

Raton visitor center draws customers like magnet

By Tim Keller
Special to The Chronicle-News

RATON — As the summer travel season begins, Beverley Mark is busy greeting a relaxed but steady flow of travelers. Within a 15-minute span recently, two separate drivers have the same question: “How far is Phoenix?”

Mark doesn't have to look at the extensive chart on the counter. “682 miles. Are you making more stops in New Mexico?”

She knows the distances to Denver, Albuquerque and Amarillo — exactly 224 miles to each — and other popular destinations. “Trinidad is 17 miles and takes 20 minutes,” she says.

Another number Mark likes is 16: next month, Mark will have been a customer service representative 16 years at Raton's New Mexico Visitor Information Center, located a half mile west of I-25 at the Clayton Highway.

Her co-workers are long-time veterans, too: Joseph Vargas has been at the Raton visitor center for 12 years, Alicia Fernandez for seven years. How does Mark account for the low employee turnover?

“It's the best job in the world! The people who come in are happy because they're on vacation. They're happy to learn more information to help them enjoy their New Mexico vacations even more.”

The attractive grounds with big trees and expansive lawn draw picnickers — “We had a lot of people picnicking today at lunch” — who take advantage of the center's immaculate rest rooms, the free Wi-Fi, and seemingly countless other perks. There's even a computer terminal with Internet for travelers who don't carry their own.



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Raton's New Mexico Visitor Information Center logged 44,082 visitors in 2011, an average of 120 per day at the popular vacation stop.

Beverley Mark has been serving travelers at the Raton information center for 16 years. “It's the best job in the world!” she says. “The people who come in are happy, because they're on vacation.”

Last year, 44,082 visitors signed the logbook; that's an average of 120 per day, or one every five minutes. Multiply that times how many people are in each car and you get a picture of the bustle.

This year's figures are running slightly ahead of last year's, but they can't

hold a candle to the peak years a decade ago: in 2002, 65,597 visitors logged in, an average of 180 per day.

Recently, a traveler took advantage of the free coffee service, provided by NM Lodging Association, while perusing large attractive panels in the high-ceiling sunlight-filled display

room.

Several panels feature “Historical Raton” photography and history. There are displays for “Golfing in New Mexico” and “NM State Parks, Monuments, & Museums.” There are New Mexico travel brochures of every type and locale imaginable, including foreign lan-

guage guides in Spanish, German, Italian, and French.

“Our most popular handouts, by far,” Mark says, “are the New Mexico state map and the New Mexico Vacation Guide,” offered to each traveler at no cost, like most everything else here.

There is a small section of state-themed merchandise available for purchase: T-shirts and sweatshirts, cups and refrigerator magnets, hats and shot glasses. They're currently augmented with products celebrating the state's 2012 centennial.

Travelers come from near and far. So far this year, states contributing the most visitors are New Mexico itself, Texas, California, Arizona, Colorado, Oklahoma, Minnesota, Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin, in that order.

Canadians lead the international visitors, followed by others from Germany, Mexico, England, Australia, Japan, the Netherlands, France, Switzerland and Denmark. How many international travelers visit? Look at it this way: 10th-place Denmark accounts for an average of one visitor per day.

Although summer is the peak season, Mark says she meets lots of “snowbirds” every spring and fall, traveling between their winter homes in southern New Mexico or Arizona and their permanent homes in winter's far frozen north.

“Just today a woman came in,” she says, “a traveler from Arvada, Colo. She complimented us on our visitor center. She said she travels a lot and we're one of the top two nicest centers she's visited.”

As the Arvada traveler prepared to leave, she was so laden with magazines, brochures and merchandise that she asked whether Mark could provide her with a bag to carry it all.

“If you have a bag,” she said, “you'll be number one.” Smiling, Mark reached under the counter and produced a bag. It feels good to be number one.

Where to worship

A list of denominations and churches in the area



TRINIDAD

Adventist

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST
1605 Aiello St. 719-846-0244.
Sabbath School: Saturday, 9:30 - 11 a.m.
Sabbath Service: 11 a.m.
Pastor Robert Bird, 1-505-387-2131.
Elder Herb Sabol, 719-846-0699.

Apostolic

APOSTOLIC LIGHTHOUSE TABERNACLE
I-25, Exit 11, South of Wal-Mart.
Sunday School: 11:30 a.m.
Worship Service: 12:15 p.m.
Wednesday Worship: 7 p.m.
“Come Worship With Us.”
Pastor Charlie Gurule, 719-242-4774 or 505-301-8201.

SOUTHERN APOSTOLIC CHURCH OF JESUS - 816 Nevada
Sunday: 10 a.m. (English & Spanish)
LIFE Group meets Thursday at 7 p.m.
“One Lord, one faith, one baptism.”
Pastor David Boyer, 719-680-0986.

Assembly of God

FIRST ASSEMBLY OF GOD CHURCH - 924 North Nevada Ave.
Sunday School: 9:45 a.m.
Sunday Worship: 10:45 a.m. & 6 p.m.
Wednesday Services: 7 p.m.
Pastor Kim Pittman

TEMPLO BETHEL ASSEMBLY OF GOD - 218 Santa Fe Trail
Sunday Services: 10 a.m., Worship, 11:30 a.m., & Evangelistic Service, 6 p.m.
Mid-week Worship Service: 6 p.m.
Pastor Nick Trujillo

Baptist

BIBLE BAPTIST (Independent)
1102 Stonewall. Sunday School: 10 a.m., Sunday Worship: 11 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.
Thursday Worship: 7 p.m.
Call: 719-845-0827.

Fisher's Peak Community Church

CHURCH - 10377 Santa Fe Trail.
Sunday Services: Bible Study, 9 a.m., Worship, 10:15 a.m., Senior High Youth, 5 p.m., Wednesday Bible Study, all ages, 6 p.m. - Nursery provided.
Pastor David Cook, 719-846-6018
Everyone is welcome!

Bible

TRINIDAD BIBLE CHURCH
1513 Hayes Street / 719-846-2885.
Sunday Family Worship, 10 a.m.
Parenting and personal Bible studies during the week.
Pastor Rick Thomas

Catholic

HOLY TRINITY CATHOLIC CHURCH - 235 North Convent St.
Masses: Monday - Friday 8 a.m., Saturday 5 p.m., Sunday 7, 9 & 11 a.m. (Family Eucharist, 9 a.m. Sunday Mass), Confessions 3-4:30 p.m. Saturday.

Christian

FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH
200 S. Walnut St. / 719-846-3843.
Sunday Bible classes - all ages: 9:30 a.m.
Sunday Worship Service: 10:45 a.m., (Nursery provided, infant - 5 yrs. Also broadcast on KCRF, 1240 AM 11 a.m. - noon on Sunday).
Wednesday Adult Bible Study & Youth Group: 7 p.m.
Men's Breakfast: 8 a.m. forth Saturday.
Websites: fctctrinidad.com & jet4christ.com. Pastor Cary Nelson.

Potter's House Christian Center

CENTER - 1601 Nevada Ave.
Sunday: 10:45 a.m. & 6 p.m.
Wednesday: 7 p.m.
Pastor Joseph Gutierrez, 719-859-1093.

CHURCH OF GOD - 220 S. Animas St.
Sunday Worship: 10 a.m.
Ministry of Gods Word: 11:15 a.m.
Thursday Prayer & Bible Study (in-home): 7:30 p.m.
Call 719-846-3781 or 719-846-4883 or go to: www.ChurchesofGod.info

Church of Christ

CHURCH OF CHRIST
1000 Nevada Ave. / 719-846-2919.
Sunday: Bible Class, 9:30 a.m., Worship 10:30 a.m. & 6 p.m.
Wednesday Bible Study: 7 p.m.

Full Gospel

TRINIDAD FOURSQUARE GOSPEL CHURCH - Call: 719-361-0056.
Home Bible Study: Monday, 7 p.m.
Pastor Kenny Bryan

Inter-denominational

GOOD LIFE FELLOWSHIP
For those without a home Church, we are here. You are not alone. Offering: In-home Bible Study, Communion, Baptisms, Hospital Visits, Weddings, etc. Goodlifefellowship.com or 719-845-0567.
“Meeting the needs of the community one project at a time.”

NEW HOPE MINISTRIES
38096 Highway 160 (Old Wagon Wheel)
Sunday Worship Services: 10:15 a.m.
Wednesday Prayer Meeting: 6 p.m.
2nd Sunday Praise Breakfast: 9 a.m.
Pastor Vondell Kooz
719-845-0078 or 719-846-3853

Jehovah's Witnesses

KINGDOM HALL - 1713 Goodale St.
Sunday Public Talk: 10 a.m. & Watchtower Bible Study: 10:50 a.m.
Tuesday Bible Study: 7:30 p.m.
719-846-3119.

Lutheran

ZION'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
Corner of Prospect & Pine Streets.
Sunday Worship: 10 a.m.
(Holy Communion 1st & 3rd Sundays).
Pastor Andrea Doeden, 719-846-7785.

Methodist

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH - 216 Broom Street.
Summer: Sunday after Memorial Day - Labor Day / Adult Bible Study & Choir Rehearsal, 8:45-9:45 a.m., Worship & Children's Sunday School, 10 a.m.
Fall: Sunday after Labor Day - Memorial Day / Adult Bible Study & Choir Rehearsal, 9:45-10:45 a.m., Worship & Children's Sunday School, 11 a.m.
Pastor Leslie Barnett, 719-846-6824.

Nazarene

1st CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE
733 Stonewall Ave. / 719-845-0383.
Sunday School: 9:30 a.m.
Sunday Worship: 10:45 a.m.
Wednesday (for all ages): 6:30 p.m.
“We're a Family Bible Church”
Pastor Rick Davis

Non-denominational

FAITH CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP
2608 Santa Fe Trail.
Sunday Service: 10 a.m.
Mid-week Service: Tuesday, 6 p.m.
Youth Service: Thursday, 6 p.m.
(Nursery & Children's Classes provided.)
Pastor Bill Frashuer, 719-846-9673.

Heart of Trinidad Fellowship

FELLOWSHIP - 131 W. Main St.
Sunday Celebration: 10 a.m.
Pastor Dick Valdez, 719-846-9100.

Trans-denominational

HIDDEN TREASURE MINISTRIES
208 Pine St. / 719-742-5766.
Monday: 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Call for pastoral care or personal ministry.
Pastors John & Sherron Hudson

Pentecostal

FIRST PENTECOSTAL CHURCH
10375 Santa Fe Trail / 719-846-2987.
Sunday Worship: 10 a.m. & 6 p.m., Thursday Service: 7:30 p.m.
Pastor Sean Gonzales

Presbyterian

UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
801 San Pedro - All are welcome!
Winter: Sunday Service is 10:30 a.m. & Sunday School is 9:30 a.m.
Summer: Sunday Service is 9:30 a.m. - from Memorial Day to Labor Day & no Sunday School during the summer.
Pastor Bonnie Canizaro 719-846-6513.

Synagogues

TEMPLE AARON
407 S. Maple St., 719-846-2781
Call for service days and times.

AGUILAR

FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF AGUILAR (Outreach Church of First Christian Church of Trinidad)
309 S. Romero / 719-846-3843.
Sunday Bible School: 9 a.m. & Worship Service: 10 a.m.
J.E.T. Youth Group Services (1st & 3rd Sundays), 6 p.m., ages 12-20.
Websites: fctctrinidad.com and jet4christ.com. Pastor Scott Martin.

St. Anthony's Catholic Church

CHURCH - 125 South Fir.
Sunday Mass: 8:30 a.m.
Priest: Phil Coury, 719-941-4124.

International Holiness Church

CHURCH - 609 Fir St.
Sunday Worship: 10 a.m.
Friday Bible Study: 7 p.m.

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Joseph Febraro Jr., Owner

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305 State Street, Trinidad
• 719-846-3837.

-Mangino's Automotive Center
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-Your Name Can Appear Here
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