

TELLURIDE DAILY PLANET

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SUNDAY

AUGUST 19, 2018
VOLUME 24, NUMBER 99
www.telluridedailyplanet.com



Don't quote me but...

"Soap shouldn't be a luxury, but it should be luxurious."

—Dr. Marc Donsky, of Fairplay

Calendar

Sunday

- Live Longer Retreat: Peaks Resort, Mountain Village
- Music in the Core: Heritage Plaza, Mountain Village, 3-5 p.m.
- AA: Christ Presbyterian Church, 5:30 p.m.

Monday

- Live Longer Retreat: Peaks Resort, Mountain Village
- Public Meeting: Presentation of San Miguel County Housing Needs Assessment, Mountain Village Town Hall (Town Council Meeting Room), noon-3 p.m.
- Music in the Core: Heritage Plaza, Mountain Village, 3-5 p.m.
- AA: Christ Presbyterian Church, 5:30 p.m.

Tuesday

- Live Longer Retreat: Peaks Resort, Mountain Village
- AA: Christ Presbyterian Church, 7 a.m.
- Tasting Telluride Food Tour: Downtown Telluride, 11 a.m.-2:15 p.m.
- Music in the Core: Heritage Plaza, Mountain Village, 3-5 p.m.

Weather

Forecast: Sunday is predicted to be sunny with a high of 69. Monday will be mostly sunny with a high of 72, while Tuesday will bring scattered thunderstorms with a high of 69.

Muse: "Pressure is what you feel when you don't know what's going on."
—Chuck Noll

IN ORBIT:

Sunday Focus: Sports

Norwood football season preview

Wednesday: Arts, Lifestyles & Nonprofits

EDUCATION

Back to school, a week early

By **AMY M. PETERS**
Planet Contributor

School bells will ring a week earlier this year when students in the Telluride School District return to classrooms Wednesday (teachers returned for in-service programs Monday).

After two years of planning with the Telluride Science Research Center and Telluride Academy — both campus tenants — the early start enables the high school semester to end before winter break.

Telluride School District adding faculty housing, crafting ballot language for mill levy

In turn, students will be released from school a week earlier in May.

"We also adjusted sports schedules to start this week," Superintendent Mike Gass added. "It's actually getting back to where Telluride was before the big construc-

tion addition."

Gass projects enrollment will be steady, despite a small influx of students from the Norwood school district, which is transitioning this year to a four-day school week.

"It's a bigger challenge with the

younger kids because it's a daycare issue," Gass said.

Middle/High School Principal Sara Kimble anticipates an increase of 23 students at the high school, but she's not sure how many of those students are from Norwood.

During the past several weeks, the first faculty occupants moved into two, newly constructed district housing units in Ilium. In addition,

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Mushroom mania

Scott Keating, left, and San Miguel County Commissioner Kris Hostrom demonstrate how to cultivate mushroom spores to a rapt audience in Elks Park during the Telluride Mushroom Festival on Thursday. (Photo by Sophie Stuber/Telluride Daily Planet)

COMMUNITY

'A story of Life or Death'

Local Todd Wilson remains optimistic despite living with kidney failure

By **JUSTIN CRIADO**
Editor

A man walked into the Daily Planet office recently.

"I need to make a plea for my life," he told Classified Sales Rep Jenny Klein, who took his three-page letter for the editorial department to look over.

Todd Wilson's tome, titled "A story of Life or Death," mainly recounts his years as a champion rower, during which he won two Swiss National Championship titles. In reading the letter, his passion for the sport was evident, as he described the 2007

and 2008 Swiss championships, including his two gold medal finishes.

"I wanted to know what it was like to be an Olympic athlete, so I trained like an Olympic athlete," Wilson, 58, of Telluride told the Planet. "It paid off."

But that was 10 years ago. Wilson's story ended on a more serious note.

In 2015, he was diagnosed with kidney failure, a serious end-stage condition that requires ongoing dialysis treatment or a kidney transplant eventually. Wilson will travel to

the Front Range this month to undergo the necessary tests and evaluation in order to determine if he's suitable to receive a transplant. If all goes well, he'll be placed on a waiting list. The average wait time for a donor is 3-5 years, according to the National Kidney Foundation. For people with Type O blood types, which is Wilson (Type O positive), the average wait is seven years. If a person donates a kidney in someone's name, the process is expedited.

"This is really exciting for me,

See **WILSON**, Page 8

SAN MIGUEL COUNTY

TAX COULD SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH

Potential mill levy would generate approximately \$600,000

By **SOPHIE STUBER**
Planet Contributor

Mental health is a topic on many people's minds lately. Though San Miguel County is a beautiful area, it's not necessarily always an easy place to live. The costs of living are incredibly steep, and fulfilling job opportunities are not always prevalent.

In a recent interview with the Daily Planet, Paul Reich, Tri-County Health Network behavioral health program manager, discussed some of the high sources of constant stress for local residents.

"Housing is difficult. Jobs are seasonal. None of us have friends and family (who live in the area), for the most part," Reich said. "It's a difficult environment, and there's a lot of stress that doesn't appear in other places."

Due to the high costs of living, many people commute from outside of San Miguel County to work. Long travel times make it difficult to form relationships and friendships, Reich said.

"If you don't make those social connections it's really hard," he added. School districts in San Miguel County also have experienced suicides. "That's particularly heartbreaking," said Reich, a Telluride School District board member.

The rural location also means that there are fewer professional medical resources, particularly for mental health. Several groups have

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Early

SCHOOL, from page 7

leverage three-fourths of \$1 million," Gass said. "We're trying to draft language so that if Amendment 73 passes, we wouldn't levy locally. Where if 73 fails, we could still levy locally for \$750,000."

Gass added, "We don't want to confuse voters, so it's going to take a lot of conversations to educate parents within the district."

The school board has been evaluating the efficacy of programs across the district by inviting various groups to work sessions. For example, when a group of high school students joined a work session discussion last spring, a no cellphones policy was put into place.

"High school students will be asked to put their phones away when they are in classrooms and the library," Kimble said. "The purpose is to limit technology distractions not related to the curriculum in the classroom."

DUAL IMMERSION PROGRAM

This also is the first year the district will receive data on the dual immersion (DI) Spanish language program, a program the school board continues to evaluate.

"We've worked over the summer to connect with other DI resort schools in Colorado so that we can share data across like demographics," Gass said.

With the DI program being offered into 4th grade this year, Intermediate School Principal Chad Terry explains that students entering 6th grade will attend classes "in more of a middle school model and the design of the program will change to accommodate a different class schedule."

While there is no official sunset for the DI program, Gass explains that under the direction of a 15-member committee called Global Fluency, assessments are applied to ensure reading, writing and language proficiency in Spanish. The end goal of the program is for high school graduates to earn a Seal of Biliteracy on their diplomas.

HEALTHY KIDS COLORADO

The district will soon roll out results of a Healthy Kids Colorado survey that was administered to students last spring.

"The survey results help to understand the impacts of living in our resort environment, and there are some flags in there that parents need to hear about," Gass said. "What do kids have access to? What do they perceive their parents perceive?"

Tax

HEALTH, from page 7

The proposed measure would be a .75 mill increase in property taxes, which would result in approximately \$600,000 to help fund mental health resources for schools, crisis services and emergency response services, suicide prevention, and mental health treatment and substance abuse prevention throughout the county. A portion of funding would also go towards providing consistent psychological counseling in the school districts.

Reich, who also is a member of the commission, explained that the group identified a serious funding gap for mental health services in San Miguel County.

"We need to come up with local solutions because the answer isn't necessarily going to come from the state," he said. "It really comes down to that there aren't enough services, and there's not enough dollars in the system in San Miguel County for mental health services."

Miller, who also is involved in the mill levy initiative, agreed that initiatives to fund local resources are necessary.

"What we've learned is that clients do a lot better if they're served where they live," she explained. "We want to be able to provide a wide menu of services in Telluride."

Currently, a person who may be suffering from a mental health crisis has to go to Montrose to receive an emergency crisis evaluation. There are no resources in Telluride for this type of diagnosis. Often, people don't meet the risk level to qualify for treatment in Montrose and are sent back to Telluride. As a result, there are no local resources to mitigate potential crises.

Funding for mental health resources from the mill levy could improve these services.

"We really want to do more prevention and maintenance so that they don't get to that crisis point," Miller explained. "And if we are in an environment of high risk, we want to treat people in our community."

In a recent poll, 72 percent of likely voters in the November election indicated that they would support this mill levy increase, Reich reported. "It's clear that it's an issue voters care about," he said.

In San Miguel County, six people died by suicide in 2016, two last year and four so far in 2018, according to Reich.

"That's 12 (suicides) in three-and-a-half years. It's a topic on a lot of people's minds," Reich said.

Miller noted that the majority of clients that she sees suffer from substance abuse.

"I would say that 80 percent of the clients that I see are related to substance abuse. Primarily alcohol, but also marijuana," she said.

There is currently no detox center or place to treat substance abuse in Telluride. The crisis demands immediate action, according to Miller.

"We're at a breaking point in our community where we really need to address these issues both for our youth and adults," she said.

Since the state doesn't always provide enough resources, mental health professionals, local government officials and community members are focusing on local opportunities, such as the mill levy.

"We need to find local dollars and invest in local resources," Reich said.

The Board of County Commissioners plans to finalize the language of the initiative and vote to officially put the mill levy on the November ballot at its Wednesday meeting. The proposal is overseen by an independent body appointed by the county commissioners.



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favorite things?



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