

Front Porch

DENVER, COLORADO

NORTHEAST DENVER

DECEMBER 2019

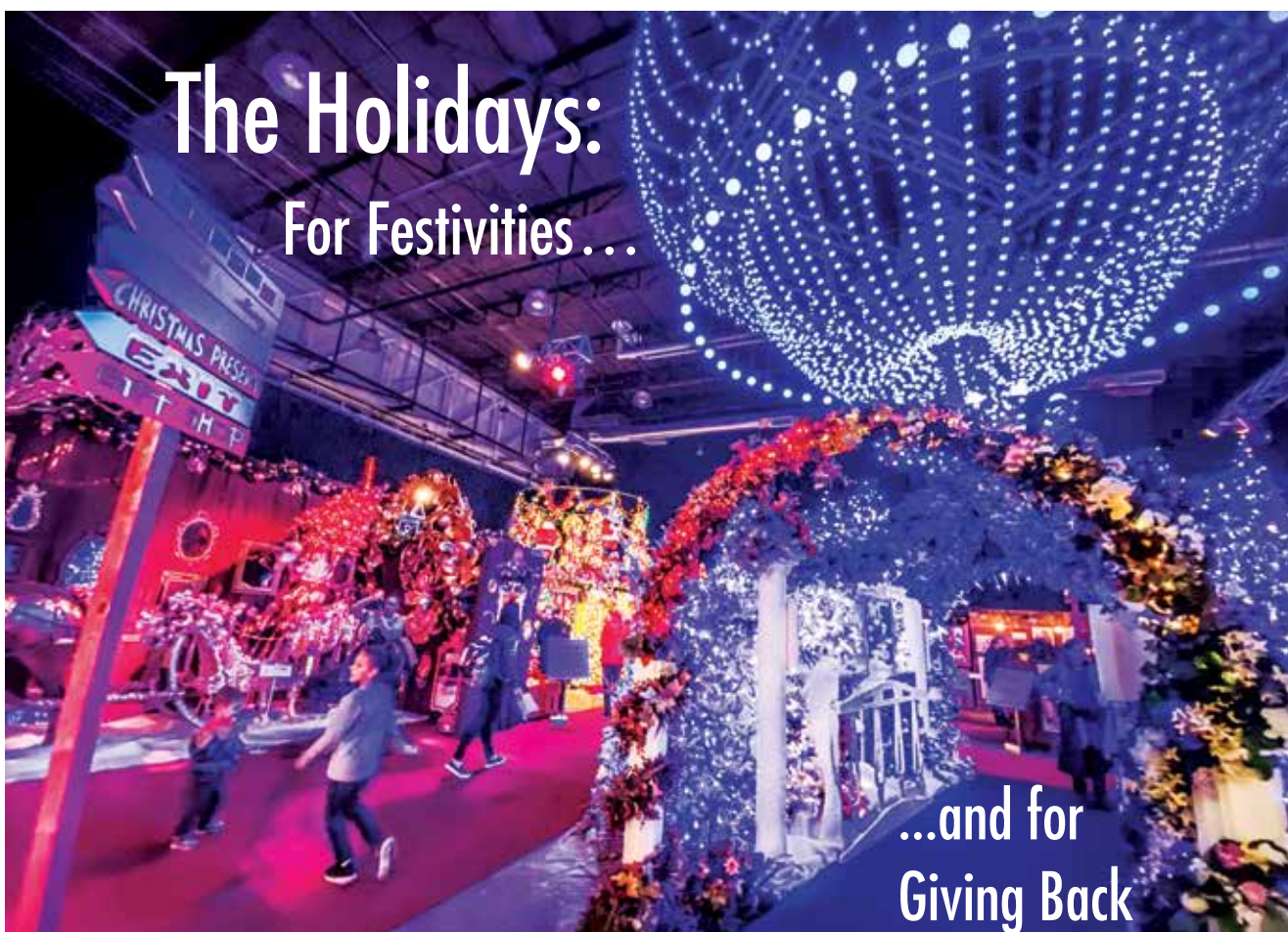
Bluff Lake: A Living Laboratory



Bluff Lake volunteer George Ho and Executive Director Rachel Crouch lead a group of bird watchers on a monthly walk around Bluff Lake Nature Center. Novice and experienced bird watchers gather the first Saturday of every month at Bluff Lake to observe and record birds. Over the past two decades, more than 193 species of birds have been spotted at Bluff Lake. *Story on page 26 by Mary Jo Brooks.*

The Holidays: For Festivities...

...and for Giving Back



Festive outings like Denver Center for Performing Arts' display of holiday cheer in the Hangar at Stanley offer happy memories for visitors. Another holiday tradition is giving back. Find ideas for places to volunteer over the holidays and year-round. *Story on page 10 by Mary Jo Brooks.*

The day the firemen delivered the teacher's baby—at school



DSST: Conservatory Green reading teacher Marissa Kast holds Zara, the 2 1/2 month old baby of her good friend and reading teacher colleague, Lindsay Agbalokwu. Firefighters from nearby Station 39 responded to the 911 call and helped deliver Zara on the sidewalk moments after they arrived. They returned to Zara's birthplace 2 1/2 months later to meet her and deliver gifts.



An early season snow offered good enough conditions for sledding in Greenway Park.

Contents

- | | | | |
|----|---|----|--|
| 3 | <i>Commentary</i>
Advocates keep banging their heads on the TABOR wall. | 18 | East Colfax Collective's Pleas to the City: Prevent Displacement and Improve Community Engagement |
| 5 | Reducing Your Greens' Carbon Footprint | 19 | Saving One Lab at a Time |
| 6 | All in a Day's Work, just not a typical day | 20 | NE News Updates: High Comfort Bike Lanes; Park Hill Golf Course; Illegal Pete's; MLK to Peoria Opening |
| 8 | "Women have been understudied for years. It's actually worse than you think." | 21 | Event List—Also find more events and post events online at FrontPorchNE.com |
| 10 | Ideas for Holiday Giving | 24 | SUN Spot: The Sustainable Neighborhoods Program; Stapleton Area Education; Proposed Zoning Change; Denver City Auditor; Nov. meeting recap; Meetings in 2020 |
| 12 | <i>Creative Aging</i>
Flipping the Cultural Narrative About Aging | 25 | Family Stress During the Holidays? |
| 14 | Rounding Up the Truth on RoundUp | 26 | Bluff Lake: A Living Laboratory |
| 16 | Indie Prof:
<i>The Kingmaker</i>
<i>Mindhunter</i> | | |



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Pick up the *Front Porch* in the Lowry and Mayfair Safeways or our sidewalk racks. Readers are welcome to take multiple papers from any *Front Porch* racks to share at local businesses and organizations.

Events & Announcements at Stapleton

Sweet William Holiday Market

Saturday, December 7, 9am-4pm & Sunday, December 8, 10am-4pm, The Cube
The Sweet William Holiday Market is a vintage and lifestyle market offering a refreshing alternative for shoppers who are on the hunt for holiday treasures, crafts, and one-of-a-kind gifts. The holiday market is an event reflecting the unique, eclectic, and urban character of the Holidays in the Stapleton neighborhood. We host a top-notch variety of artisans, collectors, musicians, non-profit organizations, and food vendors.

Wine Education Series

Wednesday, December 11, 7pm, The Cube
The MCA's Wine Education Series spotlights the educational side of wine tasting. The tasting will be guided by wine expert Grant Harmsen of The Vineyard Wine Shop, who will educate attendees on the selected wines' evolution from vineyard to table. This sit-down tasting will include an hour of educational discussion highlighting a variety of Grant's favorite Holiday reds and sparkling wines followed by time for social tasting and intimate interaction. Tickets are \$20 and will increase to \$40 on the day of the event. To purchase tickets, visit stapletoncommunity.com. You must be 21+ to attend, and no refunds will be permitted.

Active Minds Seminar – The History of Colorado

Thursday, December 12, 1pm, Sam Gary Library
Join Active Minds in discovering the many stories behind Colorado's vibrant history. You will learn about the competing claims to Colorado, dating back to the Native Americans who originally occupied our state's land. The lecture will cover our 15-year struggle to become the 38th state, as well as the role mining and oil played in the evolution of our homeland. Bring your favorite Colorado stories to share with others who call this beautiful state home!

Holiday Concert

Friday, December 13, 6:30pm, The Cube
A local trombone quartet will be performing a holiday-inspired concert and sing-along, highlighting some seasonal stylings that will surely bring this magical time of year to life. These four musicians possess a charismatic and authentic stage presence that will set the audience aflame with their spark-throwing enthusiasm and passion for the holiday season. This concert is free and open to the public.

Annual Members' Meeting

Wednesday, December 18, 6:30pm, The Cube
The 2019 Annual Members' Meeting is scheduled for December 18. At this meeting, community members are required to elect ten (10) representatives to serve as District Delegates for the following year. Proxy ballots will be mailed out to all members (home & business owners) in the community by the first week of December. This meeting will also be streamed live on Facebook for members that would like to participate online.

Active Minds Seminar – The Lewis & Clark Expedition

Thursday, December 19, 6:30pm, Sam Gary Library
Join Active Minds for a program focusing on Lewis & Clark's expedition heading West over 200 years ago. They will discuss the achievements and challenges of the expedition as well as the impact it made on our young nation. Building upon the experiences of those on the expedition, we will also discuss the evolution of our country's relationship with Native Americans and the lands they inhabited.

Holiday Cocktails Workshop

Thursday, December 19, 7pm, The Cube
Are you looking to impress your friends and family with some newly developed mixology skills over the holidays? Come to our Christmas Cocktails Workshop, where you'll be able to explore a diverse collection of bartending supplies and produce your very own, signature, holiday beverage. There will be a cocktail expert present to demonstrate a variety of bartending techniques and flavor profiles. Tickets are \$20 and will increase to \$40 on the day of the event. To purchase tickets, visit stapletoncommunity.com. You must be 21+ to attend, and no refunds will be permitted.

Santa's Best Christmas Trees

Monday-Thursday, 11am-8pm, Friday-Sunday, 9am-8pm, North & South Greens
This holiday season be sure to visit one of our Christmas tree lots located on both the Founders' and Conservatory Greens. The North Conservatory Green is located at 49th Place & Valencia Street, and our South Founders' Green is located at 29th Avenue & Roslyn Street. You won't have to go far to find the perfect tree for your 2019 holiday display!

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Master Community Association **STAPLETON**

Front Porch

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The Front Porch – NE Denver distributes more than 28,000 free papers during the first week of each month. Papers are delivered to doorsteps and/or racks in Stapleton, Park Hill, Lowry, Montclair, Mayfair and NW Aurora.

The Front Porch is printed with soy-based ink and the paper contains 30% post-consumer waste. We contribute monthly to replant trees equivalent to the amount of paper used in each issue.

COMMENTARY

By Todd Engdahl

Over the last three decades governors, various legislators, education advocates, construction company executives, business leaders and civic activists have organized to ask Colorado voters to increase taxes to raise more money for the state's cash-strapped schools, crumbling highways and other needs.

In every case voters—or at least a majority of the adults who bothered to vote—have said, “No thanks” to statewide tax increases, except for one earmarked tobacco tax hike and the brand-new on-line gambling tax.

The defeat of Proposition CC in this November's election is only the latest in the string of losses for about a dozen other ballot proposals to fund education and/or transportation since the early 1990s.

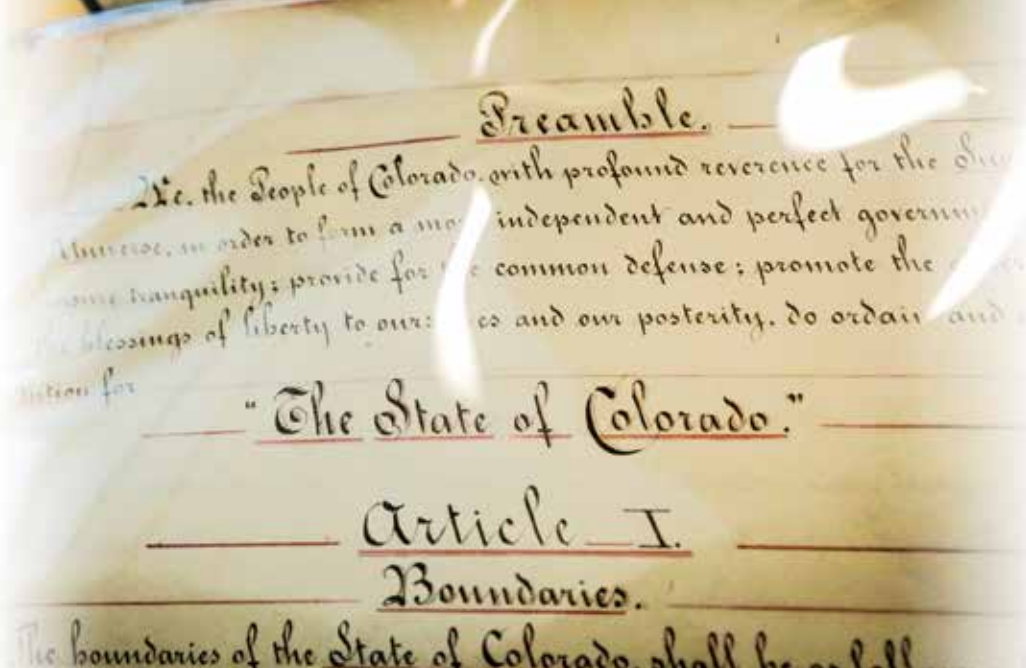
Proposition CC wasn't a tax increase. It merely would have allowed the state to keep tax revenues collected in excess of the annual limits set by the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights (TABOR), a constitutional amendment approved by voters in 1992.

Despite the defeat of CC, proponents say they aren't deterred and will pursue other TABOR fixes, including a possible proposal to repeal or otherwise modify TABOR at the ballot box in November 2020. That effort is being coordinated partly by the Colorado Fiscal Institute, a think tank that analyzes state financial issues.

Two key questions are at the center of the debate over TABOR.

Does Colorado need more tax revenue?

For many people, the objective answer to that question is yes. Colorado has a multi-billion dollar backlog of transportation projects. On the subject of K-12 education, Colorado teachers are among the lowest paid in the nation, and more and more state school districts, especially in rural areas, have moved to four-day school weeks, partly to conserve financial resources.



The original handwritten Colorado Constitution is in a sealed case in the Ralph L. Carr Colorado Judicial Center in Denver. Once in the Constitution, amendments, as has been seen with TABOR, are difficult to change.

Advocates keep banging their heads on the TABOR wall.

But subjectively, the answer to that question depends on one's beliefs about government. Conservative policymakers and some voters believe the state has plenty of revenue—it just needs to prioritize spending differently. (The shop-worn canard about “waste, fraud and abuse,” however, is, a fantasy. Colorado state government is generally lean and efficient.)

What some conservatives are particularly exercised about is the growing cost of Medicaid benefits. If medical spending could be trimmed, they argue, there'd be more money for education and highways. Some conservatives also argue that too much education spending is diverted to administrative costs, an argument that's never been proven.

Why do Colorado citizens keep saying “no” at the ballot box?

Since TABOR was enacted, voters have approved hundreds of local tax increases and lifted many local revenue caps. Why are they reluctant at the state level?

First, ballot measure language is confusing—intentionally so. Some of the more obscure provisions of TABOR require stilted ballot language that can be confusing to voters.

Voters who are confused or uncertain about ballot measures tend to vote no.

Second, voters don't seem to be as connected to state government as they are to local issues. Think about it—state government is responsible for services that most people don't use—or, more importantly—don't think they use.

Most Coloradans aren't prisoners, don't receive Medicaid benefits, don't go to state colleges or receive public assistance—among the major parts of state spending. Those are major drivers of the state budget, but most citizens don't use those services. Almost everyone drives or travels on state highways, but many people have a limited understanding of how those are funded.

One of the biggest pieces of state spending is aid to local school districts, but most voters also don't have a detailed understand-

ing of how schools are paid for. And, the majority of Coloradans don't necessarily have a direct connection to public schools—they're either childless or their kids have moved on from the public schools.

Third, Colorado voter turnout often is anemic, and that affects voting on ballot measures.

The turnout for the November election was about 41 percent, or about 1.5 million votes out of 3.8 million voters. (More than 600,000 other Colorado adults aren't even registered to vote.)

Of those who voted, approximately 32 percent were Democrats, 35 percent were Republican and 32 percent were unaffiliated. Republican voters generally tend to be older and more skeptical of taxes, so they often swing the results in low-turnout elections.

Those three factors highlight the challenges for advocates of state fiscal reform. They have to find more compelling reasons to convince voters, and they really need to work on a ground game to turn out voters.

What the defeat of CC means to you

Most taxpayers don't receive a check in the mail each year that revenues exceed the TABOR limit. Instead, state legislators have given TABOR refunds indirectly, such as the property tax reduction to seniors and some veterans. In some large-refund years tax rates can be lowered temporarily.

Todd Engdahl is owner of Capitol Editorial Services, a firm that provides legislative coverage, intelligence and analysis to private clients. During a long career as an editor and public policy writer, he served as executive city editor of The Denver Post, founder of DenverPost.com and founder of Education News Colorado, which later became part of Chalkbeat Colorado.

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	Montview Blvd Presbyterian Church	12
	Stapleton Church	17
Community Organization	Stapleton Master Community Association	2
Dance Classes	Dance Institute LLC	22
Dental	Lowry Family Dentistry	15
	Nestman Orthodontics	27
	Stapleton Dental	21
	Stapleton Orthodontics	18
	Trommeter Orthodontics	11
	Williams Family Dentistry	6
Design and Remodeling	Diane Gordon Design	23
	Gather and Spruce	25
Entertainment	Denver Center for the Performing Arts	28
Environmental Sustainability	Denver Recycles	7

Events	Jackalope Arts	3
Family Entertainment	Denver Center for the Performing Arts	11
	Shops at Northfield Stapleton	8
Fitness	Bladium Sports and Fitness Center	17
	Ubergrippen Indoor Climbing Crag	25
Home Furnishings	Smart Spaces	24
Home Services	Denver Recycles	22
	Reflection Windows & Doors LLC	12
Hospitals	Rose Medical Center	14
Housecleaning	Number 1 House Cleaning	17
	White Magic Cleaning Services	25
Insurance	Allstate - The Mathes Agency	25
Medical Doctors	Aspen Medical Group	9
	Colorado Gastroenterology	23
	HealthONE Premier OBGYN	12
	Stapleton Pediatrics	23
Museum	History Colorado Center	16

Opticians	Colorado Family Eye Center - Stapleton	17
Pets	Ciji's Natural Pet Supplies	27
Plumbers	Dirty Jobs Done Dirt Cheap	16
Pre-Schools/Childcare	Denver Preschool Program	7
Real Estate	RE/MAX Momentum Stapleton	26
	Wolfe & Epperson Real Estate	19
Research Studies	Parent's perception research study	24
Restaurants	It's Brothers Bar & Grill	10
RV Sales & Rentals	B&B RV, Inc.	13
	B&B RV, Inc	28
Schools	Denver Discovery School	22
	Denver Language School	4
Tutoring	Results Learning	16
Window Coverings	Budget Blinds	5



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Pictured, Left to Right: Eric Haley, Co-Founder and CFO, Jenn Frymark, Chief Greenhouse Officer and Viraj Puri, Co-Founder and CEO of Gotham Greens. Their newest venture, located just north of the Stanley Marketplace, will grow fresh greens year-round for local grocery stores and restaurants. Though not “certified organic,” the company does not use pesticides or herbicides in its hydroponic greenhouses. Below: Hydroponic greenhouses are very efficient, requiring less water and land than traditional farming methods. Photos courtesy of Gotham Greens.

Reducing Your Greens’ Carbon Footprint

By Martina Will, PhD

Eric Haley, Co-Founder and CFO of Gotham Greens, recalls the lightbulb moment when he and Viraj Puri got the idea for their fresh produce and food company. Puri, Co-Founder and CEO of Gotham Greens, at the time worked for an environmental engineering firm that built the nonprofit Science Barge, which floats on the Hudson River. The barge features a hydroponic greenhouse vegetable farm, solar panels and wind turbines to educate people about sustainability. Famous chefs would bring their children to the barge on Saturday mornings and almost invariably asked about purchasing the fresh produce, leading the two to wonder. “Why would a Michelin star chef be so interested in buying lettuce produced in a greenhouse when there are farmers’ markets everywhere?” says Haley.



Haley, who grew up in Greenwood Village and attended Cherry Creek High School, met Puri while studying abroad in Italy. The roommates became best friends and years later, both were living in New York City where Haley was an investment banker and Puri worked in the clean tech and sustainability fields. After conducting research on the produce supply chain, Puri and Haley were stunned to learn from conversations with retailers and local restaurants how far fresh produce had to travel. Much of the basil sold in New York, for example, had been grown in Israel. From there, it flew to JFK and transferred to a flight

across the country. After touching down in Los Angeles, it moved to the Salinas Valley. There, the basil was packaged before being flown back to New York with “packed in California” labels. Puri and Haley saw an opportunity to take their love of sustainability and grow fresh produce that could be harvested and delivered the next day to area retailers and restaurants. One business plan, one grant and multiple calls to friends and family later, they built their first 15,000-square-foot rooftop greenhouse in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, N.Y., in 2011. This spring, the company will open its first Mountain West location, a 30,000-square-foot greenhouse built on land they are leasing from the Stanley Marketplace. Though they looked at many Colorado locations, they found the Stanley site ideal “given its location, its adaptive reuse and its customer-facing element,” says Haley. Two of Haley’s longtime friends work for developer Westfield Company, Inc., and he admits that having his friends as landlords was appealing as well, making the project that much more fun. The company currently operates six greenhouses in New York City and Chicago and will open new locations in Providence and Baltimore. “We focus on redevelopment projects and adaptive reuse of urban space,” reflects Puri. “The Stanley site was a brownfield so we had to remediate the land before starting construction.” Within the Aurora greenhouse, there will

be different climate and humidity zones for seedlings, lettuces and basil. Puri estimates the location will have a little over an acre of hydroponic growing space, producing about 20 acres’ worth of greens due to the great efficiency of indoor greenhouse farming. Gotham Greens’ greenhouses use 95 percent less water and 97 percent less land than conventional farming. By eliminating all that international and domestic travel, Gotham Greens reduces the produce’s carbon footprint while giving retailers and consumers fresher food with a longer shelf life. Gotham Greens grows its produce without pesticides or herbicides, in a controlled environment. A resident ladybug population eliminates aphids and other would-be pests. The locally-grown lettuces have a suggested retail price of \$3.99 for a 4.5-ounce container. For about the same price, the company also sells 10-ounce bags of “Ugly Greens (Are Beautiful),” those imperfect leaves from the outer layer of lettuces, which may be blemished or discolored but are just as tasty and nutritious as the perfect leaves, according to Haley. When asked about the elephant in the room—those plastic clamshells—Puri says the company continues to look at alternatives at trade shows in Germany and elsewhere but for now uses plastics to meet supermarkets’ food safety and packaging requirements, and to prevent food waste by extending product shelf life. Though Go-



tham Greens has considered compostable plastics, Haley says a lot of the plant-based plastics originate in GMO corn and are not necessarily better for the environment, especially since they typically can’t be backyard composted. “We are hopeful ...that the brilliant minds who are out there will come up with more sustainable solutions that we can adopt,” says Puri. Beyond growing a lot of greens, both Puri and Haley expect the Denver-Aurora business will serve as an educational site, hosting tours for schools, clubs and university classes that want to learn more about sustainability, indoor greenhouse agriculture and hydroponics. Although the typical germination rate is 98%, they overplant to ensure that their greenhouses are always growing at capacity. They routinely give away any excess seedlings to schools and community groups. Gotham Greens will not have a retail site but will supply area grocers and restaurants. The company’s longstanding relationship with Whole Foods Market means the retailer will certainly be selling Denver area-grown produce at local Whole Foods Markets. The company is currently exploring additional local partners. Haley says they expect to hire about 30 full-time employees at the Denver-Aurora location. For more information and to see job openings, visit www.gothamgreens.com





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All in a Day's Work

just not a typical day



Right: New mom Lindsay Agbalokwu lets Zachary Bousman hold baby Zara 2 1/2 months after he helped with her delivery on the sidewalk at DSST: Conservatory Green. Engineer Todd Hall and Capt. Derek Warlum from Denver Fire Station 39 A-Shift Crew join in celebrating Zara's healthy birth.

Left and below: Agbalokwu and baby Zara were photographed by Marisa Kast minutes after Zara's birth. Later, at the hospital, when asked what time Zara was born, Kast pulled out her phone and got the time off the photo. It was 9:06am.

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FrontPorchNE.com



By Carol Roberts

Early on Tuesday, Sept. 3, 6th grade reading teaching Lindsay Agbalokwu instant messaged her good friend and 7th grade reading teacher colleague Marissa Kast that she was feeling a little weird. But her due date was still three weeks away and she'd just felt one small pain. She thought it might be a sign the baby would arrive in the coming week.

Being a teacher with students waiting, she went to school. After attending to her homeroom advisory, her sixth grade class went downstairs for their morning meeting, and she presented the weekly award nomination. That part of her day accomplished, Agbalokwu went back upstairs and started her first class.



"That's when I felt like a ton of pressure...something's not quite right." Thoughts of what to do flashed through her mind. "I need to find Marisa. I need to find Natalie (Lewis, the School Director). Should I call my mom to come pick me up? That'll take too long. Marisa can take me to the hospital."

Kast got word Agbalokwu needed her and found her in the teachers workroom. She could see she was in pain. They tried calling the doctor's office but it wasn't open yet. Marisa then dashed back to her classroom and told the vice principal she was leaving, grabbed her keys, and drove her car around from one side of the building to the other where Agbalokwu was waiting.

"By the time I got my car from that side of the building to this side, she was unable to stand," says Marissa. "I thought, 'Oh my God. I just left you three minutes ago. What happened?'"

Agbalokwu reflects on that moment, "I was like, it's happening. I was feeling a combination of anxious and unbelievable. I went back and forth from thinking, 'Is this going to be a complete false alarm and super em-

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December 2019

6

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barrassing? The fire department's here and nothing's happening.' Or, 'It's unbelievable, she's really coming.' School Director Lewis and Dean Chris Earls were with Agbalokwu and had called 911. The dispatcher had said, 'You need to lie her down.'



Photo courtesy of Denver Fire Dept.

Kast remembers thinking, 'Where do we take her? We have an elementary school downstairs and we have silent hallways. She's clearly in a lot of pain [and not silent]. We can't take her inside because there are 8-year-olds learning there. Where do we put her? On the ground? I was like, 'I have a sleeping bag in my car.' We go on a staff retreat in the mountains every before school starts—and I hadn't taken my sleeping bag out of my car yet.'

'We laid her down on the sleeping bag and the 911 operator said, 'I'm going to walk you through how to deliver this baby.' I said, 'Hold on, Lindsay, hold on.' But it was very clear that was not an option. Luckily we started hearing sirens at that point,' says Kast.

Agbalokwu says of that moment, 'Once I saw them (the firemen) I calmed down. Natalie and Chris and Marissa were there, being support people and I was like, breathe, it's ok. Once I heard those voices it was like, it's ok, my body's going to do this. It was fast and I saw the baby—and then I didn't care how it happened. I had the baby. She's beautiful.'



Baby Zara dons a firefighter helmet knitted by LienChi Hall as Zachary Bousman holds the gift basket for her. Firefighter Andrew Bristow (left) 'caught' Zara when she was born. The firefighters also created a custom 'Heirloom Birth Certificate' (pictured above) with an image of the firehouse.

Augustana Festival Christmas Concert | Sunday, December 15 | 7:30 pm | Choir, Handbells, Organ, Orchestra
Longest Night: A Service of Healing and Hope | Wednesday, December 18 | 6:30 pm
Christmas Eve Worship | Tuesday, December 24 | 3 pm • 5 pm • 7:30 pm
Christmas Day Worship | Wednesday, December 25 | 10:30 am

Augustana LUTHERAN CHURCH
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 5000 E Alameda Ave | Denver CO 80246 | 303-388-4678 | www.augustanadenver.org

DENVER

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January 2020

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	30	31	H	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	H	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

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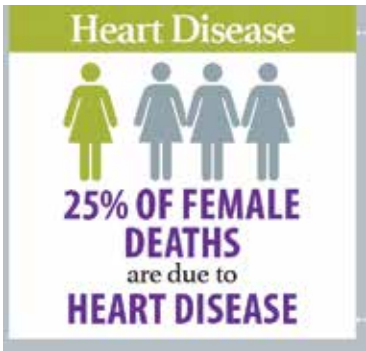
FUNDING QUALITY PRESCHOOL FOR DENVER



Dr. Jane Reusch and Dr. Judith Regensteiner stand in the lab where they conduct research on how sex, diabetes and cardiovascular health interact. Regensteiner is co-founder of the Center for Women's Health Research at the CU Anschutz Medical Campus in Aurora.

By Martina Will, PhD

Notwithstanding the pink ribbons adorning license plates and yogurt lids to raise breast cancer awareness, heart disease is actually the number one killer of women in the U.S., with 25 percent of women's deaths due to cardiovascular disease each year. This figure is higher than all cancers combined, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Though some differences emerge when viewed by race and ethnicity, heart disease remains within



the top two causes of death for Hispanic, Black, Native American, and Asian women in the U.S. And surprisingly, until relatively recently, most studies of cardiovascular health centered on men. "The truth is that women have been very understudied over the years...it's really kind of shocking; it's actually worse than you think, not better than you think," says Dr. Judy Regensteiner, Director and Co-Founder of the Center for Women's Health Research at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus. In fact, the

top 20 drugs that are prescribed in this country, the majority were not approved with enough information on women—there weren't enough women in the studies to determine if they worked the same in women," says Regensteiner. In fact, a 2001 Government Accountability Office report found that 8 out of the 10 prescription drugs withdrawn from the market between 1997 and 2000 posed greater health risks for women than for men. When Regensteiner and two of her colleagues in 2004 established the Center for Women's Health Research, they envisioned a place that would undertake "cutting-edge research in women's health and sex differences." But don't be misled

"Women have been It's actually wo

warning signs for heart attack and the characteristics of heart failure and coronary disease manifest differently in men and women. Sex differences are not confined to symptoms, but may also include treatment protocols and medications.



by the name. The Center actually studies both women and men to understand the relationship of sex and gender to cardiovascular health, diabetes, and mental health. Supporting research is the Center's first pillar. The Center's second pillar is mentoring young scholars. The Center also provides grants to researchers. To date, over 70 MDs and PhDs have been awarded funding for projects that range from "basic science" (mice and molecules) to epidemiological studies. And yes, even when using mice, the studies rely on female and male mice. "This is such a new field," reflects Regensteiner, who says that it was only in 1993, with the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Revitalization Act, that clinical research had to



include women and minorities. The Center also has a grant that allows researchers



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whose work might otherwise be interrupted due to health concerns or a family issue, to hire help during a hiatus from the lab.

Endocrinologist Dr. Jane Reusch views the Center's grants as "seed money" for many researchers, who might use the \$25,000-\$50,000 they receive to launch a small study. That study then has the potential to be translated into a larger grant down the road, when NIH sees preliminary results from a pilot study. The Center has distributed about \$1,700,000 in grants over the years, and its researchers have leveraged those studies into \$78,000,000 in NIH grants.

Reusch and Regenstein, whose research together focuses on diabetes, have new insights on "these crazy discrepancies in our knowledge of how to treat women." Their work demonstrates



that "women, the minute they develop diabetes, all of a sudden have the same risk as a man for having a cardiovascular event." In other words, the "cardioprotection" premenopausal women normally have disappears when a woman has diabetes; additionally, women with diabetes have a higher risk of blindness than men.

"Neither one of us can do what we

do on our own, or at least not as well; and that is why it's so great to be doing research at a school of medicine and have that opportunity to continuously learn from everybody around us," says Reusch.

The Center's third pillar is public outreach. The Center shares its research with the general public and the medical



Front Porch photos by Christie Gosch

Paisley Huntoon talks with Deirdre Rafferty, Senior Professional Research Assistant and Study Coordinator as she works out. Huntoon was diagnosed with Type 2 Diabetes earlier this year and signed up to participate in a diabetes/cardiovascular health research study at the Center for Women's Health Research. Of her diagnosis, she says: "It is genetic in my family, so it wasn't totally surprising." When photographed, she was in the first week of the 15-week exercise program. "I would say I'm significantly better than I used to be since I've been taking my meds in June," she says. "It's been kind of cool to do some of these tests that I wouldn't otherwise have been exposed to. And everyone is super helpful and answers all of my questions." The Center's researchers study a range of healthcare issues where sex and gender may play a role in symptoms, outcomes, or treatment.

The graphics with women's health statistics are courtesy of the Center for Women's Health Research.

community to ensure that their researchers' findings do not remain confined to laboratories or the medical ivory tower. An upcoming public event on Dec. 12 is highlighted above.

Over 13 million women in the U.S. have diabetes, according to the Center, which is seeking sedentary men and wom-

en aged 30-55 for a compensated research study that includes 4 months of supervised exercise training. They need participants with Type 2 diabetes but no diabetes complications and others without diabetes for the control group. To learn more, contact

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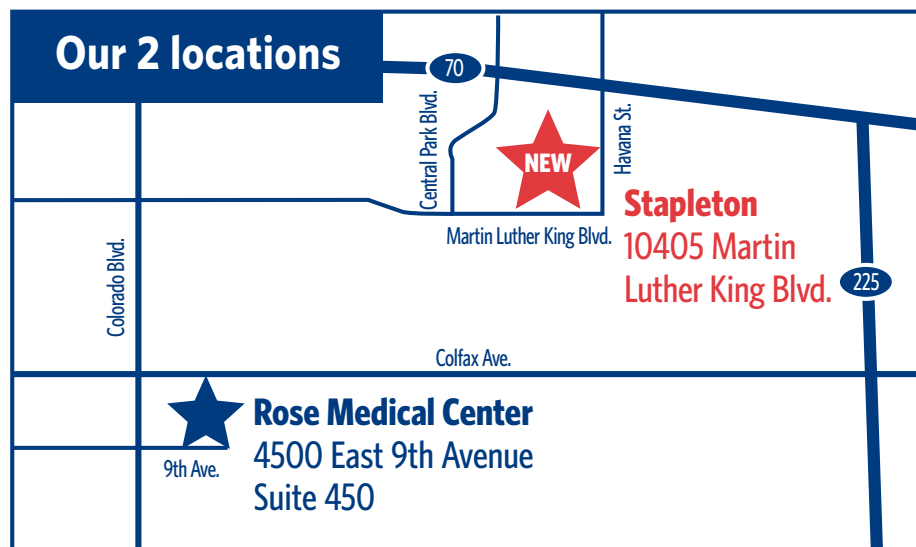
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Ideas for Holiday Giving

The approaching holiday season is a reminder of the many individuals and families who are less fortunate than ourselves. Giving back—through monetary donations or volunteering—offers a way to honor the season and perhaps even put us on a path toward year-round generosity.

By Mary Jo Brooks

One of the easiest ways to donate money is through Colorado Gives Day on Dec. 10. Now celebrating its 10th anniversary, the goal of this statewide initiative, sponsored by the Community First Foundation and FirstBank, is to increase philanthropy through online giving. Every donation on Dec. 10 is boosted by a \$1.5 million incentive fund, which is distributed to Colorado charities proportionate to the donations they receive. Last year on Colorado Gives Day, donors raised more than \$35 million to benefit 2,481 non-profit groups. Visit ColoradoGives.org and search by type or location. You can also schedule future donation dates.

50% Tax Credit for Childcare Organization Donations

Organizations that are certified to provide childcare offer a 50% tax credit. (For example, if you donate \$100 to a qualifying childcare organization, you will receive a \$50 tax credit. Request the childcare tax credit form when making the donation on the Colorado Gives website.)

Local Non-profits Needing Volunteers

Following are descriptions of organizations near NE Denver and the kind of volunteer help they need—most are listed on the ColoradoGives website. For additional ideas about places to volunteer, consult ProjectHelping.org or ImpactLocally.org—both host volunteering events and have online calendars for signing up.

Aurora Warms the Night provides shelter, meals and advocacy for those experiencing homelessness. Year-round services include providing meals, warm clothing, hygiene items and referrals to partner agencies. Families can volunteer by assembling care kits or making & serving hot meals. Visit their website for signup information at AuroraWarmsTheNight.org.

The Urban Farm at Stapleton—The tag-line for this Stapleton-based organization is “cultivating kids, crops, critters and community.” The farm depends on volunteers to keep animal pens clean, grass mowed, fences mended and much more. Volunteers must be ages 8 and older and attend a one-hour orientation session. The next orientation is Dec 21 at 9a. For more info, consult the website at TheUrbanFarm.org.

Sand Creek Regional Greenway preserves and promotes natural and recreational resources along a 14-mile public trail in northeast Denver. The organization has monthly cleanups and other opportunities for regular trail maintenance. On December 15 from 9-11am the organization is asking volunteers to participate in a winter bird count. This is a great citizen-science opportunity; no experience is necessary. For more information visit SandCreekGreenway.org.

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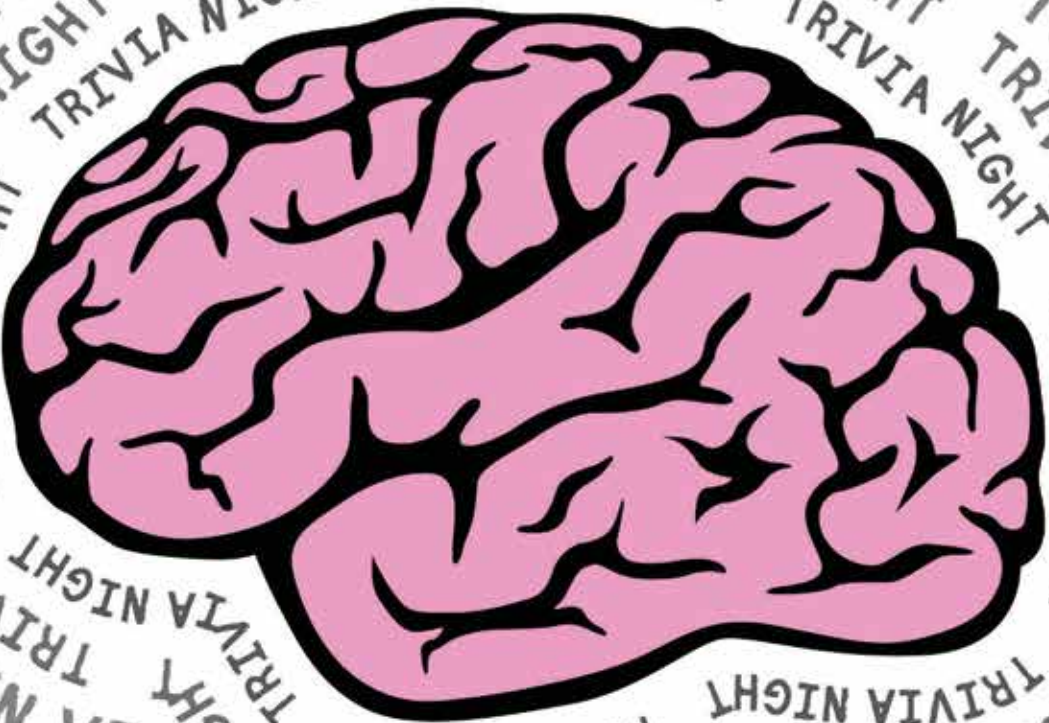




Community service on a trip to Nicaragua with Project Lumina left Park Hill residents Sophia Means (left) and Natalie Angstadt with a desire to do more for the people they'd met there. The two East High School students came home and took it upon themselves to raise \$2,531 selling Nicaraguan coffee—funds they sent to Nicaragua to cover a full year of university tuition for two students there.



The Crossing is part of the Denver Rescue Mission and provides transitional housing and opportunities to help people to attain self-sufficiency. Families can volunteer to serve meals 365 days a year, 3 times a day. A signup list opens 3 months in advance. Spots during the holiday season fill up quickly. Visit www.denverrescuemission.org to sign up.

Casa de Paz is located just a few miles away from the Aurora immigrant detention center. It provides housing, meals and emotional support to families separated by immigrant detention. Volunteers are needed to bring a meal to feed 4-6 people or clean the facility. Contact Executive Director Sara Jackson at sjackson@casadepazcolorado.org.

The Gathering Place is a daytime drop-in center for women, children, and transgender individuals experiencing poverty or homelessness. The best way to help is to organize a donation drive for food or toiletry items. Please consult their website for specific



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Handmade Mats for Homeless

Residents of Overture Stapleton have met weekly for almost 2 years to work on community service projects. They have knitted hats and blankets for newborn babies and collected canned goods for food drives. A year and a half ago Pat Moore, left, learned from a project at her church how to make mats for homeless persons using plastic bags. The multi-step process requires cutting the bags into strips that are loops, linking the loops into

long chains, and knitting and crocheting the plastic chains into 12-inch squares. Linda Thorstad, right, made over 100 of the squares. Moore wove the squares together into 3' x 6' mats that are thick enough to provide some protection from cold wet ground. Overture residents collected toiletries and socks, among other items, to go in holiday bags with the mats for distribution at the Denver Rescue Mission. The colors reflect the sources of the bags: King Soopers brown, Safeway white and Denver Post blue and orange.

Comment and share at [FrontPorchNE.com](https://frontporchne.com)

Project Worthmore fosters community and self-sufficiency for Denver-area refugees. It needs volunteers to set-up, serve food and hand out toys at its holiday party on December 7th. To sign up, contact anne@projectworthmore.org. For a longer-term opportunity, Project Worthmore is seeking families to partner with refugee families to share meals or outings (Must commit to at least 3 months). When the weather turns warmer, volunteers are also needed to work at the Delaney community farm which helps connect refugees with small-scale, sustainable agriculture.

Denver Children's Home serves children who have survived trauma, neglect and abuse. In December, you can "adopt a family" and provide gifts for families of children in the home's care or "adopt a classroom" to provide much-needed supplies. Year-round, volunteers (21 years and older) are needed to make meals or play games with children. For more information consult [Denver-ChildrensHome.org](https://denverchildrenshome.org).

items of need. [TGPDenver.org/donate/donate-new-and-used-items.html](https://tgpdenver.org/donate/donate-new-and-used-items.html) or contact Kelly Tobin at kelly@tgpdenver.org.

Food Bank of the Rockies serves people who struggle to meet their basic food needs (almost half are children). Volunteers are needed to work at two warehouse sites. Volunteers must be at least 14 years old and accompanied by an adult if they are under 16. Sign up on their website FoodBankRockies.org.

Anchor Center for Blind Children provides education and support services for visually impaired children from birth to 5 years of age. There are numerous ways for adults to volunteer at the school year-round. Some special opportunities for family volunteering include holiday gift wrapping on Dec. 10 & 11, year-end clerical help on Jan. 6 and 9 and helping to set-up, serve and clean up at a "Visions of Love" event on Feb. 6 & 7. For more information, contact Sarah Rice srice@anchorcenter.org.

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Kathy Gresh takes advice from Tony Ortega on how to add color and depth to her bird. Front Porch photos by Christie Gosch

By Tracy Wolfer Osborne

Elizabeth Sanders had given up painting. She gathered her canvases and brushes, paints and art books and put them in a donation box next to the trash. The last thing she painted was a portrait of her daughter, Malia Rose. But Malia was dead now. She died two years ago of cancer, and Sanders was in a funk. “I go like this,” she says, her hand riding an invisible roller coaster. “But then I heard about the Tony Ortega painting class at Sam Gary Library, and I thought, well, it’ll get me out of the house. It’ll get me around other people. It’s a two-minute walk. So I said, suck it up, Buttercup, and get your ass over there.”

She’s glad she went. Eight weeks later, and Sanders sits in her apartment surrounded by eclectic art and her fluff-faced dog, Ollie, says her life has changed dramatically. “My story isn’t so much about what I learned painting-wise or what I took away with a piece of work. It’s about an evolution. The first thing we worked on was the [color] scale, and I had so much fun doing that one exercise; it inspired me to get out my little box. I took out my spatula, and then I got out something else, then something else, and soon I didn’t have enough space,” she says, patting her queen-sized Sleep Number bed. “So this is going, and I’ll have more room for this,” she says pointing to her easel cramped in the corner.

Her transformation is in large part thanks to Amy DelPo who worked as a librarian for the Denver Public Library for ten years before becoming the library’s first Administrator



Creative Aging Flipping the Cultural Narrative About Aging



Librarian Lily Kosmicki (left), and Administrator of Older Adult Services Amy DelPo, check in on Tony Ortega’s final painting class.

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December 2019

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Sherron Blanks is inspired by Blooms of Hope while listening to Tony Ortega address the class at the Sam Gary Library.

of Older Adult Services in April of 2019. Amy and her partner, Lily Kosmicki, a librarian at the Sam Gary Branch quickly learned that older adults in Denver tend to be healthier, more affluent, and better educated than previous generations and regardless of health and income, they want a more meaningful and active existence. “It’s about providing enriching, high-quality programs, events, and classes,” DelPo says. The Older Adult Programs, which are funded by The NextFifty Initiative and available to anyone fifty plus, offer everything from tech and medicare support to creative aging classes. “Creative aging is a national philosophy that says one of the greatest gifts of age is time and space to do things that we weren’t able to do in the crazy rat race of life. Out of the 18 people currently enrolled in Ortega’s class, 12 or 14 of them have never painted before, and I think that’s beautiful,” DelPo continues. “We want to flip the cultural narrative,” DelPo she says of their efforts. “Our current cultural narrative marginalizes older people and says it’s a time of decline, it’s depressing, and it’s about what you can’t do anymore. We want to flip that to it’s a vibrant time of exploration and life-long

learning and inclusion because of things like wisdom and experience. We also want to create community and connections for this population.”

Flipping the narrative is something Sanders understands. When Malia was given six to nine months to live, she says, “We made the commitment to live every day with gratitude, joy, laughter, hugs, creativity, and happy music.” It’s in that same spirit that Sanders has decided to make room for more creativity in her life. “I’m going to do a whole book of color assignments, and my goal is to teach this one day,” she said, holding up one of the books she rescued from the donation box. It’s Julia Cameron’s latest edition in a series on spiritual creativity, and it’s aptly titled *It’s Never Too Late to Begin Again*.

To learn more about Denver Public Library’s Older Adult Programs visit denverlibrary.org/events/upcoming or email Amy DelPo directly at adelpo@denverlibrary.org. DelPo’s already planning more programs for 2020, including classes in art, poetry, writing, tech training, health, and mindfulness—all designed just for older adults.



Elizabeth Sanders’ apartment shows her appreciation for eclectic art. Photo by Steve Larson

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Rounding Up the Truth on RoundUp

By Martina Will, PhD

“It was quite the response from the neighborhood,” says Kerri Schoen Reynolds. Her concerned October post about the herbicide Roundup in the “Stapleton Moms” Facebook group garnered about 80 responses within the first 12 hours. Most seemed to share her trepidation about the product, which is widely used in parks managed by the Master Community Association (MCA) and Denver Parks and Recreation. “When you take the kids to the park and you’re seeing these yellow flags and pesticides are being sprayed and you’re walking with your stroller...it’s really frustrating,” says Reynolds, who says the issue has been on her mind “for many years.”

Application Standards

Local and state statutes mandate those yellow flags whenever a professional applies pesticides or herbicides. Denver Parks employees remove their flags after 24 hours, but the public perception may be that the flags indicate an entire lawn area has been treated with Roundup. Denver Parks, MCA, and an expert on weed management at Colorado State University (CSU) all confirm that Roundup is not broadcast sprayed or used on turf. “Usually where we use Roundup is in the sidewalk cracks and in the tree rings....Even if you see the flags, that doesn’t mean we’ve sprayed Roundup. It means we’ve sprayed an herbicide or a pesticide,” says Scott Gilmore, Denver Parks’ Deputy Executive Director.

“I would like the MCA to come up with a plant-based alternative....If we don’t stand up, what other communities will? This is a beautiful neighborhood of well-educated people...why not...say we are going to choose to live a better way because we can?...It’s part of being a good steward of the Earth.”

—Kerri Reynolds, Stapleton parent

“Glyphosate is absorbed really quickly into plants. As long as the sprayed droplets have dried, you wouldn’t be able to get it off to get it on your skin...even if you tried. The person who is going to get exposed to herbicides and particularly glyphosate is the applicator, not the general public.”

—Dr. Todd Gaines, Associate Professor of Molecular Weed Science, Colorado State University

Keven Burnett, Stapleton MCA Executive Director, instructs its subcontractors to minimize the use of pesticides and herbicides and only use them “as a last resort.”

The MCA, which manages five sports fields, over 20 pocket parks, and the South and North Greens, does not broadcast spray pesticides or herbicides. Like Denver, it spot sprays as needed and does root injections to treat trees chemically according to Burnett.

An Alternative Approach

The City of Boulder does not use Roundup, concerned not only with glyphosate but also with one of its inactive ingredients—POEA—which would require another story entirely to address.

“Park Operations has not used any sprays since 2015...no chemicals whatsoever,” says Dennis Warrington, Urban Parks Manager, Boulder Parks & Recreation. He says in

very rare—“almost non-existent”—instances, park managers may use glyphosate on state-listed noxious weeds. Boulder relies on mechanical weed-pulling, using volunteers and jail crews—and admits that weeds will still surface. “We’re not like a lot of other areas where you see the almost perfect bare dirt rings around trees. The only way that that happens is because people spray.”

Warrington says Boulder has also reduced the number of horticulture beds to 275, but still maintains 1800 acres including 380 acres of irrigated turf. Denver maintains 3,000 acres of turf by comparison. Neither Boulder nor Denver treat for dandelions in any way, which is one way both have moved away from pesticides. The two cities allow dandelions to grow for the 2-3 weeks that they appear, mow them down, and reapply grass seed to eventually reduce dandelions. Both Warrington and Gilmore say that they still get calls complaining about the dandelions as soon as the yellow flowers appear.

Gilmore says the City of Denver is one of the largest to have taken the Monarch Pledge and is pursuing certification as a Community Wildlife Habitat by the National Wildlife Federation.

“We don’t want to spray stuff that kills wildlife. We’re trying to minimize impacts,” says Gilmore, who cites the City’s recent adoption of the Game Plan for a Healthy City, a new strategic master plan. The Parks Department is also finalizing new Standard

“We get a lot of volunteer groups that help us pull weeds...four days a week...they typically pull weeds. We have a weed steamer from Australia...it kills the roots and the more you use it, the longer it takes the weeds to come back...It is labor-intensive. And there are definitely areas here where you will see weeds.”

—Dennis Warrington, Urban Parks Manager, Boulder Parks & Recreation

Operating Procedures this year that address how the City uses pesticides in the parks.

A Little Chemistry, A Lot of Debate

Reynolds is not alone in her concerns over RoundUp. With its active ingredient of glyphosate, RoundUp has made headlines for years as its health and environmental implications fuel debate across disciplines and international boundaries. A Monsanto chemist first discovered glyphosate’s herbicidal properties in 1970, and by 1974, the company began



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selling Roundup. Its use really took off in the 1990s, when Monsanto introduced “Roundup Ready” genetically-engineered soybeans, corn, and cotton.

Fast forward to the early 2000s, and what once seemed like the corporation poised to end world hunger had become a bad word in many homes. Monsanto’s business practices gained notoriety with scathing stories in *Vanity Fair* and elsewhere. Debates over genetically engineered crops, seed contamination, and resistance to glyphosate and other herbicides further tarnished Monsanto’s reputation.

In 2015, the World Health Organization’s International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) determined that glyphosate is “probably carcinogenic to humans,” and found “strong” evidence for glyphosate’s genotoxicity or DNA damage.* In April 2019, however, the EPA released a report stating that it had found “no risks to public health from the current registered uses of glyphosate,” according to EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler. Confused?

Surely, someone capable of teaching a class called “Molecular Genetics and Evolution of Pesticide Resistance,” would have definitive answers for *Front Porch* readers. Dr. Todd Gaines, Associate Professor of Molecular Weed Science at CSU has spent much of his career studying glyphosate, particularly plants that have evolved glyphosate resistance. Gaines praises glyphosate’s efficacy on a wide range of weeds and credits it with reducing tillage, which in turn reduces carbon emissions. “There is an environmental benefit to using herbicides that can be overlooked in this debate,” Gaines says, adding that glyphosate helps to reduce “excess nutrients running off from agricultural land,” which causes algae blooms. “The more farmers can use no-till agriculture, the better they protect it from runoff.”

“From an acute toxicity perspective, glyphosate is very safe for people in terms of your short-term exposure to it. You would have to eat more glyphosate than you could possibly fit in your stomach to even have any kind of acute poisoning effect,” says Gaines. He agrees, however, that long-term studies on health and environmental impacts are less conclusive.

Full disclosure: CSU’s Weed Research Institute receives funding from a number of companies in the “crop protection industry,” including Bayer, which acquired Monsanto in 2018. “Is there a potential conflict of interest? I’m employed by the state of Colorado, and I’m here to think about the interests of the stakeholders of the state,” says Gaines. “I am looking out for what are the tools they [farmers] have available, what are their problems. I do research on nonchemical weed control,” he adds. “Frankly, there’s over-reliance on glyphosate for weed control; it’s been abused in the sense that it just works so well that people got away from diversified weed management.” Gaines says much of his outreach to the agricultural community is to educate them on non-herbicidal approaches to weed management.

Moving Forward

Burnett sees a degree of opportunism in the heightened public concern about glyphosate. He cites “the hundreds and thousands of commercials that run from the legal community that is drumming up business on this subject.” Gilmore echoes this view: “People hate Monsanto.... people are coming after them...” He ascribes consumers’ fears of RoundUp in part to the wave of commercials seeking litigants for the nearly 19,000 lawsuits against Bayer in the U.S.

Still, recent studies documenting that glyphosate is bad for insect populations vital for ecosystems, pollination, and the food chain have resulted in staunch challenges for German pharmaceutical giant Bayer at home, too. Germany is phasing out glyphosate use, beginning with city parks and private gardens in 2020. By the end of 2023, glyphosate will be banned entirely in Germany.

For Reynolds, the absence of longitudinal studies means that glyphosate remains a concern, and she’s thinking about ways to effect change locally. “People say there is no science that proves it [a glyphosate-cancer link]. Who’s going to trace a person throughout their life and determine at what point is it [cancer] genetic and at what point is it environmental?”

Still, as long as RoundUp remains on store shelves, educating consumers—who may not use the product correctly and are not required to place those yellow flags after its application—may be just as important as addressing concerns with the entities that manage our public spaces. Matthew Lopez, Manager, Pesticide Enforcement, Colorado Department of Agriculture observes, “all licensed commercial applicator businesses have demonstrated experience and one of the most rigorous tests across the country to gain that licensure.” He encourages homeowners to consider hiring a commercial applicator if they have concerns about pesticides.

**Note: The IARC’s report was not based on its original research; its working group of 17 experts from 11 countries reviewed about 1000 scientific studies from around the world.*

“Our directive to our contractors is to use...pesticides and other landscape treatments as our last line of defense....As soon as we let parks go to weeds, we get a lot of phone calls about that, too. People don’t want weeds. Invasive weed management is something we try to take very seriously but there are very few procedures that are demonstrable as useful.”

—Keven Burnett, Executive Director, Stapleton MCA

“These parks that we’ve built are not natural and they need to be maintained, and we have to use herbicides and pesticides to maintain them at the level that people expect...We would way rather not use anything...but if we stopped treating our trees, probably 50% would die....Organics are not as effective as the pesticides we use.”

—Scott Gilmore, Deputy Executive Director, Denver Parks

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Each month, the Indie Prof reviews a current film in the theater and second film or series available on DVD or instant-streaming service. Follow “Indie Prof” on Facebook for updates about film events and more reviews.

The Kingmaker (2019)

In the first sequence of Lauren Greenfield’s powerful new documentary film about Imelda Marcos, the former First Lady of the Philippines is seen doling out money to street kids in Manila. Then she is filmed at a Children’s Cancer Center, where she proceeds to hand money to the young patients. “Some candy for the kids,” she says, as the cameras follow her. Later, she talks about meeting world leaders (in the 60s and 70s) and how she enjoyed their company. Of Mao and Saddam Hussein, she relates, “I didn’t think they were all

portedly looted billions. Once they were deposed and rioters stormed the palace, she recalls, “They didn’t find skeletons. They only found beautiful shoes.”

She insists, with a straight face, that the years of martial law during the Marcos reign were Philippines’ best. The film then cuts to the protests of the period and interviews of dissidents who were tortured and raped. “The past isn’t even there anymore,” she now says. At the age of 90 and looking back at her life—her charm and savvy intact—she still influences Filipino politics, most recently in her son’s run for the Vice Presidency and the family’s support (financial and otherwise) of Rodrigo Duterte’s 2016 successful bid for the Presidency.

The documentary itself is deft and biting, using historical

footage mixed with illuminating interviews while allowing Marcos to tell her own story. It also has an ominous ending that is still being played out. It will most certainly be nominated for an Academy Award in the coming season. Definitely worth the viewing.

You will enjoy this film if you liked *The Missing Picture*, *The Act of Killing*, and/or *The Square*.

Starts at the Sie Film Center on 12/6.

Mindhunter (Season Two—Netflix)

In my review of season one (8/18)

that bad.” Of Richard Nixon, she states “He was misunderstood.” Sometimes a documentary film makes an argument in its first few minutes with the remainder of the film serving as evidence. Point made.

Marcos is a fascinating figure and her influence, power, and political deftness cannot be denied. She served as her late husband’s best surrogate—both at home and even more so abroad—and many think she was the driving force of his presidency (including being blamed for the assassination of a rival), behind his sham re-election bid, and pur-

of this dark and dense show, I mused that “At first glance, it would seem a bit macabre to enjoy a series about serial killers.” After rolling through the just-as-good-and-perhaps-even-better season two, I am glad I glanced. And it is still macabre. Executive Producer David Fincher (*Seven*, *The Game*, *Fight Club*) returns to produce and direct several episodes, and the production values don’t skip a beat in the new season. Disturbing and even borderline insane, it is one of the most gripping psychological thrillers to hit TV.





Mindhunter

Season one of the show followed two FBI agents—Holden Ford (Jonathan Goff) and Bill Tench (Holt McCallany)—as they established a new psychological profiling unit along with the help of Professor Ann Woldbert Burgess (Anna Torv). Season one chronicled the years 1977 – 1980, while season two continues on to cover the years 1980 – 1981 and the Atlanta child murders of 1979 – 1981 (based on the real-life case of Wayne Williams). Building on the formative years of the profiling group in season one, the team now focuses on a single case (with a few diversions) and tries to prove their methods are

Burgess pursues a relationship with another woman (of course, taboo in this time and place). These characters—a sort of “Island of Misfit Toys”—expand personally and professionally in interesting and mysterious ways. All along, the writing is superb, and the actors are at times quirky, mostly stolid, and sometimes downright

sound. The focus on the singular case makes for close procedural drama while allowing time and space for the show to breathe. Those breaths function to bring us closer to the main characters as we delve into their personal lives. And what lives they are.

Ford continues on his path toward a virtual mind meld with the killers; Tench has his own personal challenges when his wife and young son become entangled in a local murder; and

stingy with their inner workings. These are smart, difficult people doing smart, difficult work. Do we even want to get to know them? Would that make us just as dark? Perhaps, and Fincher has made a career of not necessarily shining light through the darkness as much as he drags us into it with him. Rather than look away, it makes us want to stare further into it. Enjoy the view.

You will like this show if you enjoyed Season One, *True Detective*, and/or any Fincher film.

Seasons one and two now available on Netflix.

Vincent Piturro, Ph.D., is a Professor of Film and Media Studies at Metropolitan State University of Denver. He can be reached at vpiturro@msudenver.edu. And you can follow “Indie Prof” on Facebook and @VincentPiturro on Twitter.

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Photo courtesy of East Colfax Collective

East Colfax Collective's Pleas to the City

Prevent Displacement and Improve Community Engagement

By Martina Will, PhD

“From what I’ve seen, people are working together and they see their destinies as intertwined,” says

Nebiyu Asfaw of those he talks to along East Colfax. Asfaw is a member of the recently formed East Colfax Community Collective that introduces a new voice in ongoing discussions of Denver’s East Area Plan (EAP). The plan offers a 20-year vision for economic development in the East Colfax corridor from Colorado Blvd. to Yosemite St. The Collective is especially concerned about displacement, the community engagement process, and the City hold-



“We want the City to be introspective and reflect on some of the other projects that we feel haven’t gone well, like the Welton Street project,” says community organizer Brendan Greene.

ing developers accountable.

The Collective wants the City to be more creative and leverage its power to prevent

displacement and ensure protections for current EAP residents. While proponents of the EAP tend to focus on building affordable housing in the corridor, the Collective emphasizes the need to preserve existing affordable housing. Collective members don’t believe the City and other community groups fully grasp the true urgency “around anti-displacement policies or



“Once the developer buys the land, it’s theirs. It does not seem like the City has control once the developers come in,” says Towanna Henderson, an East Colfax community leader who recently joined the Collective.

concrete measures to create more affordable housing for those below 30% AMI [Area Median Income],” according to an October press release. Denver’s AMI, according to the City’s Office of Economic Development and Opportunity is \$92,800 for a household of four. An AMI of 30% for this same household is \$27,850.

Collective members also question how effectively the City has managed community outreach in the past

two years. Asfaw says a lot of the mom and pop shops “honestly have not had the level of engagement that they needed. And that’s not to criticize the folks that have been reaching out; they’ve been trying but it hasn’t been effective.” He references small businesses like Lucy’s Ethiopian Restaurant, where they may have only two or three people working and attending a community meeting requires closing the restaurant.

“When it comes to engaging the community,” says Henderson, “allow the community to determine what that looks like.” A long-time E Colfax area resident, Henderson has attended numerous meetings with City planners, homeowners, renters, business owners, and other stakeholders. She says typically, the City does most of the talking, allotting about 20 minutes to the community, during which time people are also expected to review and comment on complicated maps and charts.

With average household incomes ranging from \$36,000 to \$114,000 across the different neighborhoods encompassed by the EAP, primary concerns vary. While some other community groups have expressed concerns about the EAP’s suggested options for increasing density, density is not among the top concerns identified by the East Colfax Community Collective. They do, however, agree with concerns expressed in other neighborhoods about the City’s limp approach to reigning in developers’ worst impulses.

Residents united under the moniker “Denver East Neighborhoods First,” in October shared an open letter to City Council signed by Hale resident and “First” member Jeanne Lee. Lee criticizes the seemingly unbridled development permitted under the EAP: “Affordability is not required and current affordable units will be lost. There is also no

Above: Members of the grassroots East Colfax Community Collective include landlords, business-owners, renters, homeowners, and leaders from the Ethiopian, Afghani and Congolese communities.

One-on-One or Small Group Meetings with the East Area Plan Team

Dec. 3, 12:30-5pm Park Hill Library
Dec. 12, 6:30-8 pm Ashley Elementary
Use online sign-up at DenverGov.org/eastplan to avoid a wait

requirement for a developer who builds on Colfax or in other sections of the East Area to provide affordable units.”

One suggestion for increasing density in the EAP is by having more Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), where current single-family homes would be allowed to have an additional dwelling unit. Upzoning would be another means of increasing density. The EAP proposes allowing 8-story buildings at designated intersections along E Colfax that are currently zoned to allow 5-story construction. The EAP calls on developers to offer some sort of community investment in exchange for any 8-story construction they undertake, but critics are skeptical that the City has the teeth to ensure this happens.

Revitalizing a neighborhood should benefit the neighborhood, says Brendan Greene, community organizer for the collective who wants the City to reflect and learn from past mistakes. Though reflection does not appear to be part of its mandate, Denver’s newly created Department of Housing Stability (HOST), is charged with both creating and preserving existing affordable housing. The EAP looks like a good place to start. For further information on the EAP, including upcoming meetings: DenverGov.org/eastplan.



“We can’t control market forces,” says Nebiyu Asfaw with the Ethiopian American Development Council. “We need to focus on what we can control. One of these is TIF [Tax Increment Financing], the tax incentives. What exactly are we giving away to incentivize what and who?”

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Saving One Lab at a Time

Nicole Landeck, at left below, volunteered to foster Phoebe, initially not knowing she was pregnant. She is now helping Phoebe care for 10 puppies. Brooke Grey runs the day-to-day operations of Mile High Labs, which fosters and finds adoptive homes for labs found in Texas and transported to Colorado. Front Porch photos by Christie Gosch

By Karyn Cole
Thinking of adding a canine companion to your family? The Mile High Lab Rescue Mission, a local rescue and rehabilitation agency, is looking for people like you to foster and adopt their dogs.

Brooke Grey first volunteered to foster a dog for the Mile High Labs 7 or 8 years ago and never looked back. Today, she serves on the board and runs the day-to-day operations of the rescue.

MHLRM's mission is to save one dog at a time and allow them to call Colorado home. The agency rescues homeless Labrador Retrievers and lab mixes. Most of their dogs come from Texas, where a lack of consistent spay and neuter laws leads to overcrowded pounds and shelters. Without an alternative such as Mile High Labs, these shelters are often forced to euthanize the dogs. Labs and lab mixes are the second most common dog to be euthanized in Texas.

Saving these dogs is Mile High Labs' passion. Grey and her team partner with approximately 20 shelters in the Houston and Dallas areas. When she learns of pets in need, she acts quickly to arrange transportation, veterinary care, and foster placement for them before ultimately finding each dog a forever home. Grey says she gets up to 200 requests to save a dog each day, though MHLRM is only able to save between 20 and 30 each month.

The Mile High Lab Rescue Mission is completely volunteer-run. The agency has partnered with Northfield Veterinary Hospital, which provides healthcare for the dogs, including vaccinations, the required spay/neuter procedure, and microchipping. But Grey said the families that agree to foster these animals while they are waiting to be adopted are the most vital part of the organization. There is a pressing need for new fosters in the Denver area. They have a wonderful network of foster families, but

more foster options means they can save more dogs. And frequent "foster fails"—families that decide to adopt the dog they were fostering—remove prospective families from the pool.

Grey encourages families to think about opening their home to a dog in need. "When people are thinking about how they can help, it can be overwhelming. But for our families, fostering is an incredible experience. We need families to give these dogs love on a short term basis so they can go on to their forever home."

Nicole Landeck is a Stapleton resident, business owner, and mother of three. She had fostered 8 or 9 dogs before agreeing to take in Phoebe, who turned out to be pregnant and later gave birth to 10 puppies. "I thought it would be an amazing, once in a lifetime opportunity for our family," Landeck said. "We would get to take care of the mama, make her comfortable, see the puppies be born, and take care of the puppies for 8 weeks."

Landeck helps organize meetings between her foster pups and prospective families. Those who are interested in adopting from Mile High Labs go through an intensive application process designed to get the dogs into the best possible homes.

Matching dogs with their new owners is one of Landeck's favorite parts of the job of a foster family. "It is just amazing to watch these dogs find their people. Often times their backstory breaks your heart, but watching them find their family is the best thing in the world."

Grey encourages all dog lovers to think about fostering. "By becoming a foster, you are saving a life. We can only save as many dogs as we have fosters."

For more information on how you can help, visit MHLRM's website, milehighlab-mission.com, and follow the organization on Facebook and Instagram.



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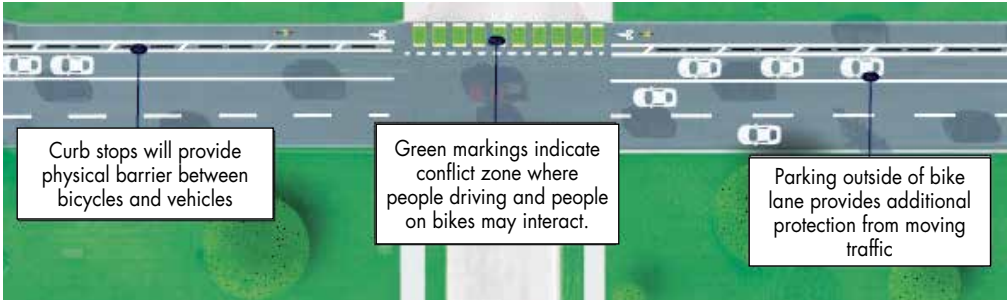


By Martina Will, PhD, Carol Roberts

1 High Comfort Bike Lanes To Be Built on CPB and City Park Esplanade in 2020

Community input helped shape the design of the new high-comfort bike lane that will be constructed along Central Park Blvd. (CPB), between Montview and 36th Ave. in 2020. Input from participants at a May public meeting as well as public comment at the project website conveyed the importance to planners of several design features. “We’ve done a lot of work to shorten the crossing and made some big improvements at CPB and Martin Luther King, and we’re pretty excited about that,” says Dana Hoffman, Project Manager with the Transportation Design team for the City and County of Denver. “Shortening the crossing makes it easier for people to get out of the conflict zone with vehicles.”

A physical barrier will also be part of the final bike lane’s design. “They [the public] wanted more of a clear vertical separation, so we settled on curb stops, which provide additional vertical protection,” says Hoffman. “They also asked for additional pedestrian crossing treatments; we are adding intersection



Graphic shows some of the features of the high comfort bike lane coming to Central Park Blvd. in 2020.

An “Election First” for Colorado



Voting for the first time in the recent November election, Brad Simpson contemplates the Denver ballot at Aurora’s Second Chance Center (SCC). Simpson, who cast his vote about two weeks after his release from prison, served 20 years. He is among the first formerly incarcerated individuals to be allowed to vote immediately upon their parole in Colorado. The state changed its laws earlier this year, restoring voting rights to parolees. Not voting wasn’t an option for Simpson, who says, “That would seem irresponsible of me. One thing I’m trying to learn how to do is be more responsible.” SCC helps formerly incarcerated individuals transition into society.

treatments whether at the crosswalk itself or warning signage as well as changing the angle of the turn at certain places to slow down vehicles,” she says. The new high-comfort bike lane should be completed by early fall 2020.

A Nov. 21 meeting was the last public meeting for this project, and Hoffman anticipates that the final design will be available at the project website in early 2020. The Park Esplanade High Comfort Bikeway Project, connecting 16th and 17th Avenues will be the subject of a public open house on Dec. 4, from 5:30-7:00pm, at Denver East High School Cafeteria, 1600 City Park Esplanade, Denver. denvergov.org/bikeprogram

2 The Future of the Park Hill Golf Course? Views Vary Widely

“At this point in time, there is no legitimate reason for anybody to initiate a city planning process for some sort of planning on this property while this conservation easement encumbers the land. That would be a terrible waste of citizen resources and city resources,” said Woody Garnsey at a press conference by the advocacy group Save Open Space (SOS) on Oct. 22.

Meanwhile, the mayor and at least two city council members see it differently. “It’s important we ensure there is a robust community engagement process and that neighbors are welcomed and encouraged

to participate,” says Councilman Chris Herndon. Councilwoman Robin Kneich says, “I believe it is critical for the city to lead the conversation about the future of the golf course, ensuring that all voices are heard....I hope the community will engage respectfully and thoughtfully in such a dialogue and that it can begin soon.”

The 155 acres of golf course land were purchased by Westside Investment Partners in July. In November the City paid Westside \$6 million, allowing the city to permanently use 25 acres of golf course land for stormwater detention and settling a lawsuit over a lease on the property. That agreement also kept in place the golf course use restriction (conservation easement) giving the City and Westside a period of at least three years to listen to community input on future use of the land.

Views differ not only on whether that discussion should happen at all, they also differ on whether it’s legally possible for the land to be used for anything besides a golf course. SOS believes a statute passed by the state legislature on June 30 makes future development on the land impossible. The City believes legal pathways (listed at the end of this article) may exist that would make development possible.

Whether to keep the land as a golf course or use it in other ways will be worked out in community discussions over the next three years.

Mayor Webb, who initiated the conservation easement during his tenure as mayor, argued in a recent *Denver Post* editorial: “Protecting and increasing Denver’s open space against the effects of climate change, such as desertification, flooding and the heat island effect, has never been more

critical...” In the October 22 press conference, Webb said, “...we need to fight to make sure this doesn’t turn into a commercial-mixed use development that has poor architecture, people being displaced...”

Kenneth Ho of Westside has a background in urban planning as well real estate development and has served on the Mayor’s Housing Advisory Committee and on the Planning Board. He says, “...parks also have the power to increase property values surrounding it and therefore can cause gentrification. With that, affordable housing absolutely needs to be part of the program here. Since the land doesn’t have any residents on it, we won’t be displacing anybody directly...”

Webb says: “If a concrete residential-commercial development is put here, you can never reclaim this space. It’s gone.”

Ho says: “...we don’t think a golf course achieves any of the outcomes around equity, access and sustainability that are part of the city’s current comprehensive planWe can either address the area’s need for a significant amount of park space, affordable housing, neighborhood services and job creation with a mixed use development, or we can address one thing, which is a golf course. We think we can address more than one issue facing the city.”

Webb says: “...there is no one [in the City] saying no on [development] permits being offered, to say we’re going to have higher standards.”

Ho says: “We know that we’re going to have a number of agreements with the community and the city and we want to make sure it’s balanced and addresses some of the mistakes that were made in the past...you’re definitely seeing it in terms of entitlement processes (what’s required to get approvals and permits) and the need to address affordable housing and open space in a meaningful way.”

The November agreement between Westside and the City created time for the community to speak on the future use of the golf course land—and clearly the discussion has started. After three years of public input, if City Council does not approve a plan for use other than as a golf course, the conservation easement will stand and Westside will be responsible for restoring and rebuilding this land as a golf course.

For interested readers, Denver City Attorney Kristin Bronson gives the following legal reasons why the City believes future development may be possible despite the conservation easement (acknowledging these would need to be vetted further): 1) The conservation easement has been part of the chain of title of the property for over 20 years and preceded the current version of the law. 2) One purpose of the statute is to prevent improper use of tax credits associated with conservation easements, which doesn’t apply since there were no tax credits; and, in particular, would the statute apply to an easement held for over 20 years by a home-rule municipality? 3) If the community decided and city council approved a change, the City could, depending on the change, ask the court to decide whether the statute would apply to or permit the new uses. The statute doesn’t address modifications, it just addresses terminations; and the physical condition of the property over the history of the easement would need to be evaluated. 4) With regard to matters of local land use control, courts are highly deferential to decisions made at the local level.



Former Denver Mayor Wellington Webb speaks at a Save Open Space press conference at the Park Hill Golf Course on Oct. 22

3 Illegal Pete’s Comes to NE

With the arrival of Illegal Pete’s to Oneida Park in Park Hill this spring, it will get even harder to park on the already crowded block—maybe consider riding your bike. The fast casual restaurant will bring with them a long list of “Best of” awards ranging from best burrito, best vegetarian green chile, best fish and other tacos, best breakfast burritos, and best late night food. Other recognitions include a plaque for working around the clock to feed police officers working the 2011 Aurora shooting and Inc. 5000’s Fastest Growing Companies in the U.S. in 2016 and 2019.

Those familiar with Illegal Pete’s may associate them with a college crowd—and their locations in Boulder (where Pete Turner opened his first restaurant in 1995), Ft. Collins, and DU do bring in the students; but Erin Barnes from Illegal Pete’s says the character of their 11 current restaurants reflects the surrounding neighborhoods. “We’re definitely keeping in mind that Park Hill has it’s own personality.” Although the restaurant will have a full bar, they expect and welcome families.

Illegal Pete’s also is known for its Living Wage Initiative. “It’s really important to Pete that people who work in the restaurant industry can actually consider their job a career. He was seeing some of his employees having to work two jobs to make ends meet,” says Barnes.

“It doesn’t matter if you’re on a gluten free diet or vegetarian or vegan, we design our menu so that whoever is coming in to Illegal Pete’s can rest assured, if you have allergies, that you’re not going to have a bad experience. We have everything outlined on cards so people can see what has gluten or dairy. You can see our fresh ingredients and design it how you like,” says Barnes. She points out that their beef and pork are sustainably raised and obtained from Niman Ranch, who she calls “beacons in animal husbandry.” Pete’s opens for breakfast with \$5 burritos and bowls and is also known as a great late night spot, though exact hours for Park Hill aren’t yet available.

4 MLK to Peoria Opening Date

The original CDOT contract specifies completion in March 2020, according to the contractor, Mortenson Construction. At this time the goal is for traffic to access the new road from Iola to Peoria by the end of 2019. This would include removing detours through the neighborhoods, but not operating on a full 4-lane road.

Final road work and landscaping will be done in early 2020 and will include periodic detours and traffic control.

December and Early January Events

12/10 Tuesday—Colorado Gives Day. Join the movement to “give where you live” and support your favorite non-profits. coloradogives.org

NE DENVER/NW AURORA EVENTS

12/5 Thursday—Financial Empowerment: How Your Brain Can Keep You from Making Wise Financial Decisions. 6:30–7:30pm. Sam Gary Branch 2961 Roslyn St. denverlibrary.org

12/5 Thursday—Spreading Wings Gala. Honoring Capt. “Sully” Sullenberger, the world-renowned pilot, safety expert, author and Captain during the “Miracle on the Hudson.” Wings Museum, 7711 E Academy Blvd. wingsmuseum.org

12/5 Thursday—Wonder Lab Holiday Open House. Check out our new acrylic pour painting studio, buy holiday gifts and create your own artwork (projects \$5-30). All ages. 1195 Newport St. wonderlabstudios.com

12/6 Friday—Together We Count: 2020 Census. 3–4pm. Hear about how to participate and why the census matters to you. Sam Gary Branch 2961 Roslyn St. denverlibrary.org

12/7 Saturday—Mini Comic Con 2019. 10am–4pm. Featuring over 30 Colorado comic book creators. Sam Gary Branch 2961 Roslyn St. denverlibrary.org

12/7 Saturday—El Camino: All You Need to Know Before You Go. What you need to make your journey a success. 1–4pm at CFU Lowry. Fee \$48. 7653 E 1st Pl. freeuregistration.com/CourseStatus.awp?&course=1940E

12/7 to 12/8—The Sweet William Market. Top-notch artisans, collectors and gourmets. Sat. 9am–4pm, Sun. 10am–4pm. The Cube, 8371 E Northfield Blvd. sweetwilliammarket.com

12/11 Wednesday—Community Sing-Along. 6:30pm. Intergenerational sing-along with a live band. Sam Gary Branch 2961 Roslyn St. denverlibrary.org

12/12 Thursday—Active Minds: The History of Colorado. Come discover the stories of Colorado history. Free. 1–2pm. activeminds.com. Sam Gary Library, 2961 Roslyn St. denverlibrary.org

12/13—Holiday Concert. 6:30pm. Local trombone quartet. Free, open to public. The Cube: 8371 Northfield Blvd. stapletoncommunity.com

12/15 Sunday—Sam Gary Literary Book Club. 2–3pm. December Title: *Beloved*, by Toni Morrison. Sam Gary Branch 2961 Roslyn St. denverlibrary.org

12/18 Wednesday—Kindness Club. 4pm. Inter-generational, all-ages club will focus on kindness to family, friends, and loved ones this holiday season. Sam Gary Branch 2961 Roslyn St. denverlibrary.org

12/19 Thursday—Active Minds: The Lewis & Clark Expedition. Learn about the expedition and the legacies it left for the young nation. Free. 6:30–7:30pm. activeminds.com. Sam Gary Library, 2961 Roslyn St. denverlibrary.org

12/19 Thursday—Holiday Cocktails Workshop. A cocktail expert will demonstrate a variety of bartending techniques and flavor profiles. 7pm. The Cube: 8371 Northfield Blvd. stapletoncommunity.com

Through February—Winterskate. Old-fashioned, outdoor ice skating. More details at: northfieldstapleton.com

Visit our online calendar to view more events.

Events submitted by the 17th of the month are considered for printing as space allows.

FrontPorchNE.com > Events

SEASONAL/HOLIDAY EVENTS

12/1 to 12/22—2019 Holiday Markets. Stapleton, Larimar Square and Rino locations, go to denverbazaar.com for more details.

12/3 Tuesday—City of Aurora Holiday Tree Lighting. 5–7pm. Aurora Municipal Center. auroragov.org

12/5—Eastbridge Holiday Jingle. Live concert, visits with Santa, kids’ activities, S’mores & hot chocolate. 6–8pm. 10155 East 29th Dr, eastbridgetowncenter.com

To 12/5—20th Annual Festival of Wreaths. Benefiting the Aurora Museum Foundation. View at 4 locations including The Stanley Marketplace, stanleymarketplace.com

12/6 & 12/7—9News Parade of Lights. Colorado’s brightest holiday tradition. Friday, 8pm; Saturday, 6pm. Civic Center Park, 101 W. 14th Ave. downtowndenver.com

12/7 Saturday—Holly Jolly Lowry Holiday. 2–5pm. Refreshments, kids craft table, local choirs, Giving Tree and a visit with Santa till 4:30. lowrydenver.com. Eisenhower Chapel, 293 Roslyn St.

12/7 Saturday—Holiday Family Sing-Along, A Time of Wonder. Cookies, cocoa and family fun. 5000 E Alameda Ave. augustanaarts.org

12/7 to 12/8—Fair Trade Christmas Market. Featuring handmade baskets, jewelry, clothing, food items and sacred art from around the globe. Montview Church, Fellowship Hall. montview.org

12/7 to 12/8—Holidays at Delaney Farm. Celebrate the holidays with a glimpse into Aurora’s past. Enjoy games, history, and a hot chocolate bar. 130 S Chambers Rd, Aurora. auroragov.org

12/7 & 12/14—Breakfast with Santa. 9–11am. Adults \$45; Members \$35; Kids 3-12 \$25. 2300 Steele St. denverzoo.org

12/7 to 12/21—The Browns’ Happiest Christmas. Molly Brown House. Saturdays. Tickets at: mollybrown.org

12/7 to 12/24—Breakfast with Santa. Dine with Santa and mascot Sharkey. Downtown Aquarium. Reservations required: 303-561-4450 or aquariumrestaurants.com

12/14 Saturday—Inside the Orchestra- Christmas Tiny Tots. Christmas music, appearances by Santa and Mrs. Claus, hot cocoa, jingle bells, caroling and more. PPA Event Center, 2105 Decatur St. 9:30am & 10:45am. insidetheorchestra.org

12/14 to 12/15—Jackalope: An Indie Artisan Fair. Handmade shopping, DIY workshops, local food and drink. 11am–7pm. Stanley Marketplace, 2501 Dallas St., Aurora. jackalopeartfair.com

12/15 Sunday—Augustana Festival Christmas Concert. Choir, hand bells, organ and orchestra - 7:30pm. Augustana Lutheran Church, 5000 E Alameda Ave. augustanadenver.org

12/16 Monday—Soccer with Santa. Bring your kids to play soccer with Santa and take pictures with him. 2400 Central Park Blvd. bladiumdenver.com

12/19 Thursday—Cocoa with the Commander. Warm up with your District 5 Command staff for hot cocoa, coffee, donuts and candy canes. 9–11am. 4791 N Tower Rd, Dunkin Donuts. denvergov.org

To 12/22—Santa’s Village at Chatfield Farms. Meet Mrs. Claus, Santa and his reindeer while walking through colorful holiday lights. Various evenings 4:30–8:30pm. botanicgardens.org

12/22 Sunday—Jinx Jones Rockabilly Christmas Show. Doors open at 7pm, show at 8pm. All ages. theorientaltheater.com

12/22 Sunday—Christmas Tea and Children’s Craft Fair. 9:30–10:30am. Montview Church, Fellowship Hall. montview.org

12/23—Car Parade and Grand Menorah Lighting. Parade starts 4:30 at The Shops at Northfield and ends at 29th Ave Town Center for 5:30pm menorah lighting. jewishstapleton.com

To 12/23—Denver Christkindl Market. Vendors from Germany and elsewhere, local artisans, carolers, traditional German food/drink. 1515 Arapahoe St, on the 16th St. Mall. Hours vary. christkindlmarketdenver.com

12/29—Chanukah Candles. Stanley Marketplace, Aurora. 4–6pm. jewishstapleton.com

To 12/30—Zoo Lights: Illuminated with Life. 5:30–8:30pm. Tickets \$15-20. 2300 Steele St. denverzoo.org

12/31 Tuesday—Noon Year’s Eve at Denver Children’s Museum. 9am–4pm. mychildsmuseum.org

12/31—New Year’s Eve Fireworks. 16th Street, Pedestrian Mall. 2 shows, 9pm and midnight. downtowndenver.com

To 12/31—Nick’s Holiday Putt Club. Holiday themed outdoor mini golf on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from 5–9pm. Punch Bowl Social, 3120 N. Uinta St. punchbowlsocial.com

To 1/2—Camp Christmas. Tickets start at \$8. All ages. Over-the-top indoor immersive installation turns the holiday spirit all the way up. denvercenter.org. The Hangar at Stanley Marketplace, 2501 Dallas St, Aurora.

To 1/3—Blossoms of Light. A dazzling and ever-changing display of light and color. 5–9pm. Denver Botanic Gardens, York St. botanicgardens.org

1/6 to 1/17—Denver Treecycle 2020. Recycle your tree by removing all decorations/lights and set out for collection on scheduled trash day by 7am. denvergov.org, 311 or 720-913-1311

CIVIC MEETINGS/ EVENTS

12/4 Wednesday—New High Comfort Bikeway: City Park Esplanade from 16th to 17th Avenues Public Meeting. 5:30–7pm. Denver East High School. denvergov.org

METRO EVENTS

12/1, 7 & 8—Sully Movie Series. Doors open 12:30pm, movie starts at 1pm. Included in the price of museum admission. Seats are first come, first served. Wings Over the Rockies Air & Space Museum, 7711 East Academy Blvd. wingsmuseum.org

12/5 to 12/8—Denver Potters Association Show. Thurs. 3–7pm, Fri. 10am–7pm, Sat. 9am–6pm and Sun. 11am–3pm. castleclayartists.net. Sixth Ave. United Church, 3250 E. 6th Ave.

12/6 Friday—First Friday Art Walks. Santa Fe Arts District, Tennyson Art Walk, River North (RiNo) Art District, Golden Triangle Museum, Navajo Street Art District. denver.org/things-to-do/denver-arts-culture/denver-art-districts

12/6 Friday—Love Actually in Concert. Boettcher Concert Hall. 7:30. Tickets start at \$20. coloradosymphony.org

To 12/6—Denver Leaf Drop 2019. Weekday and weekend drop sites. 5

(continued on page 22)
December 2019



METRO EVENTS

(continued from page 21)

pack of 30 gallon leaf bags at Denver ACE Hardware stores. Dates times and locations at DenverGov.org or call 311.

12/21 Saturday—Ninth Annual Klezfest. Two Klezfest concerts at the Mercury Café, 2199 California St. 6pm and 9pm. Hosted by the Mizel Museum, info at: mizelmuseum.org

To 1/20/20—Denver International Airport’s Ice Skating Rink. 9am-9pm. Free; complimentary skates available. denevents.flydenver.com

To 2/16—Downtown Denver Rink. FREE entry; bring skates or rent: \$7/kids 12 and under; \$9/13 and older. downtown-denver.com

HEALTH, WELLNESS, FITNESS

12/5 Thursday—Merry Fit-mas Fitness Class. Free adult

fitness class for all fitness levels, hosted by Denver Police District 5. 6–7pm. 4890 N Argonne St, Green Valley Ranch Rec Center. eventbrite.com/o/denver-police-18437953495

12/8 Sunday—Denver Jingle Bell Run/Walk for Arthritis. Washington Park. jbr.org

12/14 Saturday—Scramblin’ Scrooge 1M/5K/10K. Denver City Park. featonthetstreet.com

12/21 Saturday—A Christmas Carol Classic 5K, 10K and Tiny Tim Youth Run. Denver City Park. featonthetstreet.com

To 12/31—Yoga en Español-Yoga. All levels vinyasa yoga class, entirely instructed in the Spanish language. Saturdays at 1:15pm, \$15 drop in, Free for CorePower Yoga Members. 7485 E 29th St. corepoweryoga.com

1/4/20 Sunday—The Resolve 1M,5K, 10K. Denver City Park. featonthetstreet.com

KIDS AND FAMILIES

Every Tuesday—Tattered Tales Storytime. 30 minutes of stories, activities and snacks. 10:30am, 2526 East Colfax Ave. tatteredcover.com

Every Thursday—Star K Kids. 9:30 and 11am; kids 5 and under. Morrison Nature Center, 16002 E. Smith Rd., Aurora. auroragov.org

Every Saturday—Little University. 10:30–11am. Various kids’ programming, changes weekly. Schlessman Library, 100 Poplar St. denverlibrary.org

Baby, Toddler & Preschool storytime. Denver Library. Various locations, times and days. Details at denverlibrary.org/events.

12/4 Wednesday—Firehouse Tales for Tots. Free with general admission. 11am–12pm. Denver Firefighters Museum, 1326 Tremont Pl. denverfirefightersmuseum.org

12/4 Wednesday—Write & Talk for Teens with Lighthouse Writers Workshop. 4pm. Join local author Whitney Gaines to try a new genre/topic each month. Registration required online. Sam Gary Branch 2961 Roslyn St. denverlibrary.org

12/6 Friday—Do It Yourself Snowglobes. One of many DIY kids’ workshops in December at Neighborhood Arts Studio, 4890 Ironton St. neighborhoodartstudio.com

12/7 Saturday—Cuentos del Arte. During free first Saturday listen to cuentistas tell the tales of artworks during the storytelling program. denverart-museum.org. 100 W. 14th Ave. Pkwy.

12/7 Saturday—Home Depot Kids Workshop. 9am-12pm. FREE how-to clinics first Sat. monthly, ages 5-12. Get Home Depot apron, wooden project and project pin. Metro-area Home Depot stores. homedepot.com

12/10 Tuesday—Middle School Trivia Night. Grades 6–8. Free. 7–9pm. Spots limited, bring photo ID. Denver Museum of Nature and Science. 2001 Colorado Blvd. dmns.org

12/11 Wednesday—Create Playdate: Drop-in Artmaking Program for Kids 3-5. 10am–1pm. Tots and their grownups enjoy story time, art making, and more. Denver Art Museum, 100 W 14th Ave. Pkwy. denverartmuseum.org

12/14—A Gilbert & Sullivan Christmas Carol. Children’s matinee is an abridged version with free admission. Montview Presbyterian Church, Miller Center, 1980 Dahlia St. elps.org/a-gilbert-and-sullivan-christmas-carol

12/17 Tuesday—Little Wings: Let’s be Aliens. 9–10am. Ages 2–4. With one adult. \$1 off admission. Wings Over the Rockies Air & Space Museum, 7711 East Academy Blvd. wingsmuseum.org.

12/22—Fourth Sundays at Four Mile Historic Park. Story time and free wagon rides and hot cocoa & cider. Adults \$7, youth (7-17) \$5, under 6 free. Get here early! 715 S Forest St. fourmilepark.org

12/22 to 1/5/20—\$1.00 Kids’ Admission! Ages 4–16, 3 and under always free. Wings Over the Rockies Air & Space Museum, 7711 East Academy Blvd. wingsmuseum.org.

12/21 to 1/5/20—Winter Break at the Denver Art Museum. Free general admission for kids every day includes hands-on artmaking and more. denverartmuseum.org. 100 W. 14th Ave. Pkwy.

12/3 to 12/29—Denver Puppet Theater. Elves and The Shoemaker. 3156 W. 38th Ave. denverpuppettheater.com

To 12/29—Ella Enchanted. A captivating tale for children and adults of all ages. Tickets \$9–\$13. Main Stage. 6901 Wadsworth Blvd. Arvada. arvada-center.org

12/31 Tuesday—New Year’s Eve Family Tour. Free with general admission, designed for children 5–10. 10:30-11:30pm. Clifford Still Museum, 1250 Bannock St. clyffordstillmuseum.org

To 5/8—LEGO Brick Building Contest. For youth 3-18. Winning creations will be displayed. Required theme is nature and science. Museum of Nature and Science, 2001 Colorado Blvd. dmns.org

LECTURES, CLASSES, INFORMATIONAL EVENTS


12/3 Tuesday—Japan. From imperialist empire to economic power, Japan has a complicated and fascinating history. Free. 10–11am. Jewish Community Center, 350 S Dahlia St. active-minds.com

12/11 Wednesday—Managing Daily Challenges for Caregivers. 1–3pm. Learn to use journal writing and other techniques to help identify and manage these challenges. Sam Gary Branch 2961 Roslyn St. denverlibrary.org

12/12 Wednesday—Bold Women. Change History. Lecture Series. Dolores Huerta, Founder & President of the Dolores Huerta Foundation. Complimentary childcare. 1200 Broadway. historycolorado.org

12/12 Thursday—Let’s Talk: Conversations about Women’s Health.. \$10/person, includes light dinner. 5:15–8pm. RSVP by Dec. 9. Anschutz Inpatient Pavilion 2, 12505 E. 16th Ave., Aurora. medschool.cuanschutz.edu

12/14 Saturday—The Discovery of the South Pole. The race to the South Pole was one of the greatest international races full of tragedy and triumph. Free. 1–2pm. Central Library, 10 W 14th Ave Pkwy. activeminds.com



The Nutcracker

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December 15, 1:00pm

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Principal: Charmaine Keeton • Office Manager Liz Muth: Liz_Muth@dpsk12.org

MUSEUMS

12/6—Mercado de Navidad 5–9pm. Museo de las Americas, 861 Santa Fe Dr. museo.org

12/11 Wednesday—Monthly Indigenous Film Festival. Free. Phipps Theater, Denver Museum of Nature and Science, 6:30-8:30pm. This month's titles at dmns.org

12/14 Saturday—Cockpit Demo Day. 10am–2pm, Wings over the Rockies Museum, Lowry. wingsmuseum.org

12/8 Sunday—Music in the Galleries: Spektral Quartet. Free with general admission. Clifford Still Museum, 1250 Bannock St. clyffordstill-museum.org

To 2/2/20—Claude Monet The Truth of Nature. Exhibition features more than 120 paintings spanning Monet's entire career. Ticketed event. Denver Art Museum, 100 W 14 Ave Pkwy. denverartmuseum.org

MUSEUM FREE DAYS

Monday–Friday—The Money Museum. Closed weekends and bank holidays. 1020 16th St. kansascityfed.org

Tuesday–Sunday—Aurora History Museum. 15051 E. Alameda Pkwy, Aurora, aurora.gov.org

12/3 Tuesday—The Children's Museum Free Evening. 4–8pm. mychildsmuseum.org

12/7—Denver Art Museum Free SCFD 1st Saturday. Free for kids 18 and younger every day. Denver Art Museum, 100 W 14 Ave Pkwy. 720-865-5000, denverart-museum.org

12/13 Friday—Four Mile Historic Park SCFD 2nd Friday Free Day. 715 S. Forest St. fourmilepark.org

12/14 Saturday—The Urban Farm at Stapleton SCFD Free Day. Free ad-

mission from 10am–1pm. 10200 Smith Rd. theurbanfarm.org

12/18 Wednesday—Clifford Still Museum Free Day. 10am–5pm. 1250 Bannock St. clyffordstillmuseum.org

12/18 Sunday—Denver Museum of Nature & Science SCFD Free Day. 2001 Colorado Blvd. dmns.org

12/19 Thursday—Plains Conservation Center SCFD Free Day. 21901 E. Hampden Ave., Aurora. botanicgardens.org

PERFORMANCE/ THEATRE

12/3 to 12/8—Dr. Seuss' How The Grinch Stole Christmas. Tickets start at \$35. denvercenter.org. The Buell Theatre, 1385 Curtis St.

12/5 to 12/22— Christmas en Colorado. A lively play full of songs and laughter that celebrates familia and our beautiful state of Colorado. Su Teatro Cultural & Performing Arts Center, 721 Santa Fe. suteatro.wellattended.com

12/6 to 12/28—Santa Claus Conquers The Martians. The Bug Theatre, 3654 Navajo St. bugtheatre.org

12/7 to 12/8—A Symphony Holiday. The People's Building 9995 E Colfax Ave. Aurora. aurorasymphony.org

12/7 to 12/22—Granny Dances to a Holiday Drum. A multicultural celebration that touches the hearts of people of all backgrounds. 119 Park Ave W. cleoparkerdance.org

12/10 Tuesday—John Leguizamo: Latin History for Morons. Tickets start at \$35. denvercenter.org. The Buell Theatre, 1385 Curtis St.

12/13 to 12/14—Moscow Ballet's Great Russian Nutcracker. Paramount Theatre, 1621 Glenarm Pl. nutcracker.com

12/13 to 12/15—"...and this is my significant bother." A period show

based on nine short stories by James Thurber, featuring live music by The Hoagies. Buntport Theater 717 Lipan St. buntport.com

12/14 to 12/15—The Nutcracker. Dance Institute presents the full ballet. Sat. 5pm, Sun. 1pm. Tickets \$18. Adams City High School, Commerce City. danceinstitutedenver.com

12/14 to 12/15—Mannheim Steamroller Christmas. Tickets start at \$44. Celebrating 35 years of holiday magic. The Buell Theatre, 1385 Curtis St. denvercenter.org

To 12/15—Looped. A comedy by Matthew Lombardo. vintagetheatre.org. Vintage Theatre, 1468 Dayton St, Aurora.

To 12/15—The Thanksgiving Play. A wickedly funny satire. 1080 Acoma St. curioustheatre.org

12/18 to 12/24—Santa's Big Red Sack. The holiday show NOT to bring the kids to. The People's Building 9995 E Colfax Ave. Aurora. santasbigredsack.com

12/18 Wednesday—Charlie Foxtrot: Comedy at Stanley. A new monthly comedy show every 3rd Wednesday at 8pm. Stanley Marketplace, stanleymarketplace.com

To 12/22—Calendar Girls. Based on the Miramax motion picture by Juliette Towhidi and Tim Firth. Fri. & Sat. 7:30pm, Sun. 2pm. firehousetheatercompany.com. John Hand Theater, 7653 1st Pl.

To 12/22—The Second City's Twist Your Dickens. Seasonal satire that's never the same thing twice. Aurora Fox Arts Center, 9900 E. Colfax Ave. aurorafoxartscenter.org

12/22 Sunday—Tuba Christmas Concert. 11:30pm. Denver Performing Arts Complex (Galleria). FREE to public, \$10 participant fee. 303-726-4101 or tubachristmas.com

To 12/22—Shakespeare's Twelfth Night. Denver Center for the Performing Arts. Space Theatre, Speer Blvd & Arapahoe St. denvercenter.org

To 12/22—A Christmas Carol: The Musical. Main Stage Theater. 6901 Wadsworth Blvd. Arvada. arvadacenter.org

12/24 Tuesday—Twas The Night Before Christmas. A live stage adaptation of the classic Christmas poem with a modern twist. Paramount Theater, 1621 Glenarm Pl. paramountdenver.com

To 12/29—The Nutcracker. Colorado Ballet's acclaimed Nutcracker returns for its 59th year. Ellie Caulkins Opera House. coloradoballet.org

12/23 to 1/5/20—Jimmy Buffet's Escape to Margaritaville. Tickets start at \$28. denvercenter.org. The Buell Theatre, 1385 Curtis St.

To 1/5/20—Tuck Everlasting. Musical celebration is perfect for the whole family. vintagetheatre.org. Vintage Theatre, 1468 Dayton St, Aurora.

To 2/16—Goodnight Moon. Tickets start at \$16. Ages: PreK-2nd grade. The beloved bedtime story comes to life on stage for a whimsical musical adventure. denvercenter.org. Randy Weeks Conservatory Theatre, 1101 13th St.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Denver Snow Buddy. Volunteers are paired with seniors within a 2-mile radius of one another, helping clear their walkways after two or more inches of snow has fallen. Application to volunteer at voacolorado.org/Volunteer/Snow-Buddies or call Tiffany Harris at 303-297-0408. Please note, there is a one-time fee of \$25 for a background check.

Every third Saturday—Volunteering Orientation 9–10am. Urban Farm at Stapleton offers opportunities for individuals and families. RSVP: theurbanfarm.wufoo.com/forms/zia2rpb0ou3ew1. 10200 Smith Rd.

(continued on page 24)

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SUN Meetings are held on the 3rd Tuesday of every month from 6:30-8:30pm; a break at 7:30pm allows attendees to depart after an hour, though all are welcome to stay until the end. Meetings are held at Central Park Recreation Center, 9651 MLK Jr. Blvd. For information about SUN, visit www.stapletonunitedneighbors.com. To contact SUN, email stapletonunitedneighbors@gmail.com

December SUN News

The Sustainable Neighborhoods Program Wants Your Ideas

In its second year of participation in the City and County of Denver's Sustainable Neighborhoods Program, the Stapleton community has come together to bring several inspiring events to the neighborhood. Among the events organized through the Sustainable Neighborhoods Program are the planting of twenty new trees in Greenway Park, an Electric Vehicles Forum at Sam Gary Branch Library, canvassing on behalf of the Denver Digs program, the second annual Community Day of Reflection, a reusable grocery bag giveaway, and more. These events are only possible because community members are willing to take the time out of their busy schedules to participate. SUN and the Sustainable Neighborhoods Program are thankful to all who contributed.

Ideas for an event or program that builds community while promoting sustainability are being solicited. The Sustainable Neighborhoods Program can help to secure the resources and communications to make help bring ideas to life, and to build community around sustainability. Students with a requirement for volunteer or service hours can meet requirements through volunteer work with the Sustainable Neighborhoods Program. Interested persons should connect with the SUN Sustainability Committee at sunsustainability@gmail.com or on Facebook at [facebook.com/snpstapleton](https://www.facebook.com/snpstapleton)

Members of the Sustainable Neighborhoods team are excited about finishing a second year strong and are excited to see what year three has in store.

Stapleton Area Education Space and Programming Plan

SUN is seeking input from community members, area school leadership, and our elected DPS school board representatives to construct a plan for what school configuration will best meet the eventual needs of the fully built community while supporting a strong public school system in Denver. This plan will be available to inform the community members serving on the 2020 Community Planning and Advisory Committee (CPAC). The CPAC will create the 2020 bond and mill levy packages that will go to the Board of Education for approval. CPAC applications were accepted through November 22, with meetings taking place from January to June of 2020.

Digstown proposed zoning change

Digstown submitted a rezoning application for their location south of I-70, to leave the 7,104 sq ft building footprint intact, with the use becoming salon suites for humans. The exterior fencing would become additional parking lot. The building would have additional windows on the north side. Owners are hoping for a zoning hearing in March, and construction in summer 2020. If the zoning change is successful, Digstown would combine locations (to the Stapleton location north of I-70), otherwise things stay as they are. Ownership would appreciate all questions come to Stacy Reed or the manager Jack, via: fun@digstown.us.

Denver City Auditor Tim O'Brien, recap from 11/19 SUN meeting

Auditor O'Brien described the role of the auditor in city government. In Denver, the

auditor is elected every 4 years. Where tax dollars go, so goes the auditor: zoo, botanical gardens, Denver Preschool Program, internal departments and agencies. The auditor seeks to make government accountable and transparent. Summarizing the financial stability of Denver, Auditor O'Brien described annual growth since 2009, with \$763 million sales tax in 2018 (\$34million from marijuana), and \$385 million in the general fund. The city is well positioned to continue to repay bonds in the presence of a hypothetical economic decline. The airport's \$945 million in revenue generated \$544 million excess of expenses, with anticipated projects including \$1billion for a runway, \$1.5billion for 13 more gates are being added to each terminal, and the Great Hall project restarting soon. Among 41 employees in the auditor's office 10 hold a CPA qualification. On the 2020 ballot, voters will be asked to approve a requirement that the city auditor hold a CPA qualification.

Meetings in 2020

In 2020, SUN will continue meeting in the Central Park Rec Center on the third Tuesday each month from 6:30pm-8:30pm. Meetings are organized with a public portion for the first hour with speakers from city agencies or community organizations, with a brief break before a discussion-focused second hour. Attendees are welcome to stay for the full meeting, but the break is a time of transition when attendees can come/go with minimal disruption. Speakers for early 2020 include: School Choice in January, and Public Works in March. SUN will not meet in December of 2019.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

(continued from page 23)

Mentoring high-performing, low-income students. Minds Matter is recruiting our next class of college access mentors to help high-performing, low-income high school. mindsmatterdenver.org

Volunteers Needed at Ronald McDonald Family Rooms at Rocky Mountain Hospital for Children. At Presbyterian/St. Luke's Hospital. Seeks volunteers for once-a-week commitment, 6-month minimum. ronaldhouse.org under "How You Can Help" for info.

Single Volunteers of Greater Denver. Volunteer, not-for-profit singles group to meet others and assist nonprofit organizations for events/activities. svgd.org

Reading Volunteers Needed. For students in K-8 grade. 1 hour, 1 student, 1x week. During school hours. julie@partnersinliteracy.org or 303.316.3944 ext. 241.

Project Worthmore. Nonprofit organization of committed community members give, volunteer, mentor, befriended refugee neighbors. 1609 Havana St., 720-460-1393

Research: Parents' Perceptions About Offspring's Mental Health Care



Are you a parent of an adolescent 12–17 years old with diagnosed anxiety and or depression? If so, you are invited to participate in a research project exploring parent's perceptions about your adolescent's mental health care.

Your participation is voluntary and confidential. Participation in this study can take up to 90 minutes in a single session. If you join the study, you will answer questions about perceptions related to your adolescent with anxiety and or depression regarding family, school, health care, mental health care, community, society, policy, culture, and accessing mental health care.

As a token of appreciation, a \$25 gift card will be given after conclusion of the interview. If you are interested in participating or have any questions, please contact: Andrea LeClaire at 303-981-8190 or andrea.leclaire@cuanschutz.edu

Protocol #19-1356

Andrea LeClaire, PhD(candidate), MSHA, RN, Doctoral Student, College of Nursing, University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus

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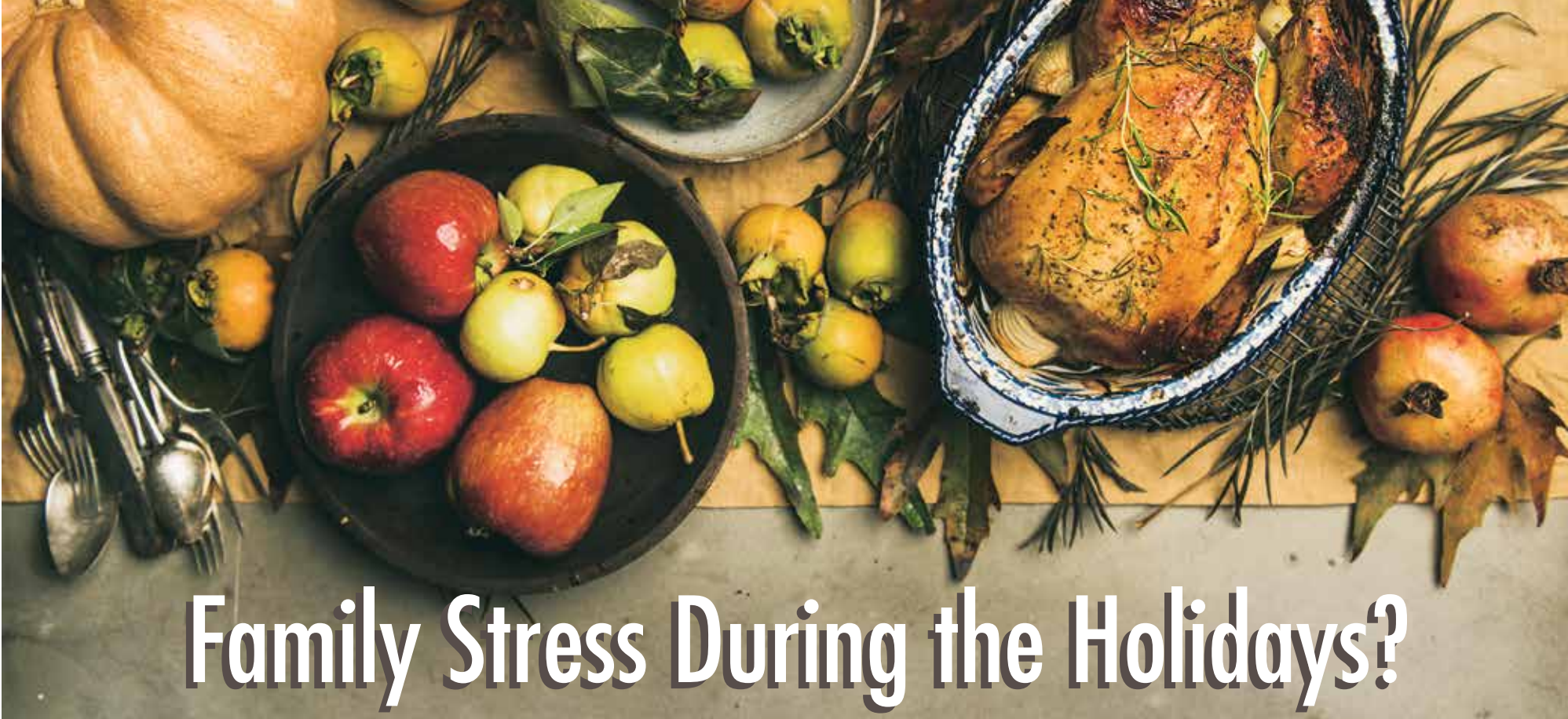
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Family Stress During the Holidays?

By Sandra Thebaud, PhD

The holidays are coming and you'll be spending time with your family. With an impeachment investigation dominating the news, the usual family differences may be heightened this year.

Holiday gatherings can be tough, even in the best of times, because we're surrounded by images of seemingly happy, loving families that get along or, at least, seem to resolve their issues amicably. This can lead us to expect the same from our own family, even though it's never been the case in the past. Such images can be so strong, we expect our family members to miraculously be different than who they have been all along. How can you deal with your stress and prevent holiday gatherings from turning into a nightmare?

Awareness is the key to effectively managing stress.

Mentally prepare yourself to accept family members as they are

Take an accurate assessment of your family members. When we're

around people who can easily annoy or upset us, it's easy to see only their negative side. Write down both their positive and negative qualities—and focus on the positive.

Expecting family members to be something they're not will lead to disappointment and make it difficult to spend time with them. After a while, we wish they would change what we don't like about them. Just accept them for who they are—both positive and negative qualities.

If you can't find positive qualities, ask a good friend or family member to help you reframe some of the negative qualities. Remember, who they are is the result of their own unique experiences. Another family member may be able to help you gain patience (and hopefully compassion) for them.

Strategies for minimizing negative interactions

You may have done a good job of loving your family from afar, but now, thanks to the holidays, you find yourself around family members who have been toxic to your

emotional and mental health. The key is to strike a balance between loving your family members and keeping yourself sane. Try these strategies for minimizing your negative inter-

actions in order to have more enjoyable holiday gatherings.

- While you're around family during the holidays, keep the conversation on neutral topics—like food, family traditions, and happy or humorous memories.
- Some family members are so good at pushing our buttons they can do it with a simple comment even before the conversation gets going. Keep in mind most people's favorite topic is themselves. If you turn the focus of the conversation

You survived growing up with them. You can easily survive a holiday with them.

- back to them and their positive qualities, they will be less focused on you.
- If you can't stay calm, take a time out. Excuse yourself to go to the restroom where you can be alone and regain your calm composure; get something to eat or drink; or talk to someone else (e.g., "Oh, there's Aunt Ruth. I haven't seen her in so long. I should go say hi."). The key is to end the conversation and keep things from getting worse.
 - Once the meal is over, play games—the sillier the better—and get back to laughing together.

Your relatives are who they are because of their personal experiences. You are who you are because of yours. Everyone has a right to have an opinion. Sometimes opinions can be influenced—but you can't expect them to change. Accept your family for who they are and remember you are only seeing them for a short time. You survived growing up with them. You can easily survive a holiday with them.

Sandra Thebaud, PhD, is a psychologist with a specialty in stress management and a former Navy Lieutenant Commander. She is the author of two books on stress management.



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The riparian area hosts an abundance of plant and animal life including birds, rabbits, foxes, beavers, deer and a resident turkey.



The 9-acre lake at the heart of Bluff Lake Nature Center is fed by storm water from the Stapleton neighborhood.

Bluff Lake: A Living Laboratory

By Mary Jo Brooks

On a recent Saturday morning—with temperatures hovering just above freezing—a dozen devoted birdwatchers gathered at Bluff Lake Nature Center for their monthly bird walk. Using scopes, binoculars and long-lensed cameras, the group re-



Former Bluff Lake Executive Director Glenn Fee stands at the observation deck. Before the dam was rebuilt, the lake was periodically dry. (2008 Front Porch photo)

corded 32 different species of birds, including 10 different species of ducks. George Ho, who has led the group for the past 2 years, said it was a very good day.

“Even if we don’t see something rare, it’s nice to just walk around enjoying nature with people who have a similar interest,” says Ho.

Located on the eastern

edge of Stapleton, Bluff Lake is a living laboratory that has been welcoming bird watchers, school students, scientists, walkers and joggers to its 123-acre wildlife refuge for over two decades. Yet remarkably, most people don’t know much about its history or mission.

Bluff Lake’s Mission: Inspire People to Protect and Connect with Nature

Bluff Lake was created in the late 1800s as part of an irrigation system for nearby farms. In the 1940s, the property was acquired by the city of Denver to become part of the Stapleton Airport, to be used as a “crash zone.” When the airport closed in 1995, the Sierra Club sued Denver for inadequate environmental protections that allowed toxic chemicals to spill into nearby Sand Creek. As part of that settlement, the city invested over three million dollars to restore the land and enhance its wildlife habitat. A non-profit organization was formed to manage the property, and in 2008, the Bluff Lake Nature Center received full ownership. Its primary mission? To educate and inspire people to protect and connect with nature.

“Bluff Lake is a fantastic educational tool that allows us to teach people about the natural world, about conservation and the importance of preserving open space,” says Rachel Crouch, executive director of Bluff Lake Nature Center. Each year, more than 5,000 Denver Public School students visit Bluff Lake on fieldtrips.

Ninety-five percent of the schools that participate serve low-income students, who often don’t have the opportunities to connect with nature and wildlife. During the summer, an additional 300 kids participate in summer camps. “We have a very diverse community that comes here and it’s so gratifying when we see kids who have come here on field trips, then bring



Since 1995, more than 100,000 school children have visited Bluff Lake Nature Center.

their parents back because they’re so excited to show them what they’ve learned.”

Getting adults more involved at Bluff Lake is one of Crouch’s goals. She assumed the top job 18 months ago after serving as its education manager. She’s hoping to form an insect club, similar to the birding group, which would encourage insect lovers to explore and document insects found on the property.

So far, 98 species of spiders found at Bluff Lake

Professional scientists have been utilizing Bluff Lake as a giant outdoor laboratory for years. Paula Cushing is a biologist with the Denver Museum of Nature and Science who studies spiders. Since 1999, she has been leading citizen science workshops at Bluff Lake for a bio-diversity survey. After a short training session, the volunteers fan out across the area to

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This red-tailed hawk at Bluff Lake was photographed by George Ho, who leads the Bluff Lake Birders group.

Left: A jogger enjoys a scenic workout along the 1-mile trail around Bluff Lake.

Wildlife photos by George Ho from his visit to Bluff Lake on November 18 are posted at FrontPorchNe.com, where readers can also comment on and share this article.

collect and preserve spiders.

“Bluff Lake is an ideal open laboratory. It has diverse habitat, from the grassland at the top of the bluff down through the riparian area by the lake. It contains several different habitats where we can see all kinds of spiders,” says Cushing. “It’s been a win-win-win situation. It’s good for my project. It’s good for Bluff Lake, because we provide them with a list of species that live here. And it introduces local people to this very special place.”

So far, Cushing and her volunteers have discovered 98 different species of spiders at the lake. Cushing says studies are important because so very little is known about spiders.

“Mammals and birds have long been studied. There are about 10,000 species of birds and 5,400 species of mammals. But there are over 48,000 species of spiders and that number is increasing all over the world as we discover new species,” says Cushing. “We need to get a baseline of information about spiders before we can even begin to understand how changes in habitat and climate are affecting them.”

Birth control for prairie dogs?

Dan Salkeld is a biologist at Colorado State University who is also using Bluff Lake as a laboratory. He is studying a problem vexing many front-range communities that are rapidly being developed: over-population of prairie dogs. As the Stapleton neighborhood was built, prairie dogs moved to Bluff Lake in droves.

“Prairie dogs are considered a keystone species. The holes they dig become homes for other animals so they are good for the ecosystem,” says Salkeld. “The problem is when too many populate an area, they can cause erosion and destroy habitat.”

Salkeld is testing whether birth control will bring the population back into balance. A year ago, his team injected two dozen female prairie dogs at Bluff Lake with a contraceptive. He’s still analyzing the data but a follow-up visit to Bluff Lake this fall seemed to indicate that fewer babies had been born. He says his work at Bluff Lake will be very useful for other communities that want non-lethal options to manage prairie dogs.

Executive director Crouch says another reason scientists flock to Bluff Lake Nature Center is because as a private, non-profit organization, there are fewer regulatory hurdles to overcome than a government-managed property. She’s quick to add, however, that since Bluff Lake doesn’t receive government support, funding is always a challenge. Over the next three years, Crouch hopes to raise enough money to erect a building that would house an information center, a classroom and restrooms.

“During the past few years, we’ve spent our energies restoring the site and protecting it. Now we want to take the next step and make it even more accessible for people to visit,” says Crouch.



Bird watchers of all abilities are invited to join the monthly bird walk. This summer, following Hurricane Dorian, bird watchers from all over the state flocked to Bluff Lake to see a bird normally found in Central America, the Groove-billed ani.

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