

IN THIS EDITION:



Financial
PLANNING
2026

SUPER BOWL LINK
Durango’s John Benton
helping coach Seahawks **1C**

AFFORDABLE HOUSING
Durango on track to meet
Prop. 123 requirements **5A**

Weekend Edition

THE Durango HERALD

SERVING THE HEART OF SOUTHWEST COLORADO | DURANGOHERALD.COM | SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2026 | \$2.00

ROCKY MOUNTAIN CHOCOLATE FACTORY

‘We’ve got the legacy, but no one’s really ever sat down and said, ‘How do you build a brand out of this whole thing?’



Irene George, left, and Aimee Bitanny with Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory apply texture to chocolate peanut butter bars on the production line Jan. 22 at the factory in Durango. Headed up by Interim CEO Jeff Geygan, the company is revamping its internal operations and out-facing branding.

JERRY MCBRIDE/Durango Herald photos

Economic rebirth on the horizon?

BY ELIZABETH POND
HERALD STAFF WRITER

When Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory Interim CEO Jeff Geygan took over company operations in May 2024, the beloved Durango-grown confectionary was on

the brink of bankruptcy. Turning things around was the first item on Geygan’s agenda. “When we came in, we said, ‘Guys, we’re losing a ton of money here, so whatever you did yesterday, assume we’re going to do it differently tomorrow,’” he said in a wide-ranging



Judy Harrison flattens almond bark before it cools Jan. 22 at the factory.

interview with *The Durango Herald*. “If what (was done) yesterday worked, I wouldn’t be sitting here – trust me.”

Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory stock has declined more

See **REBIRTH, 7A**

LA PLATA COUNTY

Residents workshop peaceful protest

Civil disobedience requires choices and comes with risks

BY CHRISTIAN BURNEY
HERALD STAFF WRITER

As discontent grows over federal immigration enforcement, some La Plata County residents are brushing up on the philosophy and practice of civil disobedience.

About 60 residents met Jan. 24 – the day after U.S. Border Patrol agents shot and killed Minneapolis man Alex Pretti, 37 – in Durango for a civil disobedience workshop led by JoAnn Smotherman and hosted by Durango

Friends Meeting, the resident Quakers group.

INSIDE

REVISITING CODE: Compañeros director says noise citation an attempt to suppress speech. **8A**

Examining the ideas of philosopher Henry David Thoreau, civil rights champion Martin Luther King Jr. and other thought leaders, attendees talked about what civil disobedience looks like, the risks it entails and the purpose it serves.

Merriam-Webster defines civil disobedience as “refusal to obey governmental demands or commands especially as a nonviolent and usually collective means of forcing concessions from the government.”

Smotherman described it as “the responsibility under conditions of failure.”

Thoreau treated the responsibility of civil disobedience as

See **PROTEST, 8A**

Around THE CORNERS

Introducing Weylin Ryan, Ignacio’s new town manager

Lifelong La Plata County resident wants to balance growth with community character

BY SCOUT EDMONDSON
HERALD STAFF WRITER

Weylin Ryan has always found La Plata County to be a hard place to leave. He grew up in Bayfield, and after attending college in Indiana, quickly

found his way back to Southwest Colorado.

After wearing several hats in various community service-oriented roles, he became Ignacio’s town manager Jan. 12, taking the reins from Mark Garcia after he retired. He said his

life-long love of the places and people that make Ignacio special are what inspire him most in his new role.

“I grew up in Boy Scouts, so I was taught that you have to give back through community service,” Ryan said. “(Becoming town manager) is another way to give back to another community that I care deeply about and have fond memories growing

up in.”

In the handful of weeks since he started the job, he said it has been a whirlwind learning the ropes, from making sure the town is properly staffed or making sure utilities like sewer and gas are accessible to residents.

He is excited to be town manager and for what the future holds for the community.

“I really do some exciting stuff,” Ryan said. “I work with the town to look at the future, what growth looks like or ask, ‘Do we want growth?’”

He worked various other jobs with deep ties to the area. His first job was rowing clients down rivers as a raft guide for Mountain Waters. After college and

See **RYAN, 8A**

Business | **1D**
City, Region, State | **3A**
Obituaries | **4A**

Opinion | **1B**
Southwest Life | **8B**
Sports | **1C**

 /thedurangoherald
 @durangoherald

Today: Sunny. Mostly clear tonight.
High 58 | Low 26.
More weather | **6C**

News tips | **247-3504 or 375-4567**
Subscribe | **375-4530**
Place a classified ad | **247-3504**





HERE
For Every Body



SAN JUAN REGIONAL
MEDICAL CENTER
LifeBetterHere.com