

With mission to offer training on all aspects of the hospitality industry, Mobile Comunidad opens new Mountain View Hospitality Academy

FORT DAVIS - Mountain View Hospitality Academy is the newest initiative of the nonprofit outreach program Mobile Comunidad, with a mission to offer professional training to area adults and high school juniors and seniors in all aspects of the hospitality industry.

The new academy operates at Mountain View Lodge, formerly Mountain Trails Lodge, on Highway 118, just one mile south of Fort Davis. Through partnerships with the Rio Grande Council of Governments, Cornell University, the Conrad N. Hilton College of Global Hospitality Leadership at the University of Houston, and other institutions, students can complete their chosen courses and obtain certificates.

The academy will also incorporate hands-on training and work-study opportunities. Areas of study include all aspects of restaurant management, including kitchen management, front and back-of-house training, culinary arts, catering, wine/food pairings, bartending, and bar

management. Also offered are hotel/motel operations courses, including front desk operations, housekeeping, business management, maintenance and landscaping, camping and glamping, marketing, and guest experience management.



Financial assistance and limited on-site housing will be available to students. Courses will be presented in the classroom at the Lodge, known as The Gathering Place, with visiting professors and instructors. Following the coursework, students can work in their chosen areas of interest at the Lodge, which continues to operate as a commercial lodging

facility, guided by area professionals from the region's hospitality industry.

A restaurant will return to the property as the Mountain View Café serving breakfast to the public from 7 to 11 a.m. Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays beginning September 8. Additional dining options are planned for the future. The Mountain View Café will offer many of the favorites enjoyed in the past at the Drugstore, with former Drugstore staff creating the meals.

The academy will also educate those already employed in area restaurants, hotels, and motels to expand their skills and explore new aspects of hospitality. A survey of local hospitality businesses revealed that hiring and retaining skilled workers is their main challenge. The academy will work with area employers to tailor courses to their workforce. Tourism is the main **(See page 2)**

ACADEMY

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economic driver in Jeff Davis County and in many communities in the greater TransPecos and Big Bend region.

With dozens of new hotel rooms and eateries being planned for these communities, students who complete their education at the academy will have the skills to gain satisfying careers in this area or anywhere in the world.

"I believe that Mountain View Hospitality Academy will create tremendous career opportunities for its students and be a game changer for the industry in our region," said Jeanine Bishop, Mobile Comunidad Co-Founder, and Lodge General Manager. "Students from the academy will be able to fill the many openings at our area lodging and dining businesses, making for a win-win situation for them and the employers."

Mobile Comunidad is leasing the Lodge property from owners Scott and Jenny Turner, who have operated the facility for more than 17 years, initially as the Davis Mountains Education Center, conducting educational tours to Mex-

ico's Copper Canyon and in Texas, New Mexico, and the Big Bend.

The Turners will continue to advise the Mobile Comunidad staff, ensuring that the Lodge will continue with its high standards and favorable reviews.

They will turn their focus to Terlingua, where they own a short-term rental property near the Ghostown, featuring glamping yurts and a loft at Terlingua Escondido.

The Lodge has operated since the 1930s when it was Spencer's Mountain View Lodge. Bishop decided to return to the original name in a nod to the history of the property.

Mountain View Lodge serves as the base of operations for Mobile Comunidad. The student lunch program will operate.

This school year, they will feed nutritional hot and cold lunches to Fort Davis Elementary students three days per week and high school students one day per week. The bookmobile and the Charlie Cart student nutrition education program will also headquarter at the property.

Mobile Comunidad continues to expand outreach in education, nutrition, health, literacy, and social services. Originating as a program of

the Friends of the Jeff Davis County Library, Mobile Comunidad is now a separate nonprofit organization. Board members include Todd Jagger and Robin Eisen. Mobile Comunidad's mission, in short, is feeding minds and bodies.

Bishop and fellow co-Founder Vicki Gibson conceived of the academy along with Jenny Turner and the Rio Grande Council of Governments' Peggy O'Brien and Robert Halpern.

Weekly Zoom meetings have been conducted since early March to take the academy from idea to implementation. Area hospitality owners and other interested supporters have participated in the program's planning.

Planners intend the program to provide an option for area students and adults to secure well-paying jobs with an opportunity to gain long-term careers while remaining in their home towns. "The education at the academy will give students the skills they need without leaving home for university and incurring student loan debts," said Gibson.

