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Weekend Edition THE Durango HERALD

THIS EDITION POPS! | DURANGOHERALD.COM | FRIDAY, JULY 3, 2026 | \$2.00

Communities to mark America's 250th with festivals, family activities



Fourth of July events are planned this week in communities across the Four Corners.

LA PLATA COUNTY PRIMARY ELECTIONS

Dem ballots outpace GOP's

What do results say about voters heading into November?

BY JESSIE BOWMAN
HERALD STAFF WRITER

Despite lower-than-expected turnout – only 36% of La Plata County's eligible voters cast a ballot – the primary election offered an early glimpse into shifting voter participation.

Democrats and unaffiliated voters who chose Democratic ballots outnumbered Republicans by a wide margin Tuesday, a reversal from the county's 2022 primary, even as local political observers cautioned against reading too much into a single election.

In 2022, unaffiliated and Republican voters in La Plata County far outnumbered Democratic voters. And while final voter statistics will not be available for several days, unofficial election results indicate Democratic turnout far outpaced Republican turnout this year and early voter data released Wednesday by the Colorado Secretary of State's Office suggests a shift among unaffiliated voters.

The Democratic contest with the highest turnout drew 10,436 voters, compared with 5,367 in the Republican race with the highest turnout.

Among unaffiliated voters, 3,762 cast ballots in the Democratic races, and 1,149 in the Republican race. However, the party preference of 2,700 ballots had not yet

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READY TO PARTY?

BY ANNA WATSON
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Independence Day returns this week to communities across the Four Corners as the nation prepares to celebrate its momentous 250th anniversary.

Towns and cities will host long-standing traditions unique to their areas. Cortez will host its Parque de Vida festival and a fireworks show; Silverton will put on its mountain-town parade; Durango will host a parade, live music and com-

munity party; and Farmington will host its multiday Freedom Days bash, complete with games, a parade, fireworks and more.

Thousands of visitors and residents are expected to fill parks and downtown centers across Southwest Colorado and northwest New Mexico.

Fireworks are planned in some areas, while others have scaled back or canceled displays because of wildfire concerns.

Here's a roundup of Fourth of July events leading up to and through the holiday weekend:

INSIDE

FIREWORKS: Bayfield to hold official show. 5A

EVENTS: Calendar of regional Fourth of July events. 7A

Silverton's popular escape has more music this year

Whether arriving by car or aboard the historic train, visitors to Silverton will find a packed schedule Friday and Saturday.

Silverton Area Chamber of Commerce planned its annual, old-fashioned Fourth of July parade, block parties, family activities and live mu-

sical performances.

"We really focus on family-friendly events, but this year we have more live music than we've had in the past," said DeAnne Gallegos, executive director of the chamber of commerce. "So, you could choose an intimate patio seat with your family or a block party."

The brochure was edited several times to add last-minute band entries.



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ROCKY MOUNTAIN CHOCOLATE FACTORY

New interim CEO wants to 'make chocolate fun again'

Al Harper plans to move RMCF away from 'corporate' model, address financial woes

BY ELIZABETH POND
HERALD STAFF WRITER

Al Harper, owner of American Heritage Railways, wasn't looking for a job when former Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory Interim CEO Jeffrey Geygan resigned last week –

but he couldn't pass up a surprise offer from the Board of Directors to sign on as the confectionary's temporary new commander-in-chief.

"I had no idea I'd ever be coming back here – it just wasn't on my schedule," said Harper, who served on the

RMCF board for a year back in 2024. "(The board) said that he (Geygan) had resigned, and would I consider coming and being the interim CEO of Rocky Mountain Chocolate, and I said, 'You're kidding me.' It was not a job I was looking for. I don't need a job – but I like the idea of a challenge."

Geygan resigned June 26, and the board called Harper the next day, he said. His first

day of work was Wednesday.

He was offered a hefty salary, but said he told the board he would rather keep the funds circulating in the struggling business and be paid the equivalent of \$200,000 in stocks instead.

"I said, 'Well, here's the deal: my stock is so low, you can pay me in stock. If I'm successful, then I'll do really well. If I'm not, I'm stuck with a bunch

of not very valuable stock,'" he said. "That way, we're not taking any cash from the company. The company needs the cash."

A recent fourth-quarter fiscal 2026 earnings report reflected a \$3.4 million loss and a 23.6% year-over-year revenue decline for the company. Meanwhile, RMCF's daily stock prices have

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