

EDITORIAL

www.andrewscountynews.com

news@andrewscountynews.com

Man with theft warrants who evaded arrest in a vehicle sentenced to prison

By SAM KAUFMAN
sam@basinbroadband.com

A Hobbs, New Mexico man, who last year led officers on a vehicle pursuit spanning two counties that eventually ended in Andrews County after the stolen pickup and trailer he was driving stalled in pastureland, was recently sentenced to prison for the crime.

Uvaldo Acosta Munoz pled guilty to a charge of evading arrest detention with a vehicle during a June 28 hearing in 109th District Court and received five years in the Texas Department of Corrections, according to a criminal disposition report from the district clerk's office.

Munoz was eventually arrest-

ed without resistance following the Nov. 8, 2021 pursuit and was charged with evading arrest detention with a vehicle, unauthorized use of a vehicle, possession of controlled substance and criminal trespass.

Furthermore, Munoz had five warrants for theft from Gaines County, investigating Texas Department of Public Safety troopers said.

The possession of a controlled substance, unauthorized use of a vehicle and criminal trespass charges were dismissed through Munoz's plea, according to Andrews County Jail records.

Troopers received a call from Lea County dispatchers the morning of Nov. 8 regarding a stolen vehicle.

DPS troopers and another

officer initiated the pursuit of the stolen Dodge pickup and trailer at FM 181 and CR 323 in Gaines County, according to law enforcement officers.

The pursuit headed south on FM 181 into Andrews County, officers added. Munoz then turned onto an oilfield lease road in his attempt to elude pursuing law enforcement officers.

The trailer being towed by the suspect vehicle contained unsecured pipe, which provided another challenge, according to the DPS trooper.

There were times in the pursuit on lease roads when it appeared the unsecured pipe

could fall off the trailer and into the path of pursuing law enforcement units.

It resulted in officers "backing off a little" in distance from the suspect vehicle, officers noted.

"We tried to keep a little distance, but not too far where we could lose him on the lease roads," a DPS trooper explained. "We kind of had to take on the risk."

Munoz ended up driving through pastureland, where the pickup and trailer became stuck in soft sand, according to officers.

"That's when we got him into custody," they said.

The pursuit began at around

8:20 a.m. and ended 35 minutes later at 8:55, they added.

Munoz allegedly had methamphetamine on his person, which led to the charge of possession of a controlled substance Penalty Group 1 less than a gram.

The criminal trespass charge stemmed from Munoz being caught on private property.

Andrews County Sheriff's Deputies assisted with Munoz's apprehension.

An initial bond amount of \$141,500 was set on Munoz, according to jail records.

Most of that amount—or \$101,500—stemmed from theft of property between \$2,500 and \$30,000 counts from Gaines County, Andrews County Jail records revealed.

COVID

Continued from Page 1

Wednesday, 25 on Thursday and eight on Friday.

Healthcare officials believe the cases are an offshoot of the omicron variant that has less severe symptoms compared to some of the other virus variants.

There have been relatively few hospitalizations related to COVID-19 this summer at Permian Regional Medical Center.

However, going from the CDC's Low Community Level to Medium required virus-related hospitalizations in the region, which includes Odessa and Midland, according to Andrews County Health Department Director Dr. Gordon Mattimoe.

Community Levels look at matrices to determine the three categories (low, medium and high) by using the number of new cases, the population and the number of COVID-19 hospitalizations, the county's social media site stated.

Under the Low Level, which Andrews had previously been included in the past several months, residents are encouraged to stay up to date with COVID vaccines and get tested if they have any symptoms.

The Medium Level, meanwhile, encourages the same two steps under the Low level category, along with recommending those that are at high risk for severe illness to talk with their healthcare providers about whether they need to wear a mask and take other precautions.

The High Level encourages residents to wear masks indoors, testing with symptoms and added precautions for those at risk of severe illness.

Andrews County did reach the Medium Level over two months ago, according to Mattimoe.

But the case numbers had dropped since late April to place the county back in the Low Level.

The recent increase led to a move back to Medium Thursday.

The health department planned a drive-thru testing effort on Saturday and possibly again in the middle of next week, Mattimoe said.

A breakdown based on age groups with the recent spike revealed the 31-40 and 51-60 categories with the most cases at 24 apiece. Ages 61-70 had 22 cases, followed by 20 cases for 21-30, 18 for 41-50, 17 for 0-5, 14 for 6-15, 12 for 16-20 and five for 71-80.

The health department encouraged several safety tips, including washing hands with soap and water, watching for symptoms and testing to help prevent spread to others.

Warrant



Land

Continued from Page 1

shall not sell its interest in the property before the property is fully developed without first giving the city the opportunity to purchase the property back for no more than the purchase price."

City officials said BW Gas & Convenience plans to use the three acres to build a new, state-of-the-art, 24-hour Allsup's travel center with 24 fueling positions for autos/light trucks and four to five lanes of truck diesel.

The estimated construction cost is approximately \$5 million.

Typical construction time is 120-150 days, which translates into an anticipated opening date for the new Allsup's late this year, according to city officials.

Ongoing staffing for the new business will generate 18-20 new, good paying jobs in Andrews, they added.

BW Gas & Convenience esti-

mates that this store will contribute over \$75,000 of annual sales tax revenue to the City of Andrews.

BW Gas & Convenience—Yesway acquired Allsup's in 2019. The following year, Allsup's and Yesway consolidated their corporate headquarters from Iowa and New Mexico to Fort Worth.

The new, combined company is invested in Texas and has plans to re-invest in towns and communities throughout the state.

Over the next few years, the company is planning to build over 50 new stores in at least 30 different communities.

"They believe Andrews is a community ripe for investment and have prioritized this site to be accelerated in their current development plans," city officials said.

The new store will join a present Allsup's located on N. Main St.

In other business:

-The council acted on an Encroachment License with Jody's Oilfield Service to utilize the surface of the city's easement for encroaching purposes.

-The council considered on the first reading Ordinance 1711 to permanently increase the speed limit established for vehicles on portions of Loop 1910 as recommended in the Kiley Horn Loop 1910 Speed Study.

-The council heard a presentation from Andrews City Manager Steve Eggleston on how other cities with designated truck routes address large commercial vehicles on streets not designated as a truck route.

-The council acted on the first reading to amend Ordinance 1714 of the City Code of Ordinances providing "to accomplish a commercial purpose" as a defense to prosecution for a person driving a large commercial truck upon a street not designated as a truck route.

had an arrest warrant for sexual assault of a child following his May 19 indictment by an Andrews grand jury.

The alleged sexual assault offense of a 15-year-old female initially occurred between 2019 and 2020, according to an APD press release.

Police opened an investigation into the offense last August, the press release stated.

Andrews police said Thursday that once Gammage's arrest warrant was issued in May, it entered a state and national law enforcement database. Any encounter with law enforcement would reveal the outstanding warrant, police added.

Gammage's first encounter with law enforcement since was Tuesday after he called 911 to report the unresponsive infant, according to authorities.

Odessa police were dispatched to the Brady Station Apartments at 4221 E. 52nd St.

at 12:52 p.m. in reference to an unresponsive infant that was not breathing, according to the arrest affidavit.

Responding police observed the deceased infant inside the apartment with "heavy bruising swelling to the left side of his face and head," the report states.

There were also multiple smaller bruises along the top of the deceased infant's head, it adds.

Gammage told police he woke up at around noon Tuesday to Pierson telling him the infant was not breathing. He then called 911. Initially, when asked about the bruising, Gammage claimed the infant hit his head on a hard portion of the crib's interior.

Gammage told investigators the last time he saw the infant was around 5:30 or 6 a.m. Tuesday.

Kameron remained unemotional and seemed to lack care

about the incident throughout contact," investigators said in the affidavit.

Pierson said she fed the infant at 5 a.m. and went back to sleep. She woke back up around noon to "find the baby not breathing."

She frantically woke Gammage up to notify him, but Gammage seemed "uncaring," Pierson told police. Pierson then told Gammage to call 911, the report states.

Leyla reported Kameron became apologetic toward her and told her he hoped she wasn't mad at him. Leyla also reported Kameron has extreme anger issues and has recently killed several dogs by strangulation," the affidavit states.

Gammage and Pierson were then taken to the police department. Upon further interview, Gammage "admitted he has extreme anger issues and has been dealing with a lot of stress

lately, including the infant frequently crying."

He also said he and Pierson smoked marijuana Saturday night and Pierson laid down to nap in the living room at about 10 p.m. Gammage stated the infant, who was in the bedroom, began crying. He then went to try and play with the infant and began tossing the infant in the air then catching him, the affidavit states. Gammage claimed he "accidentally" dropped the infant after about the fourth toss, which caused the infant to land on his left side.

"Kameron reported the infant hit the floor 'hard' when he landed," the document adds. "Kameron reported (observing) the bruising and swelling on the infant's face and head after that, but he didn't want to tell Leyla (for) fear of getting in trouble."

Gammage told investigators the infant began acting unusual over the next couple of days, and

when he saw the infant deceased Tuesday, his initial thought was "something like he killed his kid," the affidavit states.

Pierson said when she woke up from her nap on Saturday, she checked on the infant and saw the bruising on the infant's face and asked Gammage about it, according to the affidavit.

Gammage told her the infant probably hit his head on a hard part of the crib, the report states.

"Leyla reported they did not seek medical attention for the bruising," it adds. "Leyla reported the infant became more 'fussy' over the next couple of days, but she thought it was because he was teething."

Pierson was charged with injury to a child/criminal negligence (state jail felony) for knowing about the bodily injury to the infant and neglecting to seek medical attention for the infant for three days, the affidavit states.