

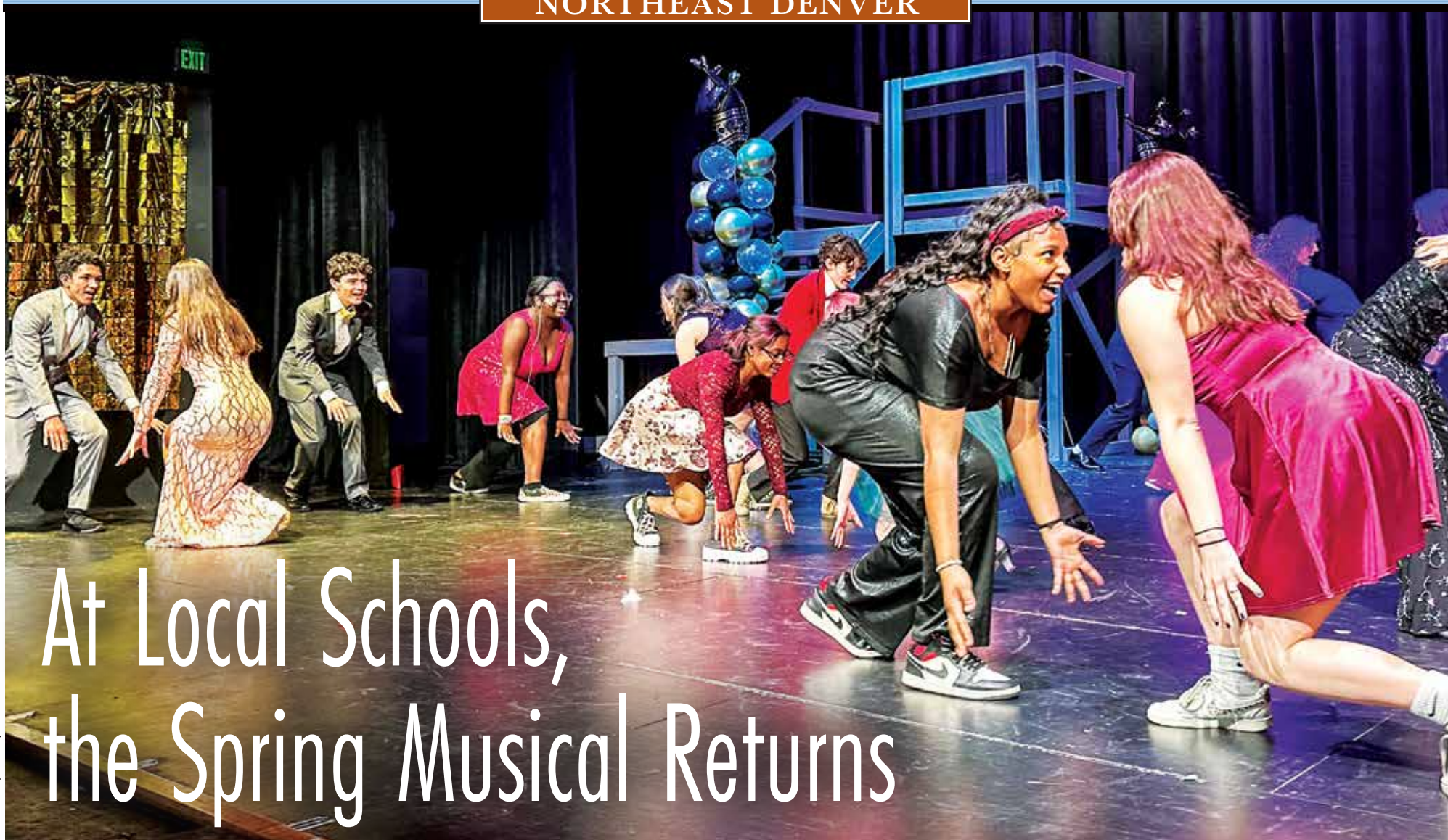
Front Porch

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NORTHEAST DENVER

APRIL 2023



Front Porch photo by Christie Gosch

At Local Schools, the Spring Musical Returns

Students get down on the dance floor in this year's spring musical at Northfield High School. *The Prom* is a show "about accepting yourself for who you are and accepting others for who they are as well," said Northfield Theater Director Hanan Al-Naqeeb.

After several years off due to the Covid-19 pandemic and in celebration of the Educational Theatre Association's "Theatre in Our Schools Month," multiple DPS schools enthusiastically brought back their spring musicals. Students from local schools took a deep dive into inspirational live theater performances. Middle and high schoolers alike say returning to the stage brought freedom, hope, and joy, along with much-needed camaraderie and a boost in self-confidence. *Story by Sarah Huber on page 10.*

Monumental Gun Control Package *Moves Through the CO Capitol*



Photo by Andrew Nicola

After the second instance of gun violence in a month closed down their school, Denver East High School students flooded the Capitol to protest the school shooting epidemic and support the gun control bills moving through the Legislature. State Rep. Eliza Hamrick co-sponsored the bill to raise the minimum age to possess firearms from 18 to 21. *Story by Brian Heuberger on page 4.*



Front Porch photo by Christie Gosch

A Mission to Preserve Black History

Sculptor Ed Dwight, in his North Park Hill studio, stands next to his rendering of Miles Davis. *Story by Mary Jo Brooks on page 12.*

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Bird Sightings

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The Hooded Merganser ranges in length from 15.8–19.3 inches, ranges in weight from 16.0–31.0 ounces, and its wingspan ranges from 23.6–26.0 inches.

Hooded Merganser

Male and female Hooded Mergansers look vastly different from each other. The adult female has a greyish-brown body and a light reddish-brown crest that extends from the back of the head.

The mature male's head, neck, and breast are mainly black with white markings. The large white patches on the crest are very conspicuous when he raises his crest during courtship. His lower flanks are a rich reddish-brown or chestnut color.



Female Hooded Merganser with a fish in its beak.

Hooded Mergansers have serrated bills that improve their fishing skills. They mainly feed on small fish, crayfish, and aquatic insects. They also eat tadpoles, a few mollusks, and small amounts of plant material.



The American Dipper is 6.5 inches long, its wingspan is 9.1 inches and its average weight is 1.6 ounces.



Here you can see the white flash in the American Dipper's eyelid while blinking.



Diving beneath the turbulent stream, the American Dipper forages for food.

American Dipper

The American Dipper is an aquatic songbird that is found in the mountainous regions of Central America and western North America from Panama to Alaska. It is grayish brown, chunky, and smaller than a robin. It has long legs, a short bill, and a small tail. The feathered eyelids are white and flash white when blinking. Its way of foraging for food in whitewater streams makes it unique and entertaining to watch. While wading and swimming in turbulent streams among rocks, it dives beneath the water head-first to forage for insects, insect larvae, small fish, or fish eggs.

Bird Walks

April 1 and May 6. Two options: 8–10am or 7:30–10am (choose a 2-hour or a 2.5-hour walk.) Both walks are free but you must RSVP at www.blufflake.org/bird-watching. All are welcome. Bring your own binoculars, or borrow a pair from your guide. 11255 MLK Blvd. Search FrontPorchNE.com for “Bird Sightings” to see all the past bird stories and photos from George Ho.

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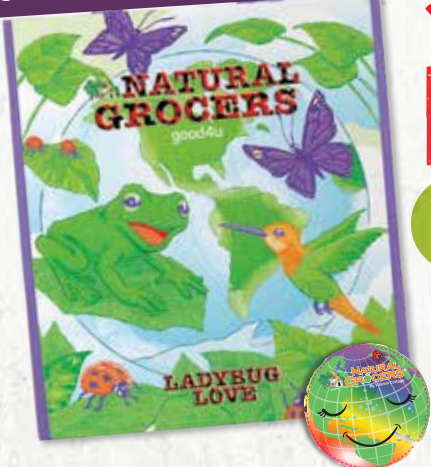
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Monumental Gun Control Package

Moves Through the CO Capitol

By Brian Heuberger

With two recent school shootings happening less than two miles from the Capitol and with residents becoming outraged about the rising rates of gun violence, Democrats in the Colorado Legislature have introduced a monumental gun control package consisting of four bills that began progressing through the Legislature in March. Each bill proposes a different gun safety policy that Democrats believe can help alleviate the violence in communities and improve the safety of residents.

SB 169: Age Requirements to Purchase Firearms

SB 169 would raise the age requirements to purchase or possess firearms in Colorado from 18 to 21 years old. Supporters of the bill contend that many incidents of street violence or mass shootings are perpetrated by people younger than 21 and that implementing this policy could hinder them from purchasing new guns and committing violent crimes. However, opponents argue that the bill would violate the Second Amendment by depriving people between the ages of 18-21 of the right to own guns for self-defense.

SB 168: Permitting Lawsuits Against Gun Manufacturers

Colorado currently prevents residents from filing lawsuits against gun manufacturers except for cases in which the firearm products featured manufacturing defects. SB 168 would remove this limitation and allow gun violence victims or attorneys general to file lawsuits against members of the gun industry.

Supporters contend that the bill would provide re-

“Red Flag laws are one of the most effective tools we have to prevent gun violence—but unfortunately Colorado’s Red Flag law is tragically underutilized.”

—Senate President Steve Fenberg (D-Boulder)

course for people who have been harmed by irresponsible practices of gun industry members to remedy the harm, redress the grievance, and deter the misconduct. In contrast, opponents contend that the threat of arbitrary lawsuits would restrict legitimate businesses in the industry from being able to operate in the state.

HB 1219: Establishing the Waiting Period

In Colorado, background checks for gun buyers typically take minutes to complete and customers can usually purchase the guns without delay. HB 1219 would change this by implementing a three-day waiting period that would start when the background check is first initiated.

Supporters contend that the three-day wait could save lives by giving customers who are in distress time to calm down, relieve the distress, and refrain from carrying out acts of self-harm or community violence. However, opponents argue that the waiting period

violates the Second Amendment right of customers to buy firearms for protection in a timely manner.

SB 170: Expansion of Red Flag Law

SB 170 would expand Colorado policies on Extreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO) petitions. This is commonly known as a Red Flag law because people who are concerned that someone poses a threat to others or themselves can file an ERPO petition to ask a judge to have the guns removed before any harm can occur.

“We’ve heard from the opposition that guns don’t hurt people, people with guns hurt people, and the ERPO bill addresses that point,” says State Rep. Jennifer Bacon, a sponsor of the bill and a representative for Northeast Denver. “If people through due process are shown to be a danger to themselves or others, and if they have self-harm ideation or community-harm ideation, they shouldn’t have those weapons and we should have a process to remove them.”

The Red Flag law was first implemented for Colorado in 2020. But that ERPO policy only allowed petitions to be filed by individual family members or law enforcement officers. The ERPO petition is filed in court, evidence is presented to a judge, and then the judge can determine whether to approve or deny the petition. If the judge approves the petition, the subjects would have their guns confiscated and would be prohibited from purchasing new firearms (continued on p. 6)



Rep. Bacon presents SB 170 to the House Judiciary Committee. Bacon believes educating the public can improve the Colorado Red Flag law.

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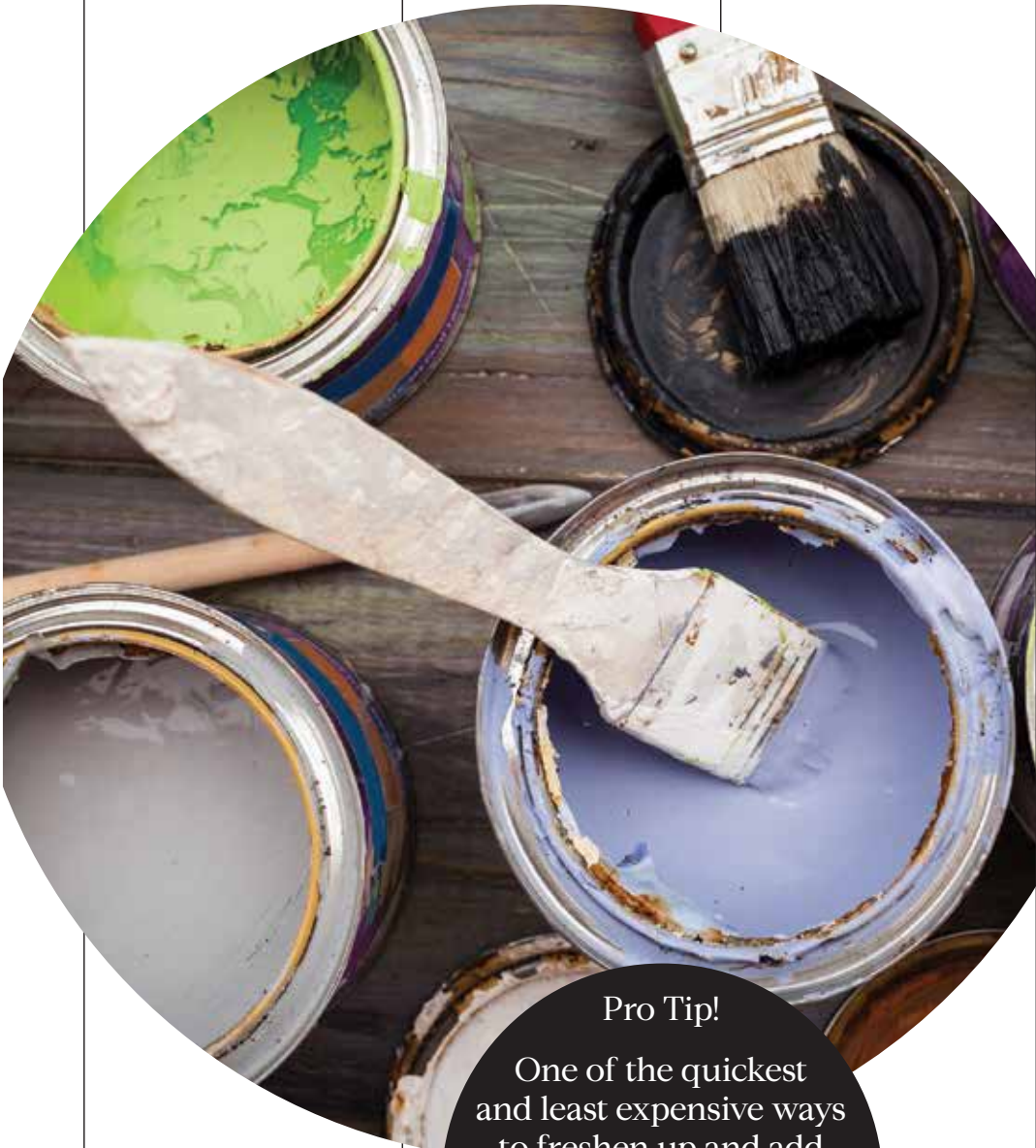
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Gun Law Changes in Colorado
(continued from pg. 4)

for either two weeks with “temporary” petitions or for one year with “continuing” petitions.

SB 170 would expand the scope of ERPO by allowing more groups to file petitions. Instead of just individuals and police officers, the bill would add four new professions to the list, including mental health workers, district attorneys, health care providers, and school educators.

“We’re always asking the question after mass shootings if someone knew or had an idea there was an issue,” says Rep. Bacon. “These professions are ones who can see patterns of behavior, so we just want to be sure that the people who spend the most time with these folks are able to utilize this tool.”

Supporters contend that expanding the scope of ERPO can solve problems that are impairing the efficacy of the policy. A report from Colorado Public Radio demonstrated that ERPO was being utilized in Colorado far less than in other states, that many counties were refusing to enforce the policy, and that individuals were filing the petitions and succeeding in courts at substantially lower rates than police officers.



On March 1, this impromptu memorial took place outside of East High School when the students learned that Luis Garcia passed away two weeks after being shot. Photo by Matt Kingham

“Red Flag laws are one of the most effective tools we have to prevent gun violence—but unfortunately Colorado’s Red Flag law is tragically underutilized,” says Senate President and bill co-sponsor Steve Fenberg (D-Boulder) in a statement to *Front Porch*. “Senate Bill 170 will strengthen our state’s Red Flag law and increase the number of individuals who can file for an extreme risk protection order, which will create more opportunities for community members to recognize when something is wrong and

intervene in a way that will prevent further gun violence and save countless lives across our state.”

Front Porch reached out to multiple Republican leaders in the House and Senate for comments or interviews, but did not receive responses before press time.

House Judiciary Committee Hearing on SB 170

On March 22, the House Judiciary Committee heard testimony from supporters and opponents of SB 170. Just hours before the hearing, a student at Denver East High School pulled out a gun during a security check, shot two deans inside the school, and put the students into lockdown protocols. This was the second shooting in a one-month span at Denver East, which added an extra layer of urgency to the concerns about gun violence and caused the shooting to be mentioned consistently during the witness testimonies.

The testimony from Denver East student Alexander Cisneros carried significant gravity. Cisneros already planned on testifying in support of SB 170, but the shooting at his school just hours prior to the hearing made his perspectives on gun violence especially personal and his calls to allow teachers to file ERPO petitions particularly poignant.

“Is there anyone more qualified than the teachers and health professionals who come to understand their students? I should like to know what professionals are considered qualified if not these,” said Cisneros during his testimony. “We tell our teachers what we never tell our parents. We form connections with those adults to the point that our teachers care for us and our well-being. So if a student speaks of a serious desire to do harm to themselves or others, is that not something that we should take seriously to save lives?”

Witnesses on both sides articulated multiple arguments when discussing the bill throughout the hearing. For opponents, some worried that ERPO petitions would violate their Second Amendment rights, would prevent people from receiving mental health treatment, or would be filed unnecessarily for revenge.

For supporters, many witnesses emphasized that more effective Red Flag laws could have prevented family members from committing suicide, the Club Q shooter from purchasing new guns, or the Boulder shooter from at-

tacking the King Soopers victims.

After hearing from the witnesses, the members of the House Judiciary Committee delivered their statements and cast their votes on the bill. With a 9-4 vote, the bill to expand ERPO

passed through the committee.

At the time of publication, the bill was moving to the House floor. If it is approved by the House it will be sent to the Governor. *Front Porch* will continue to provide updates regarding SB 170 and the other gun control bills.

“We’re always asking the question after mass shootings if someone knew or had an idea there was an issue.”

—State Rep. Jennifer Bacon

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A "Pi Night" event at Montview Manor in the penthouse's dining area. Other amenities include an event center, community lounge, computer lab, fitness room, salon, and 360° rooftop deck.

By Brian Heuberger

Many new affordable housing projects are underway throughout Northeast Denver to reduce the housing deficit facing neighborhoods and increase the affordable options available for residents. The new projects have been implemented by non-profit organizations with funding assistance from the City.

The affordable housing problem has increased exponentially in the recent decade.



Robin Kniech/At-Large Denver City Councilmember.

During that time, the population of Denver soared, the rate of development slowed, and the intense demand for housing caused the values of properties to skyrocket. Also during that span, increases to the average wages of residents failed to keep pace with rising costs of housing. According to data compiled by the Common Sense Institute, between 2015-2022 the average mortgage price spiked by 202 percent while wages only rose by 37 percent.

"If we could raise people's wages so they could earn enough, we wouldn't need to lower the cost of their housing," says Denver City Councilmember Robin Kniech. For the past 12 years Kniech has represented Denver as an at-large councilmember and is now completing her final year before being term-limited. "The price of housing went up as the population grew, but wage stagnation accompanied that and so we ended up with the gap."

This gap has had a detrimental impact on Denver communities. In 2022, the National Association of Realtors listed Denver as one of the least affordable cities in the nation for residents earning middle-income wages of approximately \$70,000. Aside from traditionally expensive California cities, Seattle and Denver were ranked as the least affordable cities for middle-class households. This could be contributing to the labor shortage in which many industries in the city have reported drastic shortages within their organizations. Denver is currently experiencing staff shortages among school teachers, hospital nurses, city workers, police officers, restaurant servers, and private-sector businesses.

"Our economy is not in balance," says Kniech. "The journey has evolved from providing affordable housing as

compassion for people in poverty, to a necessity for working families and moderate income families to be able to stay stable for the vibrancy of our city and the equilibrium of our economy. Now we're at risk of our city not being able to function because we can't afford housing for moderate income families, and that's a significant change from when I took office."

The urgency of the problem has encouraged non-profit organizations, the Denver City Council, and the Department of Housing Stability (HOST) to collaborate together while implementing several new affordable housing projects in Northeast Denver.

Central Park Condominiums

The Denver Affordable Housing Fund, sponsored by Kniech, is being used to help finance the Central Park Condominiums. Located on Central Park Avenue and 54th Street, this new affordable housing project will offer income-restricted ownership opportunities with 70 two-bedroom units that will be priced at \$225K. The Central Park Condominiums are still under construction, but the property is expecting to welcome residents in early 2024.

Northfield Flats

The City Council also approved a \$4.5 million loan to the Northfield Flats property. Located on 46th and Xenia, this four-story building will provide 129 units for residents within a particular Average Median Income

(AMI) range. Affordable housing property managers often require renters to earn a certain percentage below the AMI to qualify for the available units. According to current Denver data, 30% of AMI is an annual earning of \$25,000 and 80% is about \$63,000. For Northfield Flats, the units will be available for people whose income is 30% to 80% of AMI.

Montview Manor

The City Council also approved a loan of \$4.4 million for the Montview Manor. This building, located on 17th and Steele, provides affordable housing units for moderate-income

seniors. This is a 13-story building with 88 units along with a clubhouse, exercise center, and a rooftop that offers panoramic views of the city.

Montview Manor is owned and operated by Archway Communities, a non-profit that has been providing residents with affordable housing, educational programs, and community resources since 1995. Archway currently has 10 properties and over 650 units in the Denver Front Range, and the organization is now preserving Montview Manor as a permanently affordable building for seniors who are within 30% to 80% of AMI.

Mosaic Campus

Archway Investments also recently acquired the four dorms on the Mosaic Campus of the former Johnson & Wales University. The non-profit is converting the dorms into affordable housing for individuals and

"If we could raise people's wages so they could earn enough, we wouldn't need to lower the cost of their housing,"

—Denver City Councilmember Robin Kniech



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families. Known as the Park Hill Family Campus, it will provide 154 units for individuals within 30% to 60% of AMI. The buildings are expected to open in early 2024.

“The buildings are beautiful, historic, and in amazing condition with quality construction that’s way beyond what any developers could afford to build from scratch today,” says Julie Stern, the Director of Real Estate for Archway Communities. “But the campus also has access to education, entrepreneurship, and workforce development resources. And with the Kitchen Network right next door, we’re also excited to explore partnering with them, so it’s great to build housing in a way that’s part of something bigger.”

Urban Land Conservancy and Delwest Development

A partnership between the Urban Land Conservancy (ULC) and Delwest Development has led to an affordable housing project located on 38th and Holly. The \$8 million loan that the City approved for Delwest, and the 253 units that will be provided by the project, make this the largest affordable housing project ever assisted by HOST. The project has just begun the construction process, but it is expecting to open in 2025 and it will serve residents who earn 30% to 60% of AMI.

“We’re always seeking to expand the diversity of the developer talent in the Denver metro area,” explains Sarah Harman, the Urban Land Conservancy’s Vice President of Real Estate. “Sometimes we buy the property and identify a development partner who’s motivated to do affordable

housing and serve our mission. In other cases, we sell developers the rights to the lands with a stipulation for a certain amount of affordable housing.”

ULC currently invests in 52 properties throughout the Denver Metro area and offers 2,325 affordable units for renters and owners.

East Colfax

ULC is now focusing on the East Colfax neighborhood. The organization recently acquired a former bank building on Colfax and Ironton to transform the large property into what they call the ColfaxLab. The three-story building will be used as a space for nonprofits, the parking area will be used to develop affordable housing, and the Impact East Colfax steering committee was established through a collaboration with the Fax Partnership.

“We’ll identify and secure properties that can be either converted or preserved for affordable housing in that East Colfax corridor where there has been so much displacement,” says Harman. “When you have incredible investments coming in at the east end of Colfax, that can have ripple effects across the entire corridor.”



Archway is renovating the Mosaic (previously Johnson & Wales) dorms to expand units and upgrade features. Photo courtesy of General Contractor, Taylor Kohrs

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At Local Schools, the Spr



Front Porch photo by Christie Gosch

The McAuliffe International School's Newsies cast sings warm-up exercises before jumping into their lively retelling of the 1899 Newspaper Strike.

By Sarah Huber

As schools nationwide celebrated March as the Educational Theatre Association's "Theatre in Our Schools Month," several middle and high schools in Northeast Denver raised the curtain on their spring musicals—some for the first time since 2019—to enthusiastic community support.

On stage, the middle school actors of McAuliffe International School in Park Hill were "finally set free to be themselves," says Jen Carabetta, who directed this year's musical with voice teacher Dawn Owens. The students delivered a rousing performance of the Broadway hit *Newsies*, which chronicles the true story of how a ragtag group of newsboys achieved their own measure of freedom.

"There's freedom and joy in playing a role and experiencing the world in a new way," says Carabetta. "That's the beauty of live theater."

The McAuliffe actors leaned into the freedom and joy, with a boisterous opening scene pulling the audience into New York City at the end of the 19th century. The musical recounts the 1899 Newspaper Strike: In two remarkable weeks in the history of American news consumption, the "newsies" of New York—orphans and immigrants who hawked newspapers for pennies in the streets—formed a union and successfully negotiated with wealthy newspaper publisher Joseph Pulitzer. In period costumes, the students danced, joked and sang, and a few student gymnasts upped the ante with stage-wide tumblers and twirls.

"Being part of live theater gives people a ton of empathy."

—Elliot Liu, Student Director of *The Prom* and a Junior at Northfield High School

Sixth grader Landon Streker, who played a "newsie" named Albert, says embodying a character was "like an escape," adding, "you take on this whole new world and really try to be in it and feel your character's feelings." Likewise, Roby Thurmond, a seventh grader in *Newsies*, says, "Having this opportunity makes me feel free and happy all the time I'm doing it." For Brooke Bentley, another sixth grader in the musical, "The 'newsies' are like heroes, standing up for themselves even when they're children."

At Northfield High School in Central Park, students explored a similarly inspirational topic with the production of *The Prom*, an award-winning musical comedy recently adapted by Netflix. Northfield theater director and teacher Hanan Al-Naqeeb notes, "This is a piece that is very relevant to our students. It's about accepting yourself for who you are and accepting others for who they are as well." *The Prom* showcases four fading Broadway actors and their attempts to assist a lesbian student who has been banned from bringing her girlfriend to the high school prom. "After the shooting at Club Q happened, it solidified the importance of this piece," says Al-Naqeeb. "We talked about this in auditions, and we've spent 15 to 20 hours a week together as a cast, creating strong relationships and a safe space for everybody to have these conversations about acceptance and being able to share your authentic self."

Al-Naqeeb believes live theater is essential to social activism. "I love the joy and the pride that students get from doing this work," she says. "They're finding their voices on stage and off." Junior Liam Jarvis, who played Kevin in *The Prom*, says he hopes the musical "can change minds by immersing the audience directly into the story, giving a more in-depth view of the message than a movie can do."

Watching *The Prom* take shape on stage was "such a good and great experience" for senior Ca'Shara Crisp, who plays "the parent" in the Northfield musical. She says, "I already come from the queer community as a member, so while coming into this some people had concerns, through people performing and hearing, they've come to see that it's an amazingly positive show."

Dozens of cast members from McAuliffe and Northfield emphasized that positive change starts, for them, with relating to a character. Junior Keegan Shouse, who

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ing Musical Returns

played Trent Oliver in *The Prom*, comments, “When you’re performing, you’re part of that different world and part of the scene. You become a different person; I’m now Trent Oliver, and I’m in Indiana.”

Dawn Owens, who directed *Newsies* with Carabetta, considers the arts critical to students’ emotional health. “That need for expression in the arts is exactly why we wanted to bring this to McAuliffe,” she says. “It teaches them life lessons.”

Those life lessons include confidence in public speaking, plus a myriad of social-emotional tools. “Kids that do theater are kids who learn to give people a second chance,” Carabetta says. “Mishaps happen, someone forgets a line, and the show must go on. You cover for each other, and you are a team.”

The Prom student director Elliot Liu, a junior at Northfield, concurred: “Being part of live theater gives people a ton of empathy,” she says. “Stepping into others’ shoes is what acting is, then transmitting

these stories to the world.”

As for public speaking, eighth grader Violet Manthey, who played a reporter in *Newsies*, says, “Being in theater has given me a lot more confidence. I had a presentation the other day in school and felt like I could stand up a little taller.”

Carabetta helped build the theater program at McAuliffe before moving to the drama department at Northfield, where she still teaches. She came back to direct *Newsies* as an all-school, extracurricular activity. “We welcomed anyone who wanted to give it a try,” Carabetta says. “It was beautiful how the cast came together in such a short time.”

“We saw what the pandemic did for the arts, and we wanted to do something to reinvigorate drama amongst youngsters,” adds Owens.

Eighth grader Amaria Bisibo, who played a dancer in *Newsies*, says joining the production “helped me come out of my shell.”



Students at Northfield High School belt out a tune from the hit musical comedy *The Prom*.

Front Porch photo by Christie Gosh

Overall, the middle and high school students agreed that the highlight of live theater is the camaraderie. Sixth grader Aubrey Ringgenberg says, “I love that I am able to make friends with so many people in different grades who are cool and into the same thing that I am.” Quynh MacKenzie, a senior who played one of the Broadway stars in *The Prom*, says, “This year we all have a new appre-

ciation for theater—for the connections we’re making with one another and the audience and the uniqueness of storytelling in person.”

Just before curtain call on the opening night of *Newsies*, eighth grader Soren Pedersen encapsulated the feelings of many of his fellow actors, declaring, “When we’re up there, I live for the stage.”

Photo by Seraphim Fire Photography



East High School produced the musical *Chicago* featuring the school’s band on-stage.



The George Washington High School Patriot Players staged *9 to 5*, based on the 1980 hit movie.

Photo by Joshua DuFree

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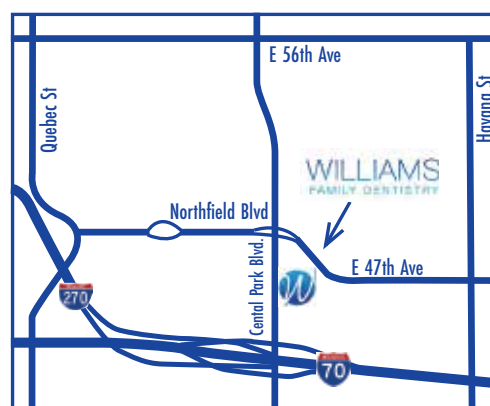
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A Mission to Preserve Black History

As a young man, Ed Dwight was on track to become the nation's first Black astronaut. When that attempt was thwarted, he pivoted and eventually became a sculptor. His Park Hill studio is filled with just a fraction of the 18,000 gallery pieces he's created. Dwight is famous for using "negative space" in his sculpture, as seen in the Louis Armstrong sculpture in the foreground.

By Mary Jo Brooks

For more than four decades, Park Hill resident and sculptor Ed Dwight has been casting Black history-makers in bronze to ensure that future generations know about their contributions to society. Sixty years ago, Dwight himself was on a path to make history as the nation's first Black astronaut, and although that didn't happen, Dwight has been a history-maker in his own right throughout his 89 years of life.

Born in Kansas City, Dwight says he was interested in both art and airplanes

Dwight was studying architectural engineering at a local community college and holding down two newspaper delivery jobs when he read a headline about a Black pilot who had been shot down and taken as a prisoner in the Korean War. Dwight said that was like a light bulb going off: He hadn't known that African Americans were allowed to fly planes. He enlisted in the U.S. Air Force, got promoted through the ranks, and became a test pilot while also earning a college degree in aeronautical engineering at Arizona State University.

In the midst of the civil rights movement, Dwight says President John F. Kennedy was eager to find and promote a Black astronaut who could serve as a national hero, which is why he says he was picked to enter the astronaut training program run by Chuck Yeager at Edwards Air Force Base in California. Dwight soon appeared on Jet and Ebony Magazine covers. "I was traveling the country giving speeches and meeting with members of Congress." Unfortunately, Dwight says he faced racism and hostility at NASA, and although he advanced through the training, he was not selected to be an astronaut. After Kennedy was assassinated, Dwight knew he didn't have a future with NASA and he left the military.

He then held a variety of jobs: consulting for an aviation business, working for IBM, opening several restaurants in Denver, and dabbling in commercial real estate. Throughout all of those ventures, Dwight says he couldn't ignore the desire to make art. He began by making small sculptures using found pieces of metal. Eventually, his sculptures attracted the attention of Colorado Lt. Governor George Brown,



Dwight documents Black history as far back as the 1500s and the beginning of the slave trade.

who was the first Black lieutenant governor in the country. Brown asked Dwight to create a statue for the Colorado State Capitol and encouraged him to begin a career as an artist who showcased Black history. "He told me that although Black people had been on American soil for 300 years, you would never know it by looking at all of the sculptures in public spaces. He said I could change that."

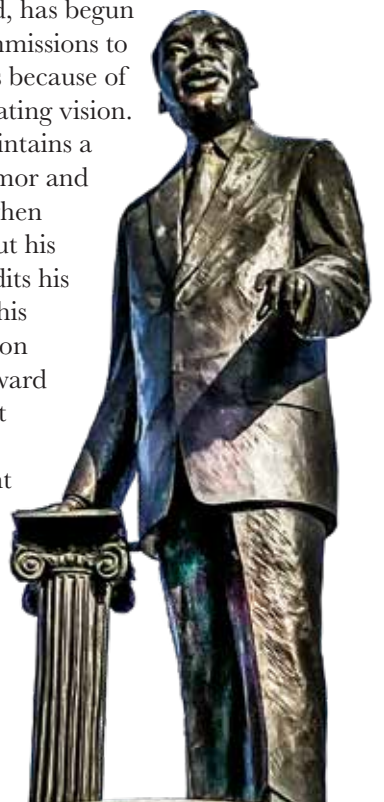
Since then, Dwight has been on a mission to do just that. At age 43, Dwight went back to school, earning an MFA in sculpture at the University of Denver and then receiving a commission from

the Colorado Centennial Commission to create a series of 50 bronze sculptures that depicted Black pioneers, explorers, trappers, farmers, and soldiers who helped settle the West. Dwight followed that project with a series about the evolution of jazz—from its African roots

to contemporary music. It consists of 70 statues, including depictions of Louis Armstrong, Miles Davis, Ella Fitzgerald, and Duke Ellington.

He's also created a Rosa Parks sculpture in Grand Rapids, Michigan, a Medgar Evers memorial in Mississippi, and an Underground Railroad memorial in New Jersey. One of his largest projects is his Texas African American History Memorial in Austin. It portrays African American history from the 1500s to the present day and includes a depiction of Juneteenth when African Americans were emancipated. In Denver, Dwight's most visited sculpture is the Martin Luther King Jr. statue in City Park. In all, Dwight says he's created more than 130 memorial sculptures and over 18,000 gallery pieces.

Dwight's studio and foundry are located in a 30,000-square-foot warehouse in North Park Hill. He oversees several artisan craftsmen to complete the large installations. Dwight, who is now legally blind, has begun to refer commissions to other artists because of his deteriorating vision. Still, he maintains a sense of humor and optimism when talking about his life. He credits his mother for his determination to push forward even against long odds. "Every night the last words I heard from her were: 'There's nothing on earth you can't do.'"



The Martin Luther King Jr. memorial in City Park is Dwight's most famous work in Denver.



In addition to sculpting famous African Americans, Dwight wants to preserve the history of ordinary Black people, like these sharecroppers.

as a child. "My mom was very aggressive about my learning. I got a library card when I was 4, and I would check out books about the great masters and try to copy the oil paintings and I would also study books about the science of flight." While still in high school, he told his father that he wanted to study art at college. "And my father said 'you're going to be an engineer.' When I said I didn't know what engineers did, he said 'all you need to know is they make money.'"



"The Ballerina" is one of Dwight's early sculptures using found metal pieces.

Denver East Angels Win the 6A State Basketball Championship

By Brian Heuberger

The Denver East Angels basketball team achieved several remarkable feats while beating the Fossil Ridge Sabercats from Fort Collins and winning the 6A State Championship on March 11.

The 26-2 record for the season demonstrated the resilience of this Denver East team. The Angels lost the first two games of the year, including a blowout loss to Fossil Ridge. But the team responded to that adversity by maximizing their performance level and by going on a 26-game winning streak.

During the title game at the Denver Coliseum, the Angels showcased the qualities they exhibited throughout the season. The same superior depth, excellent teamwork, complementary basketball, and effective execution that

shined bright all year also propelled the Angels to great heights in this big game. With a strong second quarter and an explosive second half, the formidable defense and prolific offense allowed the Angels to secure the championship with a convincing 82-61 victory.

Many players delivered great performances and contributed to the impressive win. Jack Greenwood led the scoring with a game-high 27 points, D-Aundre Samuels soared with 25 points, and Austin Mohr knocked down buckets for 11 points. Additionally, earth-shaking dunks by Gil Gonzalez ignited the team with surges of momentum.

Certain milestones were achieved with this Denver East championship victory. This was the 10th title for Coach Rudy Carey, who has been coaching the Angels for over five decades. He is now the most



Photo by Dan Whicker/CHSAA

On March 11, The Denver East Angels won their 12th championship as a program by defeating the Fossil Ridge Sabercats 82-61. The roster for this championship squad includes Gil Gonzalez, Jack Greenwood, Henry Chapman, Sam Scott, D'Aundre Samuels, Howard Cameron, Irving Wilson, Ryan Kelly, Lance Price, MJ Dailley, Terrence Morgan, Austin Mohr, Carter Smith, and Mousa Diop. They were led by Coach Rudy Carey.

successful basketball coach in Colorado history with 897 regular season wins and 10 championships, both the most in the state.

But this was also significant for the entire Denver East basketball program. Though it was their first title since 2014, it

was their 12th championship in school history and this ties Manual for the most championship wins of any Colorado high school. This establishes the Angels as an elite dynasty in high school basketball and a source of inspiration for the Denver East community.

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Local References

Apr. & Early May. Events

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

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

NE DENVER/NW AURORA EVENTS

Saturdays—East Colfax Free Bookstore. Open Saturdays 4–6pm. Located at Counterpath, 7935 E. 14th Ave. Take books/donate kids books.

4/1 & 5/6—Bluff Lake Bird Walks. Sat: 2.5-hour walk at 7:30am or 2-hour walk at 8am. Free but must RSVP at blufflake.org/birdwatching

4/8 Saturday—Spring Fling. The Urban Farm's annual Spring Fling. Families can enjoy farm demos, egg hunts, and more. 9am–1pm. 10200 Smith Rd, theurbanfarm.org

4/8 Saturday—Cockpit Demo Day. Get an up close look inside select aircraft. 10am–2pm. 7711 East Academy Blvd. wingsmuseum.org

4/8 Saturday—Elders Oral History Event. History Colorado is committed to preserving and sharing the stories of Black communities. Learn how you can help. 1–4pm. Park Hill Library, 4705 Montview Blvd. denverlibrary.org

4/8 Saturday—Islamic Geometric Art making with ideaLAB. Basic intro to Islamic Geometric Art then create your own. Suitable for teens and adults. 10–11am. Sam Gary Library, 2961 Roslyn St. denverlibrary.org

4/13 Thursday—Active Minds presents Sugar. Explore the fascinating world of sugar with Active Minds. 1–2pm, Free. Sam Gary Library, 2961 Roslyn St. activeminds.com

4/12 Wednesday—Islamic Geometric Art making. Basic intro to Islamic Geometric Art then create your own. For adults. 11am–12pm. Park Hill Library, 4705 Montview Blvd. denverlibrary.org

4/25 Tuesday—Author talk with Dr. Lisa Damour—The Emotional Lives of Teenagers: Raising Connected, Capable, and Compassionate Adolescents. 12–1:30pm. Sam Gary Library, 2961 Roslyn St. denverlibrary.org

4/30 Sunday—Qigong and Mindfulness Walk. Gentle mind/body practice that promotes health and well-being followed by a contemplative walk. 7:30–9am. Bluff Lake Nature Center, 11255 E. MLK Jr Blvd. Free. blufflake.org

5/4 Thursday—Ageless Grace - Body and Brain Workout. 21 simple seated exercise tools designed for all ages and abilities. 2–3pm. Schlessman Library, 100 Poplar St. denverlibrary.org

5/6 Saturday—Montview's Annual Carnival Wristbands \$8 (presale) or \$10 day of. Under 2 and over 65 free. 11am–3pm. Montview Community Preschool & Kindergarten, 1980 Dahlia St. montviewpreschool.org

4/22 Saturday—Speaker Series | Air Cavalry: The UH-1 Huey in Vietnam. Presented by Vietnam veteran and Wings Over the Rockies volunteer Keith Shaddox. 11am–12pm. 7711 East Academy Blvd. wingsmuseum.org

5/6 Saturday—Shrinky Dink Jewelry Create jewelry made from Shrinky Dinks. All ages welcome. 10–11:30am. Sam Gary Library, 2961 Roslyn St. denverlibrary.org

Colorado Mineral and Fossil Show at the Crowne Plaza DIA



METRO EVENTS

4/7 to 4/9—RMGM Colorado Mineral and Fossil Spring Show. 10am–6pm Fri & Sat, and 10am–5pm Sun. Free parking and admission. Crowne Plaza DIA, 15500 E 40th Ave, rmgmpromotions.com

4/7 & 5/5—First Friday Art Walks. Art District on Santa Fe. 5:30–9:30pm. denver.org/things-to-do/denver-arts-culture/denver-art-districts

4/9 Sunday—Music in the Galleries: Tyler Breuer + Felix Ayodele. Included with admission. 11am–2pm (break from 12–1pm). 1250 Bannock St. clyffordstillmuseum.org

4/13 Thursday—Art & About Tours. For visitors with early-stage Alzheimer's or dementia and their care partners. 1–2:30pm. 100 W 14th Ave Pkwy. denverartmuseum.org

4/13 Thursday—Deeper Dive: In-Depth Titanic Tour. Explore the details of traveling aboard the RMS Titanic. 6:30–8pm. Molly Brown House Museum, 1340 Pennsylvania St. historicdenver.org

4/13 Thursday—Big Ideas Series: Odili Odita – Abstraction. Explore monumental topics related to exhibition themes with guest speaker Odili Odita. 6–7:30pm. 1250 Bannock St. clyffordstillmuseum.org

4/14 Friday—Find Your Inner Peas Garden Tea. Join us for a cup of tea and a tour of our historic home and gardens. 10:30am or 1:30pm. Center for Colorado Women's History, 1310 Bannock St. historycolorado.org

4/15 Saturday—Titanic Memories. Experience heart-wrenching survivor stories in a one-of-a-kind theater experience. 5–8pm. Molly Brown House Museum, 1340 Pennsylvania St. historicdenver.org

4/22 Saturday—Bold Women. Change History. Alicia Garza, founder and principal of Black Futures Lab and co-founder of Black Lives Matter Global Network, will discuss her book, *The Purpose of Power*. 1200 North Broadway. historycolorado.org

4/22 Saturday—YouthBiz Spring Marketplace. Find unique gifts for Mother's Day, Father's Day, birthdays, graduation, showers, and more. 10am–2pm. 3550 E. 1st Ave. yacenter.org

4/27 Thursday—Nat Geo Live with Zoltan Takacs. Biomedical scientist and inventor Zoltan Takacs collects venoms from around the world. 7:30pm. Newman Center, Gates Concert Hall. newmancenterpresents.com

KIDS AND FAMILIES

Tuesday–Friday—Local Library Storytime. Mornings. Different age groupings and locations. Info at denverlibrary.org

Wednesdays—Mornings at the Museum. Ages 3–6, 10:30–11:15am. Free. New programs every week. Aurora History Museum, 15051 East Alameda Pkwy. Register at auroragov.org

Fridays—Magic the Gathering Club. 4:30–5:30pm. Ages 12–18. A teen-run magic club. Park Hill Library, 4705 Montview Blvd. denverlibrary.org

Saturdays—Bluff Lake Nature Center Family Events. No event on 4/8. 11255 E. MLK Jr Blvd. Free, check times and programs at blufflake.org

Saturdays—Chess Club for 18 and Under. 3–4:30pm. Not meeting on 4/8. Ideal for ages 5–18. Park Hill Library, 4705 Montview Blvd. denverlibrary.org

4/8 Saturday—CSU Spur 2nd Saturdays. Free. Lots of family-friendly programming. 10am–3pm. 4817 National Western Dr. csuspur.org

4/16 Sunday—Spanish Storytime at Tattered Cover Kids. 5pm. Stanley Marketplace, 2501 N. Dallas St, Aurora. stanleymarketplace.com

4/16 Sunday—Create Playdate. For families with children 3–5 and their siblings. Included with admission. 10am–12pm. 100 W 14th Ave Pkwy. denverartmuseum.org

4/20 Thursday—Kids Book Celebration. Read any book that has a dragon as a character and be ready to share some highlights. Ages K–5th grade. 4–5pm. Park Hill Library, 4705 Montview Blvd. denverlibrary.org

4/22 Saturday—ideaLAB Sensory Friendly Maker Hours. Create in an environment that is quieter and less overwhelming than typical lab hours. Register to reserve your spot. 10–11:30am, Sam Gary Library, 2961 Roslyn St. denverlibrary.org

4/23, 4/26 & 4/29—Art Crawl: ABCs of Curating. 10:30–11:15am. For caregivers with infants–14 months. Registration required. 1250 Bannock St. clyffordstillmuseum.org

4/25 Tuesday—Día del Niño, or Day of the Child. Break open a Piñata filled with candies and toys and then each child can make their own paper bag Piñata to take home. Ages 0–12. 4–5pm. Park Hill Library, 4705 Montview Blvd. denverlibrary.org

4/30 Sunday—El Día del Niño - Free Day. The celebration will include performances by local and international artists. 10am–5pm. History Colorado, 1200 Broadway. historycolorado.org

4/30 Sunday—Día Del Niño Celebration. Join artist David Ocelotl Garcia for a mural-making session among other activities. 10:30am–12:30pm. 1250 Bannock St. clyffordstillmuseum.org

MUSEUMS, ETC.

American Museum of Western Art. Open M, W & F from 10am–4:30pm. Admission is \$5. 1727 Tremont Pl. anschutzcollection.org



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Aurora History Museum. Admission is free. Closed Mondays/holidays. 1505 I East Alameda Pkwy. auroragov.org

The Byers-Evans House Museum. Operated by History Colorado as the Center for Colorado Women's History. History Colorado members are free. 1310 Bannock St. historycolorado.org



The Children's Museum. Reservations recommended at mychildsmuseum.org

Clyfford Still Museum. SCFD Free Day Apr. 30. 10am to 5pm. Children ages 17 and under are always free. 1250 Bannock St. clyffordstillmuseum.org

Denver Art Museum. SCFD Free Day Apr. 11 and Apr. 30. Youth 18 & under always free. 100W 14th Ave. Pkwy. denverartmuseum.org

Denver Botanic Gardens. SCFD Free Day Apr. 22. Tickets and member reservations required. 1007York St. botanicgardens.org

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

Denver Museum of Nature and Science. SCFD Free Day Apr. 30. Open till 9pm on Fridays. 2001 Colorado Blvd. Timed tickets required. dmns.org

Denver Zoo. SCFD Free Day Apr. 9. Reserve tickets at denverzoo.org. 2900 E 23rd Ave.

The Forney Museum of Transportation. Mon, Th-Sat, 10am-5pm; Sun, noon-5pm. 4303 Brighton Blvd. fornymuseum.org

Four Mile Historic Park. Open Wed-Sun, 10am-4pm. 715 S. Forest St. fourmilepark.org

History Colorado. New exhibition *The Dry: Black Women's Legacy in a Farming Community* opens 4/14. Free membership for 4th graders. 1200 Broadway. historycolorado.org

Kirkland Museum of Fine and Decorative Art. Tue-Sat, 11am-5pm; Sun 12-5pm. Ages 13+ welcome. 1201 Bannock St. kirklandmuseum.org

Molly Brown House Museum. SCFD Voter Free Day: April 18. Tue-Sun, 10am-4:30pm. 1340 Pennsylvania St. mollybrown.org

Museo de las Americas. Tue-Fri, noon-6pm. Sat, noon-5pm. Closed Mon & Sun. 861 Santa Fe Dr. museo.org

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

National Ballpark Museum. 1940 Blake St. Check for days/hours at ballparkmuseum.com

The Urban Farm. Open to the public from 9am-1pm, Wed-Sat. 10200 Smith Rd. theurbanfarm.org

Wings Over the Rockies Museum. 7711 East Academy Blvd. wingsmuseum.org

PERFORMANCE/THEATRE

4/2 to 4/30—Stories on Stage presents “Denver Noir”. 14 notable literary and mystery authors. Su Teatro Cultural and Performing Arts Center, 721 Santa Fe Dr. storiesonstage.org

4/6 Thursday—Mingus Big Band. Six-time Grammy-nominated band featuring 14 of today's finest jazz musicians. 7:30pm. Newman Center, Gates Concert Hall. newmancenterpresents.com

4/7 to 5/7—Damn Yankees. Devilishly funny and full of classic showtunes. Arvada Center, 6901 Wadsworth Blvd. Arvada. arvadacenter.org

4/7 to 5/14—The Inheritance. After the AIDS epidemic, three generations of gay men grapple with the tragedy and what it means for their future. Vintage Theatre, 1468 Dayton St. vintagetheatre.org

4/8 to 4/30—Ballet Ariel presents the magical ballet “Firebird”. A timeless tale of a Prince and his Princess and the beautiful firebird that rescues them. Two locations. balletariel.org

4/8 to 5/6—A Shayna Maidel. A family conveys the aftermath of the Holocaust through an examination of one divided family's experience. The John Hand Theater, 7653 E. 1st Pl. firehousetheatercompany.com

4/14 to 4/16—Anastasia. This musical transports us from the twilight of the Russian Empire to the euphoria of Paris in the 1920s. Buell Theatre, denvercenter.org

4/14 to 4/23—Colorado Ballet Presents Ballet MasterWorks. Our love letter to ballet that will leave you longing for next fall. Ellie Caulkins Opera House, 1385 Curtis St. coloradoballet.org

4/14 to 6/18—The 39 Steps. Where Hitchcock meets hilarity. Singleton Theatre. denvercenter.org

4/15 Saturday—The Music of Pink Floyd with the Colorado Symphony. The music of psychedelic rock legends Pink Floyd. Boettcher Hall. coloradosymphony.org

Through 4/15—Amerikin. Charged. Relevant. Unexpected. Curious Theatre, 1080 Acoma St. curioustheatre.org

Through 4/16—Stories on Stage presents “The Word Painter”. Stories from Peter Heller's books. Su Teatro Cultural and Performing Arts Center, 721 Santa Fe Dr. storiesonstage.org

4/18 Tuesday—The Great Debate. Pits teams of non-experts head-to-head in lively debates of the inconsequential. Name your price tickets. Buntport Theater, 717 Lipan St. buntport.com

4/20 Thursday—Neustadt JAAMM Series: Avi Liberman. Avi Liberman's quirky style has made him a favorite in comedy clubs nationwide. 7pm. The Elaine Wolf Theatre, 350 S. Dahlia St. jccdenver.org

4/21 & 4/23—The Evergreen Chorale Presents Very Vivaldi. Two locations, Evergreen and Denver. ovationwest.org

4/23 Sunday—Missy Raines & Allegheny. Bluegrass. 7-9pm. 71 East Yale Ave. swallowhillmusic.org

Through 4/23—tick, tick...BOOM! Celebrating the power of finding your voice and holding on to a dream. Vintage Theatre, 1468 Dayton St. Aurora. vintagetheatre.org

4/26 Wednesday—Pacifica Quartet and Anthony McGill, Clarinet. 7:30pm. \$5 for students (with ID). Newman Center, Gates Concert Hall. friendssofchambermusic.com

4/28 Friday—Sunny War, presented by Indie 102.3 Nashville-based singer-songwriter and guitar virtuoso. 8pm. Tuft Theatre, 71 East Yale Ave. swallowhillmusic.org

4/28 to 5/21—Treasure Island: A New Musical. A swashbuckling good time that is perfect for the entire family. Aurora Fox Arts Center, 9900 E. Colfax Ave. aurorafoxartscenter.org

4/30 Sunday—DYAO Presents: American Landscape. Spring concert. 4pm. Tickets: adults \$20, seniors \$15, students & teachers are free. Newman Center. newmancenterpresents.com

5/5 Friday—Colorado Wind Ensemble. Sounds of today and tomorrow—40th season celebration. 7:30pm. The King Center Concert Hall, 855 Lawrence Way. coloradowindensemble.org

Through 5/7—The Color Purple. The musical adaptation of Alice Walker's award-winning novel. Wolf Theatre. denvercenter.org

5/7 Sunday—DYAO Presents: Ode to Joy. The DYAO presents Beethoven's Ninth Symphony featuring the Colorado Symphony Chorus. 1000 14th St Unit 15. coloradosymphony.org

Through 5/18—The Book Club Play. A book club really starts reading between the lines. Arvada Center, 6901 Wadsworth Blvd. arvadacenter.org

Through 5/21—Our Town. A small town is a portrait of the universal experiences. Arvada Center, 6901 Wadsworth Blvd. arvadacenter.org

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Denver Public Schools. Numerous volunteer opportunities with our students and schools. equity.dpsk12.org/get-involved/volunteer-services

Food For Thought Denver. Striving to eliminate childhood hunger by providing food for students and their families. Sign up to volunteer or donate at foodforthoughtdenver.org

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

Reach Out and Read Colorado. Help sort and pack gently-used children's books for underserved families. On the Clayton Early Learning Campus. Email info@reachoutandreadco.org for details.

Reading Volunteers Needed Read with students in grades K-8. One hour a week. No experience necessary. Contact: Pil, 2011 @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 go to sandcreekgreenway.org/upcoming-volunteer-opportunities

Single Volunteers of Greater Denver. Not-for-profit singles group to meet others and assist nonprofit organizations for events/activities. Info at svgd.org

Village Exchange Center A non-profit formed to serve immigrants and refugees in Aurora & Denver. villageexchangecenter.org

Volunteers of America Colorado Branch For volunteer opportunities go to voacolorado.org/volunteer-opportunities/

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Front Porch photo by Christie Gosch

The LUME at Stanley Marketplace closed after the immersive “Dali Alive” show ended.

By Mary Jo Brooks

1 The LUME Closes

The LUME at Stanley Marketplace has closed. It opened to much fanfare in November, hosting an immersive exhibit featuring the art of Salvador Dali. The large Stanley hangar space was transformed into a multi-media, multi-sensory experience during its three-month run. Grande Experiences, an immersive art company based in Australia, had planned to make The LUME a permanent fixture at the Stanley featuring continuous immersive art displays. Stefanie Jones, who handled marketing for “Dali Alive,” says “the Grande Experiences ownership team decided to move The LUME elsewhere for the time being.” She did not have additional information about the company’s reasons for the move or plans for the future. Grande Experiences did not respond to requests for an interview. In 2021, Grande Experiences staged a “Van Gogh Alive” immersive show that brought 80,000 visitors to the Stanley. The Stanley hangar is once again available for private events.



Photo courtesy of United Airlines, Inc.

When the United Flight Training Center expansion is completed, it will have 52 of these full-motion simulators.

2 United Flight Training Center Expansion Continues

Expansion of the United Airlines flight training facility on its 23-acre campus in Central Park is well underway. Most of the exterior structure of the new four-story

...NE News Updates



building near Quebec Square has been finished. Two new full-motion flight simulators are scheduled to be installed in June and the building is expected to be completed at the beginning of 2024. Already the largest facility of its kind, the new building was needed to meet United’s target of hiring an additional 10,000 pilots by 2030. Every nine months pilots must train at the center to stay up-to-date on certifications, and at any given time there are approximately 600 pilots using the facility. Once completed, the facility will have 52 full-motion simulators and 28 fixed training machines. United plans to hire for 1,800 jobs in Denver this year, both at the airport and at the United Flight Training Center.

3 Denver Discovery School Closing

The Denver Public School Board voted unanimously to close Denver Discovery School at the end of this school year because of low enrollment. It currently has 93 students and was expected to enroll just 62 students next year. Board member Scott Esserman called it “an institutional failure.” The middle school has endured numerous problems since it opened in Central Park and has seen enormous turnover in principals and teachers over the past 9 years. Since 2017, the school failed to meet academic expectations. Families that currently have students enrolled at Discovery will be allowed to transfer to a new middle school of their choice. A spokeswoman for DPS said the district is in active discussions about how Denver Discovery’s vacated space will be utilized after the school closes in May.

4 WCMD Election in April

The Westerly Creek Metropolitan District (WCMD) will hold elections for three board positions this spring. Ballots will be mailed out to Central Park residents April 10-17 and must be returned by May 2. WCMD is the quasi-governmental entity that was created in 2000, along with the Park Creek Metropolitan District, to fund and construct the infrastructure of the Central Park neighborhood. WCMD has been the entity in charge of imposing the taxes, and now it is transitioning to help with

operations and management. (For a full explanation of how the special districts operate, consult the January 2022 *Front Porch* edition online.) Six candidates are vying for the board and the top three vote-getters will be seated. Candidates were asked to submit short biographies. *Front Porch* has edited them for length. They are listed below in the order they will appear on the ballot.

Jack Seward has worked for Central Park’s Master Community Association (MCA) for eight years. He also serves as a board member for Central Park United Neighbors (CPUN).

John Karner has a background in municipal finance and economic development, having worked for Denver’s Department of Finance as it coordinated the creation of Central Park’s special districts.

Barbara Dornseif did not submit a bio by our print deadline.

Robert Marsh, a retired urban planner, is currently serving as a WCMD board member and is seeking re-election to lead WCMD’s transition to ownership of community assets.

Matthew Blackburn is a certified public accountant who formerly worked on compliance issues for Denver’s Wastewater Management Division and on expenditure forecasts at the Department of Public Works.

Brendan Loy is an attorney and father of three. He says he is running to ensure that Central Park’s infrastructure is well-run and its money is well-spent.

For more information about the election or the work of WCMD, visit www.westerlycreekmetro.org



Front Porch photo by Christie Gosch

Yuan Wonton’s co-owners Penelope Wong and husband Rob Jenks serving food from their truck.

5 Three’s Company

One of Denver’s most popular food trucks, Yuan Wonton, will soon occupy a brick-and-mortar storefront on Fairfax Street, just across from Park Hill’s Long Table Brewhouse. Owners Penelope Wong and Rob Jenks never thought they wanted a traditional restaurant of their own and this venture will be far from conventional. They are teaming up with Pho King Rapidos, a Vietnamese food truck, and Sweets & Sourdough, an artisan bakery. Each of the three businesses will have separate days when they operate and a sign outside will illuminate which business is serving that day. They also plan to host some collaborative dinners. Jenks says he hopes the new restaurant will open in May.

6 Changes to Denver Compost Program

Starting April 1, Denver residents will no longer be able to throw compostable plates, utensils, paper towels, or pizza boxes into their green compost bins. A1 Organics, the state’s largest recycler of organic material, announced that it will only accept food waste and yard waste. It will also accept only three-gallon certified compostable bags used to hold food scraps. The company said the change was made because too many people were throwing non-compostable items into the bins, which takes time and labor to remove. A1’s press release says, “simplifying what we accept supports our goal to keep food scraps and yard and plant trimmings out of the landfill to prevent harmful methane emissions while creating marketable compost.”

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the couple—at times, uncomfortably so—and we are stitched into their difficult journey. The journey isn't static, however, as we dive into their pasts, learn about their work and lives, and in the process, reconcile memory

with the lived existence. The end result is a poignant meditation on being, on memory, and on love.

Góngora was a well-known journalist going back to the late 70s in Chile—he covered a difficult period in which the brutal Pinochet regime executed thousands, disappeared thousands more, forced many into poverty, and ruled with an iron fist from 1973–1990. The dictator also heavily censored all aspects of Chilean society, including the arts. Those opposed would either disappear or be executed. Góngora walked the fine line of reporting the events in real time, and we see many of his clips from the period—oftentimes focused on the widespread poverty of the society, and in several clips, focused on the forgotten children of the era.

Urrutia was a star of the stage, TV, and film; she became a union advocate and activist; and she also served as President

of (what is essentially) the Ministry of Culture for many years. In the film, we first meet her as the wife of an elderly man suffering from Alzheimer's, and yet, she is

so much more and so wonderfully *aware*. She loves Góngora, she takes care of him, she stays up with him through the difficult nights of hallucinations and pain, and she even asks the difficult questions that need to be asked in such a space. Urrutia is absolutely wonderful—full of life even in the

face of death—and determined to help Góngora remember his rich, full, and meaningful life. This is her story as much as/ more than his.

If you've ever seen someone in the throes of Alzheimer's, the film will activate extreme emotions, as it did for this writer.

When someone forgets who they are and who they were, the emptiness and despair we feel is beyond devastating. The film captures that sense of watching life slowly escape from a living, loving being. Even if you haven't experienced it, you will most certainly sympathize with this personal and intense film. In the end, there is some light—the light that we shine ourselves, the light that illuminates the past, and the light that comes from a beautiful existence.

Monica (U.S.—2023)

Monica (Trace Lysette) is a transgender woman, estranged from her family for many years, who returns to her hometown to help care for her dying mother. Does her mother recognize her child? Does Monica forgive her mother after being shunned and banished? Does Monica's brother now accept *her*? This close, personal, and intense film captures the emotions of such a dynamic and asks these difficult questions without being trite or cliché. Italian director Andrea Pallaoro offers us a soft and intimate film that never leaves us far away from the faces and emotions of the characters. We move into Monica's perspective from the beginning and do not leave her side. The medium of film is well-suited to psychological intimacy if done correctly, which is quite rare. Pallaoro accomplishes this highwire act with the help of an excellent cast, including Lysette with understated grace as Monica and the always-sparkling Patricia Clarkson as her mother.

The film is a wonderful balance of nuance and not-nuance in the sense that it doesn't give us easy answers to difficult questions, but at the same time, it forces us to contemplate those questions. The cinematic aspects force us into that contemplation—



Girl Talk

with an overabundance of close-ups and long takes that bring us extremely near to the characters. We don't always like that as viewers, but it works to precision here. Finally, this is a story we need to see and a topic we need to discuss. It is a welcome addition to the world.

Girl Talk (2023)

"They tell us to speak lower and that we shouldn't interrupt the boys. Screw that. The problem isn't us; the problem is the judges." Such is a piece of advice given to a group of young women debaters in a Massachusetts high school in this fascinating and brisk new documentary. These brilliant and motivated young women will be the leaders of tomorrow, and their story serves as a microcosm for the larger society surrounding them.

The film follows five young women as they navigate the competitive and high-stakes world of high school debate, showing them in their element as well as through insightful interviews. It shouldn't come as a surprise that most national debate champions are boys, and this film shows the inner workings of that dynamic. These are smart, thoughtful, and reflective young women who fight forces beyond their control every single day. In a male-dominated subset of a male-dominated world, they are fighting history and tradition and maybe, just maybe, changing a small part of that world. A fascinating look into this high-pressure world.

Vincent Piturro, PhD., is a Professor of Film and Media Studies at MSU Denver. Contact him directly at vpiturro@msudenver.com or follow him on Twitter. For more reviews, search *The Indie Prof* at FrontPorchNE.com.

The Eternal Memory



April is Women+Film month at the Denver Film Society, and this year's program runs from April 5–10. From the Denver Film Society: "Women+Film showcases documentaries, narratives, and short films celebrating the best in women-centric programming; both by and about women. These thought-provoking stories of women from around the world are sure to inspire all audiences. Come be inspired by the powerhouses in filmmaking that come to discuss the films in person and the important issues they cover." See the website at www.denverfilm.org for the specific program, including dates and times. Below are reviews of a few selections.

The Eternal Memory

(Chile—2023)

This documentary from Chilean director Maite Alberdi tells the story of a couple struggling through a difficult case of Alzheimer's Disease. The couple are prominent Chileans—Augusto Góngora, a noted TV journalist and author; and Paulina Urrutia, an actress and former Minister of Culture for Chile. Góngora is 15 years the elder in the relationship, and as we meet him, he is 71 years old, frail, and suffering through the awful disease. Urrutia, younger and still active, is his caretaker. Alberdi brings us up close to

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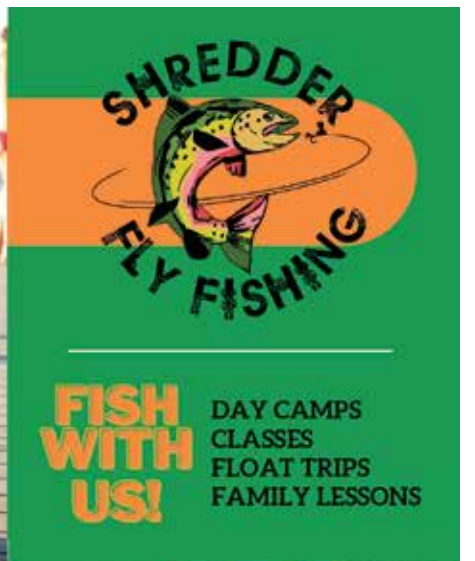
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A Culinary Gem Comes Home to Central Park

Front Porch photo by Christie Gosch



Chefs and co-owners Lisa Bailey and Keegan Gerhard were excited to open D Bar Central Park in the couple's neighborhood of 15 years. The grab-and-go bakery-café version of their D Bar Uptown restaurant features savory and sweet items and a limited drink menu.

By Courtney Drake-McDonough

Despite many successful years working in the restaurant business and enjoying the popularity of their restaurant D Bar Uptown, Chefs Keegan Gerhard and Lisa Bailey consider it a dream come true to have opened D Bar Central Park last month. The main reason? It's in the married couple's neighborhood just steps away from where they've lived for 15 years.

The co-owners of the bakery and café wanted to provide a quick service version of their original restaurant, which opened in 2008. During the pandemic, they realized that many of their menu items were very conducive to the grab-and-go format.

The Central Park location has a smaller footprint than their 19th and Pennsylvania restaurant, and it allows the couple to do most of their prep-work out of a commissary kitchen at the nearby Mosaic Campus. Early each morning, Gerhard and Bailey prepare high-volume products at the commissary before taking them to the Central Park location, where items like cookies and croissants are then baked. This will be the model for other bakery café locations they hope to open around the Denver metropolitan area in the next few years.

At D Bar Central Park, which seats approximately 15, items can be purchased to go or enjoyed in the café along with coffee drinks and a limited alcohol menu. Some of the most popular items from D Bar Uptown include Bacon Mac & Cheese and D Bar Dates (with Manchego cheese and bacon).



Chef Gerhard specializes in savory items while Chef Bailey focuses on sweet baked goods, available to takeout or for dine-in.

restaurant is to join and enhance a community. But the proximity to home was also a factor, especially since the couple recently got their first dog.

"Part of it is just selfish—we wanted to be able to walk to our restaurant," Gerhard admits. "If you have your own restaurant business, it's easy to find yourself opening and closing every day and being there 14, 16, 18 hours a day. We thought if we had a place right by us, maybe we could walk home, take a break, and take the puppy for a walk."

Afternoon Tea, a popular feature at their Uptown location, will begin at Central Park in May, in conjunction with Mother's Day and by reservation on an ongoing basis.

"It's not the old-school, opulent, harp, and dripping-in-gold thing," says Gerhard. "It's our take and it's more food and drink than anyone should probably have in an afternoon, but it all travels really well."

Opening a D Bar location in Central Park was important to the couple who believe that one of the responsibilities of a

Being closer to home is also beneficial to Gerhard after years of frequent travel as a host and judge of Food Network's *Food Network Challenge* and *Last Cake Standing*. He's currently working behind the scenes on shows for Netflix and Apple TV that allow him to be in Denver more.

"I did TV for a long time, and as grateful as I am for it, ultimately it just takes me away from the restaurant. What I love about the production side of things is that I can do most of it from here because, when I'm gone, even to do one show, it's a minimum of three days and then everything falls on Lisa," says Gerhard. "I don't consider myself a TV guy, that's for sure. I consider myself a cook and I like being at the restaurant."

The couple senses more pressure having a restaurant in their own neighborhood, but also feels a personal connection to it. Although people had been asking Gerhard to open a D Bar in the neighborhood, he was concerned that having a pared-down version would be a letdown for regular customers who are familiar with their full-service brand. "I don't use the word 'brand' lightly," Gerhard explains. "People tell us we have a great brand but I don't know if that was intentional. We were trying to make delicious food."

Gerhard and Bailey are excited to carry the brand into Denver International Airport in the fall when they'll open a small concept of D Bar in Terminal A. Since both domestic and international flights go out of that terminal, Gerhard loves the idea that people can take something fresh from D Bar while they fly to other places.

After 15 years, Gerhard and Bailey are glad they had the opportunity to open D Bar Central Park at this point in their business. "We never wanted the location to be a place where we were experimenting and figuring things out," Gerhard says. "We hoped that by the time we could open a spot in our neighborhood, we would have built a good enough name."

"What's crazy to my little pastry brain is that we have people who went to D Bar on their first date, got engaged there, had us make their wedding cake, and now their kids' birthday cakes," he adds.

"I could not be more grateful. I take it as a really serious responsibility and challenge to make sure we don't let people down because they come in with high expectations."

D Bar Central Park is located at 7302 E. 29th Ave. The website is dbar-denver.com.



While the focus is "grab-and-go," about 15 seats are available to enjoy dine-in food and drink.



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MASTER COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION APRIL 2023

FIRE AT PUDDLE JUMPER POOL

On January 23rd there was a fire at Puddle Jumper Pool that caused excessive damage. Puddle Jumper pool will be closed indefinitely. We will be notifying the community with updated information as we receive it. We will be posting these updates on our website and through our weekly emails. To sign up for our weekly newsletter please visit www.mca80238.com.

MCA FRONT DESK

The MCA front desk is open Monday through Friday from 10:00am to 4:00pm. The front desk is inside the Cube located at 8371 East Northfield Blvd Denver, CO 80238.

IMPORTANT AQUATIC DATES

- April 5th- New Swimmer Swim Team Meeting via Zoom
- April 12th at noon- Swim Team Registration
- May 1st at noon, online- Pool Rentals Open
- May 3rd at noon- Resident Swim Lesson Registration

ACTIVE MINDS: Sugar

Thursday, April 13th, 1-2pm. Sam Gary Library
Sugar occupies a unique place in cultural and culinary landscapes. It has graduated from an esoteric ancient crop to an omnipresent part of modern food consumption. Sugar's history, however, is not always a sweet story, and it poses contemporary health concerns as well. Join

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ACTIVE MINDS: Mexico

Thursday, April 27th, 6:30-7:30pm, Online

Join Active Minds for an in-depth look at our neighbor to the south. We will cover Mexican history and recent events as we seek to understand how this country fits in the regional puzzle of North, Central and South America. We will examine key issues in Mexican relations with the U.S. including immigration, trade relations and border security.

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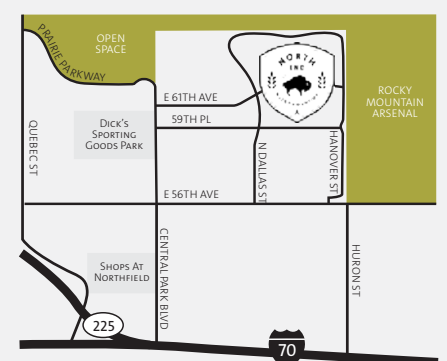
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