvd. – Market Manager for Southwest New Mexico James Torres holds the proclamation while Store Manager Joel Aguilar cuts the ribbon.

CITY HALL SOLAR ARRAY – June 4, 700 N. Main St. – Mayor Pro-Tem Sharon Thomas, City Councillors Miguel Silva and Gill Sorg and Las Cruces Hispanic Chamber of Commerce member Santiago Soto hold the proclamations while Mayor Ken Miyagishima cuts the ribbon.

A PERFECT FIT – June 12, 1140 E. Idaho Ave. – Chief seamstress LeeAnn Brickson holds the proclamation while George Pintar, co-owner, cuts the ribbon.
New Members

Lori and Jon Hathway
Carriage House Salon and Boutique
556-9209

Lloyd MacDonald
Executive Auto Brokers LLC
525-1217

Patty Holland-Branch
Facilities Connection
915-834-7101

Mike Stolp
Presley Printing & Mailing
523-1704

Dante Tuton
Re/Max Classic Realty - Dante Tuton
386-6285

Steve Coletti
Schwan’s Home Service
382-0520

Judy Pope
Sonoma Palms Apartments
382-5611

Renewing Members

Kelly Frost
Advanced Hearing Care

Alfred Perez
Amazing Computer Service

Beth Fant
Beasley, Mitchell Co. LLP

Raul Carrillo
Carrillo Law Firm PC

Bob Harrington
Credit Repair of New Mexico

Linda Wray
Crescent Electric Supply

Kay Blankenship
Days Inn

Denton V. Holmes
Denton Holmes

Shirley Gonzales
Division Of Vocational Rehabilitation

Gabriel Calderon
El Paraiso Management Services LLC

Don Panagrossi
Enchantment Land Certified Development Company

Angelique Montes
EnrichTheKids Inc.

Ernesto Uranga
Ernesto Uranga

Joseph Arnone
Exit Realty Horizons - Joseph Arnone

Towarnera Anderson
Golden Corral Restaurant

Marie Schwartz
Habitat for Humanity

Victor Delgado
Holiday Inn Express - Las Cruces North

Belia Alvarez
Hotel Encanto de Las Cruces

Steve Fox
HoyFox Toyota -Lexus -Scion

Joseph Camuñez
Joseph P. Camuñez, D.D.S., P.A.

Jerean Hutchinson
La Posta de Mesilla

Kevin Self
Las Cruces Chamber Ballet

Bob Jeska
Las Cruces Gospel Rescue Mission

Frank Leto
Las Cruces Sun-News

Alma Franzoy-Capron
Leavitt Group Southwest Inc.

Rod Reyes
Massage Envy

Mike Lavin
McDonald’s Restaurant

Brian R. Hesser
Millennium Health and Wellness

Susan Wilson
New Mexico Mutual Group

Aaron Prescott
New Mexico Spaceport Authority

Michael Black
Oasis LP Inc.

Kerry Hixon
Pat Campbell Insurance LLC

Kiel Hoffman
Pioneer Bank

Irene Pistella
Price’s Creameries

Rosalie Burns
Rosalie Burns

Pat Ballestri
Soledad Canyon Earth Builders

Hal Kading
Southwest Aviation

Kevin Davis
Southwestern Abstract & Title

Amy Miller
SpringHill Suites by Marriott

John Hummer
Steinborn & Associates Real Estate - John Hummer

Kary Bulsterbaum
Steinborn TCN Real Estate- Kary Bulsterbaum

Janet Honek
Sunspot Solar Energy Systems LLC

Diane Miller
Teaching & Mentoring Communities (TMC)

Jennifer Zappone
Toastmasters Club No. 2984

Douglas Eddings
Ump 88 Grill

Walt Kowalski
W. Kowalski Inc.
## CHAMBER OF COMMERCE SCHEDULE

### JULY 2013

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<tr>
<th>Sunday</th>
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<td>Noon Member Advisory Committee</td>
<td>4 p.m. Las Cruces Day in Santa Fe Committee</td>
<td>9 a.m. Commercial Space Committee</td>
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<td>8:30 a.m. Literacy Conference Committee</td>
<td>11:30 a.m. Affordable Care Act Luncheon, Ramada Palms de Las Cruces</td>
<td>11 a.m. Small Business Council</td>
<td>8 a.m. Leadership Las Cruces, Memorial Medical Center</td>
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<td>4 p.m. Board of Directors</td>
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<td>5:30 p.m. Business After Hours, Hotel Encanto de Las Cruces</td>
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### CHAMBER EVENTS

#### Las Cruces Quick Facts

**HOUSING PRICE INDEX**

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<tr>
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<th>May '12 Median</th>
<th>May '13 Median</th>
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<td>Las Cruces (Doña Ana County)</td>
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### CHAMBER BY THE NUMBERS

The Greater Las Cruces Chamber of Commerce is the primary advocate for the greater Las Cruces business community, dedicated to fostering growth and opportunity by focusing on communication, education and participation.

**FULFILLING THE COMMUNITY NEED**

The following statistics from the past 30 days indicate the number of individuals interested in learning more about the chamber by visiting the website. Those who have visited the site inquired about relocation advice as well as the approximate number of member business referrals by chamber staff members.

- **6,491** people visited the chamber’s website
- **52** people inquired about relocation

#### 2013 SOUTHWEST NEW MEXICO LEGISLATIVE GUIDE

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Government appoints McMillan to state board

It was announced Monday, June 10, that Gov. Susana Martinez appointed Randy McMillan of Las Cruces to fill the vacant position on the New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority Board of Directors. McMillan is the principal and qualifying broker for NAI 1st Valley Real Estate and owns other businesses in Las Cruces.

NAI 1st Valley is a Las Cruces-based real estate firm exclusively offering commercial sales, leasing and property management services. Independently owned and operated, NAI 1st Valley was established by Randy McMillan CCIM, SIOR in 1979.

CFSNM welcomes director of the Ocotillo Institute for Social Justice

The Community Foundation of Southern New Mexico has announced that Ryan Steinmetz will be the director for the newly created Ocotillo Institute for Social Justice. The Ocotillo Institute evolved from the Quality of Life Initiative in May, which was an initiative that began in 2011 by County Commissioner Billy Garrett and then-Sen. Jeff Bingaman’s Field Aide Jake Rollow, made possible by the grant funding they solicited from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

One of the main projects of the Ocotillo Institute for Social Justice will be to implement the Empowerment Congress in Doña Ana County. Using a model that has evolved over 20 years in Los Angeles County, the Empowerment Congress seeks to convene people at the community and county level around issues affecting their quality of life; participants will create action plans around issues such as transportation or youth activities that reflect the voices of the communities.

The congress hopes to connect communities across the county with their county leaders and county leaders with their constituents.

For more information on the Ocotillo Institute, contact Ryan Steinmetz at the Community Foundation of Southern New Mexico at 521-4794 or ryan@cfsnm.org.

NMSU’s Creative Media Institute’s child safety video recognized with three awards

New Mexico State University’s Creative Media Institute has been recognized with three awards from three different video competition for its work in “Ensuring Child Safety Upon Parental Arrest,” the first video of a series of three in collaboration with local law enforcement agencies.

The awards were the Bernalillo County Sheriff’s Office, Children Youth and Families, Protective Services Division and New Mexico Department of Agriculture. In that role, he performs a wide variety of tasks to help maintain fairness in the marketplace for both buyer and seller. Hall lives in Albuquerque and works throughout the metro area.

Romero handles a number of projects for the director’s office. Last year, she was instrumental in creating NMDA’s new website, www.nmda.nmsu.edu. This year, she took on a new software program to help the department analyze and track bills through the legislative process. Romero lives in Las Cruces and works at the NMDA main office.

NMDA is located in Las Cruces, but it has staff positioned strategically throughout the state in order to carry out the mission of protecting New Mexico agriculture and the state’s citizens. Learn more about NMDA’s service to New Mexico by visiting www.nmda.nmsu.edu.

Two NMDA employees recognized for service to NM

New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA) has recognized two staff members who were nominated by their colleagues for going above and beyond in the service to New Mexico. Brian Hall and Amanda Romero are the recipients for this year’s Distinguished Service Awards.

Hall is an inspector with the Standards and Consumer Services Division. In that role, he performs a wide variety of tasks to help maintain fairness in the marketplace for both buyer and seller. Hall lives in Albuquerque and works throughout the metro area.

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Las Cruces Toastmasters Club No. 4509 receives the presidential award from Area Governor David Wallace June 12.

Las Cruces Toastmaster Club captures presidential award

Area Governor David Wallace presented the Toastmasters Distinguished Award to Las Cruces Toastmasters Club No. 4509 Club President Monica Magallanes June 12. This is the highest Toastmaster Club Award in the organization. Less than 8 percent of all clubs worldwide receive this distinction.

Las Cruces Toastmasters Club meets from 7 to 8 p.m. every Wednesday in Good Samaritan Retirement Village, 3025 Terrace Drive, Community Room. Visitors are welcome.

For more information about Toastmasters, go to www.toastmasters.org.

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