

Front Porch

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AUGUST 2021

Safe Outdoor Space



The Safe Outdoor Space tent community at the Park Hill United Methodist Church will provide shelter for 40 people who are experiencing homelessness

through the end of the year. Left to right: Minister of Worship and Music Daryl J. Walker, Executive Pastor Rev. Laura Rainwater, Director of Children and Youth

Tory Doerksen and Lead Pastor Rev. Nathan Adams. Story on page 14 by Mary Jo Brooks.

Still Learning from the Ancient World



STONEHENGE

The “Stonehenge” exhibit at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science remains open until September 6. Artifacts, videos, and recreations like this one share the latest insights about this ancient site, which continues to reveal its secrets to archaeologists.

Story on page 8 by Martina Will.

Our New Superintendent & Issues that Lie Ahead



DPS Supt. Dr. Alex Marrero

“I was just taking marching orders from a sickly immigrant mother. She told us, ‘Es mejor que me traigas buenas notas’—bring me good grades. We were good kids. Maybe not the most motivated, but did we make trouble in school? Absolutely not,” says Dr. Alex Marrero reflecting on his childhood education in the Bronx. When he was just 12, he decided to forgo his neighborhood school for one in a wealthy neighborhood nearby. It was a decision that set in motion a series of events that would shape him in many ways. Today, he’s Denver Public Schools’ new superintendent in charge of 93,000 young souls.

Story on page 4 by Tracy Wolfer Osborne.

Swainson's Hawk—photographed at Bluff Lake Nature Center

The Swainson's Hawk migrates here from Argentina yearly to nest and raise young in April and returns to Argentina with the juveniles in September.



Average adult weight is 1.8 lbs. (30 oz) for males and 2.5 lbs. (40 oz) for females.
Wingspan is 49 inches.

BIRD SIGHTINGS

The **Black-chinned Hummingbird** below was photographed in Central Park in the Bluff Lake neighborhood. This mother nested in the maple in front of photographer George Ho's home last summer. She nested there again this summer and had two hatchlings. Ho's photo story from nest building to fledglings taking flight is linked to this article at FrontPorchNE.com.
Average adult weight is 0.11 oz.
Average weight of a hatchling is one-third the weight of a dime (0.02 oz).
In less than 3 weeks a hatching grows to an adult-sized fledgling.
Wingspan is 4.3 inches. The nest is 1.5 inches in diameter (about the size of a golf ball).
The eggs are half an inch long (about the size of a jellybean).
Photos and information by bird watcher George Ho.



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Front Porch

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Events & Announcements

Before it's back to school, savor your summer with August events for all ages.

It seems like the start of school is just around the corner, but don't assume the summer season is over quite yet. This month, the MCA is presenting a wide variety of events in Central Park, including film, theater, and live concerts for all ages at our outdoor parks and amphitheaters. Grab your family and a blanket and come out to support some of our local Colorado artists, musicians, and entertainers while soaking up what's left of summer before it's officially behind us.

Aug. 5 – Last MoJaBlu Concert

On August 5th, don't miss our final MoJaBlu concert of 2021 at Conservatory Green and Amphitheater with the electrifying return of The Hot Lunch Band. Made up of five incredibly talented musicians, The Hot Lunch Band boasts high-energy entertainment with hard-core funk and dance music. Their undeniable charisma and comedic personalities make them one of the most sought-after musical groups in the city. We promise you one thing: there's absolutely no way you'll be able to stay seated for this show!

Aug. 6 – Last Movie at Founders' Green

The MCA will be screening the Disney hit *Raya and the Last Dragon* at dusk on August 6. Stunningly animated and often charming, *Raya and the Last Dragon* delivers another Disney treasure that expands on the weight of one's legacy and explores the struggle of those coming to terms with loss, forgiveness, and self-growth.

Aug. 12-14 – Central City Opera Musical Theater

On August 12th-14th, at Conservatory Green and Amphitheater, we are thrilled to host our first-ever musical theater production presented by the Central City Opera. The Central City Opera is the fifth oldest professional opera company in the country and is renowned for exquisite world-class productions. Central City Opera will perform *En Mis Palabras*, an original one-act bilingual opera. *En Mis Palabras / In My Own Words* addresses the universal theme of adolescent development — finding your voice and learning who you are amid parental expectations and peer influences.

Aug. 26 – Municipal Jazz Band

If jazz is more your style, don't miss out on seeing the rousing return of a neighborhood favorite when Denver's Municipal Jazz band performs on August 26th at Conservatory Green and Amphitheater. Made up of some of Colorado's

most accomplished musicians, this 20 piece jazz band will perform a variety of music the whole family will enjoy.

Sep. 4 – Denver Municipal Concert Band

The full 40 piece Denver Municipal Concert Band comes to Founders' Green on Sept. 4th to perform an impressive array of music including movie scores, show tunes, marches, and other classic masterpieces.

Aug. 22 – Kids Triathlon

On Sunday, August 22nd, the MCA will host the highly anticipated return of the Kids Triathlon. The race will have all the components of an official triathlon including, timing chips, finisher medals, race shirts, kids swag bags, etc. Registration for all age groups is sold out, but we encourage neighbors to come out and cheer on the community's youth as they participate in this event. At our triathlon, kids are the stars of the show. The MCA, event sponsors, and community volunteers do everything possible to make this a fantastic experience for all participants while promoting the benefits of a healthy lifestyle focused on daily exercise and good nutrition.

Sundays thru Oct. 10 – Farmers Market

Lastly, don't forget to visit Founders' Green for our Sunday Farmers Market managed by HobNob Events. At our weekly farmers market, local vendors provide Colorado-grown produce, tasty baked goods, specialty meats, gourmet food items, and more! HobNob and the MCA believe it is essential to support our local community. Therefore, all products sold at our market must be grown, raised, produced, or gathered by the vendor in the state of Colorado or bordering counties. Check out the market every Sunday through October 10th!

With this exceptional line-up of events happening throughout the month, there's still plenty of time to enjoy the summer season in Central Park. Please visit the MCA website, www.MCA80238.com, for additional event details on everything mentioned above, including times, locations, and the most up-to-date information regarding COVID-19 safety. Here's to savoring the remainder of summer, mainly its sunshine, longer days, and all the ways we enjoy this community we love.

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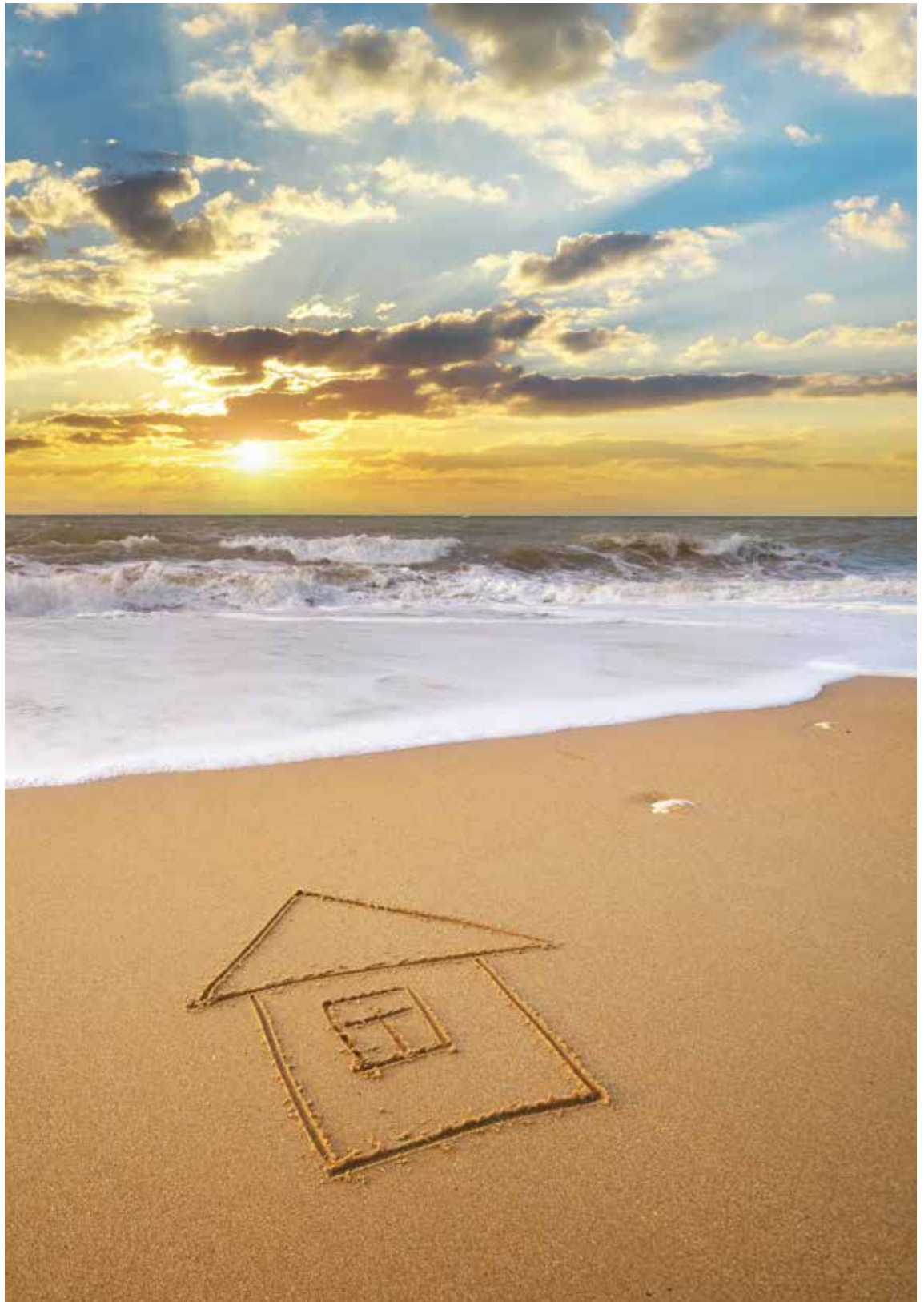
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Sharon Hicks, president of the Denver chapter of the Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority, stands outside Hallet Elementary School in Park Hill. For several years, the Black sorority has provided groceries for families in need at the school.

AKA: Offering An Image to Emulate

By Mary Jo Brooks

Members of the nation’s oldest African American sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha (AKA), were thrilled last November when one of their own, Kamala Harris, was elected as the nation’s first female Vice President of the United States. “We were all just in awe. It made us all want to do more and be our best selves. Everything she stands for is what we stand for,” said AKA Denver chapter president Sharon Hicks. She also noted that the attention Harris is bringing to the organization has boosted both membership and enthusiasm in the organization. “So many people are becoming even more active, realizing that we have greater things to accomplish.”

But being at the forefront of politics and social change is nothing new for this 113-year-old organization, which was founded at Howard University, a historically Black college located in Washington, D.C.

From the very beginning, the sorority has been involved with expanding voting rights, transforming education, eradicating poverty, and expanding health care services for African Americans—including the establishment of the nation’s first mobile health clinic in 1935. The service organization has more than one thousand chapters around the world and nearly 300,000 members. This spring, a film called “Twenty Pearls” was released, which documented the numerous ways the sorority has impacted American life.

The Denver chapter, which was founded 73 years ago, has more than 100 active members, who proudly wear the sorority’s pink and green colors. “We have entrepreneurs, doctors, teachers, political leaders, and women from all walks of life,” says Denver AKA member Linda Williams. She notes that two lawmakers in the Colorado legislature—Representatives Rhonda Fields and Janet Buckner—are also members.

“We try to be a positive ray of light—even in times of darkness. We try to hold ourselves up so that girls and young women have an image they can emulate,” says Williams.

Although the Covid-19 pandemic made some of the sorority’s service work more difficult, Hicks says members of the Denver chapter were eager to figure out new ways to meet the needs of the community. Their “Pink Pantry”—a program designed to alleviate food insecurity—helped provide groceries for families who had relied on food programs at schools, and for elderly residents who couldn’t go shopping. “We’ve always done meal assistance for families, but the need dramatically increased during the pandemic,” says Hicks.

Williams noted that the sorority also tried some unconventional approaches to connect with elderly members of the chapter who were particularly isolated by the pandemic. “My cousin is a sorority sister and she was turning 101, so we organized a big parade in front of her house—all of us decked out in our pink and green.”

During the 2020 election, the sorority launched a huge voter registration initiative and get-out-the-vote effort. After the George Floyd killing and protests erupted, the chapter held virtual townhalls to discuss how to engage more effectively with the community. And as vaccines became available, the AKA sisters were determined to get the word out to the African American community to get vaccinated.

Hicks says this fall her members are eager to resume in-person activities: helping with a community garden at Hallet Academy in Park Hill and providing college application prep and assistance at high schools throughout Denver.

By Tracy Wolfer Osborne

When Dr. Alex Marrero was 12 years old, he convinced his mother and school principal to allow him to stay in what he calls his “educational comfort zone.” His decision would send him on an academic trajectory that was neither designed nor intended for him. ““You tested into the gifted and talented program here,” said the principal. ‘Why don’t you want to stay? It’s a fine school.’ My mother sat there quiet and intimidated while I translated. I told them I was scared to stay at our neighborhood school without my brother; it was too dangerous. Don’t get me wrong, it was a rough school, but I wasn’t scared. I just wanted to go to school with my Little League buddies and best friend Miguel.”

Miguel was a kid with cognitive issues and a bad stutter who qualified for a special program in Riverdale, an affluent part of the Bronx that boasted generational wealth and sprawling estates on a hill. Marrero, as a student in his neighborhood school’s honors program, finessed his way to attend the Riverdale honors program.

Transferring to Riverdale didn’t insulate Marrero from every hardship. After a long ride on two buses, he found himself in “a world that was totally different from my own. I saw people who looked differently from what I was accustomed to, and I was worried I wouldn’t fit in—but I pushed forward because I wanted to be part of the Little League crowd. There was also a learning curve in terms of culture. I was used to chaos, and Riverdale was structured. It was also a lot more reading than I was used to, but I did okay. I wasn’t the top student, but I was nowhere near the bottom either.”

Despite holding his own, at the end of seventh grade, Marrero was transferred to The Academy, a program in Riverdale for underperforming students. For Marrero—who expected to continue in the honors program—the demotion was an unexpected and undeserved slap in the face. “I still remember my teacher and friends were shocked. My buddy Chris Colon, who was the catcher on our team, said, ‘You get

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better grades than me.’ I don’t want to say it was racial; I imagine it was based on my zip code, but looking back now, it was bad. All the kids in The Academy—which was in a leased basement of a high-rise two blocks from the main campus—were black and brown, and everyone who remained in the main program was white and Asian.” Gone were the challenging coursework and rigorous curriculum. Marrero distinctly remembers correcting a long-term sub who was badly botching a lesson on the Pythagorean theorem. “It was an absolutely terrible learning experience and a complete joke.”

By the end of eighth grade, Marrero was ready to follow in his older brother’s footsteps and applied to vocational school. But a guidance counselor who saw his record got him reenrolled in the honors program. “She didn’t have to do that. She played my cards right. I want to make sure every kid has the same opportunities as those on the hill.”

A Look at the District as Marrero Arrives

Closing the achievement gap—which leaves boys who look like Marrero dangling at the bottom—will of course prove to be one of Marrero’s biggest challenges in DPS. Perhaps equally as challenging will be navigating the choppy waters between the reformers and the traditionalists—two polarizing groups who staunchly believe their policies will pave the path to excellence.

As recently as 2018, the reformers had mo-



Front Porch photo by Steve Larson

Our New Superintendent & DPS Issues that Lie Ahead

mentum. They believe in testing, competition, and accountability. They shut down underperforming schools and fired less-than-satisfactory teachers. They embraced competition, opened 65+ new schools and created SchoolChoice. It was a system that—despite catapulting DPS from one of the worst urban districts to the middle of the pack—still lost favor with voters.

2020 ushered in a new political landscape reflected in a flipped-majority union-backed board. They believe in a holistic approach over standardized testing, a centralized center of control, and a strong teachers’ union. Most recently, they unanimously rejected the ex-

pansions of two innovation zones after passing a resolution to “pause and reflect” about iZones through May of 2021. They’ve also passed several resolutions—the Know Justice, Know Peace Resolution, the LGBTQIA+ Inclusion Resolution, the Won’t be Erased Resolutio, and the Black Excellence Resolution—all of which are aimed at creating a more inclusive and equitable curriculum.

Implementing A Practice of Collaboration

Marrero rejects the idea that someone has to be either a reformer or a traditionalist when it comes to choice vs. neighborhood schools. He says he’ll create a transitional team of internal and external folks who will help guide his decisions. “What I anticipate with iZones, innovation, neighborhood, and charter schools is that there will be collaboration, not just in fluff but in practice.” He also says there will be a renewed focus on Latino excellence and looks forward to working with groups like the Colorado Latino Forum and the Latino Education Coalition. “It’s important,” he says, “because over half of DPS students are Hispanic or Latino.”

Critical Race Theory and Closing the Achievement Gap

Educators and politicians across the country have suggested one of the keys to closing the achievement gap—which has been re-coined the opportunity gap—is to embrace Critical Race Theory (CRT), which is largely the purview of university law schools and graduate programs, not K-12 classrooms. CRT has become a controversial curriculum that moves beyond teaching the history of the Civil Rights Movement and embraces a comprehensive historical view that says America first began not in 1776 with the signing of The Declaration of Independence, but in 1619 with the arrival of the first slave ships. Supporters say kids who can see themselves in the curriculum will be more likely to succeed. Opponents say the curriculum teaches that White students are part of an oppressor class and Black and Brown students are part of an oppressed class. They call it repackaged Marxism that separates people by color and asserts that the biggest indicator of children’s future success is not their character but the

color of their skin. Will Jones, Director of External Communications for DPS, says the district does not teach Critical Race Theory. However, recent conversations with principals indicate they are embracing a new anti-racist curriculum, including implementing implicit-bias training for teachers. Twenty-two states have proposed legislation to limit CRT, while five have passed laws prohibiting or limiting it. Marrero says the public can expect a formal statement from DPS regarding CRT soon.

Community Awareness of DPS Options Is a Priority

Marrero has been DPS Superintendent for just over two weeks. And he’s taken that time to embark on a listening and learning tour. “I appreciate being informed by people with more institutional knowledge than myself,” he says. But it isn’t just VIPs in education he’s listening to. “My Uber driver didn’t know I’m superintendent. He just thought he had an annoying customer. He was from Ghana by way of New York and had three daughters in DPS, and he’d never heard of the Black Excellence Program. That was hard feedback for me. I’m literally learning from the backseat, and as a community-guy, I want everyone to know what’s happening in the district.”

The DPS Board recently released their findings from the “pause and reflect” period. They read in part: “We found many stakeholders are either unaware of innovation flexibilities or do not fully understand them.” That’s somethingMarrero has heard first-hand from a Spanish-speaking parent—“‘No entiendo la innovación ni las opciones que tienen mis hijos.’ And it resonated with me for two reasons. One, because, I didn’t always know my options either. Compared to where my mother went to school in the Dominican Republic, our neighborhood school was a palace; it was a cathedral, so who were we to question it? And two, because it’s something my mother would have said.”

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Event Visitors Respond to Van Gogh Alive



Front Porch photos by Christie Gosch

By Carol Roberts

Visitors shared their comments at the moment they exited the Van Gogh Alive event at Stanley Marketplace. A few chose not to comment, but all who did were enthusiastically positive about the experience. The recurring themes were: I really liked the music with the art. I really liked the quotes. I enjoyed it more than I expected.

Denverites' comments about the Denver Center for the Performing Arts' production couldn't have been more different from the *New York Times* art critic's comments (though, in fairness, we don't know how the Denver show differed from the New York shows): "These shows left me feeling largely indifferent; in fact, the strongest reaction I had was an alarming sense of intrusion and a disingenuous connection with the artist and his work."

Annette: Unexpectedly beautifully done. I thought it might be much more wild with modern flashing lights and instead it was respectful of Van Gogh's work.

Admira: I just thought it was a moment out of reality. It told a beautiful story, I think, really well.

Shannon: It was a little disorienting at first. It took a moment to kind of just settle in and figure out where to be. It was beautiful. I love how it kind of takes you on a journey through his evolution as an artist.



Mark: It's a completely immersive experience. It was like being inside his work. Where else are you going to experience that? It's incredible.

Susan: He could be quite philosophical. At the end, although he seemed to be sad and alone, there was a part of him that was so optimistic. I was more intent on his time periods and the quotes that were shown—I will go look more at his art elsewhere because, although I was enjoying it, I was really trying to think about what was being expressed in his quotes.

Jay: Beautiful but darker than expected.

KC, with 2 1/2- and 3-year-old daughters: I enjoyed it because my daughters were enjoying it so much. They got to dance and run around on the images projected on the floor. They didn't have any trouble lasting 45 minutes.

Michelle: It's extremely moving because you're immersed. You get a sense of what it was like to be in the moment with him. I loved it.

Cody, 10 yrs: It was pretty cool. It was better than going to a museum because you don't have to walk around to look at all the different pictures because the pictures change. The big pictures and music are cool.

Karen: It's what I needed in this period of time with all the stress and misinformation. This was a great escape and it makes me want to go home and draw. The quotes were just great. I realized if I would have stood in another part of the room, I could have seen everything without turning my head all the time. It was beautifully done with the music and very powerful. And my husband, we dragged him here and now he won't come out.

Noel: I thought it was overwhelming and had such depth and quality because Van Gogh had such depth and quality. I would have liked to see individual periods or paintings for a longer time... As Van Gogh moved out of Paris and to the countryside, I began to see in his landscapes and flowers that they had personalities...there was a people component to them. In some pictures I saw torment and chaos and conflict, but in others I saw such freedom, color, and movement. I think anybody who lets the paintings soak in has a sense of who must have painted these.

I'm sure that my experiences [as a psychiatrist], in terms of dealing with emotions played into how I responded. Van Gogh's colors and how prolific he was were influenced by his emotional condition, which most people have come to regard as a temporal lobe epilepsy. And he had a heart condition for which he took digitalis. Digitalis makes everything more yellow and green and off shade. So my sense is, his paintings reflected how he saw things.

I believe absolutely that if today's medications had been available, they would have affected his art. Medications make people more "functional" in our society, but they stop taking their meds because it robs them of their passion. But I think Van Gogh would have had the passion and the free spirit to say, "I'm not taking these drugs, these poisons that would rob me of who I am." One of his quotes was, "I just want people to accept me for who I am."



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Still Howling and Banging

Neighbors from the 2600 block of Syracuse Ct. in Central Park still show up at 8pm to support Covid workers. Left to right: Ignacio Correa Ortiz, Vince Collins, Shirley Johnson, Kay Taylor, Wendy and Mateo (back) Correa, Ella and Avery Fowler, Chris Neukom. Wendy is blowing a vuvuzela, a plastic horn that produces sounds so loud they have been banned from many sports areas.

By Carol Roberts
“At the beginning of the Covid news coverage, one of the first things we saw was the people in Italy at 8pm. They all came out on the balcony. So I started clapping,” says Ignacio Correa Ortiz. “Then a couple days later, this opera singer came out and sang his aria—and then somebody else brought out their violin. All of a sudden it became a community concert.”

So the 2600 block of Syracuse Court in Central Park decided to do the same. “I don’t play any instrument other than the drum and the vuvuzela, so I brought them out,” says Ignacio. “Then Shirley is a bell ringer at her church, so she brought out her bell. Bonner brought his vuvuzela as well. And Claudia and her partner came out—she whistles with her lips so loud. And then the



Wendy and Mateo Correa (back) and Ignacio Correa Ortiz

kids, when they heard the drums, they all came out looking for what it was. So it was a lot of excitement. We kept on going every night for months, especially when we could not go anywhere. In the early days, it was a party.”

The “kids” in the neighborhood are Ella and Avery Fowler. They climbed on top of their car and their camper and waved ribbons. They say they loved howling—and gave a demonstration. “It was really sweet to honor the people who save our country and save people. I just thought it was really kind of our whole entire block to do that,” says Ella. Her

sister Avery adds, “I think it’s really respectful, especially to the doctors who have been work-

ing for a very long time to figure out the vaccine. And now, it’s a lot safer to go out in public and masks aren’t required barely anywhere. And I feel like the support of the people on our block and everywhere helped that. “

In late July, the neighbors are still coming out. “We have had family members who have had Covid and friends who have died of Covid—and my siblings are in the medical professions,” says Ignacio. “So we just come out and recognize that. Last night we were somewhere else and my watch goes off at 8pm. Wherever we are, we just clap.

The neighbors speak out about their connections with front line workers and Covid patients. At Shirley Johnson’s church, there are several nurses who were on the front lines. Chris Neukom’s family knows nurses, doctors, and paramedics. Wendy Correa has a client who’s a respiratory therapist working with Covid patients at University Hospital and a nephew in St. Louis who got Covid. “He’s 41. A police officer, no smoking, no underlying conditions. Three of the four officers in his unit got sick and recovered in two weeks. Johnny wound up in ICU for eight weeks on an ECMO, a heart lung machine. They didn’t think he would live. He’s now in rehab, but he has like 50 percent lung capacity. It’s personal that we know so many people who got Covid before they were able to get a vaccine.”

The first time Ignacio knew he wasn’t going to be there, he told Shirley she had to hold the fort. She went out. “All alone in the rain and sleet and snow,” Shirley adds.

In May, the neighbors had some discussions about an end date, but then the Delta variant arrived and people started getting sick again, “You know, we’re not done. It’s still going on. So, we’ll keep going,” says Ignacio. “It’s like we’re not gonna stop, says Shirley, “and we haven’t.”

“Covid is going to go on for awhile” says Wendy. “Luckily those of us that are vaccinated may not get really sick. We may not die. We may not wind up in the hospital. But we don’t really know the long-term effects for those who’ve already gotten sick—and so it’s just important that we still remain vigilant about this and take good care of the doctors and nurses and people that are working to help us.”



Shirley Johnson



Chris Neukom

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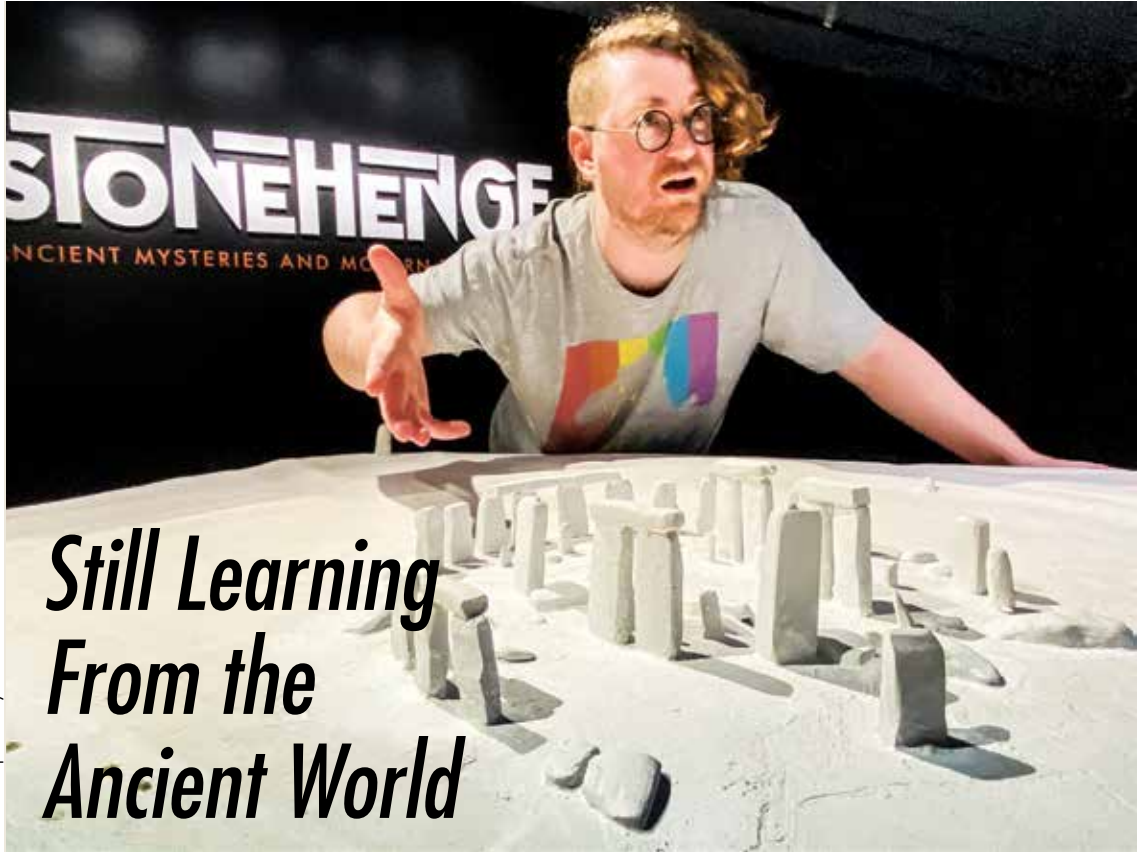
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Still Learning From the Ancient World

Andrew Parker, a DMNS educator performer, explains how Stonehenge changed shape over the centuries, as people moved the now-iconic stones. Stonehenge attracts more than 1.5 million visitors each year.

By Martina Will

For centuries, people have marveled at a circle of upright stones standing on the Salisbury Plain outside of Wiltshire, England. How did the massive sandstones get there? What purpose did they serve? Who planted them? Spoiler alert: it wasn't aliens.

A UNESCO World Heritage Site, Stonehenge remains one of the most iconic ancient sites, older than the pyramids at Giza or the Mayan temples in Mesoamerica, the site was part of a large network of interconnected ritual sites. Long before ancient people placed the monoliths



Archaeologists have found antler picks, pictured, as well as bone and stone tools around Stonehenge.

we associate with Stonehenge, Mesolithic hunter-gatherers camped near the River Avon and erected large posts on the site.

"It was developed over time from people all across the British Isles," affirms Andrew Parker, an educator performer with Denver Museum of Nature and Science, which is home to the exhibit "Stonehenge: Ancient Mysteries and Modern Discoveries" through September 6. "As early as 10,000 years ago, it seems to have been a sacred site for hunter-gatherers. At that time, there was probably a lot of game for them to hunt and there are some really interesting physical features of the landscape."

The megaliths we

most associate with Stonehenge are of a local sandstone called "sarsen," which scientists believe came from Marlborough Downs, about 19 miles away moved to the site about 3,000 BCE, these imposing stones endure as silent testament to the ancients' engineering ingenuity. Scientific advances and ongoing archaeological investigations have brought us closer than ever to understanding who built Stonehenge and associated sites in the vicinity.

Wild cattle and pigs, in addition to deer and other game, drew

Mesolithic hunter-gatherers to the area, but ancient peoples also associated the site with the sacred.

Cyclical freezing and thawing during the Ice Age had created "parallel gullies and ridges that coincidentally aligned with the summer solstice sunrise and winter solstice sunset," according to the DMNS exhibit.

Far from being an isolated site on the plain, Stonehenge was part of a larger network of cultural and sacred sites. Its construction and shifting design over the centuries reveal the highly complex social organization and planning required for an undertaking on this scale.

Like most cultural sites,



These Mesolithic tools dating from 8000-4000 BCE allowed hunter-gatherers to cut wood, dig for roots, cut plants and meat, and scrape animal hides.



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Left: The model in the picture is using an antler pick to dig the circular ditch-and-bank around the stones—the “henge.” (Henges feature a ring-shaped bank and ditch, with the ditch inside the bank.) Stone circles exist throughout Britain and Ireland; Stonehenge’s builders shaped the stones and over time added lintels. Construction required complex social organization to ensure that builders had reliable access to resources.

sociated sites. Mike Parker Pearson, Professor of British Later Prehistory at the Institute of Archeology, University College London, has been directing research on Stonehenge since 2003 and curated this exhibit, produced by the Austrian Museums Partner, in collaboration with English Heritage.

In February 2021, Pearson and his team found that the bluestone circle at Stonehenge had previously been installed in a similar sacred circle at Waun Mawn in Wales before being moved to their current location in the Salisbury Plain. Neolithic migrants from Wales dragged these stones on log sleds about 150 miles to bring them to Stonehenge. Each bluestone weighs one to three tons, and it would have taken 50 people over a long period of time through a series of many, small movements to move a single stone to the Salisbury Plain. “These stones may have represented a connection to their ancestral home in Wales,” says Parker.

If England is not in your summer travel budget, head to the DMNS to see the original artifacts and learn about the latest research on Stonehenge before the exhibit’s final day on September 6. DMNS is open daily. Tickets for this show are available at www.dmns.org or call DMNS at 303-370-6000.



These are the bones of a man buried with a copper pin, a large dagger and other items around 2400-2200 BCE.



Above and below: An engineering feat that continues to amaze, the people who built Stonehenge moved sarsens weighing 4-28 tons each, to the ceremonial site from approximately 19 miles away. They then “locked” the stones together using hammerstones and mauls to create mortise-and-tenon joints. The DMNS exhibit includes many examples of tools, including hammerstones from the site.



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NE DENVER/NW AURORA EVENTS

Every Sunday Thru 10/10—Central Park Farmer's Market. Colorado-grown produce, baked goods, meats, and more at The Green (29th Ave & Roslyn) 9am–1pm. mca80238.com

Every Thursday Thru 9/30—Park Hill Farm & Flea. A Thursday Night Market featuring local makers, food purveyors, live music, and more. Oneida Park, 2231 Oneida St., from 4–8pm. parkhillfarmandflea.com



Oneida Park Farmers Market

Every Friday Thru 8/27—Stanley Farm & Flea. 9am–1pm. 2501 Dallas St, Aurora, in the South-east Plaza. stanleyfarmandflea.com

Every Saturday Thru 10/30—City Park Farmers Market. 60+ Colorado-based vendors offering locally-made produce and products. 8am–1pm at 2551 E. Colfax Ave. cityparkfarmersmarket.com

Saturdays—Bluff Lake Welcome Booth & Family Adventure Day. Free giveaways, scavenger hunts, field equipment rentals, games, and activities for both kids and adults. Later end-time, fire pit, and s'mores on select weeks. 11255 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. blufflake.org

8/1 Sunday—City Park Jazz. 6–8pm. Nelson Rangell performs at City Park Pavilion, 1700 N. York St., cityparkjazz.org

8/1, 8/22 & 8/29—Sunday Summer Music Series at Stanley West patio at Stanley Marketplace, 2501 N. Dallas St., Aurora. 1–4pm. stanleymarketplace.com

8/3 Tuesday—National Night Out. 5–8pm. Village Place park, 4662 N Carson St. For more info, email danae.baskall@denvergov.org

8/5 Thursday—MoJaBlu Concert series: Hot Lunch Band. Conservatory Green (49th & Valentia.) Begins at 6:30pm. mca80238.com

8/6 Friday—Outdoor Movie Series: Raya and the Last Dragon. The Green (29th Ave & Roslyn St). Movie starts at dusk. mca80238.com

8/7 Saturday—7th Annual Run for the Ring. Supporting The Guild of the Children's Diabetes Foundation. Barbara Davis Center for Diabetes, Anschutz Medical Campus, 1775 Aurora Ct, Aurora. childrensdiabetesfoundation.org

8/7 and 9/4—Bird Walk Around Bluff Lake. 8–10am. Join our birding experts on this free walk, everyone is welcome. Bring your own binoculars or we can loan you a pair. 11255 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. blufflake.org

8/12, 8/13 & 8/14—Theatre on the Green with Central City Opera. The Green (29th Ave & Roslyn St). Begins at 6:30pm. mca80238.com

8/21 Saturday—Bluff Lake Two Hour Guided Walk. 8–10am. Open your senses and engage with nature in a deeper way. 11255 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. blufflake.org

Through 8/22—Five Guys Named Moe. A musical featuring the works of jazz legend Louis Jordan. Vintage Theatre, 1468 Dayton St, Aurora. vintage theatre.org

8/29 Sunday—Qigong and Mindfulness Walk around Bluff Lake. 7:30–9am. Led by Joann Calabrese, mindfulness, and qigong instructor. 11255 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. blufflake.org

Through 9/6—SummerSkate. The Shops at Northfield Stapleton. \$10, includes skate rental. shopsatnorthfield.com

Through 9/26—Van Gogh Alive. A large-scale, multi-sensory experience to entertain the whole family. Stanley Marketplace, 2501 N. Dallas St., Aurora. Tickets at denvercenter.org

METRO EVENTS

Active Minds Seminars. Check out the schedule for webinars in August, some in-person. Denver metro area events at activeminds.com

8/3 Tuesday—CF Climb Denver. Empower Field at Mile High Stadium. Stair climb benefits Cystic Fibrosis. 5:30pm. In-person and online options. Register by 8/2 at cff.org/rockymountain/

8/4 and 8/11—Mixed Taste Lecture Series. Return of this popular DCPA, off-beat series, online or in-person at the Seawall Ballroom. Tickets at denvercenter.org

8/6 Friday—First Friday Art Walks. Art District on Santa. 5:30–9:30pm. denver.org/things-to-do/denver-arts-culture/denver-art-districts

8/6 and 8/13—B-Side Music Fridays. Rooftop, garden performances. 1485 Delgany St. Details at mca80238.com

8/11 to 8/14—Cherry Creek North Food & Wine. Celebrate the diverse and sophisticated tastes of Cherry Creek North dining. 2401 E. 2nd

Aug. & Early Sept. Events

Ave. ccnfoodandwine.com

8/12 Thursday—Shady Grove Summer Concert. Eef and The Blues Express, all ages. 6:30pm. Swallow Hill at Four Mile Historic Park. Tickets \$10-20 at swallowhillmusic.org

8/14 Saturday—Jonathan Saraga Quintet. New York trumpeter featuring a band of CO based artists for this one-night-only occasion. 1330 27th St. nocturnejazz.com

8/14 Saturday—Carabiner Comedy Show. Stand-Up Comedy & Craft Beer with stand up comedian Zac Maas. 14er Brewing & Beer Garden 3120 Blake St. eventbrite.com/e/carabiner-comedy-show-tickets-163796552899

8/16 Monday—Wild Fire: A theatrical concert inspired by real Colorado stories. Real life stories from 2020's East Troublesome Fire and songs written by folk artists. denvercenter.org

8/19 Thursday—Riverfront Park Summer Sessions. Music, food, and art. Free entry. Commons Park, 15th St. & Little Raven St. riverfront-parkevents.com

8/21 Saturday—MCA Denver's 2nd Annual Parade for the People. Begins at 1pm at the City of Cuernavaca Park, ends at the Museum of Contemporary Art with food trucks, performances, and free admission to the museum. 1485 Delgany St. mca80238.com

Weekends Thru 8/22—Colorado Renaissance Festival. Larkspur. coloradorenaissance.com

8/24 Tuesday—Active Minds presents: The Challenges of Mexico. In-depth look at our neighbor to the south. 1:30-3:30pm, Free. Garden Plaza of Aurora, 14221 E Evans Ave, Aurora. activeminds.com

8/28 Saturday—Broomfield Plane Pull. Join Special Olympics, presented by The Smile Generation at Rocky Mountain Metropolitan Airport. 11755 Airport Way, Broomfield. specialolympicsco.org

8/28 to 8/29—Firefly Handmade Summer Market. 100+ indie artisans, cocktails, beer, and wine, Live music, Local shops, restaurants, and bars. Free admission. 1000 Block of S Gaylord St in Wash Park. fireflyhandmade.com

8/29 Sunday—Affordable Arts Festival. 160 Colorado & national fine artists selling art discounted to \$100 or less. Arapahoe Community College, 5900 S. Santa Fe Dr., Littleton. \$12 tickets help raise funds for scholarships. affordableartsfestival.com

Through 8/30—Evenings al Fresco. Concerts Monday/Wednesday evenings at Denver Botanic Gardens. 1007 York St. Tickets at botanicgardens.org

9/2 Thursday—SipCity Fundraiser. A gourmet food and wine tasting benefiting the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless. 5:30–8:30pm. The Cable Center, 2000 Buchtel Blvd. coloradocoalition.org

9/4 to 9/6—Cherry Creek Arts Festival. Relocated to the creekside area of the Cherry Creek Shopping Center. Sat & Sun, 10am–8pm; Mon, 10am–6pm. Free but reserve timed tickets at cherry-creekartsfestival.org

Through 9/16—Movies and Concerts at Infinity Park. Free. Movies start at 7:30, concerts at 3:30. Infinity Park, Glendale. Schedule at infinitypark-glendale.com

KIDS AND FAMILIES

8/4 Wednesday—Mornings at the Museum. Ages 3–6, 10:30–11am. Aurora History Museum, 15051 East Alameda Pkwy. auroragov.org

Through 8/7—Parade of Playhouses One-of-a-kind children's playhouses. Raffle to benefit Junior Achievement programs. Stanley Marketplace, 2501 N. Dallas St, Aurora. stanleymarketplace.com

Through 8/13—Learn to Row Summer Programs for teens. Join the Mile High Rowing Club on Cherry Creek reservoir. Six, one-week programs. milehighrowing.org

8/14 Saturday—Cockpit Demo Day. 10am–2pm. Get a close up look! Wings Over the Rockies Museum. wingsmuseum.org

8/15 Sunday—Sensory Friendly Morning at Wings. 10–11:30am. For people with sensory processing sensitivities and their families. Wings Over the Rockies Museum. wingsmuseum.org

Through 8/21—Denver Public Libraries Summer of Adventure. Activities that will help you to read, make, and explore! For Denver kids birth to 12th grade. Free. denverlibraryadventures.org



City Park Farmers Market



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MUSEUMS, ETC.

American Museum of Western Art. Advanced tickets required, admission is \$5. 1727 Tremont Pl. anschutzcollection.org

Aurora History Museum. Advanced reservation is required, admission is free. 15051 East Alameda Pkwy. auroragov.org

The Byers-Evans House Museum. Timed tickets required, History Colorado members are free. 1310 Bannock St. Tickets at historycolorado.org

The Children’s Museum. Wed–Sun, by reservation only at mychildsmuseum.org

Clyfford Still Museum. SCFD Free Day Friday, Aug. 13. Reserve tickets in advance. 1250 Bannock St. clyffordstillmuseum.org

Denver Art Museum. SCFD Free Day Saturday, Aug. 21. Youth 18 & under always free. 100 W 14th Ave. Pkwy. denverartmuseum.org

Denver Botanic Gardens. Advanced tickets and member reservations required. 1007 York St. botanicgardens.org

Denver Firefighters Museum. Tues–Sat, 10am–4pm. 1326 Tremont Pl. denverfirefightersmuseum.org

Denver Museum of Nature and Science. New exhibits including *Numbers in Nature: A Mirror Maze*. 2001 Colorado Blvd. Timed tickets required. dmns.org

The Forney Museum of Transportation. Thurs–Sat, 10am–5pm; Sun, noon–5pm. 4303 Brighton Blvd. forneymuseum.org

Four Mile Historic Park. Site of Denver’s oldest standing structure. SCFD Free Day Friday, Aug. 13. Open Wed–Sun, 10am–4pm. 715 S. Forest St. fourmilepark.org

History Colorado. Some exhibits are timed entry and free with museum admission. 1200 Broadway. More info at historycolorado.org

Molly Brown House Museum. Permanent collection plus this summer’s exhibit *Looking Forward/Looking Back*, 1340 Pennsylvania St. mollybrown.org

Museo de las Americas. Newest exhibit thru 8/21: *SOMOS: On Domestic Violence, Resilience and Healing*. 861 Santa Fe Drive. museo.org

Museum of Contemporary Art Denver. Penny admission 1st Sat. of the month. 1485 Delgany St. mcadenver.org

National Ballpark Museum. Tues–Sat, 11am–5pm. 1940 Blake St. ballparkmuseum.com

The Urban Farm. Open Fri 9:30am–1pm, Sat & Sun 9am–1pm. 10200 Smith Rd. theurbanfarm.org.

Wings Over the Rockies Museum. Showing the National Geographic film *Living in the Age of Airplanes*. 7711 East Academy Blvd. wingsmuseum.org



Central Park Farmers Market

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

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

Project Worthmore. Help bag and deliver fresh fruits and vegetables, dairy, and household necessities to refugees in Denver and Aurora. projectworthmore.org

Reading Volunteers Needed. Stedman Elementary and Bill Roberts Middle School. More info at partnersinliteracy.org

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Ronald McDonald House Charities Volunteer. Go to ronaldhouse.org under “How You Can Help” for info.

Sand Creek Greenway Volunteer Opportunities. For more info, email cgarwood@sandcreekgreenway.org or go to sandcreekgreenway.org/upcoming-volunteer-opportunities/

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

Village Exchange Center Food pantry and summer camp volunteers needed. Sign up at village-exchangecenter.org

Volunteers of America Colorado Branch For volunteer opportunities, email bgulley@voacolorado.org

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Hundreds of Hours Well Spent in Search of A New DPS Superintendent

By Dr. Carrie Olson, Denver Board President

DPS is starting a new chapter with Dr. Alex Marrero as its leader. I voted to hire Dr. Marrero because I believe in his ability to inspire students, families, and educators and reinvest all of us in a strong public school system—a system where your child is seen and known for who they are and is supported to attain the highest levels of academic achievement and personal growth. Dr. Marrero’s commitment to engaging the community and bringing people together along with his lived experience as a multilingual learner will be tremendous assets to DPS on our path forward.

I dedicated my first four years on the board to bringing my classroom practice of listening to DPS students and families to the boardroom. When the need to hire a new superintendent arose, I insisted that we listen to your voices and partner with the community. Conducting an inclusive process was a priority and one to which I personally dedicated hundreds of hours. That process included conversations with nearly 700 stakeholders as well as feedback from 7,000 survey responses. Three finalists were announced—all candidates of color—who were interviewed by 72 people. Four hours of interviews with students and community members, which included questions on pressing issues submitted by individuals from communities around the district, were live-streamed, and the public was invited to provide feedback.

Hiring Dr. Marrero was a community effort. I am proud to say that this inclusive process reflected what the community wanted. Dr. Marrero rose to the top as the individual who best exemplified the qualities that students, parents, and educators said they wanted in a DPS leader. He will move us through and beyond COVID, make decisions that include your input, move equity from an abstract idea to action, and ensure that your child’s teacher—and every adult they interact with throughout the day—is supported to provide the best public education experience possible. However, he cannot do it alone; he needs our help.

I am committed to working with Dr. Marrero to strengthen our public school system for your DPS students. I challenge all of us to come together around what we collectively value—strong public education and our children—to support Dr. Marrero and make DPS a world-class public education system. His success will be our students’ success.

Dr. Carrie Olson is a teacher, adjunct professor, human rights and Holocaust educator, and the president of the DPS Board of Education. In November 2017, she was elected as the first DPS career classroom teacher to serve on the DPS school board. After 32 years in the classroom, Dr. Olson describes teaching as being more about who she is rather than what she does. As a board member, she strives to elevate DPS students and families in the same way she remembers her third grade teacher elevating her.

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The Cinema Q Film Festival returns to the Denver Film Society this year to celebrate the best in LGBTQ+ programming from the around the world. This year's lineup is primarily virtual and takes place from August 26 – 29. For more information, a film list, and screening links, go to denverfilm.org. This month, I review two films from the Festival, along with suggestions for further viewing. Enjoy these interesting, unique, and important films.

See You Then (2021)
The premise of this captivating film is simple: former lovers Kris (Pooya Mohseni)

and Naomi (Lynn Chen) meet some fifteen years after an abrupt breakup. Kris has recently transitioned, and Naomi sees her as a woman for the first time. Naomi, a former performance artist, is now a professor and married with two kids. While the premise may be simple, the film touches on a plethora of important issues: Kris's transition, what it means to be a woman in the world, the good and bad of being a woman, the good and the bad of being a man, the state of art in our society, the enmity of a long-ago difficult breakup, and just the lovely tenderness

of reuniting with someone who knows you intimately. Yes, the film tackles a great variety of difficult issues but does so deftly and at times, comically.
The writing and acting are the stars of the film, and while the visual aesthetics are simple, they play their parts perfectly.

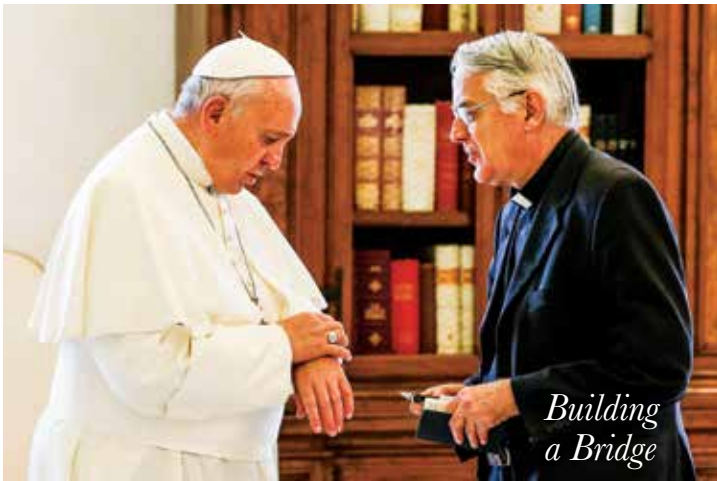
It is set up as one extended conversation that takes place over the course of a single evening in a few different locations. The old lovers are awkward at first, then nostalgic, and then open and honest about everything. Naomi doesn't understand everything about Kris's transition, and her probing questions seem to be more awkward for the audience than for Kris. But as Naomi learns, we learn. It is a beautiful, and real, discussion.

First-time director Mari Walker shows an adept hand at directing actors, and keeping those actors in the frame, in perfect focus, while others move through the world behind them, slightly fuzzy. The effect is that we narrow our own focus, yet Walker keeps that energy fresh and vibrant. The intermittent score adds to the easy mood and complements the story and aesthetics nicely. All elements work nicely to tell the story, and it all adds up to an interesting and refreshing film that is certainly worth your time.

Building a Bridge (2021)
This documentary follows polarizing Catholic priest Father James Martin and his campaign to make the Catholic Church more accepting of the LGBTQ+ community. It is self-evident why he is a polarizing figure, but Martin finds unlikely support in many areas as well as likely opposition. The film may spend too much time with Martin himself, but as the center of this endeavor he is the most riveting figure, and the film shines when he is featured.

Martin has his detractors, including the Church hierarchy and even the Pope (who dismisses him as he would a parishioner in a confessional). He also has a clear antagonist in Michael Voris, the founder of the aptly-named Church Militant group. Voris may come off as a caricature at times, but we know full well these days that underestimating those who may seem clownish could prove disastrous. The film does a good job of casting him as the villain in a modern passion play.

Executive produced by Martin Scorsese—no stranger to placing the Church on trial in his own films—and directed by Evan Mascagni and Shannon Post, the



Building a Bridge

tone of the film is sympathetic and endearing. We root for Martin, we celebrate with him when he achieves small victories, and we crash with him when he doesn't. We hope for a happy ending and some clear resolution by the end, but we can't help feeling his task is ultimately Sisyphean. Yet Martin keeps pushing ever upward.

And I must add a caveat: as a crib-Catholic, I found it illuminating. My own experience with the Church was similarly Sisyphean, for many reasons. I am sure many can sympathize.


A few other films to check out:
My Name is Pauli Murray (2021)
This is the opening night show on August 26. There will be an in-person screening at the Sie Film Center 7pm-9pm and virtual access during a four-hour window 6pm-10pm.
The film is a look at the life and ideas of Pauli Murray, a non-binary Black lawyer, activist, and poet who influenced both Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Thurgood Marshall. Directed by Julie Cohen and Betsy West.

Jump, Darling (2020)
A rookie drag queen, reeling from a breakup, escapes to the country, where he finds his grandmother in steep decline yet desperate to avoid the local nursing home. Directed by Phil Connell.

My Best Part (2020)
Upcoming actor Jérémie is going through an existential crisis. Pathologically jealous and plagued by romantic, professional, and familial misadventures, he flees Paris to reset in the country with his mother, who turns out to be more than a little invasive. Directed by Nicolas Maury.

Vincent Piturro, Ph.D., is a Professor of Film and Media Studies at MSU Denver. You can reach him at vpiturro@msudenver.edu or follow him on Twitter.



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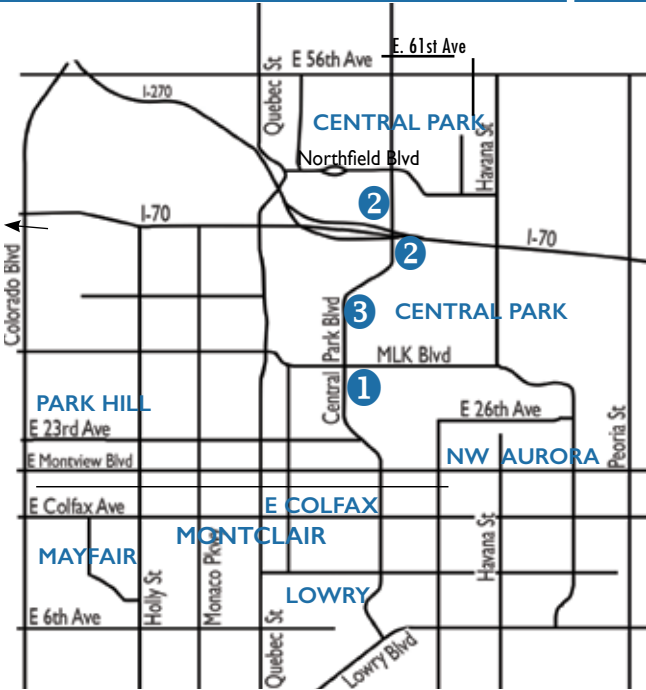
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Income-restricted housing—Brookfield/Forest City has built a total of 909 income-restricted for-sale homes and 612 income-restricted rental units in Central Park. This is approximately 10% of all the for-sale homes and 32% of the rental units in Central Park. Citywide, 1,152 affordable units that have received city financing are currently under construction at 24 sites throughout Denver and an additional 855 are in the planning stage. Check Denver’s Department of Housing Stability, Resident Resources at denvergov.org for more information on income-restricted rental and for-sale homes.



By Carol Roberts

1 What Will Be Built at MLK and Central Park Blvd?

On Denver’s Community Planning and Development website, the latest update for 8504 Martin Luther King Blvd. shows the project is still going through the Site Development Plan (SDP) process. The SDP was last submitted on April 19, 2021 and “resubmittal required” is noted. The project description is listed as follows: “The Price Development group is developing a five-story multifamily building in the Stapleton neighborhood along MLK drive and Central Park Ave. The development will consist of 288 units, including studios, one-, two- and three bedrooms. Amenities will include a sky lounge and an outdoor courtyard for tenant use. Parking will be provided in a wrapped garage that will be 5 stories. The site is zoned M-RX-5a.”

The Denver Planning website says “projects that have gone through the SDP process (essentially zoning entitlements, right-of-way improvements, stormwater/wastewater infrastructure review, etc) and received an approval allow the applicant to apply for building permits.” We’ll watch for updates.

2 CPB & I-70 Runway North & South Projects

An updated list of confirmed businesses for these developments was announced June 28. For Runway South (located SE of I-70 and Central Park Blvd.): 1) QuikTrip gas and convenience store; 2) Brandt Hospitality Group 4-story hotel with 106 rooms; 3) Superstar Car Wash. For Runway North (located NW of I-70 & CPB): 1) Chili’s casual dining; 2) PNC Bank with drive-thru ATM; 3) Raising Cane’s chicken finger restaurant, patio and drive-thru; 4) SCL Medical Group primary care facility; 5) Go Church worship and kids’ ministry.

3 Central Park Urban Living Condos

The newly completed condos across the street from the Central Park Rail Station are now home to 132 homeowners who would otherwise have had a tough time in Denver’s housing market. At another time or in other locations, their jobs would enable them to afford middle class housing. At the opening event, Gete Mekonnen, Executive Director of Northeast Denver Housing Center, which pulled together the partners on this project, read some of the new owners’ occupations: accounts



receivable specialist, tax examiner, program director, biomedical technician, Denver 9-1-1, small business owner, bus operator, utility worker, pharmacy technician, flight attendant. Qualified buyers earn below 80% of the area median income. For a single person that’s not more than \$55,950 and for a household of three it’s \$71,950. The project includes 51 one-bedroom and 81 two-bedroom homes. The City provided \$2,640,000 in financing from the Affordable Housing Fund toward the \$35.9 million project.

4 Are Your Maple Trees Dark Green and Healthy or Bright Light Green and Needing Help?

If your maple, oak and other trees don’t have dark green leaves, chances are that iron chlorosis, or lack of usable iron in the soil, is the culprit. Over time, these trees go from



The tree on the right is an example of one that was turning bright light green and starting to yellow, but it turned back to dark green after chelated iron was added to the soil.

bright light green to yellow, then eventually die. Though Colorado soils tend to have sufficient iron, alkaline soils make it difficult for plants to absorb the iron, according to the Colorado State University (CSU)

Extension office. Iron chelated with EDDHA or other options can be used to treat the soil. You can request a soil testing kit online, reach a master gardener and upload photos of problem trees at: <https://cmg.extension.colostate.edu/> For more information, see: <https://planttalk.colostate.edu/topics/weeds-cultural-problems/2121-iron-chlorosis-trees/>

5 More Airplane Noise in NE Denver Recently

DIA got an Airport Improvement Program (AIP) grant from the FAA to do maintenance and updates on Runway 16L/34R, a runway that is typically used in 40% of their operations, mostly departures, says Alex Renteria, DIA Public Information Officer. Maintenance at DIA is ongoing with annual AIP grants from the FAA, says Renteria, but with the airport now 25 years old, this grant triggered a major 6-month project. Concrete panels on the runway are being repaired and replaced as needed, all the lighting is being replaced with LEDs, and signage is being updated. The project on the 12,000-foot-long by 150-foot-wide runway started on May 17 and is expected to be completed in September. To accommodate this runway closure while maintaining the same level of flight operations, different runway configurations are now being used—and NE Denver residents are hearing more airplanes overhead.

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Safe Outdoor Space

Cole Chandler, executive director of the non-profit Colorado Village Collaborative, sits in one of the 40 tents that have been erected in the Park Hill United Methodist Church parking lot. He says

By Mary Jo Brooks

One month after the first residents began occupying the tents at the Safe Outdoor Space (SOS) encampment at the Park Hill United Methodist Church, Pastor Nathan Adams says he's been pleased at how neighbors have responded, volunteering to bring two meals a day and other necessities for the residents. "We're hoping to do some social events here to get community folks, church folks, and residents together. We already had one

open house and several hundred people came. It was great for everyone to talk with each other and see that we're all human, just trying to do our best."

That's not to say there haven't been challenges along the way. This spring, five Park Hill residents filed a lawsuit against Adams, the church, and Denver's zoning administrator, alleging that the tent city would pose a danger to minors and school children. That lawsuit was dismissed in May, but two new challenges were filed with the Denver Board of Adjustment for Zoning.



A sign on the fence of a property that adjoins the tents shows the support of a neighboring family.

he's seen an overwhelmingly positive response from community members who want to donate food—so much so that the organization now provides residents with two meals a day.

Rulings from those hearings had not been made public when this story was filed.

Adams said the decision to host the encampment came after months of discussions by church members who wanted to figure out what they could do to ease Denver's housing crisis. "Our belief system is about putting faith into action. And one of the questions we kept asking ourselves was, if not us, who?"

Those church members ultimately met with the non-profit organization Colorado Village Collaborative (CVC), which operated a safe outdoor tent space in downtown Denver and two tiny-home communities in Cole and Globeville. It has since established another tent community at Regis University. The church members were impressed by

the organization's track record and decided to partner with CVC.

CVC Executive Director Cole Chandler says the idea behind the SOS tent areas is to provide safe places for unsheltered people to survive with dignity. He also says it's important that these struc-

tured tent communities be located all over the city. "We're trying to push back against this idea that poor people only belong in certain neighborhoods. No neighborhood is unfit to serve the poor."

The "Safe Outdoor Space" strategy was adopted by the city in response to the rising numbers of illegal tent

encampments that were erected during the pandemic. "There are many reasons that people struggle with the traditional shelter system. Sometimes the shelters

"We're trying to push back against this idea that poor people only belong in certain neighborhoods. No neighborhood is unfit to serve the poor."

—Cole Chandler

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are too big or people don't feel safe," says Angie Nelson, deputy director of Housing Stability for the city of Denver. "We wanted to diversify shelter options. How can we meet people where they're at so we can get them into a more stable environment?"

Statistics for 2021 have not yet been released, but according the 2020 "Everyone Counts" survey, just over 4,000 people were homeless in Denver last year. That figure includes 2,036 people who were in emergency shelters, 1,089 people who were in transitional housing, and almost 1,000 who were unsheltered. The Safe Outdoor Space communities are designed to meet the needs for people in that last category.

Chandler says sheltering 1,000 people isn't an insurmountable goal. "That's what gives me hope. In just a few months, we've created 100 spaces for people. If we had a few more sites, we could help many more." Chandler is searching for permanent space to develop these communities, since both the Regis and Park Hill sites will close in December.

The Park Hill site will ultimately house 40 people, although only about 20 people had moved in by the end of July. Part of that delay was due to the criminal background checks that are being conducted on every resident. Chandler thinks those background checks are unnecessary because of the numerous safety precautions that have been put in place and are discriminatory because "people who have gone through the justice system also deserve housing." But the policy was a concession made by CVC because of pushback from some neighbors and because the encampment is near a childcare center.

The CVC tent communities have staff on site around the clock, both for security and to connect residents with services, so they can transition into more permanent housing. It is surrounded by a tall, covered fence with a locked entry. Only residents and staff are allowed in—all guests are prohibited. And there are other rules: no violence, no weapons, no drug or alcohol

use, no disruptive behavior. Chandler says so far, he's only received a few complaints about the Park Hill site including one about the smell of cigarette smoke and another about a food wrapper that was left in the alley.

Safe Outdoor Space encampments are authorized in Denver based on an emergency zoning decision by City Council during the pandemic. That decision has now been extended to allow the SOS camps to continue until December 2023.

That's what has people like Florence Sebern upset. A Virginia Village resident, she helped organize a group called Safe and Sound Denver that is trying to fight the city's group living amendment, which allows up to five non-related adults to live together in a single-family home. The group is also opposed to the Safe Outdoor Space encampments. Sebern says the city zoning administrator hasn't done the necessary impact studies or gone through the necessary public comment period to make such a zoning change. "I object to this from a process standpoint. Our neighborhood associations should have been told. There's a chain of communication that was not followed."

Sebern also objects to the large sums of money that have been spent on these temporary solutions. CVC will receive \$900,000 from the city to operate the SOS areas. "I think the money could be better spent for walls and a roof. Are we



The "Safe Outdoor Space" strategy was adopted by the city in response to the rising numbers of illegal tent encampments that were erected during the pandemic, like this one at Speer and Grant.

really going to get behind what is essentially a better tent in a cage?"

Rev. Adams is the first to admit that the SOS tent areas are not "THE" solution to the homeless crisis. "We need a multi-pronged approach to address all the things that lead to homelessness. Temporarily

outdoor spaces is just one small part of that."

Next month, the city of Denver plans to release for public comment a comprehensive five-year plan to combat homelessness.



A board shows daily updates, including who is donating meals.



The Safe Outdoor Space facilities include toilets, wash stations, and showers.

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