

# ELDORADO VISTAS

VOLUME VII, ISSUE 4

April. 2005

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Monthly Newsletter of the Eldorado Community Improvement Association

1 La Hacienda Loop, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87508 ▼ (505) 466-4248 ▼ [www.eldoradocommunity.org](http://www.eldoradocommunity.org)

## Our Agora Changes Hands

**CHECK OUT YOUR DICTIONARY** for a definition of **agora** (accent on the first 'a') n. pl. agorae. It means "a marketplace or public square in ancient Greece that served as a center for civic life" and it's what we call our local shopping center.

It's a fairly safe bet that New Mexico with both its history and present firmly tied to the Spanish language has few if any other place names in Greek. The name given our center was the result of a partnering in 1989 of two Greek businessmen, **Frank Karris** and **Alex Constanteras**, who first pooled their resources to develop a portion of Eldorado for a housing development that they then christened with a Spanish name, *Dos Griegos*, meaning "Two Greeks." Later in 1995, the same entrepreneurs built a shopping center here and, departing from the customary Spanish, called it "The Agora" after the ancient market and gathering place of Athens.

The new owners of the Agora are members of a family enterprise with substantial real estate interests in Kansas. **Jerry Schauffler**, the company's CEO, and his daughter **Perry Ann Jeveli**, one of its board members, recently visited Santa Fe to meet with the Agora's tenants. Asked why they chose Eldorado for their purchase of a new business, their first outside

Kansas, they replied that they were "most impressed by the sense of community here."

With the impetus of new ownership, the coming months will see some significant changes at the Agora. Nearly 9,000 square feet of needed shelf and aisle space will be added to the Eldorado Supermarket. Already a sales leader for the chain of which it is a part, the market will feature a new deli, a modern produce section and an accessible customer service desk, along with the expansion of shelf and aisle space. The hope of the supermarket owners is that more space and more choices will encourage area residents to do the bulk of their grocery shopping here, closer to their homes.

The jewel in the crown of the Agora has always been its beautiful, well-kept garden that features many native New Mexican plants. It will be retained and maintained, but new paving, probably brick, will be installed and a portion of the garden will be shaded to accommodate those who wish to have their coffee and sandwiches outside during the months of hot sun and high temperatures.

With none of the well-known fast food franchises in the vicinity, Eldorado will get one more eating establishment to add to the very fine choices we have now of Las Chivas, Mariana's, Copa de Oro and Home Run Pizza. In late May, the new owners have announced that "an Asian take-out" will open under the direction of an experienced chef who will call his new business *The Wild Wild Wok*.

With many things changing at our "marketplace and public square," the Agora, one thing will remain happily the same, **Peter Vogel** who has been the property manager under the previous owner, **Gary Boyle**, will continue in that capacity with the new company.

With new owners who are improving things and equally interested in working with and supporting the Eldorado area, a recently in-the-news TV personality well known for her skill in home economics might look at what's happening these days at the Agora and say, "It's a good thing."

—*Frank Schober*

*ECIA Board  
Work Study  
Meeting,  
Community  
Center, Mon.,  
April 18, 7 pm*

### THE TEAM (L TO R):

**JERRY SCHAUFFLER & PERRY ANN JEVELI**, MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY THAT NOW OWNS THE AGORA

**JOHN BROOKS**, PRESIDENT OF THE COMPANY THAT OPERATES THE ELDORADO SUPERMART

**PETER VOGEL**, AGORA PROPERTY MANAGER

**JIM FLYNN, VP, & KATHY DOMINGUEZ**, CONTROLLER, BOTH OF THE BROOKS COMPANY.



**Share your  
comments  
with us!**

*For policy and  
deadline, see  
below*

### Editorial Policy

*Vistas* invites opinions, ideas, stories, photos, and art from the community at large. Please include contact numbers for fact checking purposes. The newsletter will not publish unsigned letters or material deemed inflammatory. Material will be printed at the discretion of the editors. Letters over 150 words will be edited for fit. Community announcements are welcome; accompanying photos are welcome, too. **DEADLINE:** Newsletter deadline is the 3rd day of each month. Submissions can be dropped off or mailed to the ECIA office or emailed to [info@eldoradocommunity.org](mailto:info@eldoradocommunity.org). Please include "Attn: *Vistas*" in your message.

### Mission Statement

The mission of *Vistas*, the monthly newsletter of the ECIA, is to inform the Eldorado community about issues before the ECIA Board and the membership at large. By so doing, the publication seeks to foster increased neighborhood pride and community participation in the decision making process.

## Water News

**T**HE ELDORADO AREA WATER and Sanitation District held a public meeting on Monday, March 7, to discuss three prominent issues regarding the District's efforts to obtain financing for the remaining \$4 million required to complete the purchase of the water system. Those issues were (1) the response to the Court of Appeals ruling that the already-issued general obligation bonds were invalid; (2) the effort by the District to sell revenue bonds to local residents; and (3) the Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) negotiated between the District and the County. Well over 100 residents attended and many questions were asked of the members of the District Board, their attorneys, and County Commissioner Jack Sullivan. The culmination of the meeting was a resounding vote of confidence in the District's moving ahead with the JPA.

Despite the strong support in the community for the agreement with the County, as evidenced not only at the March 7 meeting but again on March 10 at the Board of County Commissioner's meeting, the County

**ASSOCIATION FEES  
ARE NOW CONSIDERED DELINQUENT,  
SO CALL BEFORE YOU WRITE THAT  
CHECK TO SEE WHAT LATE FEES YOU  
HAVE INCURRED!**

Commissioners refused to approve the JPA. The District will review its options for financing and will soon announce their plans. By order of the District Court the \$4 million must be paid by June 1 of this year or the water system will revert to AMREP ownership—at a very heavy expense to the community.

It is unfortunate that the County Commissioners have rejected this opportunity to begin a long-term, and mutually beneficial relationship with the Eldorado Area Water and Sanitation District. But the District Board is a determined board. The Eldorado community has proven numerous times that they are also determined, and that they support the EAWSD Board's efforts to purchase the water system. The EAWSD Board is confident that with the continued support of the community we can still complete the purchase.

—EAWSD Board of Directors

## Albuquerque to Santa Fe

**T**HE NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT of Transportation (NMDOT) in cooperation with the Federal Transit Administration, Federal Highway Administration, Mid-Region Council of Governments, and Santa Fe Metropolitan Planning Organization, is sponsoring the Albuquerque-Santa Fe Transportation Corridor Study. A range of alternatives for transportation between these two major New Mexico destinations has been developed and includes both alignment location options, as well as mode options.

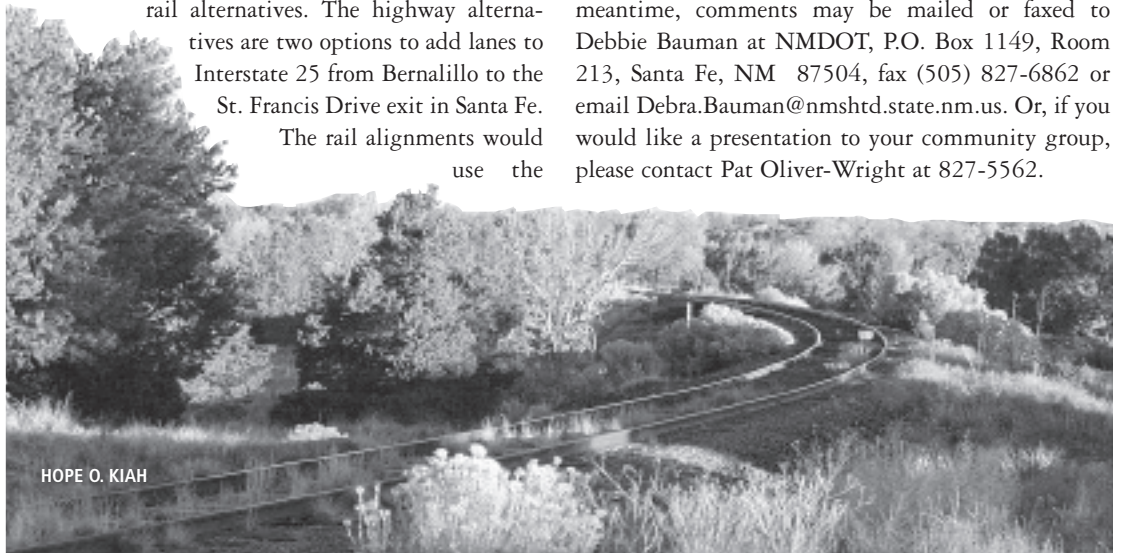
At this point in the study a screening process is being conducted to evaluate a series of highway and rail alternatives. The highway alternatives are two options to add lanes to Interstate 25 from Bernalillo to the St. Francis Drive exit in Santa Fe.

The rail alignments would use the

existing Burlington, Northern, Santa Fe (BNSF) line from the town of Bernalillo to La Bajada hill. North of La Bajada the following four possible rail alignments are under review:

- ▼ BNSF using the Waldo Bypass then following Interstate 25 to Santa Fe Southern Railroad
- ▼ BNSF to the old New Mexico Central track (Kennedy Line)
- ▼ BNSF to Santa Fe Southern, with possible Lamy Bypass
- ▼ BNSF to Community District alignment

The next series of public meetings will be held in April (date and location to be announced). In the meantime, comments may be mailed or faxed to Debbie Bauman at NMDOT, P.O. Box 1149, Room 213, Santa Fe, NM 87504, fax (505) 827-6862 or email [Debra.Bauman@nmshtd.state.nm.us](mailto:Debra.Bauman@nmshtd.state.nm.us). Or, if you would like a presentation to your community group, please contact Pat Oliver-Wright at 827-5562.



HOPE O. KIAH

## Don't Blame the Dogs

**RESIDENT COMMENTS,** "I see very few people carrying 'pooper-scoopers,' and sometimes I see dogs being walked without leashes. I do not marvel at the manners of pets not walked on a leash. Rather, I realize what a danger this poses to residents if the animal becomes startled, excited or angry. I realize that it's not the dog's fault, but the owner's."

The ECIA gets many complaints about people not cleaning up after their dogs, or not walking their pet on a leash. Most of the time, the homeowner doesn't know the name or address of the pet owner (or is unwilling to give it), so there is really nothing the ECIA can do to notify the pet owner of this nuisance behavior.

The first line of defense against these offenders is for you to talk to them personally. Good communication can lead to voluntary compliance and a more neighborly neighborhood.

You may want to suggest solutions that address the pet owner's behavior instead of the dog's. Owners should be held responsible for properly managing, training and supervising their pets. Blaming the individual animal or type of animal does not stop the

problem. Many residents seem reticent, however, to speak with their neighbors for the simple reason that they must live together and be neighbors, perhaps for many years to come.

For concerns and problems related to dogs repeatedly running off-leash and those displaying aggression to people, neighbors should document the facts and call the Santa Fe County Animal Control department (424-2050). It can help to have several neighbors report their observations to animal control. Before you buy or adopt a dog check out this website: <http://www.paw-rescue.org/before.html>

### LANDSCAPE LIGHTS

Landscape lighting, such as the solar-powered lamps lining driveways and walks, must be fully shielded. Light shall not be visible through any openings in the fixture other than the lowest point of the fixture (the bottom).

Reminder—before you build, please submit your plan. Compliance, first! AC applications are available at the ECIA office or on the web at <http://www.eldoradocommunity.org/architecture>.

—Charles Smith, the ECIA CCR

## President's Round-up

**ROADS: MUD!** Sticky, oozing ever present Mud! If you are an Eldorado resident who lives on one of the 57 miles of dirt road, then you have had to deal with the mud issue this winter. Ed Benrock, chair of the Road Committee, has heard from many of you. As a result, he contacted the county to determine a remedy for our muddy roads. In most cases, the base course on the road is not sufficient to bind the soil when it is wet, therefore we have mushy, muddy roads. It costs approximately \$30,000 per mile to base course roads. With 57 miles of dirt road, most of which needs some attention, the project becomes almost prohibitive. Ed will continue to work with the county, and although our muddy roads will not be fixed in the near future, at least we will have a plan for improvement that will extend over three to five years. The only good thing about muddy roads is that we have had some relief from the drought!

**ANNUAL REPORT:** About the time you receive this April issue of *Vistas*, you should also receive a copy of the ECIA Annual Report. This edition is our first attempt at a new and improved document. Please read it and be sure to vote for candidates for the Board of Directors. There are only three candidates for five board positions, but it is impor-



tant that you vote. Also, in order that we may establish a quorum for the May 2 Annual Meeting, please send your proxy information unless you plan to attend the May 2 meeting.

**ANNUAL MEETING:** On Monday, May 2, the membership meeting for the Eldorado community will be held at the El Dorado Elementary School at 7 pm. At this meeting you will have an opportunity to hear how the year has gone for the association. You will be able to greet the new board members and thank the retiring board members. There will be a portion of the meeting for you to speak about issues that are important to you and to the community. We are also planning to have music, refreshments and door prizes. So come and enjoy an evening with your neighbors.

—Jeanne Klein

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### COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

Finance: Gisela Knight  
Architecture: Bill Schwent  
Conservation: Steve Wust  
Stable: Dina Sassone  
Election: Vacant  
Road: Ed Benrock  
Information: Vacant  
Neighborhood Watch:  
Sandra Vreeland

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### COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Vista Grande Library  
466-READ  
Security  
204-2945  
Fire and Rescue  
466-1204  
Animal Control  
424-2050



## Run for ERA

The Eldorado Residents Association (ERA) needs three candidates for ERA's Board of Directors. These are two-year terms. The ERA is an organization of activism and fun, and has served the Eldorado community from its infancy to nearly complete buildout. Help is needed. I urge you to become involved in your community.

Nominations will be taken from the floor at our April 4 Annual Meeting. For information, call me, **Jerry Bradley**, at 466-4253.

## Fun Stuff

On Saturday, April 16, Vista Grande Public Library (VGPL) will host a performance of the Poetry Drill Team for teens as well as those from junior high and the higher grades in primary school. On April 23, the Library will host a Celtic dance performance for anyone interested. For times, contact VGPL at 466-READ or [READ@VGLibrary.org](mailto:READ@VGLibrary.org).

## Homework Help

Once again, homework help is available at the Vista Grande Public Library with ACT, Academic Center for Teens, on Wednesdays from 4 to 8:30 pm. Retired teachers volunteer their time for this service, providing tutoring in the humanities, mathematics and study skills.

## A Home for Someone

Santa Fe Habitat for Humanity will hold an informational meeting in Eldorado at 7 pm on April 18, in the Community Center living room. This year Santa Fe Habitat plans to construct houses for seven new partner families. This orientation is an excellent opportunity to learn more about Habitat for Humanity and its mission to provide affordable housing for Santa Fe families. Please join us and learn more about this exciting opportunity to volunteer with a great local organization. For more information, you can call the Santa Fe Habitat office at 986-5880, or visit our website at [www.sfhfh.org](http://www.sfhfh.org).

## Eldorado Studio Tour

Eldorado's big annual Studio Tour is happening Saturday, May 14, and Sunday, May 15, from 10 am to 5 pm at artists' studios throughout Eldorado. The Eldorado Fire Station on Vista Grande will house the Preview Gallery through the weekend from 10 am to 5 pm where visitors can see a sample of each artist's work. Brochures with illustrations of each artist's work, studio number, and address and maps to the studios will be distributed to homes in Eldorado and



available at the fire station and the Agora.

This year will be our biggest tour ever with 99 artists and 66 studios. The variety and quality of the work—that will also be available for sale—is unmatched by any other northern New Mexico studio tour. Many varieties of art from ancient oriental brush painting to tapestries to basket-making and abstract painting will be available throughout Eldorado.

The artists are working hard on committees and within their studios to get ready for this big community event. The reputation of the tour reaches across the U.S. as visitors from various states plan their spring trips around the tour weekend. Visitors to Santa Fe hear about the Eldorado Studio Tour at their hotels and inns, and often spend the weekend exploring and purchasing art.

Volunteers from the community are needed to help at the Preview Gallery Saturday and Sunday. To volunteer, call 466-0413. For information call co-chairs **Joretha Hall** at 466-3256 or **Janet Amtmann** at 466-3256. See this year's group of artists' work at [www.eldoradoarts.org](http://www.eldoradoarts.org).



Pastel by Jane E. Chandler



White Lotus by Jeff Brown



## Astronomy Corner

*It suddenly happened.*

The theory concerning the explosive creation of the Universe from a single point is known as "The Big Bang." This cosmic singularity included not only all matter, but all of space-time as well.

Two models have been derived from Edwin Hubble's observations and Einstein's Theory of General Relativity: the Steady-State theory, with claims that the Universe is expanding and matter is being created at a uniform rate that keeps properties of the Universe the same; and the Big Bang Theory, which holds that the Universe emerged from a single explosive event and continues to expand.

The night-sky in March: Mercury and Venus are not easily observed; Mars is low in the southeast in the morning; Jupiter rises after sunset in the east; Saturn is high in the west-southwest after dark in Gemini.

—Juan Alvarez,  
Jalva88610@aol.com

P.S. Spring and summer offers us pleasant weather to stand in our yards at night and look at the stars. Please follow the covenants on lighting fixtures. Thank you.

## Hike

The Conservation Committee will lead a hike April 23. Come out and enjoy a spring morning in our Community Preserve. Leader Cary Carlson will select a moderate trail/off-trail route through varied terrain. Meet at the Community Center at 9 am, return at noon. Bring hat, water, and snack. Call 466-6073 for details.

## To Read or Not To Read

A local Shakespeare reading group is being formed. Contact Mary Denison at mmw85@aol.com or call 466-6657 by 4/09/05 —no experience necessary.

# April Events

*Left out? Help us compile a comprehensive events listing.*

Email [info@eldoradocommunity.org](mailto:info@eldoradocommunity.org) with your meeting/event information, or bring it to the ECIA office by the 8th of the month for publication in the following month's *Vistas*. Please include "Attn: Vistas" and be sure to indicate:



### 1. Type of Event

### 2. Location

### 3. Date & Time

4. **A Resource Person** (one who can answer questions both about the event and the sponsoring organization) and his/her telephone number.

Photographs (digital or snapshots) are encouraged!

*Note: All meetings are at the Community Center, unless otherwise noted.*

**LR**=Living Room, **F**=Foyer, **CFR**=Conference Room, **CR**=Class Room, **RR**=Railroad, **K**=Kitchen

## APRIL SPECIAL EVENTS

ERA Annual Meeting	Mon., Apr. 4, 7-9 pm			CR
SF Habitat for Humanity Informational Meeting	Mon., Apr. 18, 7 pm			LR

## COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Road Committee	Mon., Apr. 4, 6-7 pm	Ed Benrock	466-2088	CFR
Conservation Committee	Tues., Apr. 5, 7-9 pm	Stephen Wust		CFR
285 Coalition	Wed., Apr. 6, 7-9 pm	Kathy Pilnock	466-1598	CFR
Architectural Committee	Tues., Apr. 12, 7-9 pm	Bill Schwent	466-7708	CFR
Finance Committee	Wed., Apr. 13, 9:30-11 am	Gisela Knight	466-2568	CFR
EAWS&SD*	Wed., Apr. 13, 7-9 pm	Ray Nichols		CFR
Board Work Study	Mon., Apr. 18, 7-9 pm	ECIA	466-4248	CFR
Architectural Committee	Tues., Apr. 19, 7-9 pm	Bill Schwent	466-7708	CFR
ECIA Board	Thurs., Apr. 21, 7-9 pm	ECIA	466-4248	CR
Information Committee	Mon., Apr. 25, 7 pm	Ken McPherson	466-4161	F
Stable Committee	Tues., Apr. 26, 7-9			CR
Architectural Committee	Tues., Apr. 26, 7-9 pm	Bill Schwent	466-770	CFR

## MONTHLY MEETINGS

ERA Coffee Social	Tues., Apr. 5, 10-11 am	Jerry Bradley	466-4253	F
Book Club	Sat., Apr. 9, 1:30-3 pm	Barbara Rugg	466-2559	
La Canada Wireless	Mon., Apr. 11, 7-9			LR
Book Club/Pot Luck	call for date and time	Ken Fischer	466-2537	
Search & Rescue	Thurs., Apr. 14, 7-9 pm	Dave Burdett	466-9765	CR
Troop 414 Committee	1st Wed., 7:30-9 pm	Bruce Blossman	955-0880	CR
Venturing Crew 414	2nd & 4th Wed., 7-9 pm	Vera Hayduk	466-1726	C
ERA Coffee Social	Tues., Apr. 19, 10-11 am	Jerry Bradley	466-4253	F-K
Cub Scout Pack 414	4th Tues., 7-9 pm	Ty Ransdell	466-2579	Sm Gym
Library Book Group	4th Thurs., 7-9 pm	Shelley Moore	466-9636	Lib
MOMS Club	Call for date and time	Shannon Ratcliff	986-9050	

## WEEKLY MEETINGS

AA	Tuesdays, 5:45-6:45 pm			CR
AA	Thursdays, 5:45-6:45 pm			CR
AA	Thursdays, 6-7 pm			CR
AA	Sundays, 5:15- 6:15 pm			CR
Bridge	1st & 3rd Mon., 1-4 pm			LR
Bridge	1st & 3rd Fri., 1-4:30 pm	Marjorie Segell	466-3958	CR, LR
Bridge	2nd & 4th Fri., 1-4:30 pm	Pat Lavengood	466-9765	CR, LR
Bridge	Wednesdays, 9-noon	Nancy Rost	466-2832	LR
Community Band	Thursdays, 6-8 pm	Joel Hopko	466-8412	
Fire & Rescue Training	Wednesdays, 7-9 pm	Fire Station Office	466-1204	Station
Fire & Rescue Work Duty	Saturdays, Call for time	Fire Station Office	466-1204	Station
Senior Lunch**	Wednesdays, 12-1 pm	Therese Janowski	466-1397	CR
Knitting Club	2nd & 4th Tues., 10 am-12 pm	Joyce Hanmer	466-3018	F
Adult Volleyball	Wed., 7-9 pm	Arlene Mayer	466-6641	School

\*Eldorado Area Water and Sanitation District

\*\*Reservations Required

VISIT OUR WEBSITE: [www.eldoradocommunity.org](http://www.eldoradocommunity.org)

## The McAvinchey Code

**DON MCAVINCHHEY**, President-Elect of the El Dorado Elementary Parent Teacher Association, lives by a code that makes him as dedicated to the community as he is to his kids. He is one of an amazing number of parents in Eldorado who participate very actively in the lives of their children, and in contributing to the quality of their experience and learning at the elementary school. Currently, 247 families belong to the PTA, a record number for them and a very high number compared to most schools in the state. It has been calculated that if all the parents volunteering their time at the school were paid \$20 an hour, the salary total would equal \$198,965 a year. This high level of parental involvement contributed to the school earning Exemplary Status at the state level for four years in a row, the only elementary school in the state to do so. The only other school in the state to achieve this status was the Los Alamos High School.

When one is elected president of the PTA, he or she begins the term by serving two years as vice-president first, followed by two years as president. Prior to becoming vice-president of the PTA, Don had been having a ball heading up the Dad's Club for a year. At a large PTA meeting, someone mentioned they had had a Dad's Club back in Dallas. Don looked around and saw that he was only one of two fathers present. Inspired by a research study he knew of that found the average face-time American dads have with their kids is one-and-a-half to two minutes a day, Don, together with **Rob Lochner**, (the other father present), started the Dad's Club. Ranging from about six to twenty fathers, the organization sponsors monthly activities where dads and their kids have fun together on outings like swimming at the Chavez Center then going out to dinner afterwards, monthly community service projects at the school (painting the basketball court and more), and weekend activities every couple of weeks, including camping trips.

Aside from chairing the Dad's Club for the past three years and serving as vice-president of the PTA for the past two years, Don is also on the Landscaping Committee and

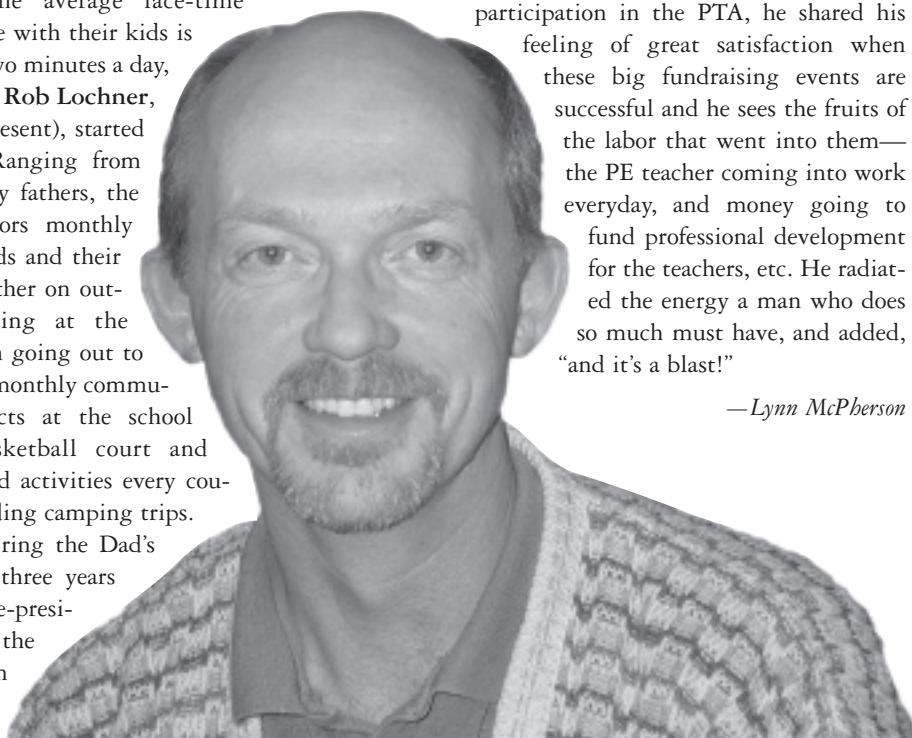
chairs the K-8 Committee, which has spent the last three years pursuing the addition of grades 7 and 8 to the elementary. Don is hoping that the school district's decision about adding a pilot 7th grade in 2006 and 8th grade in 2007 can be made by the end of April.

Both the PTA and the Dad's Club, along with other committees, are involved in raising the minimum \$43,000 to \$45,000 needed for the school each year. A few of the many fundraisers they host are: the Book Fair, which funds professional development for teachers, the Halloween Carnival, which made about \$7,000 this year, the Talent Show, which funds the Visiting Artists Program, a Wrapping Paper Sale every other year, which makes from \$16,000 to \$20,000, and the PTA's Silent Auction, which funds a good portion of the PE teacher's salary.

For the past four years, the school has received \$30,000 a year from the Turnbough House Fund. **Bob and Theresa Turnbough** bought a lot, had their company's building crew build a house, sold it, and donated the money to the school. One of the challenges facing Don and the PTA is finding a way to replace that money as it is nearing the end of its allocation. Don sees the PTA as not just a fundraising organization though, but as a vitalizing element for a vibrant community, a way to bring people together for the sake of the kids and the community.

When asked what he would say to encourage participation in the PTA, he shared his feeling of great satisfaction when these big fundraising events are successful and he sees the fruits of the labor that went into them—the PE teacher coming into work everyday, and money going to fund professional development for the teachers, etc. He radiated the energy a man who does so much must have, and added, “and it's a blast!”

—Lynn McPherson



Upcoming PTA President at Eldorado Elementary



THE BULLETIN BOARD IS AGAIN ACTIVE ON  
OUR COMMUNITY WEBSITE. YOU CAN  
PLACE ITEMS TO SELL OR GET INFO ABOUT  
ITEMS FOR SALE, POST MESSAGES, ETC.  
GO TO [ELDORADOCOMMUNITY.ORG](http://ELDORADOCOMMUNITY.ORG).



## Tips for Springtime

**H**ERE IN THE LAND OF ENCHANTMENT, we can only wish for April showers. What we usually get is wind—and lots of it. The wind factor will determine much of how we relate to our landscape and gardens. Strong winds (or malas brisas in Spanish) invisibly dry the soil and plants, so remember to increase watering, especially as leaves burst forth. To protect roots and soil microbes, it's also a good idea to keep mulch in place.

April is the time to prune roses. Remove dead and diseased wood first, followed by unwanted suckers. Next, cut down the height of the plants and leave only four or five healthy green canes that are widely spaced. Roses love air flow, which holds down fungi and other diseases. Keep an eye out for insect pests, like aphids, who love to suck on tender new growth. Dormant oil applied to stems and branches effectively suffocates over-wintering eggs

without using harsh chemicals. Gently begin fertilizing plants—half strength is recommended now due to potentially freezing night temperatures. (Too much nitrogen in combination with cold weather can harm your plants.)

The nurseries around town are stocking up on plant materials, so now is a good time to search out interesting varieties or place orders. Avoid planting in wide-open areas; July, with the arrival of summer rain, is a better time to plant those sections. Get your patios and decks ready for outdoor summer living. Cut back and begin fertilizing geraniums with high phosphorous plant food; BR 61 is my favorite for all blooming plants in containers. Do not put out tender annuals and houseplants, including geraniums, until mid-May.

The winter rains and snow should make this spring lush and glorious. Enjoy!

—Michael Clark, *Tropic of Capricorn*

WHITEWOLFVISION.COM

## No Bird Brains These Ravens & Crows

CONTINUED FROM THE FEBRUARY ISSUE OF VISTAS.

**L**IKE MAMMAL BRAINS, the brain of a bird accounts for 2% to 10% of total mass—brainpower needed for control and coordination of flight muscles, and development of songs and vision (for which birds are superior to most mammals). Two brain areas unique to birds (the hyperstriatum and the wulst) are responsible for courtship, nest building and other complex behavior. In Ravens & Crows (R&C), the other corvids (jays and magpies) and parrots, these two brain areas are much larger than in other birds.

R&C are highly social, forming flocks in winter and family groups in summer. Crows form strong pair bonds, and both parents help raise their young, called sims. The young bird will stay with its parents for a couple of years, and help feed the next nest of sims. There are documented cases of crows assisting injured members of the flock by distracting predators. Crows will gang up against stronger predators, especially hawks and owls, dive-bombing them from above (termed mobbing).

B. Heinrich set up a problem-solving experiment using Common Ravens. Meat was suspended on a string 2.5 feet below a perch. The first day none of the tested birds could get the meat. The next time, one bird flew directly to the perch and used its feet and beak to pull the string and lift the meat to the perch.

Urban-living crows have learned to use road traffic for cracking tough nuts! They do this at traffic light crossings, waiting patiently with human pedestrians for a red light before retrieving their

prize. They also know how to drop clamshells from a height to break them and get at the meat inside.

There is a video clip that shows a crow standing at the top of a small section of snow about five feet long, turning over on its back to slide down the length of snow and then walking uphill to repeat the procedure. Was it play? Or maybe the bird had an irritated spot on its back that was soothed by the cold!

New Caledonian Crows make two different tools to acquire otherwise unobtainable foods. Hook tools made from twigs by trimming and sculpting are used to poke out insect larvae from holes in trees. The crows also manufacture stepped-cut Pandanus leaves to probe for prey under leaf detritus, using a series of deliberate movements that spear the prey onto the sharpened end or the barbs of the leaf. These tools are consistently made to a standardized pattern and are carried around on foraging expeditions.

On the negative side, R&C are associated with battlefields, medieval hospitals, execution sites and cemeteries (because they scavenge on human remains). In England, a tombstone is sometimes called a ravenstone. The widespread death of R&C in New York and New England marked the entrance of West Nile Virus in the U.S. in 1999.

In captivity, R&C may live up to 30 years.

You can add to your own information about crow intelligence at <http://www.crows.net/project.html>.

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## For the Birds

There is an outbreak of avian disease (probably Salmonellosis) in the Pine Siskin and Goldfinch population at the moment. While this seems to occur cyclically (every 4-5 years) and may be nature's way of keeping bird populations in balance, it is very distressing to find dead and dying birds in your yard. Disease-causing bacteria can be spread through infected food or water, so it is particularly important to keep your birdbaths and feeders clean to contain the outbreak as much as possible. Change the water in your birdbaths every few days and clean them often. Clean out your feeders once a month. If you have found sick or dead birds, immediately disinfect your feeders and baths with a solution of 90% water, 10% bleach. Urge your neighbors to do the same.

*—Diane Oberlin, a resident of Eldorado, a long-time  
bird watcher and bird lover who works at  
Wild Birds Unlimited in Santa Fe*

