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Validation

“Yes, it is true, I can turn a good listener into a helpful horse trainer in under 10 minutes!”

It's not every day that you meet a professional sports cameraman, especially one who is rather large, loud, and imposing, but obviously with a heart of gold and a deep love of animals. Not to mention, someone who has some pretty wild stories to share, cultivated during his 20-year career filming Super Bowls and all other manner of National Championships.

We met at a birthday party of a mutual friend, and he self-admittedly invited himself to come out to the ranch for a visit. He only had a few hours before he had to head out of town, but he really wanted to come and see the horses. I rearranged my schedule to accommodate him. I didn't know him very well, or what to expect, but I liked him quite a lot at the party and was eager to share the horses with him.

He was honestly quite cautious of the horses upon his initial arrival, which I really liked. He explained to me that he loved animals, and had had many over the years: dogs, cats, fish tanks, reptiles; but he had a very bad experience around horses, and he was very wary of them. His wife and daughters loved horses and always begged him about it, but he had always put his foot down pretty sternly; because he had such a traumatic experience, he was afraid for his family. He thought horses must be just too dangerous and unpredictable, but he was still fascinated by them at the same time.

So we talked it through and realized that yes, indeed, he had been at some ranch where, although his gut feeling told him to be cautious of the horses, the people running the operation just slapped him on the shoulder and said, “Don't worry about it! These animals are perfectly broke and never act up or run off!” So, like any normal



person, he buried his concerns, and tried to interact with the horses the way he was told to by the people in charge of the horses, although he didn't like how it felt.

Guess what? The crippled horse who can't even run, ran off with him, and he got quite hurt, and this fostered a lifelong fear of horses, despite being an avid animal lover. So I explained to him that, sadly, this is the reality for about 80% or more of people in the horse world. They are confident they know what they are doing (is this you?), because making horses do things is what they were taught, and it's what (seemingly) everyone does. But the level of force that is used in the horse industry and taught to young children, normalizing the violence, is exactly what got him, and thousands of children and adults, hurt each year. This is not a joke. The horse industry in general is about 100 years behind in how it trains and handles horses. Every marine mammal trainer in the world knows this, and they just shake their heads sadly when reminded of this.

So here we have a man, a true animal lover, who had used gentle techniques with all of his animals his entire life, because it just felt right, who was actually using positive reinforcement for years, without even realizing it. He had wanted to follow his heart and interact with horses the same way, but was told, “No, you have to be the boss,” and, “Tell them what to do.” So, against his better instincts, he did, and he got hurt, and a dream was crushed.

So he came, and we talked all of this through, and he got to interact with Sugar through the corral fence, where he could feel safe. I gave him just a couple of pointers on how to interpret horse body language, when it was safe to touch and interact with her. He was in no time confidently speaking with her, petting her, training her for me. Yes, it is true, I can turn a good listener into a helpful horse trainer in under 10 minutes! While I mucked stalls, he spoke to her, felt safe with her, helped train her, and generally had such a magical experience that we both had tears

in our eyes. He thanked me again and again for the privilege, the experience, and the renewed confidence in himself and what he knew all along but didn't have anyone to confirm for him. He almost choked up when he said, “I am almost 50 years old, and never fed a horse a treat before today; thank you.” He said he can't wait to come back with his wife. And later that night, he texted me again, about how grateful he was, that it had been so good for his mental health to have this experience.

It was absolutely amazing, and I can't wait to have him and his wife come back. This is what I am looking for, to gather an entire community of people like him, and Animal Loving Angels, like you, to come, interact, and experience horses on their terms, the way it should be, at the ResqRanch. And to that end I am happy to announce we are now officially offering experiences like what we described here on our website ResqRanch.org.

Last but certainly not least, I am so excited and grateful to announce we have been nominated for Non-Profit of the Year! Just as much as I am grateful I was able to facilitate that moving experience for one person, I know we can do that for many others. What I am doing here at the ResqRanch can change people's lives. We have solid proof of the deep emotional impact positive reinforcement animal training can have on a person's mental and emotional health. It works, and I have known it all along, although some just “don't get it.” But I knew it. Won't you help me share this with as many others as we can who need this too? Please vote for the ResqRanch, in the Everything Evergreen App on our phone, for Non-Profit of the Year. Together, we can change people's, and horses', lives for the better.

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— KELLER WILLIAMS FOOTHILLS REALTY —

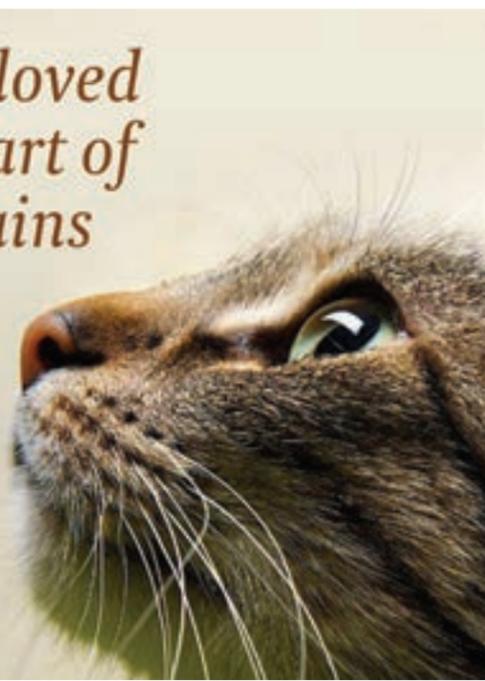
A Gift of Love

BY LISA PLUMMER SMITH

“When we allow them to, animals can bring more joy into our lives.”

“Until one has loved an animal, a part of one’s soul remains unawakened.”

— Anatole France



I love hearing the story of the day my parents brought me home from the hospital after I was born. They laid me down on the couch and our dog Taku carefully approached, taking in the scent; I made a noise, and his tail started wagging slowly at first, then faster and faster.

Taku was mostly black with tan eyebrows and paws, with a tan and white ruff at his chest. I can still recall the feel of his fur and his gentle presence. Having Taku was a privilege. He gave us unconditional love, taught us responsibility and companionship, and

ultimately provided my first experience with loss and grief.

Caring for and loving an animal provides many life lessons. Aside from the basic discipline it requires to feed, exercise, and clean up after a pet, it cultivates empathy and the ability

to protect and care for a being that cannot care for itself. Our pets rely upon us to survive; and for many of us, pets become members of our family. After the loss of a beloved pet, please remember how lucky you were to love something so much that their absence brings you pain.

I was first around horses at age 5. My then stepmother was a longtime horsewoman, and my father bought her a horse. I remember time spent at the stable with her and our horse Rocky, a gentle white giant Percheron cross that I could ride bareback by myself. I was hooked immediately, and being a horse-crazy young girl undoubtedly kept me on a straighter and narrower path than I could have chosen myself.

Being raised by my father brought with it an inconsistent environment. Horses provided me with consistency, structure, social opportunities, physical activity, and hours spent exploring every trail, path, and thoroughfare I could find. Horses became an anchor for me. Being with my horse takes me to a calm and happy place where I can simply enjoy the moment. During the darkest times in my life horses have been a sustaining force for good.

I share my home with a dog and cat that the universe brought to me. Technically, I rescued them, but they bring me such happiness I feel they somehow rescued me too. They ensure my empty nest is still full of love, nurturing, and life! Living with my pets somehow grounds me and provides routine, exercise, and daily adventures.

When we live in tune with animals, we tap into senses we may not otherwise use. We can interpret a look, anticipate others’ needs, and understand unspoken emotions more easily. Caring for another being makes us feel good. Pets teach us to be happy, to greet our loved ones, that it’s okay to rest, that play is essential,

that cuddles improve our mood, and that a walk always feels good.

When we allow them to, animals can bring more joy into our lives. The bond between humans and animals can be very healing and provide solace difficult to find elsewhere.

This month please take a moment to reflect on your relationship with animals and perhaps call forth a treasured memory of time spent in the company of a favorite pet.

All the best, Lisa.



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connection to the past



Rebecca Kintner Sundwell
1854 – 1927 Original Sundwell
Conifer homesteader and Mary's mother-in-law



Augustus T. Sundwell
1852 – 1935 Original Sundwell
Conifer homesteader and Mary Sundwell's father-in-law



Mary Sundwell - 18 years old



Leondes Sundwell - Mary's husband

HOMESTEADING IN COLORADO IN LATE 1890S AND EARLY 1900S

FROM THE JOURNAL OF MARY E. SUNDWELL | CONIFER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Part 1 of 2

Historically, we know the names and have properly celebrated the men who forged west in the 1800s to explore and eventually settle newly acquired land in the United States of America: The explorers, the community and city builders, the businessmen, politicians, and the settlers.

But there are countless people who remain nameless who were true pioneers to the westward movement of the United States. These are the settlers who moved west, into undeveloped areas of a wild country. Thousands signed up to claim and proof land offered by the national government with the Homestead Act of 1862.

One of these Colorado pioneer families was Mary Sundwell, her husband, Leo, and young son, Otto. Leo's parents homesteaded land to the west of Denver in the late 1800s. With the encouragement of his parents, Mary and Leo filed a claim and became homesteaders on land adjoining the parent's homestead near Conifer, in the early 1900s. Mary had the foresight to keep a journal of her life on a homestead in the foothills west of Denver.

I shall start this about a family of six, Father, Mother, and four sons. The oldest son was Otto, 11; the next Leo, age 9; then Lloyd, age 7; and the youngest son Vernon, age 2 years. They lived in Denver where the father had a good business of painting and paperhanging.

In those early days of the 1890s, work days were at least six a week, it was not governed by unions, and a day's work was longer than eight hours.

The father and mother were anxious to get land someplace they could build on and go to on holidays and Sundays. A place where the boys could get out and play and also help the parents improving the place.

One summer the father fixed up his wagon for a camping trip. He had a cover for it so the family could be out of the rain, yet they could keep traveling. He had a good team of horses, so they started on a trip to look over land and decide where they would like to homestead. They went into the northern part of Colorado in Routt County, Grand Lake, and then on into the western part of Colorado, seeing Grand Junction, Glenwood Springs, Montrose, and Leadville. From Leadville they followed the old freighting roads, used by the early day miners into Denver. Coming down through some of the prettiest mountain parts of Colorado they found land could be homesteaded 35 miles from Denver.

There were a few families living in the area

and when they returned to their home in Denver, they decided that if they could find what they wanted the father would file on the land under the Homestead Act. He went to the land office in Denver and after talking with the man in charge and getting a map of the land that was open for filing on, he went to see a friend who was a surveyor. Later they went to the mountains and finally, after checking lines and corners, decided to file on a 160-acre parcel in Barney Gulch 2 ½ miles north west from the main road.

Through the years, every holiday and weekend and period of time when work would be slack in his business, the father would take his wife and boys up to the land and it wasn't long until they had a cabin built near a spring. Now the work was to cut logs for a big house. They did quite a lot of building fences, too. The homestead laws require a certain amount of improvements before it can be proved upon. The law in those days required five years before one could make final proof.

As the boys grew, they liked to go to the mountains every chance they had. Sorrow came when the oldest boy, Otto, was fatally hurt on one of the trips coming down from the mountains after they had been up there over the 4th of July.

They continued to build, and a more permanent house was started. It had four rooms on the main floor and two bedrooms upstairs. It was all plastered inside, and outside was slabs from the logs with the bark left on. It was a pretty place.

Leo, the second son, followed in his father's line of work and in 1906 he came to Florence, Colorado, 152 miles south west of Denver. Leo and I were married Dec. 23, 1907, in Florence.

When we would go to Denver to see his parents, they always talked to us about getting land. They had persuaded the third son to file on 160 acres that adjoined his parents' place.

Finally, in August, 1909, while I was in New York visiting relatives, Leo moved to Denver. His work had slacked off in Florence and there was no prospect of getting any better and he knew he could get work in Denver. When I returned from my trip in NY we moved into a small apartment and Leo went to work for a former boss he had before he went to Florence. During a lull in his work we took his father's horse and spring wagon and went up to the mountains and stayed at his parent's place. We were there 10 days, and while there it snowed a heavy wet snow. The pine trees were beautiful, and the quaking aspen leaves were yellow and it was a wonderful sight.

Leo's parents continued to talk land to us, and we were considering it, too. However, we were expecting our first baby and we gave more thought to that than anything else. Our baby came Nov. 7, 1910, and we gave him the name of Otto. Leo's brother Otto was his favorite brother.

Finally, in making inquiries about land, Leo found that a 160-acre parcel in Barney Gulch, just ¼ mile from the main road and adjoining Beaver Ranch, a ranch of 880 acres, was open for contest. It had been filed on by a man named Manor Lewis who used to carry the mail. This place had an old 3-room house, a blacksmith shop, barn and hay barn, and 2 cabins, 10 x 12 each, made of quaking aspen logs. Lewis had turned his mail route over to Maggie Crow who moved onto the place when Lewis left. The date of the hearing for the contest Leo had filed was set for April 10, 1911. In the meantime, Leo made an effort to find Manor Lewis, and through some friends of Lewis that Leo had found, they gave Lewis' address and Leo wrote to him and offered to buy his relinquishment on the land. Lewis wrote back agreeing to sell it to him and stated his price.

Leo sent him a check and Lewis sent relinquishment papers. Leo took them to the land office April 1, 1911, and gave them to the man in charge and filed on the land while he was there at the land office. It automatically did away with all

the contest, so we began to think about moving to the mountains. We had six months from the date of filing to establish our home.

In September, we moved to the place. We decided to use the two cabins, as they were quite new and were clean. The old 3-room house Leo tore down and sawed the logs up for firewood. We just had a little 4-hole cook stove in the kitchen for heat, baking, and cooking. We did not have any heat in the other cabin. We had a double bed and Otto's bed, a chest of 3 drawers, piano and a chair. Leo put up a corner shelf and I fixed a curtain across it and that was our clothes closet. In the kitchen I had the stove, a drop-leaf table, Otto's high chair, and 2 straight chairs, and a tight cupboard with 3 shelves that stood on legs about a foot high. Leo put up some shelves about 3-foot-long and I think there were 5 of them to put the dishes and utensils on. I made a curtain to cover the front of it. There were two windows in each of the cabins and one door each. On one of the sides of the kitchen I had a narrow bench large enough to hold 2 pails of water and a wash basin. There was no sub floor on either cabin. The floor was made of 2" boards by 10" wide. They had knots in them and were not smooth. Leo banked up on the outside of the cabins with dirt so the floors would be warm. He dabbed the chinking between the logs too, so it would be warm.

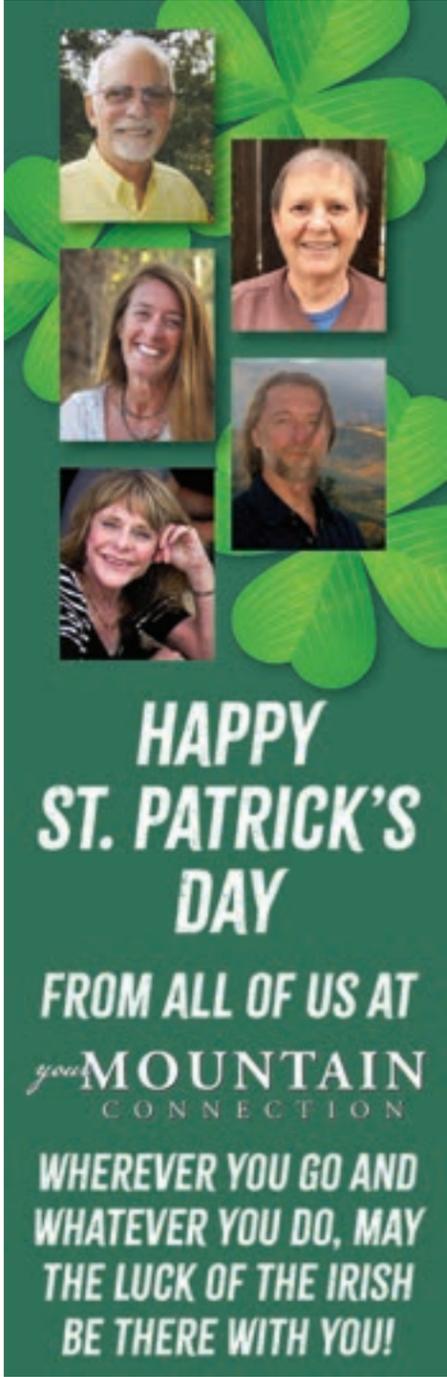
After we had been up there a month, we decided we needed more bedding. With no heat in the bedroom cabin, it got pretty chilly. So, we got word to the man who carried the mail and he picked us up and we rode with him to Morrison, Colorado, where we had to get the train to go into Denver. At the time we moved up there the post office was 1 ½ miles from where we were. It was at the Junction where the Turkey Creek road divides. The mail comes up the South Turkey Creek and is served to those living on that route, and in the morning the carrier takes mail down North Turkey Creek way and serves those living on that route. The North Turkey Creek road comes out on South Turkey Creek Road just above what used to be Spruce Lodge and Tiny Town. The train from Morrison to Denver was a mixed train having cars with rock, logs, and one passenger car. It took quite a while to get to Denver as there was so much switching of cars on the way. Morrison was 18 miles from Denver.

“One of the really important things about preservation is it connects people to history in a very tangible way.” — Myrick Howard

Thank you to Karen Edwards, Mary Sundwell's granddaughter, who shared a copy of her grandmother's journal with Conifer resident Jaime Davis, who shared it with the Conifer Historical Society and Museum. SHARE HISTORY!

The mission of the Conifer Historical Society is to share the region's legacy by collecting, preserving, and exhibiting historical and cultural materials.

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I'm Just Sayin'...

Pets – March 2026

Jeff Smith owner/publisher

This is one of my favorite editions. All the photos of the pets that people send in are the most fun. There is quite a variety this year. Enjoy.

Have you been to the new Conifer Library? It's worth a visit. It's a great facility and a friendly and helpful staff.

There have been some changes recently in the Chambers of Commerce. Jim Meyers has assumed the President's position of the Platte Canyon Chamber of Commerce, again. We welcome Jim back. They have some great plans for 2026. Erica Sprenkel is the new President of the Evergreen Chamber. She brings a lot of experience with running organizations and will continue the enthusiasm of the Chamber for its members. I'm sure Nancy Judge will still be visible in the community.

A big shout out to Norma Croucher in Bailey, who turns 104 on March 14th. Happy birthday, Norma!

Avalanche – While some players are taking a break to play for various countries, the Avs still hold a dominant position in the NHL.

Nuggets – They are still in a decent position, but a winning streak wouldn't hurt.

Quackadilly says:
"Animals are one of the most beautiful gifts we have."
 —Alyssa Milano



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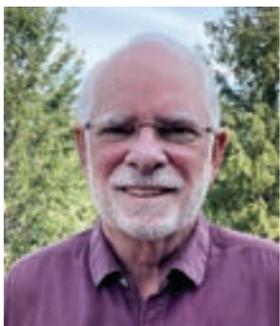
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— EVERGREEN HEALTH INSURANCE —

Special Enrollment Periods for Health Insurance

BY ED REGALADO



“I saw many families choosing to downgrade their health plans due to increased premium costs.”

It's March. Do you have health insurance?

If you're under 65 and need to buy your own health insurance, finding an affordable, quality health plan for yourself and your family became more challenging for the self-employed and others in the individual marketplace this year. Open Enrollment for 2026 ended January 15th, and I saw many families choosing to downgrade their health plans due to increased premium costs. If there's an upside, one of the most crucial benefits secured by the ACA that remains is guaranteed issue. That means you can't be denied health coverage because of a pre-existing health condition.

Rumor has it Congress is working on bipartisan solutions to address the drivers of high healthcare expenses here in the U.S.; we'll see how it goes. In the meantime, we're working with what we've got!

If you are under 65 and uninsured, you'll need to qualify for a Special Enrollment Period (SEP) in order to enroll in a new health plan for 2026.

There are several events that can trigger an SEP. The first is if you've lost employer-sponsored health coverage. Second, an SEP is triggered if you move to an area outside your existing coverage area. Other qualifying life events such as getting married or having a baby can open an SEP for you. If you have a life event that triggers an SEP, don't wait to find a new plan. Generally, you only have 60 days from the reported "event" to apply.

For folks turning 65 this year, the important timeline you'll want to keep in mind concerns your initial enrollment period. You have

to take the initiative to enroll in Medicare through ssa.gov unless you're already collecting Social Security. You can apply as soon as 3 months prior to your birth month; or you can delay up to 3 months past your birth month, but unless you have other creditable coverage, you really shouldn't. Understanding all of Medicare's moving parts is a bit of a learning curve, and sorting through it with the free services of a local independent broker can be game changing. If you're navigating Medicare for the first time this year, I'd be happy to help you through it.

If you're over 65, there are two common circumstances that may find you enrolling for coverage outside the annual enrollment period. The first would be if you retained insurance through your employer past 65, but are ending that coverage now. In this case, you're likely already enrolled in Part A. You have 60 days to report your creditable coverage loss and enroll for Part B without penalty. Then you can choose an Advantage Plan or a Supplement and PDP plan to complete your coverage. The second common circumstance is an SEP triggered by a move outside your service area.

As usual, broker services are offered at no cost to you, and we are happy to discuss your options in our office or over the phone. Give us a call!

Ed Regalado is a certified broker. The office is located at the Stone House at 1524 Belford Court in Evergreen. Ed can be reached at 303-674-1945 or send an email to: edregalado46@gmail.com.

— CORE HABITS COACHING —

Life After Change: What Happens When Coaching Works

BY ISABELLE DE FAYS COMINA | WWW.COREHABITSCOACHING.COM



“Coaching builds a life where healthy routines become second nature.”

Imagine waking up one morning and realizing that the habits you once fought against no longer control you. Your energy feels steady. Your choices feel intentional. And for the first time in a long time, your daily actions match the life you've always wanted to live.

This isn't fantasy—it's the real outcome many people experience after committing to personal coaching.

Coaching doesn't just break bad habits; it builds a life where healthy routines become second nature. After weeks and months of small, consistent steps, clients often describe a surprising feeling: ease. The behaviors that once required discipline begin to feel automatic because they have been rewired into the brain's everyday operating system. What used to feel like an uphill battle becomes the new default.

This shift creates space for something most people forget to expect on the journey of change—joy.

With better habits in place, energy stabilizes, stress decreases, and mental clarity returns. People find themselves more patient with loved ones, more confident in their decisions, and more in control of their time. Instead of reacting to life, they begin shaping it.

Life after successful coaching doesn't look perfect—it looks empowered. Setbacks still

happen, but they no longer derail progress. Clients learn to adapt instead of abandon, adjust instead of quit. This resilience becomes one of the greatest outcomes of the coaching process. It transforms changed habits into a changed identity.

The ripple effect is often profound. Someone who once struggled to maintain basic routines may find themselves taking on new challenges—training for a 5K, starting a hobby, improving nutrition, or finally sleeping well. Many describe feeling lighter, not because life got easier, but because they became stronger, more aware, and more aligned with their values.

This is the quiet revolution that coaching creates: a life where your habits work for you, not against you.

And here's the hook, the reason many readers decide to try coaching for themselves: You don't have to wait for the "right moment," perfect motivation, or a new year. You only need a willingness to begin—and a coach who knows how to guide you from intention to transformation.

If you've ever wondered what your life could look like with the right habits, the right support, and the right structure, consider this your invitation. Coaching helps you become the person you already know you can be—one small, sustainable step at a time.

With over 30 years as a physical therapist, 10 years as a yoga instructor, and extensive healthcare executive leadership experience, I guide clients on a journey of transformation, helping them create lasting habits, nurture their well-being, and reconnect with their natural energy and confidence. www.CoreHabitsCoaching.com • corehabitscoaching@gmail.com

— PEOPLE PROBLEMS —

Operational Exit Readiness

BY JENNIFER MAY ELLIS



“How can you sell your business, if you are the only one who knows how to properly operate it?”

Despite not having much of a winter, spring is getting closer, and with spring come thoughts of new beginnings. In the workplace, new beginnings could look like new policies, new employees, or exiting your business to start a new business or to start your retirement. This month's article is focused on exit readiness.

What is exit readiness when it comes to selling a small business? Exit readiness is the process of preparing a business for sale by ensuring it can operate independently, while maximizing its value in alignment with personal financial goals. Key components of an exit plan may include: (1) obtaining a professional valuation; (2) cleaning up financial records; (3) shifting operations from individual expertise to institutional knowledge; (4) documenting processes within Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs); (5) developing a leadership team; and (6) creating a personal post-exit plan to ensure the sale proceeds match your retirement needs. I support small businesses with operational exit readiness—numbers 3, 4, and 5 from this list.

So what do I mean by shifting operations from individual expertise to institutional knowledge? This means getting all of the business knowledge out of founders' heads and into systems. Many successful small businesses started with a smart business owner and a notebook and then never evolved from the notebook. How can you sell your business, if you are the only one who knows how to properly operate it? This is where SOPs come into the equation. SOPs are uniformly written procedures with detailed instructions to record routine operations, processes and practices followed within a business organization.

Also, many small businesses still use a paper/folder system regarding their customer information. This can be a big issue from an

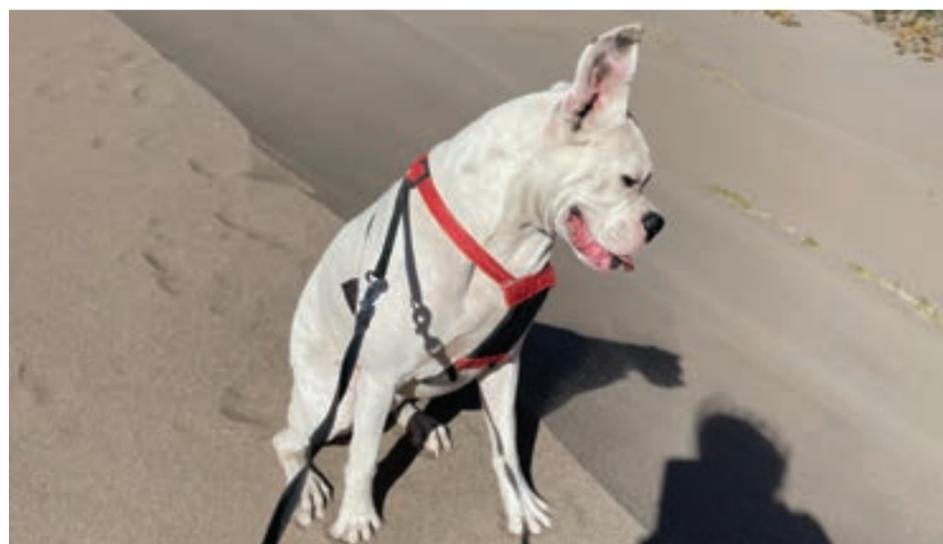
operational efficiency standpoint as well as negatively impacting a purchase price. If your customer data isn't easily quantifiable for a prospective buyer, then a buyer will likely only pay for your equipment and inventory and not your company's "goodwill" or future earnings. You can make the customer data pipeline more visible by moving it out from a paper system and into a Customer Relationship Management system.

Investing in building out leadership teams also ensures that businesses can effectively run without the founder. This could look like appointing a new general manager with the founder shifting to more of an advisory role, or creating cross-training programs that ensure that every technical/expertise role within an organization has a backup who can perform the task at 80% proficiency.

If all of this feels overwhelming, this is where I can support you. I can be the bridge between your brain and the systems within your organization. I can help you extract your individual knowledge and transform it into institutional processes that will support your organization's efficiency and, in turn, increase its overall value.

P.S. I am experimenting with offering a workplace "Dear Abby" column. I will be very careful with privacy considerations. Any advice would not be legal and instead from the realm of HR Consulting. If you have a situation that you would like some thoughts on that could also be referenced in a future column, please contact me.

Jennifer May Ellis is a human resources consultant and former employment law attorney. She is an Evergreen resident and supporter of small businesses. She is the founder of Jennifer May Consulting and can be reached at jennifer@jennifer-may.com or <https://www.jennifer-may.com/>



Enjoying the "breeze" at the sand dunes



From left to right: we have JoJo, the Great Pyrenees; Oliver, our love bug; and Josie, the feisty one that rules them all.

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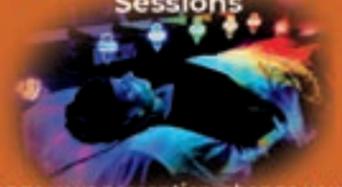
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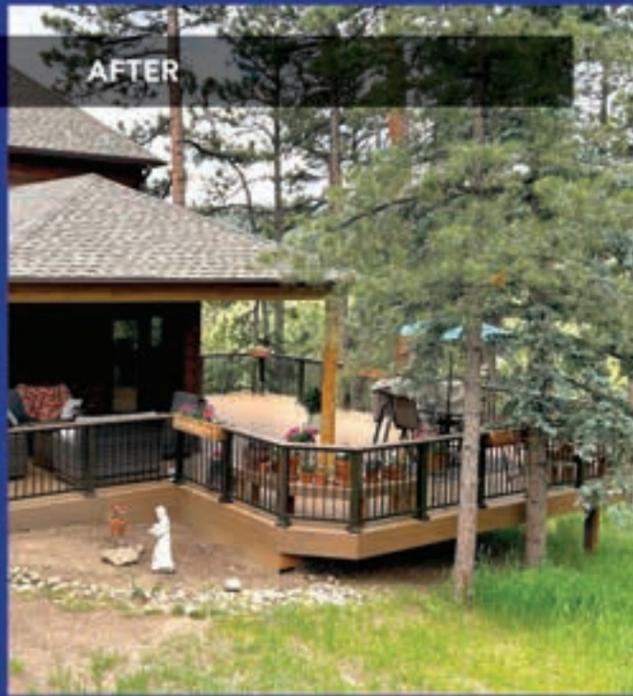
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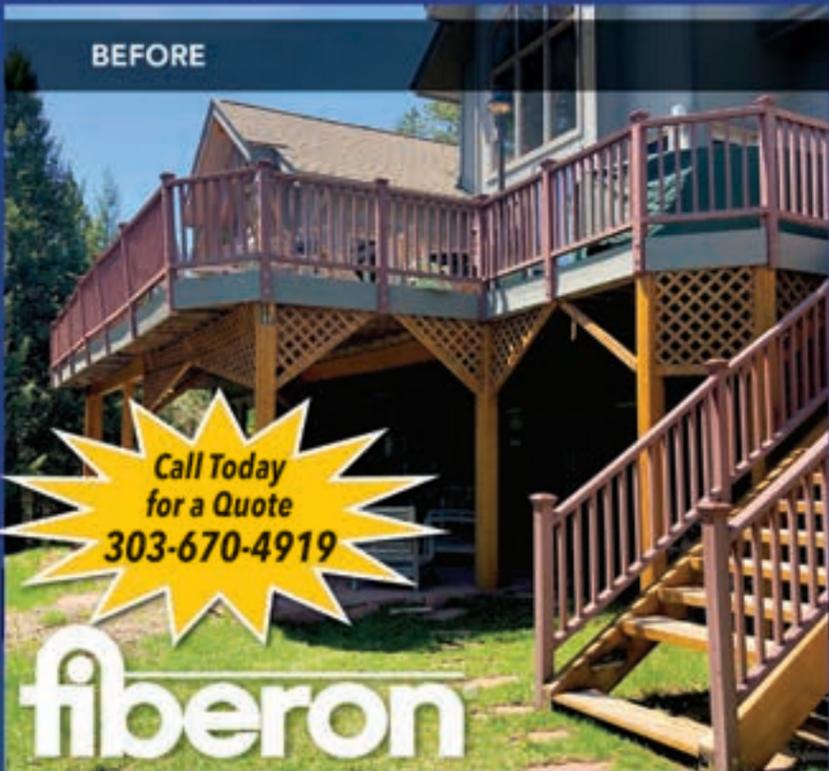




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Penny for your thoughts

“The Denver Zoo and Cheyenne Mountain Zoo have okapis. So, head on down and take in this very special mammal.”



How About the Okapi? Only Relative to the Giraffe

BY PENNY RANDELL

Good day to all our readers. I have been told that many of you folks enjoyed reading about that relaxed and way cool giraffe. That made me so happy I was led to write about their only relative. We are taking on the okapi, *Okapia johnstoni*, that is also known as the forest giraffe, zebra giraffe, and Congolese giraffe.



The okapi is an artiodactyl mammal, meaning a placental mammal belonging to the order Artiodactyla. They are ungulates that bear weight primarily on two of the four toes on each foot. The other two toes help with balance. They are also endemic, being found in a single geographic location, the Democratic Republic of the Congo in central Africa. This animal has stripes, and is therefore reminiscent of the zebra, but they are closely related to the giraffe. The okapi and giraffe are the only members of the family Giraffidae.

Okapis are considered a medium-sized giraffid. At the shoulder they measure 5 to 6 feet tall, with a weight ranging from 440 to 770 pounds. They have a body length of 6 to 8 feet from head to tail. These animals have a long neck and ears that are also long and quite flexible. The coat is chocolate to reddish brown with white horizontal stripes on their legs that turn solid white at

the ankle. Such stripes aid this animal by serving as camouflage when searching out food in a densely vegetated area. Their face, throat, and chest are grayish white in color. Their feet are ever so special, as interdigital glands are present in all four feet, being slightly larger on the front. These glands serve as scent glands and produce semi-viscous secretions that contain pheromones. These are odor messengers that offer information of status, territorial markings, mood, and sexual behavior.

Males have short, hair-covered horn-like structures called ossicones. These are similar to the ossicones of a giraffe. Females are usually one to two inches taller than a male, and have no ossicones. Instead, the female has what is called a hair-whorl. This is a patch of hair growing in a circular direction around a visible center point. Many adaptations fit the okapi for its tropical habitat. A large number of rod cells in the retina enable its night vision. These cells are photoreceptors that function in dim light. Too, they have a strong olfactory system, giving them a keen sense of smell. The teeth are low-crowned and finely cuspid, capable of cutting tender foliage. These critters have a large cecum and colon, which helps with microbial digestion. They experience rapid food passage, so they eat more frequently, eating less at a time, than other ruminants.

Okapis are mostly diurnal, but they may be active for a few hours in the dark. They remain solitary, except when mating. Their home ranges overlap, and usually six occupy one small area at a time. A male's home range averages about five square miles, whereas a female averages one to two square miles. Females are sedentary, while males migrate continuously. A male's urine is used to mark territory, and a female uses common defecation sites. Grooming by both males and females is a common practice. This

grooming is mainly at the earlobes and neck. Okapis rub their necks on trees, often leaving a brown fluid exudate.

Males are very protective of their territory, but will allow grazing females to pass through. At breeding time males pay a visit to female home ranges. These animals are usually tranquil, but do kick and head-butt to show aggression. Because the vocal cords are poorly developed, vocal communication is fairly limited to moaning and bleating. The Flehmen response, a visual expression in which the animal curls back its upper lip, is common. When exercising such behavior they show their teeth and inhale through their mouth. Their main natural predator is the leopard.

Now, about nutrition: these animals are herbivores and feed on buds and leaves, along with branches, grasses, ferns, fruits, and even fungi. They are often considered unique in some forests as they are the only known mammal that feeds solely on “understory” vegetation in those forests. This is accomplished through the use of their 18-inch-long tongue to harvest suitable plants. They also use their tongue for grooming. An okapi is known to eat over 100 species of plants, some of which are poisonous to humans and other animals. They prefer to feed in gaps created by fallen trees, where staple foods are mostly comprised of shrubs and lianas (long woody vines).

The female reaches full maturity in a year and a half, but the male is not fully mature until after two years. The okapi does not observe seasons. The male can enter the rut at any time, just as the female can go into estrus at any time. When these remarkable fellers are kept in captivity, the female has her cycle every 15 days. Courtship is glaringly obvious and a sight to experience. The two begin by circling each other, then eventually licking and smelling take place. The male is the instigator as he begins to extend that massive neck, along with serious tossing of his head, with one foreleg out front holding steady on the ground. Natural copulation takes place at this time.

Gestation is more than a year, generally 14–15 months, resulting in the birth of one calf. The

offspring can weigh anywhere from 31 to 66 pounds. The udder of a pregnant okapi swells, beginning two months before the delivery, or parturition. In addition, she may pass what is known as vulva discharge. The vulva is the external structure that is comprised of the female's genitalia and leads to the interior of her reproductive tract. As for birthing, the female stands throughout the entire delivery process, which can last three to four hours. Some have been seen resting on the ground at intervals. Once the calf is born, the female eats the afterbirth, then grooms the baby. Her milk is high in protein and low in fat.

As with most ruminants, the baby can stand after 30 minutes. It takes about a year for the baby to lose its very long eyelashes and mane and begin to look just like its mother, eventually gaining white around the ankles. These juveniles are kept in hiding, being fed infrequently by the mom. The calves do not defecate for the first couple months of life. This is believed to be a way to avoid predation and keep them safe in their most vulnerable stage of life. The babies begin eating solid food after three months, and are weaned at six months. The juveniles grow rapidly at first, then growth rate declines. Lifespan is 20 to 30 years.

An okapi is a captivating animal, and you will be very happy when you see one. There are about 100 of these critters kept in Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) zoos. It was 1937 when the Bronx Zoo became the first in North America to acquire an okapi. In fact, their tireless breeding program produced 13 calves between 1991 and 2011. The San Diego Zoo has had okapis on display since 1956, and the first calf was born there in 1962. Since then, this zoo has had over 60 okapis born at the zoo and the San Diego Zoo and Safari Park. Fortunately, the Denver Zoo and Cheyenne Mountain Zoo, too, have okapis.

So, head on down and take in this very special mammal. In the meantime, I'll be investigating another species and preparing to pass on the information to you. Have a wonderful month, and don't forget to visit the Denver and Cheyenne Mountain Zoos. You won't forget it. I promise!

OUR READERS' FUR BABIES!

Thanks for Sharing the LOVE!



My dog and I enjoy enjoying Evergreen Lake in all its beauty.



Sweet Bella, always ready for a game.



Our bearded dragon, Baby



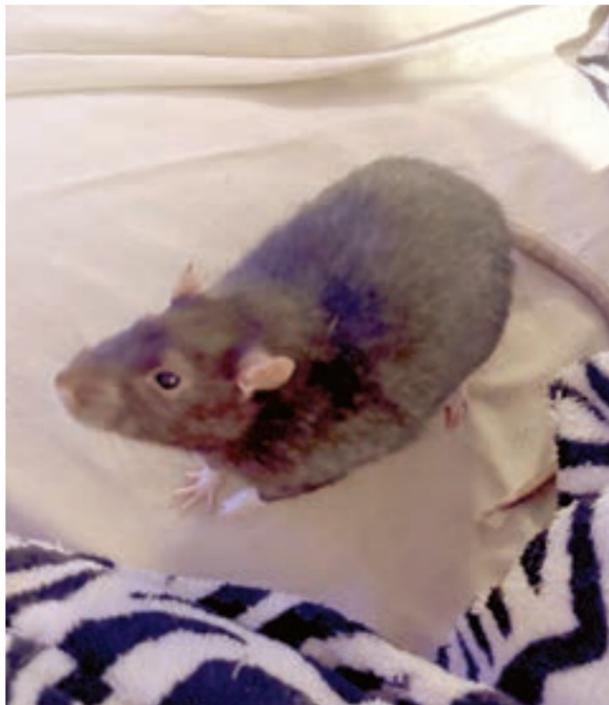
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Tofu, "Life is good!"



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Bundi the rat



Moosh Colorado mountain dog



“Many cleaners contain harsh chemicals that can be harmful to our pets.”



Dogs, Dogs, Dogs

BY CATHY KOWALSKI

It's almost spring and you may be making plans for spring cleaning! Everyone wants a clean house, but we need to be aware of what we are using when we are cleaning, because many cleaners contain harsh chemicals that can be harmful to our pets.

Cleaners that contain ammonia, strong acids, or bleach can be toxic if inhaled or ingested. Even dishwashing liquids can be a problem if ingested. Hydrogen peroxide can cause rashes. If rubbing alcohol is ingested, it can result in vomiting and disorientation. Bleach can cause skin and eye irritation, and burning of the esophagus and stomach lining. Tissue can be damaged by ammonia. Many toilet bowl cleaners contain phenols which can be corrosive. Also make sure to dispose of any items you have used while cleaning, such as paper towels, and be certain that your garbage bags and cans have secured lids.

Natural cleaners would be an excellent choice. Vinegar (to clean glass and countertops), baking soda (for stains), and lemon juice are great to use for cleaning. A good vinegar cleaner would be one cup of water, one cup of white vinegar, drops of essential oils (make sure they are non-toxic to pets), combine in a spray bottle, mix, and spray!

A floor cleaner that is pet safe would contain one cup of white vinegar, one gallon of hot water, and a few drops of dish soap.

Keep all cleaning products in locked areas or high cabinets to make sure your dog cannot access them.

You will also want to ventilate the area you are cleaning to eliminate any fumes.

Cleaning when your pet is out of the house helps to keep them safe.

If you are not interested in making your own cleaning supplies, look for plant-based products that say “pet-safe.” These products utilize enzymes or natural ingredients.

Products for pet accidents that are pet safe include Nature's Miracle, Rocco & Roxie, Puracy, Clean+Green, and Skout's Honor.

No matter whether you make your own cleaning solution or use a purchased one that is pet safe, you will want to make sure the surface is dry before allowing your pup access. If you use a strong cleaner, you will want to rinse until the cleaner has been removed. Dogs love to lick surfaces, so it is imperative that these surfaces are thoroughly rinsed.

For carpet, Clean+Green carpet cleaner or Puracy Professional Carpet Cleaner are designed to be pet friendly.

Signs that your dog has ingested a harmful substance would include vomiting, diarrhea, lethargy, wheezing, coughing, or having a hard time breathing.

If you believe your dog has been poisoned, call your vet or the 24-hour emergency hotlines: ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center 1-888-4-ANI-HELP or 1-888-426-4435, or the National Animal Poison Control Center

1-800-548-2423. It would be helpful if you know what your dog has ingested. Make sure to move your dog to fresh air if it was from fumes.

You do not want to induce vomiting unless you are instructed to do so by poison control or your vet.

Any cleaning product, no matter if it is home-made or purchased, can cause a reaction in some dogs. Any concern you have about a product should be brought up to your veterinarian.

Even if you are making your own cleaning products, keep them out of reach of all pets, make sure to rinse all surfaces after using, have your pets out of the area when cleaning, and don't bring them into the area until all surfaces are dry. Keeping our furry friends safe, in good health, and able to enjoy a clean environment are our spring-cleaning goals!



Cathy is the Executive Director and trainer at Faithfully K9 Service Dogs and Dog Training. Call 720-934-7378 or visit the website www.faithfullyk9.com.



OUR PETS

BY ANNE VICKSTROM

“Studies have found that animals can reduce loneliness, increase feelings of social support, and boost your mood.”

Talented Colorado artist Lorri Acott perfectly summed up the relationship between people and dogs in her sculpture titled “Who Rescued Who?” The human figure leans toward the dog's snout, gazing upward. I've been in a similar position with one of the six dogs we've adopted, or perhaps I should say, partnered.

When I was feeling down from a stressful situation, our golden retriever sat in front of me and pressed his forehead against mine. I instantly felt calmer, and as I embraced him, he leaned against me. Delivering a big hug, I couldn't help but laugh. I popped back up and continued my day, which included a lot more loving scratches. The reason is that “Interacting with animals has been shown to decrease levels of cortisol (a stress-related hormone) and lower blood pressure. Other studies have found that animals can reduce loneliness, increase feelings of social support, and boost your mood.” It certainly did all of that for me.

Dogs aren't just playthings; they're essential companions in their families. By ignoring this fact, human partners miss out on the best part of sharing a home and life with an animal. Our dogs have 25–60 times as many scent receptors as we do. When we are fearful, sad, or angry, our body's chemical levels change, with cortisol levels increasing. A dog smells this and is affected by it. If you're concerned, they're guaranteed



“Our golden retriever sat in front of me and pressed his forehead against mine. I instantly felt calmer.”

to be too. It's their way of taking in their surroundings, ready to protect you. On the other hand, when we're happy, “they can detect subtle chemical changes in sweat and breath, such as variations in endorphins and oxytocin. Studies show dogs can distinguish between happy and fearful scents, often acting more relaxed and friendly when they smell a happy scent, compared to showing stress or fear in response to fearful scents.” How many times have you heard someone say that their spouse doesn't understand

them? Too bad we can't smell each other's emotions the same way dogs do.

We leave our dogs alone in our homes for full workdays, without a call or a visit, and unlike humans, who would be angry and punish us for such behavior, each time we return, those neglected critters come running toward us, a treasured toy in their mouth, to share their joy with us.

I recall a friend sharing with me one of the reasons he was getting divorced. “Can't she at least

get up from the sofa when I come home after a hard day's work?” He wouldn't have had cause to divorce his dog. No dog would lie on even the softest sofa when their partner returned home.

There are practical reasons to have a dog. When something bumps in the night, it may capture my attention, but if the dog is happy, then I can rest easy. When our partner starts barking like a banshee, I know someone is at the door. Who needs a doorbell when there's a dog in the house? Our malamute carried her ancestors' DNA. The Inuit people used malamutes as guards for infants. They would leave the child bundled in the igloo and leave the malamute at the door. Carcasses of predators would lie at the entrance upon their return from hunting, with the malamute standing close by the child. The same happened with our children. No one was allowed to approach without our dog's okay.

If you have a dog, learn about their traits, then spend time with them to discover their particular attitudes. If they're runners, get outside with them. If they're cuddlers, share quiet time with them. If you don't have a dog, consider adding one to your household. These four-legged walking hearts are so much more than just pets—they are loving companions with fur.

Anne Vickstrom proudly started her writing career with *Your Mountain Connection*. She has written for regional and national publications, and has published books, including *Depths of Devotion – A Love Story Across Continents and Cultures*. She loves living in Evergreen where she and her husband raised three children and six dogs.

Cultivating Young Voices: The 2026 Young Writers Conference

For over three decades, the mountain community has fostered a unique sanctuary for student creativity. Since its inception in 1995, the Young Writers program has remained a cornerstone of local education, proving that even in a digital age, the power of the written word is timeless.

A Legacy of Literacy

What began as a grassroots effort by mountain area teachers has grown into a robust creative community. As educators, we recognized a need for students to connect beyond the classroom, envisioning a space where young authors could find their tribe.

Event Details

This year, the tradition continues on April 2 at Marshdale. The evening will feature a blend of peer sharing and professional inspiration.

- **Featured Author:** This year's guest is Jolene Gutierrez, who will share insights into the professional writing process.
- **The Share Groups:** In a nod to the program's roots, Mountain area teachers volunteer their time to lead small "share groups."

- **Student Authors:** Every participating student brings a self-published book they have written, allowing them to experience the pride of being a published author among their peers.

- **Participating Schools:** Bergen Elementary, Marshdale Elementary, The Montessori School of Evergreen, Parmalee Elementary, Rocky Mountain Academy of Evergreen, West Jeff Elementary, Wilmot Elementary

Learning for the Whole Family

Young Writers isn't just for the students. While the children are busy sharing their stories, the event offers dedicated parent presentations hosted by members of our community. These sessions traditionally focus on social-emotional education and creativity.

The Young Writers Conference remains a testament to what happens when a community invests in the imagination of its youth. It's more than just a day of writing; it's thirty years of building confidence, one story at a time.

<https://sites.google.com/jeffcoschools.us/jwc2026/home>

Little Paws, Long Story

BY KAARSTEN TURNER

I have two dogs, Sara and Little Bear. Combined, they make up one decent-sized pet. It is hard to imagine, with each weighing it at approximately ten pounds, that their ancestors, in an entirely different form, once trotted alongside hunters on frozen ground. These two trot to the kitchen in case a



piece of toast goes rogue. The distance between those worlds is measured not just in years, but in trust—a long, shared evolution that turned wary predators into family. And on any given evening, with one warm body pressed against your leg and another curled as close as it possibly can, that entire history contracts into something very simple: two small hearts, beating steadily beside your own.

The quiet inexplicable miracle behind my little balls of fur is that they carry the echoes of wolves in their genes. Even these two diverged from wolf ancestors roughly 20,000–40,000 years ago, and they were likely the first animals ever domesticated by humans. Over thousands of generations, selective breeding nudged them away from the wary independence of wolves toward the tameness, social ease, and emotional attunement that humans now take for granted in a family dog. Researchers still debate exactly how that partnership began—whether bold wolves lingered at human campsites, living off scraps, or whether humans raised wolf pups until a more cooperative, dog-like temperament emerged—but there is broad agreement that humans and early dogs shaped each other through shared hunting, protection, and companionship. In the process, dogs adapted remarkably to human social cues and emotional signals, becoming specialists in reading faces, gestures, and moods in ways even tamed wolves do not match.

small in stature but overflowing with affection and loyalty. She is a toy-sized guardian with a watchful streak who thinks nothing of taking on the Amazon delivery driver or a suspicious leaf skittering down the driveway. While she is alert and vocal, quick to sound the alarm, she is just as quick to melt back into the role of quiet lapdog once she is satisfied that all is well. In a world that moves too fast, Sara reminds of a slower, gentler rhythm: the soft thump of paws on hardwood, the quiet sigh as she settles next to you, the unspoken reminder that being present is its own kind of work.

If Sara is the old soul, Little Bear is the comic relief—a Chug, half Chihuahua and half Pug, compressed charisma in a small, sturdy body. Little Bear has a compact frame and eyes so human, they make strangers melt. His life's mission is to be a best friend first, watchdog and couch clown second, and he is just that. He wants to be in the middle of everything: the phone call, the TV show, the project on the table that clearly needs "help," and I know this because puzzle pieces go missing. I wish I could go back into their lineage and see the long history that brought them from the wild into my living room. I think we all do.

Kaarsten is a forester, a mama to two boys, a sunchaser, a writer, and a lover of chocolate. She's lived in Conifer for a while now.



Juba, fur baby and contributing writer

COOKING CLASSES WITH... CASTLES & KITCHENS

Cooking With Your Palate

BY TOM BECKER

“Try mixing techniques and flavor choices from several recipes; it's fun.”

Prior to Christmas I found lobster tail on sale, and some holiday lobster in the Rockies sounded good. A bisque or a creamy linguini, but with this unusually warm weather, perhaps a lobster roll. But what style? To an east-coaster, a lobster roll's style matters. Most every region throughout New England features its own special lobster roll, and although similar in their culinary makeup, the differences are viewed as critical. Maine lobster rolls contain a bit of mayo, enough to lightly coat the lobster, along with diced celery and ground black pepper. It's served cold in a butter toasted New England roll. Connecticut does a light saute in butter, with a squeeze of lemon and a sprinkle of salt. It's served warm with a chopped chive garnish. Maryland rolls feature a lobster tossed with mayo, Old Bay, celery, parsley and shallot. The Boston lobster roll features a bit more mayo than Maine along with celery, lemon, and lemon zest. These are perhaps the lobster roll heavy hitters.

When I look at doing a new dish, I'll do research on the different takes of the same dish. From regional differences to the different interpretations of various chefs, you'll find stylistic differences in both flavoring and technique. Try mixing techniques and flavor choices from several recipes; it's fun. And always, cook with your

palate. So, for this project, I started planning my take on what I liked for each lobster roll. I chose an overall blend from the styles above, and added a little personal preference. As Old Bay is paprika heavy, I blended mayo, paprika, sea salt, black pepper, lemon and a sauce blend called W Sauce, and adjusted to taste. But wait, it's a beautiful day, the Traeger is calling my name and I have some pecan pellets which will blend very well with lobster. Toasted rolls? Nope!

Stromboli is an Italian-American turnover from the 50s. It's made of pizza dough and is essentially a rolled pizza. Typically stuffed with Italian meats, veggies and cheese, it is rolled, baked and sliced for service, alongside some marinara. So, how about a pecan-smoked lobster roll stromboli? Makin' stuff up is fun! This recipe will feed 4–6. Here we go...



Join us! We offer hands-on cooking classes in our Conifer kitchen. Browse classes on our website www.castlesandkitchens.com or contact Francesca or Tom at castlesandkitchens@gmail.com.



STROMBOLI Serves 4–6

My basic pizza dough recipe is a Tavern Style thin crust. If you like your pizza with a crispy edge this one does the job.

- 2 ½ C AP flour
- 2 t sugar
- 1 ½ t instant yeast
- 1 t salt
- ¾ C + 2 T cold water
- 2 T olive oil

In a small bowl mix the yeast into the water and set aside. In your mixer bowl, mix the flour, sugar, and salt together, and then slowly blend in the yeast-water mix and oil. Increase the mixer to a medium speed and let it run until the dough pulls away from the bowl and forms a soft ball. Place the dough on a lightly floured surface and knead for a minute or two. You want a ball that is soft and smooth and springs back when pressed. Place in an oiled bowl, cover with wrap and let rise 1–2 hours until doubled in size. Remove from the bowl, cut it in half and form 2 balls for two 12" pizzas. Loosely wrap and refrigerate 5 hours to overnight. Remove from refrigerator at least 2 hours before use.

For the sauce, make enough for the inside of the dough as well as for dipping.

1 C mayo; 1 celery stalk, halved and diced; 1 bundle chives, divided ½ – ½ and chopped; paprika, sea salt, ground black pepper, and lemon juice to taste; and anything else to taste, like W sauce. This is what I mean when I say, cook with your palate. It's a sauce. Make it please you.

We're looking for a smooth, citrus flavor with a little spice at the back of the mouth. The celery and chives are needed for some

earthiness, and the salt will bring the flavors together without tasting salty.

Using two 4–6 oz. tails, cut the shell and pull the meat free. Place them on a parchment-lined tray, and season the meat with melted butter, lemon, and paprika. Pre-heat the oven to 400° or your smoker to 225°. Oven: Cook the lobster for 12–15 minutes to an internal temp of 130° and remove. Smoker: place the shells directly on the smoker and smoke 30–35 minutes to 130° and remove. Increase the temp to 400°. After removal from the heat, cut the lobster into bite-size chunks.

On a floured board, roll the dough to a 10x14 rectangle, with the 10" side toward you. Spread an even layer of sauce across the dough. Place a good layer of spinach on top of the sauce and top that with shredded Parmesan cheese. Sprinkle with the ¾ amount of chives. At the quarter point of the laid out stromboli run a horizontal line of lobster from right to left. Do the same at the ¾ point. Take the dough edge close to you and bring it over the first line of lobster and roll up to the end of the stromboli. Fold up the edges to secure the filling. Mix 1 egg and 1 T water for an egg wash. With a brush, wash the dough with the egg, then flip seam side down and complete the wash. Sprinkle with the remaining chives and place back on the tray. In both oven and smoker, bake for 25–30 minutes. The crust should be golden. Remove from the heat and rest for 5–7 minutes. Slice, plate with sauce, and enjoy!

MORE OF OUR FURRY FRIENDS!

Thanks for Sharing the LOVE!



Latte and Lacy, our ragdoll cats



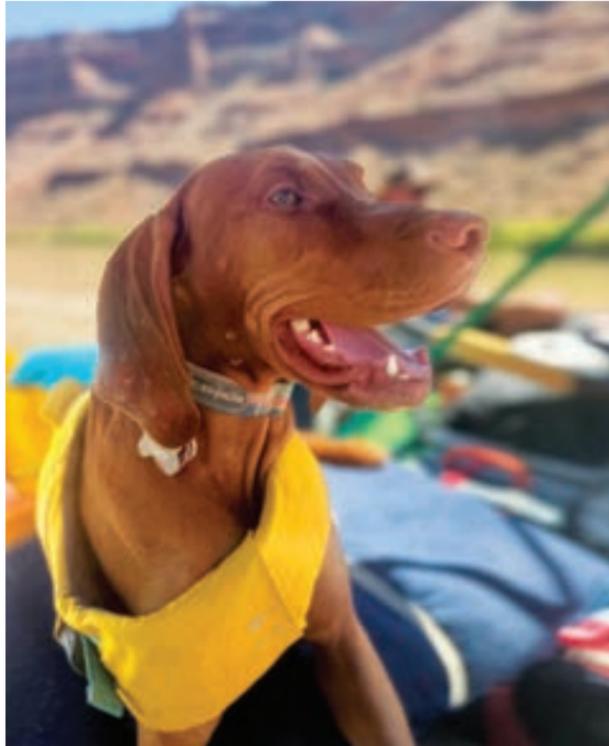
Sessie the Siamese

“The whole glorious history of animals with people is about joy and connection. It’s about loving this creature and letting this creature love you.”

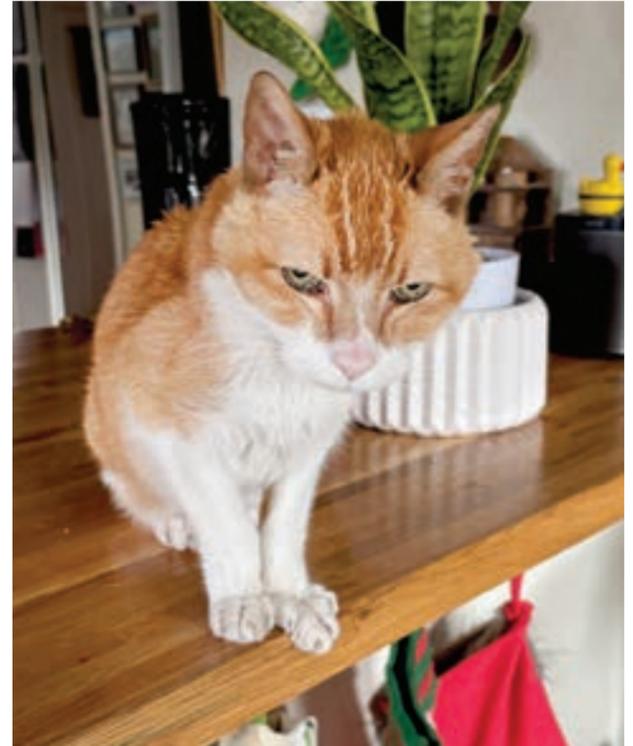
— Jon Katz



My two Cavaliers - Ernie and Ollie



My grand dog, Timber the Vizsla



Acholi, the king!



Maizy, a dog for all seasons



Kiko and Pickles...Double Trouble!

Evergreen Chamber News



Time to Show Love to Our Small Businesses

BY ERICA SPRENKEL

I know for many of us, this is the time to focus on the loved ones in our lives, and the Chamber is no different and we need your help. Each year we host an annual business awards event, and while we love all of our businesses and their owners, there are always those who rise above.

For 2025, here are your nominees:

NEW BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

- Chillax Om Natural Health & Longevity Center
- Savvy Advisors
- Old Growth Tree Service
- Dawnstme Premiere Concierge

PEOPLE'S CHOICE

- The Wildflower Cafe
- Holly Berry
- Burke Dermatology
- EverBean Coffee Co

Now we need your help. Voting is open in the Everything Evergreen app, and each of these businesses and nonprofits need you to vote. In the app (if you don't already have it, simply go to your phone's App Store to download it), go to the "Live/Work/Stay" community and the top icon is for voting. Voting closes on March 6, so show some love to our local businesses and nonprofits who truly stood out in 2025.

BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

- The Wild Game
- Mr. Electric of Golden, CO
- State Farm Insurance/Michele Vanags
- The Little Bear

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

- Wes Bickmore-Evergreen Rentals
- Haydn Johnson-Echo Mountain
- Amy Broxterman-Front Range Business Ops
- Jacque Cook-Suz's Cookie Jar Rescue

NONPROFIT OF THE YEAR

- Resilience1220
- Boogie Benefits
- ResqRanch
- Blue Spruce Kiwanis

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Nikola Lekovic – Appointments
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Kathryn is a love, intimacy and relationship coach supporting individuals and couples to create and sustain safe and passionate relationships. Individual and couples workshops and retreats offered.

Kathryn Beachy – Owner
tantrawithkathryn.com
kbeachy@tantrawithkathryn.com

Conifer Chamber News



MARCH 14-29	TASTE OF 285		
MARCH 26	COMMUNITY DIRECTORY COVER PHOTO CONTEST		
APRIL 17	CASINO NIGHT & NOMINEE CELEBRATION		
APRIL 23	AWARDS CELEBRATION AND DINNER		



Celebrate Community

BY BETH SCHNEIDER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As we step into an exciting new year, the Conifer Area Chamber of Commerce is proud to announce a vibrant lineup of events designed to celebrate community, support local businesses, and bring neighbors together across the Conifer area. From delicious dining experiences to inspiring celebrations and creative opportunities, 2026 is already shaping up to be a memorable year.

Next up is our newest addition, **Taste of 285**, happening March 14-29 in partnership with the Platte Canyon Chamber of Commerce. This two-week celebration highlights the incredible restaurants, food trucks, bakeries, and drinking establishments that make the Highway 285 corridor such a flavorful destination. Community members are encouraged to explore new favorites, revisit longtime staples, and enjoy the unique tastes that define our communities. Taste of 285 is a chance to directly support the hardworking local businesses that keep our region thriving year-round.

Creativity will also take center stage this spring with our annual photo contest for the cover of the new **Community Guide**. This guide will be mailed to 10,000 homes in and around Conifer, showcasing the beauty, businesses, and spirit of our community. Photographers of all skill levels are invited to submit images that capture what makes this place so special, whether it's sweeping mountain views, local events, wildlife, or everyday moments that reflect life in the foothills. The winning photo will become the face of the guide, offering a meaningful way for residents to share their perspective and pride in our community.

April brings two signature celebrations that honor the people and businesses who make Conifer shine. On April 17, join us for **Casino Night and the Annual Awards Nominee Celebration**, an evening filled with fun, connection, and anticipation. Guests will enjoy professionally run casino games, festive energy, and the opportunity to celebrate this year's outstanding nominees. It's a night designed to

bring the community together while recognizing the dedication, innovation, and service that fuel local success.

Just a few days later, on April 23, we gather for the **Annual Awards Dinner**, an elegant evening devoted to announcing and honoring this year's award winners. This special celebration highlights the remarkable individuals, businesses, and organizations that go above and beyond to strengthen our community. Surrounded by friends, colleagues, and neighbors, we will recognize excellence, share stories of impact, and celebrate the spirit that makes Conifer such a wonderful place to live and work.

As these events approach, we encourage everyone to remember one simple but powerful message: **shop local**. Every purchase made at a neighborhood store, every meal enjoyed at a local restaurant, and every service booked with a hometown provider helps sustain jobs, support families, and preserve the character of our mountain community.

We look forward to celebrating with you throughout 2026 and continuing to build a strong, connected, and thriving community together.

Beth Schneider
Executive Director
Conifer Area Chamber of Commerce

If you have any membership questions, please contact the chamber office:
director@GoConifer.com, 303-838-5711.
Thank you for your continued support and thank you for shopping local!

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March 1

Evergreen's Polar Plunge, 10am–12pm at the Evergreen Lakehouse. Are you ready to take the plunge? A majority of proceeds go to INSPIRE, an Evergreen organization that provides inclusive recreation opportunities for individuals with disabilities, making a meaningful impact on the lives of participants and their families. <https://www.a4aevergreen.org/product/lake-plunge>

March 4

Conservation Trends in the West. Lori Weigel, Principal of New Bridge Strategy, will share an inside look at the findings from the annual bipartisan Conservation in the West poll, which digs into Westerners' views on climate change, public lands, water, wildlife, and other important conservation issues. Wed., March 4, 9–10:30am, at the Mountain Area Land Trust, 908 Nob Hill Road, Suite 200, Evergreen. Free public event. Register at <https://savetheland.org/events/>

March 4

Wine, Women, and Wealth (WWW), 6:30–8pm at Willow Creek Restaurant, 29029 Upper Bear Creek Rd., Evergreen. Amazing things happen when women get together in community. Relax, enjoy a glass of wine and light appetizers, meet other amazing women, and learn about money! It's FREE. There's time for networking and sharing about yourself, so bring business cards if you have them! RSVP is required. Text or call Amelia at 720-722-0094 or use the Meetup or Eventbrite link to register: <https://www.meetup.com/wine-women-wealth-evergreen-co/>

March 6–22 Evergreen Players presents an Immersive Murder Mystery. Join us at the historic Hiwan Homestead Museum, 28473 Meadow Dr., in Evergreen. Friday and Saturday performances begin at 7:30pm and the Saturday and Sunday matinee performances at 2pm. *The Evergreen Players is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization producing 6 shows per year in the foothills. Established in 1950, the Players' mission is to create professional quality theater to inspire, engage and entertain. The Players' mailing address is P.O. Box 1271, Evergreen, CO 80437*

March 5, 12, 19, and 26

Join us for Thirsty Thursdays at the Blackbird Cafe, from 4–7:45pm, for local live music, appetizers, and drinks. 25940 Highway 74 in Kittredge.

March 5, 12, 19, and 26

For horse lovers of all ages, TrailBlazers Class at the ResqRanch will be held every Thursday from 4:30–6pm. This isn't just another riding lesson. This is a movement. The Trailblazers is a weekly community gathering for compassionate horse lovers of all ages, dedicated to creating a better future for equines. Together, we are embarking on a mission to dramatically increase the number of people skilled in the art and science of Positive Reinforcement (R+) training. By joining, you become a vital part of the solution, helping to prepare the world to welcome and care for every horse in need. Trailblazer Single 90-minute Session: \$52 or Trailblazer 10-Session Pass: \$430. <https://www.resqranch.org/trailblazers-a>

March 5, 12, 19, and 26

Preschool Adventures at Evergreen Nature Center, weekly on Thursdays, 9–10am. Bring your little one to the Nature Center each week to develop their early childhood readiness skills through nature exploration. Practice fine motor skills, literacy comprehension, and more at the Evergreen Nature Center. These programs are designed for children ages 2–5 years old. All children must have an adult in attendance. Come dressed to explore the outdoors. This program is completely FREE and no registration is needed. Approximately 45–60 minutes. <https://evergreenaudubon.org/events/preschool-adventures-at-evergreen-nature-center/>

March 12

Mountain Mixer @5, Elevate Your Networking, 5–7pm at Peak Cowork, 1202 Bergen Pkwy, Evergreen. \$5 members, \$10 not yet members. For info email Admin@evergreenchamber.org

March 12

Conifer Area Chamber of Commerce Monthly Membership Meeting at Our Lady of the Pines, 9444 Eagle Cliff Road, in Conifer. Doors open at 7am for networking and the meeting runs 7:30–9am. This meeting welcomes chamber members, prospective members, and any of our neighbors interested in learning more about our business community and activities in the area. Please bring your own coffee, tea, or water as beverages will not be provided.

March 13

EPRD Father Daughter Dance, 6pm–8pm, at the Evergreen Lake House. Join EPRD for a night of dancing and desserts! We will have crafts, face painting, cookies, music, balloons, and fun! The entire family is welcome to join in this special occasion. Feel free to bring along any kiddos or guardians! www.evergreenrecreation.com

March 13

Join Center For the Arts Evergreen for our monthly Creativity, Coffee & Conversation (CCC) for mountain area seniors! Each month from 1:30–3:30pm, we offer the opportunity for artists, writers, and arts appreciators (aged 55 and better) to gather and find connection through art. CCC is an opportunity to come together, make new friends, and learn something new. Social interaction and community engagement keep us all a little healthier.

March 13–15



In March at StageDoor Theatre we are heading over the rainbow for **The Wizard of Oz** (youth edition) performed by our premier company. March 13 at 7pm, 14th and 15th at 2pm, all tickets \$15. Music and lyrics by Harold Arlen and E.Y. Harburg, background music by Herbert Stothart, dance/vocal arrangement by Peter Howard. Presented by Concord Theatricals. This edition is based on the classic motion picture owned by Turner Ent. Co., distributed by WB. Tickets and information: www.stagedoortheatre.org *Stagedoor Theatre is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit community-based theatre, open to everyone.*

March 14–29

Taste of 285! Businesses all along the 285 corridor will showcase the tastes that make our area unique. Restaurants, food trucks, coffee shops, bakeries, cocktail spots, breweries, and more will highlight special menu items, seasonal offerings, or customer favorites. This event is a collaborative effort of the Conifer Area Chamber of Commerce and the Platte Canyon Chamber of Commerce, bringing together businesses and communities along the 285 corridor with a shared goal of supporting local and celebrating what makes this region special. By working together, the Chambers are expanding the reach of Taste of 285 and inviting residents and visitors alike to explore more of the corridor and the incredible variety of flavors it offers. www.goconifer.com

March 19

Wild Aware, local Evergreen nonprofit, invites you to join us for a wild evening of celebration and connection at the Open Aware Meet & Greet on the third Thursday of each month at 6pm at the Evergreen Brewery, 2962 Evergreen Parkway, Suite 201, Evergreen.

March 17

Connections & Cocktails, 4:30–5:30pm at the Woodcellar Bar & Grill, 1552 Bergen Parkway, Evergreen. Join new members, ambassadors, and seasoned members alike to network in a casual setting. evergreenchamber.org

March 20–April 25



22nd Annual Mile High International Pastel Exhibition. Opening Reception: Friday, March 20 from 6–8pm at 31880 Rocky Village Drive in Evergreen. Join us for the opening of this beloved annual exhibition, this year juried by Chicago-based artist Susan Kuznitsky and presented at CAE for the first time. The show brings together exceptional pastel works from artists nationwide, ranging from expansive landscapes to intimate portraits. All are welcome to attend, enjoy drinks and light snacks, and hear participating artists share insights into their work and creative process.

March 21 and 22

Nestbox Sale at Evergreen and Conifer King Soopers! Visit King Soopers in Evergreen or Conifer during the weekend of March 21st and 22nd to purchase handmade nestboxes from Evergreen Audubon and Nature Center. We sell the nestboxes built during our September 2025 Nestbox Build Day to benefit our feathered friends at a cost that can't be beat! We hope to see you there. Proceeds benefit Evergreen Audubon and Nature Center. Evergreen King Soopers, 1173 Bergen Pkwy, Evergreen; Conifer King Soopers, 25637 Conifer Rd, Conifer

March 25

Mom's Tubing is the perfect chance for moms to take a well-deserved break and enjoy some winter fun on the hill! Join us on Wednesday, March 25 from 7pm–9pm at Echo Mountain, 19285 CO-103, Idaho Springs. After tubing, head to your private space in The Lookout for a snack and hot chocolate. Laugh, slide, sip, and savor a little time just for you—because moms deserve the fun, too! \$20 <https://shop.echomtn.com/Events?day=2026-03-23>

March 27

Morning Birds and Brews with Evergreen Audubon and Nature Center, on the last Friday of each month, 8:30–10am at the Evergreen Nature Center, 27640 CO-74. We will spend some time chatting indoors at the Evergreen Nature Center before heading out to the meadow and seeing what birds we can find. Evergreen Audubon will provide hot drinks. Bring your own coffee mug or thermos, binoculars, and weather-appropriate clothes. We have binoculars to lend out, so don't worry if you don't have your own! This event is geared toward adults, but all ages and birding abilities are welcome.

March 2026



March 4

Women's Circle 5:30–6:30pm. Expand your circle and connect with others in a safe space. Activate your creative power to align with your feminine presence that attracts the situations and relationships that you desire. Brenda will share powerful practices to embolden you to show up in life to be seen and heard.

March 8

Mindfulness Walk 10am. Join Kathy at Pine Valley Ranch (30400 Crystal Lake Road, Pine) for gentle walking, grounding, and reflection. Whether you are feeling called to reconnect, reflect, or simply enjoy a calm morning, all are warmly welcomed. Bring layers for the weather, water, and an open heart.

March 11

Dru Yoga 5:30–6:30pm. Dru has a focus upon maintaining a healthy spine, through activation movements in the beginning of class and throughout a Dru session. A typical Dru Yoga class includes energy block release sequences, classical asanas (yoga postures), pranayama (breath work), mudras (gestures), positive

March 27

Wild Aware, an Evergreen Colorado non-profit organization, is actively recruiting volunteers, new and old, for their **Fourth Friday Coffee**, a monthly event that continues on the 4th Friday morning of every month. Our gatherings begin at 9am in the Evergreen Bread and Cocktail Lounge, 1260 Bergen Pkwy, Evergreen. Come meet new friends and make an impact in your community! wildaware.org

March 28

Come visit Evergreen Nature Center each month for a new program designed for the whole family! Each month we will explore a new nature theme; our March topic: Antlers vs. Horns. From 11am–12pm at 27640 CO-74, Evergreen. <https://evergreenaudubon.org/events/saturday-family-program/>

March 29

Suit up in your most unexpected slope style for **Anything but Ski Clothes!** We're inviting guests to swap traditional ski gear—think jeans, sweats, t-shirts, costumes, or other creative outfits that keep you warm and covered. Participants who join the fun will receive a free side and a non-alcoholic drink from the Café as a thank-you for getting into the spirit. Get creative and show off your offbeat slope style! 10am–5pm at Echo Mountain, 19285 CO-103, Idaho Springs (*All clothing must be appropriate, and guests may not wear anything that exposes body parts that shouldn't be shown. Anyone dressed in unsafe or inappropriate attire will be asked to change or leave the event.*)

March 29

Join us for the **mustang filly's 3rd birthday party!** From noon–2 on Sunday, March 29th, at the ResqRanch. Enjoy Arts and Crafts with the Crafty Chassis, and join us for a fun afternoon of snacks, art, and horse fun! www.resqranch.org

April 10



A Night with Our Stars, (formerly Sparkle & Shine Business Awards and Gala), Friday, 6pm–9:30pm, at the Evergreen Lake House, 29612 Upper Bear Creek, Evergreen. Join us for a night of celebrating our stars. Our annual business awards this year will be an enchanting evening by the lake. We will have assigned seating and a fully catered dinner, so be sure to purchase your tickets as a group to sit together. We will be partaking in amazing food and drink and hanging out with our fellow business owners. Black-tie encouraged. Event sells out, purchase your tickets early. Tickets \$80: Dinner and 2 drink tickets included. evergreenchamber.org

PeaceWorks, Inc. offers a complimentary Community Wellness Program as part of our advocacy for personal wellbeing, healthy relationships, and safe homes. All are welcome. Attend in person at Taspen's Dragonfly Studio, unless otherwise noted. Register www.taspenshealingcenter.com under Events, or online (Zoom details on website) peaceworksinco.org/events

affirmations, and also empowering visualizations. Dru classes are tailored to the student and their individual level, which makes it great for everyone.

March 18

Block Therapy™ Trauma Release 5:30–6:30pm. Trauma (physical and emotional) becomes trapped in your body and leads to pain, aging, and disease. This powerful self-healing practice unlocks the restrictions and adhesions that block blood and oxygen flow and releases trauma at a cellular level. All levels. Wear comfortable clothes. Bring a yoga mat if you have one and a water bottle.

March 25

Meditative Sound Bath 5:30–6:30pm. Join Brenda for a transformative vibrational meditation to harmonize emotions and thought patterns while soothing tensions in the body. Sensation is integrated with mindful intention to enliven energy centers and internal wisdom. Wear comfortable clothes, bring a water bottle, head pillow, and yoga mat (if you have one).

Submit your calendar events to *Your Mountain Connection* via Marty Hallberg (news@yourmtnconnection.com).
Calendar Events are published as space allows.
Information must be received by the 10th of each month prior to the actual date of the event.

If your group is no longer meeting, please let *Your Mountain Connection* know via Marty Hallberg (news@yourmtnconnection.com).



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Professional Automotive Repair from someone you can trust to do it right!

Ben Grant, the owner of Grant Automotive, grew up in Pine Junction and has always been involved in the mountain community. At the age of 15, Ben knew that his strong interest in automotive repair would determine his professional direction and after 12 years of working for Kevin's Subaru he opened Grant Auto in July of 2000.

Ben has steadily built a loyal following and currently has ten employees. He estimates that he and his techs combine to reflect about 100 years of experience, and it is important to note that 30 of those years are his.

Ben prides himself in the volume of repeat service in American and Japanese-made vehicles. They have the latest computerized diagnostic equipment including two alignment racks that utilize digital cameras to align all four wheels accurately.

In addition to having the latest equipment, they can take care of all recommended mileage services for vehicle warranty, specializing in late-model fuel-injected cars and trucks. Diesel repair and Emissions testing are also offered.

If you need your car or truck repaired, need mileage services, basic services, or even new tires, **Grant Automotive is the place to go. It is located at 19356 Goddard Ranch Court on Highway 285, ½ mile south of North Turkey Creek, just 6.5 miles from C-470 and Highway 285 and just down from Aspen Park.**

**PLEASE CALL
303-697-0225**

**TO SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT
and visit www.GrantAutomotive.net**

19356 Goddard Ranch Court

Morrison, Colorado 80465

303.697.0225

all major credit cards accepted



Proud member of the
Better Business Bureau



5 stars from Bruce, a verified customer:

"Grant very quickly helped us out in an emergency. We couldn't be happier!" —Bruce C.