

Majestic Birds Fly into the SLV for 40th Year Anniversary



Ralee Alonzo
—Staff Writer—

The 40th Annual Monte Vista Crane Festival began on March 10th and continued through the 12th of the month.

Every year in the San Luis Valley, the town of Monte Vista celebrates the homecoming of sandhill cranes and other birds during their seasonal migrations.

The festival creates opportunities for sightseers to get views of the astonishing birds and allows them to learn interesting and unknown facts about them.

According to the Monte Vista Crane Festival Committee, "The highlight of the festival is the opportunity for close-up viewing of thousands of cranes at the Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge as they prance and display for each other, lift off en masse in the mornings, and return to their roosting spots at sunset."

They also state that, "...many Canada Geese and ducks visit the wetlands of this high-altitude desert framed by 14,000-foot snow-covered mountain peaks," also creating photographic conveniences for tourists. With closer views of the

birds, many travelers and locals get to experience new perspectives.

When a ticket is purchased to attend the fest, the Monte Vista Crane Festival Committee provides interpreter-led bus tours and access to visit local locations to learn additional details about the gruidae.

Sponsored by Ducks Unlimited, "Wings Over Water" was shown at the Vali 3 Theater in Monte Vista. The movie chronicles the journey of three bird families and was shown free of charge and shown on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.

To kick off the exciting weekend, the festival committee held a 5k run/walk in Monte Vista, on Saturday morning for all ages and all abilities. The funds that were made from it were given completely to the Monte Vista Community Ambulance.

To continue the celebrations, the new Ski-Hi Complex, in Monte Vista, held the Crane, Craft and Home Expo.

The event supported various vendors as they sold their art as another factor of honoring the sandhill cranes and other migrating birds.

The nomadic birds are known for their priceless dance moves and their trumpet-sounding calls. The population that frequents

the San Luis Valley nears 20,000; the greater sandhill cranes winter in New Mexico, Mexico and Arizona then come back north for the spring season.

The birds stand four feet, weigh around 11 pounds and can spread their wings nearly seven feet.

Cranes mate for life and can live to be 20 years old; the oldest known crane lived to be 37 and 3 months old. They are also acknowledged as one of the oldest and most historic

birds; fossils from at least two million years ago have been identified.

Another way that the city represented the eccentricity of the birds was with the 4th annual community art project, The Swoop of the Cranes. This is an event where various local artists design a 5-foot steel crane that is displayed downtown in Monte Vista, March through August.

When the summer season is concluded, businesses and citizen

sponsors are offered the opportunity to buy back their art. If not re-purchased by the original owner, the silhouette becomes a part of an auction.

The funds from the auction are given to the city and used for storefront improvement programs all over the town.

The 40th Annual Monte Vista Crane Festival was once again a huge success with fun had by all locals and tourists alike.



Photo Courtesy of Monte Vista Journal

SANDHILL CRANES— Several thousand sandhill cranes make their way into the San Luis Valley during the early spring season.

Protecting the Alamosa School District



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—Staff Writer—

A new accessory has been added to each class this past month. Each teacher got multiple of these accessories, not by choice, but as a precaution.

It is something teachers have been given. This addition brings our school to a new reality that no one expected. Teachers have to be trained on how to properly use this accessory, it is called the RedBag. These RedBags now hold a place in each classroom for emergencies, such as school shootings.

The RedBag foundations are protecting schools in emergencies. After COVID-19, the relief funds are now being contributed to this foundation to help administration protect K-12 school districts. This will help assist teachers in the classroom during emergencies, to help create a "safe space" for students, according to RedBag foundation.

All students are aware of active school shooters, now a common thing in the United States. Therefore, our school is now gathering RedBag supplies to help in any way to prepare teachers and students to handle these shootings and threats the best they can.

The foundation has broken down every part of what they are trying to achieve. The idea of these

bags is to teach teachers how to fully protect their kids in the case of a shooter. Inside the bag is stuff to help save any student's and teacher's lives.

On the bag is a connected QR code that help the administrators have access to such things on how to use the supplies in their bags, where to place their bags, also trainings that can help prepare for anything that can happen in the school district.

There is also an app that provides a way for the administration to communicate with other school principles, fellow teachers and have a way to communicate with dispatch. There is also a way for the teachers to get warnings on their phones when there is a lock-down, when the lock-down is done, or in cases when there are lockouts.

Many of us are aware of this new possibility; it has now happened as a scare for the Alamosa School District. There was a threat at the beginning of the school year at Alamosa High School, as many kids and teachers were left scared in a lock-down, not sure what had happened.

Many students thought it was a drill, slightly not taking it seriously, until teachers were notified that an active shooter was in our school. Luckily, this was "swatting" and no active shooter was in the school. Though our police depart-

ment was very quick and was ready to keep the teenagers safe at Alamosa High School. After this incident many students were scared, but after some time, some students were less traumatized from this moment at school.

"Swatting" once again happened at the Ortega Middle School when there was a call of a shooter going to the school. Many students feared this was going to happen again.

Then lastly at the end of February, Alamosa High School and other schools were put in a lockout when the police got a call of a possible student coming to school with a gun.

This also felt expected by many students, knowing once again there was a threat, while some students have brought up trauma.

This has become such a common thing to happen at schools. There has been multiple shootings in the United States just in the first four months of this year, according to Gun Violence Archive. That's not even close to possibly the amount of scares people have had about shooters at schools, universities, parks, work places, etc. shown in the Gun Violence Archive. The Alamosa community has contributed in the shooting statistics.

The point of this is that this is becoming way too common here. It's becoming familiar like how we

are all aware of having COVID-19. Something like this should not be as common as a virus.

Many people have become bruised from these incidents, many people have died from these shootings. There has been a study shown that there will be more shootings in the United States, compared to the amount of days in a year, that can be shown in the Gun Violence Archive.

That is something our community should not be afraid of, to step out into the world to experience their life because they don't want to die from a shooting.

Our Alamosa School District has been trying to come up with anything possible, to figure out how they can help our schools. There is even a group of teachers that are working together to protect kids by staying notified throughout the day on everything that is happening in the school.

If there is anything that seems to be unusual, these group of teachers will be able to help protect their kids at all times. There is not much information on who is in this committee or fully what job they are now fulfilling, though the schools protection is getting stronger.

It's not a secret that these scares and shootings are a huge thing in the United States and affect many people differently.

The main focus here in Alamosa though is finding ways to

better protect the students in Alamosa School District. Though we as a whole community will also need to start considering the possibility of other schools around the US also being in jeopardy.

Though these RedBags seem to be a step to help protect everyone in the school district. From much research in the RedBag foundation, it shows that this system is ultimately trying to protect students in the United States.

This concept is new to everyone in this community because it was never a thing that happened here.. The community is learning quickly on how to protect schools.

Hopefully, this is the last scare that the Alamosa School Districts gets at least this year. There has been so much tension in students and administration lately, that there does not need to be this additional stress of thinking there might be a shooter in our schools, that there are going to be more swatting's, and more threats.

We can learn quickly and correctly from the schools about the preventions taken. Lately, everyone at Alamosa High School has been exhausted, so one can't help to wonder if we are not only burnt out from the work and pressure on us for multiple tests during this season. While also having to worry about the possibilities of a shooter in schools, leaving invincible teens in fear.