

Business

THE LAS CRUCES
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Section B

In search of good sense



Alta
LeCompte
Around the valley

I'm mortal. There it is — the most difficult sentence I've ever uttered, and the second shortest.

In a burst of good sense, I recently decided it would be a good idea to have an advance health care directive, will and power of attorney in place.

Some come to that place of good sense at a more appropriate time in their lives. My daughter and her late husband did so before getting on a plane together without the kids — just to make sure someone else didn't have to mop up for them in a worst case scenario.

That was years ago, but I still haven't caught up.

I'm busy, an optimist and a chronic procrastinator. And maybe I'm dishonest — and afraid.

The calm and thorough Las Cruces attorney my husband and I met with last week was careful not to awaken our barely sleeping fears.

"If you predecease ..."

Yeah, we thought, exchanging glances. We were not the adults in the room. But I began to think that if procrastinators are finally doing some estate planning, maybe the death-denying culture we're a part of is changing.

We were raised in an America where our loved ones died in hospitals, out of sight of innocent children and others who thought the body would never perish.

Mesilla Valley Hospice has been fighting that attitude for decades. In the course of offering compassionate care to the terminally ill, it opens the door to contemplation and conversation.

We also have the media and the Internet to thank for starting a conversation about attitudes toward death and estate planning, and by the way, with business exit or succession planning.

I've heard sad tales of local businesses that disappeared because their owners didn't have a plan.

One of the specialties of local consultant Ed Murphy, a partner with B2B CFO, is crafting exit strategies.

Interestingly enough, many of his clients are not older business owners, but young entrepreneurs who start businesses with the intention of exiting and starting more businesses.

For those young entrepreneurs, letting go is a means to moving on — not a

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Size belies potential

Nano-tech advocates speak in Las Cruces

By Alta LeCompte
Las Cruces Bulletin

"We are going to cure cancer," Scott Bryant told the High Tech Consortium of Southern New Mexico Friday, March 15. "Already the blind can see, the deaf can hear. That's all related to nano-technology."

Bryant, president of the advocacy organization Nano-Network of New Mexico, flew in from Albuquerque to pitch the possibilities for micro- and nano-tech industries developing in southern New Mexico.

He said those possibilities are enormous. "There's a super power of assets in this region," he told the consortium at its meeting in the Hotel Encanto de Las Cruces. "We just have to bring that out a little more."

Bryant said the state's background in sensors is its strongest asset for small technology. "When it comes to sensors, nobody does it better than us," he said. "One of the more interesting areas for small technology is in packaging and advanced technology manufacturing. New Mexico has a tremendous opportunity here — all we have to do is focus."

"Ten years ago, we were No. 3 in the nation in small tech," he said, adding rankings

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Kevin Boberg, associate dean of the New Mexico State University business college and CEO and director of the Arrowhead Center at NMSU, welcomes guest speaker Scott Bryant of the Nano-Network of New Mexico Friday, March 15.

Favoring initiative over incentives

Workforce effort creates job opportunities for students, filmmakers

By David Salcido
Las Cruces Bulletin

Will she or won't she? That was the question facing New Mexico filmmakers as the 60-day legislative session wound to a close Friday, March 15, and HB379 sat on Gov. Susana Martinez's desk awaiting a signature.

When news broke that Martinez had vetoed the bill, however, it wasn't seen as a final defeat.

Revised within hours as HB641 by House majority whip Rep. Antonio "Moe" Maestas, D-Albuquerque, the provisions of the original bill were amended into an omnibus tax bill in the final minutes of the session and passed. Pleased with the changes, Martinez promised to sign it into law.

As part of a larger tax reform package, the bill boosts the 25 percent tax rebate on qualified production expenditures to 30 percent for television series shooting at least six episodes in the state with a budget of at least \$50,000 per episode. The bill also allows up to \$10 million in credits to roll over to the following year if annual payouts do not reach the \$50 million cap.

This is seen as great news by an industry that has been holding its breath while future prospects hung precariously in the balance. Power players like Mary Ann Hughes, vice president for film and television production at the Walt Disney Co., had gone on record as stating in the Albuquerque Journal, "It's a game-changer for us. It puts New Mexico among the top leaders in the world regarding locations for a

television series."

A progressive approach

For now, at least, all is well with the film industry in the northern part of the state. Here in southern New Mexico, however, there was never any doubt as to the potential for growth

and economic development when it comes to filmmaking. Chalk it up to forward thinking men and women who are doing everything they can to prove that a successful film industry doesn't necessarily rely on the kindness of fickle politicians with personal agendas.

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Photo by Eric Swanson

New Mexico location manager Rebecca "Puck" Stair will kick off a series of film-related workshops under the newly formed Film Workforce Incentive on Saturday, March 23, at the Doña Ana Community College East Mesa campus.



Photo by Nick Chamberlain

Local filmmakers put their skills to work on the set of the award-winning short film, "Bomb Squad." The Film Workforce Initiative seeks to put local filmmakers to work on a more regular basis, via networking and incoming film project opportunities.

Film

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On Tuesday, March 13, during the monthly Film Las Cruces forum held at the Rio Grande Theatre, Las Cruces Film Liaison Mark Wark made an announcement that polarized the 80 or so filmmakers and film enthusiasts gathered. Since then, word has spread and the excitement is building.

As a joint effort between the Las Cruces Convention & Visitor's Bureau, which houses the Las Cruces Film Office, and the Doña Ana Community College Creative Media Technology Department, a Film Workforce Initiative has been put into effect which will, over time, create more jobs and opportunities for the students and filmmakers living in the region.

The initiative has been set up to raise awareness of filmmaking in southern New Mexico, by bringing industry professionals from Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Los Angeles and elsewhere to Las Cruces, in order to provide workforce training seminars.

"A specialized workforce training program" of this type has never been attempted before and is a flagship initiative of the new CVB film office," Wark said. "Local students and professionals will get advanced hands-on field training provided by industry insiders with unique working knowledge. It will serve several purposes, including attracting new business and employment opportunities to the Las Cruces community."

Professional partnering

Wark believes that by bringing industry insiders into the community network, they will familiarize themselves with the city demographics beneficial to new business. He further adds that building strong partnerships with outside resources through education and training is a vital process to community workforce preparedness and provides additional economic impact.

First in this new workshop series will be nationally renowned location manager Rebecca "Puck" Stair, who works exclusively in New Mexico and has on her resume such high-profile productions as "No Country For Old Men," "Terminator Salvation," "Due Date" and "The Lone Ranger," to name just a few. She is currently working on the set of "The Homesman," starring Academy Award-winners Tommy Lee Jones, Meryl Streep and Hilary Swank. The class will be held at the DACC East Mesa branch from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday, March 23, and includes travel to multiple locations within a 15 mile radius of Las Cruces.

The classes are open to locals who meet the basic requirements and have advanced skills in photography and digital media training. Classes are limited. Individuals should call the Las Cruces Film Office at 541-2444 for availability. Future classes will be announced. Classroom trainees will also be provided networking opportunities with known industry insiders looking for local workforce solutions.

The development of this workforce training program is a work in progress, according to Wark, and has been established as result of gracious support from Matt Byrnes, the department chair for the Digital Imaging and Design Technology Department at DACC and Philip J. San Filippo, executive director of the Las Cruces Convention & Visitors Bureau.

"I want to thank them both for developing this valuable key community training program," he said. "They deserve the credit."

Building on successes

Fueling this new initiative was the announcement that New Mexico State University's Creative Media Institute was recently ranked No. 49 in the 2013 Top 100 U.S. Schools for Animation and Game Design sponsored by Animation Career Review.

"These programs are vital to our community success by providing qualified workforce for today's demanding digital film and entertainment industries," Wark said. "We do not see enough recognition for our academic partners who play such an active role, often behind the scenes, to attract and develop sustainable economic growth in our local film and entertainment industry."

Add to this the Las Cruces Film Office's recent successes with workforce placement on the NBC production, "The Dead of Night," a true-crime documentary series airing on the Discovery I.D. network — which was shot in Las Cruces March 9-14 — and the feature film "Enemy Way," starring Forest Whitaker, which will be filming in Las Cruces and Deming through April. According to Wark, NBC hired 31 local crew members and "Enemy Way" is estimated to have hired around 200 local crew and specialized support services.

"The film and entertainment industry relies on film offices around the state to find local resource solutions beneficial to filming locations in their areas," Wark said. "Las Cruces' recent success has garnered regional and state recognition by industry insiders and the N.M. film office. The collaborative success in the local film and entertainment community, including the academic institutions, has led to additional location interest from entertainment industry and independent productions."

As ongoing talks between the Las Cruces Film Office and new feature film productions in development continue, Wark gives credit to the local film schools for providing the opportunities that have arisen. He sees a direct correlation between what he calls "successful academic training" and the development of the Film Workforce Initiative.

"I think these institutions deserve the recognition that helps build the recent success and I congratulate them on a job well done," he said. "Without a credible and talented workforce to support film and entertainment industry, the opportunity for economic impact would not exist. I believe we can see the results in Las Cruces with additional hotel and restaurant traffic, with increased transportation and support services and in expendable income as result of increased employment."

Nano

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no longer are kept. "We probably are not there today."

Other states have more money, and they have gotten busy, Bryant added.

Touting the job-creating potential of small tech, he said it's important to keep focused on community colleges to ensure they are producing the technicians critical to small tech.

Consortium explores hopes and hurdles

Bryant was joined by his colleague Alberto Correa, a physicist and engineer, who explained small tech encompasses both micro and nanotechnologies. Micro-particles, which are larger, are governed by Newtonian principles. At 1,000 times the size of nano-particles, micro-particles perform in ways that can be predicted by scientists.

"They are used in electronics, where they behave beautifully," Correa said, adding that the smaller nano-particle is less predictable.

Correa said the largest silver producer in the world currently is marketing six different kinds of nano-particles, including nano silver, which was known in antiquity for its antibacterial properties.

"Silver nano-particles are mixed with polyester to make socks, so you will never have stinky socks," he said.

But there are safety concerns, such as what happens when particles embedded in fabric sluff off in the washer and flow out with the wastewater in a journey into the environment.

Dealing with risks

Both speakers stressed the importance of ensuring the safety of workers, consumers and the environment.

Bryant said because of potential risks, insurance companies may stop the commercialization of nano-technology cold.

He added that while insurance companies may want to stop high-visibility nano applications, in fact, nano-particles already are at work in a host of food products and anti-aging cosmetics and other consumer products.

"But they're not going to tell you that," Bryant said.

Good sense

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bad lesson to learn at any age.

Murphy's local and national client base finds him at the B2B CFO website and at www.edmurfphyco.com, as well as throughout the realm of social media.

Also online and making a stir is a young widow, Chanel Reynolds, who dealt with a financial mess following the death of her husband, who was fatally injured in a bike accident. Reynolds created a website that's a simple guide to estate planning. Her story is circulating widely, with coverage on NPR, at www.daillyfinance.com and in the New York Times.

Reynolds' website offers a list of documents she believes everyone should have at the ready, just in case. It features free downloads and the option to receive monthly reminders to stay motivated and get new information.

Her website, by the way is called www.getyourshitttogether.org.

"I'll be working on mine, inspired by Reynolds and Jon Underwood, a British Web designer and self-named "death entrepreneur," who is trying to thread the taboo topic into the general conversation.

He told his story to the listeners of NPR Friday, March 8.

Entrepreneurship: A view from the real world

Later in the day, Bryant spoke at New Mexico State University, giving a Verge Fund lecture hosted by the College of Engineering.

That event was attended primarily by students with entrepreneurship on their minds. Bryant inspired the would-be entrepreneurs by Skyping or phoning in three real-world entrepreneurs whose patience is paying off.

"Being persistent is the key to the quagmire of entrepreneurship," Harry Bushong told the students. "You need an investor who believes in you and introduces you to his friends."

At age 37, Bushong is on his sixth start up. He said the unique challenge of nano-tech entrepreneurship results from the inability to see nano particles. Most investors don't have a science background and are wary of the tiny particles. They have to believe in the entrepreneur rather than the product, he said.

He said government, researchers and the public shouldn't fear nano-technology.

"It's when corporations don't take responsibility to provide data to insurers, employees and the public that it can create problems," he said.

New Mexico culture benefits nano entrepreneur

Appearing via Skype, entrepreneur Job Flemming told students he worked at Sandia National Labs for seven years before leaving in 2007 to commercialize micro-needles for medical diagnostics.

He said he faced two realities — the time it would take for the FDA to consider the product and the impact of the 2008 economic downturn. To stay in business and provide cash flow, he marketed ceramic glass, leveraging products for different industries, including life sciences and consumer electronics.

"We're internally and angel funded," he said. "We also sought out strategic partners within the industry."

When asked why he chose to locate his business in New Mexico, the native Californian said, "It's a really good community of small business owners geared to help you through introductions, partnerships and with feedback on proposals. I'm not so sure I could have that — and the lifestyle — anywhere else."

Underwood said he held his first death café a year and a half ago in his basement. He set out tea and cake, and his mother, a psychotherapist, helped facilitate. Since then, he's been working to launch the idea as a worldwide movement.

"When people sit down to talk about death, the pretense kind of falls away, and people talk very openly and authentically," Underwood told NPR's Deena Pritchep.

He said people walk away from the conversations unburdened, and focused on what they want to do with their lives.

"And they say things in front of strangers which are really profound and beautiful. And for English people to do that, with our traditional stiff upper lip, is very rare," he said.

It could be argued the Anglos among us inherited that stiff upper lip, but our culture may be evolving. We in the Mesilla Valley have the inspiration of Mexican Dia de los Muertos rituals celebrating death.

We don't have to go online or visit England to be inspired to take on the topic of death and then do some estate planning and/or business succession or exit planning.

My goal is to grow up enough to complete my estate plan and shed my stiff upper lip to join in the Dia de los Muertos celebration this November in Mesilla Plaza. I hear it is profound and beautiful.

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