



MUSICAL MARATHON

Litton to lead Music in the Mountains’ Family Concert 1B

RECORDS BROKEN

Pommeret, Dauwalter win Hardrock 100 1c

Weekend Edition
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FERRIS FIRE

Growth halts; blaze 53% contained

Incident managers: Crews to focus on hot spots and repair work

BY ANNA WATSON
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

The Ferris Fire about 15 miles northwest of Dolores has not grown in the last few days since it reached 64,870 acres. The slowdown is credited to ground crews, aerial drops and moisture moving into the region, said California Team 7 spokeswoman Holly Welch. Firefighters, led by the national incident managers Team 7, have successfully established lines around this most-active northwest corner using hot shot crews, hand crews and helicopter drops. “Anything can change; something could roll out from the fire. But right now, they’re feeling pretty confident that it’s not going to continue to move,” Welch said. She emphasized “you never know what can happen” but as

Around less active portions, crews are mopping up and monitoring lingering spots for potential to rekindle.

days go by, fire officials anticipate additional containment. As of Thursday, the wild-fire that ignited from lightning strikes June 27 was 53% contained. While growth has stopped, crews continue to conduct “seek and destroy” missions to extinguish interior heat pockets – those smoldering areas – using hand tools. The heat pockets are being identified through the use of drones with thermal imaging. Welch said most of those pockets are 600 to 1,000 feet off the control line. Montezuma County and the greater region saw scattered storms during the afternoons and evenings this week. Yet, no rain has been recorded on the fire’s northwest flank, while other areas received one-tenth an inch of precipitation.

See FIRE, 7A

Food insecurity affects La Plata County’s residents in range of ways



JERRY MCBRIDE/Durango Herald
Judy Rector shops at the Pine River Shares Market on June 16 in Bayfield. She is one of many residents in the region experiencing food insecurity.

NO ONE IS IMMUNE

BY ELIZABETH POND
AND JESSIE BOWMAN
HERALD STAFF WRITERS

Manna soup kitchen’s campus is bustling at 10 a.m. on a weekday. A group of women, each with a shock of orange hair that suggests familial relation, energetically loads groceries into bags at the community food market. The youngest among them – appearing around middle school age, judging by her height and soft, rounded features – expresses excitement about the snacks she’s placing in a bright pink backpack. Outside, people eat breakfast. They’re congregated under trees, on the benches by the building and perched on the side of the parking lot. Some of them are unhoused. Most of them are not. “Everyone is struggling right now,” one volunteer stacking egg cartons said. Food insecurity can impact anyone – the person sleeping at the bus stop, your middle-class neighbor with a big family or

About this series

Thousands of La Plata County residents struggle to consistently access enough nutritious food. This series examines the impacts of the growing affordability crisis and looming cuts to many New Deal-era nutrition and social service programs on the county’s fragile food safety net, the widespread impact on the community and the local efforts working to build a more resilient food system.

In this series:

Today: A broad range of people experience food insecurity in a variety of ways.

July 24: An exploration of how

the farmer down the road, said Rachel Landis, director of the Good Food Collective, a Durango-based nonprofit that works to provide connection, resources, policy support and strategic leadership to build a more just and thriving food system across Southwest Colorado. “This really is an issue affecting many of our friends and neighbors down here in this region, and this is not something that is limited to our folks who are within our kind of lowest socioeconomic sta-

tus,” she said. “It is also really impacting the middle working class – (and) I think that’s the other thing, is understanding that this could be any of us, really.” In La Plata County, recent estimates from the Durango Food Bank suggest around 7,000 people struggle with food insecurity and miss at least one meal a day. Other nonprofit leaders believe that number is likely much higher based on what they are seeing in their communities, although those

estimates are difficult to quantify. What is clear is the need. In the Pine River Valley, lines at the food bank have doubled in the past two years, and organizations across the county dedicated to helping families afford groceries or put fresh fruit and vegetables on the table remain as busy as ever amid an affordability crisis that hits rural areas particularly hard. The conflict in Iran has driven up fuel and fertilizer costs, pushing grocery prices higher. Beef prices continue to climb as the U.S. cattle herd sits at its smallest size in more than half a century. Housing costs and expensive childcare add on, and looming above it all are next year’s changes to federal assistance programs. Over the past five years, local food organizations have built an increasingly sophisticated network of support and begun focusing on a more community-driven approach to addressing food security – but the issue still persist in the region, and its impacts can be diverse, far-reaching and long-term, Landis said.

See FOOD INSECURITY, 8A

Chris Ballantine new CEO/publisher of Ballantine Communications

Next generation family member says he wants to listen, improve and innovate

HERALD STAFF REPORT

Chris Ballantine on Wednesday was named CEO and publisher of Ballantine Communications, which owns and operates three newspapers in Southwest Colorado and northwest New Mexico – including *The Durango Herald*. Ballantine, 40, comes from a

multigenerational newspaper family and has played a behind-the-scenes role in the company for many years. He has served on the BCI board of directors since 2012, and currently serves as secretary. He has also held various positions in the company, namely in circulation. He is the son of former publisher Richard G. Ballantine,



Ballantine

member and in the process of moving to Durango from Los Angeles. “I’m excited about the family having more involvement in the operations of the company,” Chris Ballantine said. “We want

to continue our mission of providing high-quality journalism and information to the Southwest. I am very impressed by the work we do and look forward to helping the company find innovative ways to improve.” He noted the significance of his family’s role in journalism going back multiple generations. “It was fun growing up in a newspaper family – hearing different debates on news stories and what was happening in the community,” Ballantine said. “I

always remember the charm my grandmother Morley had, even with her high standards and sometimes stern demeanor.” He said he wants to begin his tenure by hearing from readers and advertisers, including what they like and dislike about the company and their ideas for making the enterprise better. He invites readers to email him at publisher@bcimedia.com. Ballantine said the media

See BALLANTINE, 8A