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# State of the Arts in Taos

By Dena Miller Dec 27, 2022 Updated Dec 29, 2022 1



Courtesy photo

Couse Studio

New Mexico is known for many things: among them, its incredibly unique landscape, its tri-cultural heritage, and its off-the-beaten-path quirky individuality. And, of course, there is its art. From the ancient petroglyphs to the enduring Native American and Hispanic influences to the confluence of contemporary artists migrating to the state, New Mexico is rightly cited as one of the most creative hubs in the U.S.

To live in or visit Taos, one would be hard-pressed to ignore the impact of the arts and cultural communities that exist here, yet it is amorphous: how is it really quantified?

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Thanks to an initiative sponsored by Americans for the Arts and spearheaded locally by the Millicent Rogers Museum, Taos will soon have a better understanding of exactly what the impact of its non-profit members of the community actually contribute to the economic growth of Taos County. It will be a valuable tool yielding a hard-data aspect to the conversation in which is so often engaged.

According to Greta Brunschwyl, Executive Director of MRM, "The Millicent Rogers Museum and Taos Arts Council are pleased to announce participation of Taos County in Arts & Economic Prosperity 6, the most comprehensive economic impact study ever conducted in the U.S. of the non-profit arts and culture industries. AEP6 will examine those economic impacts in Taos County against 398 additional communities representing all 50 states."

"It is," she affirmed, "a big deal for all of us."

This is the first time that Taos County has been included in an AEP study. Data will continue to be collected through Spring 2023 via surveys distributed to guests — locals and visitors — of venues and events throughout the area, and is anticipated to be amalgamated by AFTA by the fall. The results will be benchmarked with both Santa Fe and Albuquerque's results as well as against communities of a similar size to Taos across the country.

"AFTA will provide a customized report on the unique economic impact results for Taos County, including the number of jobs that are supported and the amount of government revenue that is generated by our community's non-profit arts industry," Brunschwyl continued. "Everyone knows the intrinsic value of the arts, but this information will help us understand the overall return on investment, as well as help us advocate for greater support across the county."

Each of our other regional museums — the Harwood Museum of Art; Taos Art Museum; Couse-Sharp Historic Site; and Taos Historic Museums — are participating along with over 70 county organizations that identify as non-profit, whether or not they have 501(c)(3) status.

"We all think the numbers are going to tell an eye-opening story," Brunschwyl said.

While we await the AEP6 results, we should nevertheless take time to celebrate the many tangible and robust accomplishments our arts community.

After years of planning and capital fundraising, Davison Koenig, executive director of Couse-Sharp, said, "2022 was our first full year of The Lunder Research Center building being completed and open. It's been great to have the LRC gallery with amazing exhibitions and open five afternoons a week to the public for free. This fall, we began to welcome researchers, online and in-person, to our library and archives by appointment."

The historic site also hosted its biggest-ever fundraiser, La Luz de Taos, and had its busiest tour and open-house season at "Taos' best kept secret," he added.

"We, at Harwood Museum of Art, are grateful to have been able to open our doors more fully in 2022, engaging our youth and educators in a unique arts-based social emotional learning program. We also have enjoyed sharing a wide range of art and music with our community," said Juniper Leherissey, the Harwood's executive director. "Much of our work, however, has been future focused as we prepare for the celebration of our Centennial in June 2023 and fulfilling our intentions to embrace a future of the Harwood as a more diverse, inclusive, and relevant museum."

"Taos Art Museum's 2022 attendance surpassed previous years, with visitors enjoying special exhibitions of work by Nicolai Fechin, Doel Reed, and the Taos Society of Artists in the Fechin House, as well as contemporary exhibitions by local artists in the Fechin Studio," noted Executive Director Christy Schoedinger Coleman.

"Our annual gala sold out and raised more money than in the past several years, providing vital support for museum operations and the preservation of our historic properties," including the re-stuccoing of the Fechin Studio. The community's generous support of the museum ensures its sustainability for future generations, she said.

Galleries in town were also busy, said gallery owner and activist Rob Nightingale. "A few galleries have closed and a few have opened so it seems to balance out. And even though gas prices went up, people still wanted to travel and 'live life.' [Foot traffic and] sales have been great," and, overall, he noted, Taos continues to draw the public with its electric art scene.

"After being dormant for many years, Taos Historic Museums President Daniel Barela reignited the 'Ole Taos Trade Fair' at the Hacienda de los Martinez," Nightingale continued. "It was welcomed by all who attended [in 2022] and will just get bigger in continuing to keep the history of Taos alive."

All indicators point to another robust year for the arts community, and the pending AEP6 study will surely bolster its continued successes along with a better understanding of how inherently art is woven into the quality of life of Taos County.

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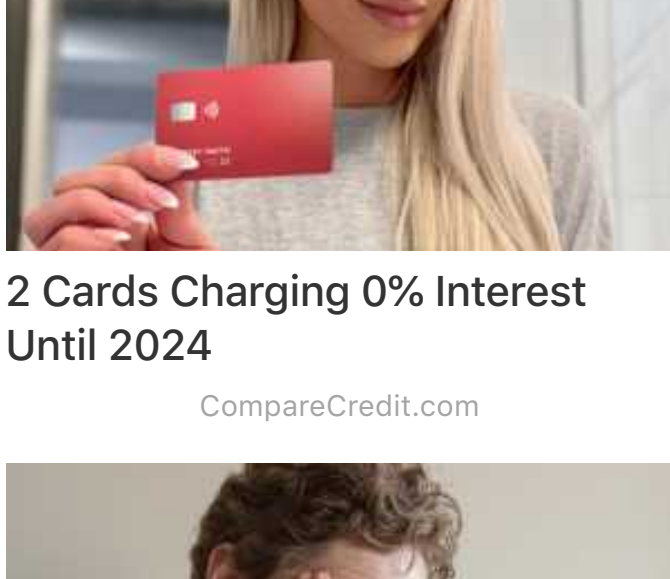
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**Denice Dearing** Jan 2, 2023 2:43pm

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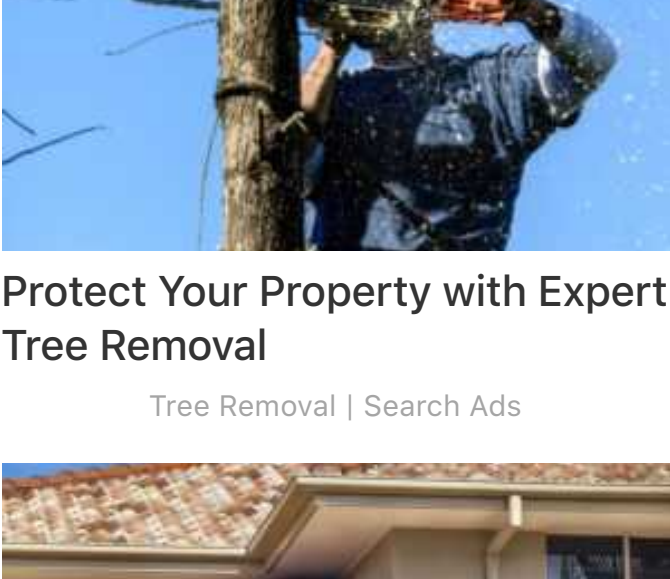
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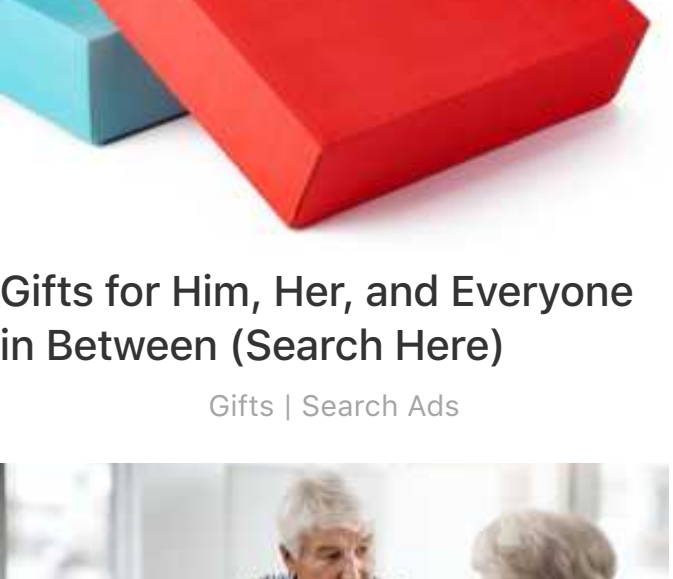
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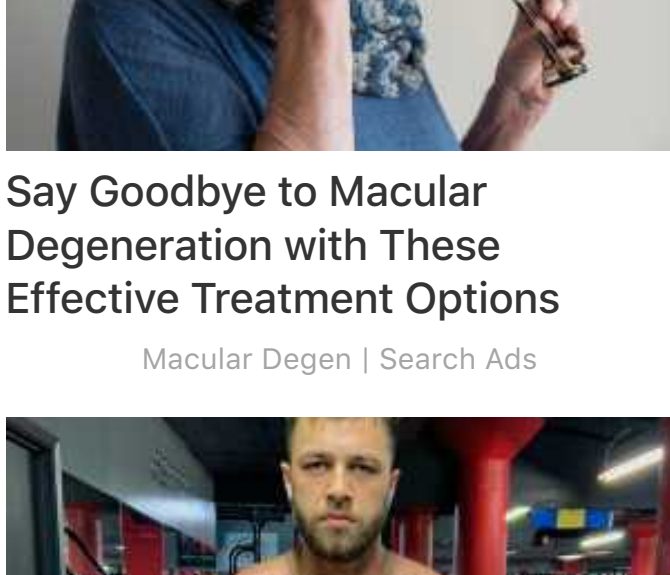
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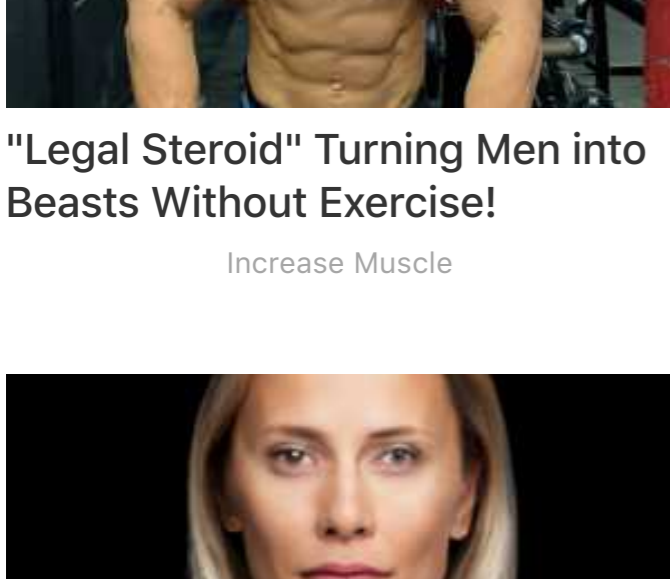
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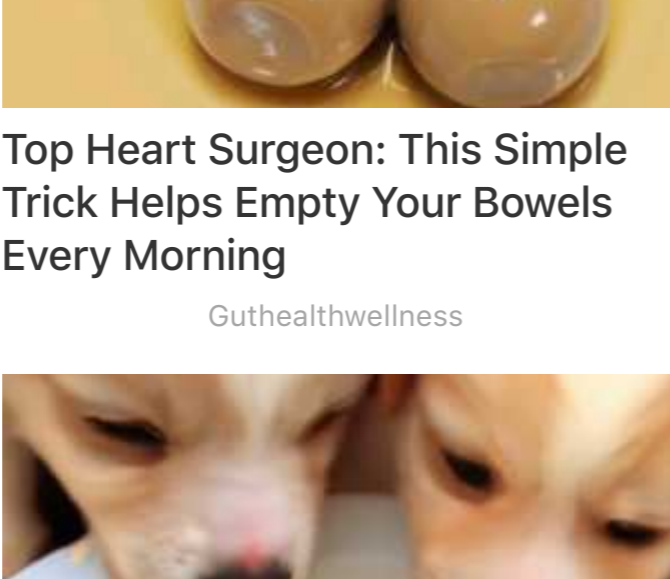
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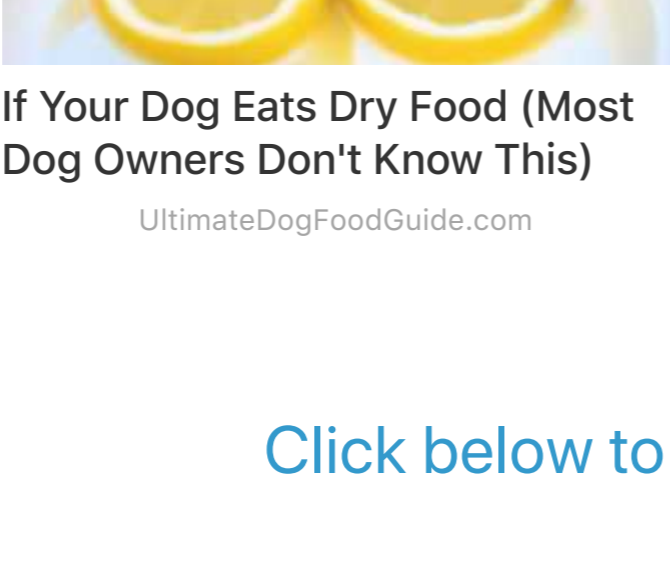
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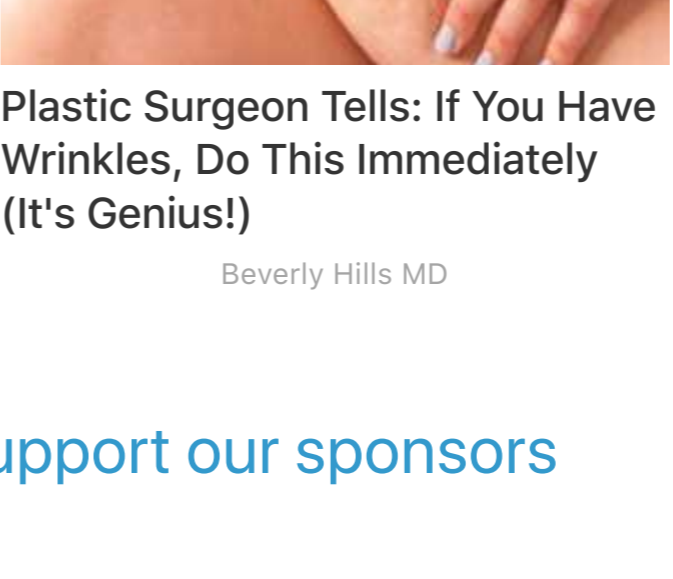
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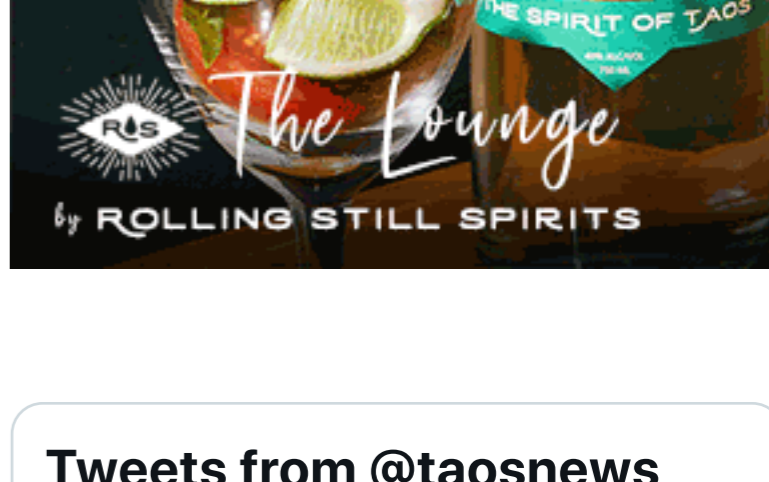
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