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News on the Positive Side
AUGUST 2026

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Cover art by Marty Hallberg

— EXPLORE THE HISTORY OF OUR COMMUNITY ON PAGE 4 —

Connection to the Past



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Keeping it Cool

“Our pets rely on us to notice the little things, before the heat becomes dangerous.”



“Stay cool out there — on the inside, and on the outside!”

When the thermometer climbs, we humans know exactly what to do. We turn on fans, find shade, grab a cold drink, and complain about how miserable the heat feels. But what about the animals that depend on us to recognize the signs that they are struggling? Our dogs, cats, horses, livestock, and backyard animals don't get to walk inside, open the refrigerator, or tell us, “I'm too hot.” They rely on us to notice the little things, before the heat becomes dangerous.

Every summer, as a vet, I see firsthand horses losing tremendous weight, and even dying, from being unable to defend themselves from fly attacks, causing major skin lesions over their entire bodies, combined with suffering in the tremendous heat. It is sad, but true. Don't let this happen to any of your beloved animals!

For our dogs and cats, the biggest mistake people make during extreme heat is underestimating how quickly temperatures can rise. A short walk on hot pavement can burn paw pads, and a few minutes in a parked vehicle can become life-threatening. Remember that animals are wearing a fur coat all year long, and many breeds were not designed for intense heat. Walk early in the morning or later in the evening, provide plenty of fresh water, and always give your pets access to a cool, shaded place. Other tools to consider are adding ice cubes to their water bowl and purchasing cooling mats.

Keep in mind, their behavior might change, too. Your dog may no longer want to get on the bed in this heat. That's OK. Just make sure the wood, tile, or concrete they lie on, instead, is padded so they don't get hairless, thickened skin on their sensitive elbows. And some animals are afraid of the air conditioner. Maybe, instead, they can spend more time out in the garage. Simply observe their behavior and try to help them the best you can to be comfortable.

One of the best tricks is to think like your pet. Would you want to stand barefoot on the driveway? Would you want to sit outside without water or shade? If the answer is no, your pet probably doesn't either.

For our larger animals, especially horses, the challenges become even greater because they often live outside and cannot simply escape the elements. Horses regulate body temperature through sweating, but during extreme heat and humidity, sweating becomes less effective. A horse that is breathing heavily, sweating excessively, acting lethargic, or not drinking enough water may be in trouble.

Simple steps can make a huge difference. Make sure clean, cool water is always available. Provide shade whenever possible. Keep manure cleaned up so the area is clean and dry. Trim the weeds around the barn. Use fans safely in barns and shelters to increase airflow. Avoid strenuous exercise during the hottest parts of the day. And remember that hydration is more than just water. Electrolytes can be helpful for animals that are sweating heavily, but they should be used correctly and not as a replacement for proper management.

Then there is another summer enemy that many people underestimate: flies.

Flies are not just annoying. They can cause stress, discomfort, skin irritation, and infections, and even contribute to the spread of disease. Anyone who has watched a horse constantly stomping, swishing its tail, or trying to bite at its own body knows the frustration flies create. An animal spending all day fighting flies is not resting, eating, or relaxing the way it should.

This is where prevention becomes so important. At the ResqRanch, we believe that true animal care is about looking at the whole picture: the animal's physical health, emotional well-being, environment, and daily comfort. Whether we are working with rescued horses, helping owners understand better R+ training techniques, or educating people about animal wellness, our goal is always the same: give animals a better quality of life.

One of the tools we have seen make a remarkable difference during fly season is my all-natural and organic ShooFly spray. I, for one, never want to be without it again since we started using it here on our rescue animals. Many people who have followed our videos have seen the results firsthand. It has become one of those simple tools that can dramatically improve an animal's comfort, especially during the relentless summer months when flies seem impossible to escape.

The difference is often obvious. Instead of constantly shaking their heads, stomping their feet, or trying to get away from biting insects, the flies just fall off, and animals can relax. And a relaxed animal is a healthier animal.

The reality is that there is no single magic solution for surviving extreme heat. It is a combination of awareness, preparation, and paying attention to what our animals are trying to tell us. Sometimes the most important health care happens before there is ever an emergency.

The hottest days of summer are challenging, but they are also an opportunity. They remind us that animals are not just property or responsibilities on a checklist. They are living beings that trust us completely.

At the ResqRanch, we believe education is one of the greatest gifts we can give animals and their owners. If you want to learn more about keeping your animals healthier, happier, and safer through every season, follow along with our educational videos on my YouTube channel, @The1DrQ, and FREE resources at ResqRanch.org. Our clinics may fill quickly, but our mission continues every day: helping people understand animals better so animals can live better.

Because whether they have four paws, four hooves, feathers, or fins, every animal deserves comfort, kindness, and a chance to thrive — especially when summer turns up the heat.

Stay cool out there — on the inside, and on the outside!

DrQ and the crew of Aspen Park Vet Hospital and the ResqRanch

Aspen Park Veterinary Hospital is located at 25871 Duran Ave. Conifer, CO 80433. You can call the hospital at (303) 838-3771 (838-DrQ1) or visit them at www.DrQandU.org.

— KELLER WILLIAMS FOOTHILLS REALTY —

The Greater Good for All

BY LISA PLUMMER SMITH

“Please, let us remember how powerful we can be if we work together!”



Wanting the greatest good for all is a hugely beneficial mindset! It reduces anxiety and depression, increases your resilience, provides a sense of higher purpose, lowers your stress and strengthens social ties. A hopeful outlook also offers major health benefits such as increased pain tolerance and reduced risk of heart attack and chronic illness by lowering cortisol levels and boosting your immune system.

We are created equal and share common experiences living on this planet. We should not allow ourselves to judge each other. The habit of judging others reflects our own character and demonstrates whether we choose quick assumptions or seek to understand while having compassion and empathy for others.

Until a wrongdoing happens to someone you care about, you may not be able to personally acknowledge the utter wrongness of a particular doing. Sometimes it requires firsthand experience to put things in perspective for us. Please consider the passage, “If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.” This concept is most famously rooted in the biblical verse 1 Corinthians 12:26 (e.g., in the English Standard Version): It emphasizes our human interconnectedness, demonstrating that a community or family functions as a single unit where every part intimately shares in the joys or sorrows of the others.

By allowing ourselves to be silent, we allow wrongdoing to persist. Whatever you feel passionate about needs your attention, your support, your voice. Now is the time to push yourself outside of your comfort zone, to find the courage to use your voice and work together towards the greater good for all.

Please, let us remember how powerful we can be if we work together. We cannot let ourselves be overwhelmed/distracted/influenced by the raging noise around us. We must take time to reset, renew, research, and become informed about what matters most to us, and then use our voices to support what we believe in. Persistence, intentional community choices, and faith ensure that positive behaviors prevail.

As we age we may experience cognitive changes. Learning something new helps our brain build new pathways, which in turn improves our memory and problem-solving skills. My husband Phillip knew how to make a Caesar salad from scratch and wanted to teach me how to do it. At first I resisted, thinking, “Why should I learn?” I relented, and he happily taught me the process. Now that he is gone, I enjoy making it in the huge wooden bowl he purchased. The process holds golden memories

and reminds me of him. I am so thankful I took the time to learn how to make it.

My life experiences have gifted me a greater appreciation for all the good that is in the world. I try to live each day in gratitude and exercise my mind and body. I have good days and I have not-so-good days, but I have accepted that it is okay to not be okay. I’ve learned to acknowledge my feelings and process them; then I can move forward to a better place.

Thank you for allowing me to share my thoughts this month. I hope you gained something here that makes your life a little better. All the very best, Lisa



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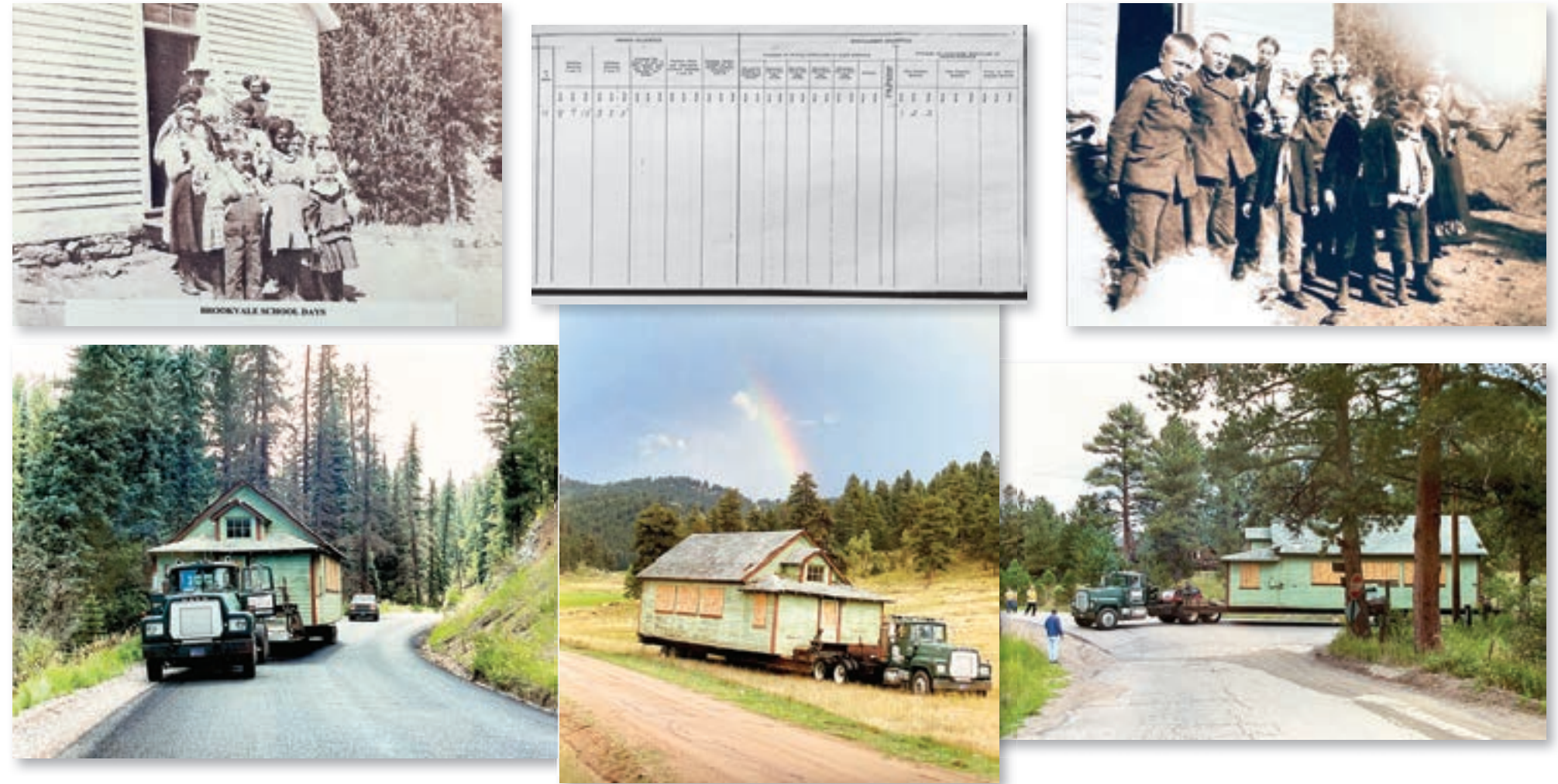
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connection to the past



“The physical location of learning may change, but the concept of integrity in education remains. The rescue and restoration of historic schools is a priority in our community.”

THE BROOKVALE SCHOOL

ELAINE HAYDEN | HISTORY EVERGREEN

In a matter of weeks, public school calendars will be released. Included in this schedule are non-student days for teacher in-service training; holidays; and fall, winter, and spring dates, with some wiggle room for the much-celebrated snow day as needed. Quite a different calendar was presented in the early days of the pioneer schools in our mountain area, if in fact there was a calendar. No policy that requires 160 teacher-student days existed. Pearl Anderson reported in her oral history interview that the general rule of attendance, particularly at the Brookvale School, allowed for school to be in session for six months out of the year, “Three in the summer and three in the fall/winter...(from) April they’d go until July and then they’d (break)...then in the winter months we didn’t go at all.” The reason behind that and similar school schedules was the necessity to have students help with work on the family homesteads, as well as the difficulty in navigating the roads with snowdrifts or muddy ruts. The story of Brookvale School could be a companion story to the Anderson family saga. The Andersons were ensconced in the community since 1895 onward; thus, their involvement in the development of the community is noted and valuable.

The Brookvale School was a late 1870s addition to the community located up Bear Creek, seven miles from the current Evergreen Dam, on one acre of land that had been donated by a local landowner. Clear Creek County (CCC) was founded in 1861; soon thereafter school taxes were levied, making it possible to finance public school construction with creation of the CCC School District #11. Prior to construction of dedicated school buildings, classes were often held in a family home. By the early 1900s there were approximately 25 year-around resident families in the Evans Ranch, Bendemeer, and Brookvale areas, with most families including children in need of schooling.

The Brookvale community enjoyed prominence and consisted of tourist cabins, a post office, a school, and a hotel that quickly became a destination mountain resort with stage lines serving guests from Idaho Springs and Bear

Creek. A 1903 issue of The Idaho Springs Siftings newspaper printed, “It is stated by all the tourists that there can be no more picturesque spot found anywhere in the mountains than in Brookvale.” The post office opened in 1876 at Brookvale, the same year that the downstream community of Evergreen was granted a post office at the behest of Dwight Wilmoth, resulting in Brookvale Post Office becoming an extension of the Evergreen services. The Anderson family contracted to provide mail service to and from Brookvale, holding that postal position for over 35 years, well into the 1940s. The Anderson family was very active in supporting their community since the arrival of Matilda and Frank, Sr. in 1895 and continuing with Pearl and Frank through the mid-1980s. Always at the center of community organizing, it is no surprise that Pearl Anderson contributed her services and time as a member of the CCC School Board from District #11 from 1918 to 1922.



Just as there were no strict policies regarding school procedures in the early years, there were no licensing requirements for the schoolteachers. Many were high school graduates; others were family members who stepped in when needed to provide guidance and consistency for the students. The pay for teachers in these early years was generally \$50 per month. Pearl Anderson’s interview revealed that her family offered their home for the teacher’s room and board for a fee of \$20 per month. The fundamental one-room Brookvale School, like most early schools, served multiple grades. At the time many structures were no longer utilizing the log construction techniques of early mountain buildings and had moved to the clapboard construction model. The heat source for the school was a wood stove, tended by the teacher and students. The outbuildings were a shed, for stabling mounts for students who arrived at school on horseback or donkeyback, and a basic outhouse, as there was no running water in the school in the early years.

Three Anderson boys, Harold, Walter (later of Anderson Mountain Market), and Buster attended the Brookvale School through the eighth grade, at which time they matriculated and tuitioned into Evergreen Schools. The Brookvale School began to suffer low enrollment and closed its doors to students in 1946, when all grades were enrolled in the Evergreen schools. The building remained on the property where the CCC Road and Bridge shops are located on Yankee Creek Road. The building continued to serve as a community gathering place, a certified polling place, a brief stint as a kindergarten, and county office space until the old school fell into disrepair in 1973, following 100 years of service to the county. After many years of petitioning interested parties to purchase the building, CCC successfully found a buyer with the agreement that the buyer would move the structure from county property. The undertaking was an event to be unequaled for excitement in the neighborhood when the Brookvale schoolhouse was jacked up onto a trailer and inched its way down the narrow Yankee Creek Road in 2005. Along

the route, gateposts were temporarily removed, utility wires were raised, and traffic was delayed to accommodate the size of the building. A new home was found for the historic Brookvale School building, which has now been fully restored and preserved. The structure is located on private property, for private use only, and is inaccessible to the public.

Today, King Murphy Elementary is the county school that serves the area that Brookvale School once served: Yankee Creek, Bendemeer, Circle K, Evans Ranch, and many more local communities. Mountain pioneers provided groundwork in understanding the importance and the value of education that has thrived over time. With the introduction of technology, the educational landscape has taken on a new look—not necessarily better or worse, just new. The traditional classroom, the multi-grade classroom, remote learning, and homeschool systems have all, in their turn, supported educational standards that serve our mountain communities. The physical location of learning may change, but the concept of integrity in education remains. The rescue and restoration of historic schools is a priority in our community, with the Medlen School, Buffalo Park School, the Conifer (Little White) School, and the Brookvale School being a few among many whose history is retold through preservation.

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History Evergreen is a newly formed non-profit organization whose mission is to acknowledge the rich history of our community and to foster an appreciation of historic preservation. Through publication of books, articles, social media and pamphlets we endeavor to maintain the historic record in a sustainable and inclusive manner for all to enjoy.



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— LOAN ZONE MORTGAGE —
Is Your Home Equity Just Sitting There?

Find the Right Loan for Your Situation
BY WANDA NORGE, MORTGAGE CONSULTANT

Is your home equity just sitting there? How about home equity loans with no additional monthly mortgage payment?

It's frustrating for seniors over 55 who have lots of equity in their homes but limited income streams. This can make it difficult to access that equity.

Here are a couple options worth mentioning:

Use a fixed-rate second mortgage that allows you to keep a first-lien mortgage in place.

This loan offers a simplified financial assessment option, making it easier to qualify if you have been told the debt ratios are too high.

There is no required monthly mortgage payment with this loan. However, you can repay as much of the loan balance as you like each month. Loan amounts can be between \$50,000–\$1 million. Get the funds as a lump sum or a line of credit. The loan is due when the borrower moves out of the house, doesn't pay taxes or home insurance, or passes away.

Perhaps you want to pay off higher-interest credit cards or personal loans; manage household bills, medical expenses, or travel expenses; or fund home improvements, repairs or upgrades to make the home user friendly as you age in it.

Or perhaps you need more than \$1 million? Use a jumbo option to convert up to \$4 million



“Reverse products are highly regulated products. They are not a scam or bad loans.”

in home equity into usable cash at the age of 55 instead of 62. There is no monthly or annual insurance premium with this loan, unlike a regular Home Equity Conversion Mortgage (HECM) loan. This can be a smart option if you have the equity and want to retain other investments and minimize taxes.

It eliminates your monthly mortgage payment. Or, if the home is currently free and clear, you can access the funds and still have no payments. Funds can be tax free, but consult your tax advisor. You can receive funds via a lump sum, monthly payouts, a line of credit, or a combination of all three.

These options have been helpful with “gray divorce” situations where one spouse may want to retain the home and buy out the other person and end up with no payment. It can help with the qualifying aspect of financing when social security and pension income doesn't work with debt ratios.

Reverse products are highly regulated products. They are not a scam or bad loans. Just like any mortgage loan or second fixed rate or line of credit, it needs to be the right loan for the right situation. Access equity you have worked hard to earn. You are using a financial tool to supplement your retirement and diversify assets, achieve a goal and help with cash flow.

Let's discuss if this is right for you.

Wanda Norge, Certified Mortgage Advisor (CMA), Certified Divorce Lending Professional (CDLP), Loan Zone Mortgage, LLC (NMLS: 1870102), 23 yrs exp, 29 yr Evergreen Resident, Phone: 303-419-6568, loans@wandanorge.com, www.wandanorge.com (NMLS: 280102).

Firsts and Lasts

BY KAARSTEN TURNER

“In less than a month, my firstborn son will be moving away and starting college.”

Clear as day, I remember my three-year-old son walking towards the front door of the Montessori School of Evergreen fifteen years ago. It was his first day of preschool. He was wearing khaki shorts, a Gymboree shirt embroidered with a monkey, and a Pottery Barn kids backpack that was almost as tall as he was; a head above and legs below the knees stuck out as he walked away. Only there for a few hours, I would pick him up before lunch.

I clocked it as a milestone, and I remember my own internal monologue as I contemplated what he would learn inside a place that was bigger than the walls of our own home.

I was surrounded by moms who homeschooled, and sometimes I doubted my decision. Turns out it was the right one for us. We spent fourteen more years at the school, and my second son walked right up those same steps on his first day of preschool.

In less than a month, my firstborn son will be moving away, moving into a freshman dorm and starting college. This time he won't be coming home for lunch or sleeping in the bedroom across the hall from me at the end of the day.

Looking back, scrolling through the days of summer feels like a catalog of lasts. It was his last first day at Conifer High School. It was the last time he drove his brother to school. It was his last Senior Sunrise at Red Rocks. It was the last time he painted a parking space. It was the last time I knew for sure we would take a summer vacation together.



“The back-to-school parts will blend into bigger things, milestones and memories I won't be a part of.”

Yesterday I went for a hike with a friend who has a son the same age as mine. We've known each other since the backpacks were the same size as the boys. “What are we going to send our boys off with? Is there a list? Have you seen a list?” I wish the enormity of the transition to college could be as simple as a list, of honoring lasts and anticipating firsts, and packing the necessities. Turns out the list starts with XL twin sheets, a pillow and a comforter, towels and washcloths, a planner, a backpack and sticky notes.

I know I'll continue to catalog these moments, first and last, grief and celebrations blending into the cumulative stories that make up the sum total of our life together. The back-to-school parts will come in bits and pieces and blend into bigger things, milestones and memories I won't be a part of. When he's gone, I'll be sorting through the heart-shaped letters he made me in preschool and stare at the popsicle-stick picture frames with his smile, missing front teeth. I'll read them again and again, remembering that little guy who sat in my lap and read a story about a raccoon named Frances that asked for milk before bedtime and loved to eat jam.

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.

— EVERGREEN HEALTH INSURANCE —
Medicare Prior Authorization Analysis

BY ED REGALADO

If you're 65 or older and enrolled in a Medicare Advantage Plan, you've probably heard that prior authorization issues can be a burden for some enrollees. And if you find yourself needing post-acute care, such as when recovering from a major illness or surgery, it turns out that it isn't too uncommon for first requests to be denied.

A Kaiser Foundation article published on July 6th, 2026, states that you are more likely to be denied for post-acute care if you're on a Medicare Advantage Plan. For example, requests for Long-Term Hospital care are denied 65% of the time, Inpatient Rehabilitation Facility care is denied 54% of the time, and Skilled Nursing Facilities are denied at 12%. That sounds pretty rough, but to keep it on balance, all other services carry a denial rate of only 8%. If your Advantage Plan denies authorization for a service, always appeal. 80% of appeals filed are granted.

Meanwhile, costs for healthcare have been skyrocketing. In 2023, original Medicare paid \$43,000 for the average Long Term Care stay, \$24,000 per Inpatient Rehabilitation stay, and \$16,000 per Skilled Nursing stay. Medicare is testing a new model using AI tools to conduct prior authorization screenings for a limited set of services in some markets. This experiment may signal changes to come for those on original Medicare in the future.

While the good news is that most appeals are granted, those on Advantage Plans who require post-acute care can wait 5 to 6 days on average for an appeal to clear, and delays can be critical! Since denials for this type of care are rare with



“Insurance companies sometimes deny claims they shouldn't.”

original Medicare, it is no wonder that many more folks are sticking with it and enrolling in Medicare Supplement Plans these days.

In theory, Advantage Plans were established so that the insurance companies would monitor costs and help avoid fraud, waste, and abuse. But insurance companies sometimes deny claims they shouldn't. And because of the large number of denials, Congress and others have put pressure on insurance companies to curb the practice of denying expensive claims so they can delay payment through the appeals process.

On another front, those on state exchanges, such as Connect for Health Colorado, know all too well that the eligibility for a tax credit changed this year. If you're a single person making over 400% of the federal poverty level, or about \$62,600, you no longer qualify for a credit. The loss of the tax credit for so many has led to fewer people enrolled across the country this year. Many clients tell me they simply can't afford the new premiums.

It was recently reported that 16 states (Colorado not included) project a median premium increase of 14% for individual health policies in 2027. The mid-term elections are coming up, and this is a political problem, so my hope is for Congress to feel incentivized to bring us some relief in 2027. Need help or just free Medicare advice? Give me a call!

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

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Jefferson County has an aging population

The average age in Evergreen is 50 and not getting younger. Many couples moved here to raise their families in the 1970s and 80s, watched their children graduate and move away, and experienced the death of one spouse. Too often the surviving spouse lives alone in a large home because they cannot afford to downsize — and there are few housing options suitable for seniors in Evergreen.

When you hear about proposed affordable housing, think about these seniors who’d rather not leave the place where they’ve spent the best years of their lives. The Evergreen Legacy Foundation and other interested parties are proposing affordable senior apartments as part of the future for the 13-acre Bergen Meadow campus. Keeping the fields and playgrounds and reserving space for a future community center will make it a multi-generational activity center.

this message brought to you by the Evergreen Legacy Foundation ... for the love of Evergreen!



Dogs, Dogs, Dogs

BY CATHY KOWALSKI

Why spend the time teaching your dog obedience, why not just let them drag you around on a walk, why not just let them “be a dog”?

Training strengthens the bond between you and your dog. Dogs never judge you, never think you are too thin or too heavy, too young or too old—they always really “see” YOU! Although they love you without judgment and unconditionally, they have no idea what the expectations are to live in your world. Working with clients every week, I hear things like, “They are so stubborn,” “They don’t listen,” “They ate my shoes”—and the list goes on.

Usually, it is not that they are stubborn; they just have no idea what you want. When you think they don’t listen, it’s usually that they are distracted. You may have seen the Pixar movie *Up*, where Dug totally loses focus when he hears the word “squirrel.” Dogs are driven by impulses until we give them some idea of how to live in our world. They are easily distracted by noises, sometimes noises that we cannot even hear. Seeing anything move quickly immediately grabs their attention.

If they ate your shoes—first of all, put your shoes away! Having a puppy or a new dog is a fantastic way to freshen up your routine of keeping things picked up. Secondly, to a dog, shoes smell great, and they remind them of you. They have no way of knowing that they shouldn’t

chew on them. Remember, they are driven by impulse until we show them what the expectations are.

A training routine can help you to make sure to spend quality time with your dog. You can leave treats in different rooms, and when your dog is in another room, call them and give them a treat. This is an easy way to make sure to get a good recall when you need it! You can practice tasks while you are doing other things, such as having your dog stay on a rug when you are preparing or eating dinner. Training your dog can help to keep them safe, keeping them from running out through an opened door or jumping out of a car. Life skills for a dog include coming when called, not going through openings until given permission, and not jumping up on people. Your dog feels safer and more secure when clear boundaries are set.

When your dog learns a new task, it improves mental stimulation, increases their self-confidence, and alleviates anxiety.

A well-trained dog is also a well-adjusted dog that is less stressed in situations such as going to the groomer or the vet.

Faithfully K9 Service Dogs only uses positive reinforcement methods. You will see the

adoring look on your dog’s face and the wag of their tail when they are rewarded with treats and praise for mastering a task or exhibiting good behavior. Dogs LOVE to be talked to, they get excited when you tell them good boy, good girl, or even just their name.

An untrained dog can create chaos in your home. Untrained dogs are more likely to run away, pose a threat to others and animals, and cause frustration.

Some people ask if their dog is too old to be trained—dogs of every age can benefit from training, both in the positive attention they receive and in the reward of having a better relationship with their human.

If you think of training as fun, as an investment in a relationship that enriches both your and your dog’s lives, then you will look forward to the opportunity to share special moments with your best furry four-legged friend.



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.

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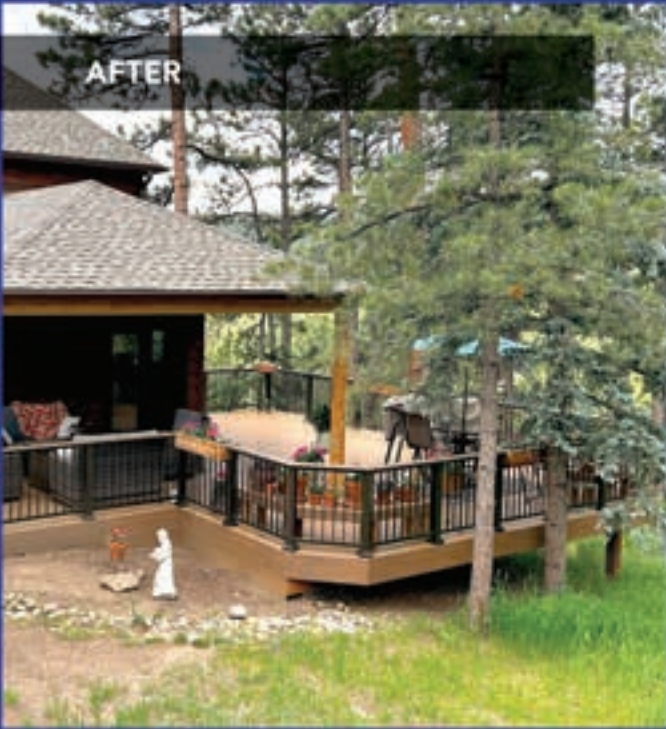
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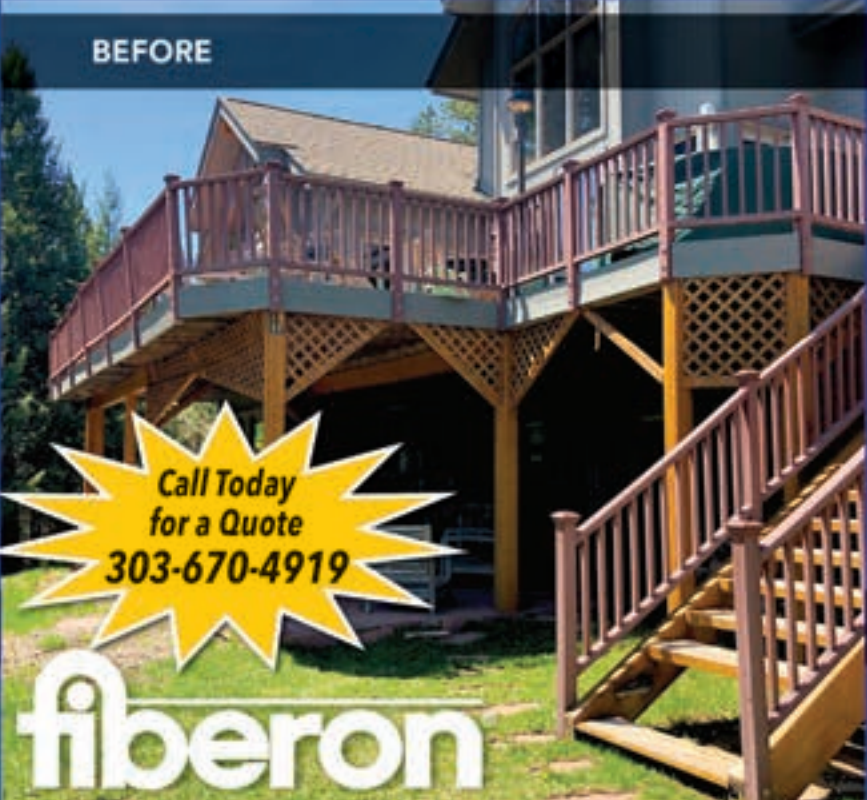
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Conifer Chamber News



2026 Wild & Well Mountain Wellness Fair

Discover Your Path to Wellness

BY BETH SCHNEIDER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Looking for new ways to improve your health, reduce stress, and connect with local wellness experts? Mark your calendar for the **2026 Wild & Well Mountain Wellness Fair on Saturday, August 29, from 10 am to 3:30 pm** in the parking lot at **Our Lady of the Pines Church**. This free, family-friendly event celebrates the many ways we can care for our bodies, minds, and spirits while highlighting the incredible wellness resources available right here in our community.

Whether you're just beginning your wellness journey or have been prioritizing your health for years, you'll find something to inspire you. The fair will feature a wide variety of local wellness providers representing traditional and holistic approaches to health. You'll have the opportunity to meet practitioners, ask questions, discover new services, and learn about the many resources available close to home.

Throughout the day, attendees can enjoy mini-demonstrations and interactive presentations that offer practical tips and hands-on experiences. From movement and fitness to mindfulness and healthy living, these sessions are designed to introduce you to new ideas you can incorporate into your daily life.

One of the event's highlights is a community blood drive, giving attendees the opportunity to make a life-saving difference while they're there. Donating blood is one of the simplest ways to help others, and every donation has the potential to save multiple lives.

The **Wild & Well Mountain Wellness Fair** is a chance to connect with neighbors, support local businesses, and discover the many ways our community is working together to promote healthier, happier lives. You'll leave with valuable information, new connections, and perhaps

a few new ideas for taking the next step in your own wellness journey.

Whether you're interested in nutrition, fitness, mental health, natural therapies, preventive care, or simply learning more about what's available in our community, you'll find welcoming experts ready to help.

Admission is free, so bring your family, invite a friend, and spend the day exploring all that our mountain wellness community has to offer.

Wild & Well Mountain Wellness Fair

Saturday, August 29, 2026

10 am – 3:30 pm

Our Lady of the Pines Church Parking Lot

Come discover, learn, and be inspired! We look forward to seeing you there!

The **Wild & Well Mountain Wellness Fair** is also a wonderful opportunity for local wellness providers to showcase their businesses and connect with the community. If you offer products or services that promote physical, mental, or emotional well-being, including healthcare, fitness, nutrition, counseling, massage therapy, holistic health, outdoor recreation, or other wellness-focused services, we invite you to be part of this growing event. Vendors have the opportunity to meet potential clients and network with other professionals

Vendor applications are due by August 17, so don't wait to reserve your space.

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!

The Conifer Area Chamber of Commerce is dedicated to making our community the best it can be. We are here to support our local businesses and create opportunities for them to grow and get connected to our community.

www.goconifer.com



DINE AND SHOP LOCAL

Evergreen Chamber News



Why Talking to Strangers Matters

BY ERICA SPRENKEL

What if one simple “hello” could make a difference in someone’s day or even strengthen an entire community?

That’s the idea behind Jefferson County’s new “**Talk to Strangers**” campaign. It encourages all of us to take a moment to connect with the people around us, whether we’re standing in line at the grocery store, shopping at a local business, attending a community event, or enjoying one of our beautiful parks and trails.

These small moments matter. According to the Colorado Health Access Survey, one in five Jefferson County residents report feeling lonely often or always. Research continues to show that strong social connections reduce stress, anxiety, and depression; encourage healthier lifestyles; and improve both physical and mental well-being. Sometimes the smallest interactions can have the biggest impact.

At the Evergreen Area Chamber of Commerce, we’re proud to support Jefferson County’s “**Talk to Strangers**” campaign, because building

connections is at the heart of our mission. We work every day to connect businesses, residents, and visitors, but the strongest communities aren’t built through organizations alone; they’re built by people who take the time to connect with one another.

The next time you’re out and about, put your phone away for a moment, make eye contact, smile, and say hello. That stranger could become a neighbor, a friend, a customer, or someone who simply needed to feel seen that day.

Together, we can make Evergreen and all of Jefferson County an even more connected, welcoming, and vibrant place to call home, one hello at a time. And while you’re out making those connections, remember to Shop, Support, and Love Local. Every conversation, every visit, and every purchase help strengthen the community we all love.

Follow us on Facebook. Visit our website EvergreenChamber.org.
Call us anytime 303-674-3412.

For over 50 years the Evergreen Area Chamber of Commerce has proudly been serving the mountain community. Our mission is to grow the local economy by building business relationships, promoting the community and representing local concerns with our county government.



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Juba Contemplates the Fox

BY PENNY RANDELL

I have enjoyed discussing the various species that we deal with on a daily basis. This is Juba again; and considering commonly seen critters, the fox is high on the list. A simple description is that the fox is a medium-sized omnivorous (able to eat anything) mammal belonging to several genera within the Canidae family. This is the same family as the dog; but the fox has a flattened skull with upright, triangular pointed ears, a long and lanky rostrum, and a long bushy tail called a brush. When considering species, the genus group *Vulpes*, or “true foxes,” is composed of 12 members.

These guys are remarkably prolific and can be found on every continent except Antarctica. Above all others, the red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) stands as the most common, including 47 subspecies throughout the world. More than anything, it is the nature of the fox that has enabled its success. Foxes are known to be shrewd and perceptive as they meld with human societies, often accepted purely for these traits. These animals are smaller than some members of Canidae, for example, the wolf and jackal. However, once again the red fox stands separate from other foxes, as they are the largest of the species. The smallest species is called a fennec fox, which weighs 1 ½ to 3 ½ pounds, whereas the red fox comes in at a robust 9 to 19 ½ pounds.

The fox has partially retractable claws that are primary to their ability to move rapidly. Unlike other Canidae, the fox walks on his toes. The whiskers are black in color and can be found on the muzzle, with shorter ones located elsewhere on the head. All foxes differ when it comes to fur. Each species varies in fur color, density, and length. The coat can be brilliant white, black, black and white, red, and some are gray on their tummies. Kit foxes and fennec foxes are designed for life in the desert and sport huge ears and short hair for cooling. Those that live in the Arctic have small ears, short limbs, and thick, insulating fur. A red fox typically has an auburn coat. Too, coat color can change with the season as well as age. Foxes molt each spring, so that they can handle warmer weather. This begins around the feet and continues up its body to its back.

Now we take a look, or a listen if you are so lucky, to the various vocalizations of the fox. There is such thing as a whine, which is audible just after birth. Both the mom and dad whine as they respond to the baby kits, caring for them until they fall asleep. The yelp, or infantile bark, begins around 19 days later and is heard mostly when the kits are playing together. Next comes the explosive call, which is a high-pitched howl offered to frighten predators or alert outside cubs. We move to the adult calls from here and recognize the combative call and the opened mouth that usually accompanies it. Then there's the basic growl that controls the kits, and the bark, used to warn intruders.

As I already said, it is the fox's nature that enables it to become a part of human society. For certain the fox can be particularly genial and unreservedly communicative. It is a relief to know that these mammals pose little to no threat to household pets. Whew! That's really good news to me, for I live in the woods. Anyway, although they are mainly solitary animals, they can easily co-exist with others. Indeed, many of these fellers often prefer a home in the suburbs and cities. It is now somewhat commonplace to find foxes playing in cemeteries and parks.

A fox's eyesight proves that he was designed to be nocturnal. They can see in the dark and have a specialized lens to account for this. In addition, they are naturally solitary. But we must consider the effects of both evolution and mankind and how they have altered the life of a fox. It turns out that over time they have become crepuscular, or

going out in the daylight hours and especially at twilight. Foxes that live in urban areas, and especially those that somehow became a human's pet, often adapt their sleeping regimen to the world around them and thereby their overall behavior as well.

The fox has always been seen as a magical being that is scarcely understood. For one thing, most are monogamous and mate for life. They can even burrow into the ground. Human development, which initially pushed these animals into the urban scene, hasn't really revealed all that much understanding thus far. That's saying a lot, with our interaction with foxes becoming so common. However, if you are going to interface with these wild ones, it had best be done from a distance. Observation should supersede contact. Many folks have enjoyed feeding these animals, but that, too, is a bad idea. The last thing they need to do is to lessen or dull their hunting instincts. Tools sharpened to aid in survival are paramount. What happens if for some reason the human feeding ends? Most often the fox will turn to trash cans, which doesn't do much good for anyone.

When in the wild alone, the lifespan of a fox is one to three years. Some, especially those in captivity, can live up to ten years. Most foxes will eat anything they find, but some—such as the crab-eating fox—save themselves for a specialized diet. These critters are known to eat over two pounds of food a day, caching excess food as they go along. A pouncing technique is used for hunting. They crouch down to camouflage themselves within the terrain and then use their hind legs to pounce on their prey. Their enlarged canine teeth enable the fox to grab its victim by its neck and shake it until dead.

Even after the male fox is completely grown, its scrotum stays close to its body where its testes remain collected and safe. Oddly enough, the testes of a red fox are smaller than those of the tiny Arctic fox. Sperm forms from August through September, with the testicles attaining their greatest weight from December through February. The female, or vixen, comes into heat

for one to six days, with a reproductive cycle of 12 months. The ova are shed internally during estrus without the stimulation of copulation. Once the eggs are fertilized, the vixen experiences a gestation period of about 52 days. Female foxes that mate have an 80% chance of becoming pregnant. The litter size of a red fox is usually four to five kits. However, the Arctic fox can have up to 11 at a time.

At present several fox species are endangered in their natural setting. Foxes are under pressure from habitat loss and from being hunted for their fur or other trade. Because foxes are opportunistic hunters and most industrious in their efforts, the animals are most often considered a nuisance. Still, they have been used to control pests on fruit farms, never bothering the fruit in doing so.

Fox attacks on humans are rare, but they are greatly attracted to hens and rabbits. Although records show that many red foxes have become domesticated, this relaxed state does not usually last long. After all, a fox is a fox, and they are wild animals. One exception to this rule is the Russian silver fox. Having been handled for some time, this animal has had significant physical and behavioral changes. Currently the domestication of these foxes has resulted in 50 years of experiments in Russia. Remarkably, a few of these kept critters experience physical changes frequently seen in domestic dogs and cats. There are records of pigmentation changes, floppy ears, and curly tails. Also, some of these domesticated beings became considerably more tame, even seeking physical attention from their keepers.

Well, it's great to be sharing the summer with you folks. I hope you have learned something here and perhaps gained a greater appreciation for our furry friends. After all, these animals don't cause too much trouble, and we have forced many into an urban situation. Keep your eyes open, for foxes are common. Thanks for reading my piece, and stay cool out there.

A Skeptic's View

Fact Checking

BY GARY LOFFLER

“Sometimes our most cherished ideas turn out to be wrong, and that can be distressing.”

I was reading a book the other day, and the author used a phrase I had not heard before: gong farmer. Helpfully they went on to give a brief description. A gong farmer is the person who clears the night soil from a garderobe. A garderobe was basically an outhouse inside a castle, a room rather than a free-standing separate outhouse, but it served the same function. It was more convenient than going outside when nature called, but not a lot more technologically advanced. I doubt we have to define night soil. Amusingly, garderobe also just means a small room or alcove, even while it meant a bathroom (of sorts). The word has survived to modern times and appears to mean wardrobe closet now. At least that is what shows up when searching Amazon.

But gong farmer, what a great phrase. I have no idea why it is not used more in literature, especially with all the historical romance that is so popular. “Master Simon may look like your run-of-the-mill popinjay, but he comes from a long line of gong farmers.” “No amount of perfume could ever completely mask the gong farmer odor that lingered in his passage.” “His previous career as a gong farmer should stand him well in his new role as deputy mayor.”

Of course for this to all be possible, the first thing to do is to fact check to be sure that gong farmer is in fact a bit of historical slang. A quick internet search confirms it to be real. Wikipedia goes into detail about the phrase. Apparently gong is a version of gang in old English, which meant going. It was not a surprise to find out this was a less than glamorous profession. It paid better than some jobs but was not something mothers bragged about their son doing.

In this case, fact checking came out in my favor. What I hoped was true turned out to be true. This is not always the case. Sometimes our most cherished ideas turn out to be wrong, and



“Avoid newsletters and sites that are trying to sell you something, or are pushing a very strong opinion.”

that can be distressing. It can be distressing enough that a lot of people will forego verifying their favorite stories or thoughts rather than risk having to abandon them. More commonly, they seek verification from people who believe the same way. By not going outside your peer group, it is more likely you won't be exposed to contrary views. In general if someone rejects scientific studies in favor of “common sense” or personal beliefs, it is fair to say their fact checking skills leave a bit to be desired.

Consider, for example, the Flat Earth Society. This is a group of people who believe the earth

is flat. Most seem to believe that it is disc shaped, with Antarctica bordering the entire outer edge with impassible ice walls. The satellites that are orbiting the Earth are thought to be just circling around a spot on the disc. Not surprisingly, flat Earth believers reject the sciences that prove them wrong, and they often do so using modern communication which all depend on the very sciences they denounce. They also often accuse the elite of conspiring to keep their “truth” from the general public. The how and the why such a conspiracy would exist is left as an exercise for the reader.

When I talk about vaccine deniers ignoring the mountains of data that have accumulated over the last 60-odd years of vaccine use, it is nothing compared to what the flat earthers choose not to believe. The amount of information on the round Earth goes back at least 2,000 years. The ancient Greeks knew the Earth was round based on various obvious observations including the classic “ship approaching over the horizon” technique. If you have ever traveled to Denver on I-70 from the Kansas border, you have seen something similar. The mountain tops appear first, then as you get closer to Denver you see more of them, and finally the tall buildings of the city are visible. The taller an object is, the sooner you can see it over the curvature of the planet. If the Earth were flat, you would be able to see all of the mountains immediately.

One Greek scholar went so far as to measure the circumference of the planet using some basic math. Eratosthenes measured the length of the shadows of rods placed in different cities on the summer solstice. Then using an algebraic equation he got a number of 25,065 miles. Pretty impressive when modern measurements put it at 24,901.461 miles along the Equator.

There are a couple things to be aware of when fact checking. One is making sure that you are looking at something from a reliable source. Online encyclopedias are a good place to start. The Encyclopedia Britannica is available if Wikipedia is not your style. Avoid newsletters and sites that are trying to sell you something, or are pushing a very strong opinion. Asking on the Ford website if Ford makes the best cars is going to return a predictable result.

Ultimately, I think a lot of people do not fact check because of the possibility of learning they are wrong, and not everyone wants to take that chance.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

August 1–8
StageDoor Theatre’s Summer Company celebrates Summer with Disney’s HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL2 On Stage! Friday and Saturday 7pm, Saturday and Sunday matinee 2pm. Tickets \$25, \$5 discount for seniors, students, and educators. Director Jacob Frye, Choreographer Arianna Olivarez, Musical Directors Alexandria Sullivan and Kris Sage, Stage Manager Parker Liebaert. www.stagedoortheatre.org
Stagedoor Theatre is a 501(c)(3) non-profit community-based theatre, open to all.

August 4
Evergreen Newcomers and Neighbors sponsors Evergreen Speaks! 5:30–6:30pm at Evergreen Christian Church, 27772 Iris Drive, Evergreen. Free. Featuring Kris Kazian, Division Chief of Fire Operation at Evergreen Fire Rescue, who will be speaking on the challenges our local government face, from providing safe drinking water and parks, to fire protection and emergency medical systems.

August 10–31
Shine on stage at The Venue Theatre! Auditions are here for the following fall productions: **Carrie the Musical**, grades 9–12, August 10, 5pm–7pm; **Puffs**, grades 7–12, August 23, 1pm–4pm; **SpongeBob the Musical** (Youth Edition), grades 4–8, August 25, 5pm–7pm; **Intermediate Improv Classes** (Adults), starting August 31, Monday evenings, 7pm–9pm. We also welcome and train student crew for all of these productions—sets, costumes, lights, and sound! To register visit: <https://www.thevenue-theatre.com/classesandshows>
The Venue Theatre, 27132 Main Street, #K-100 (by Safeway), is a 501(c)(3) non-profit. At the Venue students receive professional training for stage and life!

August 20
Wild Aware, an Evergreen, Colorado, non-profit organization, invites you to join us for a wild evening of celebration and connection at the **Open Aware Meet and Greet** on the third Thursday of each month from 6–7:30pm at the awesome Evergreen Brewery, 2962 Evergreen Parkway, Suite 201, Evergreen, CO, 80439. wildaware.org

August 21–22
Evergreen Players presents EPiC (Evergreen Players Improv Comedy), one weekend only! Directed by Scott Ogle. Center Stage Theatre transforms into a hub of laughter as The Evergreen Players’ Master Company skillfully integrates audience contributions into sketches that will leave you in stitches. Enjoy an evening brimming with laughter, camaraderie, and the delightful unpredictability of improv comedy. Center Stage Theatre, 27608 Fireweed Drive, Evergreen. Friday and Saturday at 7:30 pm.
The Evergreen Players is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. 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.

August 27
Poems and Stories of Peace with David Steele, director of Rocky Mountain Compassionate Communication Network, from 6–8pm at **the Conifer Peace Park**. Come with a story or poem to share or just come to listen. Bring a lawn chair and picnic dinner with your non-alcoholic beverages. Event is free. Donations are appreciated. **For info: coniferpeacepark@gmail.com**

August 28
Wild Aware, an Evergreen, Colorado, non-profit organization, is actively recruiting volunteers, new and old, for their **Last Friday Coffee**, a monthly event that continues on the last 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

August 29
Split and Steak at Conifer Community Church, 9998 S. Havekost Road, Conifer, 7am until about 2pm. Help us get a start on our annual Firewood Ministry for the community by cutting, splitting, and stacking wood for a few hours. Then feast on a meal of steak and all the trimmings. Sign up for volunteering on our website www.coniferccc.org/split-steak.html, or call 303-838-4161.

August 29
Evergreen Newcomers and Neighbors Open House: 12–2pm at Buchanan Park Rec Center. ENN is open to new and longtime residents. Meet neighbors and make new friends through our

Submit your calendar events by the 10th of each month prior to the actual date of the event to news@yourmtnconnection.com.



August 5
Dru Yoga 5:30–6:30 pm. 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 affirmations, and also empowering visualizations. Dru classes are tailored to the student and their individual level, which makes it great for everyone.

August 9
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.

August 12
Women’s Circle 5:30–6:30 pm. 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

many activity groups, such as outdoor sports, crafts and hobbies, card games, wine groups, and social events. Activity leaders will be available to answer questions. **Visit us at: evergreennewcomers.com.**

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) www.peaceworksinc.co/communitywellness

share powerful practices to embolden you to show up in life to be seen and heard.

August 19
Dance Party 5:30–6:30 pm. Step into a vibrant sanctuary of sound and movement at our community wellness dance party, where Sabrina and Brenda invite you to shift from performance to presence. This gathering encourages you to drop out of your head and into your heart, using the rhythm as an anchor to deepen your connection with each intentional breath. As the music builds, you’ll find the space to shake off stagnant energy and enliven your spirit. It’s a rhythmic celebration designed to leave you feeling grounded, radiant, and authentically connected.

August 26
Block Therapy™ Trauma Release 5:30–6:30 pm. 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.



BACK TO SCHOOL

BY ANNE VICKSTROM

“Life never lets learning stop.”

This month’s theme is Back to School, or one might say, Back to Learning. For an empty-nester like myself, you might imagine that the theme wouldn’t mean anything to me, but life never lets learning stop. An example follows.

I share with you what happened on the night of June 24. It had been a lovely day, but I could see clouds building to the west. In preparation, I tucked the cushions on the patio furniture under the umbrella—just in case. I was snuggled up, enjoying a good movie, when the rain started accompanying the dialogue.

Bolting from my cozy spot, I tore outside to move the planters under the umbrella in the hope of saving the delicate petals from the marble-sized hail that pelted me, causing tomorrow’s bruises. Drenched, I returned and stated that I had saved the planters, but it was too late for the gardens.

The movie ended, and I headed to bed, happy to hear only rain falling—thank heaven the hail had stopped.

The following morning, after being awakened by my dachshund’s flapping of ears—I am accustomed to waking to this daily alarm—I let the short-legged little man out and walked across the deck to see how my plants had fared. I was thrilled to see that the flowers were intact. Then I gazed over the railing to our “little” creek below.

The night before, on our dry-stacked patio, there had been two chairs and a recliner resting on a colorful rug. Beside it, there had been



huge sections of a ponderosa that had blown down last year, waiting to be split and stacked beside the cord of wood my husband had neatly arranged for use next winter. These objects were so big that there was no possible way I could have lifted them. A pile of branches that lay as long as I am tall and about half my height had also filled the space. That morning, only one chair remained on top of topsy-turvy pieces of slate. It looked like the pieces were in mid-motion to some wild music. Beside it, the wet mud from the remains of a drought-fed stream was replaced by a torrential flow. I’m not exaggerating. Ask my neighbor.

As I surveyed the damage, I walked down to my neighbor’s home and found that her culvert had been blocked, silt was feet deep, and the flow of the raging stream was cutting across her driveway and making itself at home in her garage. Still in her pajamas, ankle-deep in flowing water, she did her best to manage the barrage.

Further inspection revealed that our pavement, which was only a few years old, had been undercut by water, and now the edges hung precariously over four-foot-deep ravines. Living on a private road is such an adventure.

One by one, neighbors woke to discover their own damage, then checked on their next-door compatriots. One who had witnessed two to three feet of water the night before reported what had happened as the rest of us slept. Fences were washed out, more culverts were stuffed with debris, chairs from ¼ mile up sat mired in the—what seemed at the time—quicksand.

Urgent calls were made to road repair names we yearned to see. Xcel was quick to respond to a fallen tree that had struck a wire. Caution tape was set up around emerging booby traps on either side of the road.

When the initial shock subsided, we stopped for coffee and got something into our stomachs, then put on safe footwear and headed down to

help our neighbor push water from the garage and try to redirect the flow away from her house. Our nine-year-old neighbor wielded a push-broom like an old pro. An angel from LAM Tree arrived to do some spraying, but instead pitched in to shovel rocks and mud to get the job done. A neighbor and her daughter, on their way out of town, turned around, grabbed shovels, and went to work clearing mud and rock. They left about 5 hours later—putting their neighbors first.

Later, we would discover the damage up and down the main road, especially in Kittredge.

When the news about the cost of things became clear, we found understanding and cooperation from all our neighbors, who just wanted to be sure everyone was safe.

Lessons learned? Mother Nature has a temper. Rocks, trees, and debris that seem impossible to move are nothing for wind and rain. Personal property is important, but not nearly as important as people’s safety. When things get rough, just having others nearby can comfort and reassure you.

Living in our mountain community is a luxury, but now and again, the “personal tax” can seem awfully high. Lessons learned. Hopefully, we won’t be tested again for a very long time.

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.



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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.

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