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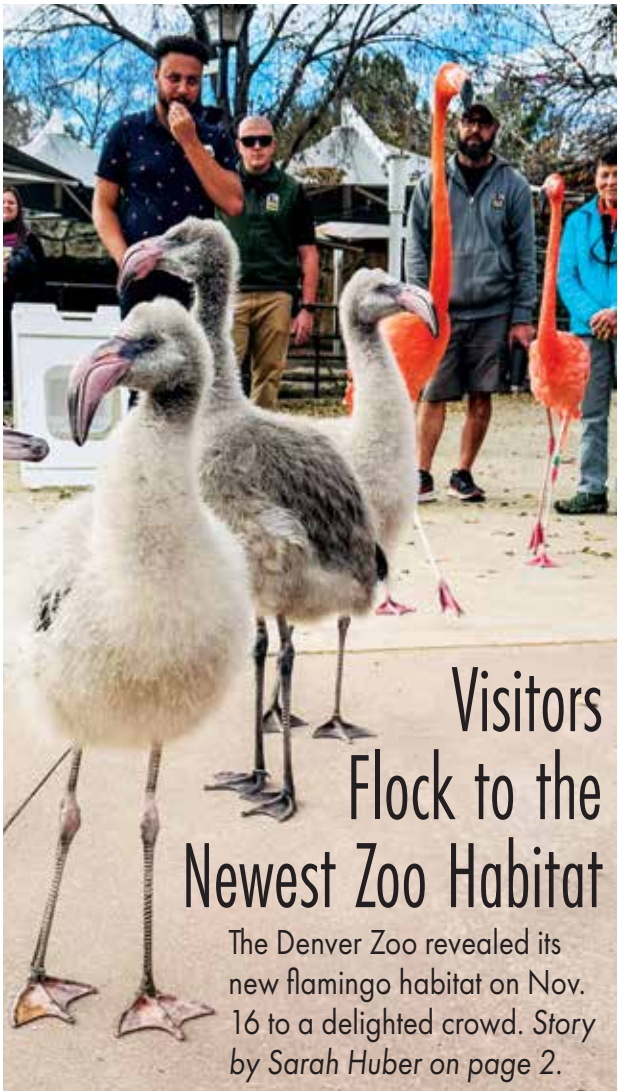


## One of the Best Views in Denver Now Open!

This recent view of the Central Park neighborhood, taken from the former air traffic control tower, demonstrates the area's development since the 2011 photo. Photo above by Christie Gosch, photo at right by Adrian Diubaldo

FlyteCo Tower recently began offering tours to the observatory at the top of Central Park's iconic air traffic control tower. Visitors who can safely climb 11 flights of stairs are rewarded with a spectacular 360-degree view of Denver and the Rocky Mountains. Currently, the tours are available only on Wednesdays and require a reservation. *Story by Martina Will, PhD on page 5.*

Dec. 20, 2011



## Visitors Flock to the Newest Zoo Habitat

The Denver Zoo revealed its new flamingo habitat on Nov. 16 to a delighted crowd. *Story by Sarah Huber on page 2.*

## StoryWalk Adorns East Colfax with Original Poetry



Ayan, a student from Ashley Elementary School who helped compose the piece "Like Running Water," read her poem during the Sidewalk Poet's StoryWalk on Sept. 16. *Story by Sarah Huber on page 4.*

## Denver Election Shakes Up School Board

*Story by Brian Heuberger on page 6.*

## Embracing Aging Through Creativity and Connections

*Story by Mary Jo Brooks on page 8.*



## Holiday Events and Charitable Opportunities

*Listings start on pg. 12*



# Visitors Flock to the Newest Zoo Habitat

By Sarah Huber

Denver Zoo unveiled a new habitat for its Chilean and American flamingos on Nov. 16 to joyful cheers from the crowd as five fluffy gray chicks and two adult flamingos rushed, honked, and flapped their way through a paper ribbon that divided the nearby bear habitat from the new flamingo digs.

Flamingo Habitat is inspired by the Andean Highlands, and the new home is positioned between Harmony Hill and Tropical Discovery. The indoor-outdoor space features wading

pools for the flamingo flocks, nesting islands for mothers and chicks, and vantage points for visitor viewing. Colorado's First Gentleman Marlon Reis, a zoo supporter and animal advocate, spoke at the ceremony. He called it a "happy day" for zoo members, staff, and of course, the flamingos. He reminisced about falling in love with animals at Denver Zoo as a child and thanked voters for backing a bond initiative in 2021 that directly supported the zoo. City of Denver Chief of Staff Jenn Ridder and members of the Peruvian

Consulate were also in attendance. The zoo partners with Peruvian conservationists to protect Chilean flamingos, which are classified as an endangered species and are found throughout South America.

Denver Zoo President Bert Vescolani noted that the new habitat cham-



Denver Zoo President and CEO Bert Vescolani introduced the waiting crowd to the feathered inhabitants of the new Denver Zoo Flamingo Habitat during the grand opening of the space on Nov. 16.

pions sustainability: The wading pools have a recirculation system to conserve the water, and the nesting pads are designed to propagate the flamingos.

Some of the chicks that participated in the ribbon ceremony are among the zoo's beloved "flockstars," named in honor of musical performers, such as Nick Jonas, John Denver, and Neil Diamond. Zoo officials said the chicks rehearsed the grand opening ribbon run a handful of times before the big move-in.

The opening of the new flamingo habitat also served as the public launch

of Denver Zoo's \$75 million fundraising campaign, Into the Great Wild Open. The campaign consists of three pillars: Open Arms to fund zoo education, Open Hearts to support animal care, and Open Spaces to fuel the zoo's conservation work. Building the flamingo habitat cost approximately \$5 million, and the funding was covered by the first phase of the campaign.

Vescolani says, "Those who invest in the future of Denver Zoo are ensuring we can continue to provide exceptional care for our animals and help save wildlife for future generations."



Soon after move-in, the flamingos check out the wading pools and nesting islands of their new habitat. Visitors also appreciate the multiple viewing vantage points.

Front Porch photos by Christie Gosch

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## Introducing Front Porch's New Team Member

### Brian Saxman, Ad Sales Manager

We are excited to welcome Brian Saxman as the new Ad Sales Manager for *Front Porch*. Saxman has a background in advertising since 1997, including his tenure at *The Denver Post* and as partner of a Denver advertising agency. Anyone seeking to advertise with *Front Porch* can call Brian Saxman at 720-655-4016 or email him at [adsalesmanager@frontporchne.com](mailto:adsalesmanager@frontporchne.com).



# Holiday



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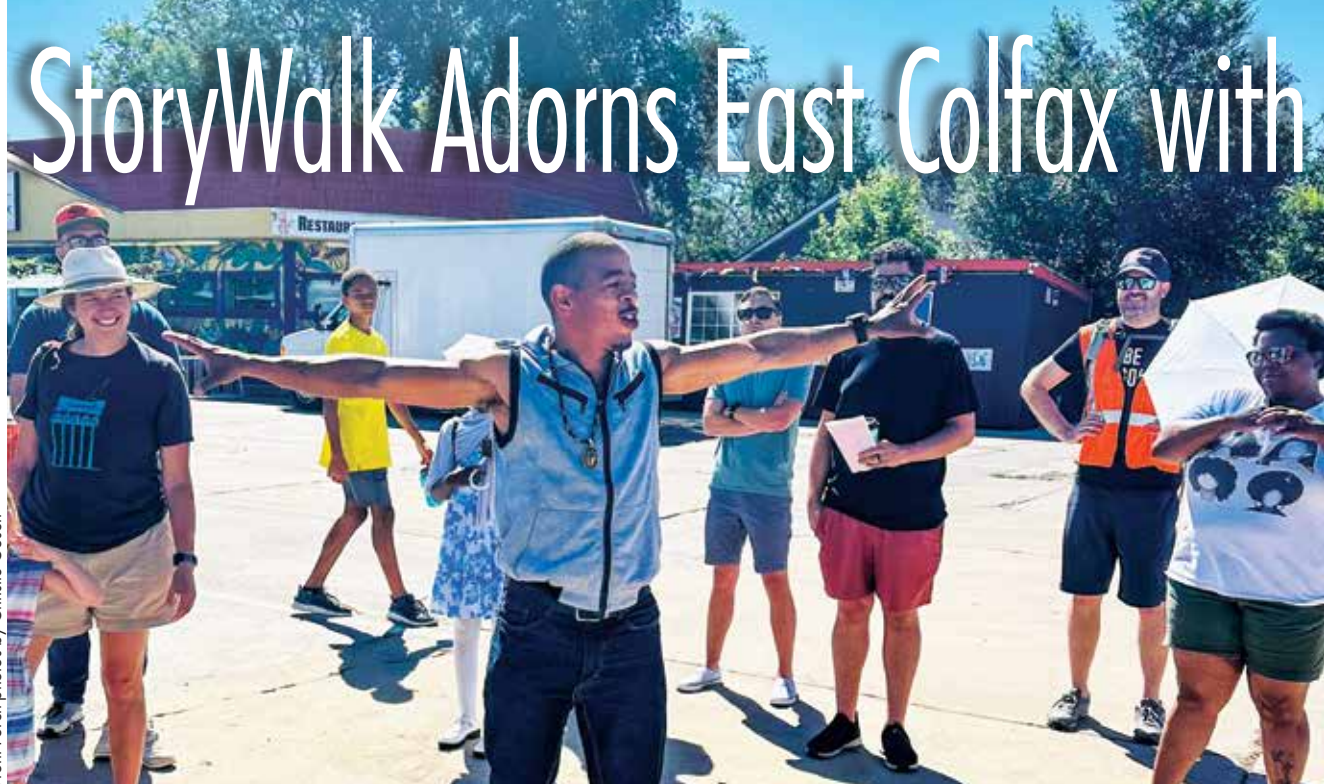


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Christian Steward performs his poem, “The Places for Potential Spaces,” during the East Colfax StoryWalk this fall. His piece is inscribed on brightly colored vinyl and wrapped around an electrical box at the corner of Colfax Avenue and Syracuse Street.

By Sarah Huber

New interactive art is now adorning the East Colfax neighborhood in some of the most unexpected places, from panels atop wooden posts throughout McNichols Park to vinyl-wrapped electrical boxes along Colfax Avenue. The panels and electrical boxes are inscribed with original poetry and are the “stops” in a “StoryWalk,” the first art installation by the Denver non-profit Sidewalk Poets.



Courtney E. Morgan (L) and Abby Templeton Greene (R) founded Sidewalk Poets in 2022. The StoryWalk is their first art installation. Photo by Jesse Temple Trujillo

The stops feature 17 original poems that testify to the joy, struggles, and resilience of East Colfax. “The walk aims to celebrate the people who make up this neighborhood and to amplify their authentic personal stories,” says Abby Templeton Greene, who co-founded Sidewalk Poets in 2022 with fellow poet Courtney E. Morgan.

The installation places the poems in visible locations throughout the community. “I want the StoryWalk to highlight all that we have in this neighborhood,” says Greene, who lives in East Colfax. “We have this amazing community made up of people who speak many languages and carry many stories, and in that there is great value and a great deal to be proud of.”

The StoryWalk, supported by a grant from Denver Arts and Venues, exhibits the writings of Sidewalk Poets and those who have participated in the organization’s storytelling and poetry workshops. Several collaborative poems were written by Ashley Elementary School students, parents or staff, including “Like Running Water” by a cohort of fourth graders. Other poems, written by youths from the Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning, depict the refugee experience and are printed on the StoryWalk stops in the writer’s first language and in English. The StoryWalk is designed to be enjoyed either as a circuit with people viewing each poem on the route, or serendipitously with pedestrians encountering a poem or two as they walk through the community.

Sidewalk Poets board member Erika DeShay Lowenkron is an English teacher in the Cherry Creek School District who says that she “purposefully lives in the neighborhood of East Colfax for its grit and beauty.” For Lowenkron, the StoryWalk, like storytelling in general, builds community relationships and “empowers transformation through self-expression.” She says, “If I know my neighbor’s story, then I begin to see them more fully. We come to know each other,

# StoryWalk Adorns East Colfax with Original Poetry

feel safe together, and watch out for each other.”

In September, soon after the poetry installations were finalized, more than 50 members of the surrounding community gathered to stroll the StoryWalk and view the poems. Greene and Morgan led the group from piece to piece, and several of the artists who wrote poems for the StoryWalk read their compositions to the crowd.

Although the poetry installation celebrates the energy and vibrancy of East Colfax, it also draws attention to the importance of providing dignity and equity for pedestrians. As Lowenkron recalls, “We were out with our dogs, parents with kids in strollers, moving as one organism, yet we could not all safely walk or roll due to the lack of walkable sidewalks.”

One of the StoryWalk poems, initially composed to mark Denver’s observance of World Day of Remembrance for Traffic Victims, was written by Christian Steward. His work is titled,

“The Places for Potential Spaces” and urges neighbors to “occupy the streets” in a way that is safe, inclusive and sustainable, such as biking, singing, dining, or playing.

As an RTD community connector, Steward helped Sidewalk Poets obtain a grant from RTD to embellish the utility boxes. “Walking and poetry unite us. Be kind to your neighbor, but don’t limit your kindness to your neighborhood,” says Steward.

Greene and Morgan, who are both former educators, established Sidewalk Poets to bring “the healing power of the arts” to residents in the community and to people navigating trauma, says Morgan. They emphasize that using the creative arts in therapeutic ways has been proven to reduce feelings of anxiety, depression, and emotional exhaustion while increasing feelings of power, positivity, and self-confidence. Today the poetic duo leads storytelling workshops for youths within the court system, students throughout metro Denver, and immigrants who speak Spanish.



Maria Corral recites her poem, “Hierbabuena/Peppermint,” printed on one of the StoryWalk panels in the East Colfax neighborhood.

(continued on page 5)

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# One of the Best Views in

The former air traffic control tower offers a panoramic view of the Denver skyline. Front Porch photo by Christie Gosch

*By Martina Will, PhD*

Central Park's iconic 164-foot tall air traffic control tower is now open to the public on a limited basis. One of the last vestiges of the Stapleton International Airport (1929-1995), the tower rewards guests who climb the 11 flights of stairs with some of the best views of Denver and the Rocky Mountains. Visitors to the 800-square-foot observatory can see as far as Pikes Peak on a clear day, and it's the perfect spot for a selfie photo.

"I just got tired of saying 'no,'" says Eric Serani, FlyteCo co-founder and president. He started offering tours at FlyteCo Tower in mid-November. "Everyone who comes in asks, 'Can we go in the tower?' So I figured out a way to say 'yes.'"

## Sidewalk Poets *(continued from page 4)*

“Every person is an artist born with creative genius, and every person deserves a safe environment in which to experiment, learn, heal, and develop,” notes Greene while reflecting on the benefits of poetry for the individual and the community. “We believe that writing and storytelling are vehicles for positive self-transformation.” She continues, “We also believe that writing, retelling, and reclaiming one’s own personal story is an act of social justice.”

Morgan encapsulated Sidewalk Poets' mission, saying, "Writing poetry helps all of us—kids, adults, and society as a whole—process and make sense of and even find beauty in what is hard and broken in this world. We treat art and writing like it's 'extra,' but it's really at the heart of our humanity."

The StoryWalk interactive art installation will be on display through next summer. For a map of each storytelling location and a suggested walking route, visit [sidewalkpoets.org/storywalk](http://sidewalkpoets.org/storywalk).

This tower was part of a 1960s expansion to the former Denver Municipal Airport. In 1964, it was renamed Stapleton International Airport after former Denver Mayor Ben Stapleton, a controversial figure for having been a member of the Ku Klux Klan. By 1960, Stapleton International ferried over 1.5 million travelers each year to their domestic and overseas destinations. The tower remains an emblem of Denver's mid-century growth and regional economic importance.

After the last plane departed the Stapleton Airport in 1995, and after Denver International opened as the new airport for the city, the control tower was closed down and remained empty for over two decades. According to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Denver City Council reached out to Punch Bowl Social in 2014 because the national chain was known to utilize historic buildings for its entertainment venues. Punch Bowl Social then hired OZ Architecture to bring its vision for a second Denver location to life. Together they gutted and re-designed much of the interior for its new use, which included a corporate headquarters on the third floor and family-friendly entertainment at the base levels.

After Punch Bowl closed in 2020, the space was again vacant until it was acquired by new owners. In August 2022, FlyteCo Brewing began to operate the bars, restaurant, and entertainment features that include bowling lanes, dart boards, arcade games, and mini golf. FlyteCo also added a private event space in the tower's base, and it recently began using the third floor for axe-throwing, golf simulators, ping pong tables, and a full bar.

The tower does not offer any amenities at present, but Serani hopes a new elevator is in the building's future. At that point, he would also like to place a cocktail lounge in the observatory and expand the tower tours for guests. A new elevator, he says, would cost over half a million dollars. Even during its active operation as an air traffic control tower, the elevator stopped two flights of stairs below the observatory, so an additional system such as a wheelchair lift would need to be built to provide equal access for all visitors.

"The neighborhood is great, and the aviation community is being great," says Serani. "They really embrace this, and we've had a lot of corporate and group events as well."

If you want to test your stamina or get your steps in, guided tours are currently available on Wednesdays by reservation only. Tickets are \$10 each. Note that at present, tours do not accommodate those with mobility issues. Visitors must be able to climb 11 flights of stairs. For more information and to register for a tour, go to Eventbrite.com: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/tower-tours-tickets-730458851087>. FlyteCo is located at 3120 Uinta Street in Denver.

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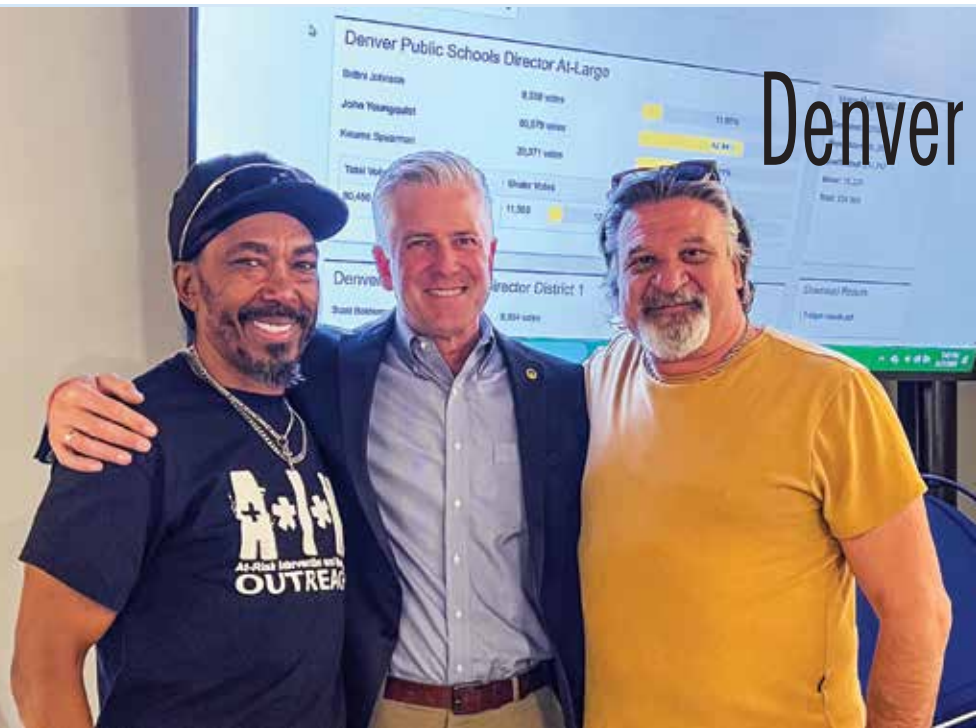
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John Youngquist (center) watched election results on Nov. 7 with his campaign staff and loyal supporters at Bar 38. The new at-large member hopes to “improve the culture” of the Denver School Board.

By Brian Heuberger

On Nov. 7, voters made consequential decisions that altered the Denver School Board and rejected a property tax proposal. The school board races received significant attention due to the infighting among board members and their policies on school safety. With three of the seven school board seats up for election, the ballot gave voters a chance to significantly change the makeup of the board.

### Youngquist Gets Big Win

The election for the at-large seat vacated by Auon’tai (Tay) Anderson was an especially high-profile race. Former East High School principal John Youngquist won a decisive victory over former Tattered Cover CEO Kwame Spearman with a 32-point lead. “I was really grateful that people heard our message and wanted experienced leadership for our students,” says Youngquist. “We were able to step forward with confidence knowing that a majority of people supported what we represented as the work to be done and the priorities to put into place.”

Safety was a prominent focus of the election cycle, and Youngquist is eager

to address an aspect of school safety that he finds especially urgent. “The discipline matrix is not serving our students or our staff well,” says Youngquist. “It doesn’t help individual students that are having behavioral challenges, or help make certain that our schools are safe. So we need a guide to prevent negative behaviors from happening, best practices for when they do, and we have a responsibility to provide that guide to our educators.”

Financing is another issue that Youngquist will prioritize upon starting his first term. “We need transparency with our finances,” says Youngquist. “It’s difficult right now for community members and school employees to understand where we are with the budget or how we’re allocating it, and without that we’re unable to make smart decisions for keeping schools open, closing schools in the future, and providing students with the resources they need.”

During the course of the election, candidate endorsements drove the biggest sources of campaign funding. Youngquist was endorsed by Denver Families Action, which supports reform candidates and charter schools. Its funding arm was an independent expenditure committee called Better Leaders, Stronger Schools,

# Denver Election Shakes Up School Board

which funded numerous television commercials and mailer advertisements for Youngquist. The \$1.3 million spent by the committee greatly exceeded the \$167,400 spent by the Denver Classroom Teachers Association, which endorsed Spearman.

Two incumbents in district races also lost to reform candidates. Scott Baldermann was defeated by Kimberlee Sia and Charmaine Lindsay lost to Marlene De La Rosa.

### Prop HH Soundly Defeated

Prop HH was another high-profile contest during this election cycle. The proposition sought to alleviate the large increases in home valuations by reducing the property tax rates in Colorado and by equalizing TABOR refunds for all residents.

Prop HH was soundly defeated in a 20-point landslide. Many Democrats blamed their party for failing to explain the details of the proposition or promote its benefits. In contrast, the opposition to Prop HH—led by Advance Colorado—raised substantial funds and launched an aggressive campaign to criticize the proposition.

The rejection of Prop HH was a big loss for Gov Jared Polis, who was a champion of the measure since its inception last spring. He responded to the defeat by calling the Legislature into a special session to develop new bills to provide property tax relief.

On Nov. 20, the special session ended with Democrats passing a new property tax package that will be in effect for the 2023 tax year. The bills decrease the residential assessment rate from 6.765

percent to 6.7 percent while also enabling all households to deduct \$55,000 from the assessed value of their homes. The tax package also provides all residents with an equal TABOR refund of \$800. In addition, Democrats expanded the Earned Income Tax Credit by \$185 million, which will benefit low-income working families. Finally, the legislature formed a bipartisan task force to develop long-term property tax solutions.

*“I was really grateful that people heard our message and wanted experienced leadership for our students.”*

—John Youngquist

### Two Other Propositions Pass

Two other propositions passed handily. Prop II allowed the State to keep excess revenue from tobacco taxes to be used for the universal preschool program, and Question 2P permanently extended a tax that helps fund tuition for Denver Preschool students.



Advance Colorado President Michael Fields displays his personal license plate celebrating Colorado’s Taxpayer Bill of Rights at the victory party for No on HH Nov. 7, 2023 at JJ’s Place in Aurora. Photo courtesy of Advance Colorado/Kevin Beaty

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Councilwoman Shontel Lewis believes the increased funding for Vision Zero can help the program provide safer infrastructure for cars, bikes, and scooters.

By Brian Heuberger

Disputes over funding levels between Mayor Mike Johnston and the City Council were resolved in November with a compromise for rental assistance and increased funding for transportation improvements.

The disagreement over rental assistance began in October. The initial budget provided \$12.6 million for rental assistance, but the council asked the mayor to add \$17.5 million more while citing that Denver’s soaring evictions set a new record this year and are projected to keep growing in 2024.

When the mayor countered with only an additional \$3 million, the council expressed outrage and passed an amendment to add \$14.8 million for rental assistance. Achieving a supermajority was pivotal, as getting nine votes provided the council with the power to override a potential veto from the mayor and pass the full amendment on its own.

Reaching the supermajority was difficult for the councilmembers. “Most of us agreed that rental assistance was important, but there were disagreements about where the dollars would come from,” says Councilwoman Shontel Lewis, who co-sponsored the amendment and who represents much of Northeast Denver.

# Mayor and Council Settle their Disputes to Pass the Budget

resents much of Northeast Denver. “Some folks had hard lines about not cutting from certain areas, and so we had to negotiate to find out what cuts everyone would accept.”

The City Council was able to form a supermajority, and this prompted the Mayor’s Office to propose a compromise. The mayor offered \$13.5 million in additional funding, the council approved this new amendment, and the funding for rental assistance increased to \$29.1 million.

Another funding dispute involved transportation improvements. With Denver on pace to set a record for most traffic deaths in a single year, the council submitted amendments to increase transportation funding. Councilwoman Lewis sponsored an amendment to add \$550,000 for the Vision Zero program that strives to eliminate all traffic deaths.

“Funding Vision Zero can help us keep using old tactics that were working while researching new strategies that could work,” explains Lewis. “We can learn from experts about what options are effective, and we can hear from residents about what changes would make their streets safer.”

This issue was resolved amicably. The mayor approved the amendment from Lewis, granted the funding for Vision Zero, and accepted another amendment for the Safe Routes to School program.

With these disputes settled, the council passed the budget, which totaled \$4 billion. The two-month process demonstrated a shift in political dynamics, as the City Council added far more funding to the budget than in previous years and banded together to form supermajorities on many issues.

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Front Porch photos by Christie Gosch

Jennifer Moss Logan shows an insect display to seniors in front of the Botswana diorama at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science.

By Mary Jo Brooks

When she retired eight years ago, Robin Cohen didn't want to sit at home in front of the television, but she didn't realize just how busy she was going to be. Her days are filled with free activities for seniors—from

taking photography classes, to attending lectures, to participating in an intergenerational choir—that are all organized by the Denver Public Library.

Cohen says that the activities give meaning to her life. "I love that I'm not invisible. They call it the All Seasons Choir because it intentionally tries to bring together people of all ages. The library sets a tone so that everyone treats each other as interesting peers." She says it's that sense of community and connection that has made her feel valued. "I don't have children and I live alone. But I find that these 'flash' communities are just as satisfactory as family."

Helping people over 50 appreciate a new stage of life is exactly what these programs are designed to do, says Amy Delpo, manager of Older Adult Services at the Denver Public Library. "Our approach is asset-based and meaning-based. We want people to embrace their older years, to view it as a time of growth, lifelong learning, finding meaning, and creating new connections as they continue to explore the world and themselves."

Delpo helps organize a broad array of programs and tries to make them as accessible as

# Embracing Aging Through Cr

possible, whether it's online meditation, art classes, Chi Gong in a park, lectures by University of Denver professors, the weekly choir sessions at Swallow Hill, or a monthly movie club at the Sie Film Center.

One of the latest partnerships that Delpo has forged is with the Denver Museum of Nature and Science. Seniors get an up-close look at the dioramas—those large-scale displays that show animals in 3-D habitats from around the globe—while museum scientists share information about how they were created and some interesting facts about the wildlife in the scene. Then the audience is broken into small groups and encouraged to tell stories about their own experiences with the natural world.

Jennifer Moss Logan is in charge of the Creative Aging Program at the museum. She says the museum has always served older adults, but in recent years has begun experimenting with more robust programming. "Older adults are living longer, healthier lives," says Moss Logan. "And

we realized that we need to provide programming that is more dynamic, social, skill-building, and participatory to match where adults are now."

She believes that the diorama visits are popular because seniors want to keep learning, but that it is equally important for them to share stories about their lives and create connections with other people.

In another collaboration with the library, museum officials brought objects from an Apollo space exhibit to seniors

with memory issues. They also drank Tang and ate space ice cream. "We had them talk about what it was like to watch the astronauts go to the moon—they had some incredible stories," says Moss Logan. "They bring a lifetime of experience and we want to make a space where they can share that."

She credits the Denver Art Museum (DAM) with helping to jumpstart methods that Denver's cultural organizations can use to better serve older residents. It holds regular "creative aging forums" with a wide variety of groups so they can share best practices and form partnerships. Over the past 10 years, DAM has conducted research about the importance of embracing creativity. "We know that as we age, we need to eat well and exercise. But engaging in creative pursuits is also a key part of healthy aging," says Danielle Schulz, who leads Lifelong Learning and Access at DAM.

She says the Denver Public Library is well-positioned to do this work because having branches in every neighborhood provides easy access for many seniors. Since DAM has only one location, it needed to develop innovative ways to reach people who can't travel downtown. "We realize we have a

*"I don't have children and I live alone. But I find that these 'flash' communities are just as satisfactory as family."*

—Robin Cohen

role to play that is outside the walls of the museum, so we've created a program called Art at Hand." The museum puts together small boxes with photos of art from DAM's collection along with some information about the work and the artist. The box also includes materials that en-

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# Creativity and Connections

able the seniors to create their own works of art. The boxes are distributed to individuals and senior centers. Schulz says the next step is to form more partnerships with health centers. “We want providers to be able to say, ‘engaging with this box will lower your anxiety or your blood pressure.’ We’d like to

see them give ‘prescriptions’ like a membership to the Denver Art Museum.”

For more information about the programs mentioned in this story, visit the following websites: [denverlibrary.org/olderadults](http://denverlibrary.org/olderadults), [denverartmuseum.org/en/creative-aging](http://denverartmuseum.org/en/creative-aging), and [dmns.org](http://dmns.org).



Director Roy Wiley leads an All Seasons Choir rehearsal in preparation for concerts on Dec. 11 at Swallow Hill and Dec. 18 at the Sam Gary Library.

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Dustin Chiappetta pours wine for a Holiday Tasting event sponsored by Pearl Wine Company, the Women’s Wine Guild, and the MCA.

By Mary Jo Brooks and Brian Heuberger

## 1 Pearl Wine and Market Breaks Ground

Pearl Wine and Market has broken ground in Beeler Park. Dustin Chiappetta opened Pearl Wine in Platte Park with his brother and friends in 2015, and he is now excited to expand the business by opening the Pearl Wine and Market in his home community of Beeler Park. Chiappetta held a wine tasting event at the MCA (Master Community Association) Cube in November to celebrate the project and connect with the community.

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The Eu-  
ropean-style  
market will

offer aisles of grocery options along with a pasta bar, seafood counter, butcher stand, and pizza oven. The market will also have a wine store, coffee shop, and ice cream joint. Most food products will originate from local farmers and family-owned businesses that provide ethically sourced ingredients.

Dustin says the best part of this endeavor is offering a gathering space for residents in the community. He designed it to be a spot where people can eat dinner or grab groceries while chatting with friends and mingling with neighbors. Pearl Wine and Market will be located on 56th Avenue and Central Park Boulevard, and it will open in the summer of 2024.

## 2 Mayor’s Homelessness Plan Update

Residents of Northeast Denver expressed frustration that Mayor Johnston’s House1000 initiative is asking the neighborhood to bear more than its share of the burden to shelter homeless people. In the meeting at MLK Recreation Center on Nov. 9, the mayor and other city officials announced that the former Double-Tree Hotel at 4040 Quebec Street will be transformed into a shelter with 289 units for up to 450 individuals. It will be managed by the Salvation Army.

The city had already announced that two other nearby hotels would be used for unhoused individuals. The former Best Western at 4595 Quebec Street contains 198 units and the former Stay Inn at 12033 E. 38th Avenue will offer 96 units. The House1000 plan aims to get 1,000 people off the streets by the end of December.

Northeast resident Rosie Belville told the mayor that she thought the process was being rushed. “We’re not here to say we don’t want to find a solution [to homelessness]. But we are here to say that we’ve invested money and time to make this community vibrant and we expect you to do the same for us. Not erode our property values. Not put our children at risk.” Mayor Johnston pointed out that DoubleTree was in a commercial area, a mile away from the nearest school. “Under the criteria we looked at—proximity to transit, proximity to services, not close access to school sites—this meets all those criteria.”

Adding to the tensions surrounding the homelessness issue, just 10 days after the town hall meeting, residents living near 26th Avenue and Beeler Street reported that several brush fires were set by an unhoused man who had been living in the open space. The Denver Fire Department extinguished the fires and the Denver Police Department confirmed that an adult male was arrested and charged with arson. No other information about the incident was available by press time.

## 3 McAuliffe’s Innovation Status

In response to rumors that the Denver Public School Board was preparing to rescind McAuliffe’s innovation status and terminate several faculty members, parents of students at McAuliffe International Middle School organized a morning “walk-in” rally. On Nov. 14, students, parents, and faculty met outside of McAuliffe before school, holding signs and delivering speeches to protest the school board and defend the school’s innovation status.

Being an innovation school equips McAuliffe with the autonomy to determine its school calendar, staff structure, academic curricu-



McAuliffe teacher Logan Keeney speaks to the crowd on Nov. 14.

Front Porch photo by Christie Gosch

la, and budget priorities. These freedoms have yielded successful results, with McAuliffe consistently ranking as one of the top-performing middle schools in Denver. The reaction from McAuliffe parents and teachers was also exacerbated by the many recent conflicts that the school has experienced with the board. In the last four months, the school board fired McAuliffe Principal Kurt Dennis, launched an investigation into a de-escalation room, suspended the interim principal Micah Klaver, and now might consider revoking its innovation status. The board said that it may address the innovation status of McAuliffe in the upcoming weeks, and *Front Porch* will provide continuing coverage as the situation develops.

## 4 Second Place for Northfield High School and East High School Boys Soccer

An attempt for the Northfield boys soccer team to win three championships in a row came up short in November with a 2-0 loss to Battle Mountain in the 4A championship game. The game provided a rematch of the championship in 2022. While Northfield won last year, this time the Battle Mountain Huskies from Edwards played a strong game that had them controlling the action and scoring two goals to win the rematch and secure the championship.



Photo by Sean Dougherty

After an upsetting loss to Battle Mountain for the 4A championship, the Northfield coaches lead the team in a cheer. The team was unbeaten and made it to the finals for the third year in a row.

The three-year run for the Northfield Nighthawks included many impressive achievements. Since 2021, Northfield went 56-1-1, they won back-to-back championships, and they had a perfect 19-0 record in 2023 while pursuing a three-peat. Although Battle Mountain knocked them off the throne, the Nighthawks gave the Northfield community an inspiring run of exceptional soccer.

The Denver East High Angels also finished in second place after losing a tight contest in the 5A championship game. East High won the championship last year and were going for a repeat against the Broomfield Eagles. This was a riveting game that featured Broomfield scoring first on a bicycle kick, East High tying it three minutes later on a free kick, and then two overtime periods in which neither team could break the deadlock and a penalty shootout was needed to settle the score. Broomfield won the shootout to earn the title, but the Angels played a great game in their second consecutive championship appearance.

## 5 Drybar Coming to Central Park

Drybar is opening its third Denver metro salon in December at the 29th Avenue Town Center in Central Park. The national chain has more than 140 locations across the country. While the salons don’t offer cut or color services, its famous blow-dry styles are popular for special occasions. In keeping with the “bar” theme, the hairstyles are named after cocktails, such as the Manhattan, the Cosmo, the Mai Tai, the Old Fashioned, and the Southern Comfort.





dreams in Korean) that he can't access. As Arthur says, Nora and Hae Sung's story is more magical and literary than his own relationship with Nora. As we watch, and feel, and live with these three characters, we can't help but agree.

Director Song allows us space to live with them, and that is a major triumph of the film. It stays away from maudlin melancholy and prefers to let life play out in front of us. Characters pause as they speak to each other, they stand uncomfortably, and they are unsure what to say at times as they pass nervous glances. We get the feeling we are watching something we shouldn't be, peeking into very personal situations and interactions to which we should not have access. We want to look away; the pauses are interminable; and the undercurrent is strong and unknowing. That realism is topped with a serving of humor and an unfailing humanity that we are sorely missing in our world and even in our art today. In other words, it is beautiful.

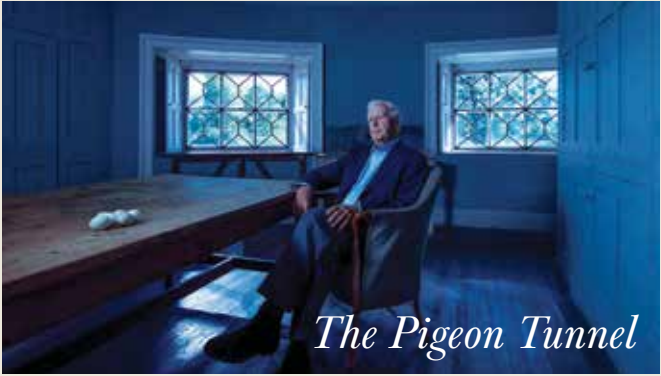
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*Full Time (À plein temps)* (France—2021)  
This is a tense, obstinate, and pressurized film about a suburban Parisian single mother trying to keep it all together. It might not sound like the most thrilling concept for a scintillating cinematic journey, but trust me on this, dear readers: Spend 90 minutes of your lives sweating this one out and you will thank me. Or hate me.

Think *Run Lola Run* in France: heels instead of Doc Martens, mortgage lenders instead of looming thugs, transportation strikes instead of the Berlin streets, and an endless electronic beat echoing our mounting stress as the common denominator. (If you haven't seen *Run Lola Run*, this comparison doesn't work. And, you *really* need to see that one too.) This is expert filmmaking, acting, and staging all for a certain effect. It works.

Every time Julie (a voracious Laure Calamy) opens a door, we hold our breath: She is hustling her kids off to a sitter, she is running for the train (we can see it in



the background, will she make it??), she is trying to find an alternate train, she is trying to find a bus, she is trying to find an overpriced taxi, she is late for work and about to get fired, she is interviewing for a better job, she is flirting with the doorman for a small favor, she is struggling to find a cheap room in the city after being stranded, she is waiting for a credit card approval she desperately needs but doesn't know will come, she is running, she is running, she is running...

There is no respite from the breathlessness as there is no respite in Julie's life. We root for her, we yell with her, we suffer with her, and we hurt with her. This is realism tinged with cinematic flourishes to heighten the effect, but it is realism nonetheless. We see a real person struggling with real situations, real problems, and real people. As viewers, we can't distance ourselves from the actions or the issues. We are *involved*, and that is the brilliance of writer/director Eric Gravel.

Streaming now on Amazon Video.

### *The Pigeon Tunnel* (2023)

This documentary is the story of author David Cornwell, better known to us by his pen name, John Le Carré. At first I thought it would be a standard biography about a famous author—complete with honorifics and the requisite fawnings we usually see in such films. I was wrong, thankfully. Instead, what we get is a fascinating deep dive into the psyche of a complicated human, a figure with miles of dark and winding passages in his life and in his brain, and insights into one of the most consequential eras in recent human history.

Enjoy this fascinating study of an author, a spy, and a keen observer of the duplicitous nature of humans. Cornwell was all of these things, and legendary documentarian Errol Morris sits him up and extricates it all from Cornwell with the usual Morris flourishes of visual flair.

Streaming now on Apple TV.

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



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# LOCAL EVENTS

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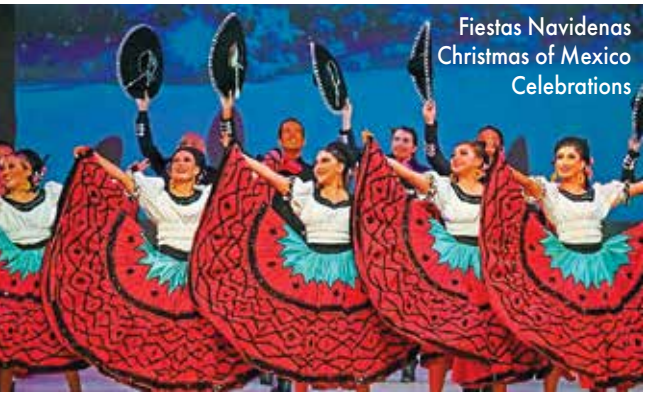
View and add local events FREE at [FrontPorchNE.com/events](http://FrontPorchNE.com/events). Submissions by the 17th will be considered for printing in the upcoming month's issue.

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

## SEASONAL/HOLIDAY EVENTS

- 12/1 to 12/30—Black Nativity.** A modern retelling of the traditional account of the nativity story from an African American perspective. Vintage Theatre, 1468 Dayton St, Aurora. [vintagetheatre.org](http://vintagetheatre.org)
- 12/2 Saturday—YouthBiz Holiday Marketplace.** Young business owners sell their unique products—all handmade by them. Young Americans Center, 3550 E 1st Ave. [yacenter.org](http://yacenter.org)
- 12/2 Saturday—Parade of Lights.** Holiday magic in Downtown. Starts at 6 pm at Denver's City and County Building. [winterinddenver.com](http://winterinddenver.com)
- 12/2 to 12/16—Holiday Tea.** Various Thursdays and Saturdays at 10:30am and 12:30pm. Tour and tea. Center for Colorado Women's History, 1310 Bannock St. Tickets at [historycolorado.org](http://historycolorado.org)
- 12/2 to 12/17—Mistletoe Market.** Local vendors, live carolers, and holiday music in the heated alley. Weekends at Dairy Block, 1800 Wazee St. [dairyblock.com](http://dairyblock.com)
- 12/3 Sunday—Latkes and Lights.** Hanukkah celebration and latke contest, 10am–1pm. JCC Denver, 350 S Dahlia St. [jccdenver.org](http://jccdenver.org)
- 12/3 & 12/4—A Piano and Me: Holiday Edition.** David Nehls celebrates everything Christmas. 7:30pm. Aurora Fox Arts Center, 9900 E Colfax Ave, Aurora. [aurorafoxartscenter.org](http://aurorafoxartscenter.org)
- 12/4 Monday—Community Hanukkah Celebration.** Join The Jewish Life Center for the Festival of Lights. Stanley Marketplace, 2501 N. Dallas St, Aurora. [stanleymarketplace.com](http://stanleymarketplace.com)
- 12/4 to 12/31—Who's Holiday.** Back for Its Third Year. Vintage Theatre, 1468 Dayton St, Aurora. [vintagetheatre.org](http://vintagetheatre.org)
- 12/5 Tuesday—City of Aurora Holiday Tree Lighting.** 5–7pm. Aurora Municipal Center, 15151 E. Alameda Pkwy. [auroragov.org](http://auroragov.org)

- 12/6 & 12/7—Fiestas Navidenas.** A tour of Christmas celebrations throughout the country of Mexico. Newman Center, Gates Concert Hall. [newmancenterpresents.com](http://newmancenterpresents.com)
- 12/7 Thursday—Holiday Pie Palooza.** 5–8pm. Holiday dessert sampling and pre-order event benefiting Denver School of the Arts. 1895 Quebec St., former Johnson & Wales Campus. [kitchennetworkdenver.com](http://kitchennetworkdenver.com)
- 12/8 to 12/10—A Colorado Christmas.** Family-friendly, festive seasonal favorites! Tickets start at \$15. Boettcher Hall. [coloradosymphony.org](http://coloradosymphony.org)
- 12/9 Saturday—Carols Around the World.** The Mile High Barbershop choruses and quartets come together to deliver a musical journey. Newman Center, Gates Concert Hall. [newmancenterpresents.com](http://newmancenterpresents.com)
- 12/9 Saturday—Santa in The Hanger.** Santa arrives in a helicopter and activities. 10am–2pm. 7711 East Academy Blvd. [wingsmuseum.org](http://wingsmuseum.org)
- 12/9 Saturday—4th Annual Five Points Holiday Stroll.** Photo ops, singing, treats, and more. Bring a new pair of warm socks to donate. 2–6pm. 2401 Welton St. [fivepointsbid.com](http://fivepointsbid.com)
- 12/9 Saturday—1940s White Christmas Ball.** Step back in time this Christmas. Hyatt Downtown Denver. [1940sball.org/winter-ball](http://1940sball.org/winter-ball)
- 12/9 Saturday—Holiday Sing-Along Concert.** Join Christy Wessler for this family-friendly event. 7pm, doors open at 6pm. Tuft Theatre, 71 East Yale Ave. [swallowhillmusic.org](http://swallowhillmusic.org)
- 12/9 to 12/10—ASLD's Winter Holiday Art Market.** The Art Students League of Denver. 235 Broadway. [asld.org](http://asld.org)
- 12/12 Tuesday—Have You Heard of Christmas? Album Tour.** Comedian Matt Rogers' live holiday comedy/music variety show. Newman Center, Gates Concert Hall. [newmancenterpresents.com](http://newmancenterpresents.com)
- 12/12 Tuesday—Celtic Woman: The Best of Christmas Tour.** Traditional Irish carols and magnificent uplifting anthems. Boettcher Hall. [coloradosymphony.org](http://coloradosymphony.org)
- 12/13 Wednesday—Celebrate the Season Concert.** Don & Gracie Batt play a variety of music to celebrate the holidays. 4–5pm. Park Hill Library, 4705 Montview Blvd. [denverlibrary.org](http://denverlibrary.org)
- 12/15 Friday—Denver Brass FREE concert.** Celebrate 10 Days 'till Christmas. 7–8:30pm. Bethany Lutheran Church, 4500 East Hampden Ave. [denverbrass.org](http://denverbrass.org)
- 12/15 Friday—Holiday Brass.** Witness the brilliance and power of the Colorado Symphony Brass. Boettcher Hall. [coloradosymphony.org](http://coloradosymphony.org)
- 12/15 & 12/16—Holiday Cheer!** A family-friendly, multifaceted array of wintertime jingles. Central Presbyterian Church, 1660 Sherman St. [denverphilharmonic.org](http://denverphilharmonic.org)



- 12/16 to 12/17—Handel's Messiah.** Experience the full majesty of Handel's masterpiece. Tickets start at \$15. Boettcher Hall. [coloradosymphony.org](http://coloradosymphony.org)
- 12/16, 12/17, & 12/22—Candlelight Holiday Special.** Featuring *The Nutcracker* and more. Trinity United Methodist Church, 1820 Broadway. [thecityevents.com](http://thecityevents.com)
- 12/17 & 12/18—The Hip Hop Nutcracker.** A holiday mash-up for the whole family. Buell Theatre at the DCPA. [denvercenter.org](http://denvercenter.org)
- 12/19 Tuesday—Elvis Christmas Spectacular.** Celebrate the King of Rock and Roll with the Colorado Symphony. Tickets start at \$15. Boettcher Hall. [coloradosymphony.org](http://coloradosymphony.org)
- 12/21 Thursday—ICE-IE sculptures.** Ice sculptures on display until they melt—approximately 5 ft tall and made of 4 blocks of ice—depicting scenes from the holiday season. The Shops at Northfield, 8340 Northfield Blvd. [shopsatnorthfield.com](http://shopsatnorthfield.com)
- 12/22 Friday—Paws & Claus.** Photo ops with your furry friends and Santa Claus. 4–6pm at The Shops at Northfield, [shopsatnorthfield.com](http://shopsatnorthfield.com)
- 12/22 & 12/23—Elf™ in Concert.** The movie's score is performed live while you watch it on four giant screens. Boettcher Hall. [coloradosymphony.org](http://coloradosymphony.org)
- Through 12/23—Santa's Big Red Sack.** A sleigh full of new sketches with irreverent wit and unforgettable characters. The People's Building, 9995 E. Colfax Ave, Aurora. [rattlebrainproductions.com](http://rattlebrainproductions.com)
- Through 12/23—Denver Christkindl Market.** Authentic German holiday experience. Civic Center Park, 101 West 14th Ave. [christkindlmarketdenver.com](http://christkindlmarketdenver.com)
- Through 12/23—The Polar Express™ Train Ride.** Take a magical journey and rekindle the Christmas spirit. Colorado Railroad Museum, 17155 W. 44th Ave. [coloradorailroadmuseum.org/polar-express](http://coloradorailroadmuseum.org/polar-express)
- Through 12/24—Camp Christmas.** Immerse yourself in a 15,000 square-foot, 360-degree kaleidoscope of yuletide cheer. Stanley Marketplace, 2501 N. Dallas St, Aurora. [denvercenter.org](http://denvercenter.org)
- Through 12/24—Colorado Ballet Presents The Nutcracker.** Sensory-friendly adaptations on Nov. 26. 1385 Curtis St. [coloradoballet.org](http://coloradoballet.org)
- Through 12/24—A Christmas Carol.** Denver's beloved holiday tradition returns. Wolf Theatre. [denvercenter.org](http://denvercenter.org)
- Through 12/24—Holiday Happenings at Stanley Marketplace.** Letters to Santa, the giving tree, live performances, pose with Santa on Saturdays, and more. 2501 N. Dallas St, Aurora. [stanleymarketplace.com](http://stanleymarketplace.com)
- Through 12/24—Winter Wonderland.** Saturday night lights, giving machines, holiday market, and a Chanukah celebration on Dec. 10. Cherry Creek North, 2401 E. 2nd Ave. [cherrycreeknorth.com](http://cherrycreeknorth.com)
- 12/29 Friday—Kwanzaa: Ujamaa.** Learn about the 4th principal of Kwanzaa, cooperative economics (shared work and wealth). 3–4pm. Park Hill Library, 4705 Montview Blvd. [denverlibrary.org](http://denverlibrary.org)
- 12/31 Saturday—Noon Year's Eve.** Join us to ring in the Noon Year before bedtime. The ball drops every hour from 9am–3pm. [mychildsmuseum.org](http://mychildsmuseum.org)
- 12/31 Saturday—New Year's Eve Fireworks.** Two shows, 9pm & midnight. 16th Street Mall, Denver. [denver.org](http://denver.org)
- Through 1/1/24—Christmas In Color Drive-thru Animated Light Show.** Three locations: Arapahoe Country Fairgrounds, Bandimere Speedway in Morrison, and Water World. [christmasincolor.net](http://christmasincolor.net)
- Through 1/1/24—Christmas at Gaylord Rockies.** ICE! Featuring a *Christmas Story*, Elf Training Academy, Mrs. Claus' Christmas Traditions, and Cirque: Spirit of Christmas. 6700 N. Gaylord Rockies Blvd, Aurora. [christmasatgaylordrockies.marriott.com](http://christmasatgaylordrockies.marriott.com)
- Through 1/7/24—Blossoms of Light.** An ever-changing display of light and color. Denver Botanic Gardens, 1007 York St. [botanicgardens.org](http://botanicgardens.org)
- 12/2 to 1/7/24—Zoo Lights.** 60 acres of lights, entertainment, and treats. Denver Zoo, 2300 Steele St. [denverzoo.org](http://denverzoo.org)
- Through 2/11/24—Downtown Denver Rink.** Free admission, rentals available. Check out hours at [downtowndenver.com](http://downtowndenver.com)



[www.denverlanguageschool.org](http://www.denverlanguageschool.org)  
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## CHARITY AND VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

- 12/5 Tuesday—Colorado Gives Day.** Donate to those institutions you care about the most. [coloradogives.org](http://coloradogives.org)
- 12/12 & 12/21—Denver Children's Home.** Prepare and serve a home-cooked meal to kids and staff. 1501 Albion St. [projecthelping.org](http://projecthelping.org)
- Catholic Charities Adopt-A-Family.** Sign-up to adopt a family and shop for a family/individual or make a donation and they will do the shopping for you. [ccdenver.org/adoptafamily](http://ccdenver.org/adoptafamily)
- Colorado Dream Foundation.** Ongoing and one-time volunteer opportunities available including tutoring, mentoring, and community engagement. 1836 Grant St. [coloradodream.org](http://coloradodream.org)
- Denver Children's Foundation.** Sponsor or donate to this year's Christmas for Kids event and help kids buy gifts for their loved ones. 8275 E 11th Ave. [denverchildrensfoundation.org](http://denverchildrensfoundation.org)
- Denver Rescue Mission.** Serve meals, volunteer in the warehouse, tutor youths, drop-off donations, and more. Visit [denverrescuemission.org](http://denverrescuemission.org) to learn how you can support this local organization.
- Denver Ronald McDonald House.** Volunteer in the facility in many different ways. Musicians, pet therapy handlers, and massage therapist opportunities too. 1300 E 21st Ave. Find details at [rmhc-denver.org](http://rmhc-denver.org)
- Food Bank of the Rockies.** Volunteer as an individual or group at the warehouse or make a food donation. 10700 E 45th Ave. [foodbankrockies.org](http://foodbankrockies.org)



**Food For Thought Denver.** Providing food for students and their families on Fridays to avoid weekend hunger. 1600 W. Colfax Ave. Sign up to volunteer or donate at [foodforthoughtdenver.org](#)

**Holiday Toy Drive.** Donate new and unwrapped toys for kids ages 5–18. At participating King Soopers and Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Denver—main office: 2017 W. 9th Ave. More details at [bgcmd.org/donate/toy-drive](#)

**Judi’s House.** Volunteer as a companion, memory quilt maker, in the kitchen, and more. 10125 E. 25th Ave, Aurora. [judishouse.org](#)

**Knitting4Peace.** Craft, knit, or crochet for those in need. Delivery volunteers also needed. All items can be sent or delivered to 2600 Leyden St. More details at [knitting4peace.org](#)

**Mile High United Way.** Volunteer with the 211 Help Center to connect families to critical resources. Support education and literacy for children. 711 Park Ave W. Many more opportunities to help at [unitedwaydenver.org](#)

**Project Angel Heart.** Help prepare and deliver meals for those in need. 4950 Washington St. Learn more at [projectangelheart.org](#)

**Project Worthmore.** Help bag and deliver fresh fruits and vegetables, dairy, and household necessities to refugees. Become an English Tutor. More opportunities at [projectworthmore.org](#)

**Rebuilding Together Colorado.** In need of volunteers of all skill levels to complete critical repairs for our neighbors to safely stay in their homes. 4981 E 39th Ave. Learn more at [rtcolorado.org](#)

**Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)** Matching volunteers age 55+ with local, part-time opportunities at non-profit partner agencies and hospitals [voacolorado.org](#)



**Single Volunteers of Greater Denver.** Objective is to fulfill the volunteer needs of non-profit organizations in the Denver area while having fun and meeting people. Info at [svgd.org](#)

**Spark the Change Colorado.** Direct service programs that leverage the talents and expertise of skilled volunteers in fields like mental health and empowering aging. [sparkthechangecolorado.org](#)

**Struggle of Love Foundation.** Volunteer for Sacks of Love Food Pantry 10am-2pm throughout the month of Dec. 12000 E. 47th Ave, Suite #403. Register at [struggleoflovefoundation.org](#)

**The Gathering Place.** Volunteer opportunities include computer lab, donation pick-ups, education, welcome desk and more. 1535 High St. Sign-up at [tgpdenver.org](#)

**Toys for Tots 2023.** Request/donate a toy, volunteer, or sponsor an event or donation box for Toys for Tots this holiday season. Search for local drop-off locations and more information at [toysfortots.org](#)

**Village Exchange Center** A non-profit formed to serve immigrants and refugees in Aurora & Denver. [villageexchangecenter.org](#)

**Volunteers of America Colorado Branch** To volunteer go to [voacolorado.org/volunteer-opportunities](#)

**We Don’t Waste.** Volunteer Dec. 8–19 at various food markets across metro Denver. Details at [wedontwaste.org](#)

## NE DENVER/NW AURORA EVENTS

**12/1 and 1/5/24—Nature Wonder Walks.** Enter the wonder by slowing down, breathing, and reconnecting. Bluff Lake Nature Center. 1pm. 11255 E. MLK Jr Blvd. Free but must RSVP at [blufflake.org/events](#)

**12/2 & 1/6/24—Bluff Lake Bird Walks.** 2-hour walk at 8am. 11255 E. MLK Jr Blvd. Free but must RSVP at [blufflake.org/birdwatching](#)

**12/9 Saturday—Herbal Soap Making Workshop.** Learn to make soap with The Urban Farm’s dried herbs and bees wax.. 11am–1pm. 10200 Smith Rd. [theurbanfarm.org](#)

**12/13 Wednesday—MCA Annual Members Meeting.** 6–8pm. The annual election of all 11 community delegates.. The Cube, 8371 Northfield Blvd. [mca80238.com](#)

**12/14 Thursday—Active Minds Presents Social Media.** Explore social media’s pros and cons and discuss its dramatic impact on society. 1–2pm, Free. Sam Gary Library, 2961 Roslyn St. [activeminds.com](#)

**12/15 & 12/29—Goatflix and Chill.** With Rocky Mountain Goat Yoga. 6pm. 8246 Northfield Blvd. The Shops at Northfield. Space is limited, pre-register at [shopsatnorthfield.com](#)

**12/16 Saturday—Connection of Loss.** A guide to acceptance, stillness, and meditation. 11am–12:30pm. Park Hill Library, 4705 Montview Blvd. [denverlibrary.org](#)

**12/16 & 12/30—Indoor Goat Yoga.** 10am, 12pm, and 2pm. 8246 Northfield Blvd. The Shops at Northfield. Space is limited, register at [shopsatnorthfield.com](#)

**12/18 Monday—Multi-Generational Choir Family Songshare.** All Seasons Choir is a collaboration between Swallow Hill Music and Denver Public Library. 5–6pm. Sam Gary Library, 2961 Roslyn St. [denverlibrary.org](#)

**12/19 Tuesday—Astronomy Night.** Join Standley Lake Stargazing from 6–8 pm. Stanley Marketplace, 2501 N. Dallas St, Aurora. [stanleymarketplace.com](#)

**12/28 Thursday—Active Minds Presents Van Gogh.** A journey into the life and art of Vincent Van Gogh. 1–2pm, Free. Sam Gary Library, 2961 Roslyn St. [activeminds.com](#)

**1/4/24 Thursday—Candle Making Workshop.** A DIY experience. 5–7pm. The Urban Farm, 10200 Smith Rd. [theurbanfarm.org](#)

## METRO EVENTS

**12/1 & 1/5/24—First Friday Art Walks.** Art District on Santa Fe. 5:30– 9:30pm. [denver.org/things-to-do/denver-arts-culture/denver-art-districts](#)

**12/9 Saturday—Organ Tour.** Join us for a morning filled with architecture, history, and organ music. 6500 E. Girard Ave. <https://cli.re/53349-organ-tour>

**12/14 Thursday—Art & About Tours.** For visitors with early-stage Alzheimer’s or dementia and their care partners. 1–2:45pm. 100 W 14th Ave Pkwy. [denverartmuseum.org](#)

## KIDS AND FAMILIES

**Tuesday–Friday—Local Library Storytime.** 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](#)

**12/6 Wednesday—Youth Gaming Night.** Play Xbox and Wii Games with friends! Snacks will be provided. Ages 5–17. 5:30–7:30pm. Sam Gary Library, 2961 Roslyn St. [denverlibrary.org](#)

**12/9 Saturday—Low Sensory Morning.** Museum closed to the general public. 8–10am. Free, but space is limited so please reserve tickets in advance at [historycolorado.org](#). History Colorado Center, 1200 North Broadway.

**12/9 Saturday—CSU Spur 2nd Saturdays.** Free. Lots of family- friendly programming. 10am–3pm. 4817 National Western Dr. [csuspur.org](#)

**12/9 Saturday—Maker Mornings: Snowflake Flurries.** Make snowflakes from household items you use every day. 10:30am–12:30pm. 1250 Bannock St. [clyffordstillmuseum.org](#)

**12/9 & 12/10—Family Make and Take: Harvest Wreaths.** Materials provided are appropriate for families with children ages 5 and up. 10am & 1pm both days. 1007 York St. Register at [botanicgardens.org](#)

**12/10 Sunday—Foxy and Shmoxy: Art Detectives.** Foxy and Shmoxy help young children access and experience art in unique ways. 10:30am–12pm. 100 W 14th Ave Pkwy. [denverartmuseum.org](#)

**12/14 Thursday—Create Playdate.** An early-childhood program for families with children ages 3–5 (siblings welcome). 10am–12pm. 100 W 14th Ave Pkwy. [denverartmuseum.org](#)

**12/17 Sunday—Spanish Storytime at Tattered Cover Kids.** 5pm. Stanley Marketplace, 2501 N. Dallas St, Aurora. [stanleymarketplace.com](#)

**Through 12/23—Little Red.** A charming, song-infused retelling of *Little Red Riding Hood*. Randy Weeks Conservatory Theatre. [denvercenter.org](#)

**12/27 & 12/30—Art Crawl: Ice, Ice, Baby.** 10:30–11:15am. For caregivers with infants–14 months. Registration required. 1250 Bannock St. [clyffordstillmuseum.org](#)

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

**Aurora History Museum.** Admission is free. Closed Mondays/holidays. 15051 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.** Bloom early learning space (newborn–age 3) now open. Reservations recommended at [mychildsmuseum.org](#)

**Clyfford Still Museum.** SCFD Free Day Dec. 3. Children 17 and under always free. 1250 Bannock St. [clyffordstillmuseum.org](#)

**Denver Art Museum.** SCFD Free Day Dec. 12. Youth 18 & under always free. 100 W 14th Ave. Pkwy. [denverartmuseum.org](#)

**Denver Botanic Gardens.** Blossoms of Light through Jan. 7. 1007 York St. [botanicgardens.org](#)

**Denver Firefighters Museum.** Hours: Tues–Sat, 10am–4pm. 1326 Tremont Pl. [denverfirefighters-museum.org](#)

**Denver Museum of Nature and Science.** SCFD Free Day Dec. 4. 2001 Colorado Blvd. dmns. org

**Denver Zoo.** SCFD Free Day Jan. 5, 2024. Lottery for free events at [denverzoo.org](#). 2900 E 23rd Ave.

**The Forney Museum of Transportation.** 4303 Brighton Blvd. [forneymuseum.org](#)

**Four Mile Historic Park.** SCFD Free Day Dec. 22. Open Wed–Sun, 10am–4pm. 715 S. Forest St. [fourmilepark.org](#)

**History Colorado.** 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.** Tue–Sun, 10am–5pm. 1340 Pennsylvania St. [mollybrown.org](#)

**Museo de las Americas.** Free 1st Fridays and always free for 13 and under. Tue–Fri, noon–6pm. Sat, noon–5pm. Closed Mon & Sun. 861 Santa Fe Dr. [museo.org](#)

**Museum for Black Girls.** Hours: Wed. 11am–6pm (half price), Th–Sun, 11am–7pm. 500 16th Street Mall. Tickets at [themuseumforblackgirls.com](#)

**Museum of Contemporary Art Denver.** Always free for kids 18 and under and healthcare workers. 1¢ admission 1st Sat. of the month. 1485 Delgany St. [mcadenver.org](#)

**Museum of Illusions Denver.** Photos with Santa Dec. 18 & 19 from 10am–2pm. 951 16th St Mall. [moidenver.com](#)

**National Ballpark Museum.** 1940 Blake St. Check for days/hours at [ballparkmuseum.com](#)

**The Urban Farm.** Open to the public Saturdays only from 9am–1pm. 10200 Smith Rd. [theurbanfarm.org](#)

**Wings Over the Rockies Museum.** 7711 East Academy Blvd. [wingsmuseum.org](#)

## PERFORMANCE/THEATRE

**12/5 to 12/24—SIX.** The SIX wives of Henry VIII take the microphone to remix 500 years of historical heartbreak into a Euphoric Celebration of 21st century girl power. Buell Theatre. [denvercenter.org](#)

**12/6 to 12/23—Yippee Ki Yay—The Die Hard Parody.** Acclaimed retelling of classic film Die Hard from Richard Marsh-Fringe First-winner, London poetry slam champion. Galleria Theatre. [denvercenter.org](#)

**12/9 Saturday—Candlelight: The Best of Hans Zimmer.** Candlelight concert in an awe-inspiring location. St Cajetan’s, 101 Lawrence Way. [eventvesta.com/events/52676/tickets](#)

**Through 12/9—Letters of Suresh.** A moving and engaging play of second chances. Curious Theatre Company, 1080 Acoma St. [curioustheatre.org](#)

**12/10 Sunday—The Velveteen Rabbit.** Narrated by Hazel Miller and performed with Stratus Chamber Orchestra. 5000 E Alameda Ave. [augustanaarts.org](#)

**12/15 & 12/16—Sarah of the Opera.** A one person Phantom parody. 10255 E 25th Ave, Ste 5, Aurora. Tickets at [roaminggnometheatre.com](#)

**Through 12/17—The Odd Couple.** Our favorite ‘Odd Couple’ is getting even more odd. The John Hand Theater, 7653 E. 1st Pl. [firehousetheatercompany.com](#)

**Through 12/23—Ballet Ariel Presents The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe.** Three Denver area locations. Tickets at [balletariel.org](#)

**Through 12/31—Rodgers and Hammerstein’s Cinderella.** A stylish, contemporary take of the fairy tale classic. 6901 Wadsworth Blvd, Arvada. [www.cli.re/44806-rodgers-and-hammersteins-cinderella](#)

### GREEN AND SUSTAINABILITY EVENTS

**12/1 to 12/31—Recycle Your Holiday Lights.** Don’t throw out your broken or tangled holiday lights, recycle them for free. Two locations: Cherry Creek Recycling Drop-off, S. Quebec St. and E. Cherry or Blue Star Recyclers, 953 Decatur St. For hours and more details, go to [denvergov.org/lightrecycle](#)

**12/2 to 12/18—Handmade Gift Classes.** Learn new skills and create one-of-a-kind, sustainable gifts for your loved ones this holiday season at the Denver Tool Library. 555 Santa Fe Dr. Register at [denvertoolibrary.org](#)

**12/7 Thursday—Going Green for the Holidays.** Discover ethical shopping ideas, embrace eco-friendly gift-wrapping techniques, and learn how to plan a waste-free holiday meal. Plus a holiday decoration swap. 11am. Center for Community, Room S350, 2249 Williard Dr, Boulder. [https://calendar.colorado.edu/event/going\\_green\\_for\\_the\\_holidays](https://calendar.colorado.edu/event/going_green_for_the_holidays)

**12/12 Tuesday—Zero Waste Cooking and History Workshop.** Learn the history of the zero-waste movement acquire mindful consumption habits and eco-friendly cooking techniques. 6–8pm. CSU Spur, 4777 National Western Dr. Free event, registration is required at [historycolorado.org](#)

**12/26 to 1/6/24—Electronics Recycling Drop-off Event.** \$5 car/individual for small load (one standard grocery bag) or \$10 for anything larger. Additional charges for some items. Facility open M–F, 8am–4:30pm, Sat. 10am–2pm. Not collecting on 12/30, 12/31, or 1/1/24. Techno Rescue, 3251 Lewiston St, Suite 10. More info at [auroragov.org/recycle](#)

**1/2/24 to 1/31/24—Recycle Your Holiday Lights.** Remove all decorations/lights and drop your tree off to be recycled at several Denver sites open weekdays and weekends. For hours and more locations, go to [denvergov.org/treecycle](#)

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Bánh & Butter Bakery Café owner Thoa Nguyen is one of 12 contestants competing on Food Network's Holiday Baking Championship season 10. The show's finale airs on Dec. 18.

*By Courtney Drake-McDonough*

It was an Instagram post showing a Yule log that got the attention of the team behind Food Network's 2023 "Holiday Baking Championship." They called Bánh & Butter Bakery Café on East Colfax to ask who the baker was behind the classic and ambitious holiday dessert. Thoa Nguyen, the baker and owner of the shop serving Asian-French inspired pastries, sandwiches, coffee, milk teas and other specialty drinks, answered the phone but was skeptical when they offered her the chance to be a contestant on the show.

A couple years prior, Nguyen had the opportunity to be on another competitive cooking show. “Out of nowhere, they sent me home after flying me out and gave me no reason as to why they were sending me home without getting to compete,” says Nguyen. “That was very heartbreaking. I didn’t even get a chance to show myself, so I had my guard up.”

When the team told her that this appearance was a sure thing, Nguyen allowed herself to let the excitement sink in.

The season of “Holiday Baking Championship” started airing on Nov. 8 and runs through mid-December. As of press time, the results weren’t known and

Nguyen couldn't say a word despite the series being filmed and completed last spring. Even with that timing, Nguyen says it wasn't hard to get in the right mindset because the show's set was decorated for the holiday season. When she was not in the kitchen competing, there were frequent interviews filmed with each contestant. The purpose of the interviews was to let the viewers learn about the contestants and become engaged with the show, but Nguyen says that the interviews were tiring and time-consuming.

“That was an everyday step—you do the interview, you compete, you continue to do interviews as you’re baking. And then you do more interviews of how you felt about the competition,” she says. “They want to tell your storyline of why you made what you did, why you picked the flavors, and why you chose to bake with that style.”

Nguyen describes the overall experience as being fun, but says things got stressful when time was counting down and contestants weren't sure they'd complete the project. Under normal circumstances, Nguyen says she can plan flavor profiles and baking designs well in advance. But during the competition,

# East Colfax Chef Competes on Holiday Baking Show

she had to think on the fly, which she describes as “terrifying.”

"You don't want to be the first to be sent home, or to be sent home at all, and you really want to show people what you can do and that you're in it to win," she says. "It's \$25,000 on the line, and for me that's life-changing. The pressure is real going into this."

Nguyen says it was helpful that she and her fellow contestants became good friends and were supportive of each other. They would help each other get refocused by remembering why they were there.

"You get back into a mode of knowing you've done this for years—you can do this. So then you get a little bit of confidence and you start to have fun," she says.

The contestants' shared interest in baking also helped them bond during the competition. That, and spending all their time together while being away from family and friends.

After Holiday Baking Championship was completed, Nguyen was happy to return home and back to work at Bánh & Butter, which she opened in 2022. There, she's able to combine her Vietnamese heritage with her culinary

training in France by baking foods in an Asian-French style.

Nguyen says that her work as a baker has benefited from her appearance on the show, including the confidence she gained during the competition. "I'm constantly feeling innovative, and every time an idea comes, I try to execute it," says Nguyen. "But the show has really impacted my way of trying to not go overboard. Sometimes simple is better."

The experience has also helped Nguyen continue pursuing her dreams, which entail being the owner for Bánh & Butter while also being a chef consultant for other businesses. She especially wants to keep supporting the growth and development of the East Colfax neighborhood.

“Because of how community-oriented I am, I put myself in a situation to be vulnerable in front of a national television audience, and to be able to help improve this community,” says Nguyen. “The ultimate goal for doing all this was to have a successful business so that my team can have a secure job and livelihood.”

Bánh & Butter Bakery Café is located at 9935 East Colfax Avenue in Aurora. The website is: [www.banhandbutter.com](http://www.banhandbutter.com).



Some everyday offerings from Bánh & Butter Bakery Café include sandwiches like the smoked salmon on everything croissant (left), and various cruffins such as this pistachio raspberry option (right).



Bánh & Butter Bakery Cafe offers various holiday treats, including yule log cakes (left) for Christmas and a rainbow crepe cake (right) for Pride Month.

A group of children in red shirts are climbing a rock wall. A green diagonal overlay covers the right side of the image, containing promotional text and graphics. The text reads: "GIVE THE GIFT OF CLIMBING!" in large white letters with a green outline. Below it, in white text, is "Gifts for Every Budget and Every Climber In Your Life Through 12/25.". Further down, it says "Super Holiday Membership and Punch Pass Specials End 12/25/2023". At the bottom left of the green area is a circular logo with a mountain peak and a Santa hat. At the bottom right are two QR codes. The left QR code is labeled "MAP IT!" and the right QR code is labeled "BUY ONLINE!".



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# NEWS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

## MASTER COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION DECEMBER 2023

### Thank you Central Park for a wonderful 2023!



#### ANNUAL MEMBERS MEETING

*Wednesday, December 13th, 6–8pm, The Cube*

Notice is hereby given that the 2023 ANNUAL MEMBERS' MEETING and DELEGATE ELECTION for THE MASTER COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION, INC. (the "MCA") will be held on WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2023, AT 6:00 PM, at THE CUBE, 8371 E Northfield Blvd. Members are encouraged to attend in person but can also join and observe virtually via [www.mca80238.com](http://www.mca80238.com). This meeting serves as the annual election of all ELEVEN (11) community delegates for the consecutive year.

The MCA is a 501(c) 4 community development organization whose mission is to manage Denver's Historic Airport District through comprehensive programs, events, and facilities maintenance. All owners of real property located within the boundaries of the Central Park development are automatically members of the MCA consistent with Article 33.3 Colorado Common Interest Act and support its mission through monthly assess-

ments levied to all property within the neighborhood boundaries.

A meeting notice and Delegate ballot will be mailed to Members directly. The complete meeting packet will be available and can be printed from the MCA website 48 hours prior to the meeting at [www.mca80238.com](http://www.mca80238.com). Meeting packets will contain the meeting agenda, previous Executive Board minutes, 2023 year-end projection, 2024 Assessment Schedule and Operating Budget, as well as any additional pertinent meeting information. If you do not have internet access, please contact us at 303.388.0724 to request a copy of the above information be sent by mail.

#### ACTIVE MINDS: Social Media

*Thursday, December 14th, 1–2pm. Sam Gary Library*

Social Media—the use of dedicated websites or apps to connect people and share information—has exploded over the past two decades. Sites like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp and many others have become part

of modern culture worldwide, for better and for worse. Join Active Minds as we explain social media, explore its pros and cons, and discuss its dramatic impact on society, institutions, politics, nations, and individuals.

#### ACTIVE MINDS: Van Gogh

*Thursday, December 28th, 1–2pm. Sam Gary Library*

Join Active Minds for a journey into the life and art of Vincent Van Gogh, whose painting career spanned only 10 years, during which time he produced over 900 paintings, selling only one. We will explore the many challenges of his relatively short and troubled life as well as explore the mystery of his death and the lasting impact of his art.

Jennifer Olsen  
Communications Manager  
[Jolsen@mca80238.com](mailto:Jolsen@mca80238.com)



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