

Front Porch

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NORTHEAST DENVER

JUNE 2024

Climate Film Series Inspires Hope and Action



Front Porch photo by Christie Gosch

Taylor Moellers, engagement lead with the Denver Office of Climate, Action, Sustainability, and Resiliency, speaks to those who gathered to watch *The Week*, a documentary series on the climate crisis. Along with Citizens Climate Lobby, Save the Aurora Reservoir, and Go Electric Colorado, Moellers offered ideas for climate action.

The Central Park MCA and *Front Porch* hosted a distinctively hopeful event on the climate crisis in May. Attendees gathered three nights in a row to view the climate action documentary series *The Week* before breaking into groups to process the reality of the crisis and, ultimately, to brainstorm actionable solutions they could implement individually and in their communities. *Story by Sarah Huber on page 8.*

Packed Legislative Session Ends with Significant Accomplishments

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Energy was the focus of several bills in the 2024 Colorado legislative session, including one that set new emissions standards and industry regulation practices and another that assessed a fee on oil and gas production. Other legislation sought to bring relief from high property taxes and increased support for education. In all, 525 bills were passed during the very busy session. *Story by Todd Engdahl on page 6.*

Empathy and Inclusion for the LGBTQ Community

A weekly meeting of women in Denver focuses on friendship, support, and acceptance for the LGBTQ community. *Story by Linda Kotsaftis on page 14.*



Image courtesy of The Center on Colfax

Deprived of Commencement Four Years Ago, These High School Grads Have Moved On

How some young people persevered despite onerous Covid restrictions. *Story by Mary Jo Brooks on page 4.*

Front Porch

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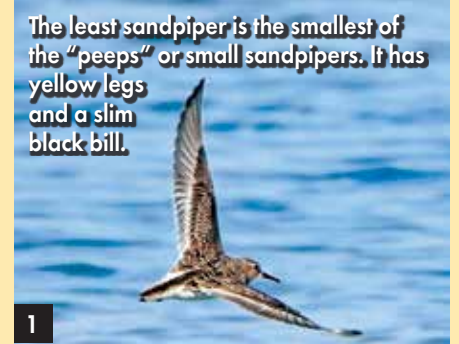
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Small, Medium, and Large Shorebirds

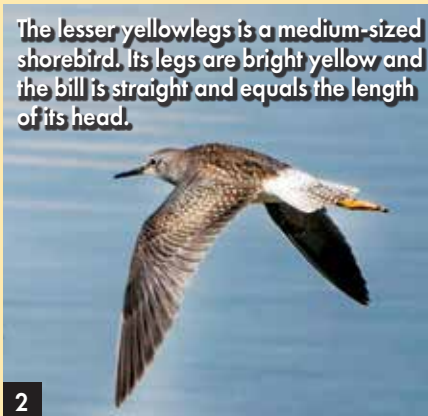
As the weather warms, the shorebirds appear on sandbars and mudflats. They come in various sizes—small, medium, and large. At the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge's Lake Ladora, the least sandpiper, lesser yellowlegs, and willet gather and share the shoreline.



Along a mudflat, a willet (right) walks past a stationary lesser yellowlegs.



The least sandpiper is the smallest of the "peeps" or small sandpipers. It has yellow legs and a slim black bill.



The lesser yellowlegs is a medium-sized shorebird. Its legs are bright yellow and the bill is straight and equals the length of its head.



The willet is the largest of the three. A chunky gray/brown bird, its wings show striking black and white in flight.

1. Least sandpiper: length: 5.1-5.9 inches, weight: 0.7-1.1 ounces, wingspan: 10.6-11.0 inches.
2. Lesser yellowlegs: length: 9.1-10.6 inches, weight: 2.8-3.2 ounces, wingspan: 23.2-25.2 inches.
3. Willet: length: 13.0-16.1 inches, weight: 7.0-11.6 ounces, wingspan: 27.6 inches.

Bird Walks June 1 and July 6. Two options: 7:30–10am or 8–10am (choose a 2-hour or a 2.5-hour walk.) Both walks are free, but you must RSVP at blufflake.org/birdwatching. 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.

Editor's Note:

The May issue of *Front Porch* featured a story about the popularity of running clubs. Since the story was published, Glissade Coffee Company announced the closure of the business

and the cancellation of its running club. The owners of Glissade say the family is "navigating health issues and have made the difficult decision to close indefinitely."

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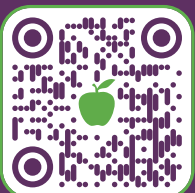


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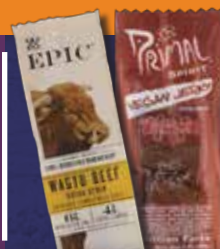
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Deprived of Commencement Four Years Ago, These High School Grads Have Moved On



Front Porch photo by Christie Gosch

Jimena Cristerna planned to become the first in her family to graduate from college, but after a year of online classes, she took a break to become a swim teacher and coach, where she says she found her true passion.

By Mary Jo Brooks

On a chilly, overcast day in May, more than 30,000 people filled Folsom Field to celebrate commencement at the University of Colorado Boulder. Amid the graduates were friends and family of Marc Witter, who grew up in Park Hill and had a very different kind of graduation four years ago from East High School.

He, and so many others like him, were deprived of a normal graduation ceremony because of the Covid pandemic. At East, graduates had a “drive-by” celebration to receive diplomas, but many other traditional senior activities were canceled.



Marc Witter graduated from the Univ. of Colorado Boulder in May.

“I was in the middle of looking for a suit for prom. I had a senior trip all planned. And none of it happened,” says Witter.

Like many students,

Witter spent the spring and summer of 2020 isolated with his family, so in the fall he was eager to move into a dorm at CU. Even with pandemic restrictions, “college was still going to mean more freedom than living at home.”

He had a few in-person classes, but most were virtual, including one lecture class that had 600 people on Zoom. “That was not the best learning environment,” he concedes. Despite those challenges, Witter graduated with a degree in environmental sciences and hopes to find work with an environmental consulting firm.

Four years ago, Lydia Loof graduated from George Washington High School via a video ceremony that featured pre-recorded speeches from students and teachers. Like Witter, she was relieved to leave for college after a summer of isolation. “I was excited to meet new people,” says Loof. But doing so was challenging at Amherst College in Massachusetts because of pandemic rules.

“I think for a lot of freshmen, eating in the dining hall is how you make friends, but we weren’t allowed to do that. We had to schedule a time to pick up our



Lydia Loof graduated from Amherst with a biology degree.

food and then eat elsewhere.” Still, she considers herself lucky. “I do think I was able to make really close friends my freshman year because there wasn’t a whole lot for us to do, so that was a silver lining for me,” says Loof, who graduated in late May with a biology degree and will work for a Colorado non-profit doing environmental work this summer.

Ivan Tochimani-Hernandez’s DSST Montview graduation ceremony took place at a drive-in movie theater where graduates sat in cars with their families and watched pre-recorded videos. As a self-described “first generation, low-income person of color,” he experienced “a huge culture shock” when he arrived at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire.

He was also confronted with extremely strict Covid rules. “We talk about how we’re the ‘lost’ Dartmouth class. It was really difficult for us to connect as a class,” says Tochimani-Hernandez. All lectures were on Zoom and students were not allowed to congregate. “We were heavily policed. I was once walking with my friends outside and security came up to us and said ‘what are you doing out here?’ It was incredibly frustrating not to be able to step outside to get some fresh air.”



Ivan Tochimani-Hernandez plans to graduate from Dartmouth in June.

He says the stress of Covid and the restrictions took a terrible toll on students. “We all felt isolated. People weren’t sleeping because of the paranoia that security officers might accuse you of breaking a Covid policy and then send you back home,” says Tochimani-Hernandez. “We had three suicides

in my class our freshman year. That was incredibly damaging for our class. It’s not something that you can ever really recover from.”

Tochimani-Hernandez says things were better his sophomore year when he participated in a 10-week program studying geology in different regions from Canada to Arizona and his junior year when he studied in the Czech Republic. He will graduate from Dartmouth in early June with a degree in earth sciences and plans to attend the University of Utah in the fall for a master’s degree.

Jimena Cristerna was also on-track to be the first in her family to graduate from college, when Covid shut down senior year activities at George Washington. In the fall of 2020, she attended Metropolitan State University of Denver, where she had been offered a full-ride scholarship. But she says it was very difficult. “I struggled learning online at Metro. At GW, I mostly got straight A’s, but at Metro, I was getting C’s and D’s. And then my grandparents in Mexico died and I decided to take a break from college.”

She helped care for her disabled sister, took on some odd jobs, and then found her calling teaching and coaching swimming. She’s an assistant coach for the Swim Dogs swimming club and helps coach the George Washington swim team. Looking back on her journey over the past four years, she says, “I respect higher education and what it’s done for people but I needed to navigate a different path. I think Covid made me more true to myself.” Cristerna says she feels very fulfilled working with children and helping them fuel a passion. “I felt like I was kind of pushed into a box in high school and then going to college was another box. Now I’m existing outside the box.”

All of the students who spoke to *Front Porch* said they were glad to have the pandemic years behind them, even as some of its impacts linger. “I think the lack of closure with my high school years has made me more aware of taking advantage of every moment of life because you just don’t know if something is going to happen and change everything,” says Witter.

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SB 24-233 was passed into law on the final day of this year's session. The bipartisan bill will reduce property tax valuations, saving the average homeowner roughly \$500 a year.

By Todd Engdahl

The 2024 Colorado legislative session made historic achievements on taxation, support of education, transportation funding, and energy development and air quality.

Work on state income taxes and local property taxes were bipartisan efforts, while legislation on transportation and energy development were less so.

And bills on land use and housing and on gun control were driven by the Democratic majorities in both chambers.

Here's a quick look at the top issues.

Local Property Taxes

Introduced May 6 and finally passed in the waning hours of the last day, May 8, SB 24-233 reduces valuations for both residential and commercial property, makes other changes in the tax system, and creates separate valuation systems for school districts and for all other local governments. Proponents hope the bill will mollify conservative interest groups that have been pushing ballot measures that could damage state and local finances. But leaders of those groups have said they're keeping their options open.

State Taxes

Gov. Jared Polis has long advocated for reducing state income tax rates. Democratic legislators have resisted that

idea while at the same time thinking up creative ways for tapping the TABOR surplus to fund policy goals through mechanisms such as tax credits. SB 24-228 tweaks the methods used to pay TABOR refunds, starting with the 2023-24 surplus, by reinstating temporary income tax rate cuts.

Other bills that passed will have the effect of reducing the TABOR surplus. Among them are \$33.8 million in senior tax rebates (HB 24-1052); a \$136 million expansion of the earned income tax credit for lower-income taxpayers (HB 24-1134), and up to \$684 million for other credits for lower-income Coloradans with children (HB 24-1311).

Energy Development and Transportation Funding

Polis brokered a deal under which Democratic legislators killed some air quality bills the oil and gas industry didn't like in exchange for the industry pulling the plug on some threatened ballot measures. Lawmakers did manage to pass SB 24-229, which sets some new emissions standards and industry regulation practices, and SB 24-230, which assesses a fee on oil and gas production. That's projected to raise \$109 million—to be used mostly for transportation projects.

Packed Legislative Session

Here's a look at the other big issues.

Education Funding

House Speaker Julie McCluskie did some masterful deal-making to pass a major reform of the state's K-12 funding formula—a goal that has eluded legislators for years.

McCluskie's HB 24-1448 basically reorders and adjusts the factors that are used to calculate the customized amounts of per-student funding allocated to individual districts. The intention is to direct more funding to at-risk students. The plan would increase overall K-12 spending by \$571.3 million by 2030-31.

The other signal accomplishment of 2024 was passage of a 2024-25 school funding package (HB 24-1430 and SB 24-188) that doesn't include use of the Budget Stabilization Factor to trim school funding. Total K-12 funding next year will be \$9.73 billion, \$561.7 million higher than this school year's funding.

Land Use and Housing Costs

The failure of Polis' single, omnibus land use bill in 2023 caused a shift of tactics for the 2024 session, but multiple bills on the issue were introduced and passed this year. Here's a look at key bills:

- HB 24-1313—This complex measure, intended to encourage development of transit-oriented housing, was the centerpiece of the housing legislation.
- HB 24-1007—This ban on local laws setting residential occupancy limits was one of the first housing bills to pass.
- HB 24-1152—Some local governments will have to ease restrictions on construction of accessory dwelling units under this bill.
- HB 24-1098—Renters will gain greater protection against evictions under this bill.
- SB 24-094—This measure sets standards for habitability of rental units.
- HB 24-1304—This proposal to limit the power of local governments to require parking in residential developments was significantly watered down.

There also were successful bills to limit the powers of homeowners' associations. But attempts to change construction defects laws failed.

Gun Control

Legislative Democrats moved aggressively on this issue, but with somewhat mixed success.

The highest profile measure, the HB 24-1292 proposed ban on assault weapons, was killed by its Senate sponsor when it became clear it wouldn't pass.

The most sweeping proposal, SB 24-131, originally proposed a ban on carrying weapons in almost any public space. It passed after being narrowed to a ban on carrying weapons in some government buildings.

Bills that passed included a requirement for training to get concealed carry permits (HB 24-1174), secure storage of guns in vehicles (HB 24-1348), and licensing requirements for firearms dealers (HB 24-1353).

And Then There's The Budget

The state budget for next year includes \$42.88 billion in total spending, including \$16 billion from the tax-supported General Fund, \$11.52 billion cash funds, and \$12.52 billion federal funds.

Key takeaways from the budget include:

- Most of the increase went to medical and human services programs.
- A 3 percent raise for state employees, along with approval of a step merit pay system.
- A 2 percent increase in the rates paid to medical professionals and others who provide services to the state.

The committee funded higher education more generously than the governor had requested, and resident tuition increases were capped at 3 percent and non-resident at 4 percent.

Other Issues and Bills

As happens every year, lawmakers pack as many issues as they can into their 120-day session. Here are some other bills of interest that passed:

Driving while texting – SB 24-065 prohibits use of cell phones while driving, with exceptions for hands-free devices.

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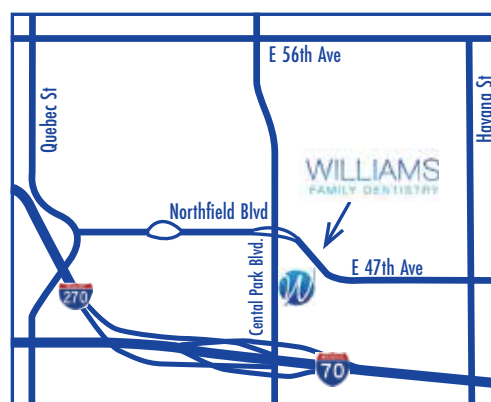


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Ends with Significant Accomplishments

Front Range rail – SB 24-184 would increase rental car fees to raise about \$55 million a year for transit projects.

Immigrant aid – Hotly contested in the session’s final days, HB 24-1280 establishes grants for community organizations that help integrate immigrants.

Mortuary regulation – In response to recent scandals, SB 24-173 establishes state regulations of funeral directors and other mortuary workers.

Motorcycles – SB 24-079 will allow motorcycles to “lane split” in certain circumstances.

Right to repair – HB 24-1121 would require companies to make it easier for customers to repair appliances and devices.

Student preferred names – HB 24-1039 requires schools to use students’ preferred names even when they haven’t been changed legally.

And here a few of the notable measures that didn’t make it:

Police Conduct—HB 24-1460 would have strengthened existing laws on police misconduct but died in a rare tie vote on the House floor.

Regional Transportation District (RTD)—HB 24-1447 started as a bold plan to reform the transit agency and more closely integrate it into state transportation planning but went through multiple amendments and still died.

Safe Injection Sites—HB 24-1028 would have allowed cities to allow such centers to open.

The Stats

The 2024 legislative session saw 705 bills introduced, 472 in the House and 233 in the Senate, a high for recent years. Here’s how they sorted out:

- 525 bills were passed
- 105 bills were postponed indefinitely, Capitol jargon for defeated
- 75 bills died because they hadn’t been acted on when the legislature adjourned or were otherwise killed

The Northeast Denver delegation

Northeast Denver’s five legislators, all Democrats, played key roles in the 2024 session.

Rep. Jennifer Bacon (House District 7) was assistant majority leader and a prime sponsor of the school finance reform bill. She also was a prime sponsor of the police whistle-blower bill that died on the House floor.

Sen. James Coleman (Senate District 33) spent a lot of time presiding over Senate debates as president pro tempore and also was a prime sponsor of one of the tax credit bills aimed at helping lower-income taxpayers.

Sen. Chris Hansen (Senate District 31) was one of the main architects and dealmakers on the property tax reform bill.

Rep. Leslie Herod (House District 8) is the only member of the delegation who won’t be back because she’s term limited. She was a prime sponsor of the failed police whistle-blower bill but also of a successful bill to regulate police use of prone restraint (HB 24-1372).

Rep. Steven Woodrow (House District 60) was a prime sponsor of the transit-oriented development bill.

Todd Engdahl is founder of Capitol Editorial Services, which provides private clients with research, reports and news on the state budget and other issues at the legislature. He’s a former executive city editor of The Denver Post, launched DenverPost.com and was co-founder of the website Education News Colorado.



House Speaker Julie McCluskie was able to pass new legislation that would increase overall K-12 spending by \$571.3 million by 2030-31.

Dr. Noah would like to remind everyone to use sunscreen when you’re out enjoying the sunshine this summer!

(CKP Disclaimer: Please do not ever look directly at the sun. Dr. Noah is wearing special viewing glasses for the eclipse.) 😊

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Climate Film Series



Front Porch photo by Christie Gosch

After watching a one-hour documentary about the climate crisis each evening, community members divided into groups to ponder questions and, on the final night, to brainstorm actionable and hopeful solutions that could be implemented in their homes, communities, workplaces and through government legislation and activism.

By Sarah Huber

Community members gathering to learn more about the climate crisis went home with “something that’s not usually part of the climate discussion,” says Central Park resident Marita Franzke. “That’s hope.”

The three-night event in May featured *The Week* documentary series on the climate and was sponsored by the Central Park MCA and *Front Porch*. Each evening

participants viewed one of the films in the series before breaking into groups to discuss the ramifications of climate change and, after the final session, brainstorm actionable solutions. The first night focused on the dire news of the crisis, the second delved into how the planet reached this point, and the third explored how to mitigate or even reverse the crisis.



Frederic Laloux and Helene Gerin were motivated to produce *The Week* out of concern for their children’s future amidst the climate crisis. Photo courtesy of *The Week*

“I really came for the hope and the promise of this to bring

individual actions into community actions,” Franzke says. “It’s very hard to feel like you’re making an impact if you don’t see that others are doing something similar, that together it counts.”

Tackling climate change hopefully and in community was the goal of the event, says Christie Gosch, design editor at *Front Porch*, who spearheaded the series. “I feel like there are other people who are struggling with this issue, and this was an opportunity to bring our community together to learn and to be spurred on in their own actions, instead of trying to do this in isolation,” she says.

The Week was produced by Frederic Laloux and Helene Gerin, a husband-wife team who, during the Covid pandemic, dug into the science behind the climate crisis out of concern for their children’s future. While Laloux and Ger-

in initially created the series for friends and family, *The Week* has now been presented to thousands of communities, clubs, and workplaces around the world.

The communal focus of the series energized Erika Walker of Central Park to take the message of “what individuals in community can do about the crisis” back to her church, where she heads a climate alliance. She says, “So often we just hear the bad news. This was saying ‘and find what brings you joy and do that.’ There’s something for everyone to do if we want to tip the scales.”

Some attendees were motivated to jump into quick-to-implement actions, such as installing a heat pump, purchasing items second-hand, using less plastic, or investing in an electric vehicle. Others planned to research grant options for accelerated reforestation or achieving city benchmarks on composting. “[*The Week*] lit a fire to get involved,” says Scott Bulfin, who lives in Central Park. “We can start local and have it grow into Central Park being an example for other neighborhoods in Denver.”

The Week presented five impact areas for climate action: home, workplace, community, government and politics, and activism. Mary Collins, a Central Park resident involved with Moms Demand Action, notes, “Even though I’ve been an activist, the series helped me realize I can do something more than just hoping that the government or oil companies will do more or do what needs to be done.”

Local climate action groups, including Citizens Climate Lobby, Save the Aurora Reservoir, and the Denver Office of Climate, Action, Sustainability, and Resiliency, were on hand with ideas for climate action. Christiana Johnson of Citizens Climate Lobby urged “ordinary people to use their voice to lead to the adoption of policies that are solutions



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for climate change.” Anne Espenan of Bonverts Hydroponic Farms distributed samples of her vegetables and explained how sustainable farming could significantly turn around the climate crisis.

Go Electric Colorado co-founder Julia Moravski encouraged attendees to register for a free consultation on home electrification. “We want to accelerate the adoption of green technology,” she says,

adding, “The climate crisis is an existential crisis. I’m honestly not sure if humans will be around in 20 or 30 years if we stay on this trajectory with fossil fuels and carbon emissions—and if we don’t do what these movies advise us to do.”

For more information about *The Week*, go to www.theweek.ooo. To schedule your free electrification consultation, go to goelectriccolorado.org

Top 10 most Impactful Climate Actions from The Week

(in no particular order)

1. Join or launch an initiative in your workplace
2. Join a group doing activism
3. For the next 10 years, vote at all levels for the most ambitious climate candidates
4. Buy everything second hand/used
5. Switch to green electricity
6. Insulate your home/condo
7. Eat less meat, consume more plants
8. Move your banking and any investments to benefit regeneration
9. Switch to public transport/bicycle/electric car
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Know Your Ozone

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SimpleStepsBetterAir.org

Q. What is the Front Range’s most pressing air quality problem?

A. Ground-level ozone is an odorless and invisible pollutant. It forms when volatile organic compounds and nitrogen oxides, mostly from fossil fuel emissions, combine with heat and sunlight.

Q. Why does this matter?

A. Ozone levels peak yearly during the summer, often on sunny days when Coloradans love to be outdoors. It impacts our health and environment, and is a leading cause of respiratory issues.

Q. What about the ozone layer?

A. Ozone (O₃) is a gas molecule composed of three oxygen atoms. High up in the atmosphere, the ozone layer is key and offers protection from the sun’s ultraviolet radiation. But breathing in ground-level ozone irritates throats and lungs, increases the susceptibility to respiratory infections, and exacerbates ailments like asthma.

Q. Who is most impacted?

A. People most impacted by this air pollution are the elderly, those with respiratory conditions, outdoor workers and athletes, and especially children, whose lungs are still developing and are more likely to be active outdoors.

Q. What can you do?

1. Reduce emissions to help keep ozone levels low, supporting your health and your community’s.
2. Actively protect your health by avoiding heavy outdoor exercise or exertion between noon and 8pm, especially on ozone alert days.
3. Know when ozone is bad by signing up for summer ozone alerts.

Text “BetterAirCO” to 21000 or visit SimpleStepsBetterAir.org to sign up for text or email ozone alerts from the Regional Air Quality Council (RAQC) and Simple Steps. Better Air

Go wild for Front Range air quality.

Walk, bike, or scoot to reduce ground-level ozone.



Ozone, created from pollutants like car exhaust, is the Front Range’s biggest air quality issue and a leading cause of respiratory problems.

Know when it matters most: text “**BETTERAIRCO**” to **21000** to sign up for ozone alerts.



liffe consistently outperforms other DPS schools in test scores and was named a Blue Ribbon School in 2020 by the U.S. Department of Education.



Story by Mary Jo Brooks and Linda Kotsaftis

1 Northeast Denver Innovation Zone to End

The Northeast Denver Innovation Zone, which oversees McAuliffe International, McAuliffe Manual, and Swigert International schools, will dissolve on June 30. In a letter to parents and staff, the zone's board of directors said that "the DPS philosophy on innovation zones has changed significantly in the last three years creating an uncertain environment to operate."

The innovation zone was created to give traditional public schools more flexibility in how they function in order to better serve students, but in recent years, innovation leaders often found themselves at odds with the DPS superintendent and board members. McAuliffe International and McAuliffe Manual will become innovation schools within DPS while Swigert will try to join the Luminary Learning Network, Denver's last remaining innovation zone.

McAuliffe International will be allowed to operate under its own innovation plan, which was approved unanimously by the school board on May 16. The school's innovation model will continue with an extended school year calendar, an extended school day, unique curriculum, and more professional development for teachers than at other schools. McAu-



Ed Dwight shown here in his Park Hill art studio in March 2023.

2 Park Hill's Ed Dwight Makes Historic Flight

Sixty years after he was stymied on the path to becoming the nation's first Black astronaut, Park Hill resident Ed Dwight finally made it into space. The flight in May lasted 9 minutes and 53 seconds and at age 90, Dwight is now the oldest person to travel in space. After emerging from the Blue Origin capsule, he grinned broadly and said "Long time coming." Last year, Dwight told *Front Porch* he left NASA in 1966 after facing racism. He went on to become a celebrated artist showcasing Black history, including the Martin Luther King, Jr. sculpture in City Park.

3 Portable Toilets Moved Thanks to a Front Porch Reader

A reader notified *Front Porch* about portable toilets parked in the disabled parking area at Central Park. *Front Porch* notified Denver parks and recreation marketing and communications director Yolanda Quesada, who responded that the toilets would be moved. Two days later they were relocated to a non-restricted area. *Front Porch* encourages readers to email askfrontporch@frontporchne.com with questions about neighborhood concerns.

4 A Crackdown on Shoplifting in Northeast Denver

The Denver Police Department conducted a retail theft prevention operation "To Catch a Thief" at The Shops at Northfield and the surrounding area during the spring. Police collaborated with store managers and security to catch shoplifters who were trying to flee stores. Uniformed and undercover officers worked on the operation and arrested four people for felony-level theft. One suspect was linked to thefts at Chery Creek Mall.

During the past few months, the DPD District 5 investigative team also arrested five suspects described as prolific shoplifters who were seen so many times they were given informal monikers: "The Trash Bag Bandit," who always took the trash bag from the shopping center's janitor's cart to steal, "Minute Man," who was in and out of a store in 60 seconds and "Sleeper," who was found sleeping in the shopping center on the day of a crime.

5 Aurora Water Work Closes Access to 25th Ave.

Aurora Water is working on a two-month project to replace a water line and fire hydrants along East 25th Ave. in Northwest Aurora. In a letter to residents, the department says there will be disruptions in water service lasting between 30 minutes and four hours. The road will be closed in segments between South Peoria St. and South Havana St. throughout the project. Residents are being alerted to the work through hang tag notices and there are "no parking" and road closure signs in the construction area.



A sign along East 25th Ave. in Northwest Aurora alerts people of roadwork and closures in the area.

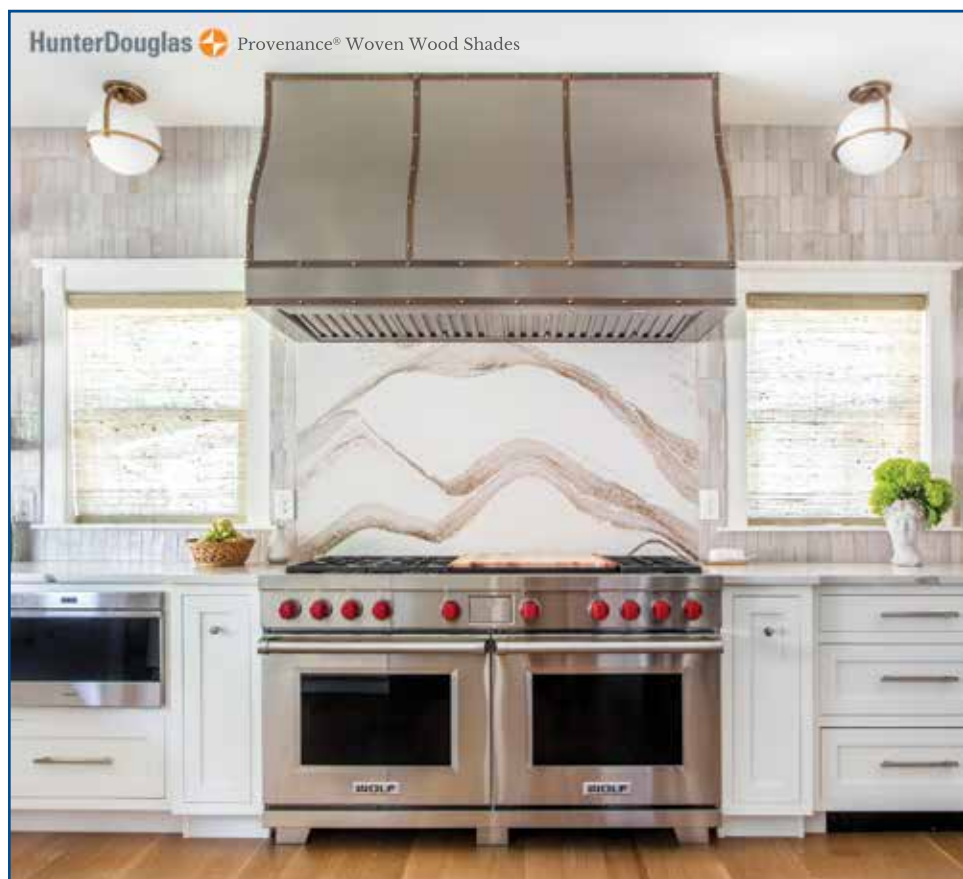
6 Mayor's Plans for Neighborhood Safety and Downtown Growth

Because the downtown area has been slower to recover from the pandemic than some other parts of Denver, Mayor Mike Johnston is hoping to accelerate economic growth by investing more than \$500 million over the next decade.

The money will come from the "Downtown Development Authority" (DDA), a state statute that lets cities fund economic development by using a portion of taxes collected in a central business district. The existing DDA uses money from property and sales taxes from areas around Union Station and Market Street Station to fund improvements there. Johnston hopes to grow the area of tax collection for the new DDA. The earliest funding would be available is 2025.

The mayor also announced a new Office of Neighborhood Safety (ONS). The office will combine existing resources of the Office of Social Equity & Innovation and the Department of Public Safety.

The ONS will work with communities to help identify causes of violence and crime and focus on intervention and solutions through community collaboration. Several City agencies will become part of the office, moving existing employees and budget money.



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The Indie Prof

Film reviews by Vincent Pitorro

We continue to journey around the world with two more Oscar-nominated films this month: the first was nominated for Best International Feature and the second for Best Documentary Feature. These films, filmmakers, and the players therein may not receive red-carpet treatment, but they are more than worthy. These are remarkable stories, remarkable professionals throughout the casts and crews, and remarkable pieces of art. Please enjoy.



Io Capitano

Io Capitano (2023)

Kudos to filmmaker Matteo Garrone for taking a step back and resisting the urge to make a flashy film or a preachy tome or a maudlin tale. The storyline is fairly simple: two Senegalese teen boys, Seydou and Mussa, save money and decide to leave their village for Europe. There, they hope to find fame and/or fortune and send money back to their families. That the boys are *naïve*, fail to listen to warning after warning, and make terrible decisions along the way may be easy for us to spot (from a comfortable, privileged position), but how the director handles that journey is key to the film. Garrone focuses on the humans, the shared beautiful humanity, and the shared ugly humanity. The vacillation between the latter two enmeshes us in the action as though we are passengers on the desert truck or the boat at sea. Soon, we are not judging from privilege, but rather, we are taking the journey with them. This is a film with great empathy.

The beautiful but isolated landscapes we see on that journey mirror the human condition: there might be hope and wonder in those landscapes, but one wrong move and everything is lost. The tiny essence of our collective being plays out in long shots of an overpopulated truck bouncing along an endless desert. Or a bustling boat precariously floating on a horizonless sea. Or a gaggle of workers dwarfed by the

building on which they work. They might be ants. Their existence hangs on a thread, a thread that can be pulled by so many people in so many different ways at so many different junctures. Magic realism can't save them, even if it may belie their sadness for a time.

The humanity plays out on the wonderful and expressive faces of standout Seydou Sarr (as Seydou) and Moustapha Fall (as his

cousin Mussa) but also through so many of the secondary characters who bring the film to life and make us feel as if we are watching a documentary. The sheer breadth of the film, and its multiple scenes of throngs of people—be it the happy village scenes or the masses of humanity on boats and trucks or the demeaned and tortured men in a Libyan prison—is staggering. Garrone brings it all to life in strikingly realistic fashion.

The film has a light touch at times, but don't be fooled—this is no Hollywood-spoiled, sanitized version of desperation and the immigrant experience. It is real. While the ending may seem happy, it is in many senses, just another beginning. We don't get a perfect resolution and tidy closure, but we do get a release. Maybe that is the best outcome we can get on this journey.

Available for rent on streaming outlets.

To Kill a Tiger (2022)

This difficult, upsetting, yet ultimately fulfilling documentary gives us some hope that good, decency, and honor still have a chance to win the day in our world. If the cause is just, if the people are strong, and if enough good people help, then change can happen. Or more to the point, people can *make* change happen. One of those people is Indian farmer Ranjit, who, along with his family, fight an ugly patriarchal system, an insular village, and history itself. The story begins as Ranjit's 13-year-old daughter Kiran (a pseudonym) is gang raped by a group of young men in the rural Indian village where they live. Ranjit refuses to just "let it go" as most villagers wish, and with his daughter and wife firmly behind him, he chooses to press charges and see it through. It may sound simple to us Americans,



but it is way beyond simple in this rural, traditional, and heavily patriarchal society. What ensues is nothing short of remarkable.

First, we should note—as the film takes pains to tell us—that Kiran was 18 years old when the film was made, and she insisted on being filmed. The filmmakers planned to blur her face throughout, but Kiran wished otherwise. This is but one example of her superhuman strength in the face of the waves of pressure, sexism, and tradition against which she fights. Her father began the fight with Kiran's blessing, and because she was a young woman (and thus denied any agency in her society), her father fights *for* her. And what a fight it is.

Ranjit first rebuffs the village elders who urge him to give up the prosecution, and then he rebuffs their offer to marry off Kiran to one of the rapists. He grapples with ostracism, threats of violence, lack of education about the justice system, and even his own doubts about the fight. With the constant urging by his wife and daughter—and the help of Indian women's rights groups—he continues on.

We sometimes forget that documentaries are still *films*, however, and they are artistic constructions. Director Nisha Pahuja doesn't forget this: her camera and compositions are beautiful and expressive, and her editing helps us follow the complex web as it is spun in endless directions. The cross-cutting between the team waiting at the courthouse and the reluctant town manager who is meant to testify is *Godfather*-esque. The entire package is expertly crafted.

In the end, we understand the "tiger" of the title to be not only the male predators who rape Kiran, but also the patriarchy who protect the (male) cubs. Decency, human rights, and justice may slay those tigers after all.

Available on Netflix.

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



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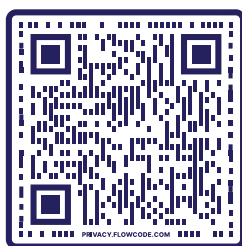
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LOCAL EVENTS

June thru early July

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 and times using contact info provided.

NE DENVER/NW AURORA EVENTS

Fridays—Yoga on the Plaza.

60-minute free class weather permitting. 9am. 8246 Northfield Blvd. The Shops at Northfield. shopsatnorthfield.com

Saturdays—City Park Farmers Market.

100+ local producers, live music, yoga, and a run club. 2551 E Colfax Ave. cityparkfarmersmarket.com

Sundays—City Park Jazz.

6-8pm City Park Pavilion and Bandshell, 2001 Steele St. cityparkjazz.org.
6/2: Kick-off concert: Roka Hueka
6/9: Stafford Hunter & Jazz Explorations
6/16: Mistura Fina
6/23: Zimbira
6/30: Hazel Miller and the Collective

6/1 & 7/6—Bluff Lake Bird Walks.

Two walks at 7:30 and 8am. 11255 E. MLK Jr Blvd. Free but must RSVP at blufflake.org/birdwatching

6/1 & 6/2—Central Park Community Garage Sale.

To register or for maps, go to centralparkgaragesale.com

6/1 & 6/2—Lowry Yard Sale.

More info. at lowrydenver.com

6/1 & 6/2—Park Hill Art Festival

10am-5pm. Painting, sculpture, jewelry, metal, wood, & ceramics. 4819 Montview Blvd. parkhillartfestival.com

6/4 Tuesday—Rainbow Pride Fan Craft.

Paint a folding fan so you can beat the heat at Pride. Ages 18+. 5:30-7pm. Schlessman Library, 100 Poplar St. denverlibrary.org

6/7 Friday—Nature Wonder Walks.

Slow down, breathe, and reconnect. Bluff Lake Nature Center. 7am. 11255 E. MLK Jr Blvd. RSVP at blufflake.org

6/7 Friday—Judi's House Happy Hour in the Garden.

Food and beverage, games and entertainment. 10125 E. 25th Ave, Aurora. judishouse.org

6/7 & 6/21—Movie on The Green.

6/7: *Super Mario Bros.* 6/21: *The Color Purple.* The South Green (29th Ave & Roslyn St.) Dusk. mca80238.com

6/7 Friday—Drag Bingo.

One of a kind bingo night. 8pm. Stanley Marketplace, 2501 N. Dallas St, Aurora. stanleymarketplace.com

stanleymarketplace.com

6/8 Saturday—Cockpit Demo Day.

A close look inside select aircraft. 10am-2pm. 7711 East Academy Blvd. wingsmuseum.org

6/9 Sunday—23rd Annual Park Hill Garden Walk.

9am-3pm. Park Hill Neighborhood. Tickets at various locations or at parkhillgardenwalk.org

6/10 Monday—Cancer Cafe.

Peer group for anyone in treatment or in remission. 2-3:30pm. Park Hill Library, 4705 Montview Blvd. denverlibrary.org

6/12 Wednesday—Meet Lindsay Gilchrist, Candidate for CO HD 8 Rep.

1-2pm. Sam Gary Library, 2961 Roslyn St. indivisible80238@gmail.com

6/13 Thursday—Active Minds Presents: Mount Everest.

1-2pm. Free. Sam Gary Library, 2961 Roslyn St. activeminds.com

6/13 Thursday—Lowry Beer Garden Fundraiser.

5-10pm. 7577 E Academy Blvd. lowryfoundation.org

6/14 Friday—Goatflox and Chill.

Big Daddy. 8pm. 8246 Northfield Blvd. Pre-register at shopsatnorthfield.com

6/14, 6/21, & 6/28—Ageless Grace-Body and Brain Workout.

2-3pm. Schlessman Library, 100 Poplar St. denverlibrary.org

6/15 Saturday—Baby Unicorn Yoga.

10am, 12pm, and 2pm. 8246 Northfield Blvd. The Shops at Northfield. shopsatnorthfield.com

6/15 Saturday—Central Park Beer Festival.

Craft breweries, food trucks, and live music. The South Green (29th Ave & Roslyn St.) 5-8pm. mca80238.com

6/20 & 6/27—Mojablu Concert Series.

6/20: *Sammy Mayfield.* 6/27: *Ti-tonic.* The North Green (49th & Valencia) 6:30pm. mca80238.com

6/23 Sunday—Central Park Farmers Market.

First market of the season. The South Green (29th Ave & Roslyn St.) 8:30am-12:30pm. mca80238.com

6/26 Wednesday—Qi Gong.

Improve breathing and reduce stress. 11am-12:15pm. Park Hill Library, 4705 Montview Blvd. denverlibrary.org

6/28 Friday—Pours in the Park.

Wine tasting and charcuterie. Observation Point (59th & Hanover) 6-8pm. Tickets \$20 at mca80238.com

6/29 Saturday—Guided Site Tour.

A relaxed tour of Bluff Lake Nature Center. 7am. 11255 E. MLK Jr Blvd. Free. RSVP at blufflake.org

6/29 Saturday—Film on the Field: Wakanda Forever.

Starts at dusk. Stanley Marketplace, 2501 N. Dallas St, Aurora. stanleymarketplace.com

JULY 4TH EVENTS

7/6 Saturday—Four Mile Historic Park's Independence Day Celebration.

10am-4pm. Live music, pioneer games, and food trucks. 715 S. Forest St. Tickets at fourmilepark.org

7/3 Wednesday—Civic Center Park Independence Eve Celebration.

5-10pm, live music starts at 6pm. Colorado Symphony, fireworks, and food trucks. Info at denver.org

7/4 Thursday—Central Park Pancake Breakfast & Parade.

9-11am, parade starts at 10:30am. The Green (29th Ave & Roslyn St.) More details at mca80238.com



Park Hill July 4th Parade

7/4 Thursday—Annual Park Hill 4th of July Parade.

Floats, music, classic cars, and more. Parade starts at 1:30pm. 23rd Ave. from Dexter St. to Krameria St. parkhillparade.org

7/4 Thursday—Aurora 4th of July Spectacular.

6-10pm. Live music, food, and fireworks at 9:30pm. Aurora Municipal Center Great Lawn, 15151 E. Alameda Pkwy. auroragov.org

7/4 Thursday—Denver Municipal Band Patriotic Concert.

7-8:15pm. Free concert in Washington Park. denvermunicipalband.org

METRO EVENTS

6/1 to 6/2—Denver Chalk Art Festival.

150 artists turn the streets into a museum of chalk art. Cross streets are 12th & Bannock. denverchalk.art

6/2 Sunday—Sunday Sundae.

A ticket buys you a handmade ceramic bowl plus all the Sweet Action ice cream you can fit in it. 200 Grant St. asld.org

6/2, 6/20 & 6/23—City Park Public Art Walking Tour.

Visit historic sculptures, fountains, and gateways. Tickets \$5. Various times—details at denverpublicart.org

6/6 to 6/9—Denver Fringe Festival.

Four days of unbridled creativity. Venues throughout RiNo/Five Points. denverfringe.org

6/7 to 6/9—Denver Greek Festival.

Food, music, boutique, cathedral tours, and more. 4610 E. Alameda. thegreekfestival.com

6/7 & 7/5—First Friday Art Walks.

On Santa Fe. 5:30-9:30pm. denver.org/things-to-do/denver-arts-culture/denver-art-districts

6/8 Saturday—Five Points Jazz Festival.

12-8pm. Free. Five Points neighborhood. artsandvenuesdenver.com

6/8 to 6/14—Black Pride.

A week of events for the community. blackpridedenver.com

6/10 & 6/24—Movie Nights.

Free, movie starts at 7pm. 6/10: *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Mutant Mayhem.* 6/24: *The Marvels.* Infinity Park, 4400 East Kentucky Ave, Glendale. infinityparkatglendale.com

6/11 Tuesday—I'm Harvey Milk.

Presenting gay rights activist, Harvey Milk. Molly Brown House Museum, 1340 Pennsylvania St. cli.re/69748-im-harvey-milk

6/12 Wednesday—SPARK! Alzheimer's Association.

A safe, interactive experience for visitors with early-stage Alzheimer's or dementia. 1-2pm. 1007 York St. Register at botanicgardens.org

6/13 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

6/14 Friday—Queeridescence 2024: A Polychromatic Soiree.

Learn LGBTQ+ history, trivia games, and more. 7-10pm. 1200 North Broadway. Tickets at historycolorado.org



6/15 to 6/16—Juneteenth Music Festival. Historic Five Points Neighborhood in Denver on 27th & Welton St. juneteenthmusicfestival.com

6/16 Sunday—3rd Annual Queer Cookout. A family celebration. Free. 2-6pm. Sie FilmCenter, 2510 E Colfax Ave. blackpridedenver.org

6/22 to 6/23—Denver PrideFest. Sunday, 9:30am parade starts at Cheesman Park and spans 14 blocks to Civic Center. denverpride.org/fest

6/22 to 6/23—50th Annual Cherry Blossom Festival. Downtown Denver in Sakura Square. cherryblossomdenver.org

6/27 Thursday—Bold Women. Change History: Danielle Shoots. TEDx speaker and investor. 7-8pm. 1200 North Broadway. historycolorado.org

7/5 to 7/7—Cherry Creek Arts Festival. 200+ juried artists, family-friendly art activities, live music, and food & drink. Cherry Creek North. cherryarts.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. auroragov.org

6/4 Tuesday—Fire Engine Visit. Meet firefighters and their fire truck. 3-4pm. Schlessman Library, 100 Poplar St. denverlibrary.org

6/5 Wednesday—Youth Gaming Night. Play Xbox and Wii Games. Snacks provided. Ages 5-17. 6-7:30pm. Sam Gary Library, 2961 Roslyn St. denverlibrary.org

6/8 Saturday—Family Nature Adventure Days. Free crafts and activities. Bluff Lake Nature Center. 8:30am-12pm. 11255 E. MLK Jr Blvd. Free. blufflake.org

6/8 Saturday—CSU Spur Family Programming. Free. 10am-3pm. 4817 National Western Dr. csuspur.org

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6/8 Saturday—Maker Mornings: Material Exploration Part 2—Loose Parts. For children 15 mos–8 years with siblings of any age. 10:30am–12:30pm. 1250 Bannock St. clyffordstillmuseum.org

6/9 Sunday—Foxy and Shmoxy: Art Detectives. Children experience art in unique ways. 10:30am–12pm. 100 W 14th Ave Pkwy. denverartmuseum.org

6/11 Tuesday—Arts and Crafts Shop. Use play money to shop for supplies and create. Ages 4+. 10:30–11:30am. Park Hill Library, 4705 Montview Blvd. denverlibrary.org

6/11 Tuesday—Rainbow Pride Fan Craft. Celebrate Pride and love who you are with a fun fan craft. Ages 5–17. 2–3pm. Sam Gary Library, 2961 Roslyn St. denverlibrary.org

6/11 Tuesday—Family Yoga. Learn skills to cultivate mindful practices at home. 3:30–4:30pm. Schlessman Library, 100 Poplar St. denverlibrary.org

6/12 Wednesday—Magic Show. Visual magic with audience participation. Ages 5–12. 3–3:45pm. Park Hill Library, 4705 Montview Blvd. denverlibrary.org

6/16 Sunday—Celebrate Pride: Family Funday. Games, crafts, and activities about pride month and identity. Free, everyone welcome. Girl Scout DreamLab, 63 N Quebec St. bit.ly/DL_FFD

6/16 Sunday—Dad's Free Day at Wings Air & Space Museum. Bring the whole family. 12–5pm. 7711 East Academy Blvd. wingsmuseum.org

6/16 Sunday—Spanish Storytime at Tattered Cover Kids. 5pm. Stanley Marketplace, 2501 N. Dallas St, Aurora. stanleymarketplace.com

6/20 Thursday—STEAM: Gardening Party. Learn about seed germination. Ages 5–12. 2–3:30pm. Sam Gary Library, 2961 Roslyn St. denverlibrary.org

6/21 & 6/22—Children and Family Make and Take. Learn how plants communicate with pollinators and create a pollinator feeder. 9:30–10:30am & 11am–12pm. 1007 York St. Register at botanicgardens.org

6/23, 6/26 & 6/29—Art Crawl: Messy Art Making Part I 10:30–11:15am. For caregivers with infants–14 months. Registration required. 1250 Bannock St. clyffordstillmuseum.org

6/26 Wednesday—Colorado Ballet. Avengers Dance Battle Workshop. Ages 3–8. 3–3:45pm. Park Hill Library, 4705 Montview Blvd. denverlibrary.org

6/29 Saturday—Rainbow Family Party. An LGBTQ+-affirming celebration for kids and families. Ages 3–8. 2:30–3:30pm. Park Hill Library, 4705 Montview Blvd. denverlibrary.org

MUSEUMS, ETC.

To find local museum and entertainment listings at www.FrontPorchNE.com → Events (tab) → Ongoing Events. For a listing of SCFD Free days, go to: www.scfcd.org

PERFORMANCE/THEATRE

6/1 to 6/23—The Lightning Thief: The Percy Jackson Musical. This fantasy novel springs to life. Aurora Fox Arts Center, 9900 E. Colfax Ave. aurorafoxartscenter.org

6/5 to 7/17—Swallow Hill Summer Concert Series. Tributes to The Traveling Wilburys, The Beatles, and more. 6:30pm. Four Mile Historic Park, 715 S. Forest St. swallowhillmusic.org

Through 6/8—These Shining Lives. In 1922 four women took their dream jobs that endangered their lives. The John Hand Theater, 7653 E. 1st Pl. firehousetheatercompany.com

Through 6/9—The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee. Six eclectic tweens vie for the spelling championship. Vintage Theatre, 1468 Dayton St, Aurora. vintage theatre.org

6/12 to 6/30—Broadway's Next Hit Musical. Whose Line Is It Anyway meets The Tony Awards. Garner Theatre. denvercenter.org

6/14 Friday—The Denver Moth - StorySLAM. This month: your most nervous experience. 7:30pm. 71 East Yale Ave. swallowhillmusic.org

6/14 & 6/15—Denver Chamber Music Festival. Chamber music in the heart of Denver. 7:30pm. Newman Center, 2344 E. Iliff Ave. denverchambermusicfestival.org

6/14 to 6/29—Testing 123. Every weekend is a different show, every night a different performance, collect all three. 717 Lipan St. buntport.com

Through 6/15—Cullud Wattah. This time-bending play takes on the Flint Water Crisis. Curious Theatre Company, 1080 Acoma St. curioustheatre.org

6/19 to 7/3—Disney's Frozen. The songs you love from the original film. denvercenter.org

7/6 Saturday—Mile High Yoyo Club Jam-boree 2: Electric Bugaloo. Tricks, yoyo vendors, learn to yoyo. 12–4pm. The People's Building, 9995 E Colfax Ave, Aurora. thepeoplesbuilding.com

Through 7/7—The Hombres. A look at the complexity and intimacy of male friendship. Vintage Theatre, 1468 Dayton St, Aurora. vintage theatre.org

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

To find volunteer listings and charitable opportunities, go to www.FrontPorchNE.com → Events (tab) → Ongoing Events

College Access Mentor with Minds Matter Colorado. 2 hours a week during the school year. Info at mindsmatterco.org/volunteers

Denver Museum of Nature & Science. Looking for teen volunteers for summer (and year-round) to inspire curiosity in visitors of all ages. Email volunteer.engagement@dmns.org

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

Denver Rescue Mission. To find volunteer opportunities, go to: denverrescuemission.org/volunteer/#opportunities

Food For Thought Denver. Providing food for students and their families. Sign up to volunteer or donate at foodforthoughtdenver.org

Go Electric Colorado. Helping homeowners sustainably electrify their homes. Sign up to volunteer at goelectriccolorado.org/volunteer

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 children's books for underserved families. Email info@reachoutandreadco.org for details.

Reading Volunteers Needed One hour a week. No experience necessary. Email contact: 2011@partnersinliteracy.org

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

Ronald McDonald House Charities Volunteer. Info at ronaldhouse.org under "How You Can Help".

Sand Creek Greenway Volunteer Opportunities. June volunteer workday is 6/15. Register to volunteer at sandcreekgreenway.org

Single Volunteers of Greater Denver. Meet others and assist nonprofit organizations for events/activities. Info at svgd.org

Spark the Change Colorado. Direct service programs that leverage the expertise of skilled volunteers in fields like mental health and empowering aging. sparkthechangecolorado.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/

GREEN AND SUSTAINABILITY EVENTS

6/5 & 6/29—Build Your Own Drip Irrigation System. A great way to reduce water waste. Free. Register at auroragov.org/residents/water/water_conservation/water_conservation_classes

6/7 Friday—Container Gardening. Join a master gardener for an overview on building container gardens. 3:30–4:30pm. Schlessman Library, 100 Poplar St. denverlibrary.org

6/8 Saturday—Seven Principles of Water-Smart Gardening. Create a landscape that will thrive under low water conditions. 9:30–11:30am. 1007 York St. botanicgardens.org

6/8, 6/12 & 6/22—Learn To Compost Workshop. 6/22 class is in English & Spanish. 9–11am or 6–8pm. 1325 Colorado Blvd. dug.org

6/9 Sunday—Used Music Gear Swap Meet. Bring your guitars, amps, pedals, drums, keyboards, and other used music gear. 11am–3pm. Stanley Marketplace, 2501 N. Dallas St, Aurora. Reserve your table at: stanleymarketplace.com

6/10 and 7/3—Knowing Your Home Basics. 5:30–8pm. 555 Santa Fe Dr. Register at denvertoolibrary.org

6/18 to 6/20—Denver Public Library Used Book Pop Up Sale. Ross-Cherry Creek Library, 305 Milwaukee St. 10am–4pm each day. denverlibrary.org

6/21 Friday—Watershed (Shed) Summit '24. Discuss current and future water challenges/opportunities facing the state. 1007 York St. Details and register at botanicgardens.org

6/26 Wednesday—Bike to Work Day. Water and breakfast stations—for a specific location or to register, go to biketoworkday.co

6/27 Thursday—Active Minds Presents: Climate Change. 1–2pm. Free. Sam Gary Library, 2961 Roslyn St. activeminds.com



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POISON AT

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Empathy and Inclusion for the LGBTQ Community

By Linda Kotsaftis

Inside a plain building along East Colfax Avenue in Denver are colorful walls adorned with rainbows and photographs. It's a safe place for the LGBTQ community to gather.

On Monday mornings, a group of women meet to share laughter and tears—a group called The Lesbian Lounge at The Center on Colfax.

Carey Candrian, PhD, an associate professor at the University of Colorado School of Medicine, leads the group, which she says provides community for the women and for herself.

"We know isolation and loneliness plague a lot of people, and especially LGBTQ people," Candrian says. "Community literally is a protective factor against a lot of physical, mental, emotional risk factors. That's what this group is about—creating a weekly space for people to come together and talk, laugh, cry, learn, and just be connected safely."

The Lesbian Lounge is just one of the groups that are part of The Center of Colfax's West of 50 program that caters to older adults. There are groups for all ages. And this month, the center is marking the 50th anniversary of Denver PrideFest.

Front Porch was invited to a meeting where women shared personal experiences with grief, marginalization, and overcoming challenges. They emphasized the importance of supportive environments, empathy, and education in promoting inclusivity.

Here are their words:

Mary Sanford

"It feels like I'm a recent widow, but my wife died in 2020. We were together almost 30 years. I had taken care of her after strokes for about four years. I was very isolated. I needed to be around women's energy. This group has meant a lot to me. We get together and laugh.

"I had a very easy coming out. I feel grateful that I had a next-door neighbor



Front Porch photo by Christie Gosch

A weekly meeting at The Center on Colfax in Denver offers a group of women a safe space to gather and share their experiences about life in the LGBTQ community.

who was gay, and I was a single mother of three. We never had a relationship, but we became lifelong friends. She introduced me to a lot of people, and I just kind of fit in. It was my belief system. I felt lucky.

"Having raised children was a big part of my responsibility for education. As a parent, you must talk to kids."

Sandy Crane

"I'm a more recent widow but I also needed lesbian people in my life.

"We were all taught a different history. It's not that we just buy it and move on. You must be curious. Don't take one person's word. Take two or three people and the truth will be somewhere in the mix of that. And that's what this group is about, three or four points of view. I can learn. I can experience and grow and still be curious.

"We are facing the same struggles you are. Why can't we talk about it because I sleep with someone different? I'm sorry. But that seems to be your problem, not

mine. So, [discrimination] is a struggle, and we feel it. It used to be more in your face, but now it's much more subtle."

Karen Davidson

"I am in the same set of circumstances [a widow]. It's been like carrying around

a shroud. Sandy introduced me to Mary and the three of us now also Zoom together on Thursdays and in some cases talk about how many times we've cried during the week.

"I want to

say to people, you're missing out on not coming here. We have fun, we laugh. We empathize with people. I think empathy is very important. And when I leave here and go home, I fall back on that thought a lot. Because there's still somebody missing.

"Years ago, there was somebody I worked with. I liked him and he told me one day I was good at what I did. He really appreciated my help in difficult situations. But he didn't like my lifestyle."

"Talk to your neighbors. People are out walking with their kids but they're looking around. Just step outside and say 'hi.' We're just people."

Mimi Shwarz

"I started coming here about a year and a half ago. I recently retired. I saw this group and it was just made for me. I like being able to do what I want during the day and come and just have this company of people that's different than any other group.

"I had an easy time coming out. I remember realizing that I was a lesbian when I was 15 or 16 years old. It was shocking to me. But then I thought, who cares? It was that realization that made

"I needed to be around women's energy. We get together and laugh."

—Mary Sanford

it easier. I came out to the rest of the world when I was probably about 19. My first partner and I were together for about 25 years. That was her first relationship as well. I think that's what made it easy, both of us coming out at the same time."

Mary Spiegel

"I love this group. It's intentional about getting different speakers here. We've had women share incredible life stories that are multi-generational. They haven't become history lessons. We've had people from the LGBTQ community talking about access to healthcare.

"On top of that, are the friendships that develop. We take care of each other. We really do support each other. I took a class on how to do drag and I came in to do my show with them.

"We have it easier because we're in a large metropolitan area. I think we take it for granted. One thing that was different for me than most of the people in this room is when I came out, I'd been married [to a man] for 18 years. Most of my friends were lesbians, so it didn't really surprise anybody, but I was raised in a religiously conservative environment. I was doing the next right thing to get married. So, I didn't start dating women until after my divorce. What they say about coming out later in life is, it's a second adolescence. Your world is totally turned on its head. You were living a different lifestyle and then suddenly, you're living another lifestyle."

Jude Gassaway

"I started coming to women's groups when I was coming out in the 1980s. I have been coming here off and on. I'm just entering the first stages of dementia, and one of my problems is I don't remember the last thing that just happened or the last event, but I can remember back to 1980. We're all dealing with similar issues. And we can all learn from each other and support each other in that sense.

"I was born in 1940 before the war started. My dad wanted to be a conscientious objector because he didn't think war was a good idea. So, he was already on kind of the left side of things. And mom was with him on that. I was lucky in that my parents were very accepting.

"I think that we need to be aware of public education that has contributed to gay and lesbian acceptance. They start teaching kids in first and second and third grade, even if they come from a religious family, asking, 'Why don't you treat these people equally?'"

Rachel Doyle

"I moved here to Colorado from Texas about two years ago and I didn't really have anyone to talk to, so I started coming here to socialize and acquire a friend group that I previously didn't have as a new resident. It's amazing."

Newcomers are always welcome. For more about The Center on Colfax, including Pride events, visit lgbtcolorado.org.

How do you save money & make food last longer?

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NEWS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

MASTER COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION JUNE 2024



CENTRAL PARK BEER FESTIVAL

Saturday, June 15, 5–8pm, South Green

Join us on **Saturday, June 15** on the South Green (29th Ave & Roslyn St) from 5–8pm for the Central Park Beer Fest! A portion of the proceeds will go to a non-profit organization.

General Admission: \$60

VIP Admission: \$75

20yrs & under Admission: \$10

VIP Tasting starts at 4pm!

This festival features a variety of craft breweries, local food trucks, & live music from, *The Corporation Band*.

VIP Tickets include: Early Admission (4–5pm) with breweries VIP tasting, a glass taster, a commemorative glass, \$12 food coupons.

General Admission Tickets include: Admission (at 5pm), a plastic taster and \$12 food coupons.

Participating Breweries/Ciders:

Bierstadt

Cerebral Brewing

Cheluna Brewing Company

Goldspot Brewing Co.

Gruvi

Haykin Family Cider

Dechutes Brewing

Rocks & Hops Brewing

Second Dawn Brewing Co.

And many more!

There will be a concession stand selling domestic beers for purchase and food trucks that will take the food vouchers and all other forms of payment.

Everyone will need a ticket to get into the event. Participants 20 years and younger can choose the “under-age ticket” option.

*Must be 21 and up to participate in brewery tastings.

NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY

We all have a role to play in keeping the neighborhood safe. We can all help prevent crime in Central Park. Remember to close your garage doors when not in use and lock all exterior doors to your home or business. Park your vehicle in your garage or in a well-lit location, lock your car doors and remove all valuables. Unsecured cars are easy targets for break-in and theft. Report after hour park and pool use by calling the Denver Police Department, (720) 913-2000. All parks are closed from 11pm–5am.

Both the City and County of Denver and the MCA prohibit the camping, sleeping in or otherwise residing on a park, open space, median, sidewalk, street or alley. This includes the accumulation of debris or other excess items. Report all homeless encampments to the MCA for prompt removal.

Illegal drug use, trespassing, criminal mischief, theft, street racing and off leash dog activity are violations of the law and should be promptly reported to the Denver Police Department. The MCA is not a law enforcement organization and is unable to intervene in law enforcement matters.

If You See Something, Say Something!

Report a crime in progress by calling 911. This includes medical emergencies, fires, gunshots, break ins and other illegal activity. If you feel unsafe calling you can text 911.

Report suspicious activity by calling police non-emergency, (720) 913-2000. This includes individuals casing or seeking targets for theft, loitering, someone driving slowly and frequently through the same area, street racing homeless encampments and parking and noise complaints.

Text the police only with tips or information, (720) 723-8911. Texts are not answered in real time, this is for information only. **DO NOT** text about crimes in progress or suspicious activity. Text with photos or video footage that may aid investigation. If you see or hear a crime you should call about it, don't know if it's a crime, then call, dispatches will gather more info.

At the MCA we are your partners in public safety. We maintain a strong working relationship with the Denver Police Department and our staff meet weekly with them to

address ongoing issues in the community. The MCA also hosts a monthly forum in partnership with the Central Park United Neighbors with the Denver Police Department to provide an opportunity for ongoing communication with the police.

Report Fireworks and Gunshots

At this time of year, fireworks are common, but are still illegal in Denver. Gunshots are very crisp, and they have a certain timing or cadence to them. Fireworks are very loud, just like gunfire, but they are very sporadic. There is a lot of crackling, sometimes they echo and sometimes there is a whistle before the fireworks. Report all gunshots even if you don't know where they are coming from by calling 911. Report fireworks by calling (720) 913-2059.

ACTIVE MINDS: Mount Everest

Thursday, June 13, 1–2pm. Sam Gary Library

It's been nearly a decade since a massive earthquake in Nepal triggered the deadliest avalanche in the history of Everest climbing. As the tallest mountain in the world, Everest holds a special place in the minds and hearts of many. It has religious significance for inhabitants of the region; additionally, it captivates the many mountaineers who have attempted to summit it and thus stand “on top of the world.” Join Active Minds as we explore the stories of Everest—both triumphs and tragedies—and examine different perspectives on the mountain's past, present, and future.

ACTIVE MINDS: Climate Change

Thursday, June 27, 1–2pm. Sam Gary Library

Scientists are predicting a global average temperature increase of 2.5 to 10 degrees over the next century. Likely impacts include more droughts and heatwaves as well as stronger and more frequent hurricanes. Sea levels are predicted to rise 1-4 feet by 2100, submerging vast areas of land. Join Active Minds as we examine the predictions and the politics given the US withdrawal from and reentry to the Paris climate accord.

Jennifer Olsen
Communications Manager
Jolsen@mca80238.com

MOVIE ON THE GREEN SERIES

Grab your blankets, coolers and your friends and come to our Movie on the Green Series! All movies begin at dusk, get there early and purchase some treats from one of the food trucks that are available. All summer movies will be held on the South Green located at 29th Ave & Roslyn St. This event is free and open to the public.

Friday, June 7, *Super Mario Bros.*

Friday, June 21, *The Color Purple*

MOJABLU CONCERT SERIES

Join the MCA on the North Green (49th & Valentia) for great music and yummy food trucks! The MoJaBlu concerts start at 6:30pm and are free and open to the public.

Thursday, June 20, *Sammy Mayfield*

Thursday, June 27, *Titonic*

FARMERS MARKET BEGINS

Every Sunday starting June 23, 8:30am–12:30pm, South Green

Local vendors provide Colorado-grown produce, tasty baked goods, specialty meats, gourmet food items and more! We strive to support and enhance the surrounding communities by providing an experience where fresh and wholesome products can be found.

POURS IN THE PARK

Friday, June 28, 6–8pm, Observation Point

Enjoy the beautiful summer evenings with a wine tasting in the park! Our first tasting of the series will take place on Friday, June 28th at Observation Point (59th & Hanover). We will have an array of different wines ranging from white to red. Tickets are \$20 and include unlimited tastings and charcuterie. This event is strictly 21+.



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Sunny summer days actually tend to take a bit of heat off our local real estate market as end of year school activities, graduations, weddings, and summer vacations make more of a splash on calendars.

For buyers looking for less competition its the perfect time to dip their toes in to test the water or stay in the pool while the others take a break.

Give us a call. We'll help you find the perfect place to dive in!

Give us a shout to book a consultation with one of our savvy team members. Our website: npredo.com



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