

Front Porch

Central Park, Park Hill, Lowry, Montclair, Mayfair, East Colfax, NW Aurora

DENVER, COLORADO

NORTHEAST DENVER

SEPTEMBER 2021

Africa Conservation Alliance Has NE Denver Co-Founder

Horn of Africa Conservation Alliance co-founder Tim Spalla (below) is pictured with his family in Central Park. Tomas Maule (left), holding a leopard cub recovered in Western Somaliland, is the organization's operations manager and co-founder. Tim and his wife Ashley, a neonatal intensive care nurse at Denver Health, have two children—Harrison, 6 (left), and Theodore, 4.



Photo courtesy of Tomas Maule

“We are on the cusp of cheetahs no longer having a viable breeding population,” says Tim Spalla. “We’re destroying their landscapes more and more every day. Once a human has touched a cheetah, it can never go back to the wild. Even the cheetahs we’ve been rescuing in Somalia can never be re-wilded. They either go to a zoo or a sanctuary—and cheetahs don’t breed in captivity.” *Story on page 8 by Ken Lutes.*



Front Porch photo by Steve Larson

The two most confusing questions on your November ballot!

We explain what the two Park Hill Golf Course questions mean and what your yes or no vote on them will do. *Story on page 14 by Tracy Wolfer Osborne.*



Photo courtesy of Larry Walsh NW Drone Photography

Tween Drug Use & Support

“If you start doing drugs you’ll probably like them. That’s the problem,” says Ben Stincer (right), who directs the FullCircle youth recovery and support program premised on “the idea that young people will stop their self-destructive behavior only if they are offered an alternative that is both fun and fulfilling.” *Story on page 4 by Martina Will.*



Front Porch photo by Steve Larson

Bird Sightings



Turkey Vulture

Avg Weight: 4.4 pounds
Avg Wingspan: 68 inches

The turkey vulture is nature’s cleanup crew. Aided by keen eyes and an excellent sense of smell, it finds the dead animals and scavenges almost exclusively on carrion. The photo above was taken this summer at Bluff Lake. The close-up was taken in 2016.



Photos and information by George Ho



Lazuli Bunting

Weight: 0.53 oz
Wingspan 8.7 in

The Lazuli Bunting is a western songbird that migrates to and nests in Colorado during warm weather. The male is a colorful bird with blue of a lapis gemstone on its head, orange throat, white breast with black and white bars on his wings. The photos were taken this summer at Bluff Lake.



Bird Walks Sept. 4 and Oct. 2, 8 – 10am. Join George Ho and other bird experts for a free guided walk around Bluff Lake. All are welcome. Bring your own binoculars or borrowed ones will be available. 11255 MLK Blvd. BluffLake.org

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Events & Announcements

Neighborhood Dog Etiquette

With all our new neighbors moving in from all over the world, we wanted to gently remind the community that dogs **must be on a leash and picked up after** whenever off your property or in public areas including the tree lawns, residential yards, the mews, neighborhood parks, and pocket parks. This is the law, and it’s part of being a great neighbor!

There is a reason that we have laws for public safety. They are designed to keep us all safe, so we can enjoy the beautiful amenities of living in Central Park. We have two dog parks in the community where your dog may run free and off-leash. One is located north of I-70 at Spruce Street & East Prairie Meadows Drive, and the other is located south of I-70 at 21st Avenue & Spruce Street.

When you see a dog on a leash, let your neighbor know you appreciate

them caring about public safety. When you see a dog owner pick up after their pet, let them know it’s appreciated.

Please be considerate and comply if your neighbor reminds you politely to put your dog on a leash or pick up after your dog. Not everyone is comfortable with animals, and this is a community that encourages safety for all.

The MCA is not in the business of policing; however, it is every resident’s right to call animal control and report those who are violating the leash law. To report complaints or city ordinance violations regarding dogs or other animals, call Denver’s Animal Control at 3-1-1 or 720-913-1311 or you can report online at www.denvergov.org.

Rebekah Henderson
MCA Delegate District 6
delegates@mca80238.com



Summary of City of Denver Animal Ordinances

Dog Excrement – Though it is not illegal to allow your dog to poop on someone else’s property, it is unlawful if the excrement is not removed immediately. Be a good neighbor, and bear in mind that some neighbors put a lot of work into maintaining their landscaping. It is best to avoid any conflict by steering your canine to the tree lawn, a public right of way. Denver Ordinances (Sec. 8-73.) requires that all dog excrement is removed immediately from any property that is not your own, public or private.

Leash Law – It shall be unlawful for any owner or keeper of any dog to fail to prevent such dog from running at large. It shall be the duty of the chief of police, and all other police officers, including animal protection officers, to see that a dog found running at large is taken up and impounded in the Denver

Animal Shelter. Dogs in violation may be taken without filing a complaint and shall be impounded according to provisions of Article VII of this chapter.

Barking Dogs – It shall be unlawful for an owner or keeper of any dog to fail to prevent such dog from disturbing any person or neighborhood by loud and persistent or habitual barking, howling, or yelping. An administrative citation or a summons and complaint issued for violation of this section shall be signed by an animal protection officer that personally witnessed the violation, supported by at least two (2) identified complaining witnesses from separate households, or supported by one (1) complaining witness if there also exists competent evidence admissible at trial to prove their case of a violation of this section.

Master Community Association

PUBLISHERS/EDITORS:
Carol Roberts & Steve Larson
PHOTOGRAPHERS:
Steve Larson, Christie Gosch

AD SALES: email Carol@FrontPorchNE.com
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www.FrontPorchNE.com
FrontPorch@FrontPorchNE.com
303-526-1969

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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.

Taking Action to Save Wildlife

By Mary Jo Brooks

The Denver Zoo has always had a mission of educating people about wildlife and the threats that various species face, but now officials want to take that mission a step further and transform the institution into a global leader for zoo-based conservation. Erica Elvove was recently hired to oversee that effort. For more than a decade, Elvove has been an innovator in the field of animal-assisted social work—a broad category of study that promotes the health and well-being of people, animals, and the environment. At the University of Denver, she helped create the Institute for Human-Animal Connection with the world’s first graduate program in human-animal-environment interaction. The institute’s program is a model for bringing together education, research and advocacy when it comes to animal-human connectivity.

She will have a similar mission at the zoo, where her primary goal is to create a vision and a strategy to expand the way the zoo engages and connects diverse audiences with wildlife conservation. “I want to inspire communities to take action for wildlife and ensure a healthier planet for future generations.”

Elvove will be in charge of onsite and community-based education programs that highlight some of the zoo’s own field research around the globe. The goal, she says, is for people to see how connected they are to animals and the environment. “We want people to take that core message from the zoo and then we want to give them action items—specific steps they can take to benefit wildlife and the environment.”

“Human, animal and environmental health are all interconnected and rely on each other for optimal health”
—Erica Elvove

Elvove says she’s passionate about promoting the “one health” concept that originated in veterinary medicine, but applies to the social sciences as well. “Human, animal, and environmental health are all interconnected and rely on each other for optimal health. If we uplift one, the others will be uplifted. If we damage one, the others will suffer. My work bridges social work and conservation together.”

She hopes that if people realize that their own health and the health of the planet are inextricably linked, they will be more likely to feel the urgency of wildlife crisis. “There’s no doubt that more wildlife species are facing extinction. This is a critical time for our planet. It’s one of the reasons the zoo created this position and why I’m here.”

She also plans to work with businesses and non-profits to bring even more diversity to the zoo’s audience—so that people of all ages and backgrounds realize that they play an important role in wildlife conservation. “We want to make sure the zoo and its conservation work are accessible to all.”

The Denver Zoo currently has four core field conservation programs around the world where it works with local partners to improve wildlife habitat and protect threatened species. Here in Colorado, the zoo helps to improve grassland ecosystems by restoring bison populations, protecting wildlife migration corridors and encouraging outdoor enthusiasts to take part in a citizen scientist program designed to understand and mitigate the effects of climate change on alpine ecosystems.

In Vietnam, the zoo works with local partners to promote the conservation and restoration of habitat for the imperiled Tonkin snub-nosed monkeys. In Peru, the zoo is leading scientific research and a public education about threats to frogs that live in Lake Titicaca and Lake Junin. And in Mongolia, researchers from the Denver Zoo are studying the impacts of climate change on argali sheep, goitered gazelle, vultures, falcons and marmots.



Front Porch photo by Christie Cosch

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Tween Drug Use & Support

“I thought I was doing Percocet. It was fentanyl.”



Word of mouth during the pandemic doubled the number of youth coming to FullCircle, which offers free support meetings for youth and parents from around the metro area.



of a screen. They checked in frequently and didn’t suspect much because by the time Alex returned home, the LSD or other substances had worn off.

When they did become concerned, they discussed things and implemented consequences. They had “frank conversations,” Alex says, but also notes that these resulted in a “false sense of trust.” After failing a marijuana test, to avoid getting grounded, Alex says, “I didn’t really care too much for weed...so I gave them my weed, so I could go out and do a different drug.”

Ben Stincer, who directs FullCircle, a nonprofit that works with teens with a variety of issues, says it’s not unusual for parents to be caught unaware, because youth are really good at hiding what they want to keep hidden. Though there may be behavioral changes, “on some level, you don’t know until they tell you, or until something happens,” says Stincer. “It starts out with a very simple thing: you get high one time, or you self-harm one time, or you starve yourself and purge or something of that nature....And at that point, it’s just this one little thing they did. But as they started to do it more and more, now it’s a quarter of their life. They do it more and more. Now it’s half, and if they start doing it all the time, that’s the entirety of their lives that they’re telling their parents nothing about.”

Though Stincer sees drug use as very normalized, it paradoxically still represents a form of rebellion for many teens, who are trying to define who they are. Social media makes access easy, with both Snapchat and

By Martina Will, PhD
“It’s probably worse than you think,” says Alex,* when asked what parents should know about youth drug use. Alex began using in sixth grade, moving from vaping tobacco to marijuana within weeks. In Alex’s experience, drug use doesn’t “plateau,” but escalates, and in Alex’s case, it led to a nearly deadly overdose.

Alex’s addiction grew quickly. “It went from weed [to] selling weed, and then it went from smoking weed with like maybe crack on it, sometimes like crazy stuff” and then it went to Xanax and all this other stuff and selling drugs and it just snowballed so fast.” Alex spent the better part of two years high on one substance or another, selling and stealing to purchase drugs and using turpentine and even hand

sanitizer to get high when nothing else was available. “Kids are very easy to manipulate,” Alex shares. Once, “I thought I was doing Percocet. It was fentanyl. I was manipulated many ways, being a kid in the drug scene.”

During the long early days of the pandemic, Alex’s parents were happy that Alex was spending a lot of time outside with friends rather than in front

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“Sober social” events cap each week. Stincer hopes the kids’ social media posts reach “the kid that’s sitting at his house smoking pot,” who may be thinks ‘that looks way more fun than what I’m doing,’” says Stincer.

Facebook commonly used for communicating with “plugs” (dealers).

No transportation? No problem. Alex’s mom shares that “The drug dealers are just driving right up to the town center and right across from the skate park in the neighborhood.... They deliver.” Alex’s dad compares the service to Uber Eats.

On the day of the overdose, Alex recalls telling the dealer “Bro, you’re late and I’m already buying a lot of stuff. You owe me something....” So he gives me like a good amount of Xanax. Me and my friends split it. And then we go home...I didn’t even feel anything, you know, it was like ‘Okay, like these aren’t working. I’m just gonna go to sleep, that’s it. And I just don’t wake up.’ Unable to rouse Alex for school the next day, Alex’s parents raced to the emergency room. Alex recalls little but “screaming at my parents, random s&*t, because Xanax makes you a piece of s*7t.” Within a week, Alex was at a rehab program that his parents credit with saving their child’s life.

After the three-month rehab program, Alex started going to FullCircle, a support group for youth and parents. The peer community provides a strong foundation while also offering a social outlet that is “as much fun as I had doing drugs.”



FullCircle is a twelve-step program, illustrated by the staircase. Though started as a ministry of the Catholic Church, the Denver program receives no Church funding, relying instead on foundations and private donations. Youth attend two weekly support groups and two weekly sober socials, and parents attend one weekly meeting. A youth contract and parental involvement are critical to success.

Fun is embedded in the idea of “enthusiastic recovery,” the group’s philosophy. “There are two kinds of drugs,” Stincer says, “good drugs and great drugs. And the problem is that they feel really good.” He remembers the many challenges and anxieties of being a young teen. “I was 13. I smoked a joint, and I remember thinking ‘Everyone that’s ever told me not to do this was lying, and they’ve never done it because this is awesome!’” FullCircle works to offer youth something “equally exciting or as visceral as that lifestyle can be while helping parents hold their walls and supporting

them with the program,” says Stincer. Sobriety is a daily commitment. Long-term peer support is critical to maintaining that commitment. Coming out of rehab, Alex says, “you’re like a baby.... you’re living a completely new lifestyle and you have no idea how to do it.” Now on step 7 of the 12-step program, Alex hopes to someday become a sponsor to a younger teen on their road to recovery in FullCircle. To learn more about FullCircle, call 720-531-3716 or visit www.fullcircleprogram.com **Alex is a pseudonym.*



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Montclair resident Dani Baker recycles and has her own compost bin, but she wanted to further minimize what goes to the landfill. She now puts out additional items that Ridwell picks up and recycles.

Recycle More Items—and Do

By Mary Jo Brooks

Montclair resident Dani Baker made a New Year's resolution to send as little trash as possible to the landfill. She already took full advantage of Denver's curbside recycling program and put food scraps and yard waste in her backyard compost, but she was looking to do more. That's when she heard about Ridwell, a new service that picks up hard-to-recycle items. "We live by the motto: reuse, repurpose, and recycle," says Baker, "But it's not easy to get rid of some things. You're driving all over town or paying separate fees. With Ridwell, they take care of that for me."

Ridwell was founded two years ago by Ryan Metzger, in Seattle, after

he was frustrated by how difficult it was to recycle batteries. He created a pilot project in his garage—picking up items like household batteries, paint, and polystyrene foam from his neighbors and finding companies that could recycle them. After seeing tremendous support for the idea, he launched Ridwell, a subscription service that picks up hard-to-recycle items every other week and delivers them to organizations that can recycle them. The company now serves more than 35,000 people in 40 cities across the Pacific North-

west and, according to Metzger, has diverted more than 2 million pounds of waste from landfills.

Only 15% of Denver households are signed up for Denver's compost pick-up service—and last year, only 25.7% of waste materials were recycled or composted. The rest went to landfills.

In just three months, he has signed up 700 Denverites, who pay between \$12-\$16 a month to recycle items that can't be recycled through the city's

This summer Ridwell began serving neighborhoods in East Denver. "We did our research. We know people in Denver love the outdoors. They like hiking and biking. And they're interested in helping the environment, so it seemed like a natural place for us to expand," says Metzger.

curbside recycling service. Metzger hopes to quickly expand throughout the Denver metropolitan area. Ridwell has forged partnerships with Colorado companies and organizations that recycle electronics, plastic bags, paint, clothing, and much more. Locally-based Atlas Molded Products, for example, takes Styrofoam and turns it into things like moldings and picture frames. Ridwell also does seasonal pickups: backpacks for an organization that provides back-to-school supplies for low income students, excess Halloween candy which gets donated to a group that plans birthday parties for homeless children. "One of the things I love most is that our members give us great ideas about organizations to partner with."

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September 2021

6

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Right: Dave Kiefner, owner and founder of The Happy Beetle, is pictured at his warehouse in NW Aurora with employees Delancy Dunn (back) and Lilah Park.

Below: Kiefner points out boxes of wine bottle corks and light bulbs as examples of items that don't have to end up in the dump—The Happy Beetle will recycle them.



Front Porch photos this page by Steve Larson

It More Easily

cling service that is now serving the Front Range. This spring Dave Kiefner, who lives in the Whittier neighborhood of Denver, founded The Happy Beetle—a subscription recycling service that operates much like Ridwell, although pickups are scheduled monthly or quarterly. The Happy Beetle also partners with Colorado companies and organizations to recycle and reuse items. “We love working with partners that have a mission component. One group we work with is called SustainAbility, which hires people with developmental disabilities. We partner with a non-profit that sends shoes to Central America and helps women

In its two-year existence, Ridwell has diverted more than 2 million pounds of waste from landfills.

become entrepreneurs, and we take old bicycle tires to Green Guru Gear which turns them into backpacks,” says Kiefner. Another partner with The Happy Beetle is Dream Books, which provides books to Denver Public Schools and the Denver Public Library. Kiefner said he named his company The Happy Beetle after reading a book to his 4-year old son about insects and the role they play in reusing and breaking down dung and other things found in nature. “The beetle seemed to be a beautiful model of circularity, and the role it plays in a healthy ecosystem,” says Kiefner. Despite these new services, Denver has a fairly low recycling and composting rate. Although Denver offers curbside recycling to all single-family homes and buildings with 7 units or less, it does not offer these services to larger apart-

ment or condo buildings. And only 15% of Denver households are signed up for the compost pick-up service, which involves an extra fee. According to data provided by the city, last year only 25.7% of waste materials were recycled or composted. The rest went to landfills. Although that was nearly a 2% improvement from the previous year, Danny Katz says it’s not good enough. He’s the executive director of COPIRG, an organization that advocates for stronger health, safety, and environmental standards. He says the problem is that the burden of recycling falls on consumers instead of the producers of these items. “If you ask most people, it’s hard to know what can go in the recycling bin. It’s complicated. We need a system where the burden is put on

producers to not only manufacture items that are compostable or recyclable, but that the burden falls on them to make sure those products are diverted from landfills,” says Katz. He says that Canada and several European countries have such a program in place and his organization is advocating that Colorado adopt a similar system. Until that happens, specialty recycling services like Ridwell and The Happy Beetle are likely to continue to expand as more and more consumers show an interest in reducing the amount of trash that is sent to landfills. For more information visit: TheHappyBeetle.com or email support@thehappybeetle.com. Ridwell.com or email help@ridwell.com.

The inspiration for The Happy Beetle’s name came from a child’s book about the role insects play in reusing and breaking down dung and other things found in nature.

CCND Air Monitoring is now providing continuous air monitoring information for the Commerce City and North Denver communities.

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Fastest Land Animal Might Not Outrun Extinction



Photos by Tomas Maule

Tim Spalla (right) co-founded the Horn of Africa Conservation Alliance to help regional authorities to protect threatened wildlife, communities and landscapes. Spalla is shown accompanying a local wildlife protection agent as they follow up on information about poachers.

By Ken Lutes

“My work is not just about animals. It’s about environment, landscape, and community-things that will never come back once they’re destroyed,” said Tim Spalla, co-founder of the Horn of Africa Conservation Alliance. “That’s a powerful motivator for me, but it’s also an aspect of this wildlife crime fight that people don’t think about.”

To help curb cheetah poaching and smuggling, Spalla and Kenya-based partner Tomas Maule—who have come face-to-face with some of the biggest criminal networks in Africa—have partnered with the

support. Through their efforts, numerous cheetah cubs, leopards, and other illegal wildlife products have been recovered.

Spalla says many cheetah-smuggling networks originate in South Sudan, eastern Ethiopia and northern Kenya. “Very few cheetahs that are poached and trafficked are local to Somaliland. We’re already on the ground in Yemen, in the Gulf of Aden. Our intent is to look at the entire chain, from where the cheetahs are poached all the way to where they’re kept in a Gulf state mansion as status symbols.”

Once the route from South Sudan to Yemen is shut down, it’s just going to shift, Spalla says. “We need to have enough control and access throughout that geography so that when it does shift, we can be there to meet it.” This is a strategy he followed in his work in counter-terrorism and one he’s put into place as a counter wildlife trafficking expert throughout the last six or seven years. “One thing I know for certain is as long as there’s a demand, there will be people willing to kill and traffic wildlife. Our plan

is to take what works in Somaliland and export that to Puntland, Ethiopia, Djibouti, and South Sudan.”

As an Army Ranger Intelligence Specialist from 2005-2009, Spalla honed his



These cheetah cubs were confiscated from smugglers by Somaliland authorities in Hargeisa Somaliland.

Somaliland government and other regional governments to address the problem on multiple fronts. They have been researching cheetah trafficking since 2018 and provide training, mentorship, and logistics



It’s not unusual for mother cheetahs to be shot after killing a goat to feed their cubs. This cheetah was shot by a Somaliland pastoralist (goat herder) for killing one of his goats.



Mother cheetahs are killed by poachers so their cubs can be sold to smugglers. Many of the cubs are transported to the Middle East where they are valued as pets and status symbols. Above left: A cheetah cub that was rescued from smugglers. Right: A cheetah cub rescued from smugglers is attended to by a veterinarian.



intelligence skills in Iraq. This experience gained him an invitation to Ft. Bragg, North Carolina, where he would go on to complete more than 20 deployments as a Special Operations Counter-Terrorism Intelligence Specialist, working throughout the Middle East, Europe, and Africa.

By 2015, many of the lessons Spalla learned in Africa—regarding terrorism, crime, poverty, and disenfranchisement—came together around wildlife and protected landscapes. “Hubs of criminal activity in Africa are basically ungoverned spaces, and what governing they have is underfunded, under resourced; there’s no training or capacity.” He believed he was being called, that his

skillset could make a difference there. “So, I formed my own company, Agile Analytics Group, brought in some special operations people from the U.S. and South Africa, and

we started marketing our services.”

Somaliland is a port of entry for the African continent, where ancient smuggling networks have been operating for thousands of years, says Spalla. “We call it smuggling today, but for thousands of years, moving animal products to the

Middle East, and the Middle East moving their products [into Africa] were normal commercial activities. The cultural, familial, economic, and political ties are strong, going back generations.”



Cheetah cub



These gazelle, confiscated from private owners following adoption of the 2015 Wildlife and Forestry Law, were held at a military base for a few years and are shown being released to the Debbis Forest Reserve.



When following up on information about poachers that may put the rescuers in danger, the rescue crew calls on local police or other authorities to accompany them. Here, military accompanied this countertrafficking patrol in Somaliland.



Above left: Multiple cheetah cubs were found during one rescue operation in Western Somaliland. Above right: Cheetah cubs being transported in a traditional basket in Western Somaliland.



Fewer than 7,000 adult cheetahs are left in the wild, according to Rachael Bale, executive editor of National Geographic's Animals desk. Bale authored a September 2021 National Geographic article highlighting the work of Spalla and his team. "We're sending this NatGeo article to every senator and congressperson who's ever said anything about wanting to do something about wildlife trafficking," says Spalla.

Spalla says he's less concerned about the smuggling networks than pulling wildlife out of that process. "The smuggling networks for legal and illegal products will continue after our work is complete. Right now, my priority is to try to stop the movement of animals, because once they're gone, they're gone."

Spalla is in the final year of a mental

health counseling graduate program at Regis University where he is focusing on combat PTSD, addiction and childhood trauma. He has volunteered at the Haven of Hope homeless shelter and will soon intern for the Colorado Department of Corrections as a mental health counselor. His interest in mental health counseling grew out of his African experiences. "My heart will always be in Africa. I've never felt more like me than when I was there, even in the worst situations."

To learn more and/or support Spalla's efforts to save wildlife, visit Instagram at: @timothyspalla and @hornofafricaalliance or scan the Go Fund Me code.



Though laws prohibit possession of cheetah cubs, some are still acquired by local residents. This photo of pet cubs was taken by a local resident before the cubs were turned over to Spalla's rescue organization.

Front Porch – NE Denver

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From the Classroom to the Boardroom: Listening to DPS Students and Families

By Dr. Carrie Olson, Denver Board President

Let's partner for student success. As we head into the 2021–2022 school year, partnerships—with district and school administrators, teachers, students, families, and the community—that support our Denver Public Schools (DPS) students will be more important than ever.

Our superintendent needs our support. I have confidence in DPS Superintendent, Dr. Alex Marrero to 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.

What can you do? You can support your child's success and the success of all DPS students, by helping us address school and district issues from the inside. Our students, families, educators, and community partners have important knowledge and expertise critical to helping the school board make decisions around issues such as healthy start times, reducing the number of small schools in the district, and a new strategic plan for DPS, to name a few.

Prioritizing your engagement. I will continue to insist that we listen to your voices and partner with you. Ensuring we are inclusive when dealing with the district's most pressing issues (some of which are mentioned above) will be a priority and one to which I will continue to personally dedicate my time. I believe the superintendent hiring process—involvement and input from students, conversations with nearly 700 stakeholders, feedback from 7,000 survey responses, and live-streamed events—is a model that aligns with our community's expectations and one we can continue to improve upon in our efforts to work with you to ensure your child, and every child's, success.

Strengthening DPS. I want to assure you that I will keep my foot on the accelerator as I work with our students, educators, all of you, and alongside Dr. Marrero, to strengthen our public school system for all DPS students this year.

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. **Scan the QR code to sign up to receive her newsletter.**



View and add local events FREE at FrontPorchNE.com/events. Submissions by the 17th will be considered for printing in the upcoming month's paper.

Please double check event dates and times using contact info provided.

NE DENVER/NW AURORA EVENTS

Every Sunday thru 10/10—Central Park Farmers' 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 night market featuring local makers, food purveyors, live music, and more. Oneida Park, 2231 Oneida St., 4–8pm. parkhillfarmandflea.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. Giveaways, scavenger hunts, equipment rentals, games, and activities for all ages. Later end-time, fire pit, and s'mores on select weeks. 11255 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. blufflake.org

9/3 Friday—The Guide: In-Person Author Visit with Peter Heller. 4–5pm. Sam Gary Library, 2961 Roslyn St. Registration required at denverlibrary.org

9/3 to 9/5—Colfax Canvas Mural Festival. Block party with DJ Cyn, a beer garden, food trucks and more. Fri: 5–8p, Sat: 11a–4p, Sun: 5–8p. 9995 E Colfax Ave, Aurora

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

9/9 Thursday—City of Aurora Virtual Career Expo. 11am–3pm. 100+ seasonal and full-time open positions. Register at AuroraGov.org/CareerExpo

9/11 to 9/18—The New American Arts Festival. Free 7-day festival celebrating diversity and inclusivity. Venues: Fletcher Plaza and The Vintage Theatre. Schedule at roshnidenver.wixsite.com/newamericanartsfest

9/12 Sunday—43rd Annual Park Hill Home Tour and Street Fair. Tour homes 11am–5pm. Street Fair, between Montview & 17th on Forest Pkwy. Tickets/info: greaterparkhill.org or parkhillhometour.org

9/14 Tuesday—In-person Memory Cafe. Music therapy for older adults. 1:30–2:30pm. Schless-

man Family Library, 100 Poplar St. denverlibrary.org

9/18 Saturday—Farm Fest. A family friendly event. Admission is free. 10200 Smith Road, theurbanfarm.org

9/18 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

9/18 to 9/19—Denver Arts Festival. 140 artists, live music; wine, beer & food; and kid's art zone. Sat. 10am–6pm, Sun. 10am–5pm. Free admission and parking. Conservatory Green, 8304 E. 49th Pl. denverartsfestival.com

9/21 and 9/28—Hispanic Heritage Month Events. 4:30–5:30pm. All ages. Sam Gary Library, 2961 Roslyn St. Registration required at denverlibrary.org

9/26 Sunday—Qi-gong and Mindfulness Walk around Bluff Lake. 7:30–9am. Led by Joann Calabrese. 11255 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. blufflake.org

10/2 Saturday—Best Pets 15th Annual Adopt-a-thon Tent on the west lawn at Stanley Marketplace, 2501 N. Dallas St., Aurora. 11am–3pm. bestpetscolorado.com

METRO EVENTS

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

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

9/3 Friday—Denver Calling: Lost Book of Astrid Lee Volume 2 City-Wide Quest. A three-week-long, city-wide mystery-quest. 1200 North Broadway. historycolorado.org

9/3 Friday—First Friday Art Walks. Art District on Santa. 5:30–9:30pm. denver.org/things-to-do/denver-arts-culture/denver-art-districts

9/4 to 9/6—Cherry Creek Arts Festival. Now at the creekside area of the shopping center. Sat & Sun, 10am–8pm; Mon, 10am–6pm. Reserve free timed tickets at cherrycreekartsfestival.org

9/4 to 9/6—A Taste of Colorado. Food, music, arts/crafts, fireworks, carnival rides. New this year: located throughout the streets of Downtown Denver. atasteofcolorado.com

Sept. & Early Oct. Events

9/10 Friday—MCA Denver Exhibit Openings: Jason Moran: "Bathing the Room with Blues" and Deborah Roberts: "I'm". Exhibits run thru Jan. 2022. Museum of Contemporary Art, 1485 Delgany St. mcadenver.org

9/10 Friday—Mile High Country Q & Brew Benefitting Tennyson Center for Children. Featuring country band LOCASH, food trucks, cocktails, and live and silent auctions. 2027 W. Colfax Ave. milehighqandbrew.com

9/10 to 9/12—Buskerfest. 50+ shows by 12 local & visiting performers on three outdoor stages. Starts at 10am. Union Station. unionstationbuskerfest.com

9/10 to 9/18—Colorado Mineral and Fossil Fall Show. Free Admission & parking. Minerals, fossils, meteorites, shopping and more! coloradomineralandfossilshows.com. 15500 E 40th Ave.

9/11 Saturday—Building Denver Exhibit Tours. Tour this time-traveling exhibition with a captivating expert and see your city in a whole new light. 1200 North Broadway. historycolorado.org

9/11 Saturday—Sunnyside Music Festival. Free. Chaffee Park 11am–7:30pm. 44th and Tejon. sunnysidemusicfest.org

9/11 to 9/26—Day Out With Thomas. Colorado Railroad Museum, 17155 W 44th Ave, Golden. eventvesta.com/events/7561

9/13 Monday—Disney Pixar's Soul at Infinity Park. Free, starts at 7:30. Infinity Park, Glendale. infinityparkatglendale.com

9/16 Thursday—Riverfront Park Summer Sessions. Music, food, and art. Free, 4–8pm. Commons Park, 15th St. & Little Raven St. riverfront-parkevents.com

9/16 to 9/19—Denver Gem and Mineral Show. Colorado Convention Center, 700 14th St. Tickets \$10. 10am–5pm. denvermineralshow.com

9/17 to 9/20—Denver Vintage Jazz Festival. Live swing and traditional jazz music from '20s thru '40s. Multiple venues, check website. Tickets/performance info: denverjazzfestival.org

9/17–19 & 9/24–26—51st Annual Denver Oktoberfest. 20th and Larimer; Ballpark neighborhood. thedenveroktoberfest.com

9/17 to 9/19—Denver BBQ Festival. Free entry, food and drinks for purchase. Empower Field, 1701 Bryant St. denverbbqfest.com

9/17 to 10/17—Doors Open Denver. Self-guided or expert guided tours of Denver's unique spaces. List of sites at denverarchitecture.org

9/24 to 9/25—Fall Plant & Bulb Sale. Denver Botanic Gardens, 1007 York St. 9am–6pm. botanicgardens.org

9/30 to 10/2—Denver Food and Wine Festival. 3-day festival, multiple events, locations. Details/tickets: denverfoodandwine.com

10/2 Saturday—The 35th Annual Carousel Ball. Children's Diabetes Foundation fundraiser: REO Speedwagon, black tie dinner, silent & live auctions. Hyatt Regency Denver, 650 15th St. childrensdiabetesfoundation.org

10/2 to 10/3—8th Annual Chessman Park Art Fest. Art, entertainment, food & drinks. 9am–5pm. 1599 E. 8th Ave. dashevents.com

KIDS AND FAMILIES

Tuesdays & Thursdays—Outdoor Storytime at Sam Gary Library. 10–10:30am. Birth–Pre K. Bring a blanket to sit on, weather permitting. 2961 Roslyn St. denverlibrary.org



Wednesdays—Outdoor Storytime at Sunset Park. 10–10:30am. Birth–Pre K. Bring a blanket to sit on, weather permitting. E. 2nd Ave Pkwy. denverlibrary.org

9/1 Wednesday—Mornings at the Museum. Ages 3–6, 10:30–11am. Aurora History Museum, 15051 East Alameda Pkwy. auroragov.org

9/11 Saturday—Cockpit Demo Day. 10am–2pm. Get a close up look! Wings Over the Rockies Museum. wingsmuseum.org

9/19 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

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September 2021

10

Front Porch – NE Denver



Free outdoor performance by Central City Opera at Conservatory Green in August

MUSEUMS, ETC.

American Museum of Western Art. Advanced tickets required, admission is \$5. 1727 Tremont Pl. anschultzcollection.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, Sep. 10. Reserve tickets in advance. 1250 Bannock St. clyffordstillmuseum.org

Denver Art Museum. 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. 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. Tue–Sun, 10am–4:30pm. 1340 Pennsylvania St. mollybrown.org

Museo de las Americas. Sep 3-25, Biennial of the Americas presents the *Americas COVID-19 Memorial*. Tue–Fri, noon-6pm. Sat, noon–5pm. Closed Mon & Sun. 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. Free Farm Fest event 9/18. 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

PERFORMANCE/THEATRE

9/2 to 9/4—Three Viewings. 7:30pm. A funeral parlor in a small midwestern town is the setting for three darkly funny and touching monologues. John Hand Theater, 7653 E. 1st Pl. firehousetheatercompany.com

9/10, 9/11, 9/25 & 10/1—Swallow Hill Music Concerts. Tony Trischka, Carrie Newcomer, Sons of the Pioneers, and Steve Forbert. Daniels Hall, 71 E. Yale Ave. swallowhillmusic.org

9/11 Saturday—The Guys. One night only, honoring the 20th anniversary of 9/11. Vintage Theatre, 1468 Dayton St, Aurora. vintagetheatre.org

9/17 to 10/10—Hundred Days. What would you do if you only had 100 days left to live? Aurora Fox Arts Center, 9900 E. Colfax Ave. aurorafoxartscenter.org

9/17 to 10/31—Young Frankenstein, The Musical. Based on Mel Brook’s classic movie. Vintage Theatre, 1468 Dayton St, Aurora. vintagetheatre.org

9/18 to 10/16—The Life Span of a Fact. Proof that the mundane life of a fact-checker is anything but. Th–Sat 7:30pm. 1080 Acoma St. curioustheatre.org

9/25 to 10/31—Sisters In Law. Fri & Sat, 7:30pm. Sun 2pm. The story of how two very different women, Sandra Day O’Connor and Ruth Bader Ginsburg, changed the world. John Hand Theater, 7653 E. 1st Pl. theatreor.com

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

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Denver Public Schools - Volunteer Services. Check out what services are needed at local DPS schools at volunteermatch.org/search/org/110806.jsp

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

Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) For volunteer opportunities, email Cathy Law at claw@voacolorado.org

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 villageexchangecenter.org

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

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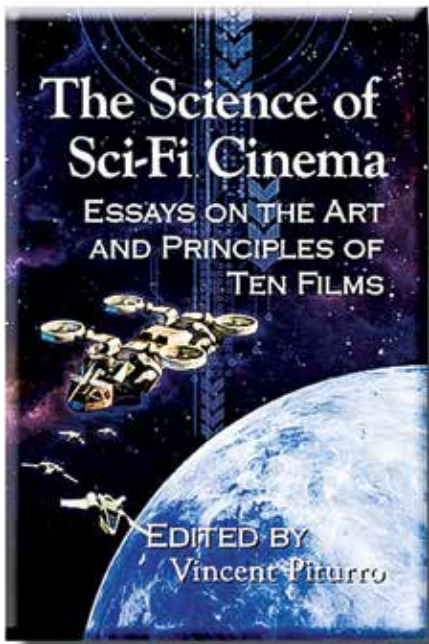
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This month I review one movie that is available online, and as we slowly open our world, reviews of movies playing in theaters will return as well. In addition, I discuss my new book and some live book signings and shows that will accompany the release. I hope to see you all in person soon!

The Science of Sci-Fi Cinema (2021—available at most book outlets)

As many of you know, I have hosted an annual Science Fiction Film Series for the past eleven years in conjunction with the Denver Museum of Nature and Science as well as the Denver Film Society. I host the entire series, and we screen science fiction films along with a scientist from the Museum in their area of specialty. We finish with an audience question & answer session at each screening. The annual summer series has always been popular even though we did those discussions virtually for the past two years. A few years ago, we decided to put some of presentations in written form, and the finished product has just been released. It includes ten



chapters—one film per chapter—with a film analysis and scientific analysis for each film. It is now available for purchase at all of your favorite book outlets. In addition, you can find us at the following

events where you can purchase books and have the book signed:
September 25 at Torpedo Coffee in Park Hill for a book signing from 11–1.
September 30 at DMNS for a book signing and then film screening/discussion. Kachun Yu, Ph.D. (Curator of Space Science at the Museum); Andrew Pantos, Ph.D. (MSU Denver Linguistics); and I will discuss *Arrival*. Students are free with the code “STUDENT.” Tickets available on the DMNS website.
October 7 at The Cube in North-

field for a book signing and film discussion. Steve Lee, Ph.D. (Mars expert from the Museum) and I will be on hand to discuss *The Martian*. Tickets will be available soon through the Central Park Master Community Association (mca5238.com).
Two notes about the book: all author proceeds are being donated to the Food Bank of the Rockies, and at each of the

above events, the MSU Denver FiLM Club will be on hand to collect non-perishables for the MSU Denver Food Bank. More events coming soon, but I hope to see you at one of these. Please join us for the fun, informative, and helpful events.

Judas and the Black Messiah (2020)

This wonderful, interesting, informative, and stylish film was nominated for several Academy Awards this past year. It opened for a brief stint on HBO Max, then went to the theaters, and now made its way back to HBO Max. It is not yet available to rent on other outlets, but it should be soon. Be sure to watch it as soon as you can because it is one of the more invigorating films I have seen in a long while. Co-written and directed by Shaka King, it masterfully tells the story of Chicago Black Panther Party (BPP) leader Fred Hampton (Daniel Kaluuya) and the man who brought him down, FBI Informant William O’Neal (Lakeith Stanfield). Kaluuya won the Oscar for Best Actor, and a few minutes into the film, you know exactly why. His performance is transformative.

The story starts with a young O’Neal captured by the FBI for impersonating an FBI agent and attempting to steal a car. He is offered a deal by the FBI: go to prison or become an informant. The title of the film gives us his answer: he infiltrates the BPP and becomes the Chief of Security. Hampton proves to be a charismatic figure that is able to bring together a coalition of disparate groups: black activists, Puerto Rican street gangs, and incredibly, a group of poor, white, Confederate-flag-worshipping Chicagoans. As his reputation and his movement grow, so does his FBI profile. At one point we see FBI Director Herbert Hoover (a scary Martin Sheen) tell a group of agents that he wished to “get Hampton’s black ass off the street” and wanted him neutralized before he would go to prison. The brutal, cold, efficient, and virulently racist manner in which the BPP is stalked and gunned down by the police and the FBI can’t help but remind us of recent events and how the past is prologue. While the film is fictionalized, they are still based on real people and real events. And real racism.

To be clear, the BPP was a controversial organization—it advocated open carry of firearms for blacks and armed



confrontations with police if necessary. Several police officers were killed along with many BPP members in the late 60s and early 70s. Some called it a terrorist organization. Some called it a vital political movement to fight systemic, ingrained, and institutional racism (particularly among the police). Hoover called it the “greatest threat to the internal security of the country.” Others called it a much-needed-revolutionary movement. You can certainly make your own determination about what it was, but the film itself is remarkable.

This is King’s first feature (beyond his feature-length school project), and it is dazzling: the cinematography reminds of Spike Lee and Martin Scorsese, the editing is dizzying at points and perfectly still at others, the settings are remarkable and suture us into 1969 without a word, and the soundtrack is inspired and deeply thematic. King is certainly a star of the film, but Kaluuya is beyond brilliant as the fiery, fierce, and soulful Hampton. His performance needs to be more than seen—it should be *felt*. The supporting cast is all fantastic, including a plucky Stanfield as the reluctant informant. This is one of those movies that you understand marks the beginning of great careers, much like Spike Lee’s *Do the Right Thing* or Scorsese’s *Mean Streets*. The latter film also catapulted a young Robert DeNiro to superstardom, as this film will undoubtedly do for Kaluuya. If you only watch for the performances, you win. There is so much more to see, however, and you win no matter what. See it soon.

You will like this film if you enjoyed *The Trial of the Chicago 7*, *Incident at Ogallala*, and/or *Malcolm X*.

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



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...NE News Updates



By Carol Roberts

1 The Future of J&W Campuses: Denver Takes a Dramatically Different Path than Miami

Gov. Polis visited the Johnson & Wales (J&W) campus on Aug. 20 to personally meet the people who are giving the campus a new life. With the transformation of this property, children and adults who most need it will have opportunities to improve their quality of life educationally, in their jobs, and in their housing (all described in a July *Front Porch* article). A group of far-sighted community leaders led by the Urban Land Conservancy came together quickly and, despite competition from developers, secured the property's future for the good of everyday people in Denver.

According to a press release from Gov. Polis' office, the Miami and Denver campuses are about the same size (25 acres) and sold for a similar price (\$60 million). But the Miami campus was purchased by a development firm, PMG, that is known for its portfolio of luxury apartment towers and hotels, including the Waldorf Astoria, the tallest skyscraper in Miami.

We don't know PMG's plans, but they surely are nothing like those of the people pictured at right who are telling Gov. Polis about their businesses that will be using the J&W kitchens.

J&W's exceptional kitchen facilities will continue to be managed by Jorge De La Torre (blue shirt), but now they will be used by non-profit programs that train workers and support entrepreneurs in food businesses.

Julie Stone (at left in the photo) is executive director of Work Options, a 25-year-old non-profit organization that helps people overcome barriers to sustainable employment by providing a 4-8 week holistic culinary job training program and long-term employment support. Erick García (white shirt)



Gov. Polis talks with community program leaders whose organizations will use the former J&W kitchen facilities to train culinary workers and support entrepreneurs in food businesses.



Gov. Polis tours Centennial Hall on the former J&W campus with St. Elizabeth's Head of School Adriana Murphy. The K-8 program provides need-based financial aid to ensure every class is balanced racially and socioeconomically so children from different backgrounds grow up learning, playing and doing community service together—and will go out into the world with those skills that will make their communities a better place. The school will be able to expand to 300 students in its new location.

is with Kitchen Network Commissary, Denver's longest running shared kitchen that incubates approximately 150 specialty food businesses each year. Julie Casault (far right) is with BuCu West, a non-profit that promotes and supports entrepreneurs and cultural organizations.

2 Coming to NW Aurora: Judi's House—Providing Support for Grieving Children

Judi's House provides free grieving support and care to children and caregivers. It was established in 2002 by Brian Griesse, whose own mother passed away when he was just twelve years old. Judi's House was established by Griesse in her honor to give back to grieving children and teens. Griesse is a former football quarterback drafted by the Broncos in 1998 and current commentator on ESPN Monday Night Football. JAG (Judith Ann Griesse Foundation) is the research component that supports Judi's House.

Judi's House currently exists in two locations on Gaylord St. in Denver and is relocating to a single larger space. The site at 10125 E. 25th Ave (25th and Fulton) is approximately 1.7 acres; the building will be approximately 26,117 sf. The two-story building is planned to have features that give it a residential quality, such as a front porch, outdoor space, big kitchen and dining area. It has 50 parking spaces on site. Staff (research and outreach) work during the day for regular business hours, and in the evenings after most staff have left, families, volunteers and counselors are on site from 5:30 until 8pm to serve the clients. The backyard will be enclosed with a solid 6 foot fence to provide privacy for children in the program.

3 Flyway Project in NE to Have a Costco

Denver City Council voted unanimously on Aug. 16 to rezone The Flyway development at Green Valley Ranch Blvd. and Memphis St. (just west of Peña Blvd.) The development will include

A banner on the fencing at E. 25th Ave. and Fulton St. in NW Aurora shows a rendering of the new Judi's House facility coming to that location. Judi's House provides free grieving support and care to children and caregivers.



Right: Former Broncos player Brian Griesse is pictured with his mother, Judi, when he was a child. Griesse founded Judi's house in her memory—she died when he was 12.



Photo by John Fernandez

Photo courtesy of Judi's House

Costco and other retailers and restaurants. Costco is expected to employ more than 270 people in jobs paying an average of \$23/hr with benefits. Opening of the Costco and other retailers is expected in the fall of 2022.

4 TOCA Football Acquires Bladium

Bladium on Central Park Blvd. in south Central Park was acquired on August 23 by TOCA Football. TOCA operates 14 soccer centers in the U.S. and Canada that feature soccer training technologies that are used by some of the best professional teams and players around the world. The Bladium-turned-TOCA will continue with the same manager and staff and will offer the same fitness options, classes and special event options. TOCA's New Venue Manager Renee Larabell says, "We look for centers that are in a great community, a great soccer community with an incredible staff where we can come in and just build upon what they've already been doing successfully....People will just see a different name on the building."

For younger children (starting at 18 months) programming will continue as it has been. More advanced players, from about age 7 and older, will start seeing some of TOCA's training technology introduced in their sessions this fall. By early 2022, 12 studios will be equipped with the enhanced training technology TOCA is known for.

"Each studio is about a thousand square feet, approximately 40 feet long and 25 to 30 feet wide, and in each corner, you have goals, which we call our smart targets," says Larabell. "Then you have a touch trainer and that is our ball machine. The touch trainer and these smart targets are controlled by an app on an iPad that our coaches use, so these studios can really create any type of soccer training experience. They can control the speed of the ball that's coming out and where that ball lands. The target will light up in different ways to tell the player where they want to place that ball. The TOCA trainer will review what happened in each session with the player and with their parents. And then the player will also have access to their own TOCA player portal." TOCA will build 12 of these training studios.

For more information about TOCA Football visit TOCAfootball.com or stop in to TOCA at E. 23rd Ave. and Central Park Blvd. in Central Park.

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By Tracy Wölfer Osborne

This November, two similarly-worded ballot initiatives with opposite intentions will decide the fate of the Park Hill Golf Course, a currently unused 155-acre open space that sits at the corner of Colorado Blvd. and E. 35th Ave. Supporters of the Yes for Parks and Open Space initiative would like the entire golf course to become a park—and would prefer an unused golf course to allowing any development there. Supporters of the Empower NE Denver initiative favor a mixed-use property with retail, housing, and a minimum 60-acre developed park. Westside Investment Partners purchased the property for \$24 million in 2019 and would be the developer if voters pass an initiative that allows development on the land—and City Council votes to support the development. (The Elections Division has not yet assigned numbers that will appear on the ballot—this article uses names chosen by the supporters of the initiatives.)

A Brief History

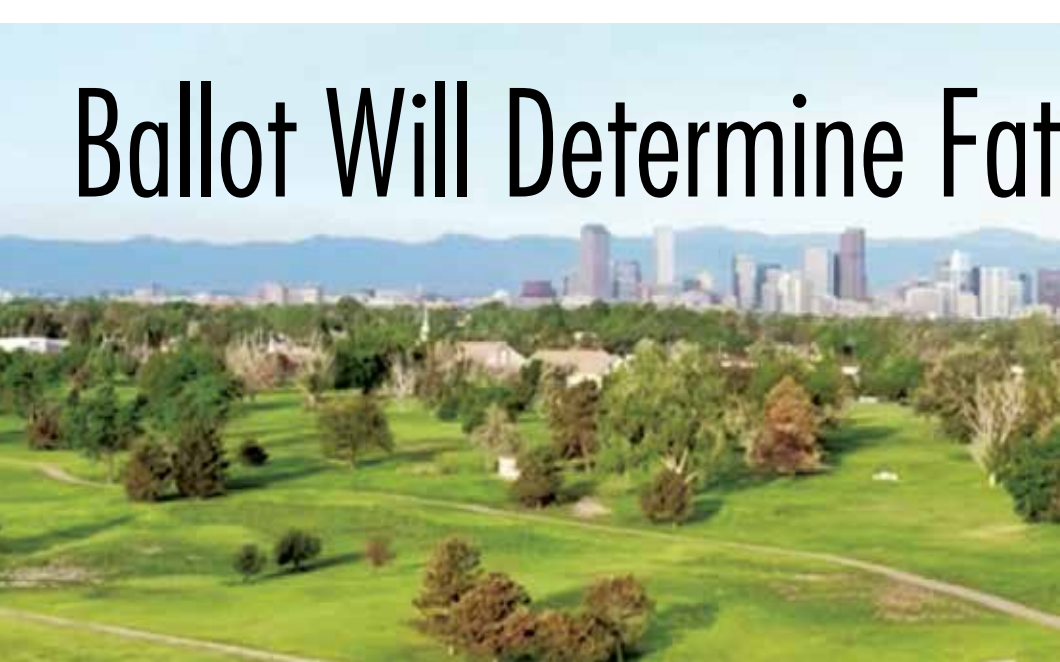
When wealthy real estate baron George W. Clayton died in 1899, his estate—which included the land that would become the Park Hill Golf Course—was transferred to a trust. For many years, the City of Denver operated the trust and at one time wanted to purchase the land outright. However, when the \$2 million that was generated through a bond measure proved insufficient, the City settled for purchasing a conservation easement that “provides for the conservation of the golf course land as open space and for the continued existence... of a public golf course.” Westside and Save Open Space Denver (SOS) disagree on who can lift the easement. (Yes for Parks and Open Space is an arm of the

SOS advocacy group.) Westside and attorneys for the City of Denver believe that in order for any development to happen—mixed-use or otherwise—the conservation easement must be lifted. And—according to the easement—that can only be done by a vote of Denver City Council. SOS argues that the conservation easement only requires that the property be used generally as open space, and therefore can be turned into a park without lifting the easement. They also argue that



Empower Northeast Denver supporters believe that those who live closest to the Park Hill Golf Course should decide its future. Front Porch photos by Steve Larson

because of a state statute, a judge—not Denver City Council—is the only one who can lift the easement. The outcome of these two ballot questions will determine whether voters citywide will decide on the future of the golf course land or whether Denver City Council decides.



Numbers will be assigned to the ballot initiatives approximately September 3. The October issue of

What Will the Initiatives Do?

Yes for Parks and Open Space would change Denver’s municipal code so development on city-owned conservation easements could not happen without citywide voter approval. Park Hill Golf Course is the only City-owned land with a conservation easement. Empower NE Denver would amend the definition of a conservation easement exempting the golf course from being considered easement property and therefore nullifying SOS’s measure even if it passes.

Potential Outcomes

If Yes for Parks and Open Space *PASSES* and Empower NE Denver *FAILS*, development could not happen without city-wide voter approval. If Empower NE Denver *PASSES* and Yes for Parks and Open Space *FAILS*, development—if approved by Denver City Council—will be allowed on the property. If *BOTH PASS*, development—if approved by Denver City Council—will be allowed on the property. If *BOTH FAIL*, development—if approved by the Denver City Council—will be allowed on the property.

What Empower NE Denver Supporters Say

Empower NE Denver argues if the Yes for Parks and Open Space initiative passes, it will silence the voices of the Northeast

Park Hill community and give the rest of Denver veto power over what happens in their neighborhood. In a March 2021 Front Porch article, District 8 Councilman Chris Herndon, who represents Park Hill said, “Yes, every individual gets a vote and that’s equal, but it’s not equitable to the people in NE Park Hill, a community that has been historically marginalized. The primary voice and the decision-making should come from those people that are in that community.” Empower Denver supporters believe mixed use development with affordable housing and a park will enable displaced families to return and have job opportunities in their neighborhood where diverse demographics are declining rapidly. According to the census, Black citizens made up 89 percent of the NE Park Hill population in 1990 and only 36 percent in 2019. According to Empower NE Denver’s website, Park Hill resident, Terrell Curtis, says, “This community has been disenfranchised for decades, and now people who do not live here are trying to allow the whole city to decide what’s best for us.” Imam Abdur-Rahim Ali, the resident Imam of the Northeast Denver Islamic Center says, “Our community has real needs and has been neglected for decades. What other neighborhood would even be asked to let other people decide what’s best for them?”

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Photo courtesy of Larry Walsh NW Drone Photography

e of Park Hill Golf Course

Front Porch will provide an explanation of all the City and State ballot issues with their numbers.

Councilwoman Cdebaca, in the fall of 2020, proposed that Denver City Council refer Yes for Parks and Open Space to the ballot. The vote was 10-3 to send the ballot measure back to committee due to all the questions and concerns Council members raised about it.

According to a survey mailed by the city, respondents from the community surrounding the Park Hill Golf Course have different priorities than those who live elsewhere in Denver. One survey was mailed to local residents who live within a mile of the golf course. The other was available online to anyone living in the City and County of Denver. Both contained the same questions. According to the survey, 85 percent of local residents want a grocery store. Many consider Park Hill a food desert and say Park Hill Supermarket isn't sufficient for providing healthy, affordable food options.

Sixty-seven percent of local respondents want affordable housing, and 73 percent want a park with athletic fields. Empower NE Denver says that last statistic is proof that development can be the best of both worlds. Westside has already promised at least 60 acres of open space. As a comparison, Denver's Central Park is 76.1 acres, Cheesman Park is 80.8 acres, and Del Mar Park is 39.9 acres.

Empower NE Denver supporters understand it's easy to take an anti-developer

stance, but point out that development doesn't just benefit the rich. Norman Harris, Co-Founder of The Holleran Group, which is partnered with Westside, says, "There doesn't have to be winners and losers. We can have a grocery store in the middle of this food desert, affordable housing to help with displacement, and a large park where our kids can play."

And, they point out that all they're displacing is a former golf course that used 106 million gallons of water, 3,200 pounds of fertilizer, and 1,600 pounds of pesticide in 2018, its final year of operation. The land continues to require resources but is not accessible for use by the public.

What SOS/Yes for Parks and Open Space Supporters Say

When Westside began planning possible future development, which has included a steering committee designated by the City, SOS filed a lawsuit arguing it was illegal to plan for development while the easement is still in place. Penfield Tate, an SOS member said, "There's a state statute that says you cannot terminate, release, extinguish, or abandon a conservation easement without an order of a court, and the City hasn't gone to court." In the lawsuit, which is currently afoot, SOS argues that the conservation easement allows the property to be used as open space, and the only allowable development can be as a park

without lifting the easement.

SOS and Yes for Parks and Open Space supporters describe themselves as a group of grassroots volunteers outgunned and outspent by a wealthy developer that can't be trusted. According to their website, SOS wants to ensure that voters in the City and County of Denver have a voice in how land in designated parks and open spaces—specifically land protected by a conservation easement—is used. They say because taxpayers paid for the conservation easement, taxpayers should have a say

committee—which includes Kenneth Ho representing Westside—has been aimed in the direction of allowing development since its inception. SOS further argues that many residents around the golf course didn't receive the survey, and that it contained loaded questions designed to elicit development-friendly responses. City Councilwoman Candi Cdebaca said on the Denver Channel, "A push poll is a marketing technique disguised as a survey in which the true objective is to sway voters using manipulative questions. The Park Hill Golf Course survey is stacked with pro-development questions as a pretext for extinguishing the conservation easement."

Penfield Tate said on a May 14 episode of City Cast Denver, "I have watched this game before. Developers come and promise things on the front end, and then as time goes on, their plans and what they actually do almost never matches the promises made." Tate later said in a phone interview, "Look at what Westside did in Loretta Heights; they cut down 188 mature trees."

Both sides accuse the other of using manipulative language and outright lying to deceive a deserving public. Their passion and pleading is clear—they both feel they are the voice of the people.

Visit SOSDenver.net for more information on why they support changing Denver's municipal code so land with a City-owned conservation easement could not be developed without voter approval.

Visit EmpowerNEdenver.com for more information on why they support changing the legal definition of a conservation easement to exempt the Park Hill Golf Course.

Read this article at FrontPorchNE.com with direct links to additional information.



Supporters of SOS (Save Open Space) Denver and its committee Yes for Parks and Open Space believe all Denver voters should decide on the use of City of Denver-owned land with a conservation easement.

in keeping that easement intact.

They argue the City is a "heat island" plagued with disproportionate amounts of pollution, and the 155-acres of open space provided by the Park Hill Golf Course could operate as a much-needed pair of lungs

SOS also argues the City is already in bed with Westside and that the steering



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Ashley L. Howlett

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Megan Davis

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Laura Hudgins

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Marcy Eastman

720.436.5494 | marcy.eastman@compass.com

Danelle Morgan

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