

MountainMonthly

Your Guide to Cloudcroft and the Sacramento Mountains

FREE



Garrett (L) and Steven (R) craft their sourdough batches at high elevation in the former Tunnel Stop Shop

Rising to the Occasion: Levain It Up in High Rolls

*The aroma of fresh-baked bread fills the air at Levain It Up Sourdough Bakery in High Rolls, where **Garrett Barnett** and **Steven Jackson** are transforming both an old building and their own lives.* by **Hannah Dean** photographs by **Bre Kincaid**

Inside what was once the Tunnel Stop shop, flour dusts a shiny metal countertop as Garrett and Steven shape loaves with practiced hands. This behind-the-scenes work leads to the storefront where mountain folks and passersby line up for their weekly fix of croissants and sourdough bakes.

Time for Change

For Garrett, the move from Las Cruces to High Rolls Mountain Park wasn't just a change of scenery—it was an escape.

"I was working as the kitchen manager at Kind Bread Co. for about three years," he explains, "but I was also doing biohazard crime scene cleaning on call. Whenever something happened, they needed someone to clean up."

The work paid well, but it took its toll. "I realized after the fact that it kind of stuck with me a little more than I thought it did," Garrett admits. He said that after cleaning crime scenes—including vehicles from the Young Park mass shooting—then, soon after a murder

and brutal stabbing scene, he knew something had to change.

Steven, who spent five years working at garden centers in Las Cruces after twelve years in home health care, found himself pulled into Garrett's vision. "He kind of forced me into it," he laughs. "He said, We're doing this. I need help."

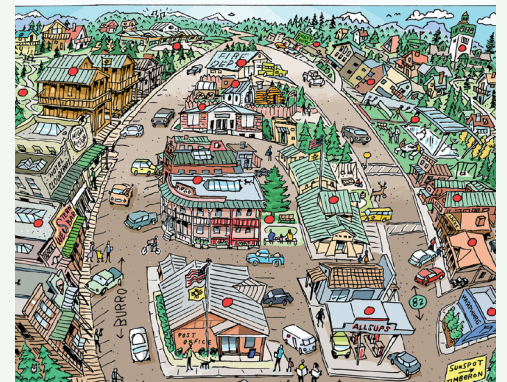
The couple had driven past the empty building countless times while visiting Garrett's mother, Monica, in Cloudcroft. When they learned the rent-to-own price was a third of the rentals they found in Las Cruces, the decision became clear.

But the building needed work. Squatters had occupied it for two years, stripping wires and damaging the interior. "It was really bad," Steven recalls. With help from family—Garrett's uncle rewiring, his father checking the foundation—they slowly brought the space back to life.

Now, just four months in, the bakery is defying expectations. "Everyone told us not to expect hiring people until the first year, maybe year and a half. So, we're on a fast track."

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Meet the gal behind the mask. Mascot Hotshot, aka **Alyssa Singer** represents CHS at the Citrus Bowl, pg. 9



Dusty Wiley sworn in as Cloudcroft's fourth mayor in three years, pg. 6



Luke Benjamin wins a Red Ryder at the Hardware Store jar guessing game. See more MOUNTAIN LIFE, pg. 22



P&Z Begins New Year with Three New Members — and Seeks Two More

The Village of Cloudcroft Planning and Zoning Commission has three new members: Chair, Rick **Donnelly** (left),

Vice-Chair **Dave Bradshaw**, and Amy **Coor**.

Two seats are open this January as longtime P+Z folks **Jessica Beach** and **Susan Difani** step down after their two-year terms. To apply for the open positions, email ccvillagemayor@cloudcroftvillage.com.

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A man with a beard and glasses, wearing a grey flat cap and a blue and white striped apron over a dark long-sleeved shirt, is focused on kneading a piece of dough on a stainless steel table. The apron has a logo that reads "PARIS BISTRO". In the background, a large industrial dough sheeter is visible, suggesting a professional bakery setting. The lighting is warm and focused on the man's hands and the dough.



Dough: Ancient and Alive

Each loaf requires at least five steps, with some products taking eight days from start to finish. Their croissants go through multiple laminations, rests, and proofs before emerging with their signature 27 layers.

The couple rarely leaves the bakery, working late into the night and arriving early each morning. Garrett's mom helps with dishes, and extra bread goes to feed mountain local Gloria

Their bakes rotate based on seasonal flavors and Garret's whims. He's looking forward to debuting a sugar-plum roll in time for Christmas.

Steven and Garrett are savoring the simple fact of being here, breathing fresh bakes and mountain air. "It's been a complete 180 life shift," Garrett reflects. "I can't wait until we can actually go on a hike and experience where we live now. Someday soon."

Levain It Up Sourdough Bakery is open Friday through Sunday. Follow them on Facebook for menu updates and holiday hours.

The Bear Track

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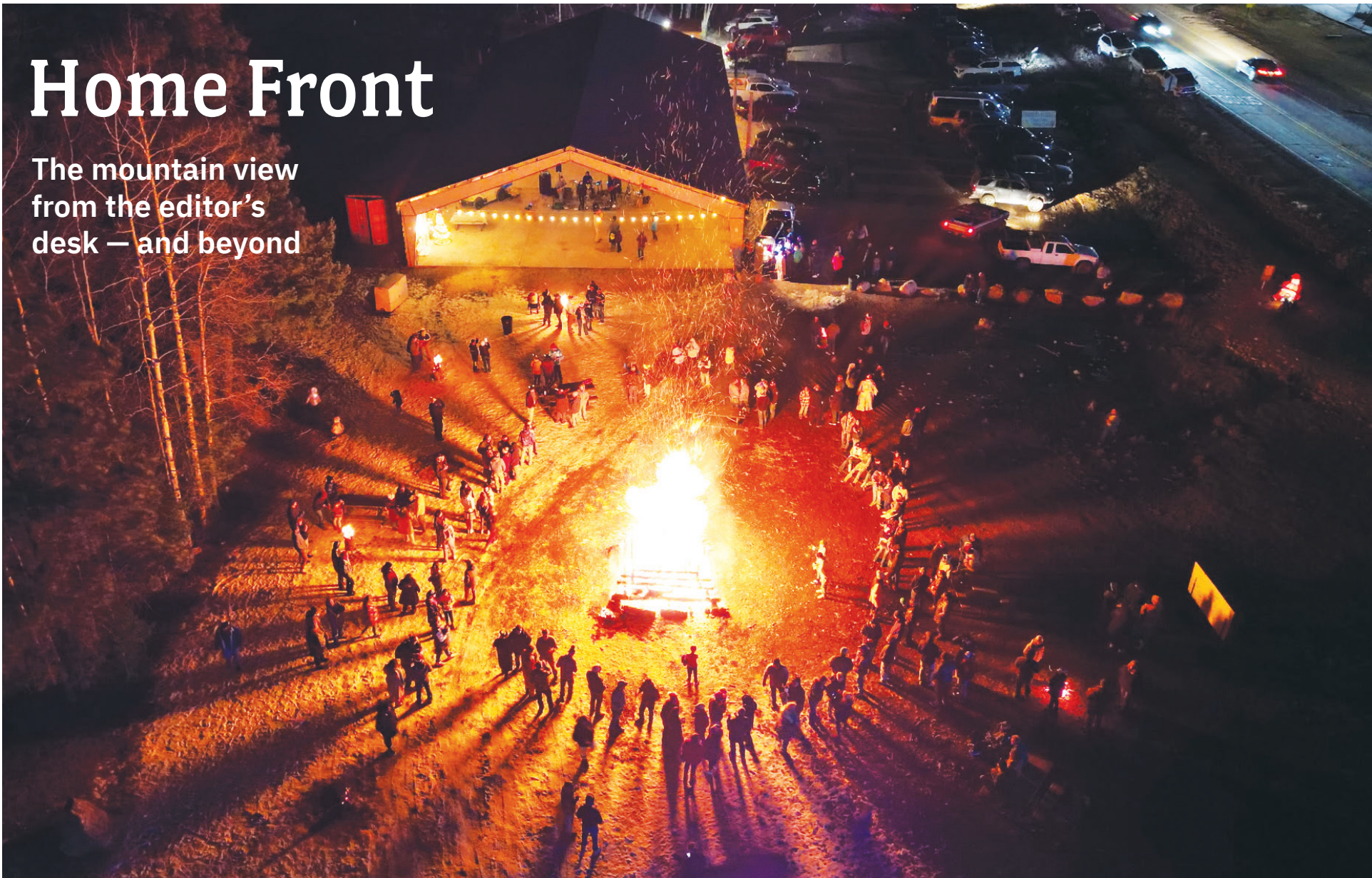
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Home Front

The mountain view from the editor’s desk — and beyond

Ullr Fest 2025 at Cloudcroft Ice Rink (Photo: Jon Tubbs)

Dear Readers,

There’s something about winter in the mountains that draws us closer together—maybe it’s the crispness in the air, the way smoke curls from chimneys, or simply the season’s invitation to slow down and savor.

This month, we’re celebrating the people who feed that sense of connection, quite literally, through their dedication to craft, flavor, and community.

In these pages, you’ll meet Elliot Bell, the brewmaster behind Cloudcroft Brewing Company, whose passion transforms local ingredients into beers that tell the story of our high-altitude home.

You’ll discover Garrett and Steven from Levain It Up Sourdough Bakery, two makers who’ve turned patience and flour into something that brings neigh-



bors together at breakfast tables across the area.

And we’re proud to feature **Makenna Stanbrough**, a Cloudcroft High School student whose Flavor Lab recipe reminds us that the next generation of food lovers and creators is already among us.

Food, as we’ve come to understand more deeply while putting this issue together, is never just about what’s on the plate. It’s about the hands that shaped it, the traditions that informed it, and the tables where it’s shared. We get to know **Crystal Tompkins**, local photographer and part of the duo behind **Black Bear Coffee Shop**. **James Jackson** makes another big Mad Jack’s announcement. These stories matter because they connect us—to each other, to this place, and to something larger than ourselves.

Extra off the Press

And speaking of connection, Cloudcroft has been alive with holiday spirit this

season.

Last month, we introduced you to Wanderlust Running and got to know the Preslar family a little better, who’ve fostered a love of trail running in Cloudcroft.

The Ugly Sweater Fun Run had folks bundling up in their most outrageous knits, laughing through Zenith Park. The tree lighting brought us all together in the glow of tradition, while the parade reminded us why small-town celebrations feel so magical.

The library hosted a special Santa story time and cookie decorating session that filled the space with the sound of children’s laughter and the smell of frosting.

Folks of all ages gathered around the bonfire for Ullr Fest at the Ice Rink—a longstanding Cloudcroft tradition.

So as you turn these pages, I hope you’ll taste not just the food and drink we’ve featured, but the spirit of the people

and place that make them possible. Here’s to the makers, the bakers, the brewers, the students, the neighbors, and the traditions that nourish us all.

—Hannah Dean



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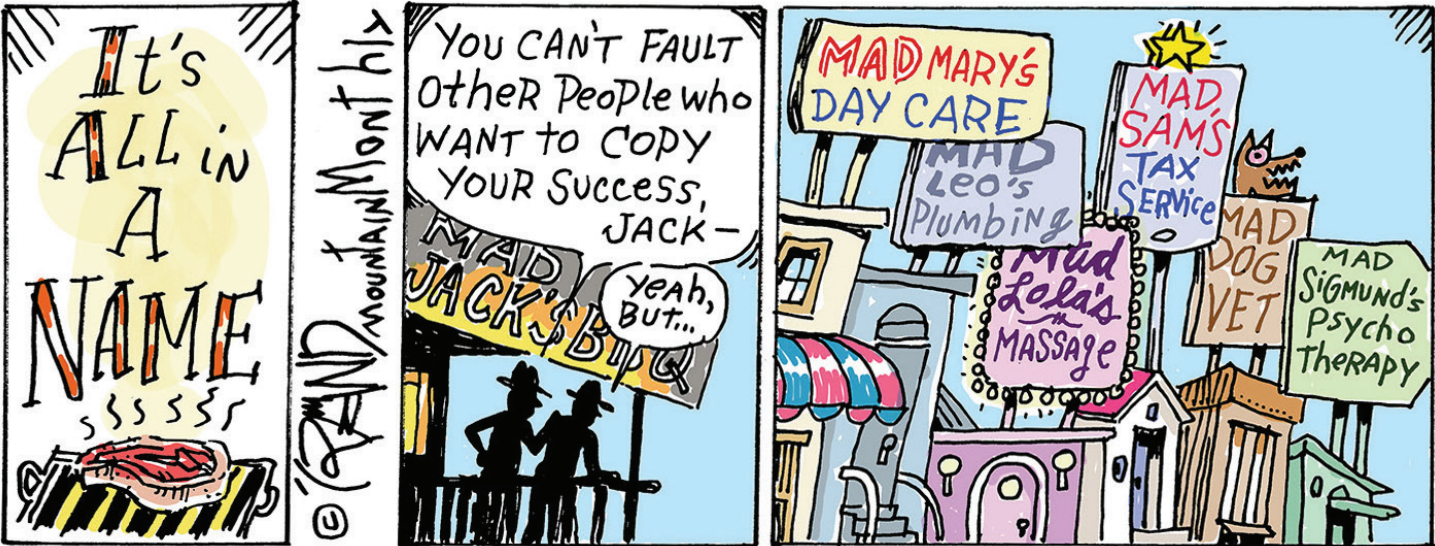
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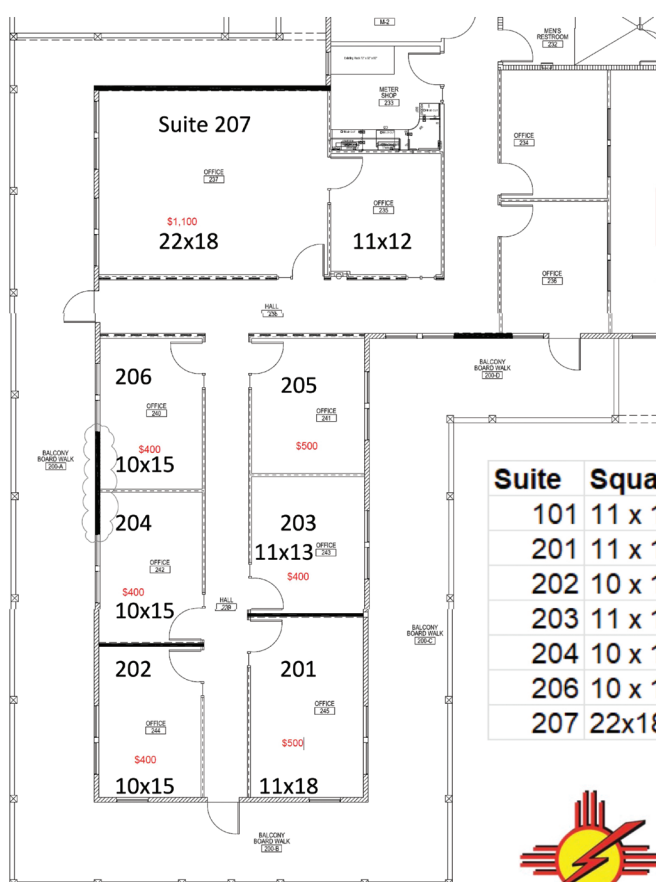
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Dusty Wiley (L) shakes hands with Otero County Sheriff’s Deputy Roger Schoolcraft at an October pre-election meet-and-greet

Wiley Sworn in, King Uploads Village Info

Starting this January, **Dusty Wiley** takes the wheel as Cloudcroft’s mayor. He and Mayor **Tim King** met to have a transition with real substance.

King reported on the Village Facebook page:

“I met with Mayor Elect Dusty Wiley from 11:00 am to 6:30 pm. We were joined by our amazing Grants Director Lauren Groesbeck for about 4 of those hours and were also joined at times by Finance Director Sylvia Hall, Utility Clerk Ashley White, Trustee

Matt Willett, Trustee Gail McCoy and Trustee Keith Hamilton.”

“We went over a 5-page List for Transition covering 8 topics including Microsoft 365 (emails for the new Mayor and Trustee) , Banking (Resolutions that need to be passed to make that happen), Passwords (for all of the different state and federal orgs that will need to be accessed), Physical Storage (where info is stored on Lodgers Tax, Grant Documentation and off-site storage), Kwikset Locks, Arlo Security Cameras, and Digital Storage (folder structure, templates, etc.)”

“Lauren Groesbeck went over the 30+ grants she has worked with over her 2.5 years contracting with the Village through her business GG Consulting, LLC. Lauren is working on a grant manual that she will be leaving with the new administration.”

“I went over a number of the GIS tools

that I created over the past year including the Online Cloudcroft Job Application, the Cloudcroft Water Data Dashboard, the Village of Cloudcroft Compensation Plan Dashboard, the Cloudcroft Operations Dashboard and Application, and the multiple Cloudcroft Employee Evaluation Dashboards.”

“We also received some great news concerning the Grants we had in “lock up” due to the Villages last 2 audits from FY23 (7/2022-6/2023) and FY24 (7/2023-6/2024). A total of about 3.2 million dollars from Capital Outlays from 2023-25 are now available to be used by the Village. Resolutions will need to be passed to be able to access the funds and will be done by the next administration, but this is a huge step for the Village!”

The next village council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 20th at 6:00 p.m.

Expert Says Cloudcroft Must Fix Aging Wastewater Plant as State Tightens Nitrogen Rules

With no current discharge permit, village officials are weighing high-dollar treatment upgrades while seeking to lease or buy the U.S. Forest Service land under the plant with looming deadlines.

Cloudcroft faces two big wastewater decisions at once: how to upgrade an aging treatment plant to comply with new nitrogen limits, and how to secure the federal land the plant sits on so that the village can make long-term investments in the location.

Robert George, a technical assistance provider with over 30 years of experience, toured the facility and held a workshop Wednesday with village leaders including Mayor Tim King, trustees, water staff, and incoming officials Mayor-elect Dusty Wiley and Danny Hardwick.

State: No permit, strict limits coming

George told officials that Cloudcroft’s wastewater plant is currently operating “without any permits,” which he called “pretty unusual” for a facility its size.

George said the state’s draft groundwater discharge permit proposes a total nitrogen limit of 10 milligrams per liter at the point of discharge—comparable to the EPA’s 10 mg/L nitrate-as-N drinking water standard, though the wastewater limit applies at the treatment plant outflow rather than at kitchen taps. There is no single national nitrogen limit for

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wastewater; requirements are set case-by-case under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) program.

“It became very obvious that the town cannot comply with that limit” with the existing configuration, George said. Current nitrogen levels leaving the plant are “five times the limit, roughly.”

He expects the state to issue a redrafted permit with a compliance schedule that acknowledges “we know you can’t comply now, but we want you to come into compliance within a reasonable time frame,” likely over 3 to 5 years.

He also warned that as New Mexico takes over the federal surface-water program, “there’s a fair to better than fair chance that the Village of Cloudcroft will be required to obtain a surface water discharge permit” on top of the groundwater permit.

Why nitrogen is the focus

Nitrogen regulation protects drinking water quality and public health. Excess nitrate in groundwater can contaminate wells and cause serious health problems, particularly for infants and pregnant women.

When trustees asked what soil does with nitrogen, George explained that bacteria in the unsaturated zone “are simply going to change it, change the form from ammonia to nitrate, and nitrate, once you form it up, [is] very mobile; it’s going to go where the water goes.”

Split system, tight nitrogen target

George described the plant as “straddling two worlds,” with some waste-



Robert George delivers his take on the WWTP

water flowing through a newer membrane bioreactor (MBR) and “a good portion of it going through the ancient trickling filter.”

The older trickling-filter plant, now pushing 70 years, still gives “remarkably good treatment” for organics and solids but does not remove nitrogen to the levels the draft permit would require.

Data from 2023–24 showed the MBR delivering total nitrogen “under 10” mg/L when properly tuned, though operator Scott Powell said recent MBR readings had been “bouncing between 10 and 15, 16 milligrams.”

Right now, George said, Powell is “pushing about 20 to 30,000 gallons a day through the MBR, and everything else is just sort of automatically shunted through the other treatment system.”

According to Public Works, the plant processes between 40,000 and nearly 230,000 gallons daily, depending on Cloudcroft’s population during peak tourist season.

As a near-term experiment, George plans to recommend routing all flows through the MBR during low-flow

winter months, “mothballing the old plant,” and then bring it back online as seasonal demand rises. “We don’t know what the full effect of that is going to be,” he cautioned, and “we’re probably not going to be able to achieve compliance.”

Engineering roadmap: PER before picking a fix

George repeatedly stressed that before the village commits to an upgrade path, it needs a full Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) focused on wastewater.

He said a PER lays out “the range of wastewater problems we’ve got to solve, here’s the options we could apply to it to solve it, here’s what the estimated costs are for each of those options.”

CDM Smith engineers have discussed bringing in package-plant systems that could “refresh the entire system for 30 to 50 years” at a cost in the range of roughly \$5.5 million to \$7 million or more.

When asked about specific options, George urged officials to study a “whole range of options,” not just more membrane cassettes. He named Sequential Batch Reactors (SBRs) as “another reasonable solution” that can handle variable flows and achieve biological nitrogen removal using gravity clarifiers rather than membrane modules, which cost \$100,000 to replace.

Aging plant, tight site

George said the old trickling-filter plant remains critical backup infrastructure even as “the clock is just winding down on that thing.”

If the village chose an SBR or a major reconfiguration, the new basin would “basically have to be built right on top of where the trickling filter and the other structures are,” which would mean “months and months of bypass, discharging pretty poorly treated wastewater, only partially treated wastewater” during construction.

Land under the plant: lease, permit, or buy

The plant sits on Forest Service property without a lease, permit, or ownership agreement. Any long-term upgrade plan will require the village to either secure a long-term lease or negotiate the purchase of the footprint so that new investment, permitting, and financing can move forward on stable legal ground.

Mayor King told the Reader he met with forest officials earlier in the year, but the conversation made no headway.

Staffing, pay, and succession

“I wanted to mention your staffing, and I’m happy to see that you have two Level 4 operators here,” George said. He noted Powell is “probably getting pretty close to retirement,” urging the village to “figure out who his successor is going to be...and let him do his best to train that person.”

“It’s very, very hard to find replacements” for highly licensed operators, George said.

On Oct. 6, Trustees voted 2-1 to officially approve promised raises for water operators after months of debate.

Everything at once, on the clock

The village now faces linked challenges: meeting a fivefold nitrogen reduc-



Statistics sourced from the Otero & Lincoln County Associations of Realtors MLS and provided by Future Real Estate



Longtime Wastewater Operator Scott Powell holds water bottles that demonstrate different phases of treatment

tion, upgrading 70-year-old infrastructure, securing land rights from the Forest Service, assembling millions in funding, and training Powell’s replacement—all on a three-to-five-year compliance timeline.

For the full story, see the Cloudcroft Reader online.

—Hannah Dean

Ski Patrol Rescue Training

On Sunday, November 16, 2025, eight Cloudcroft volunteer firefighters and/or EMTs trained with Ski Apache Ski Patrol/Mountain Rescue on chair lift evacuations in preparation for the

winter season, snow, and skiers on Ruidoso and Cloudcroft slopes.

CVFD FF/EMT-B Penny Hall and many others have worked on the Ski Cloudcroft ski patrol for nearly a decade.

“Each team was able to ‘rescue’ and ‘be rescued,’” reported FF/EMT-B Wei Gutshall.

Being on both sides of the rescue is important for EMTs to understand what their patient experiences during the rescue process. It’s another unique place for firefighters to apply technical rope knowledge, which was one of District Chief Charles Alexander’s favorite parts.

Brian Gutshall, also a FF/EMR said “It was interesting because we learned about some of the new equipment coming out, plus we also “rescued” a few of the ski patrol members’ chil-



High above the hills, Charles Alexander sits in the ski lift chair and the Gutshalls look down as SASP/CVFD members prepare the ropes to lower them to solid ground.

dren,” since skiing is fun for all ages!

Check out the videos on Cloudcroft Fire Dept’s Facebook page.Many

thanks to the Ski Apache Ski Patrol/Mountain Rescue team.

Get Involved

For fire safety information and volunteer opportunities, contact the Cloudcroft Volunteer Fire Department at info@cloudcroftfd.com. Stay warm and dry this winter! Stay cool and stay safe!

—By Katie Grabowski
Photography by Debbie Alexander

Library Corner

Dispatch from Cloudcroft’s community hub with Sandra Barr

The library’s recent cookie decorating party was a sweet success. Volunteer extraordinaire Roberta Haecker baked 72 cookies and arrived with icing and sprinkles in hand, ready to help families create edible masterpieces.

The event kicked off at 2 p.m. with a steady trickle of attendees, building to a bustling crowd once school let out. Thanks to the help of new Library Aide Gail McCoy, Library Board member Gina Sweeney, and volunteer Renee Hays, 32 people enjoyed an afternoon of creativity and community connection.

Library Director Sandra Barr shared her appreciation for the community’s continued support in her December 16th village council report. She expressed special thanks to volunteers Dan, Renee, and Russell for their dedicated service.

Recent donations have enhanced the library’s accessibility, including indoor and patio furniture sets now welcoming visitors to get comfortable. “No act of kindness has gone unnoticed,” Barr noted.

Checking In

While patron numbers have dipped slightly into the low twenties—a typical seasonal pattern—the library remains a vital community hub providing diverse services beyond book lending.

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The food and clothing bank is winding down for now, with remaining items available to anyone in need.

Director Barr is recovering from surgery. Gail McCoy will keep the library running and ensure all scheduled events proceed as planned.

“Cloudcroft, this is YOUR library,” Barr emphasized, adding warm wishes for a peaceful holiday season to all.



Storytime with Paige happens most Fridays at 10:30 a.m.

Hotshot’s Journey to the Big Time

When **Alyssa Singer** first agreed to become Cloudcroft High School’s mascot, it was mostly about hanging out with her cheerleader friends—without having to wear the uniform. “They’re like, how about you, mascot? I was like, okay, I’ll try it. And I ended up loving it,” she says.

Now, two years later, the junior journeys to Orlando to perform as one of 50 elite Mascot All-Americans at the Cheez-It Citrus Bowl halftime show on December 31.

Singer earned her spot after attending a two-day online mascot camp and submitting a performance skit. “Right around the start of school, it was like the first week of school and I got the call from my cheer coach telling me that I made All-American,” she recalls.

Only the top 10% of mascots attending Universal Cheerleaders Association or National Cheerleaders Association camps receive the honor.

As Hotshot the Bear—a name chosen by student vote this year—Singer faces unique challenges. The suit runs 40 to 50 degrees hotter than the outside temperature, and her vision is extremely limited. “I can only see in front of me. I cannot see down. I can’t see up,” she explains. “A lot of times my mom will just have to grab me and make me stop because there’s a little kid running up to me.”

But the rewards outweigh the difficulties. “The most rewarding, I would definitely say, is like, interacting with the kids and seeing them so excited and then just being able to pump up the crowd,” Singer says. Football games are her favorite, where she has an entire sideline to work with and can break out props like her inflatable football and guitar.



Singer didn’t expect to make the cut. “I’ll try out and I probably won’t get it, but it would be a good experience,” she admits. “I was just so shocked that whenever I tried that I got it.”

The Cloudcroft student, who’s been attending school in the mountain community since first grade and loves Ag and English classes, spent a week rehearsing in Orlando before performing for 60,000 fans at Camping World Stadium. Her entire family—parents and brother—joined her, along with her coach, Armando Ortega.

Looking ahead, Singer has big dreams. “My dream would be to go to Oregon

and be the Oregon Duck. That would be the best.”

For now, she’s focused on representing her hometown. “I’m so excited to go and represent,” she says. And when she returns? “Hopefully I’ll just learn more there and just be more of that pumped-up type of mascot.”

So when you spot Hotshot around Cloudcroft, give an extra cheer—she’s bringing that hometown spirit to the national stage.

—Hannah Dean

Bark Beetle Population Surge Challenges Forest Management

Pine trees across Otero County’s mountain communities are experiencing

heightened bark beetle activity following last year’s Salt and South Fork fires, prompting coordinated forest management efforts from Cloudcroft to Ruidoso.

Bark beetles — native insects measuring approximately one-third inch or smaller that typically attack weakened trees — have reached elevated population levels due to fire-damaged timber and persistent drought conditions. After major wildfire disturbances, these beetle populations can swell and begin attacking even healthy trees.

“When those bugs flew out of all those fire-damaged trees this spring, they found a lot of trees that were very stressed by drought,” said Nick Smokovich, district forester for the New Mexico State Forestry Division’s Capitán District Office. “Without that sap and the sap pressure, they were able to get into those drought stress trees and successfully attacked them and bred more beetles.”

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Management Strategies

State Forestry is working with private landowners in Lincoln and Otero counties on comprehensive forest health projects that simultaneously reduce fire risk and improve tree resilience to beetle activity. The approach involves thinning overcrowded forests to sustainable densities, retaining the largest and healthiest trees while removing competition for limited water resources.

Active forest management through thinning and prescribed fire can decrease basal area, tree density, host species composition, susceptible age classes, and competition. These activities also alter bark beetles’ perceptions by changing air temperature and light exposure, hindering their ability to locate host trees.

Cloudcroft residents can access federal funding through an NFL (Non-Federal Lands) Grant administered by the Otero Soil and Water Conservation District. Unlike typical programs where landowners hire contractors, this project will pay contractors directly to remove hazardous trees — including large declining trees near homes that require specialized climbing and removal.

“We’re writing the treatment plans so that will outline how much funding we can allocate for each project,” Smokovich said. Treatment work is scheduled to begin this winter, timed strategically for when beetles remain inactive from October to February. It is recommended not to leave large-diameter felled trees on the ground longer than 30 days, as bark beetle populations can continue building up in

stored wood and infest nearby trees.

The state is also implementing Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) buffers — heavily thinned fuel breaks — along community boundaries under House Bill 175. The first New Mexico project will address the southern boundary between Ruidoso and Ruidoso Downs that remained unburned last year. Similar work is planned for Cloudcroft.

Identification and Response

Landowners should monitor their trees for several warning signs including pitch tubes on pines, white fir, and spruce trunks (Douglas-fir does not produce visible pitch tubes but will show boring dust); reddish or brownish boring dust at the tree base or in bark crevices; fading crowns with yellow, red, or brown needles; groups of dead or dying trees of the same or closely related species; and BB-sized emergence holes.

If trees are found with live bark beetles actively present, they should be promptly felled and removed from the property to prevent further spread. When cutting trees generates slash material, it should be immediately removed, burned, or chipped and dried, as untreated slash can attract additional beetles and serve as a breeding ground for new infestations.

Landowners should avoid actions that stress trees further. Any tree damage forces the tree to expend precious moisture in the form of sap to address the injury, weakening the tree and making it more susceptible to beetle attack. Additionally, fertilization should be avoided as it promotes unsustainable growth and exerts further



moisture stress on trees.

The Science: Mass Attacks

The insects bore through bark to reach the phloem — the nutritious soft inner bark layer where they feed and reproduce. Trees defend themselves by producing pitch tubes, which appear as gooey masses of sap exuding from entrance holes as the tree attempts to trap invading beetles.

Successful colonization requires coordinated mass attacks. When bark beetles discover a damaged tree where sap has already been depleted, they emit an attractant pheromone to recruit other beetles to overwhelm the tree’s defenses.

The beetles create egg galleries in the fresh phloem, and when eggs hatch, the larvae feed outward at right angles from the gallery. Meanwhile, bark beetles carry blue stain fungi on their bodies that infect the tree’s cambium. These fungal spores germinate and disrupt water transport in the xylem. This disruption, combined with the feeding activity that girdles the host tree, accelerates mortality. In spring, adult beetles emerge from the host through small BB-sized holes and seek new trees to infest.

The Dendroctonus bark beetle currently affecting the region specifically targets ponderosa pines and Douglas-fir. Piñon pines face separate activity from Ips bark beetles, with mortality visible on south and west-facing



Mad Jack’s Mountaintop BBQ Plans a Texas Hill Country Sibling

James Jackson, the pitmaster behind Cloudcroft’s beloved Mad Jack’s Mountaintop Barbecue, broke ground recently on a second location in Johnson City, Texas—and he wants folks to know the original isn’t going anywhere.

Jackson announced on Mad Jack’s Facebook page: “It’s going to be quite a project, and take some time. But it’ll be a really unique bbq joint, right on the Pedernales River!”

The new spot at 624 N. Highway 281 in Johnson City sits on nearly 600 feet of riverfront. Jackson calls it “a diamond in the rough” with big plans for development, targeting a 2026 opening for Mad Jack’s Hill Country Barbecue.

For Jackson, the expansion represents another chapter in a remarkable journey that began with a food trailer in Lockhart, Texas, and led to building one of New Mexico’s most acclaimed barbecue destinations—you’ll regularly spot long lines wrapping around the building on a busy Cloudcroft weekend.

The move comes after he contemplated selling the Cloudcroft location in 2024, citing health concerns and the demanding schedule that comes with running a top-tier smokehouse.

Instead of selling, Jackson is expanding. “I’ll be bouncing back and forth between Johnson City and Cloudcroft for a while,” he wrote.

Jackson emphasized that loyal customers shouldn’t worry. “Mad Jack’s in Cloudcroft will remain open with some fresh ideas to make it even better!” he posted. “We hope you’ll follow us on this wild ride!”

“I want to write a story about my life, and I want it to be interesting to the very end,” Jackson previously told the Cloudcroft Reader. “I want it to have different chapters.”

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slopes at lower elevations.

Aerial surveys in 2024 documented approximately 70,000 acres with bark beetle-killed trees across New Mexico forests and woodlands.

Areas that experienced moderately severe burns face the greatest risk, requiring monitoring of fire-stressed trees within and immediately outside fire perimeters for at least two years. According to Dr. John Formby, forest entomologist with New Mexico Arbor-Pro, some trees with 80-90% scorched canopy can actually survive after a fire, meaning not all fire-damaged trees should be immediately removed.

Individual Tree Protection

For residents with small numbers of pines, preventative insecticides containing the active ingredient carbaryl or permethrin can be applied to the trunk and larger branches before spring beetle emergence. These treatments can protect trees for six months to a year. However, insecticides must be applied prior to beetle attack — once a tree is infested, it is too late for chemical intervention.

For Douglas-fir or spruce, MCH (3-methylcyclohex-2-en-1-one) can be used to prevent bark beetle attacks. MCH is an anti-aggregation pheromone that functions like posting a “no vacancy” sign on the tree and is safe to use with minimal environmental impact.

Watering trees can bolster their natural defenses, though this does not guarantee protection since a mass attack can overwhelm even healthy, thriving trees.

The Bigger Picture

Bark beetles are a natural component of forest ecosystems, providing food for other insects and animals while creating habitat for cavity-nesting birds and bats.

Their activity naturally increases the diversity of tree age and size across the forest. However, current stand densities are believed to exceed the natural range of historic variability due to past forest management policies. Fire suppression and over-grazing during much of the 20th century contributed to unnatural tree densities that have programmed forests for both fiercer wildfires and more severe beetle outbreaks.

Many people worry that numerous standing dead trees will worsen wildfire conditions. However, beetle-killed trees typically shed their needles within a year of dying, and fire spread rates dramatically decline once needles are lost. While dead snags present some threat of spotting when fires burn nearby, they do not create as significant a risk for massive fire spread as might be imagined.

Bark beetles have played a role in creating the forests we see today and will continue to alter the landscape by thinning weakened trees, creating gaps that promote understory growth, and providing habitat for other forest inhabitants. While tree losses continue, these native insects ultimately serve as agents of natural forest thinning and renewal.

Optimal forest resilience depends on adequate winter precipitation. “A good winter with plenty of snow to really rehydrate our watershed and get these trees as healthy as possible for the upcoming spring bark beetle flight,” Smokovich said.

Landowners interested in forest health projects or funding can contact the State Forestry Division’s Capitan District Office, where applications are currently being accepted.

The number one defense against bark beetles remains preventative care of the forest through strategic thinning and controlled burns.



Day Trip: Valley of Fires
Recreation Area

Only 45 minutes from Cloudcroft, the Valley of Fires Recreation Area sits along one of North America’s youngest and most dramatic lava flows, located just four miles west of Carrizozo.

About 5,000 years ago, Little Black Peak erupted and sent molten rock flowing 44 miles into the Tularosa Basin, creating a spectacular black landscape that spans 125 square miles and reaches up to 160 feet thick.

Despite its barren appearance from a distance, this ancient lava field teems with life including roadrunners, mule deer, golden eagles, and burrowing owls among the desert flowers and cacti. The recreation area features a three-quarter-mile accessible paved nature trail that winds through the jagged lava surface, offering visitors an up-close experience with this geological wonder.

Managed by the Bureau of Land Management, the site includes a visitor center, picnic facilities, and camping areas for those wanting to extend their stay. Day use costs just five dollars per vehicle, making it an affordable stop for families exploring southern New Mexico’s diverse landscapes.

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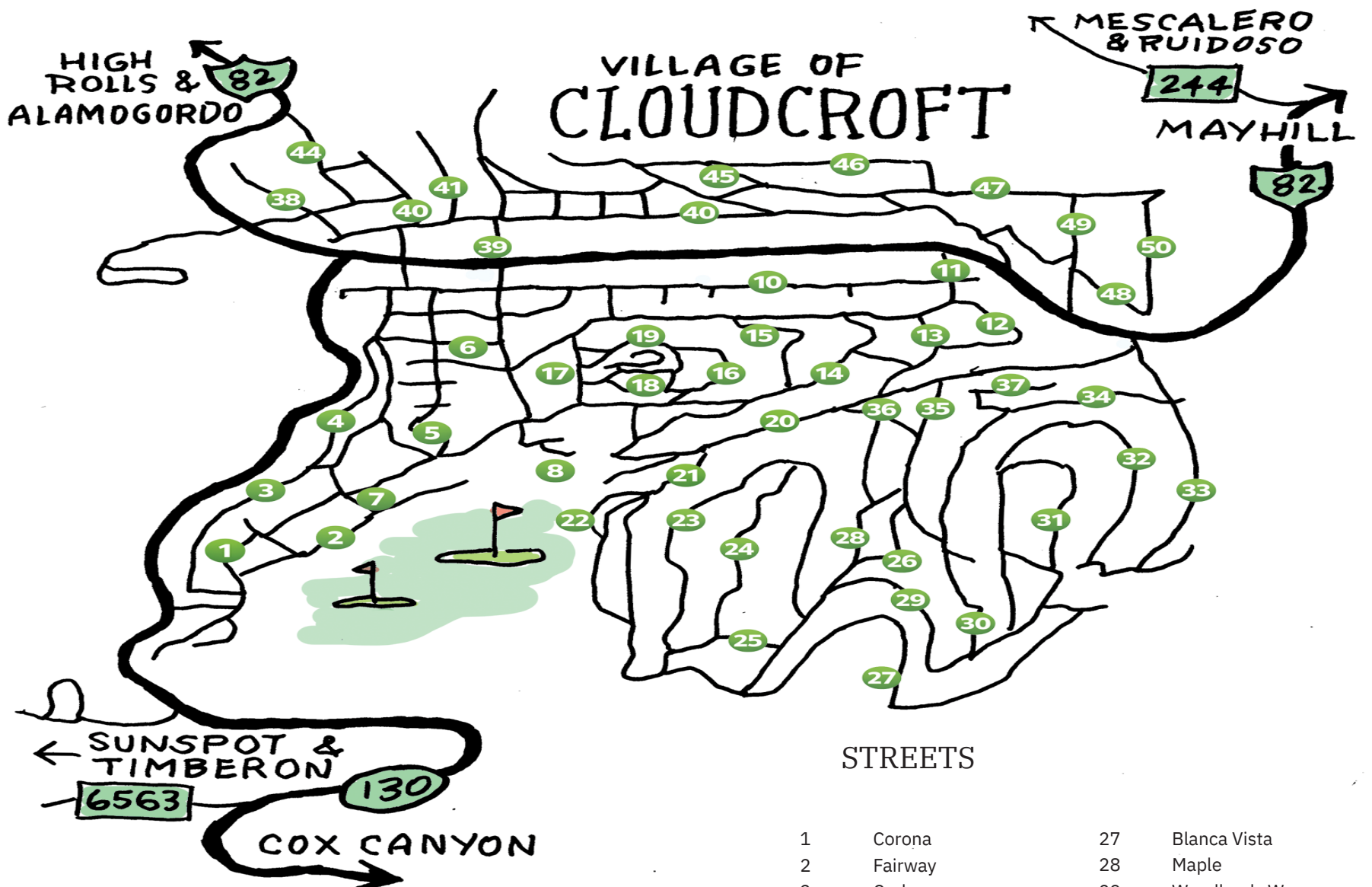
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Duo Elliot Bell and Denver Wiese craft beers and more at Cloudcroft Brewing Co.

Local Guide

What to Know

Discover the best of Cloudcroft with our monthly local guide – a handpicked selection of favorite places to shop, eat, and play in the mountains.

Brewing at 9,000 Feet: Inside Cloudcroft Brewing Company

Tucked into a renovated Forest Service tanker bay station that once housed wildland firefighting engines, Cloudcroft Brewing Company has become a cornerstone of the village’s food and drink scene.

With indoor and outdoor seating in a family-friendly atmosphere, CBC offers wood-fired pizza, house-made chips and salsa, soup, and salads alongside their craft beers—brews like Railspike Red Ale and Trainwreck IPA. The adjoining Distillery side serves pizza by the slice and craft cocktails in a 21+ setting.

But what makes a Cloudcroft beer? To find out, we spent a morning with head brewer **Elliot Bell** and **Denver Weise** as they fired up the brew kettle for a batch of brown ale.

Challenge of Altitude, Perks of Rainwater

“The higher you go, the harder it is,” Denver explains. At nearly 9,000 feet, brewing in Cloudcroft requires constant vigilance and adaptation. Water boils at a lower temperature here, which means the brewers have to modify nearly every step of the process.

“We actually have to dial the fuel down when it starts to get about 190 degrees,” Elliot adds, stirring the mash with a long paddle. “Any excuse it has, it’ll boil over. And we have to use more hops to get the same effect at altitude because it boils at a lower temperature.”

For Elliot, who spent 12 years brewing at Colorado Boy Pub & Brewery at 7,000 feet, high-altitude brewing is familiar territory. But Cloudcroft presented new challenges—and opportunities. “This is my 15th year brewing commercially,” he says. “I’ve tweaked the recipes here based on my experience. You’re always trying to make the beer better.”

One of Cloudcroft Brewing’s most distinctive features is its water source. “We use rainwater to make the beer,” Elliot explains, gesturing to a large storage tank. “That’s very unique. I’ve never experienced it before, and it ends up making a better beer because of the water quality.”

But rainwater presents its own challenge: it contains no minerals. “The rainwater has no minerals in it—none,” Elliot says. “So we add them back—calcium chloride, gypsum, magnesium

sulfate, sodium bicarbonate—both for the health of the grain to let it convert starch to sugar, and for flavor.”

From Barley to Beer

The grain itself tells a story. “Ninety-nine percent of the grain we use is barley,” Denver notes, running his hands through bags of malt ranging from pale gold to chocolate brown. “We have chocolate barleys, pale chocolate—all presenting different colors and flavors.”

The roasted grains are particularly aromatic. “They go through a process called kilning,” Elliot explains. “They put them in a giant metal drum and heat it. I went to a maltster in Bamberg, Germany—the Weyermann company. They’ve been there hundreds of years, started in someone’s garage. Now it takes up three city blocks and provides malt for breweries around the world.”

When asked about customer favorites, Elliot doesn’t hesitate. “The light beers—the Cowboy Beer and the American Lager—are the most popular. Tourists usually want something light.” His own preference? “The American Lager.” Denver’s pick is their

seasonal German Pilsner, available only in summer.

The Process: Hurry Up and Wait

As grain cascades down from the mill upstairs, mixing with hot water in the mash tun, the brewers explain their daily rhythm.

The process requires precision and patience. “It’s kind of like oatmeal,” Elliot observes, checking the consistency. “You don’t want it too thick and you don’t want it too loose.” Temperature is critical—too cold and the starches won’t convert to sugar; too hot and the beer will lack body and flavor.

“A lot of the day is hurry up and wait,” Elliot admits.

As the mash rests and the brewers set their timers, it’s clear that making beer at this altitude is equal parts chemistry, art, and mountain adaptation.

Open 11:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. most days (until 10:00 p.m. Friday and Saturday), with Thursdays reserved for chili or Frito pie specials, CBC is closed Tuesdays. Follow them on Facebook for live music schedules.

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Welcome to Cloudcroft, New Mexico — a mountain village with timeless charm and plenty to do.

Whether you’re looking for a cozy cabin, a good meal, or ideas for a scenic day trip, this list is here to help you make the most of your visit.

Here you’ll find local restaurants, lodging, shops, and services — everything you need to explore, relax, and enjoy your time in our beautiful mountain community.

Eat/Drink

Big Daddy’s Diner (1705 James Canyon Hwy, (575) 682-1224, bigdaddysdinernm.com) Comfort food and desserts. Try the fried chicken basket. Open daily 7:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m.

Black Bear Coffee (200 Burro Ave., (575) 682-1239, mybbcoffee.com) Locally-roasted beans on the west end of Burro. Head upstairs for conversation nooks, enjoy the downstairs gallery wall with rotating exhibition. Wednesday-Saturday 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., Sunday 8:00-3:00.

Brother-N-Law BBQ (209 James Canyon Hwy, (215) 858-0400) Delicious smoked meats, baked potatoes, sandwiches, and fried okra. Don’t skip the sauce. Open 11:00. a.m.-6:00 p.m. every day but Thursday.

Burro Street Bakery (505 Burro Ave., (575) 682-2777) Sit awhile at this centrally-located joint. Pies, danishes, breakfast burritos, coffee, and more. Open 7:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. daily.

Cloud 9000 Coffee (96 James Canyon Hwy) Quick breakfast—smoothies and handhelds. Coffee, tea, and lemonade, too. Outdoor seating only. 7:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. Tuesday-Friday, 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, closed Mondays.



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Cloudcroft Brewing Company (1301 Burro Ave., (575) 682-2337, cloudcroft-brewing.com) In-house and regional brews, live music, and fantastic atmosphere. Gnosh on wood-fired pizza, soup du jour, salad, chips & guacamole. Closed Tuesdays. Open 11:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m. the rest of the week—til 10:00 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

Cloudcroft Sandwich Shop (505 Burro Ave., (575) 551-0065, cloudcrofts-andwich.shop) Traditional deli in the Burro Street Exchange. Mural photo op in the outdoor patio. Get any sandwich as a salad, then a monster-sized cookie—#balance. Open 11:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. every day, closed Wednesdays.

Dave’s Cafe (300 Burro Ave., (575) 682-2127) Classic burgers, fries, and more at a casual setting in the heart of Burro. Open 11:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m. Monday-Thursday, and 11:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m. Friday-Sunday.



The Listings

Find What You Are Looking For.
We’ll Get You Started

Dusty Boots Cafe & Taco Cantina (1317 James Canyon Hwy, (575) 601-2009) Laid back home cooking—burgers, tacos, salads, and more. For breakfast, try the veggie-loaded Hiker’s Boot omelette and western potatoes. Open 7:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m. Monday-Thursday, 7:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m. Friday and Saturday, closes at 5:00 Sunday.

Eight the Cake Bakery (506 Burro Ave., (575) 682-3088, eightthecakellc.com) Lovely custom cakes. Cupcakes, cinnamon rolls, and local art. Open Thursday-Monday from 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

Family Dollar (309 James Canyon Hwy, (505) 532-2697, familydollar.com) Get the essentials. Discount chain with groceries, toiletries, and home goods. Open 8:00 a.m.-10:00 p.m. daily.

Fernando’s Burritos (96 James Canyon Hwy) Best burrito, barbacoa, and burger in the village. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Outdoor seating only. Open 7:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m. daily, closed Mondays.

High Rollin’ Coffee (109 James Canyon Hwy) Gourmet freshies galore on a rotating weekly menu. Open Monday and Tuesday 8:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., and Friday-Sunday 8:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

Higher Grounds (300 Burro Ave., (575) 682-2127) Ice cream and milkshake counter next to Dave’s Cafe. Hours vary.

Instant Karma Chai Bar (302 Burro Ave.) Global spice blends, ayurvedic teas, soothing cacao, and more at their countertop. Stay awhile. Open daily from 1:00-5:00 p.m.

KennaBelle’s Kreations Bakery (308 Burro Ave., (575) 682-2712) Follow your nose to this pink patisserie. Custom cakes and orders. Gluten-free options. Open 7:00 a.m.- 5:00 p.m. Monday-Saturday. Closed Sunday.

Mad Jack’s Mountaintop Barbeque (105 James Canyon Hwy, (575) 682-7577) Legendary barbeque in the old mercantile building. Don’t let the line deter you—it’s worth the wait. Open 11:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. Thursday-Sunday, or until sold out.

Noisy Water Winery (505 Burro Ave., (575) 682-6610) Local wine, cheese, charcuterie, and gifts. Upscale offerings, casual boardwalk venue. Open 10:00 a.m.-6:30 p.m. daily, open until 7:00 on Friday, and until 7:30 on Saturday.

Old Barrel Tea Co. (505 Burro Ave., (575) 682-7474) Fresh house-blend teas to order, plus provisions. Open 11:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Monday-Friday. Open 10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. Saturday, 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Sunday.

Saint Andrew’s Lounge and 1899 at the Lodge (601 Corona Pl., (575)

682-2566, 223collectionhotels.com/the-lodge) Chef Richard Lepree brings global flair and locally-sourced flavors to the plate. Reservations required on the 1899 side, open Wednesday-Saturday from 5:00-8:00 p.m. Saint Andrew’s Lounge open Wednesday-Saturday from 12:00-8:00 p.m.

The Distillery (1303 Burro Ave., (575) 682-2337) Craft cocktails with New Mexico and in-house spirits for date night—adults only.

Cloudcroft Brewing Company pizza by the slice. Open M, W, TH 4:00-9:00 p.m., Friday 4:00-10:00 p.m., Saturday 11:00 a.m.-10:00 p.m., and Sunday 11:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m.

Western Bar and Cafe and Package Store (304 Burro Ave., (575) 682-2445, westernbarandcafe.net) Dark and cozy dive bar with tasty food for lunch and dinner. Beer on tap, full bar. Play pool while you wait. Closed Wednesdays, open 11:00 a.m.-10:00 p.m. the rest of the week.

Lodging

Burro St. Boarding House (608 Burro Ave., (575) 682-3601) Rustic and artful digs near downtown. burrostreet-boardinghouse.com

Cabins at Cloudcroft (1006 Coyote Ave., 575-682-2396) Retro casitas by the park. cabinsatcloudcroft.com

Crofting Inn (300 Swallow Pl.) Comfy B-and-B. Book on Expedia or Hotels.com

Dusty Boots Motel (1315 James Canyon Hwy, (575) 682-7736) Themed rooms with a restaurant next door. the-dustyboots.com

Grand Cloudcroft Hotel (1207 James Canyon Hwy, (575) 601-2202) Relax in the indoor pool and spa. All king-sized beds. grandcloudcroft.com

Osha Trail Lodging (102 Mexican Ave., (575) 937-3767) Modern, conveniently-located suites. Book on AirBnB or oshatraillodging@gmail.com

SugarPines RV Park (601 Columbine Blvd., (575) 682-3375) Easy access in the heart of the village. sugarpines-rvpark.com

Summit Inn (103 Chipmunk Ave., (575) 295-3235) Chic interiors, classic mountain exterior. summitinnnm.com

The Lodge (601 Corona Pl., (575) 682-2566) Historic beauty. Stay, eat, play. thelodgeresort.com

Shopping

Aspen and Ivy Boutique (206 Burro

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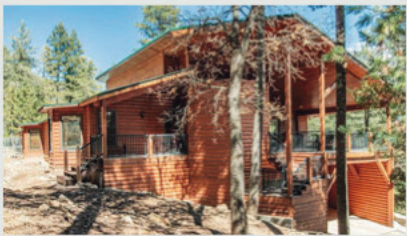
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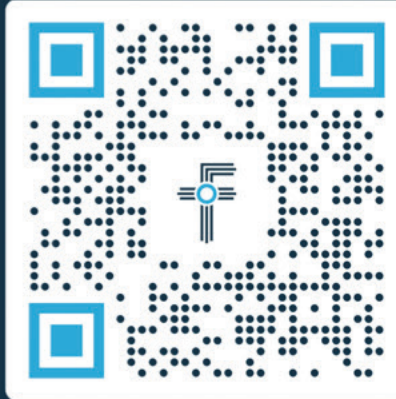
11 Center Road
Charming single-wide on 0.31 acres featuring open living, a primary suite, two guest rooms, and a covered deck among the tall pines.

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1207 Chautauqua Canyon Blvd.
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801 Panther Avenue
Updated mountain duplex surrounded by pines with two private living spaces, vaulted ceilings, pellet stove, and great live/rent flexibility..

Blake Bingham - (830) 496-1836



\$849,900

CLOUDCROFT

1094 Blanca Vista
Stunning mountain retreat on over half an acre with open living, chef's kitchen, luxe primary suite, finished basement, and amazing year-round views.

Debbie Loper - (575) 430-7044



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HIGH ROLLS

36 Old Railroad Drive
Pristine 3BR/2BA home with multiple living areas, pellet + wood stoves, remodeled kitchen/baths, landscaped yard, greenhouse, workshop, and barn.
Cori Abel - (816) 896-2674
Emily Kellam - (575) 214-9479



\$130,000

CLOUDCROFT

13 Hollywood Boulevard
As-is mountain home with 3 bedrooms, 1 bath, and kitchen area. Needs TLC but offers plenty of potential; bring your ideas and make it your own.

Debbie Loper - (575) 430-7044



\$650,000

CLOUDCROFT

1084 Woodlands Way
One-year-new luxury home with open living, soaring ceilings, designer finishes, chef's kitchen, spa-like primary suite, and an oversized deck.

Cori Abel - (816) 896-2674



\$395,000

MAYHILL

9 Serenity Street
4 Bed/2 Bath on 2 acres in the New Mexico Skies Astronomy Enclave, backing national forest; a true stargazer's paradise.

Debbie Loper - (575) 430-7044



\$199,500

MAYHILL

1846 Rio Penasco
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TIMBERON

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Debbie Loper - (575) 430-7044



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CLOUDCROFT

102 Mexican Avenue
Osha Trail Lodging. Unique multi-family investment opportunity. Includes 6 nightly rental units, a retail space, 6 storage units, and a large finished and heated garage.

Megan Corvin - (575) 551-1999



\$179,000

CLOUDCROFT

29 Mystery Path
1Bed/1 Bath cabin with rustic charm, fenced yard, covered deck, wood stove, and a bonus bunkhouse plus a spa-like soaking tub room with loft bed.

Rebekah Graham - (575) 921-5517



\$320,000

CLOUDCROFT

1012 Maple Drive
Updated cabin with new roof, plumbing, flooring, paint, and tankless water heater. Expanded deck and fully furnished with an acceptable offer.

Blake Bingham - (830) 496-1836



\$298,000

HIGH ROLLS

59 Mountain Estates Road
Over 4 acres with a mix of trees and open meadow. Year-round access and a well in place make it ideal for building your mountain home.

Annie Daniels - (575) 442-3444



Under Contract

\$675,000

TIMBERON

1855 Sacramento Drive
3 Bed/2 Bath modern retreat on 20 unrestricted acres with a large metal building, RV parking, horse-friendly setup, and a serene pond.

Debbie Loper - (575) 430-7044



\$759,000

MAYHILL

2979 US Highway 82
Rustic log-sided home on 6 acres backing forest with vaulted living, loft, primary suite, basement space, horse corrals, and a large workshop.

Debbie Loper - (575) 430-7044



\$219,900

CLOUDCROFT

302 Lynx Loop South
Escape to the cool mountain top in this charming, renovated cabin located in historic Camp Cloudcroft. This cozy retreat features 1 bedroom, updated bathroom and full kitchen with new appliances.

Blake Bingham - (830) 496-1836



First Bite

A taste of the new menu for 1899 at the Lodge

Contributing Editor **Drew Gaines** recently visited Chef **Richard Lepree** and his kitchen brigade at the Lodge at Cloudcroft. Look forward to his exclusive video interview on the Cloudcroft Reader, coming soon.

Pictured:

Crispy Slow Roasted Ranchero Pork Shoulder with Cilantro, Hominy, and Ranchero Broth

(Photo: Bre Hope Media)



Ave.) Bespoke goods, candles, plants, and local art. Open Thursday-Sunday 11:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Base Camp 9K (302 Burro Ave.) Teeny space with quality shirts, hats, and more. Open Friday and Saturday 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Sunday 11:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Burro Street Trading Post (505 Burro Ave., (225) 253-2606) Rocks, gems, and original Southwest art and wear. Open 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. daily. burrostreettradingpost.com

Cloudcroft Archery (100 Little Glorieta Ave., (575) 439-7918) Indoor range and bow services. 11:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. Tuesday-Friday, Saturday 10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.

Cloudcroft Souvenirs (502 Burro Ave.) Southwestern tchotchkes and take-home memorabilia. Open Monday-Saturday 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.,

Sunday 1:00-5:00 p.m.

Cloudcroft Truck & Auto Parts (94 James Canyon Hwy, (575) 682-6002) Requisite auto supplies. Open 7:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Monday-Friday, Saturday 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. Closed Sunday.

Coco Blu (94 Little Glorieta Ave., (575) 682-3039) Ladies' boutique with head-to-toe stylish selections and name brands. Open 10:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Sunday-Thursday, and until 5:30 p.m. on Friday and 6:00 p.m. on Saturday.

The Elk Shed (505 Burro Ave.) Southwestern goods, clothes, gourmet pantry staples, and more. Open 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily. theelkshed.com

The Fat Rabbit (206 Burro Ave.) Silver and turquoise, plus. Open 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Tuesday-Sunday.

The Highland (206 James Canyon Hwy, (575) 682-1041) Nambe, gifts, hunting supplies, licenses, and beyond. Open 10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. daily.

High Altitude (310 Burro Ave. (575) 682-1229) Your favorite little outdoors store, boutique, and bike shop. 10:00 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Monday-Thursday, until 6:00 p.m. Friday and Saturday, until 5:00 p.m. Sunday. highaltitudenm.com

Homee (109 James Canyon Hwy) Everything for sale. Home rental services. Hours vary. inhomee.com

Instant Karma (302 Burro Ave., (575) 682-2651) Ayurvedic goods, yogi-friendly clothes, books, and yoga. Open 11:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. daily. getinstantkarma.com

King's Treasure (202 Burro Ave. (575) 682-5524) Thrift to your heart's delight without breaking the bank. Open 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. every day except Sunday.

Magnum's Guns II (207 James Canyon Hwy (575) 682-6677) Guns and ammo on James Canyon Highway.

1:00-4:00 p.m. Monday, Wednesday to Friday from 12:00-5:00 p.m., Saturday 11:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. magnumsguns.com

Mountain Magic (506 Burro Ave. (575) 682-2348) Cloudcroft shirts, woodland toys, baby gifts, natural goods, and more. Open 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. daily.

New Village Hardware (61 Curlew Pl. (575) 682-2849) Everything you need for your latest project. Open 7:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Monday-Saturday, 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Sunday.

Poke The Bear (510 Burro Ave. 575-682-1341) Find the music playing on Burro boardwalk for fun and unique finds—lamps, upcycled furniture, outdoor goods, t-shirts, and humor gifts. Open 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. daily.

Red Wall Jewelry (505 Burro Ave. 575-682-4414) Delicate and artisanal wares—great for gifts. Open 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. daily.

Roots Flower Co. (62 Curlew Pl. (575) 295-1644) High-end flowers and affordable prices. Bouquets of all sizes, event orders. Open 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday.

Seasons Boutique Gift Shop (601 Corona Pl. (575) 682-2566) Shop at the historic Lodge.

The Bear Track (308 Burro Ave.) Bables, figurines, woodland critter decor, and more. Hours vary.

Tree-Riffic Toys and Candy (505 Burro Ave. (575) 682-2566) Goodies for all ages. Open M, Th, Fri, Sat 10:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m., W 10:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Sun 12:00-5:00 p.m.

Tree Top Teez (505 Burro Ave. (575) 430-5154) Custom silk-screen and embroidery shop. Open 7:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Monday-Friday.

Turquoise Shop (507 Burro Ave. (575) 682-3327) Fine jewelry at every price point. Open 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. each day, closed Sunday. cloudcroft-turquoise.com

Art

Cloudcroft Art Society Co-op Gallery (90 Swallow Pl.) Artist-run rotating gallery. Open seasonal Saturdays 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. and for holiday sales. ccartsociety@gmail.com

Off the Beaten Path (100 Glorietta Ave. (575) 682-7284) Regional handmade art selection of all media. Open 10:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Friday and Saturday, 11:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Sunday. offthebeatenpathstuff.com

Osha Trail Depot (102 Mexican Ave. 575-551-2099) Local art, woodworking, and New-Mexican goods. Interested artists inquire: oshatraildepot@gmail.com. Open 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. every day.

Samantha Odom Art Gallery (300 Burro Ave. (575) 649-9951) Original paintings and affordable prints by Samantha Odom. Open 11:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

The Little Gallery (206 Burro Ave.) Fine arts and paintings by local artists, and funky souvenirs. Open Wednesday-Sunday 11:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. or by appointment.

Healing

Be in the Mountains Yoga & Massage Therapy (109 James Canyon Hwy (575) 415-4573) Cozy space and comfortable pace in the Village Plaza. Open by appointment at yogaincloudcroft.com

Cloudcroft Animal Hospital (1403 James Canyon Hwy (575) 682-2645) Critter care and adoptions. Open 8:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m. and 1:30-5:00 p.m.

Monday-Friday.

Cloudcroft Therapeutic Massage (404 Burro Ave.) Relax and recover upstairs at the OCEC building. Open by appointment at cloudcrofttherapeuticmassage.com

Laughing Leaf Dispensary (504 Burro Ave. (575) 682-1354) Locally-owned bud tender. Open 10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. Monday-Thursday, 9:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m. Friday and Saturday, and 9:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. Sunday.

Presbyterian Medical Center (76 James Canyon Hwy (575) 682-2542) Clinic by appointment or walk-in. Open 7:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. Monday-Friday.

Southwest Naturals CBD (506 Burro Ave. (575) 682-6022) Range of CBD products, vitamins, and supplements in store. Open Monday 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. and Friday-Sunday 10:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

Trestle Medical Services (1200 James Canyon Hwy) Local family practitioner. Open Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays from 9:30-11:30 a.m. and 12:30-4:00 p.m. trestlemedical.com

Services

Atelier Art of Hair by Anna (505 Burro Ave. (415) 230-9506) Pamper your hair, style your photoshoot. Available by appointment vagaro.com/lacnb9/services

Bhair Neccessities (202 Burro Ave. (575) 518-9011) Classic color, cuts, and products. Available by appointment.

Cloudcroft Fitness (90 Swallow Pl.) Get moving with a range of class offerings and instructors. cloudcroftcycling.punchpass.com

Cloudcroft Village Office (201 Burro Ave.) Pay your water bill, attend village meetings, and more.cloudcroftvillage.com

Cloudsoft Laundry To Go (520-330-2613) Delivery service.

Crystal Tompkins Photography Family photos, headshots, business branding, soul sessions, and more. By appointment: crystaltompkinsphotography.com

First National Bank (301 Burro Ave. (575) 682-2531) Money on the mountain, outdoor ATM. Open 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. Monday-Thursday, 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Friday.

Green Mountain Construction (500 Burro Ave. (575) 551-2811) Local development. Open 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Monday-Friday. greenmountainconstr.com

High Valley Weaving School (90 Swallow Pl. 575-921-1020) Modern courses in ancient fiber techniques. Class schedules: highvalleyweaving-school.com

Pre-School and Extended Care (50 Chipmunk (575) 682-1264) Local childcare.

Rick Roger's Auto & Equipment Repair (72 James Canyon Hwy (575) 682-3352) Gas and diesel mechanic services. Open Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. and 1:00-5:00 p.m.

Sacramento Mountain Senior Services (212 Glorietta Ave. 575-682-3022) Cafeteria and social hub. mtnseniors.org

U.S. Post Office (20 Curlew Pl. (800) 275-8777) Mail and passport services. Open 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Monday-Friday, Saturday 9:30-11:30 a.m.

1CAT Trap & Release Program (100 Glorietta Ave. 575-682-7284) Non-profit feline care. Available by appointment.

THE CABINS AT

CLOUDCROFT

Close to everything but off of the main roads! Beautifully sited within the Village!

4, 2, and 1 Bedroom Cabins

Fireplaces ~ Kitchens

575-682-2396

www.cloudcroftnm.com

Play

Cosmic Adventures (cosmicadventuresnm.com) Snow-mobile tours and more

Deer Park Playground (30 Swallow Pl.) Behind the Burro St. Exchange. Picnic tables, easy downtown access.

Elevation Park (230 Mescalero Ave.) Disc golf, trailheads, and stargazing.

James Sewell Ice Rink (751 James Canyon Hwy) On the west end of Zenith Park. Seasonal skate rentals, snack bar, fireplace.

Pickleball Addicts of Cloudcroft (pickleballaddictsofcloudcroft.com) Join them! Regular seasonal play at Zenith Park.

Ski Cloudcroft (1920 1/2 Hwy 82) Southernmost ski area in NM—skiing, tubing, wood-fired pizza, and more.

The Lodge Golf Course (703 Corona Ave.) Scottish 9 in the clouds. Visit the pro shop for gear, snacks, and drinks.

Zenith Park (1001 James Canyon Hwy) Meadow in the middle of the village with playgrounds, ice rink, disc golf, walking, path, pickleball courts, and more.

Visit Cloudcroft

Sacramento Mountains Historical Museum and Pioneer Village (1000 Hwy 82) Study the Sacramentos

Sacramento Ranger District Forest Service Ranger Station (4 Lost Lodge Rd.) Visit for maps and forest facts

The Cloudcroft Chamber of Commerce (1001 James Canyon Hwy) Stop in to learn about local businesses and events

Michael Nivison Public Library (90 Swallow Pl.) Community hub for all ages

Fill Up/EV Charge

Allsup's (10 Curlew Pl) Gas, groceries, beer cave in the middle of Cloudcroft.

High Rolls General Store (845 U.S. 82) A little bit of everything.

Mayhill Country Store (3497 U.S. 82) Travel stop with souvenirs, food, and gas next door.

Otero County Electric Co-op (404 Burro Ave.) Shop Cloudcroft's downtown while your car charges.

Day Trip

Alameda Park Zoo (35 minutes) Observe critters in the Southwest's oldest zoo. Educational programs, a playground, and summer camps available. ci.alamogordo.nm.us/816/Alameda-Park-Zoo

American Armed Forces Museum (23 minutes) Archives, memorabilia, and memorial garden. Volunteers welcome. americanarmedforcesmuseum.com

Cadwallader Mountain Farms (14 minutes) High-elevation orchards with scenic views and “u-pick” seasons. Find them on Facebook for updates.

La Luz, NM (24 minutes) Tularosa Basin settlement at the base of the Sacramento Mountains.

Lincoln National Forest Scenic Byway (Varies) Winding drives past basin views, mountain meadows, wildlife, and beyond. fs.usda.gov/r03/lincoln/recreation/opportunities/scenic-drives

Mayhill, NM (23 minutes) Neighbors to the east.

Museum of Space History (30 minutes): Exhibits, education, memorials, playground, and theater. nmspacesmuseum.org

Nichols Ranch and Orchards (35 minutes) Seasonal harvests and events. nicholsranchandorchards.com

Oliver Lee Memorial State Park (47

minutes) Desert camping, historic site, and hiking. emnrd.nm.gov/spd/find-a-park/oliver-lee-memorial-state-park/

Sacramento, NM (48 minutes) Mountain hamlet nestled in the Sacramentos.

Silver Lake (17 minutes) RV and tent camping, fishing, and more on the Mescalero Apache Reservation. mescaleroapachetribe.com/parks-rec/silver-lake-official/

Sunspot Solar Observatory (32 minutes) Unique solar observing facilities and telescopes, education, visitor's center, and breathtaking views. sunspot.nmsu.edu

Three Rivers Petroglyph Site (59 minutes) One of the largest and most interesting rock art sites in the Southwest. blm.gov/visit/three-rivers-petroglyph-site

Timberon, NM (55 minutes) Mountain community surrounded by gorgeous forest—gas up on your way, no station for miles. timberon.org

Tularosa Basin Museum of History (31 minutes) area history with a full research library, gift shop, and bookstore.

Valley of Fires (80 minutes) Lava park featuring trails, visitor center, picnic

areas, and campsite hookups. blm.gov/visit/valley-fires-recreation-area

Weed, NM (41 minutes) Mountain community, home of the Weed Bluegrass Festival. weednm.org

White Sands National Park (45 minutes) Otherworldly chalky dunes—pack sunscreen and water. nps.gov/whsa/index.htm

Church Directory

Anglican Church of the Epiphany (400 Chipmunk Ave.)

Cloudcroft Church of Christ (40 Swallow Pl.)

Cloudcroft United Methodist Church (50 Chipmunk Ave.)

Community of Christ (3081 U.S. 82, Mayhill)

Mountain Bible Fellowship (33 Haynes Canyon, High Rolls/Mountain Park)

High Rolls Trinity Baptist Church (#1 Railroad Dr.)

Mayhill Baptist Church (MM 35, U.S. 82)

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www.thecampatcloudcroft.com

We Are OPEN All Year - Every Day

Breakfast Buffet

Now With Omelet Bar!!


\$18 Per person

Every Saturday

8:00 Am - 11:00 Am & Sunday Morning's

8:00 Am - 12:30 Pm

Bacon, Eggs, Sausage, Danishes, French Toast, Potatoes, Yogurt, & Assorted Fruits.





DINNER MENU

TO START

Wintergreens

Gorgonzola Cheese, Cranberries, Roasted Almonds, Raspberry Vinaigrette 14

White Anchovy Caesar

Asiago Crisp, Hearts of Romaine, Hearts of Palm 14

Ceviche Of Ahi

Black Garlic, Lemon Miso Aioli 22

Crispy Goat Cheese

Beet, Savory Cranberry Vinaigrette 16

Crab Cake

Chesapeake Bay Blue Crab, Shaved Fennel Salad, Sonoran Chili Aioli 28

TO FOLLOW

14 Hour Beef Brisket Pot Roast

With its own Trivet of Roasted Vegetables 36

Free Range Chicken Breast

Brie & Spinach Mousseline, Cranberry Bordelaise, Cauliflower 38

Certified Angus Prime New York Strip

Gorgonzola Gratin Potato, Asparagus 52

South Arctic Salmon

Soft Sun Dried Tomato, Herbed Butter, Toasted Quinoa, Roasted Squash 35

Backstrap Of Elk

Fondant Potato, Braised Vegetables, Honey Demi 60

Crispy Slow Roasted Ranchero Pork Shoulder

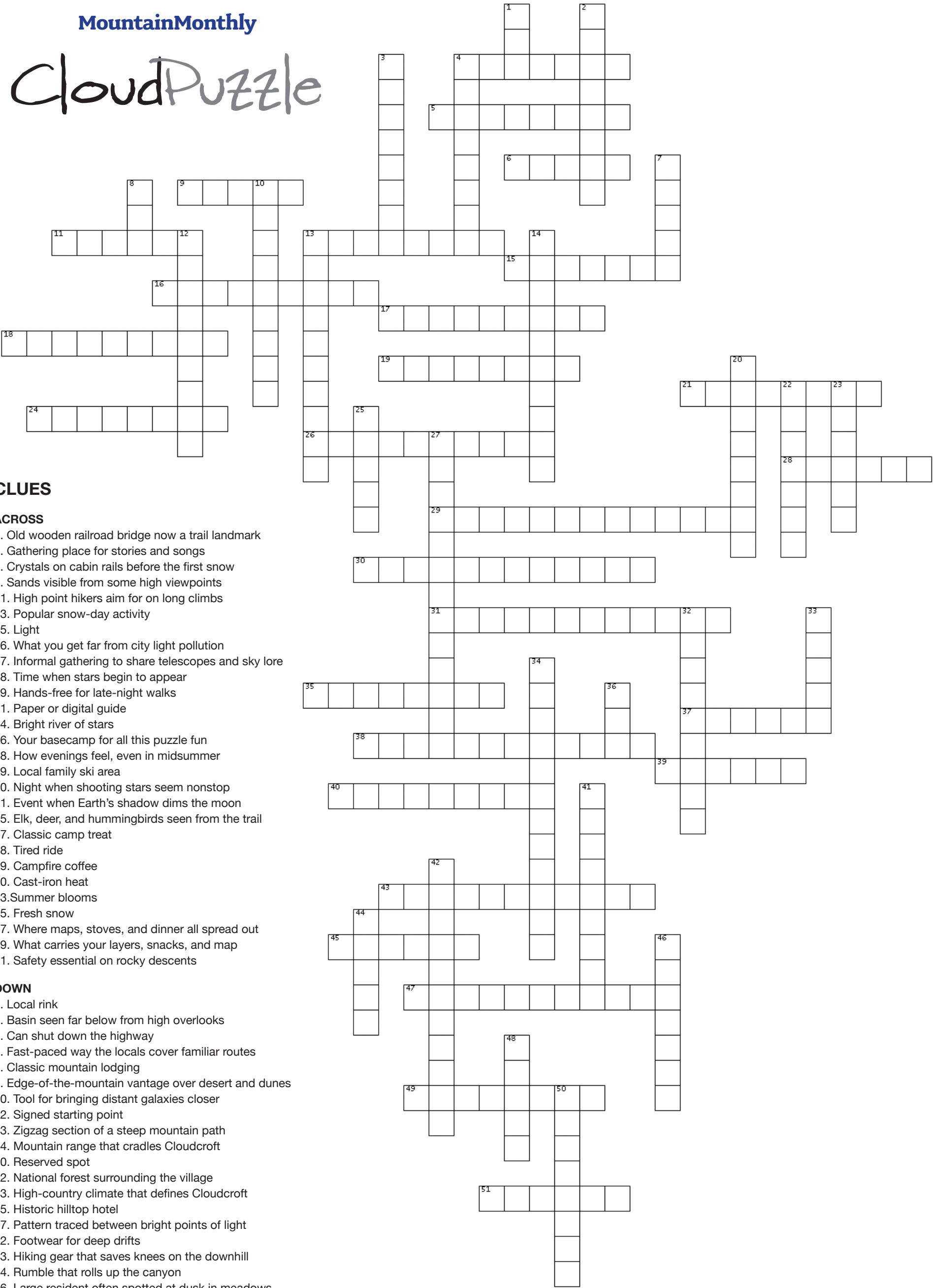
Cilantro, Hominy, Ranchero Broth 33

Mussels

Tomato Ancho Ragu, Hand formed Pasta 29

CONSUMING RAW OR UNDERCOOKED MEATS, POULTRY, SEAFOOD, SHELLFISH, OR EGGS MAY INCREASE YOUR RISK OF FOODBORNE ILLNESS ESPECIALLY IF YOU HAVE CERTAIN MEDICAL CONDITIONS

CloudPuzzle



CLUES

ACROSS

- 4. Old wooden railroad bridge now a trail landmark
- 5. Gathering place for stories and songs
- 6. Crystals on cabin rails before the first snow
- 9. Sands visible from some high viewpoints
- 11. High point hikers aim for on long climbs
- 13. Popular snow-day activity
- 15. Light
- 16. What you get far from city light pollution
- 17. Informal gathering to share telescopes and sky lore
- 18. Time when stars begin to appear
- 19. Hands-free for late-night walks
- 21. Paper or digital guide
- 24. Bright river of stars
- 26. Your basecamp for all this puzzle fun
- 28. How evenings feel, even in midsummer
- 29. Local family ski area
- 30. Night when shooting stars seem nonstop
- 31. Event when Earth’s shadow dims the moon
- 35. Elk, deer, and hummingbirds seen from the trail
- 37. Classic camp treat
- 38. Tired ride
- 39. Campfire coffee
- 40. Cast-iron heat
- 43. Summer blooms
- 45. Fresh snow
- 47. Where maps, stoves, and dinner all spread out
- 49. What carries your layers, snacks, and map
- 51. Safety essential on rocky descents

DOWN

- 1. Local rink
- 2. Basin seen far below from high overlooks
- 3. Can shut down the highway
- 4. Fast-paced way the locals cover familiar routes
- 7. Classic mountain lodging
- 8. Edge-of-the-mountain vantage over desert and dunes
- 10. Tool for bringing distant galaxies closer
- 12. Signed starting point
- 13. Zigzag section of a steep mountain path
- 14. Mountain range that cradles Cloudcroft
- 20. Reserved spot
- 22. National forest surrounding the village
- 23. High-country climate that defines Cloudcroft
- 25. Historic hilltop hotel
- 27. Pattern traced between bright points of light
- 32. Footwear for deep drifts
- 33. Hiking gear that saves knees on the downhill
- 34. Rumble that rolls up the canyon
- 36. Large resident often spotted at dusk in meadows
- 41. Pine trees
- 42. Zipped-up cocoon
- 44. Place to sip coffee and watch elk wander by
- 46. Lively post-trail stop for pizza and pints
- 48. Golden fall leaves
- 50. Small striped campground scavenger



Events: January 2026

Get Out Your Calendar and Mark Dates. Cloudcroft is Happening

Community

Take a breather and gather at the Mountain Moms program at Summit Christian Fellowship on Wednesdays from 9:00-11:00 a.m.

Grand Opening: Sparks + Rec Cannabis Lounge & Dispensary on January 10th, starting at 10:00 a.m. Food Truck on site. Located at 1315 Burro Ave. in Cloudcroft.

Village of Cloudcroft Council Meeting: Tuesday, January 20th at 6:00 p.m. in the village chambers.

Cloudcroft Schools

Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) meets on Wednesday, January 14th, from 6:00-6:30 p.m. in the Middle School Commons area. Join them to support the schools through volunteerism.

Winter break: December 22nd through January 6th—school resumes Wednesday, January 7th.

Board of Education Meeting: Tuesday, January 20th at 6:00 p.m. in the District Boardroom, 10 Swallow Place.

Find the full Calendar of Events for Cloudcroft Schools at CMSBears.org

Get Moving

First Day Hike at Oliver Lee State Park Thursday, January 1st from 10:00-11:00 a.m. A moderate 1-mile hike to Lawson Springs with views of Tularosa Basin and White Sands. Meet at site 36, park at the visitor center. Ages 8+, leashed pets welcome. Bring water. Fees waived. Contact: Kate German, 505-660-7381

Starting January 3rd, 9:30-10:30 a.m.: Yoga Preliminary Course at Instant Karma on Burro Ave. “Zoomies and Roomies welcome.” Inquire with alex@getinstantkarma.com

Run the Chilly Willy 5k, 10k, or Half-Marathon in Las Cruces on Sunday, January 11th.

Run Internacional at the U.S./Mexico 10k in El Paso, TX and head over the international bridge around Juarez landmarks. Saturday, January 17th.

Enjoy a Sunset Stroll at White Sands National Park every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday until January 17th, 4:00 p.m. until sunset. Prep for a leisurely, ranger-guided stroll through the gypsum sand dunes, perfect for photo ops. Free, park entrance fee applies.

Tour Lake Lucero and the dunes on a guided hike. Tickets are required for this program and must be purchased through Recreation.gov or by calling (1-877-444-6777).

Tuesday, January 6th: VinYin yoga at Be in the Mountains Yoga from 10:00-11:00 a.m. Book ahead at yogaincloudcroft.com

Dark Skies

Sunspot Solar Observatory: December 22, 2025, through January 5, 2026, the Visitor Center and observatory grounds will be closed for the NMSU holiday break.

Wolf Moon on January 3rd: The first full moon of the year will appear slightly larger and brighter than usual as it reaches its closest point to Earth.

New Moon on January 18th: This is the best time of the month to observe faint objects such as galaxies and star clusters because there is no moonlight interference.

Chamber of Commerce

Membership Drive: become a Chamber member at coolcloudcroft.com

Michael Nivison Public Library

Storytime and Crafts with Paige will continue Friday mornings at 10:30 a.m.

Road Runner Food Bank

rrfb.org for dates and locations. Mobile food bank: Sacramento Mountain Senior Center, High Rolls.

Alamogordo

Thursdays from 6:00-8:00 p.m.: Board Game Night at the Alamogordo Recreation Center. Open to the community, all ages.

The Launch Pad Lecture continues on January 2nd from 9:00-10:00 a.m. at the New Mexico Museum of Space History. These first Friday sessions are free to attend with lectures by guest speakers and museum staff.

The Lodge

Breakfast Buffet and omelette bar on Saturday and Sunday mornings starting at 8:00 a.m. \$18 per person.

Thirsty Thursdays: 50% of drinks from 12:00-8:00 p.m. at Saint Andrews Lounge.



Cloudcroft Brewing Co. and The Distillery

Karaoke night every Monday from 6:00-9:00 p.m. at the brewery side.

January 16th, Those 2 Guys play 6:00-9:00 p.m. at the brewery.

Music all day: January 17th, Dynamic Duo plays 1:00-4:00 p.m. on The Distillery side, while The Ghetto Vaquero Duo plays 6:00-9:00 p.m. at the brewery.

The Western Bar

Enjoy \$1.50 tacos—only served on Tuesdays. Recently debuted seasonal drink menus.

Noisy Water Winery

January 16th from 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm Noisy Water Winery (The Library) hosts the Wine 101 Class in Ruidoso. Join for a basic wine knowledge course and build confidence in your wine choices.

Cloudcroft Light Opera Company (CLOC)

CLOC meets at the Zenith Park Pavilion at 6:00 p.m. on January 8th for the CLOC Holiday party, officer nominations, and a white elephant gift exchange.

Sacramento Senior Center

Got talent? Show it off on from 10:30-11:15 a.m. on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the month.

Timberon

Senior Social night at the High Country Lounge and Grill every Tuesday from 6:00-9:00 p.m. with food, drinks, and “those classic songs that you love.” Also on Tuesdays—\$2.00 tacos all day.

Art

Samantha Odom Art Gallery on Burro hosts a special CHRISTmas Art Show. Work will be on view through Jan. 19th.

Blackbear Coffee Shop hosts an “artist of the month” on their gallery wall. Open during regular business hours.

Mescalero

“King of Accordion” Ramón Ayala plays his farewell tour on Saturday, January 24th at 6:00 p.m. at the Inn of the Mountain Gods.

Ruidoso

Thursday, January 8th at 3:00 p.m.: The Ruidoso Public Library Children’s Program will host an “art relay” for kids of all ages.



Sarah and Katie mingle at the finish line in Zenith Park for the Ugly Christmas Sweater 5k and 1-mile Dash

Mountain Life

Folks Caught on Camera Living Their Best Mountain Life



Trustee and Mayor Pro-tem **Jim Maynard** hugs daughters **Shelley Hughes** (L) and **Julie Bragg** (R) at the end of his final council meeting in December.



First Grade teacher **Brent Jewell** delights as the narrator of “Twas the Night Before Christmas” at the Elementary and Middle School Christmas Music Program.



Rivers Odom helps decorate the tree at the Samantha Odom Art Gallery on Burro



Kody Adams on shift with Tularosa Communications



Ski Cloudcroft is open for the season, offering skiing and snowboarding lessons on the bunny hill



The **Girls' Varsity Basketball** team won 2nd place in the championship for the Mountain Top Basketball Tournament this December.



Congratulations to **Chris Shinabery** for earning 2nd place in the Backhoe Competition at the New Mexico Department of Transportation's annual Road'eo. Contestants competed for three days, demonstrating their finesse at the controls of some large pieces of equipment.



Dusty Boots Cafe hosts its annual free Christmas Dinner for locals and guests.



(L-R) **Trey, Cara, and Carli** strike a pose outside of the Little Gallery on Burro.



The **Bears Boys’ Basketball Team** won 2nd place in the championship for the Mountain Top Basketball Tournament this December.



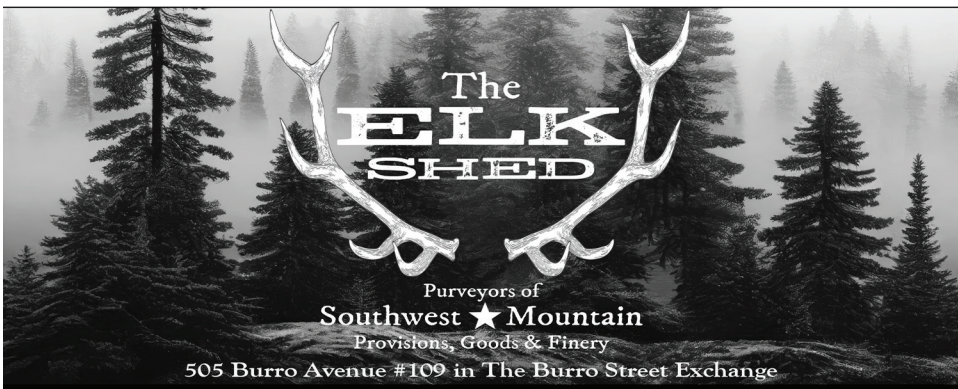
Gena D. wins the teen division of the Black Bear Coffee Shop kids’ art contest.



Little J Ranch Report: **Petunia** has officially gone to her forever home, and our hearts couldn’t be happier for her!. Watching her thrive reminds us why rescue work matters so much. If you’d like to follow more stories like Petunia’s or support the animals still waiting for their chance, visit our website. Learn more and donate at www.littlejranch.org.



Trustee **Keith Hamilton** presents out-going mayor **Tim King** with a commemorative hand-crafted American flag as a thank you for his service as a trustee and mayor.





High Valley Weaving School
Weaving and Spinning Classes
Workshops in All Fiber Arts
Sales of
Yarn & Fiber * Handwoven Garments
Rag Rugs & Hand Towels
Lower Floor of Cloudcroft Library
Thursday - Friday - Saturday
10 am to 4 pm
Joan Nussbaum / Instructor
575-921-1020





BLACK BEAR
COFFEE SHOP

Craft Coffee-Chill Vibes-Good Times
Happy New Year
Wed-Sat 8-4, Sun 8-3
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 Facebook: [blackbearcoffeeshop](https://www.facebook.com/blackbearcoffeeshop)
 Instagram [@blackbearcoffeenm](https://www.instagram.com/blackbearcoffeenm)
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Life in the Sacramento Mountains

with *Lyn Canham*

January is much quieter in these mountains than the heady activities of late December for many of us. Now, like much of the forest around us, we are holed up in our quiet dens to think about the year ahead.

These thoughts do not necessarily have the form of an actual New Year’s resolution. We might start formulating step-by-step plans to travel to a bucket-list destination. Similarly, maybe we want to arrange a training course or a workshop in a subject of increasing interest. Both of these intentions require parallel steps to build the required funding to realize them. I have arranged to take a 3-day online course in watercolor painting in late January to advance this skill in my art practice.

Perhaps we may have noticed a potentially negative attitude or reaction we want to change, or maybe we want to build up a new behavior we see as valuable (staying more present is a good example). New habits are said to take an average of 2-3 months to take hold, depending on their complexity, and require consistent practice. There’s nothing like a quiet period in the calendar to allow for more mindful observation, as well as to yield the time needed to work at a new practice.

With the slowdown in the calendar, it is possible that many residents will notice more of their local wildlife, whether these are elk, mule deer, wild turkeys, foxes, coyotes, bobcats, mountain lions, smaller animals, or our year-round birds.

There isn’t much to eat at this time

of year and the deer munch on green needles, stems, twigs, or lichen from conifer trunks and branches. If you have scrub oak or other scrub brush, they like to browse on this, and, of course, they would love to find any green remnants or leftover acorns.

A couple of deer bucks ranging from “spikes” to 8-points are around, but they don’t travel with the doe-groups. In fact, they are chasing the doe-groups, whether mule deer or whitetail deer (we see both here). We enjoy seeing deer bucks again for a few winter months.

For our own wildlife excitement, since black bears reliably hibernate in winter months, a big cat sighting will get noticed. In January of 2022, we saw a bobcat stroll across the driveway, and in very early spring of 2023, we observed a cougar relaxing across the meadow from our house. I think it is especially exciting to observe any one of the large cats using your property – (remote) observing is usually better than (physical) encountering, certainly safer!

Pine siskins join dark-eyed juncos, white- and red-breasted nuthatches, mountain chickadees, Downy and Hairy woodpeckers, and Stellers Jays in our yard. I feed the birds from November through April in the Cornell Lab Feederwatch program, for my entertainment, our cats’ entertainment, and to supplement the birds’ diets in the harsher winter season.

Chipmunks notionally ‘hibernate’ in the winter – they at least keep to their dens. They have pretty large food stores in their burrows that they can draw from occasionally. If the weather stays warm, we will all see them several days of the week. This could be distressing, but their antics as they dart up and down the face of our retainer wall, romp and tussle together, chase each other, or stop and sun along the top of the wall is too endearing and en-

tertaining to spur negative feelings.

I am amazed that we haven’t seen them during the recent Nov - Dec 2025 record-warm and dry period – they must be snoozing pretty well.

Letter from the Superintendent

Dear Bears,

Happy New Year! I hope this month’s message finds you well. It’s that time of year again for setting intentions, prioritizing wellness, and welcoming new experiences. As your Superintendent, some of my hopes for the new year are based on continuing the positive efforts we saw from 2025 throughout 2026.

Academic achievement remains a top priority for our district, as proven by the 2024-2025 NM Vistas report card, demonstrating that Cloudcroft continues to perform at or above state averages. Our buildings are filled with activity, growth, learning, and connection every single day. Our teachers will continue to work hard to help students gain skills that will carry them to the next level. Let’s continue working together in partnership to see every student succeed!

As we transition into the second half of the school year, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to each of you for your involvement in our school community. Your participation makes a significant impact on our school climate and the student experience. We are fortunate to live in a beautiful place where we take care of and encourage each other.

We invite you to join us for several exciting events happening in January. Please come out and support our boys’ and girls’ basketball programs–check our athletics page for game schedules. We also have several opportunities to connect with other families and celebrate our students’ achievements this month:

January 7: School resumes

January 14: CNA pinning ceremony; PTO meeting

January 15: Report cards

January 16: Honor Roll assemblies at CES and CMS schools

January 20: Board of Education regular meeting

January 21: Quiz Bowl

Thank you for your continued support and dedication to our schools. As always, I am available and would love to speak with you. Please reach out via email at jocelyne.gillespie@cmsbears.org or by phone at 575-601-4416. If you would like to stop by, please make an appointment with our administrative secretary, Grace White. I wish you all a rejuvenating January!

Go Bears!

—Jocelyne Driscoll-Gillespie
Superintendent
Cloudcroft Municipal Schools

VFW Post 11999 Fall Dispatch

VFW Post 11999 kicked off November with one of our favorite traditions—the Veterans Day Spaghetti Dinner, held on Saturday, November 8th at the Cloudcroft Senior Center. With help from our local Scouts, who volunteered as table servers, we served more than 60 meals.

During the dinner, we drew the winning ticket for our highly anticipated Henry VFW .22LR Tribute Edition Rifle, complete with a display case. This collectible generated excitement, and proceeds from both the raffle and the dinner support veteran assistance and community service projects here in Cloudcroft. This year’s winner was David Dale of Bangs, TX.

In addition to our charitable and patriotic missions, VFW Post 11999 fosters civic engagement and patriotism among young people through our an-

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Mountain Monthly

nual essay contests: Patriot's Pen for middle school students and Voice of Democracy for high school students. This year's theme was "How Are You Showing Patriotism and Support for Our Country?"

Cloudcroft students submitted 40 middle school and 27 high school essays, each reflecting thoughtfulness, intelligence, and a strong sense of community. Selecting just three winners in each category was no easy task.

Patriot's Pen winners:

- 1st Place: Logan Meszler
- 2nd Place: Natalie Loper-Flores
- 3rd Place: Tatum Robb

Voice of Democracy winners:

- 1st Place: Hannah Ferdetta
- 2nd Place: Carolina Loper-Flores
- 3rd Place: Alyssa Singer

The winners were recognized and awarded during Cloudcroft High

School's outstanding Veteran's Day assembly, highlighting both their accomplishments and the service of those who defend our country. Congratulations to all our winners—you represent the best of Cloudcroft: thoughtful, articulate, and engaged young citizens.

To close out November, the Post partnered with Summit Christian Fellowship to provide Thanksgiving blessings to local families. We donated 30 turkeys to accompany well-stocked food baskets prepared and distributed by the church, helping ensure every household enjoys a warm meal and a reminder of the blessings we share—even in challenging times.

VFW Post 11999 is deeply grateful for the continued support of the Cloudcroft community. Your generosity enables us to serve—not only our fellow veterans, but also our neighbors and friends—and we look forward to carrying this spirit of service into the holiday season and beyond.

—Paul Benshoof



Snowfall and the Sunny Side of Cloudcroft

The historical average annual snowfall in Cloudcroft was 120 inches, or 10 feet. We would get our first snowfall in October and our last in May. Some places still had snow on the ground in June.

If you ever wonder why all of the old vacation houses in Cloudcroft are on the south side of town—there used to be a fence running from West to East roughly where the US Highway 82 is. This fence marked the dividing line between the two halves of town. The south side was the wealthy vacation-home part of town. And the north side was the railroad workers, loggers, and year-round residents.

The south side was the cool summer side, while the north side got all the sunshine. This was great for the town during the winter. There are some old houses on the north side if you know what you are looking for, but the north side was designed to survive the winter.”

— Damon Marez,
on behalf of the Sacramento Mountain Historical Society



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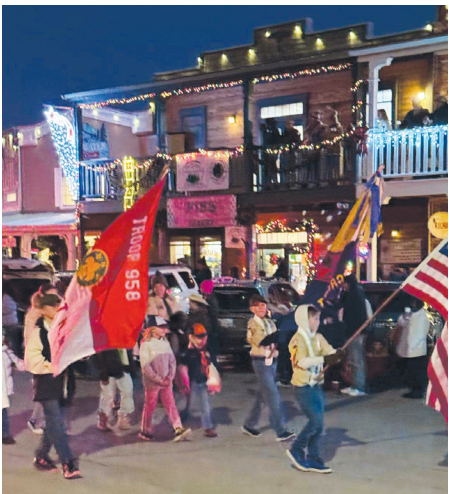
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Scouting Around

December wrapped up a strong year for Cloudcroft's Troop and Pack 958 with a string of memorable events.

The fun started in Las Cruces on November 29, when members of Troop 958 attended Scout Night at an NMSU football game. Spirits were high and the scouts enjoyed a night of team spirit, stadium lights, an easy favorite for everyone who made the trip.

Back in Cloudcroft, the scouts took the lead in the annual Christmas Parade on December 6. Carrying the U.S. flag at the front of the procession, members of both the Pack and Troop proudly represented the community and showed what local scouting is all about.

The very next day, December 7, the Pack and Troop came together again—this time indoors—for a combined Christmas party, Pack Meeting, and Court of Honor held at the Cloudcroft Senior Center. Alongside the festivities, which included food and games, both groups took time to recognize a season's worth of hard work. The highlight was that four Arrow of Light badges were award-

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ed to Cub Scouts in Pack 958. The Arrow of Light is the highest rank in Cub Scouting and is one of the few awards that can be worn on a Scout uniform after crossing into a troop. These four young scouts are expected to officially bridge into Troop 958 in the new year, adding fresh energy to a troop that's already been steadily growing.

Not quite ready to call it a year, the troop capped off the season with a campout at City of Rocks State Park. The trip included a 1.5-mile hike with time spent exploring and discussing the ancient petroglyphs in the area. In between campfire cooking and sleeping under the stars, the scouts completed roughly 16 advancements—evidence that a weekend in the outdoors is still one of the best ways to learn.

Scouting continues strong in Cloudcroft, and we're always looking for new families to join us. Interested in learning more? Come by a Sunday meeting or reach out to us—we'd love to hear from you. We meet most Sundays at 4 PM at the United Methodist Church.

Contact us: info@CloudcroftScouts.org
—Greg Crinklaw

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Flavor Lab

Cloudcroft High School Culinary Program students take recipes from the classroom to your table.

Crumb-coated Banana Bread

Sophomore **Makenna Stanbrough** shares her recipe.


You'll need:

- 3-4 medium or large bananas
- 2 Tbsp brown sugar
- 1 1/2 tsp vanilla extract
- 3/4 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1/2 cup butter, softened
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 eggs
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 2 Tbsp sour cream or Greek yogurt

Preheat the oven to 350. Grease two 8x4 pans. In a small bowl, mash bananas, brown sugar, vanilla extract, and ground cinnamon. In a large bowl, cream butter and sugar together until light and fluffy. Add in eggs and beat until mixed. To the wet ingredients, sift in flour, baking soda, and salt. stir until just combined. Add in sour cream and stir. Pour in mashed bananas, and mix until combined.

Crumb topping: Combine cinnamon, flour, and brown sugar. Cut in butter with a pastry cutter, and mix until the topping looks like coarse crumbs. Sprinkle coating evenly over the batter in both pans.

Bake for about 35-40 minutes or until the cake tester comes out clean with just a few moist crumbs stuck to it. Allow to cool for 10 minutes. Slice and enjoy!



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January 2026

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Faces & Places



“I Just Kept Drawing”: Rand Carlson’s Life in Color

*From daily deadlines to mountain mornings,
a longtime cartoonist finds his rhythm in
Cloudcroft.*

Rand Carlson’s voice catches when he remembers one morning in the late 1980s. His father had opened the San Jose Mercury News, turned to the comics page, and found his son’s work staring back at him.

“He got on the phone and said, ‘Son, you’re in the paper,’” Carlson recalls. “It was a gift, a real thrill.”

That moment—seeing his work in “The New Breed,” a King Features Syndicate strip created to fill the void left by Gary Larson’s retirement from “The Far Side”—represented hard work and passion.

Today, whether at his studio in Tucson or at his restored 1920s cabin in Cloudcroft, Carlson continues that creative journey, painting prolifically.

“Cloudcroft is such a wonderful spot to be in because it’s so beautiful.”

The Art of Cartoons

“We’re all artists when we’re young. I

just kept drawing,” he explains. “That was the way that I could express myself.”

Carlson kept drawing through every phase of his life. He was the cartoonist for his high school newspaper. In 1966, still a teenager, he had a comic strip called “The Crate Society” published in the Cupertino Courier—a parody of Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society that mocked the cookie-cutter houses spreading across Santa Clara Valley.

He became the first political cartoonist at the University of Arizona’s student newspaper, then editorial cartoonist and graphics editor at the El Paso Herald Post in the early 1980s.

One perk of the job: meeting his heroes. Charles Shultz, Bill Keane, and the creator of Marmaduke.

Carlson drew for the Tucson Weekly for 35 years—“roughly 50 cartoons a year times 35 years. So that’s around 1500 strips. That’s a lot of cartoons.”

Marking the Moment

“When people think of cartoons, they think of a joke, a punchline, something funny,” he says. “And with editorial cartooning, there’s a lot of sadness and a lot of danger. There’s a lot of things going on in the news that are not funny.”

He remembers drawing a cartoon when Anwar Sadat was assassinated. “I had the Sphinx crying.”

“One of the things I love about cartooning in general is that it brings an issue to the fore. It gives you a symbol or an image to look at when something happens. It helps you to mark the moment.”

”I worked for 35 years to try to raise the

consciousness of people, the awareness of people. I hope I made people think about things.”

“I think a cartoon is something that everybody looks at. It only takes you a few seconds to get through a cartoon. Cartoons are such a wonderful way to deliver a message to somebody.”

From Philosophy to Digital and Fine Arts

Carlson majored in philosophy at the University of Arizona, with a minor in architecture. His favorite joke: “To get the philosophy major off your porch, you pay for the pizza.”

He ran Random Arts, his graphic design and illustration business, for years. When he saw computers coming in the late 1980s, he started taking Photoshop and digital illustration classes.

“Now I have four computers.”

By the 1990s, he was illustrating for alternative newsweeklies across the United States, winning Arizona Press Club awards. Then came an abrupt pivot.

“I’d been working cyber for so long. I’d been working where I would do drawings and I’d scan them and I’d colorize them and I’d ship them around the country,” he explains. “And I wanted to work with my hands and I wanted to make something—an object. So I looked into tin collage.”

He started finding old cookie tins in thrift stores, cutting them apart, assembling them on wood panels. “It really caught fire. There was a time when I was in nine galleries across the United States—Oregon, North Carolina, Georgia, California, four galleries in Arizona.”

Then COVID hit. “Everything collapsed and I just decided that the inventory and just keeping up with it was just too much of a job. So I stopped doing it in 2020. And I was able to go back to my first love, which was painting. And now I’m painting almost every day now.”

Finding Cloudcroft

Carlson first discovered Cloudcroft in the early 1980s while working in El Paso.

Coming from Northern California’s mountains and oceans, he sought out high country. People told him: ‘Go to Cloudcroft.’

“So I did and I just loved it. That’s where I would go to hike and to experience the mountain life.”

Decades later, he found a house built in the “late 1920s or early 1930s” by the Kemp family from El Paso, just down

from the Lodge.

“It was in bad shape but I saw it had good bones as far as I was concerned.” He bought it and began a long restoration. “But I didn’t change the outside of the building at all. I kept it the same as it was.”

“I can be in my bedroom and look out the window and see White Sands National Park through the trees, which is just incredibly wonderful. And the sunsets are marvelous. So it’s location, location, location.”

A Voice for Community

Carlson has watched journalism change over his career.

“I am concerned that journalism has sort of lost its muscle in terms of informing the public, which is I think dangerous.”

“The newspaper used to be a teacher, an educator. And that’s how people find out about the water or the forest situation or paving the streets or anything else—through the newspaper. Because Cloudcroft news doesn’t make it to the television, you know. So the internet and newspapers are the education.”

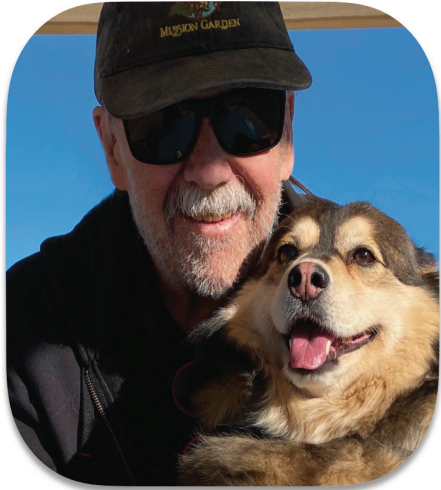


He’s thrilled to be part of it. “I’m so happy that the people of Cloudcroft and the area have something to hold in their hands and look at. It’s a rare thing.”

It’s a modest role for someone whose work has been syndicated internationally, who’s sat beside Pulitzer Prize winners, whose father once opened the morning paper and saw his son on the comics page.

He says with a laugh, “I’m the best cartoonist in Cloudcroft. I’m also the only cartoonist.”

Find Carlson’s work online at RandCarlson.com. His cartoon, “Switchbacks,” and Maps of Cloudcroft appear in the Monthly.



Rand and Abbey

PASSINGS



In Memory of Artist and CAW Board President Maria Tieman

The Cloudcroft Art Workshops (CAW) Board remembers Maria Tieman

We wanted to let all of our Cloudcroft Art Workshops family know that Maria Tieman passed away suddenly in November due to a medical emergency.

Maria served as president of the CAW Board of Directors for a number of years before “retiring” at the end of 2024. We know many of you knew Maria as an artist, as a friend, or likely talked with her on the phone, emailed with her and surely met her in person when you came to Cloudcroft for a workshop.

We are very sad that Maria has left us. She did so many things to further our organization and the mission of CAW, but mostly we will miss her kindness, compassion, her spunk and humor, and time spent with her.

We also send our thoughts and prayers to John Tieman, Maria’s husband, who shared in their CAW adventure.

It was such an honor and joy to have known and worked with Maria.

— Cloudcroft Art Workshops Board:
Linda Carter, Jerry Crump,
Robin Hallman, Kerri Snook,
David Voelz

Cheryl Lynn Miller

Cheryl Lynn Miller, 70, of Alamogordo, NM, passed away Dec. 1, 2025. A Master of Environmental Law and a serial entrepreneur, Cheryl was known for her deeply loving nature and adventurous spirit.

Preceded in death by husband, James R. Miller II. Survived by chil-

dren: James, Patricia, and Madison; grandson, James IV; and five siblings. Private services in Jan. Memorials to New Mexico Kids Matter (newmexicokidsmatter.org) or local animal shelters.



Larry “Duke” Daniell

On December 2, 2025, we lost another bright light.

Following a terminal cancer diagnosis, Larry “Duke” Daniell closed his eyes for the last time. He spent his final days at home with his beloved wife Patsy Gonzales-Daniell, daughter Jessica Rogers as well as grandchildren Izi Rogers, Taylor Rogers and son in law Jebadiah Rogers. And of course, Rex!

Duke Daniell always had an open heart and open door for so many. Duke’s love for arrow head hunting, art, nature and great story telling is what will hopefully bring us together to honor and remember this legendary man. So please join us on January 3, 2026 at the OCEC building, 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm to honor his memory and legacy. And if you have any photos, art or stories, please bring those as well.

Thank You to the people that have just been amazing with Duke and Patsys care and support for our family.

—Jessica Rogers



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Seeing Soul Through the Lens

Cloudcroft photographer and business owner Crystal Tompkins finds home—and helps others find themselves—one portrait at a time

BY HANNAH DEAN

Crystal Tompkins was the kid who spent hours on the floor with family photo albums, studying every face. She’d sit with her father, flipping through his high school yearbooks from the late ‘70s and early ‘80s.

“We would kind of be like, who’s the coolest on this page?” she remembers. “I was fascinated by just looking at these people and thinking about their story and who they were as a person and just their choices—how they wore their hair and all the things.”

That fascination never left.

Today, Tompkins runs a portrait photography business from her studio on Little Glorietta, where natural light streams through windows onto simple backdrops. This month, she’s expanding into a larger space next door as her business grows.

“I really will take as long as it needs to get a photo that I feel like they will love,” Tompkins explains. “If we get it in the first 20 minutes, cool. If it takes three hours, that’s what we’ll do.”

From Yearbooks to Backdrops

By age 10, maybe younger, Tompkins was staging photo shoots in her bedroom with her brothers as reluctant models. “My room was never clean, but I would clean it for a photo shoot,” she laughs.

When she got her first DSLR camera after her oldest son Triston was born, everything clicked. “I didn’t stop. I was just so hooked.”

The Tompkins family moved to Cloudcroft when Triston was five, just five days before school started—the

culmination of years spent visiting the mountain village from their home in Texas. Crystal’s husband Nathan had grown up making weekend trips here from Andrews.

One day, Crystal and Nathan found themselves heading home from grocery shopping in Midland when all three kids fell asleep at once.

“We turned to each other, like we hadn’t seen each other in a few months. And we were just like, you want to go to Cloudcroft? It was kind of like that.”

She called the school when she got home. Classes started in five days. They moved.

“This, for some reason, always felt like home. And I hadn’t really ever been to a place that felt like home,” she reflects. They got Zia tattoos. “It just feels like home.”

Capturing Essence, Not Perfection

In her studio, Tompkins photographs everyone from babies to seniors—or she’ll come to their homes.

Her photography philosophy is clear: “I have always been most drawn to capturing the essence of the souls in front of my camera.” She believes photographs are the closest thing to time-traveling. “The way you can hear a person’s laugh, smell their perfume, or feel their hug just by looking at a photo is magic.”

The sessions vary wildly. She’s photographed people who could teach her about posing and others who shut down when the camera appears. “It really is very much an intuitive, people-reading process.”

She recalls photographing Tom Taylor, whose portraits hung in Black Bear Coffee—the shop she and Nathan opened on Burro Avenue—at the time of his passing.

Before taking his photos, they talked for an hour and a half at the roastery side first. The coffee shop dream began on a first date in a café, where Crystal and Nathan talked about someday opening one together. They made it happen seventeen years and three kids later, roasting their own beans in Cloudcroft in the space Crystal’s studio now shares with the roastery.

Before taking Tom’s photos, they talked for an hour and a half at the roastery side first. She watched his mannerisms and noticed what he sat on. When they finally moved to the backdrop, she took just 35 photos.

“I just wanted to capture him. He got comfortable before we even got in front of the backdrop, and then we just kept talking.”

The impact surprises even her. “I’ve heard some people tell me that a session has changed their whole life.”

The Hard Part

Not everyone loves what Tompkins sees through her lens—at first.

“It’s probably one of the hardest parts of my job when a person, and I’ve learned how to hold space for it—when they don’t see what I see,” she admits. Sometimes she’ll sneak in a picture or two in their album that they didn’t choose “because if I’m that in love with it, I just can’t let it die on my computer.”

She’s noticed a generational shift. “My older clients tend to feel pressure to look perfect in photos. I’m noticing the shift in attitude toward photos and body image in general with the younger crowd. They seem to embrace the imperfections and the older crowd tends to want to fix them or not see them at all. I hope we can all learn from the younger crowd and see that life is happening in the imperfect and messy.”

“It’s not 100 percent across the board, but I’m seeing more room for authenticity over perfection as a general trend. I want to be a part of that movement—as a recovering perfectionist.”

Soul Sessions and New Beginnings

Tompkins’ newest offering, the Soul Session, is a black-and-white portrait experience designed to be accessible and authentic.

“Come as you are, don’t buy anything new, don’t do anything different. Come in the way you show up in your everyday life,” she explains. She even shoots with her camera set to black and white mode, and clients see their images in black and white first during a zoom reveal.

“If I could just photograph faces with black and white film forever, I would be 100% okay with that,” she admits.

There’s a Technicolor add-on available—a playful rebellion against the typical color-to-black-and-white conversion.

Her main goal with POW (Portraits of Women—a name chosen because it’s part of the word “power”) and her other portrait work remains constant: “I want people to show up for themselves more. I feel like I can get a good photo of everybody if you just walk in my door.”

“I want more people to fall in love with themselves or at least be content with themselves, a friend to themselves,” she says. “In having a photo session, at least the way I do it—that is my goal at the end of the day.”

The new studio space reflects both her photography

“Nathan and I are at our best when we’re creating together—making babies, making businesses. That is just where we shine.”

business’s growth and the expansion of Nathan’s coffee roasting operation, which shares the current space divided only by a curtain. She’s offering special photo packages to celebrate the move.

Village Life

“Nathan and I are at our best when we’re creating together—making babies, making businesses. That is just where we shine,” she says.

Now, with a high school junior approaching graduation and all three kids—Triston, Harper, and Adelyn—rooted in the community, the village life they chose feels right.

“They all learned to read from Mrs. Lee. My kids have been able to learn what it’s like to be part of a community and be part of something bigger than your family unit,” Tompkins says. “Having teenagers in a village is really nice because it’s not just me and Nathan’s eyes that are on them.”

On her wrist, she wears a reminder tattooed in permanent ink: “Be Here Now.”

In Tompkins’ studio, amid simple backdrops and natural light, people discover what she’s seen all along—the beauty that was always there, waiting to be witnessed.

Crystal Tompkins offers portrait sessions at her studio in Cloudcroft. Sessions start at \$350 and include five images. For booking information and current offerings, including POW sessions and Soul Sessions, visit crystal-tompkins.com. Black Bear Coffee is open for slow mornings and all-day coffee time at mybbcoffee.com.

The Tompkins offer coffee subscriptions through their brick-and-mortar store, Black Bear Coffee Shop, and recently debuted a new roast: The Tom Taylor blend.



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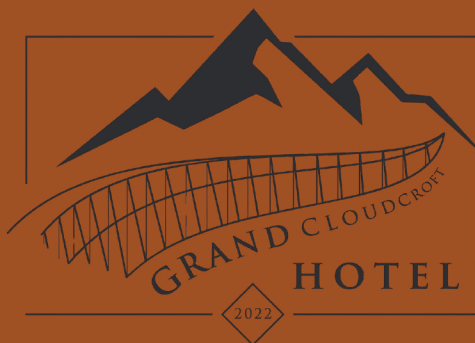


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