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CONNECTION



Home Remodeling







at Santa land for visits until 1:30 pm

ENTERTAINMENT SCHEDULE



10:15 AM- CONIFER HIGH SCHOOL LAB JAZZ BAND
11:15 AM- ELK CREEK MUSIC STUDIO
12:15- KENDAL GENTRY
1:00 PM- COOKIE EATING CONTEST
1:15- 2:00 CCC BAND

2:00 PARADE BEGINS

3:00 AWARDS 3:30 STREET DANCE PARTY WITH DJ ELEV8



SPIRITS TENT















— EXPLORE THE HISTORY OF OUR COMMUNITY ON PAGE 4 —

GOLF CART

Connection to the Past



THE ResqRanch

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Keep your treasured companion happy and healthy when you schedule an appointment in the hospital, or for a housecall, with our holistic veterinarian in Conifer, CO. Aspen Park Vet Hospital is your local source for quality care. From natural remedies to animal acupuncture, we offer a series of unique treatment methods in the hospital or on housecalls for your pets. We work hard to use the science of animal behavior to help horses, dogs, cats, and koi fish live healthier and happier lives. Schedule a visit in the hospital or for a housecall today to discuss treatment for your pet.

Reflecting on this Past Year

"When I look back at my calendar I can see why the time seems to have flown by so quickly.

We had so many events and so many happenings this year."



Do you have any idea what the percentage is of people who buy gifts for their pets for Christmas? Surveys say that 89% of people will spend an average of \$100 on their pets for Christmas; that's incredible! That just goes to show you just how much our animals mean to us. And I of all people can certainly understand why.

ur animals are the only family members in our lives who don't judge us, who we don't have to try to please or dance around conversations with. That just is who they are, drool, dirt, fur, and all, and they adore us without question, and how can we

even deserve that? So it's no wonder, with all they do for us, that we want to make their lives better in return.

I remember after my heart horse, a 17-hand thoroughbred named Taxi that I rescued off the racetrack, nearly died after a colic

surgery. He was in the hospital at Colorado State University, and he was not getting better. He was getting these cyclic fevers that would get higher and higher, no matter how many antibiotics he received or painful abdominal flushes they performed on him. I could see the look of defeat in the specialist's eyes as they avoided my gaze because they didn't know what else to do for him. And then someone suggested acupuncture. And he got his first acupuncture treatment, his fever broke, and he left the hospital the next day. After that, I was 100% convinced of the power of acupuncture. I am grateful to have learned how to use this amazing tool and have such great success with it throughout my career.

I don't know about you, but for me it is hard to believe that another year is winding down. It's been such a whirlwind of constant activity, I still feel like I am going full steam ahead, and suddenly, Christmas and the end of the year are approaching. How did that happen?

When I look back at my calendar I can see why the time seems to have flown by so quickly. We had so many events and so many happenings this year. Some of these include volunteering at the Stock Show in January, volunteering at the high school and the Chamber of Commerce, attending continuing education events, having a successful birthday party for our baby mustang fillies, having board meetings for the ResqRanch and inviting new members, my oldest daughter graduating from high school and sending her off to college, having a booth at the Evergreen Rodeo and then having a summer solstice event at the ranch, rerecording my entire Horse Training Masterclass (which, when I originally did it, took me about 3 hours, and this time it took me three days), the Koi Show, finding a new videographer and making new videos, Riley's Petstore's annual event, applying for the Pitch Perfect non-profit event, the annual Women in Business luncheon (to which I had the pleasure of taking Chelsea, our new fantastic General Manager for Aspen Park Vet Hospital), our Breeder's Cup Fundraiser at the racetrack, multiple appearances on Great Day Colorado, and last but not least our Pet Pictures with Santa event. I am deeply grateful to my team, and all of the people who helped with and attended our events this year.

I hope you too take a moment to reflect on the past few months: what you have done, what you wish you would have done, and what you hope to get done next year. It is not always easy with our busy lives to take a moment and just reflect; however, I would encourage you to do so, no matter how silly it might seem. I remember that every Christmas after Taxi was released from the hospital, I would put a ribbon around his neck and take pictures of him, just to remind myself to cherish the fact he was still with me. And I am glad I did, and I hope you do the same, because we never know how many more of these special days we will get to have. Thank you again for your support of us throughout the year, and I look forward to helping you have the most amazing, healthy, and long relationship with all of the animals in your life in 2026 and for many years to come.

Have a very merry Christmas and happy New Year, full of love, friendship, and hope for the future. Blessings to you all! DrQ and the crew of Aspen Park Vet Hospital and the ResqRanch.

Aspen Park Veterinary Hospital is located at 25871 Duran Ave. Conifer, CO 80433.
You can call the hospital at (303) 838-3771 (838-DrQ1) or visit them at www.DrQandU.org.

— KELLER WILLIAMS FOOTHILLS REALTY —

The Gift of Kindness

BY LISA PLUMMER SMITH

"A moment of kindness can make someone's day much brighter."



The holidays can offer a special kind of joy. During this time you may be busy and go through the motions, or you can choose to be intentionally present, spread good cheer, and make golden memories.

¬ ach day offers small opportunities to care defined for one other. Hold the door for someone, donate to a food bank, be gracious when someone makes a mistake, smile at strangers or offer a greeting. A moment of kindness can make someone's day much brighter.

Are folks a bit softer, kinder and appreciative this time of year? By training your mind to see all the good stuff, you just might start noticing

more of it. By focusing on the positive things in life, we choose to see all the good that exists in the world. Just think of the impact it could have if we did this all year long.

I believe in the importance of the pause before reacting, yet still find myself failing to do this at times. I vow to work harder on this habit, as it can be hurtful to the receiver of my message. By reflecting before reacting, I gain the opportunity to choose the message I send and how I deliver it.

My daughter came home from college for a short visit last weekend and was busy in the kitchen baking. The house was filled with Christmas music and delicious scents as she wore a favorite apron and made several types of cookies. It is a tradition that is meaningful to her, which creates a joyful atmosphere that I love. It is satisfying for her on many levels. It is a way for her to process her feelings while creating something for those she loves.

Before we left for the airport yesterday, she carefully filled her cookie jar and set aside several bags of cookies to distribute. I suggested that the cookies be frozen instead of being left in the cookie jar, since she would be leaving. We each expressed our opinions on the disposition of the extra cookies, then she went to her bedroom to pack. I removed the cookies from the jar and put them into the freezer.

Then I paused to reflect and considered her point of view. I realized it took away from the experience for her to have the cookies frozen. I had been insensitive. I knew in my heart I had not behaved like the mother I want to be for her. I regretted it - after all, what difference did it make where the cookies were put?

I went to her and apologized; I held her, and she clung to me. I felt the surge of emotions she was feeling as she prepared to leave all that is familiar to her. We talked, and she shared how my actions had made her feel. To her those cookies symbolized home, ritual, tradition and permanence. When I put them in the freezer instead of respecting her custom of placing them in her cookie jar, it hurt her feelings. Those cookies were an act of pure love.

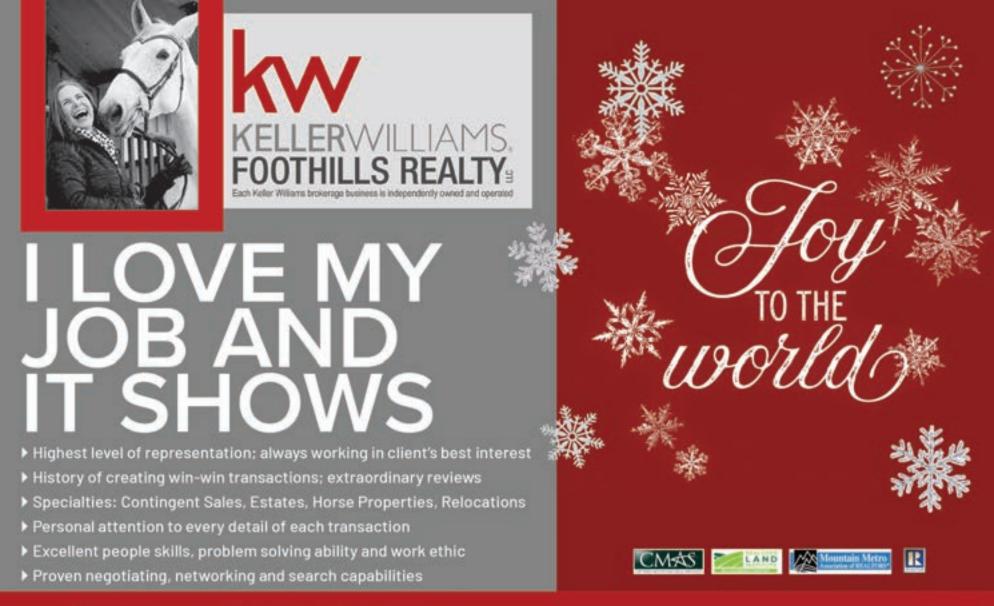
I am thankful we can share our feelings and be honest with each other. Having difficult conversations is a part of life. Being aware of how our

behavior affects others fosters personal growth and accountability. The words we speak have an impact; they spell out our intentions and have a ripple effect. Today I moved the cookies into her special holiday cookie jar, took a photo of it and sent it to her with a loving note. I can apologize and make amends, but once a moment has passed it cannot be taken back..

Please choose your words and actions carefully, my friends, as they have a lasting impact. How we choose to speak and behave determines how we are perceived. Being kind sends positivity into your community, enhances your relationships and can improve the quality of life



Savvy Mountain Realtor specializing in Relocations/Horse Properties/Estates Lisa Plummer Smith Keller Williams Foothills Realty, LLC Cell: 907-632-3683 lisarayanne@gmail.com



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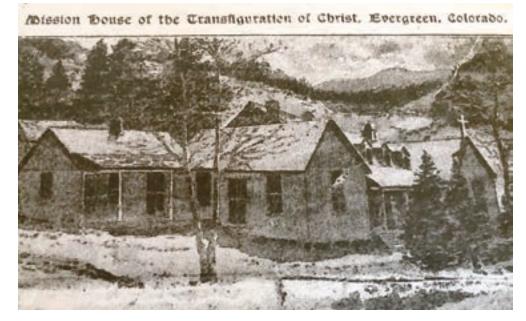
Lisa Plummer Smith 907-632-3683 · lisarayanne@gmail.com Keller Williams Foothills Realty, LLC

connection to the past



White building on right is the main street site after St. Mark's move from the cemetery site. Currently The Little Bear.

Photo from Hicks Collection





St Mark's today

THE JOURNEY OF ST. MARK'S IN THE WILDERNESS

ELAINE HAYDEN | HISTORY EVERGREEN

The odyssey of St. Mark's in the Wilderness from the dawning of an emerging community to Christmas Eve Vespers was a 25-year journey. The Episcopal church, St. Mark's in the Wilderness, came by its name honestly. When St. Mark's was erected in 1872–74, the area was accurately described as a wilderness. Thomas Bergen had established himself in his settlement in present-day Bergen Park in 1859. While still considered a remote outpost, Bergen Park was host to travelers and miners alike who were on a westward journey, and the stopover provided a rest stop and a social repast for travelers.

St. Mark's predates, by a period of four years, the naming of the community as Evergreen, which occurred in 1876. Prior to the naming of the town and the official designation of a U. S. Post Office, the general area between Mt. Vernon Canyon and Bear Creek was referred to as Bergen Park. The roadway that connected Bergen with Bear Creek was appropriately named the Bear Creek Wagon Road.



As the community and population of Bergen began to grow as a commercial center of sorts, the need for schools and churches emerged. Prior to the building of St. Mark's, Episcopal priests visited the hamlet on an irregular basis until it was determined that a church would thrive if built to meet the community needs. In response to community wishes, a house of worship by the name of St. Mark's in the Wilderness was proposed. According to an excerpt from Our Memories of Bergen Park and The Colorado Transcript of January 25, 1874, "The church at this station is centrally located on a commanding site in the midst of an extensive farming community...who felt the need of a regular house of Prayer, for the Public Worship of God (sic) and religious instruction." The cost of construction of the community church was sponsored by Episcopal Bishop Randall, the first Bishop in Colorado Territory, who petitioned friends at the congregation of St. Mark's in the Bowery, New York City, for funding. The Bergen church was erected on property owned by Edward Mallet, who was a homesteader in the Buffalo Park Road area. As reported in The Western Churchman, Mallet had purchased the property in the early 1870s on the gently sloping hillside along the Bear Creek Wagon Road with the intent of building an Episcopal church for the "benefit of the scattered farming population and for guests who in the summer occupied the various little resorts along Bear Creek...despite few resident Episcopalians."

Built on the current site of the shelter house at the Bear Creek Cemetery, the original St. Mark's building was modest in nature with a "foundation of stone about fifty by twenty four feet," according to a *The Western Churchman* article. Further description of the formation of this Episcopal church describes the newly formed congregation as "large and intelligent." Despite the small number of practicing Episcopalians in the Bergen vicinity, Bishop Randall believed the congregation would support the church. *The Western Churchman* reports that over time, "There

was very little support from the community," and the Bishop could not justify the expense of supporting the little church. Church leadership fell under the purview of Rt. Rev. Bishop Spaulding, who realized the church was failing financially. A transaction with Methodist leaders from a small congregation at Plum Creek, now the area of Sedalia, Colorado, was made that allowed for the Methodists to transfer deeds and obtain ownership of the St. Mark's in the Wilderness church in 1883 at what is now the Bear Creek Cemetery site. Following this arrangement, the Methodists held service at Bergen (Evergreen), and the Episcopalians held service at West Plum Creek.



Within a few years' time, the Methodist leadership decided to relocate their church and congregation to a more central location and moved St. Mark's in the Wilderness to what is now Main Street, Evergreen, at the corner of Douglas Park Road at the current site of the Little Bear Tavern. At the time, the Main Street of Evergreen was sparsely occupied by a large lumber storage yard, corrals, and Amos Post's supply store. It is prudent to mention that there was no tavern at this site when St. Mark's was relocated. During this transition and relocation of St. Mark's, the altar was largely ignored and left unmaintained until local part-time resident Mrs. F. J. Bancroft rescued the altar and stored it in her summer residence in Evergreen.

The journey of St. Mark's continued when in 1898, Mrs. Mary Neosho Williams leased a portion of the Stewart Hotel in the vicinity of the current Church of the Transfiguration that had served the early Evergreen community prior to the 1890s. Mary's daughter, Josepha Williams, subsequently purchased the entire Stewart Hotel and remodeled the facility to accommodate the rescued altar and to welcome once again an impassioned Episcopalian congregation to St. Mark's. By 1897, the chapel in the former Stewart Hotel dining room was pressed into full worship service when on Christmas Eve, 1897, the first service of Vespers of Christmas was offered, followed by a Christmas tree ceremony to benefit the children of the congregation.

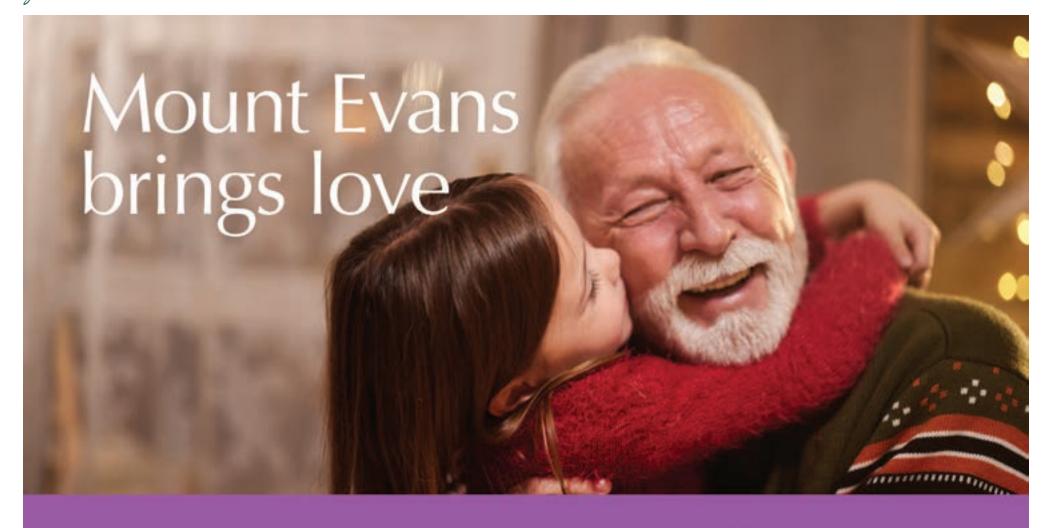
It had taken 25 years for St. Mark's in the Wilderness to settle and reach the end of a long journey from Bear Creek Wagon Road to the campus of the Evergreen Church of the Transfiguration. By 1907 St. Mark's was renovated by Jock Spence, who added exterior log siding as a preservation measure and an aesthetic value that is evident today. Subsequent years have seen procedures performed as needed to restore this rustic chapel.

The journey of St. Mark's was not so long in terms of miles traveled, but the church had gazed over three different landscapes in a matter of 25 years. St. Mark's remains a vital component of the Church of the Transfiguration campus and serves both as an historic centerpiece as well as a useful and necessary facility for church operations.

Sources:

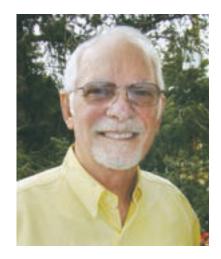
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History Evergreen is a newly formed non-profit organization whose mission is to acknowledge the rich history of our community and to foster an appreciation of historic preservation. Through publication of books, articles, social media and pamphlets we endeavor to maintain the historic record in a sustainable and inclusive manner for all to enjoy.



When it's time for hospice care, Mount Evans will be there for you and your loved ones, so you can make the most of every day.





I'm Just Sayin'...

December - Holidays

"I hope all of you can enjoy the season with family and friends."

Jeff Smith owner/publisher

fter five years serving as President of the Evergreen Chamber of Commerce, Nancy Judge is stepping down. And what a great five years it has been. In the tradition of past presidents, Nancy has worked diligently to grow the Chamber and support all the local businesses. We will miss you, Nancy, and look forward to the tradition continuing with the next Chamber leader. Thank you!

I am writing this on November 17th, and at my house at almost 9000 feet we have yet to get any snow. I hope this is not a sign of things to come for this winter. We have almost always had snow in October. I think the ski venues that are open are almost all artificial snow so far. We need the moisture and the runoff in the spring, so go out and do a snow dance.

It's hard to believe it is the holiday season again already. Seems like we just did this. I hope all of you can enjoy the season with family and friends. Let's try to remember the meaning of Hanukkah and Christmas and still enjoy the gift giving and wonderful meals.

College Football - The Iowa Hawks have had a couple of tough games against ranked teams but still have a chance at the playoffs if they can win out in the two remaining Big Ten games.

Broncos - WOW! What a great season so far. The win against KC at home was huge, and they should be able to win more games for the remainder of this season. I am afraid to predict, but if they can pick up the offense some then they should be contenders.

Avalanche - So far they look like the best team out there. If they stay healthy they should be contenders at the end.

Nuggets - They've had a good start. Again, stay healthy and keep it up.

Quackadilly says: "Wishing you and yours a happy holiday season and all the best for the coming year' **—Your Mountain Connection Staff**

NEWS ON THE POSITIVE SIDE

MOUNTAIN

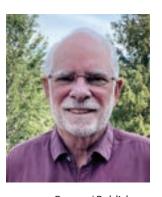
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email. jeff@yourmtnconnection.com

next issue • JANUARY 2026 t. 515-326-2672 www.YourMtnConnection.com

January theme: The New Year

Stories are contributed by local residents to inspire healthy living, happy families, and community giving. Email your story to jeff@yourmtnconnection.com. Stories accepted on a space-available basis only. Advertorials are paid advertising. Business Profiles cost \$400, limited one per year. From the Experts educational columns cost \$300/month, minimum three-month commitment. Deadline for ads and articles is December 16. Call 515-326-2672.



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— THE SASQUATCH OUTPOST —

The Sasquatch Chronicles

BY JIM MYERS

The story I am about to recount has been told in the most recent episode of "Sasquatch, Beyond the Outpost," but for the sake of those who don't follow our podcast, I'll tell the story again here. This story is very important because it explains why the Sasquatch Outpost was born over 13 years ago, a story that most of you have probably never heard.

A little background: I have been fascinated by the legend of Bigfoot since I was a teenager. Most of us were raised to believe that monsters don't exist in reality, and we eventually reach an age where we stop believing in stories of the "boogeyman."

I was no different, so you can imagine my amazement (back in 2012) when a friend informed me that a woman in Bailey had actually seen a Bigfoot. I didn't waste any time reaching out to her, and a day or two later we met for coffee at the Cutthroat Café. I listened with rapt attention as Kate told me how she and her best friend had been out for a walk near her home in Bailey. It was near dusk, though there was still plenty of light. Suddenly, they both heard a loud "crack!" that came from the hill above them. As they turned to look, a very large creature running on two legs sprinted down the hillside past them, turned and disappeared into the trees. Dumbfounded by what had just happened, they both stood there, eyes wide open in amazement, until Kate broke the silence and said, "Was that a deer?" "I knew it wasn't a deer," she admitted, "But what do you say when you see something like that?"

Kate eventually reported her encounter to the BFRO (Bigfoot Field Researcher's Organization), which led to a TV show, many more eyewitness stories, and our decision to name our store "The Sasquatch Outpost"...and the rest, as they say, is history. In our 13 years of business, we've received well over 100,000 visitors from every state in the union and from over 140 countries around the world. Neither Kate nor I could ever have imagined how her Bigfoot encounter would change our lives, and the town of Bailey, Colorado, forever.

Come by and check out the store and museum for yourself! 149 Main Street in Bailey. Open every day. You can contact us by writing to: info@sasquatchoutpost.com



Sasquatch Outpost Escape Room

For reservations: www.sasquatchoutpost. com/escape-room

— EVERGREEN HEALTH INSURANCE —

Health Insurance in Review

BY ED REGALADO

"2025 brought many changes."

"Help yourself

by working with

a certified local

broker whose

Can you believe we're already bringing 2025 to a close? In the Medicare world, 2025 brought many changes, some of which have yet to be realized. To start, Medicare Supplement plan premium costs went up more than usual this year as insurance companies sought to recoup revenue dips resulting from a rush toward completing prescribed treatments that were postponed during COVID. Premium increases are expected to normalize in 2026 in the Medigap market.

Changes continue with prescription drug coverage. The Inflation Reduction Act will cap out-of-pocket expenses for prescription drugs at \$2100 in 2026. Services are free." Another anticipated change in

2026 for prescription drugs is a tricky one: If you take a tier 3 drug or a brand drug, you likely had a \$47 copay this year. Next year, instead of a copay, tier 3 brand drugs will generally be billed at 15% of the retail cost. Additionally, carriers have pushed brokers out of selling PDP plans next year, so you will want to explore on your own. If you are currently enrolled in a Supplement plan, your broker will likely extend the courtesy to help you enroll for your PDP plan as well. Please be sure to review drug coverage on your 2026 Advantage or PDP plan.

Advantage plans reduced benefits this year in an effort to compensate revenues lost in the prescription drug market. One of the biggest changes in the Medicare Advantage market for next year is the elimination of PPO plans by a major carrier. Many of my clients on PPO plans have to change to an HMO or switch to a carrier that still offers PPO plans. If your Advantage PPO plan was eliminated, you have a guaranteed issue opportunity to enroll in a Supplement and PDP plan if you like.

If your Advantage PPO was canceled and you do nothing, you'll automatically be switched to original Medicare with no prescription coverage. You can still pick a plan in January for a February effective date, but your coverage in January will be limited.

For those under the age of 65 who get health coverage through ConnectforHealthCo.com, appears the enhanced premium tax credits (EPTCs) that are set to expire at the end of 2025 won't be renewed. This subsidy reduction is reflected in the 2026 plan premium quotes currently posted on the website. The expiration

of EPTCs will cause premiums to go up significantly for many in 2026; for those who earn over 400% above the federal poverty limit, credits will go away entirely. To buffer some of the sting, the state of Colorado will provide an added subsidy

If you have an account on the state exchange, you may be eligible for auto renew in December if you have confirmed your financial information within the past 12 months. If you haven't, log into your account or call your broker to reapply.

It gets confusing. You can help yourself by working with a certified local broker whose services are free. Call me today!

Ed Regalado is a certified broker. The office is located at the Stone House at 1524 Belford Court in Evergreen. Ed can be reached at 303-674-1945 or send an email to: edregalado46@gmail.com.

— ON THE MOVE FITNESS —

Scaling New Heights at Eighty Years Old

BY NANCY MARRS AND DEB BROWN, NSCA CPT, CWC, CNS

"Don't let anyone convince you that you are too old to do something."

Nancy has been a client here at On the Move Fitness since January of 2018. In that time, she has shown up consistently, ready to work and work hard. That hard work recently paid off when she decided to get out of her comfort zone and do something audacious to mark her 80th birthday. Nancy, who isn't specifically a hiker, decided to tackle Mt. Bierstadt, a 14,000-plus foot mountain in Colorado's Front Range. Here is her experience, in her own words:

"I decided to do something special because I turned 80 years old in April. Climbing a mountain appealed to me; I had never done anything like that before. We chose October 4th as the day to go and decided upon Bierstadt

Mountain. I started taking long hikes to train for the climb, making sure to go uphill for half the hike. Two neighbors, Elizabeth and Liron, agreed to climb with me. Although the weather forecast wasn't ideal, we stayed with the plan.

"We were met with 25 to 30 degrees windchill and 50 mph wind gusts. We were cold, and our energy was sapped by both the wind and the cold. At 13,622 feet, I decided to turn around. We still had to make it down the



"I decided to do something special because I turned 80 years old in April."

mountain. At the end of the day, we had traveled a total of 7 miles

"At first I was disappointed because I didn't reach the summit of the mountain. But, as I thought about it and spoke to other people who had climbed it, I came to realize that getting as far as I did and making it safely back down was a real accomplishment. I feel good about setting a goal and following through!

"I couldn't have done this without the strength and balance training over the years at On the Move Fitness. My leg and core strength helped me to climb up and over the big rocks in the trail. The added benefit of strength training is building bone. I have

data demonstrating a direct

correlation between consistent employee recognition efforts and

increased employee engagement

over time. Employee recognition

shows your employees that you

are paying attention to them, and

their work matters. Also, employ-

ees tend to go above and beyond

when they see you paying atten-

tion. Things like praise, celebra-

tions, and awards contribute to

an overall more positive and pro-

ductive work environment with

the perfect time to practice some

employee recognition magic.

It doesn't have to be costly. It

just ought to be thoughtful. Meaning, if you take the time

to write a card, be as specific

With the holidays afoot, this is

hopefully less stress.

been able to increase my bone density through training with heavy weights. Several times, especially going back down, I was able to catch myself and avoid falling. The balance training in all my workouts paid off.

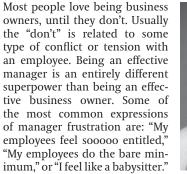
"Don't let anyone convince you that you are too old to do something. You have two choices: sit and complain about how you feel, or work to build strength and do fun and exciting adventures. I recommend the second option!'

Deb Brown is an NSCA Certified Personal Trainer and the owner of the On The Move Fitness Personal Training Studio located in Conifer. For more information about how we can help you get in shape for winter fun, please visit www.onthemovefitness.com or call us at 303-816-1426.

— PEOPLE PROBLEMS —

Why Employee Recognition Matters

BY JENNIFER MAY ELLIS



At the root of many of these perceived employee problems is usually a lack of engagement. Engagement is the connection an employee feels to their job. You want engaged/ connected employees-they perform better. Employees tend to feel less engagement with their work when they also feel undervalued. In the world of Human Resources, employee recognition

overall engagement.

What is employee recognition? It is acknowledging and appreciating your employees' contributions, large and little. Recognition can take many forms: (1) Real-time praise, "This is great work;" (2) Hand-written thank you notes, 'You went above and beyond and I noticed;" (3) Awards, employee of the month; (4) Investing in growth, professional development opportunities; (5) Celebrations, employee outings or parties for work anniversaries or milestones; (6) Gifts, gift cards or merchandise; and finally (7)

Rewarding your employees might seem counterintuitive (especially for the managers who think their employees feel entitled), but the world of Human Resources provides substantial

Financial incentives, bonuses or salary increases.



"Employee recognition shows your employees that you are paying attention to them, and their work matters."

as possible with your praise of their work. HR pro tip: By being specific, you are essentially procan boost employee morale, productivity, and viding feedback that helps reinforce positive

In the interest of fairness, it is important that you are also consistent with recognition. So if you are going to recognize one employee during the holiday season, it is usually best to recognize all of your employees. Unfairness can create resentment.

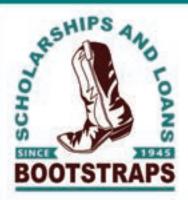
If you are grumbling or feeling like employee recognition is a daunting task, imagine your business with less tension and more productivity. Maybe also think of the notorious Ebenezer Scrooge and how he learned that giving not only benefits others, but also nourishes our own spirit. Giving your employees praise could be the first step in the direction of a more fulfilling manager experience. If you need any help, employee recognition is one of my specialities.

Jennifer May Ellis is a human resources consultant and former employment law attorney. She is an Evergreen resident and supporter of small businesses. She is the founder of Jennifer May Consulting and can be reached at jennifer@jennifer-may.com or https://www.jennifer-may.com/

The 2026 Bootstraps scholarship and loan application opens December 1!



Don't forget to complete the FAFSA form before completing our application: https://studentaid.gov/



Thank you to our community for helping mountain-area students pursue their educational dreams.

Scholarships and interest-free loans may be used for postsecondary education: college, university, community college, trade, vocational, and certification programs.

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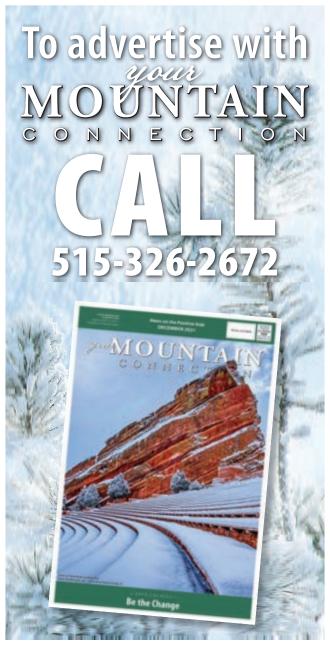
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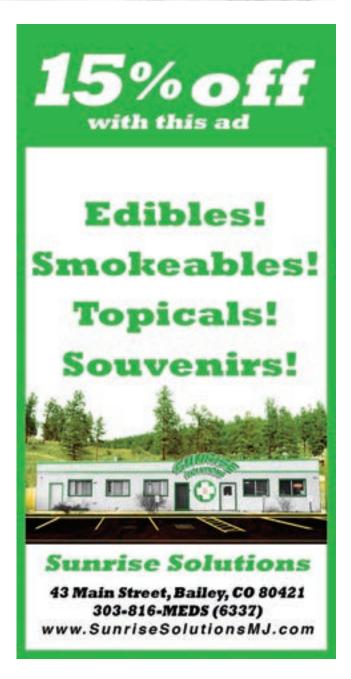


Women of Evergreen Businesses (WEB) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering female business leaders. Through ongoing outreach and service initiatives, WEB proudly supports individuals, families, and charitable organizations in Evergreen and our surrounding mountain communities.

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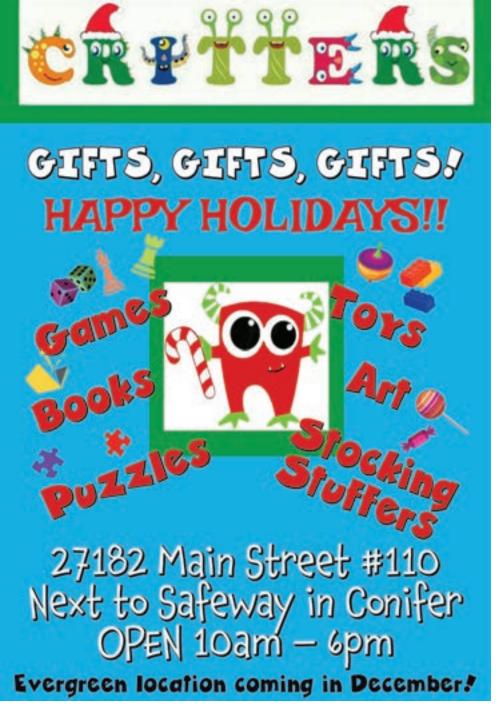


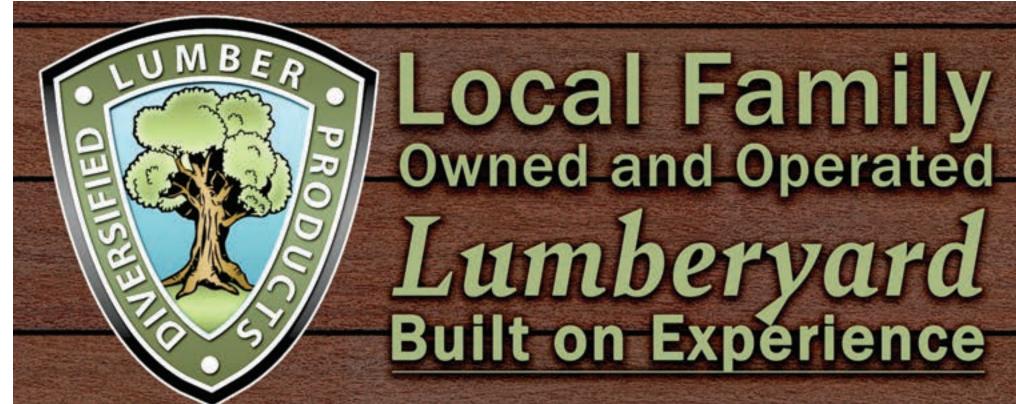
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CUSTOM OUTDOOR LIVING SPACES

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A Skeptic's View

The KISS principle
BY GARY LOFFLER

ngineers have long espoused the KISS principle: keep it simple, stupid. The idea is that added complexity brings added problems. Of course, in the real world, compromises have to be made. The most simple way to hang a coat on the wall may be to hammer a big old nail into the wall. Cheap, effective, but not particularly aesthetically pleasing. Using a proper coat hook that matches the décor of the room is a better option and better exemplifies the KISS principle of simple but not too simple.

Complexity is often used to increase comfort and ease. Cars have become amazingly complex over the years and, while they are much better in terms of creature comfort, the cost of purchasing and maintaining one has also increased. My preference for a standard transmission is not reflected in the general populace; instead, automatic transmissions are the norm, Sadly, they tend to come with a 5-year or 50,000-mile warranty, after which you are on your own for repair cost. While these vary for replacement cost, you can expect \$5,000 and up, depending on the car. The lights on modern cars are an area where the KISS principle is completely ignored. Rather than designing around a simple, effective standard head lamp and signal lights, every car now seems to have a different array of LEDs in a variety of shapes and sizes. Burned-out lamps are no longer an easy fix, and any front-end damage includes buying specific replacement parts rather than generic.

As the world's demand for electricity has grown over the years, utility companies have been using the KISS principle for deciding where to spend their infrastructure dollars. For the last ten years, this has been solar energy. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), the construction cost per kilowatt of a solar plant has dropped to about \$1,600 over the last decade, with a similar price drop for battery storage. Wind power construction costs are about \$1,450 per kilowatt. Natural gas plants have historically had cheaper construction cost

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SCIENTISM DOUBT MINDS

PHYSICS INQUIRY TRANSACTIONALISM

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"As the world's demand for electricity has grown over the years, utility companies have been using the KISS principle for deciding where to spend their infrastructure dollars."

(\$820); however, that is changing quickly as the cost and unavailability of parts increases. In particular steam turbines can have a four-year-plus wait time. These factors are driving the cost of construction up dramatically for gas-fired plants. The EIA site has no data on coal-fired plants, but the *Colorado Sun* notes that Excel Energy's Pueblo plant has "been plagued by shutdowns and costly repairs," including being offline for 373 days in 2020 and 2021.

Let's take a quick commonsense look at electricity generation, starting with solar panels. While there are different types of panels available, they all turn sunlight directly to electricity with no moving parts. Essentially they can be easily deployed anywhere there is room and sunshine. Typically there would also be a set of batteries to provide power during the times the panels are not in sunlight and to send the grid

a more uniform power feed. Wind turbines are also pretty simple in that they are just a pedestal holding up a generator, some gears and blades. Not surprisingly, the pedestal is the most expensive part, as it is a rather massive tower designed to hold some heavy equipment and a giant fan in all kinds of weather. Solar and wind plants share an advantage of being modular and scalable. In both cases maintenance is easy to schedule without interfering with the electrical output of the plant. Should the demand for electricity grow, adding more units largely depends on how much land is available.

I am going to lump coal and gas together here because they are essentially the same infrastructure, with only the fuel being different. The first thing a coal-powered plant needs is access to large amounts of coal, usually in the form of a railroad spur. Once there is a pathway to get the

coal on site, there needs to be a storage facility big enough to hold a significant amount of coal and a way to both offload coal and supply it to the furnace. The furnace then burns the coal, generating heat and smoke. Depending on the environmental rules in place, exhaust might need to be scrubbed to reduce the pollutants. The heat is then directed to the boiler which turns water (or something like water) into steam, that is then directed to a turbine, which finally turns a generator to create electricity. Gas typically is the same, except for how the fuel is delivered and stored. Maintenance is more complicated because there are more pieces that need to be taken care of, and replacement parts are often specific to the system.

From a KISS perspective of simple but not too simple, gas and coal generators clearly fare the worst. Wind and solar are far less complicated with far fewer moving parts, easier upgrade paths, and fewer environmental concerns. Solar and wind are clearly the best choice, and this is reflected in the EIA's monthly reports on planned energy generation plants. It should not be a surprise that more and more electricity is being produced by renewable energy, because from a longterm cost perspective they clearly have advantages.

A side note on the scalability advantage of solar: About 10 years ago Germany was starting to look at a new solar option for apartment dwellers. This consisted of a solar panel to hang on a balcony, a micro-inverter, and an electrical plug. Electricity generated by the panel goes through the converter to match the apartment's 220 AC voltage, providing a secondary source of electricity and reducing the cost of electricity for the renter. Payoff time for the unit typically is about three to four years, with many people seeing a 30% reduction in energy costs. An article from last year estimates that 1.5 million of these devices had already been installed.



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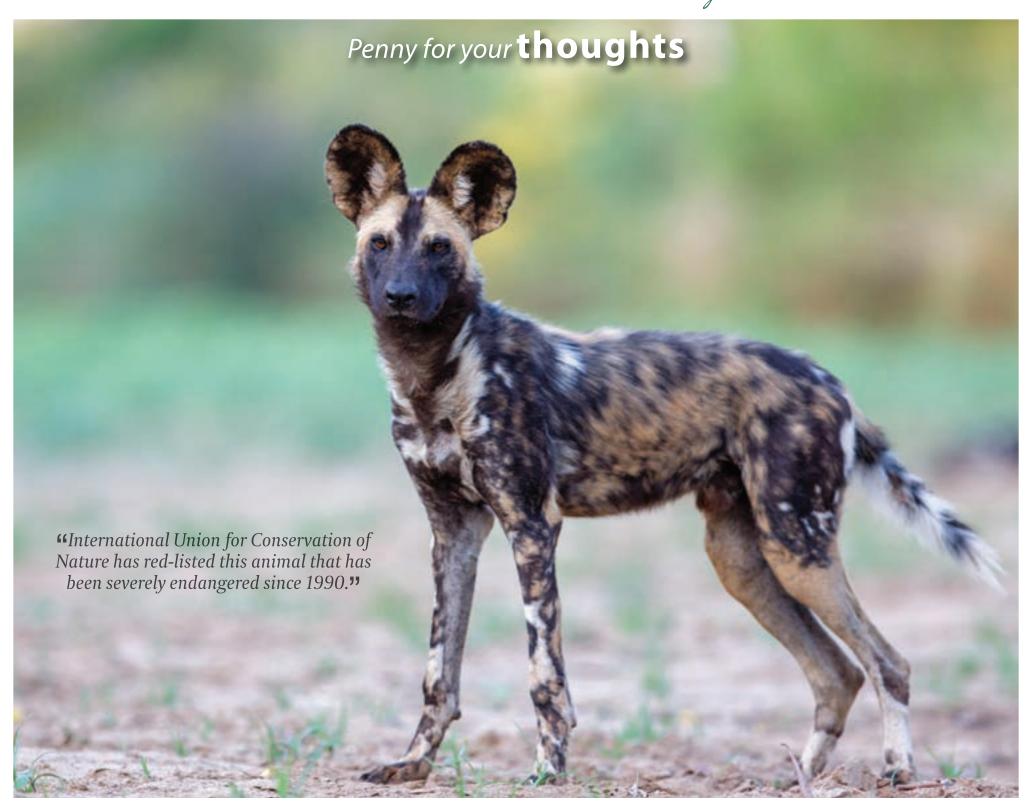
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Juba and the African Wild Dog

BY PENNY RANDELL

Juba the thinking dog here, and I'm ever so excited about the topic I chose for this month. In that I am a dog, I thought I'd take a look at one of my own species that is found in Africa. Well, as it turns out, I picked a dog that is NOT my species, yet belongs to the canine family. I'm talking about the African wild dog, *Lycaon pictus*, whereas I am *Canis lupus famillaris*. It is because of its highly specialized diet, dentition, and lack of dewclaws that this dog springs from a different gene pool than me.



also chose such an interesting subject because of the trouble this species is in. It is estimated that about 6,600 adults live in 39 subpopulations that are threatened by habitat fragmentation, human persecution, and outbreaks of disease. Sadly, only about 250 individuals are to be found in the largest subpopulation; therefore, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has red-listed this animal that has been severely endangered since 1990.

Just like me, the African wild dog is a highly social animal. They live in packs, but are often separated by sex with dominance hierarchies existing for the female, just as for the male. Unique among these animals is the fact that the females separate from the natal pack once they hit sexual maturity, as opposed to the males, which stay with the pack. The wild dog's main diet, the antelope, is usually chased to exhaustion until it drops. The babies always eat first, and the dogs usually hunt in the daylight hours.

This guy fascinates me, and I am taken aback by three characteristics that set it apart: coat color, diet, and most of all, its ability to catch prey by dramatically outrunning it across huge expanses of savannah. Its coat, designed for communication, concealment and regulation of temperature, is somewhat long and usually is a mottled patch-work of brown, white, yellow, red and black splotches. Their ears are huge and rounded on the end. Internally they house a graceful skeleton that aids in speed. They also have only four digits instead of five on their forefeet, which adds to speed and stride. This mammal carries premolars that are largest relative to body size of any living carnivore, except for the hyena. In addition, lower molars have evolved into cutting blades to aid in tearing flesh.

The social bonds of these doggies are uncommonly solid. Unlike most hunting packs, say for example the lion or hyena, the

African wild dog never hunts or sleeps alone. The packs are permanent and usually number anywhere from two to 27. The oldest female remains the leader and makes way for males and of course, the babies. But these remarkable hunters have gathered in packs of hundreds during the seasonal migrations, as with wildebeests and springboks. When considering elaborate facial expressions and body language, as observed in the gray wolf, these critters have little to none. It is believed that this lack is due to a lesser social hierarchy within the pack. And as noted, these guys remain together and have little need for expression to retain status.

The dogs that live in East Africa appear to have no absolute breeding season, while April to July is breeding season in South Africa. Gestation lasts 69-73 days, with the interval between pregnancies being 12 to 14 months. Of all the canids, this animal produces more offspring than any other, with litters reaching as many as six to 16 babies at a time. This means a single female can produce enough young to create a new pack every year. After giving birth, the mother will remain in the den with the babies until they can eat meat, around three to four weeks. Pups are weaned at five weeks, when they are fed regurgitated meat by the other pack members. At around eight to 10 weeks, the pack leaves the den and the young follow along behind. At a kill, these younger ones are always allowed to eat first until they are yearlings.

Unlike most pack animals, African wild dogs depend on the entire pack to rear the young. This is to say that both males and females are involved in that care. All but the nursing mother carry out the hunt and bring regurgitated meat to the mother as well as her young. These dogs also work together to care for the sick and dying.

There is little conflict within the pack and little aggression exhibited among pack members. Every hunting pack has a dominant pair, and usually maintain those bonds through life. Wild dogs have quite the range of vocalizations and can be heard over long distances.

There are hearty organized efforts taking place to save the wild dog. In some areas this involves working together with various organizations to make space for wild dogs, as well as for the cheetah. The Range Wide Conservation Program for Cheetahs and the African Wild Dog works across Africa with all countries that can help these animals survive. This conservation program was initiated in 2007. Because cheetahs and wild dogs encompass such a large area, their survival requires coordinated conservation action on a massive scale rarely seen in terrestrial endeavors to save species.

With all they have working against them, wild dogs are also forced to deal with disease. Rabies helped to drive this animal to extinction in both the Serengeti and Maasai Mara. Wild dogs living outside protected areas, where domestic dogs exist, can easily contract both rabies and distemper. In response, there is an urgent need to initiate or revive veterinary vaccination campaigns. Indeed, there is much we can do to save these valuable doggies, and a quick Google session will fill in all the blanks, if need be.

I am ever so happy to be a basic domesticated dog and am thankful for all the care I receive. The African wild dog needs a lot of help, or they will become extinct. That's quite the comparison. Building these populations is a must, for they help to maintain the environment for other species. Check it out and help in any way you can. I, on the other hand, will be around to give the facts and hopefully offer some education otherwise ignored.



HAPPY 45TH BIRTHDAY TO MOUNT EVANS **HOME HEALTH CARE & HOSPICE!**

BY KAREN AALUND, DIRECTOR, PHILANTHROPY & COMMUNITY OUTREACH

"You've watched us grow, welcomed our caregivers into your homes, shared your stories, and carried on our mission with care."

Forty-five years ago, on November 12, 1980, nurse and founder Carol Linke set out with a brave and heartfelt vision: to bring compassionate hospice care to our foothills and mountain communities. In that first year, Mount Evans Hospice served just 15 patients, guided by the motto, "Mountain people helping mountain people." Today, that same spirit lives on as Mount Evans Home Health Care & Hospice now serves more than 1,000 patients every year.

aching this milestone means something special in a place like ours. Many of our neighbors have lived here since Mount Evans' earliest days, or close to it. You've watched us grow, welcomed our caregivers into your homes, shared your stories, and carried on our mission with care. Just as meaningful are the many new supporters who have joined us along the way. Whether you've been with Mount Evans for decades or just discovered us recently, we are grateful for you. Your generosity, through financial gifts, volunteer hours, and community spirit, has been the steady force shaping Mount Evans into the deeply rooted, beloved organiza-

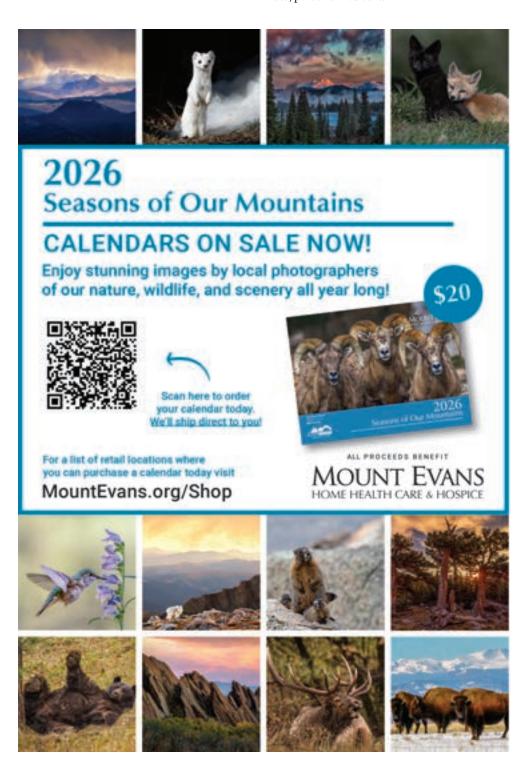
As we celebrate, we also acknowledge the challenges of providing home health and hospice care in our rugged mountain region. Reduced reimbursements from insurance providers and the increasing needs of an aging population place real pressures on our organization. Weather, long distances, and remote homes add to the complexity. These are the unique challenges Mount Evans faces every day, yet our team continues to show up for our community because it's our mission, our calling, and our promise. Remaining an independent healthcare nonprofit is central to that mission, allowing us to stay responsive to our community's needs and continue offering compassionate, personalized care.

Thanks to many generous donors over the years, our community support services are offered free of charge, including foot care and blood pressure clinics, evidence-based fall-prevention and osteoporosis classes, Alzheimer's education, and other resources that help families navigate aging with confidence. For emotional support, we offer Camp Comfort's overnight and weekday summer grief camps for children, year-round bereavement support for kids and adults at our office, and a variety of adult caregiver groups that provide connection, comfort, and understanding.

As we look to the future, we remain deeply grateful to the community that has built and sustained us. When I meet community members, they often share how Mount Evans cared for them or a loved one, praising our services and saying they don't know what they would have done without us. If Mount Evans has also touched your life or simply holds a special place in your heart, we invite you to consider a year-end financial gift of any size. Your support ensures that compassionate, high-quality care remains close to home for everyone in our foothills and mountain communities.



Thank you, truly, for 45 years of trust, generosity, and friendship. To make your year-end gift, please visit MountEvans.org/donate or call us at 303-674-6400.





Dogs, Dogs, Dogs

BY CATHY KOWALSKI

December is an exciting time for nonprofits that depend on **Colorado Gives Day** to support their missions. In the mountain area, there are three dog-related nonprofits that participate in Colorado Gives Day: Faithfully K9 Service Dogs, Planned Pethood & Intermountain Humane Society, and The Evergreen Animal Protective League.



aithfully K9 Service Dogs **◀** empowers individuals with disabilities such as PTSD, mobility challenges, and hearing impairments to train their own service dogs. This model is unique: supporting each participant from the beginning, whether they already have a dog or need assistance in finding one. Faithfully K9 Service Dogs is deeply committed to the long-term success of every service dog team supported.

Involvement does not end at graduation—assistance continues for as long as the service dog is actively working.

Faithfully K9 Service Dogs was founded in January 2018 to fill a critical gap for individuals with disabilities who want to train their own service dog. At that time, and still today, most organizations that provide trained service dogs have wait times of three to five years. Their founder recognized the profound toll that this delay takes, especially on veterans and first responders, and believed that vulnerable individuals in our community should not have to wait for help.

Every day, an average of 22 veterans and first responders die by suicide. Because veterans and first responders have given so much to our country and community, they are not charged for training. Faithfully K9 believes access to a trained service dog should be timely, personal, and empowering. That belief drives their mission.

Planned Pethood & Intermountain Humane Society is an animal nonprofit organization in the mountain area. Planned Pethood International acquired Intermountain Humane Society in 2024. Intermountain Humane Society shelters, cares for, and adopts out homeless animals. Planned Pethood is a full-service care clinic for companion animals. Dr. Jeff Young has spent over 30 years with a philosophy that every life matters, and every animal deserves a chance. They are raising \$300,000 to construct a modern, fully-equipped shelter facility.

The Evergreen Animal Protective League (EAPL) was organized in 1981. EAPL's mission is to help abandoned, lost, suffering, and needy



animals through rescue, shelter, education, reunion of lost pets with their owners, veterinary care, adoption services, spaying and neutering, and assisting the needy to help keep their pets. This organization is totally volunteer for all rescue operations. They operate The Thrift Store where all profits go entirely to the rescue operations of EAPL.

You can check out all of these animal nonprofits on the Colorado Gives website as well as their websites: www.faithfullyk9.com, www.plannedpethoodinternational.org/

intermountain-humane, and eapl.com.

All donations made online at ColoradoGives. org through December 9 count toward Colorado Gives Day. You can find a cause on their website and make a one-time donation or a new monthly donation. Colorado Gives Foundation will match the first gift up to \$100 for a new monthly donation. Donations can be made with a major credit card, bank account, PayPal, IRA charitable distributions, donor advised funds, and many other forms of payment.

Let's support the nonprofits that are supporting our mountain communities by making life better for our four-legged friends and their families. Every time you give, you receive: fostering social connection and feeling good, and making a difference in the lives of special pups and the people who need them.



Cathy is the Executive Director and trainer at Faithfully K9 Service Dogs and Dog Training. Call 720-934-7378 or visit the website www.faithfullyk9.com.



RECALLING CHRISTMAS

BY ANNE VICKSTROM

"When recollections make an entrance on the stage in my mind, I treasure them."

I am a very present person; not a gift kind of present, but the attention sort of present. When I am doing something, it's the only thing on my mind. While taking a hike, I notice the tiny little flower. While standing in a crowd, I take in all the subtleties of people interacting. While watching a movie, I'm really good at catching a prop out of place.

ne might think I would be able to remember all sorts of details later, but that is not my case. There are times I have to be reminded that I've visited certain places. I am such a present person that recalling the past often pulls up a blank space until I am guided back to the memory with descriptions of the place or what happened there.

So, when recollections make an entrance on the stage in my mind, I treasure them. Perhaps certain memories appear in the limelight because they were accompanied by a feeling or experience that makes them stand out.

Ask me about past holidays, and I'm ready to share thoughts down to the finest detail. I can remember the sting against my cheek as I peered out the icy window of my parents' car while returning home from church on Christmas Eve. Heading back up the hill, we passed by Denver West, where the trees along I-70 were decorated with colorful lights that turned the journey into



a magical adventure. Spotting dark windows helped me imagine sleeping children tucked under warm blankets, dreaming of what would be discovered in their stockings and beneath their tree in the morning. I fell into deep contentment knowing that soon I would be in my own warm bed.

I recall the aroma of the warm cinnamon coffee cake coming from the kitchen on Christmas morning, a sweet treat my mother made every year, as my sisters and I scurried down the stairs after waking our parents. That

same aroma took me back to past celebrations with my family all together, wrapped in our robes and each other's hugs.

My parents loved having people into our home for dinner parties or those cheek-by-jowl events where they wanted to include everyone, and lo and behold—they all came! The solution: double the ingredients and always say yes when someone offers to contribute to the holiday celebration. I was exposed to aromas and tastes foreign to me: dishes from our Danish neighbors, drinks from our German friend, and Grandma's rum balls.

On several Christmases, after the wrappings had been tidied, and a filling dinner was cleared from the table, a calm would present itself, calling my sisters and me to go outside to stretch our legs. We would wrap ourselves in warm clothing and step into the frozen air, each stride releasing that always-satisfying crunch of snow beneath our boots; then one of us would stop. All of us, standing still, listened to the silence that is detected only when snowflakes are falling—a silence so complete that a peace overcame us and we experienced together a calm.

Among so many memories, perhaps my favorite is the look on my mother's face when she would tell us to wait for a moment until she could turn on the Christmas tree lights. As we rounded the corner, we didn't look for our stockings or our Santa gift beside them, but rather to her smiling eyes with anticipation of having delivered us another wonderful holiday.

This year, our family will begin a new tradition of celebrating both Hanukkah and Christmas, with our not-even-a-year-old grandson. He'll learn about traditional Jewish foods alongside gingerbread men and sugar cutout cookies.

With another holiday before me, I look forward to new moments that will become memories that I will easily recall. I wish you many new memories! Happy holidays!

Anne Vickstrom's first writing gig was right here at Your Mountain Connection. She has written for national and regional publications and has published books. She loves living in Evergreen where she and her husband raised three children and six dogs.

COOKING CLASSES WITH... A CASTLES & KITCHENS X

Season's Eatings

BY FRANCESCA ARNIOTES

Italian food: we are evolving in our understanding of what Italian food is and is not. More restaurants in the Denver area are embracing true Italian cuisines instead of the Italian-American dishes of the 20th century. The cooking of Italian immigrants in America is a story of newfound abundance by hungry people, almost needing to eat to make up for lost time: "So much food, so little time." Combined with the fast pace of life found in this new world, what resulted were new combinations like spaghetti and meatballs, something that doesn't exist anywhere in Italy.

True Italian cuisines are regional, and the typical dishes of one region may well be completely unknown in the rest of the country. Chefs in big cities like Rome or Florence are, of course, under the same pressure to innovate and make a name for themselves as those in restaurants anywhere. So sometimes they will appropriate a new dish from another region. This year in Chianti, we noticed that cacio e pepe, one of Rome's most iconic pastas, had been "discovered" and made its way onto menus, and everyone was all abuzz about it. The dangers of offering another region's dishes stem from the reason they're regional in the first place. The food culture of Italy has not embraced the advantages of trucking produce all over the continent. It remains local and seasonal. It remains rooted in tradition. The fact that a restaurant in Tuscany is making a typical

PUMPKIN RAVIOLI WITH CREAM-TOMATO SAUCE





RAVIOLI

Pie pumpkin or butternut squash Fresh pasta dough (400 g 00 flour and 4 eggs)

1 egg yolk

Nutmeg

Salt and pepper

SAUCE

4 T butter

1 clove garlic, smashed and peeled

4–5 sage leaves, shredded

3 cups Mutti tomato passata

2 oz heavy cream

DOP Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, freshly grated

dish from Rome, not understanding its origins and without access to the local produce, means that they have as much chance of getting it right as a restaurant in Nebraska.

Nevertheless, the excitement of a new dish or a new cuisine is tasty fun for those of us in the kitchen and at the table. There are, however, cities and regions where people are so serious about their recipes and ingredients that they have codified and registered a "disciplinario" with the government. Two examples are the pizza of Naples and the tortellini of Bologna. Every detail about ingredients and process is strictly controlled in order to ensure that

Halve pumpkin and remove the seeds. Wrap each half in foil and put into a 375 degree oven for an hour or two, until the flesh is soft. Use a spoon to scrape the flesh from the skin, put it into a mesh strainer over a bowl and allow to drain overnight.

Put the ricotta into another mesh strainer and allow to drain overnight.

Make the dough, and while it is resting, puree the pumpkin and combine it with the ricotta, salt and pepper, egg yolk, and a pinch of nutmeg. Roll out the dough to the thinnest setting. Work with one piece at a time, keeping the rest covered so it doesn't dry out. Cut your thin sheet in half, one for the bottom and one for the top. Work quickly. Lightly flour the table and lay the bottom sheet down. Place a teaspoonful of the filling every 2 inches and cover it with the other half sheet of dough. Press with the sides of your hands between each ravioli and then on each side, squeezing out air the best you can while you seal the dough together. Cut the ravioli in squares or use a biscuit cutter.

Lay the ravioli on a clean kitchen towel as you make them.

(You can freeze them on a cookie sheet, not touching. When frozen, transfer to a ziplock bag, cook from frozen.)

Bring water to boil.

Melt 3T butter in a skillet large enough to hold the cooked ravioli. Add the garlic and sage leaves, and infuse the butter over low heat. Before the garlic gets brown, remove it. Add the tomato puree and some salt and cook on low for about 5 minutes. Whisk in the remaining 1T butter and the cream, stirring for a minute or two, and set aside until ravioli are ready to add to the sauce. You can also make the sauce a few hours ahead of time.

Add salt to the boiling water. Drop in the ravioli and cook for about 3 minutes. Remove with a slotted spoon to the skillet with the sauce and gently dress them.

Serve sprinkled generously with grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese.

filling, and an accompanying sauce. Here is a great winter or holiday course to enjoy while pumpkins and butternut squash are in the

someone who offers these dishes as authentic is following the rules, and what we will taste is correct. It's worth noting here that Italians have certain priorities. Stop signs, speed limits, forming an orderly line -all merely concepts, and nobody will bother anyone else about it. But if someone puts onions in an Amatriciana sauce, a fistfight is likely. If a winery adds sugar to the wine, those folks are going to prison. I'm just saying. Different priorities.

The region of Emiglia-Romagna, which contains the city of Bologna, is the source of ravioli, tortellini and a wide variety of other filled pasta. Each one has its shape and size, a "correct"

market.

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Holidays for Us

BY KAARSTEN TURNER

"For us, it is about the darkness and the lights and the three of us and the friends and family we love and the time to slow down and embrace conviviality."



"We load up with blankets, gingerbread, and scented candles."

walked into my teenage son's bedroom this morning, his body longer than the length of the queen size bed that fills most of the floor space. I grabbed the toes at the end of his 11-inch foot and shook them. To the choreographed motion, I added my words, "Aidan, it is time to get up. It is 7:45," to the morning dance of getting a teenager out of bed these days. Tough to figure out which part of the bed was his body, until his mop of a head of hair elevated itself from the pillow and said, "I got it." I planned to be back in five minutes. This time I would uncover his foot, leaving it exposed to the cold bedroom air, and say, "For real, dude, it is time to get up." And this is what our mornings look like these days.

He is a senior in high school. Sometimes when I am lying in bed at night, I scroll through pictures of when my boys were younger. Round red cheeks, chubby thighs, and outfits with zippers covering those toes I am tasked to shake each morning. They were excited about red and white peppermint candy canes, Hershey's chocolate kisses wrapped in red, green, and silver foil, and a bowl full of M&Ms. We had long lists of present requests for Santa, for mom and dad, and from family far away.

One thing is the same. When we turn the clocks back each year, I bring five decorative birch trees into my living room. They are lit with twinkling lights. We celebrate the winter like the Scandinavians and load up with blankets, gingerbread, and scented candles. Hygge, pronounced Hooga, is a quality of coziness and conviviality. To counter the cold and dark, we rejuvenate with the comfort and safety that come from our gatherings. If I am honest with you, the gathering is often me, alone with the dogs on the couch. All the cozy is there though, a set, ready for my family if they want to join me.

Despite the protests, I do have one requirement for the holiday season. It is to sit with me while I read The Polar Express aloud. It is a short book, and the illustrations are the lead. The text starts, "On Christmas eve, many years ago, I lay quietly in my bed. I did not rustle the sheets. Late that night I did hear sounds, though not of ringing bells." Chris Van Allsburg's book is about the power of imagination, and I read it to remind my growing sons that the holidays can be whatever they want them to be. For us, it is not about the gifts we might or might not imagine. It's not even about the candy canes and tinfoilwrapped Hershey kisses, although those things are always there. It is about the darkness and the lights and the three of us and the friends and family we love and the time to slow down and embrace conviviality.

Kaarsten is a forester, a mama to two boys, a sunchaser, a writer, and a lover of chocolate. She's lived in Conifer for a while now.

Meet Krampus

BY GARY LOFFLER

"Sort of like the Elf on the Shelf as envisioned by Wes Craven."



While Santa continues to reign as the most popular holiday spirit of December, he is not the only one out there passing judgment on good or bad children.

Thought to have originated in northern and eastern Europe even before Saint Nicholas, Krampus has been holding children accountable for their actions for centuries. Over the years Krampus has had many variations. In some cases he is only mildly threatening (leaving a rod instead of candy for bad kids), and in others he hauls misbehaving children off in a sack. His appearance likely started off as similar to a satyr (half-man, half-goat) but, like a lot of things that involve years of mimicry and alcohol-infused decision making, he became a lot more frightening and grotesque. Winter festivals would include people dressing up like Krampus and chasing after children, sort of like the Elf on the Shelf as envisioned by Wes Craven.

Shortly after Saint Nicholas made the scene with his practice of bestowing gifts and candy to good children, Krampus started tagging along as the bad guy. He would spend time peering in windows and tracking bad behavior and then, on December 6th, he and Saint Nicholas would visit those homes to reward or punish the younger residents. I would note that adult bad behavior is sadly absent from Krampus lore.

These celebrations were likely meant to coincide with the winter solstice. The Gregorian calendar, which replaced the Julian calendar in the 1500s, places the winter solstice on December 21. When this changeover took place in 1582, October 4th was followed by October 15th. This was not the only time that calendars were shifted around to account for unfortunate fact that a year is not exactly 365 days or the 365.25 days of the Julian Calendar. The point being that the winter solstice has been a cause for celebrations by many cultures because it is the turning point in winter, and daylight lasts a little longer each day; while the solstice itself did not move around much, the date on the calendar did.

Krampus has made his way into movies. There are at least eight of them out there, and they portray Krampus as violently evil. In truth, while he was always pretty judgmental, he only punished bad behavior. Also available are Krampus cards that are available for those who feel Santa is just a bit too lenient on his good kid/bad kid list.

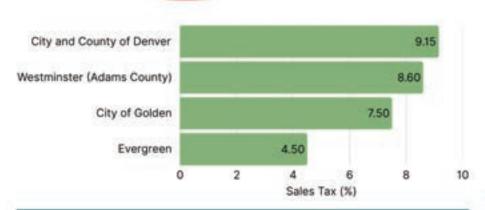
Evergreen Chamber News



This holiday season...

SHOP IN EVERGREEN







The Twelve Reasons to Shop Local (Cue the music)...

BY NANCY JUDGE

"Show pride in your community!"

- 1. **Keep Money Local**—Sales taxes fund our communities and provide vital services such as police and fire protection, street repairs and open spaces to play in. And in this case, you are paying lower sales tax in Evergreen than if you went down the hill!
- 2. **Local Investment**—Local businesses are less susceptible to national downturns and more likely to work harder to stay open.
- 3. **Locally-Made Products**—Local business owners often sell local products, which helps preserve the community's distinction and creates more jobs locally, as well.
- 4. **Support for Nonprofits**—Local businesses support good work in our community. Studies show that nonprofits receive 250 percent more support from small businesses than from large ones.
- 5. **Discover Interesting Things and People**—One-of-a-kind shops and restaurants are part of what makes our community a great place to live.
- 6. **Personal Connection**—Getting to know the store owners is a great reason to shop local.
- 7. **Product Knowledge**—Local business owners are well informed about their products and know what they are selling, and they can easily adjust their inventories.

- 8. **Diverse Products**—Local business owners choose products based on what their customers want and often carry unique items from local artists and farmers.
- 9. **Increased Expertise**—Shopping at a local store means you can get an expert opinion about the products that you're purchasing.
- 10. **Create Community**—We are a transitory society, so people don't always have a connection with the communities where they live. New to the area? I would encourage you to introduce yourself to the owners of the shops.
- 11. **Better Service**—Local business owners are passionate about their products and typically will often go the extra mile to help you and to ensure you're a satisfied customer.
- 12. **Support Future Growth**—Shopping locally is the best way to show pride in your community and help protect the businesses that make Evergreen unique.

Follow us on Facebook. Visit our website EvergreenChamber.org. Call us anytime 303-674-3412.

Conifer Chamber News



Christmas in Conifer A Season of Community, Celebration, and Cheer

BY BETH SCHNEIDER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Christmas in Conifer is in full swing, and the entire community is buzzing with festive energy. We are bringing neighbors together, celebrating our mountain-town spirit, and lighting up Conifer with joy from Thanksgiving weekend through the first week of December. With events and activities for all ages, there is something happening around every corner!

THE CHRISTMAS PARADE - DECEMBER 6

The highlight of the season is the 42nd Christmas Parade on December 6, where Sutton Road transforms into a vibrant, holiday-themed wonderland. Families line the street as floats roll by, each one bursting with creativity, color, candy, and Christmas cheer. Music fills the air, kids delight in festive activities, and the entire community comes together to celebrate. Festivities take place from 10 am to 4 pm.

NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTION GATHERING - DECEMBER 1

On December 1, neighbors across Conifer gather for Neighborhood Connection events that spark conversation, connection, and community. These small, welcoming gatherings invite residents to meet new friends, reconnect with familiar faces, and celebrate the season close to home. Check the schedule at GoConifer.com to find your neighborhood's gathering time and location.

LIGHT UP CONIFER – BEGINNING NOVEMBER 29

Light Up Conifer kicks off on November 29, and from that moment, homes and businesses across town begin to glow. Strings of lights, cheerful decorations, and creative displays illuminate our foothills, turning Conifer into a sparkling holiday landscape. Everyone is invited to drive around, explore the displays, and, most importantly, vote for their favorites.

HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS – NOVEMBER 29 TO DECEMBER 6

From November 29 through December 6, Holiday Happenings fill Conifer with activities and events for all ages. From workshops and special shopping days to family-friendly gatherings and festive performances, there is something happening every day. Local businesses, nonprofits, and community groups host events all across town, creating a lively atmosphere where residents and visitors can celebrate the season in their own way.

HOLIDAY PASSPORT AND HOLIDAY HOT DEALS

Throughout the season, the Holiday Passport and Holiday Hot Deals encourage everyone to support local businesses while enjoying exclusive savings. Visitors collect passport stamps as they shop, dine, and explore, and completed passports are entered to win exciting prizes.

Meanwhile, Holiday Hot Deals offer special discounts and promotions that make it easy to shop local while checking off everyone on your gift list. It's a fun and rewarding way to discover new favorites, revisit familiar spots, and keep holiday dollars close to home.

TOGETHER, WE CELEBRATE COMMUNITY

As all these festive moments come together, Christmas in Conifer becomes a celebration of community, connection, and local pride. Whether you're lighting up your home, gathering with neighbors, exploring local shops, or cheering at the parade, every event adds meaning to the season!

Beth Schneider Executive Director Conifer Area Chamber of Commerce

If you have any membership questions, please contact the chamber office: director@GoConifer.com, 303-838-5711. Thank you for your continued support and thank you for shopping local!

WE SUPPORT LIVING LOCALLY

SPIRIT SPARKLES

The Sparkle Center and the Sparkle Foundation has newly opened in Marshdale.



Walk into a world of dazzling sparkle and rainbow reflections! Unique Holiday Gifts galore! The Sparkle Foundation's mission is to spread sparkle on planet Earth by using the engagement that sparkle and beauty can create to share and teach basic science and classical physics to local youth.

Featuring the largest collection of 3D printed creatures. The largest 3D printed dragons ever printed on this planet, including the widest range of sizes, colors, and creature type ever assembled. The first ever humaneyesed, sparkleyesed, and blinged creatures ever created.

All K-9 crystal diamond products are created, designed, and produced by senior citizens in Evergreen, CO. Our Taj, (crown) are created, designed, and patented by TJ Izzo. This patented design uses simple science to more than double refraction and reflection producing exponentially more sparkle, using a more pleasing Taj Mahal like shape. These may be used as focusers of attention and projectors of intention.

All 3D printed creatures are designed, sparkleyesed, and blinged by senior residents of Evergreen.

6949 Highway 73, Evergreen (behide Marshdale Burger on the second floor)
Store hours: Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays 10am – 5pm
Sundays 10am – 2pm or by appointment

www.thesparklecenter.com





CALENDAR OF EVENTS

December 3

Whiskey & Wing Wednesday at Revival Brews in Downtown Evergreen. Happy hour 3 to 5pm, half off whiskey and \$5 off wings open to close. Come try some amazing Colorado whiskeys for half the price. Try our delicious wings with your choice of one of our craft house-made sauces, \$5 off. Cheers!

December 5-14



StageDoor Theatre presents ELF Jr. the Musical, performed by our Junior Company. Shows on Dec. 5, 6, 7, 12, and 13 at 7 pm, and a 2 pm matinee on Sunday, Dec. 14. Tickets \$20, with discounts for seniors, students, and educators. This family-friendly show is based on the movie, with lyrics by Chad Beguelin, music by Matthew Sklar, and book by Thomas Mecham and Bob Martin. Also in December: The RexRideout and Friends **Annual Conifer Christmas concert**, December 7, at noon and 3 pm, tickets \$10. Through December 14, StageDoor Theatre is collecting nonperishable/non-expired food items for The Mountain Resource Center to support our community. Bring items to any performance. Visit www.stagedoortheatre.org.

Stagedoor Theatre is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit community theatre, open to everyone.

December 6

Bailey's Cowboy Christmas, a Christmas celebration with a Western twist. Mosey on down for toe-tappin' live music, hearty grub from the Glen Isle Chuck Wagon, and unique, handmade gifts in our Holiday Market. From the jingle of spurs to the jingle of sleigh bells, it's a celebration the whole family will love! https://www.bailey-colorado.org/cowboy-christmas

December 12 and 14

Season of Joy, 7 pm at the Evergreen Lutheran Church, 5980 County Hwy 73, Evergreen. The 85 voices of the Evergreen Chorale are bringing beauty and joy to the holiday season. Sing in the holiday spirit with classic carols, Christmas favorites, and new works of unparalleled beauty. https://www.ovationwest.org/season-of-joy

December 1

Free Event: from 3–5:30 pm. Explore Hiwan Museum and enjoy the addition of new exhibit panels throughout the 25-room historic home museum. Refreshments, holiday music, and activities for families and kids! Please join us. Location: 28473 Meadow Drive, Evergreen 80439

December 14

Join us for an Ole Timey Christmas at McGraw Park in Bailey. Christmas caroling, cookie walk, cocoa and cider, games and crafts, and more!

December 4, 11, and 18

Join us for Thirsty Thursdays at the Blackbird Cafe, from 4–7:45 pm, for local live music, appetizers, and drinks. 25940 Highway 74 in Kittredge.

December 19-21

Evergreen Players present **Seasons Readings: A Christmas Carol**, directed by Kathleen Davis. This December, six outstanding actors from our master company will portray all the characters in our exclusive rendition of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. This rendition of *A Christmas Carol* is fun for the entire family. Shows will be held at Center Stage, 27608 Fireweed Drive, in Evergreen. Friday and Saturday performances begin at 7:30 pm, and the Saturday and Sunday matinee performances at 2 pm. Tickets are \$25 for adults, \$20 seniors, and \$15 students, and may be purchased online at **www.evergreen-players.org** or by calling 720-515-1528. Group discounts are also available.

The Evergreen Players is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization producing 10 shows per year in the foothills. Established in 1950, the Players' mission is to create professional quality theater to inspire, engage and entertain. The Players' mailing address is P.O. Box 1271, Evergreen, CO 80437.

December 31

Evergreen Ball, Join EPRD for a New Year's Eve Extravaganza, 8pm-midnight at the Evergreen Lake House. Dress up in your finest attire and get ready to welcome in 2026 at Evergreen Lake House. Featuring a 9-piece band by the Michael C Experience to dance to, catered hors d'oeuvres and desserts to snack on, a photobooth to capture the memories, and a cash bar for toasting a goodbye to 2025! First drink included. https://www.evergreenrecreation.com/480/Evergreen-Ball

Submit your calendar events to *Your Mountain Connection* via Marty Hallberg (news@yourmtnconnection.com). Calendar Events are published as space allows. Information must be received by the 10th of each month prior to the actual date of the event. If your group is no longer meeting, please let *Your Mountain Connection* know via Marty Hallberg (news@yourmtnconnection.com).





Conifer Christmas

With Rex Rideout and Friends

unday, December 7, will be the 10th annual Conifer Christmas at the StageDoor Theatre, 25797 Conifer Road, in Conifer. There will be two shows, one at noon and another at 3 pm. As always, there will be songs and stories of Christmas past, including tales of celebrations around Conifer in the early days and featuring favorite carols ranging from the 19th century back to Elizabethan times. This being the tenth year, we wanted to offer a little more. There will be four musicians: multi-instrumentalist Norman Hughes, percussionist Dennis Swiftdeer Paige, multi-instrumentalist Rex Rideout, and will feature harpist and fiddler Marianne Gibbs, all joined by dancers from Caitríona Irish Dance. Tickets are \$10 and can be bought at www.StageDoorTheatre. org. The theater will also be hosting a non-perishable food drive for the Mountain Resource Center through December 14.

Stage Door Theater • 25797 Conifer Road, Conifer, CO 80433 www.stagedoortheatre.org

December 2025



December 3

Gather and Grow Empowerment Circle, from 9–10 am, is a supportive group for survivors and community members seeking connection, healing, and personal growth. Through open conversations, guided activities, and shared experiences, participants explore healthy relationships, build confidence, and reconnect with their inner strength—all in a safe, welcoming space where everyone is valued and supported. First Wednesdays at Mountainside Bakery, 32156 Castle Ct. #207, Evergreen, CO 80421

December 3

Meditative Sound Bath 5:30–6:30 pm. Join Brenda for a transformative vibrational meditation to harmonize emotions and thought patterns while soothing tensions in the body. Sensation is integrated with mindful intention to enliven energy centers and internal wisdom. Wear comfortable clothes, bring a water bottle, head pillow, and yoga mat (if you have one).

December 9

Men's Group, 7–8 pm, at PeaceWorks' admin office 25997 Conifer Rd, Ste D-6 upstairs conference room. Are you a victim or a survivor? Learn more with Dean at our monthly men's group to foster genuine connections, learn healthy relationship skills, and uplift each other. Through open discussions, activities, and support, we aim to build a community where every man feels valued and understood. Embrace your strengths, confront your challenges, and grow alongside like-minded individuals committed to personal and collective growth. Together, we

PeaceWorks, Inc. offers a complimentary Community Wellness Program as part of our advocacy for personal wellbeing, healthy relationships, and safe homes. All are welcome. Attend in person at Taspen's Dragonfly Studio, unless otherwise noted. Register **www.taspens healingcenter.com** under Events, or online

redefine masculinity with empathy, resilience, and mutual respect.

(Zoom details on website) www.peaceworks

December 10

inc.co/communitywellness

Dru Yoga 5:30–6:30 pm. Dru has a focus upon maintaining a healthy spine, through activational movements in the beginning of class and throughout a Dru session. A typical Dru Yoga class includes energy block release sequences, classical asanas (yoga postures), pranayama (breath work), mudras (gestures), positive affirmations, and also empowering visualizations. Dru classes are tailored to the student and their individual level, which makes it great for everyone.

December 14

Mindfulness Walk 10 am. Join Kathy at Pine Valley Ranch (30400 Crystal Lake Road, Pine) for gentle walking, grounding, and reflection. Whether you are feeling called to reconnect, reflect, or simply enjoy a calm morning, all are warmly welcomed. Bring layers for the weather, water, and an open heart.

December 17

Block Therapy™Trauma Release 5:30–6:30 pm. Trauma (physical and emotional) becomes trapped in your body and leads to pain, aging, and disease. This powerful self-healing practice unlocks the restrictions and adhesions that block blood and oxygen flow and releases trauma at a cellular level. All levels. Wear comfortable clothes. Bring a yoga mat if you have one and a water bottle.





December 6@ Lariat Lodge

December 13

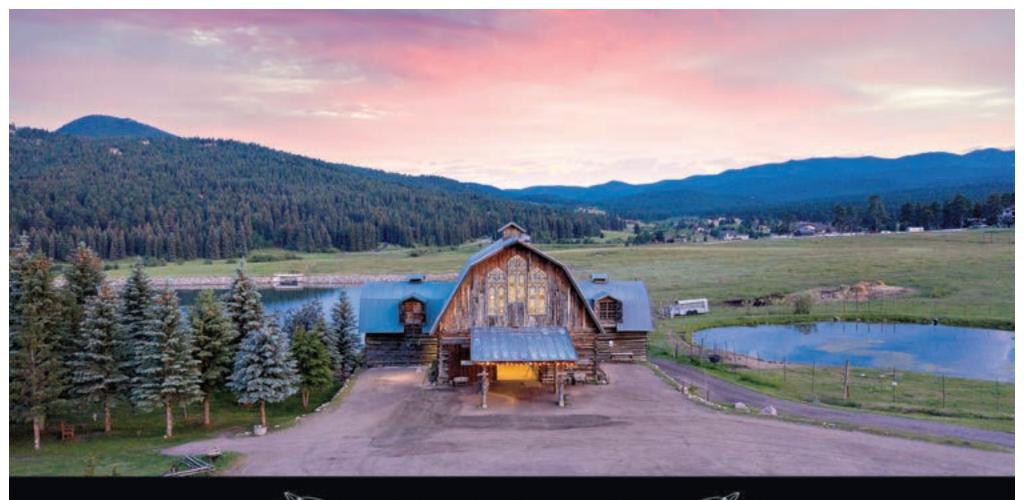
@ The Woodcellar Bar and Grill

December 20 @ The Wild Game

9:30–11:00 each Saturday

\$25/person NO TICKETS AVAILABLE AT THE DOOR

The Evergreen Chamber Santa Breakfasts are full of holiday family fun, delicious food, fun crafts to keep the kids busy at the table, and LOTS of time with Santa! Pictures for Everyone. Tickets are sold online only and this event always sells out. Everyone who wishes to be in attendance is kindly requested to purchase a ticket. https://evergreenchamber.org/santa-breakfast/



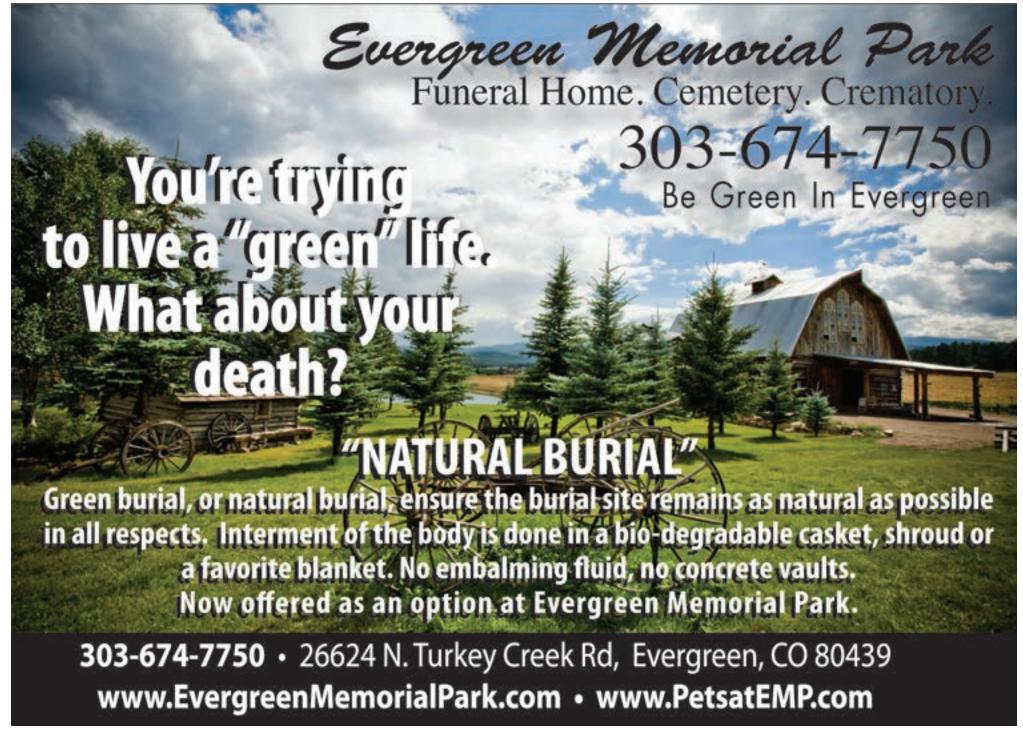


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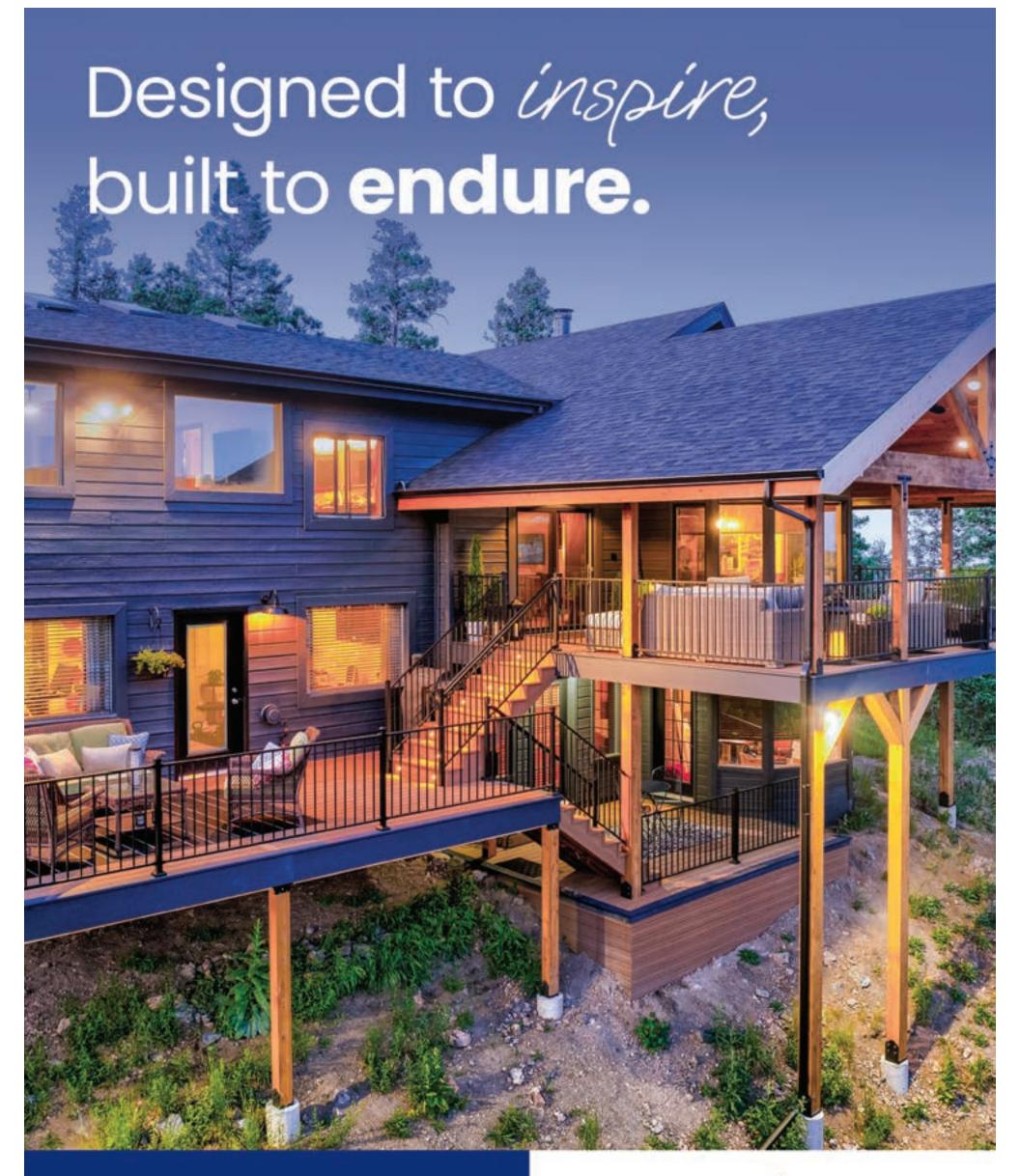




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