



UTE COUNTRY NEWS

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December 2024

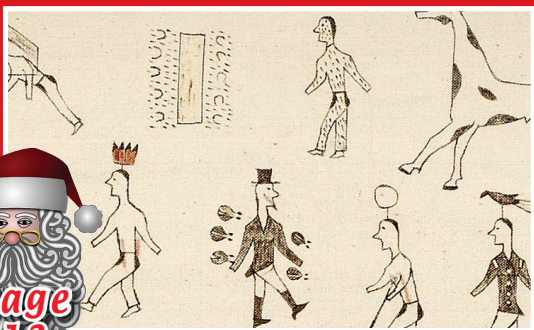
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Vol. 16, No. 12

Welcome to Ute Country

"Tree decorating with cats.
O Christmas tree,
O christmas tree,
your Ornaments are history!"
— Courtney VanSickle

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a new website!



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Hometown Rustic Creations

Discover the Magic of Victor's Holiday Season!

Join us for a season of festive fun and community spirit in the heart of Victor, Colorado!
From November 29th through January 1st, the town is turning into a holiday winter wonderland, and you're invited to join the fun.

Weekends
November 29
December 29

Cozy Small Town Shopping and Dining
Holiday Music, Magical Decorations, Baked Goodies, Hot Drinks, Spirits, Lunch, Dinner, Local Artists, Crafters, Unique Gifts, Books, Souvenirs, Collectables, and Antiques.

Saturdays 12 Noon to 3 PM in the Plaza
FREE Hot Cocoa & Treats + Holiday Selfie Photo Booth

Gold Camp Christmas
A self-guided Scenic Headframe Lighting Tour!
Weekend Evenings Nov. 30 - Jan. 1 and
Nightly Christmas Eve thru New Years Day!
Find map at STCFG.COM Events

Can you help us find Santa's missing elves?
Victor Elf Hunt
November 30 - December 24, 2024
You Could Win A \$200 Reward!
Details at [Facebook.com/VictorMainStreetProgram](https://facebook.com/VictorMainStreetProgram)

Friday December 13 6 to 10 pm

Victor Parade of Lights 6:00 pm
The Cutest Parade of Christmas Cheer!
Christmas Tree Lighting Party in the Plaza
holiday music, hot drinks, cookies, firepits!

Victor Elks Lodge Jingle Bell Ball
Santa, hot cocoa, cookies, pot-luck dinner,
Holiday Music, and open Club Room
Fun for all!

For more details and a full schedule of events, visit facebook.com/VictorMainStreetProgram or call 719-492-1768
Join the festivities and make this holiday season unforgettable!

The Pikes Peak Workforce Center works for the success of regional businesses with no-cost, tailored services connecting you to employment-ready job seekers.

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- Analytical Research
- On-the-Job Training
- Transitions & Layoffs
- Pre-Employment Assessment

ppwfc.org

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On Deck

This is our Cat Masterson on our cover photo, which Jeff took in 2020, the year we adopted Cat Masterson. TCRAS found Cat Masterson when they were picking up a momma kitty and her 7-week-old kittens, all of whom were interacting with Cat Masterson in such a way that Cat Masterson was removed for his protection! Seeing that tiny 4-week-old kitten in that HUGE habitat and hearing his story pulled my heartstrings. So, I made an appointment for Jeff to see him (this was during COVID). It was a rough start for Cat Masterson. It was and still is our pleasure to provide a safe place with lots to play with and plenty of food/water. This was Cat Masterson's first Christmas but it was not our first with a kitten, so there were no ornaments on the tree his first year. Experience taught us he would explore that pine with his teeth! We felt the quote was fitting and fun for the holidays.

We have lots of fun articles for December. *Colorado Pharmgirl* shares "A Meaningful Life." *Fitness on the Mountain's* focus is "My Brain on Gratitude" to share the benefits of an attitude of gratitude, which we highly recommend. You can learn a bit of history and the Lakota culture in *Oyate Herbals* "Lakota Winter Lessons and Teachings." Plus, there are many articles that will help you find the holiday happenings in the areas we cover.

Please feel free to share your holiday pics of your favorite indoor or outdoor pets in Critter Corner. This month's critters came all the way from WI. You can submit your photo — via email to utecountrynewspaper@gmail.com, drop in to scan the photo at Shipping Plus or snail mail them to us at POB 753 Divide, CO 80814.

We wish ALL our readers a very Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, Serene Solstice and a Kind Kwanzaa... if we've left out your celebration we apologize because no matter how you celebrate the season, it seems ALL cultures have put forth a unique way of gathering friends and family to share food and love. It doesn't get any simpler than that.

Thank you, — Kathy & Jeff Hansen

A special thanks to all listed here for their professional work and time to make this issue possible. If you have any questions please contact the publishers.

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Oyate Herbals Lakota Winter Lessons and Teaching

by Tammie Lowell, founder of Oyate Herbals

Here is an example of winter counts.

Han (Greetings!) Welcome to Waníyetu (Winter) "The Cold and Dark Moons"

Due to the frigid cold, the coming of winter signified the beginning of a quieter time. The camp stayed at a single location throughout the winter months. Women spent their time making and mending clothing. Men took part in raiding parties to ensure their camp's strength and safety. The children gathered around the warmth of the fire to listen to the stories of their elders, preserving history for another generation. Winter was also a time for family, games, dancing, ceremony and visiting one another. The following are the names of the next four 28-day moon cycles in this Cold and Dark moon phase.

Wanícokan Wi — Moon When the Deer Sheds Their Horns
Wiótehika Wi — The Hard Moon
Cannápopa Wi — Moon When Trees Crack from The Cold
Istáwícayazan Wi — Moon of Sore Eyes (Snow Blindness)

The Lakota also marked the passage of time during winter by drawing pictures of memorable events on calendars known as "waníyetu wowapi" or "winter counts." We did not have a written language until the late 1800s. Nor did we think of years as numbers, like 1800 or 1905. But the people felt the importance of keeping track of history and finding a way to mark the passage of time. For my people, a year began with the first snowfall of one winter and ended with the first snowfall of the next winter. At the end of the year, elders chose an unusual event to represent the whole year. For example, a horse near the top left of one canvas winter count stands for 1801-2, the year a group of Lakota got their first horse. The people spoke about that year as the time the people had no horses.

One man was responsible for keeping track of the years on the winter count, a calendar made up of pictures drawn on animal hides. As the keeper ran out of room or the hide wore out, he copied the pictures onto another surface, often a muslin cloth or, in the late 1800s, a paper ledger book. This man was the winter count keeper, he added a picture to the calendar for each year that passed. He was also expected to remember the details of all the years included on the calendar, in the proper order. The winter count images jogged his memory when he retold the stories of his people's history on special occasions or an evening sitting around the fire teaching the young children.

The images on a winter count might refer to natural occurrences, such as meteor showers, unusual weather, or outbreaks of disease. Or they might stand for events such as battles, encounters with European Americans, or the death of a leader. The events chosen for the count were not necessarily the most important events of the year. But they had to be unique and memorable for the entire community. Keeping a record of the images and their stories was more important than having the original count. Another reason for copying a winter count was the retirement of a keeper.

The span of time covered by winter counts was often one hundred years or more, which was longer than one person could record. The first task of a new keeper (usually a son or nephew of the retiring keeper) was to make his own copy and learn the count's symbols and stories. Then, as each new year passed, he added a new picture to his copy of the count.

More than 150 Lakota winter counts exist today, in versions made by several different encampment groups. Certain years are marked by events important to Lakota groups across the Great Plains. Other years are noted by local happenings important only to the people who made that particular count.

Many of the winter counts now in museums are copies made for non-Indian collectors. In some cases, the collectors also wrote down the stories told by the keepers. Toward the end of the 19th century, many keepers were making copies of winter counts for sale, and some charged extra for telling the count's story. The stories are very important because they explain historical events from the Lakota point of view.

As Lakota people, during the winter we also celebrated the winter solstice. For us the winter solstice transcends the physical change of seasons; it is a profound reminder of the delicate balance of life and our responsibilities towards it. In Lakota

tradition, the solstice is embraced as a moment to gather, reflect on the past year, and prepare for the future with resiliency and hope. It is a time to renew our bond with nature like Tatanka, the Buffalo, an emblem of life and sustenance, who provided not only material necessities but also spiritual guidance through generations.

This sacred time also calls upon us to reaffirm our dedication to environmental stewardship and sustainable living. The solstice is a reminder of our shared responsibility to protect the land, water, and all living beings, ensuring the gifts of the earth can sustain future generations.

We would traditionally gather around the fire during the solstice, sharing stories and reinforcing our connection to all living things, the plants, the animals, the water etc. We here at Oyate Herbals invite our supporters, friends and extended Oyate to join us in this period of reflection and commitment. Let us use the winter solstice as a moment to rekindle our collective commitment to the environment, and the principles of balance and harmony that guide our everyday lives. Winter solstice is December 21, 2024. Take time to reflect on what our mother earth is teaching us during these coming winter months, and how to take that time and go within and just as nature does. Reflect on the lessons we have learned this past year and how we may bring them into our lives as we start to come out of winter, to bloom and grow more beautiful just as our plant relatives do in the springtime.

Mítákuypéi Anpétu wašté (Good day relatives)
Many Blessings and may you walk in balance on your path.
I can be reached at 719-661-0410.

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A Look Inside the Artist Tonya Hammel, multi-media artist

by Mary Shell

Most artists I know stay to themselves, creating art and selling it. They don't support other artists or share their secret ways of making art. Perhaps it's an ego thing. I, on the other hand, love sharing what I have learned creating art and so does Tonya. Not only does she create great art and photography, but she is also busy supporting other artists with her Facebook page. Nearly every day she creates posts to inspire other artists. As a muralist myself, I know the feeling of working on a large wall. It's invigorating, physical and leaves you with a feeling of success on a large scale. Something only a few artists get to experience. Thank You Tonya for your inspiration.

How long have you been painting?

I started painting close to 10 years ago on a serious level, though arts and crafts in general have always been part of my everyday life. I remember drawing a cabin behind the school in 3rd grade. I was the only student using shading and adding details. I did pencil drawing through elementary and up until graduating high school but never at a serious level until much, much later. After having kids and staring at my family, I didn't really touch art much until they were almost grown.

I decided one day to buy some Acrylic Paint at Hobby Lobby and watch some YouTube tutorials. Knowing what I know now, the paint was terrible, and results were iffy, but it was fun.

That was a pivotal choice buying that terrible cheap paint, I had always only done pencil and colored pencil really before that. Now, it's my daily life every day. I have been on a self-taught mission since, teaching myself every technique I can. It quickly turned into a need for quality supplies and paintings piling up everywhere.

I decided to open Tonya Hammel Art in 2019 in Florence. My mural painting is still featured in my old store. Quickly the store transformed into more of a boutique, and I rebranded as Earth Dreams and Pretty Things. I closed that store in 2022 but am currently working on plans to reopen as art based and my handmade products once again in December.

I see you use multi mediums, do you have a favorite?

It's a toss-up between house paint for murals and soft pastels. There is something magical about pastels and sanded paper. They go onto the paper so dreamy and soft. Pastel pencils are game changers for fine details. But I can honestly say that for me, Behr Marquee house paint does the same things for walls. There's something magical about that too!

Copper wire has my attention currently for jewelry making, I love bending the

wire to make jewelry! Wire wrapping is something I began teaching myself last year. I have taught myself to wrap wire, bend larger wires and melt the end of copper wire to make interesting and beautiful things. Hair pins are in the works for my products coming out soon.

Photography is also my favorite thing to do. I usually have a camera close by. When my kids were little, photography was my artistic outlet. I briefly moved into taking portraits of clients for a short time until health issues momentarily stopped me.

If I had to choose one favorite medium, pigment would be the answer so I could make my own mediums of all kinds!

Who inspired you?

I'm not sure there's a good answer to this. I'm inspired by so many things every day. So many artists in the community and online. The paintings of Thomas Cole that were displayed at the Denver Art Museum really stand out in my mind. One painting was so detailed, I stood for an hour in front of it seeing new things. His ability to layer and story tell are outstanding. He is known for the tiniest details in his oil painting. Deep down setting his work at the museum probably planted the seed that led to buying acrylic paint for me. His work is masterful.

What other mediums have you tried and found not for you?

One single answer, plastic beads.

What are the size ranges that you like?

Like for paintings? One of my murals was 118-foot x 9 foot. It is in Dryden's Appliance in Cañon City. Now that's a great size for a painting! That mural was so fantastic to do, I loved that they wanted Art Deco, landscapes, wildlife, Cañon City History and sports in one painting. The design was landscape with Art Deco insets for the other features.

Another super-size painting was the mural at my old shop. That mural is 12 foot high and 22 foot wide. Its main feature is an elk. The most interesting is the geometric top with gold leaf. I love a blank wall and my imagination together, it's amazing!

When not doing super-size paintings, my most used canvas size is 4 feet by 4 feet. I tend to choose large canvases.

What is your favorite piece of work?

I have an oil painting on my living room wall by an unknown artist. It's so stunning. It was given to me by my mother-in-law. Anytime I need inspiration, I look at that painting. It's a majestic mountain landscape with mist rolling in. Most often my paintings are of wildlife and landscape. I aspire to master oil someday like that painting in my home.



What would you like to do in the future?

Get back to doing murals again. There's no better art place for me than with a pair of headphones and some house paint!

Murals are on the back burner for now and I'm working on some big projects for the future.

Getting my small shop opened again is in my immediate future. Teaching art to others is important to me and I am excited to get that going again in December. The new shop will have a small classroom and studio. I will focus on producing my handmade products, and teaching art again. I teach drawing, charcoal, pencil techniques, painting, paint making and I have so much more I'm getting lined out.

I've been learning to make paint for a while, I'll be looking into making ink in the future. I am obsessed with old dip pens and would like I learn the old ways of making ink. Same with wax sealing.

Tell me what you like about each of the mediums you use?

This is going to be a little long... For watercolor, it's pigment salts by Ruby Mountain, they explode into fantastic colors and shapes. You splash a little water on the paper, then a little sprinkle of those makes spontaneous art fantastic. I've been experimenting with making trees using the little explosions, I'm impressed to say the least. One of my favorite products!

For leather items, I'm a huge fan of Angelus Leather Paint, their glitteriest are so fun to use and shine so beautifully. The leather paint is excellent to use, but tricky to mix. If they could improve in any way, it would be making the colors primary single pigments, so they mix together better. The color range is large though, so I just buy all the colors to get great color diversity. Other than that, this stuff is beautiful to create with. I use it to paint earrings, purses and boots.

Pan Pastels and Vintage Royal Talens Soft Pastel Sticks are my go-to for portraits. The blending abilities of both are so good, the color is outstanding! Carbothello pastel pencils make details for fine art so much easier. You can really get depth and details in using this stuff. Nothing is great without the right paper though, uArt

sanded paper is superior to everything else I've tried. The Bear Painting in this article is pastel on uArt paper. This is one of my favorite works I've personally done so far.

Photography, it's my 90mm Macro lens or my vintage 500mm Mirrored Reflex lens on my full frame Nikon. Those two lenses really allow me creativity with light. If I'm not painting or making things, I'm crawling in the weeds in search of bugs or flowers to photograph. I've been experimenting with taking photos of my artwork with water droplets. The images I'm producing that way are game changers for me. There's little that is as satisfying as seeing that little photo preview after lining up a shot and fine-tuning settings perfectly. In comparison to doing art and using a camera for me, they're equally as loved.

It is simple. I love creating pretty things. I'm usually happy with the results no matter the medium or technique I use. Except for plastic beads. I really don't like plastic beads!

How often do you paint?

Almost every day, if I'm not painting, I have my camera nearby. I'm working on getting things set up so I can create even more!

Add what you think the readers would enjoy reading.

I really have found a calling in art; I truly believe that. I love to inspire others to find creativity and stay creative. I've started a group for Facebook to help bring together artists in one place. The group Creatives of Fremont County is open to surrounding small communities and those in Fremont County. One of the first things in my mind when I wake up is to post Daily Inspiration for others there. I love seeing others create. Not to mention I love teaching others. Watch for more from me on my Facebook page "Earth Dreams and Pretty Things by Tonya Hammel."

You can reach Tonya on Facebook. You can reach Mary Shell at www.maryshellart.com



Life-Enhancing Journeys

The goodness of giving

by Barbara Pickholz-Weiner, RN, BSN, CACIII, MAC, EMDRII

In a world that often emphasizes individual pursuits and self-preservation, the act of giving is a sign of selflessness and compassion. Generosity promotes connections which can be powerfully enriching to our community. As December approaches — a month usually filled with celebration and reflection — it is essential to recognize the significant impact of generosity. Through thoughtful acts of kindness, whether sharing resources or offering support, we assist others and strengthen our communities. The goodness of giving enriches both the giver's and recipient's lives in profound ways.

Why do we feel compelled to give? This instinct to help others is deeply rooted in our nature. In the primitive part of our brain, we are hardwired for altruism (the practice of caring about the well-being of others). When we witness someone in need, our immediate reaction is often to step in and lend support. This empathetic inclination has evolved over time, reminding us that, as humans, our very survival during infancy and childhood depended on the care of family and community. Our brains are wired to nurture those around us.

The impulse to give seems rooted in evolution. Compared to other animals, humans spend a long time developing from babies to people who can ultimately fend for themselves. During these vulnerable developmental stages, survival depends upon the support from your family and sometimes your community. The survival brain is encoded to care for the vulnerable instinctively.

The impact of giving a gift, whether it is a material gift, your time, or simply a listening ear, is more profound than you might realize. Studies reveal that acts of generosity, like helping out friends or getting involved in community service, can become a source of positive change in your life and in the lives of others. Keep in mind that there are many ways to give without spending money, and you can do so by using your creative talents or by sharing your time.

Do you realize that the act of giving brings joy back to the giver? Research from Harvard Business School found that individuals often experience greater happiness when they give, whether it is through money, food, or their time, compared to when they indulge in buying something for themselves. There is something incredibly rewarding about extending a hand to those in need.

How can you join in the cycle of giving to others? Is there a cause you are passionate about or have considered supporting? A friend who needs help or some encouragement? A stranger who can benefit from a random act of charity? Whether it is a simple act of kindness, a generous do-

nation, or the gift of one's time, giving is an inherent part of the human experience. It is an effective way to bring happiness to yourself and others.

"We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."
— Winston Churchill

There are some health benefits you may experience from giving.

Research reveals that giving can boost your physical and mental health in numerous ways, and it is reflected in your biology. Along with appreciation and a smile that often comes from the receiver, there is also a chemical response in your body when you do something kind for others. In a 2006 study, Jorge Moll and colleagues at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) found that when people give to charities, it activates brain regions associated with pleasure, social connection, and trust, creating a "warm glow" effect.

When you show generosity by helping someone or giving a gift, your body releases "feel good" chemicals:

- **Serotonin** — Helps regulate your mood and is connected to sleep, digestion, memory, learning, and appetite.
- **Dopamine** — Gives you a sense of pleasure and is connected to motivation and arousal.
- **Oxytocin** — Often referred to as the "love hormone," oxytocin promotes connections, encourages trust, reduces social fears, and can even help reduce pain. Oxytocin is also an anti-inflammatory and improves wound healing. Research has found that a dose of oxytocin will cause people to give more generously and to feel more empathy towards others, with pleasant feelings lasting several hours.

Neuroscience has demonstrated that giving is a powerful way to promote more personal joy and improve overall health. A study by the NIH found that when you give, your brains light up, activating areas associated with pleasure and resulting in a delightful "warm glow." Dopamine, serotonin, and oxytocin make up the "Happiness Trifecta."

Increase empathy.

Giving nurtures empathy and understanding because your brain produces "mirror neurons," which help you connect and see things from the perspective of others. When you put yourself in another person's shoes and try to be supportive, these mental processes are activated to strengthen bonding. This also fuels a cycle of gratitude that enriches relationships. Studies have shown that expressing gratitude can enhance social ties, enabling deeper connections with friends and loved ones.

Promotes gratitude and well-being.

Giving can produce feelings of gratefulness, whether you are on the giving or receiving end of an offering. Research has found that developing gratitude is integral to better health and creating social bonds. Cultivating gratitude causes people to exercise more, be more optimistic, and feel better about their lives overall. A recent study at Florida State University found that expressing gratitude to a friend or romantic partner strengthens a sense of connection to that person. When you give to others, along with them feeling closer to you, it also enhances your attachment to them. An additional bonus is that being kind and generous may lead you to perceive others more positively.

Physical and mental health benefits associated with giving or serving others:

- **Lower blood pressure** — Generosity truly is good for your heart. Researchers have found that giving to others can lower your blood pressure and protect your heart. The result is similar to the positive effects brought by a healthy diet and exercise.
- **A longer lifespan** — The secret to living longer may be giving more of yourself. Studies show that people who volunteer tend to live longer than those who do not.
- **Less stress** — Want to melt away anxiety? Gift-giving or volunteering can reduce your levels of cortisol, a stress hormone that can make you feel overwhelmed or anxious. Researchers suggest that giving may improve physical health by helping decrease stress which is associated with preventing a variety of health problems.
- **A positive mood** — Giving can stimulate your brain's reward center while releasing endorphins (which block the perception of pain and increase feelings of well-being). This can lead to a "helper's high" that boosts self-esteem, elevates happiness, and relieves feelings of depression.

How to give on a budget

Giving is far more than about money. Some of the best gifts cost nothing and offering acts of service can be more meaningful than anything you could purchase. "Act of service" gifts include anything that assists someone and makes their life just a bit easier. Examples include:

- Walking a neighbor's dog.
- Doing a housemate's chores.
- Offering free babysitting to a family or a friend.
- Helping a tech-challenged person set up a computer or TV.

"The fragrance of the bouquet remains on the hands of the giver."
— Chinese Proverb

Think about tapping into your creative talents for heartfelt, meaningful gifts. This can make the recipient feel very special.

I enjoy sewing, so I make microwavable heating pads to give as gifts. Being warm feels so good, and these are especially appreciated at this time of year as the weather gets colder. Another bonus of homemade gifts is that they tend to be budget-friendly, which can reduce concerns related to personal finances.

Another idea is to visit someone who seems lonely or isolated. You might consider reading to someone with low vision or working with them to put together a journal or an album highlighting their special memories.

One of my sisters has a well-trained service dog who she brings to a hospice facility. She has described the squeals of delight the patients express when she puts her little dog in their arms.

"Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see."
— Mark Twain

Giving is contagious, so in addition to being kind to the recipient of your gift, you can also spread the positive effect of generosity throughout your community.

A study by James Fowler of the University of California, San Diego, and Nicholas Christakis of Harvard shows that when one person behaves generously, it inspires observers to behave charitably, too. In fact, the researchers found that altruism frequently spreads from person to person.

The essence of giving creates a source of joy, purpose, and positive transformation for both the giver and the recipient. So, whether you buy gifts, volunteer your time, or donate money to charity this holiday season, your giving is much more than just a year-end chore. It may help you build stronger social connections and can even spark an outpouring of goodwill throughout your community. By embracing the kindness of giving, you enrich the lives of others and your own while helping to create a more unified and friendly world.

Barbara Pickholz-Weiner, RN, BSN, CACIII, MAC, EMDRII is the program director of Journeys Counseling Center, Inc. At Journeys, we teach you tools, skills and help you discover resources to live the most effective life possible. We guide, support and coach you along the path you desire, to become the best version of yourself. To contact Barbara, call 719-510-1268 (cell) or email Journeyscounselingctr@gmail.com.

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Community Partnership
Family Resource Center



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www.cpteller.org

***Community Partnership has
a new website!***

by Jodi Mijares

Community Partnership Family Resource Center (CP) is delighted to announce that its brand-new website launched on October 21, 2024. With the design support of two Woodland Park High School graduates, a Cripple Creek-Victor High School graduate, and their fantastic teams at Design Rangers and Neon Pig Creative, CP's website honors the local voice and culture of its community.

“CP’s website is a powerful presentation of the values and culture of our organization and community! Supporting professionals who were raised right here in Teller County is exactly what CP is all about. Working collaboratively with Design Rangers and Neon Pig Creative has produced a website that respectfully represents our community and its residents. The entire CP team contributed to the content in describing CP and its programs, and the voice of participating families is honored throughout the website as well. We are thrilled with the finished product,” commented Jodi Mijares, President & CEO, Community Partnership Family Resource Center.

Design Rangers brings deep roots in Teller County to their work. Co-founder Jenny Schell attended K-12 in Cripple Creek and spent her single-digit years living with her mom in a ghost town without running water or electricity outside of Victor. Later, as a young mother living in Divide, Jenny experienced firsthand the challenges rural families face when seeking support and resources. This personal connection to the community adds depth to Design Rangers' commitment to serving local nonprofits that strengthen the region.

“Working with CP was incredibly meaningful for us, professionally and personally,” says Jenny Schell, co-founder of Design Rangers. “They offer an amazing range of vital services, and we were honored to help them articulate their story in a way that makes it easier for families to find the support they need. Watching their team come alive during our sessions – sharing stories and discovering new ways to express their impact – reminded us why we do this work. When an organization can clearly communicate who they are and why they exist, it creates a ripple effect that

touches the entire community. We're proud to be part of CP's journey to connect more families with life-changing resources."

Founded by Colin Christie and Michael O'Caña, both proud graduates of Woodland Park High School ('03 and '04), alongside Colorado Springs native Laura Scharr, Neon Pig Creative was born from a shared passion for making a difference in the place they call home. Growing up in Woodland Park, their team deeply understands the needs and opportunities of this region. Since their official launch in 2018, they've grown to a team of six dedicated professionals, all committed to helping their community thrive.

“It’s with great pride that we partnered with CP to create their new website. This project is more than just a design – it’s an opportunity to ensure that CP’s services reach families of all shapes and sizes in Teller County that need support in various ways. Our vision was to create a friendly and supportive place for visitors to feel seen and to inspire hope as they seek the resources they need to flourish. It was an honor to support CP and continue our mission of building stronger, more connected communities through thoughtful design,” stated Michael O’Caña, Director of Web, Neon Pig Creative.

Earlier this year, CP received a \$100,000 Nonprofit Infrastructure (NPI) Grant from the Colorado Department of Local Affairs. A portion of the grant was used to update communication strategies including building a new website, with the intent of a stronger ability to communicate how programs fit together and what impact they are having in their local community.

Not only is the new website visually appealing and simple to navigate, CP's story and "why" is shared in a more compelling way. Explore activities that build community, find upcoming events, meet the board and staff, learn about CP's core values, discover ways you can change lives by giving back, and learn about common misconceptions. Please take a look and share: www.cpteller.org.

Photo on cover: CP's Development Manager Jamie Krall demonstrates CP's new website for CEO Jodi Mijares, and VP of Programs Cory Gorton.

We appreciate ALL of you!

A huge THANK YOU to the following organizations that helped to contain the Highland Lakes Fire that ignited October 28, 2024. It was amazing that this fire was contained in about two days in spite of raging winds. Over 700 people were evacuated with less than 100 showing up at the shelter, which means friends and neighbors opened their hearts and doors to shelter evacuees. What a wonderful reflection on our community!

- 4Mile Fire
- Cripple Creek Fire
- Victor Fire
- Mountain Communities Fire
- Green Mountain Falls Fire
- Lake George Fire
- Ute Pass EMS
- Teller County Sheriff and Dispatch
- Teller County OEM

Please remember, these are VOLUNTEER Fire Protection Districts. If you wish to donate, please mail your generous contributions to:

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Adopt Me *by SLV Animal Welfare Society*
Thompson

This is Thompson, a perfect Velcro pup at 3 years old, fully vetted. He has never been aggressive to humans or other animals. Thompson is dog friendly, potty trained, indifferent to cats and loves car rides. He is best with children over age 10. He is initially a little shy in a new home. Thompson was saved from a kill shelter and is now in foster care. To learn more about Thompson please contact SLV at 719-587-9663 or attend SLVAWS' Colorado Springs Adoption Fairs every Saturday 10-3 p.m. Check www.slvaws.org for locations.

This space donated by the Ute Country News to promote shelter animal adoption.

A Place for Kids

by Kathy Hansen

Southern Teller Hope partnered with Community of Caring for a survey process to identify childcare needs in southern Teller County. This partnership, along with 2022 Cripple Creek & Victor Gold Mine Social Impact Assessment, 2020 Socioeconomic Impacts of Casino Introduction to Colorado, and 2019 American Community Survey have all agreed, there is a need for “affordable” childcare in southern Teller County. This need is intended to be met through A Place for Kids.

We understand a new building will be built on lots “which are currently owned free and clear by Community of Caring, adjacent to our 100 West Building on Bennett Avenue,” according to Lisa Noble, campaign director. The goal is to attain donations totalling \$3.4 million. Just last month, the organization received a DOLA EIAF (Energy/Mineral Impact Assistance Fund) Grant for \$1 million. “We have spoken to private foundations that have given us the green light to apply, and private donors are really stepping up to the plate with donations to the childcare contribution tax credit and other donations. That’s it SO far! Donations are tax deductible!” shared Noble.

The population to be served with be birth to age 13, "But the Exploratorium is an opportunity for older kids to engage, volunteer, and hold family centered community activities," added Noble. When asked about the hours of operation, Nobel replied, "We have to assure we take into consideration the non-traditional hours of the casino and mining industries. At first we are looking at a 16 hour day, and will continue to assess and assure we are meeting the needs of the community." The center will be licensed. When asked about

staff, Nobel replied, "No Staff yet, but the staff will have to be in line with licensing regulations, which means there will have to be a director-qualified person, as well as the workers will have to have their credentials or be working towards them."

When asked why parents want to consider A Place for Kids over any other child care, Noble answered, "There is no other licensed child care in the District. There is only limited childcare for Head Start and Early Head Start families for 32 hours a week. Families will be able to go to work without worrying about their child having to watch their young siblings, people they really don't know watching their kids, and families being able to create stability in their family structures because both parents can work the same shift. They will be able to receive funding for childcare if they are eligible. This will not take the place of grandma if that's who families want to watch their kids, but it will allow grandma to go on vacation or to the doctor if she needs to. Some families drive their kids to Woodland Park for Child Care every day and then drive to Woodland Park to pick them up after work. That adds almost four hours onto their day, and it will create a safer environment for kids not being on the road so much. We will be striving for a five star rating from Colorado Shines so they know their children are in a safe, fun learning environment!"

When asked to define “affordable” Noble answered, “We will assure all childcare funding streams are utilized and optioned. CCAP, HEADSTART, Early Head Start, tuition.”

Target opening date is September 2026.

To make a donation text “PLACE4KIDS” to 44-321.

People See, People Do
You can Kindle Kindness, too!

by Readers of Ute Country News

- Thank you for holding the door open for me!
- A man is a caretaker for a neighbor who is slipping into dementia. They have another neighbor who gives the male caretaker a day off and she often will also run errands or drop things off for the other caretaker. Being a caretaker is a magnificent act of kindness and helping a neighbor get a day off or run errands are also acts of kindness!
- It was a windy day! As one person was leaving, their act of kindness was to hold the door for another entering with their arms full. Holding a door open is an act of kindness, especially when their arms are balancing many parcels in the wind.
- The news was devastating and there was nothing anyone could do to change the situation. Upon my evening reflections, I recognized and began counting the

MANY people who sent a message to me through email, in person, a hug and sometimes when words could not suffice a simple squeeze of a hand let me know these folks cared. The outcome did not change, my attitude did. How could I possibly stay in a devastated emotional place with all this love coming my way? Letting people know you care is truly an act of kindness because we all need to know that we are loved.

- I can tell you that a joke is a powerful tool. I see all kinds of sad people. I tell them a joke, then they smile or laugh and their mood is better. Jokes are acts of kindness.

Have you witnessed or experienced an act of kindness? Please share by emailing utecountrynewspaper@gmail.com or calling 719-686-7587.

Adopt Me by Ark Valley Humane Society

Charlotte

Are you looking for a quiet and cuddly feline companion? Then 3-year-old Charlotte is the cat for you! Although AVHS does not do DNA testing, she has a beautiful slate grey coloring like a Russian Blue cat. Charlotte arrived after AVHS reached out to their shelter partners. These partnerships help other shelters that find themselves at capacity and animals that may not be getting enough interest and need help finding families. Charlotte can be very shy at first. You will often find her hiding in her kennel. However, once you open the door, Charlotte immediately starts purring and nuzzling your hand. Charlotte has previously lived with other dogs. She would prefer a calm and quiet home to be comfortable in. This sweet girl just needs someone who will give her a chance. Stop by Ark-Valley Humane Society to meet the shy and loving Charlotte! We're located at 701 Gregg Drive in Buena Vista, CO and our phone is 719-395-2737.

This space donated by the Ute Country News to promote shelter animal adoption.

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Silent Auction Aspen Mine Center (AMC)

Thursday, December 12
Winter Wonderland Reception 3:30-6:30 pm AMC

Friday, December 13
Soup for the Soul 11:30-1 pm AMC

Saturday, December 14
Christmas Craft Fair: 9-3 pm Parks & Recreation
Hot Chocolate/Cider/S'mores 11-1:30 pm, AMC
Chili and Baked Potato Luncheon 11-1:30 AMC
Gold Camp Christmas Parade 12 noon, Bennett Ave.
Visit with Santa 12:30 pm AMC
Children's Activities: 12:30-2 pm AMC
Choralec 3:30-5 pm CC Baptist Church

Thursday, December 19
Toys for Tots 4:30-6:30 pm CC-V High School



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Critter
CORNER



Silvie - Carol Poklasny,
Oshkosh, WI

Biter Boy - Carol Poklasny,
Oshkosh, WI

Have a cute critter? Send us your favorite critter photos and we'll feature them here in the Critter Corner! **If you don't send your photos, you'll have to look at our cats every month!** Indoor or outdoor pets or wild critters are what we're looking for. We will not accept any photos depicting cruelty or harming animals in any way. Email your critters to utecountrynewspaper@gmail.com. Be sure to include the critter's name as well as your name.

Millie and her Dragon The Dragon that saved Christmas

by Gilrund the Historian

It was cold and snowy and Verdant, the dragon, was gathering wood for another fire to keep the giant's old castle warm for the dragon family. It was while he was picking up an odd-looking log when he heard the voices of the fairies as they were talking on a nearby tree trunk. He stopped to listen to what they were saying. He was shocked at what they said, "There isn't going to be a Christmas this year."

He dropped the log and said to the fairies, that he had frightened by dropping the big log, "You can't mean that!"

"Mean what?" asked Snowflake, the fairy, as she brushed off the snow that had flown up when the dragon had dropped the log.

"When you said that there would be no Christmas this year. Why?" answered Verdant.

"Oh, that. I thought that you, being a dragon, would have heard by now. Santa's reindeer are all sick with some sort of disease and they can't pull his sleigh."

"Even Rudolph?" asked Verdant.

"Yes, even Rudolph. I heard that his nose won't even glow, because he's so sick."

Continued Snowflake.

"That just can't be! They are magical creatures, why don't they use their magic and heal themselves? Something is really wrong here."

Said the dragon.

"Well, the only good thing is that Santa isn't sick, and the elves aren't sick."

Said Snowflake, "But they can't pull his sleigh. They can't fly. So, there you have it. Unless Santa can find a different way of delivering the gifts to all the children around the world, there just won't be a Christmas this year."

Verdant walked away thinking and thinking. Somebody has to do something, but who?

He picked up the logs that he had collected and then flew off to the old giant's castle where his family lived.

It was supper time when Verdant finished stacking the firewood. He had a lot to tell the family tonight.

"You're kidding!?" was the first response from them when he told them about Santa's Reindeer and how sick they were. Then it was, "They can't be sick at Christmas, it's against the rules!"

Then, "But it's not fair! There has to be a Christmas every year. What about all the children's gifts?"

Verdant agreed with everything, but what was to be done? It was only two weeks until Christmas!

Verdant went back to the fairies the next day and asked them how the Reindeer were doing.

"Not good enough for Christmas!" was the answer.

Verdant went to his father, Emerald, "Dad! Something has to be done about this

Christmas!"

"What would you suggest?" Emerald asked, "There are no other reindeer that can to the job of pulling Santa's sleigh. It's magical, you know. Why there is only one other creature that I know of that could do what the reindeer can do."

"Who is it?" asked Verdant.

"Dragons!" answered Emerald. "We are the only other magical creatures that can pull that loaded sleigh as fast as Santa needs to go."

"Well, what about the Unicorns? Or the Pegasus? He can fly," asked Verdant.

"Well, first of all, Unicorns can't fly, and the Pegasus is only one, and he can't pull Santa's sleigh all by himself. Nor is he fast enough," answered Emerald.

Emerald looked at his son until Verdant said, "What?"

Emerald smiled as he said, "What do you think? Think about what you and I have just talked about. Who is left to do the job? That is if you want the children of the world to have a good Christmas."

"You mean ME!?" exclaimed Verdant.

"Just think about it, son," Emerald said, "Who else is there that can do it the way it has to be done?"

"But why me?" asked Verdant, "There are lots of dragons that could do it. Why does it have to be me?"

"Good question, son. But answer me this: How many dragons do you know that even are aware that there is a problem this year? Then how many would even care about it like you do? You can go and talk to your friends and see if any of them are willing to help Santa. You'll get your answer then."

"Okay, good idea, that's what I'll do," answered Verdant, "There must be some that would be willing to help."

The next morning Verdant went to his brother Ebony, a black dragon, who now was with the Dragon Riders of Zorr. They were the Air Force of the Army of Zorr. Zorr was the kingdom they lived in.

He told Ebony about Santa's reindeer and how sick they were. He explained that they needed some help or there would be no Christmas this year.

He asked if the Dragon Riders could help just for the one night of Christmas Eve.

"We would like to, Verdant," answered Ebony, "But we are all on duty that night. There are some evil kingdoms that would use our Christmas celebrations as a time to attack because we wouldn't be prepared. Do you understand?"

"Yes," he answered, "I'll just have to find someone else."

Verdant spent the rest of the day flying here and there talking to his dragon friends about the problem. He could find no one that could help. Everyone was just too busy on Christmas Eve.

"Well, I guess it's up to me," he said as he flew back home.

Emerald, his dad, was waiting for

him.

"How did it go?" Emerald asked.

"Did you find someone to help Santa?"

"Yeah, ME!" answered Verdant, "I found out that the world is a very busy place on Christmas Eve. So, I'm going to fly to the North Pole and see if I can help Santa."

The next day Verdant was on his way, flying to the North Pole. It took him two days to get there as he landed in front of Santa's beautiful log home. Santa was in his workshop finishing up on some toys that were for the children as Verdant poked his head through the door.

Santa turned and said, "Hello Verdant. How are you today?"

"I think that I'm better than you, Santa," he replied, "I've heard that the reindeer are sick and can't pull the sleigh. Well, I'm here to pull it for you if you want me to."

Santa grinned and said, "Thank you, Verdant. I was hoping that someone would help me. You are just the right one for the job. Follow me and I'll show you where we have to go on Christmas Eve."

Santa walked to another room and opened the big window so Verdant could put his head through and see the large map that was on the opposite wall. The map was covered in red dots showing where Santa had to leave presents for the children.

Verdant didn't mind the bells so much, but the red nose was a bit much. It was battery powered and blinked on the end of the dragon's nose.

An elf quickly ran out of the workshop and handed Santa his "Book of Names." It was a small book that was filled with the names of all the children that were getting gifts for being good. The print was very small, but it was a magic book, and the names would become bigger when Santa needed to read them.

Santa picked up the reins and started to say, "On Donner, on Blitzen..." then he stopped and said, "Let's go Verdant!"

Verdant started flying up and the sleigh came up right behind him. Santa was very happy because he knew that the dragon would be able to take him everywhere he needed to go. Verdant was guided by the reins in Santa's hands and they were soon on their way to New Zealand as fast as the reindeer would have gone, if not faster.

"Go, Verdant, go!" laughed Santa as they flew through the air. "You're doing a great job. We may get there a bit early and the children will love it."

Soon they were over New Zealand and stopping at the many houses as Santa rushed down the chimneys and left the gifts for the children.

Quickly, house after house was left with gifts then on to the next small town or city. They even stopped at the few lonely houses that were way out on the farm land.

It seemed like Santa was in no hurry, but really, he was moving very fast.

Verdant was always ready when they had to move on again. As they were about to cross the Atlantic ocean, Santa looked at his watch. "Verdant, we are running late!" shouted Santa, "We have to get to the Americas as soon as possible. Can you fly any faster?"

Verdant knew that even if he were to fly as fast as he could, they wouldn't get to the Americas fast enough. He thought for a moment about how important it was to Santa and the children to get the presents on time and then decided to use the secret and magical "Dragon Jump." It was a bit of magic that only dragons have. They can go anywhere instantly. But it must only be used if it is very important.

They were just leaving the coast of an isolated island when Santa realized that they were suddenly on the east coast of America. Santa didn't know how it happened, but he was glad that they had gotten there so fast.

House after house was visited and lots of presents were delivered. Santa's big bag of presents was getting smaller and the sleigh was much lighter and easier for Verdant to pull.

Christmas Eve was nearly over and the sun was rising on the east coast of Hawaii, as Santa called out to Verdant, "It's time to go home, Verdant."

Then Santa noticed that there were three more presents still in his sack. They were hard to see because they were all wrapped up in the folds of the mostly empty, great big bag. Santa pulled the reins to the left and slightly down until they could see a big sailing ship that was just below them. Down they went and Verdant hovered over the ship as Santa jumped down and placed the three presents on the stairs leading to the lower deck, where there was a family with three children sleeping.

Dad awoke just as Santa was leaving the ship and he waved and called out, "Thank you, Santa!"

Santa waved back as he jumped back into his sleigh and Verdant started flying back up into the dawn sky and away to the North Pole.

The dad was staring and thinking to himself, "Am I seeing things? Or was there a dragon pulling Santa's sleigh?"

He rubbed his eyes and looked again, but Verdant and Santa's sleigh were long gone by then.

It was a long flight, but soon, Verdant and Santa were back at the North Pole and walking into a big party that was always held when all the Christmas presents had been delivered.

Misses Claus had plenty of food prepared for everyone, even a large green dragon that was tired and very hungry.

"Hurray for Santa and hurray for Verdant," shouted all of the elves. Even the

reindeer shouted from where they lay in their sick beds in the barn, recovering from their sickness.

"Thank you Verdant!" the reindeer shouted, "You are the Dragon that Saved Christmas!"

Verdant bowed and smiled a big dragon smile as he bit into a big chunk of pumpkin pie that he had never eaten before.

The celebration went on for several hours and finally Santa called out for everyone's attention.

"Verdant has done us all a great service and I have a special gift that I would like to give him from all of us."

Santa waved his hand and six elves marched out of a different room carrying a dome-topped, wooden trunk. It took six of them because it was so heavy.

When Verdant opened it, he found that it was filled with beautiful jewels of all different sizes, gold and silver coins and gold nuggets. Everything that a dragon wanted for his hoard.

Verdant's eyes bulged as he looked at his Christmas gift from Santa Claus, the reindeer and the elves.

"Thank you, thank you!" he said as he looked at the treasure chest.

"Oh, no!" smiled Santa, "We thank you. All of us and all of the many children around the world that wouldn't have had a very fun Christmas if you hadn't come to help us."

Santa and all the elves came and hugged as much of the big dragon as they could.

Verdant slept very well at the North Pole that night. When he got home two days later, he showed his family the wonderful gift he had been given. He told his adventure story over and over again as they asked questions about how he and Santa delivered presents to the many children around the world.

Later, he thanked Emerald, his father, for making him think of how he could be the one to help Santa.

Verdant was a different dragon after that. He spent most of his long dragon life helping other dragons and even some humans too.

He became famous among dragon kind. If you were a dragon and happened to be born green, you just might be given the name of Verdant.

Those dragons that were given the famous name seemed to always be a kind and thoughtful dragon and the humans seemed to think that all dragons should be green.

The end.

Chuck Atkinson of Como, CO enjoys writing fiction stories and treasure hunts for the children at his church. We are pleased to have him contribute to the only fiction in our Ute Country News.

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Fitness ON the Mountain

My brain on gratitude and resilience

by Lori Martin

Happy Holidays to all of our *Ute Country News* readers. It’s been almost 2-1/2 years since I joined this team of amazing writers, creatives and professionals. I am humbled and constantly learning new and more efficient ways to express my passion for wellness, fitness and most particularly, for movement. It is with intention that I write in the same way that I speak, which can be a bit drawn out and animated, at times. I realize I have developed an attitude of gratitude.

For some, the topic of gratitude is an elusive and daunting one. Recently, I have had the opportunity to put my gratitude practice to the test as I took millions of scary baby steps throughout the last year towards a new life. Never in my life have I given thanks for so many things consistently, still, I know I can do better. For those of you who find the topic does not apply to them or is too much work or unrealistic, I challenge you to read on.

First things first, where might I go to review the topic of gratitude? To [www. PositivePsychology.com](http://www.PositivePsychology.com), of course. The following is a very brief summary of the content of the article titled, “The Neuroscience of Gratitude and Effects on the Brain.” I highly recommend reading this article, by the way.

There are three ways we are positively impacted by gratitude:

- 1. Psychologically: Imagine “A Happier You”
- 2. Physically: Imagine “A Fitter You”
- 3. Socially: Imagine “A Connected You”

All we have to do is learn the habit of being grateful for the experiences we face day to day and moment to moment. Sounds easy, right? Well, not at first it isn’t but eventually, it becomes second nature.

Part of my son’s success habits have

been writing a list of three things he is grateful for each day. I attended a workshop a while back which assigned us the task of listing 100 things about ourselves we are grateful for. This task seemed overwhelming but I found that breaking it down into categories made it more manageable along with the sample topics:

- 1. **Physically:** All things health, fitness, wellness
- 2. **Mentally:** Compassion for others, showing grace for ourselves and others
- 3. **Spiritually:** Praying, meditating and nurturing our spiritual self. Reading the Bible, going to Bible Study, breathing
- 4. **Socially:** Relationships, friends, family, and volunteer opportunities
- 5. **Talents and Skills:** Organized, tech savvy, creative abilities
- 6. **Gifts:** Empathy, creativity, a heart for serving others
- 7. **Challenges I’ve overcome:** Scoliosis, thyroid cancer and most recently, divorce.
- 8. **Accomplishments:** Spent three months on my friends’ ranch in a travel trailer, graduated from Ranch Life Boot Camp, gave myself permission to move into my own little home with a real shower and kitchen
- 9. **Bucket List items:** Horse/ranch life, spend more time with family and friends, travel,
- 10. **Financially:** Saved money by living with a friend for 10 months in exchange for helping her clean and take her to doctor appointments. Earned spending money cleaning houses, dog sitting, as a personal assistant and social media manager.

A message I heard a few weeks ago caught my interest: Scientists have discovered the human brain cannot entertain

gratitude and anxiety at the same time.

Neuroscientist, author and coach, Alex Korb, in his book *Grateful Brain*, states, “Our mind cannot focus on positive and negative information at the same time.” His statement, “Gratitude forces us to focus on the positive sides of life” is not new information, but the concept that positive and negative information cannot exist at the same time explains why gratitude forces us to focus on the positive sides of life.

Practicing anything new to us can be challenging and life is filled with day to day challenges already. Gratitude often gets pushed lower on the list of priorities. In our fitness goals there are two main things most trainers will insist you do:

- 1. Cardiovascular endurance
- 2. Strength training

More daunting tasks. What if we make our first and foremost thing to do: Make time for yourself! Now our perspective changes and the rewards are greater. What amazes me is that even though I have always taken care of my body physically, I wasn’t taking care of my spirit and my soul. Adding gratitude into my life helped me through some pretty tough days. I had to put my mental and physical well-being first.

My gratitude is focused in prayer. I believe all those aspects on my list of 100 are gifts especially designed for me by God. They have been with me since I was born, but it took me a while (some of them 65 years) to realize I could use them and nurture them more.

When I stop to breathe in all the things I’m grateful for good things always happen. It’s normal to be more focused on obstacles in the moment because we are in problem solving mode. This is still a constant theme for me. Prior to my gratitude practice I would get stuck in problem solving mode. Just as with my posture, my breathing practice, and eating more nutrient dense foods, I have to work on it all the time.

For three months I have had to travel my one-year-old Kia Soul down dirt roads to and from “Ranch Life Boot Camp Rd.” Those bumps got old quickly. One day while traveling down those dirt roads I decided to focus on being grateful for the bumps because they slowed me down. I was able to see the two red tail hawks soaring above and watch the owl land on the telephone line looking down at us. My dog loves it when I go slow as he is relieved of his anxiety watching all the rabbits scamper across the road. I go extra slow for him.

I realized that all of this experience; the bumps, the nature, the sunrises and

sunsets have been there all along for my pleasure and growth. Likewise, all the not so fun stuff like cleaning stalls, chicken coops, and duck pond scum removal were gifts that taught me resilience and responsibility. Grit is a word I never thought I would use to describe me until experiencing Ranch Life Boot Camp 101. I believe I am on my way to earning the label of grit.

It’s possible some people watching my transition may have used the term “rogue” to describe the new me. The old me would never have gone to bed without a proper shower. The new me said “cow-boy shower today, it is then!” The new me might go 4-5 days without washing her hair and wore the same jeans for the same. I was horrified the first time my dog rolled in horse poop and gave him a bath with the hose only for him to do it again. Eventually, I succumbed to just wiping him down before he entered the trailer at the end of the day.

I still have a disdain for pain but, I’ve learned to appreciate how amazing our bodies are. I’ve single-handedly, moved Porta Potties. I wrestled down bales of hay without knocking myself unconscious, climbed on the roof of my trailer to secure a tarp, I’ve spent nights awake swaying in the wind during storms and trekking out to check on the horses at 3 a.m. in my pajamas. My skin hasn’t seen that much sun in years and I stopped coloring my hair, as well, which really added to the “she’s gone rogue” attitude.

The Screamin’ Squirrel Ranch Boot Camp was amazing but, I couldn’t have done it without the love and nurturing of the amazing family that welcomed me on my first day with “Now you’re family!”

I will never forget the summer evenings sitting outside the camper chatting or having a glass of wine, the laughter...lots of laughter. The yummy foods that mysteriously appeared in my fridge, like the farm fresh eggs, and my first ever duck egg, not to mention the hollarin’ and some cussin’ and a pack of dogs at my door waiting for treats. We raised a road runner, rescued a few dogs, rode the horses up to Indian ruins and took the trash to the dump. I hope they invite me back for Ranch Life Boot Camp Part 2!

If you find yourself in a similar season of life and you notice you’re walking funny after a tough day of manual labor or in need of any type of healing or muscle recovery go to www.DnaVibe.com/lorimartinfitness e-mail me for your Secret Holiday Discount Code: lorimartinfitness@icloud.com

Move...Heal...Live...MORE

Magic in the Gold Camp

by Tracie Bennitt

This year marks another awesome schedule with holiday activities in the Gold Camp. The theme for this year’s events is the “Magic of Christmas.” An annual tradition in the Community of Caring calendar includes Christmas trees, wreaths, and baskets made by individuals and businesses participating in the silent auction at the Winter Wonderland Reception on Thursday, December 12th. This is an event where you can take in the lights and music of the season, reconnect with friends, enjoy delicious food and sip hot drinks. Entry forms to decorate a tree, wreath or basket can be obtained through the Aspen Mine Center Community of Caring website (<https://cocamc.org>) Be sure to pick up your FREE Christmas ornament from the City of Cripple Creek on their special tree at the event this year.

Next up in this holiday week is Soup for the Soul, a fundraiser for the AMC Community of Caring. Individuals are invited to enter soups and/or cookies into a contest. At this event individuals pay \$5 to taste and vote on the entries. Come by for a taste on December 13th.

December 14th is a day full of fun events. The Christmas Craft Fair is an annual holiday craft fair held at the June Hack Community Center hosted by Cripple Creek Parks & Rec! With over 30 talented vendors showcasing their unique creations, you’ll find the perfect gifts for

everyone on your list. Explore a world of handcrafted treasures, from intricate ornaments that glisten like freshly fallen snow to cozy knit scarves that will warm your heart. Indulge your taste buds with delectable treats created by the high school culinary arts students as you wander through a wonderland of creativity.

Folks are welcome at the Aspen Mine Center from 11 a.m. to warm up with hot chocolate, cider and smores. A chili and baked potato luncheon is served from 11-1:30 p.m. The Gold Camp Christmas Parade kicks off down Bennett Ave, starting at noon at 5th St. and ending at the Aspen Mine Center. Santa will be at the Aspen Mine Center following the parade to visit with kids of all ages. There will be activities for the kids at the center as well.

Colorado Springs Chorale Annual Christmas Concert benefits the Aspen Mine Center and takes place each year toward the end of a week filled with community Christmas festivities and is the perfect culmination of an old fashioned Christmas celebration. The Chorale will be performing a showcase of holiday collections at the Cripple Creek Baptist Church beginning at 3:30 p.m. and will be followed by a reception. The concert is free to the public but donations to the Aspen Mine Center are encouraged.

FMI, visit www.visitcricklecreek.com.

Holiday décor light up historic mining landscape

by Ruth Zalewski

The giant headframes that are the remains of 1890s gold mining days will again light up the night sky around Victor and Cripple Creek again this holiday season. These unique mining structures are one-of-a-kind remnants of the gold rush era.

Holiday ornaments, some as large as 20 feet tall, will be lit against the starry night skies of Victor and Cripple Creek. Everything from a Christmas wreath to a snowman and a toy soldier will be on display this year.

A self-guided driving tour map will be available online at STCFG.com. The lights will be best viewed after dark and will be in place Friday through Sunday nights through New Year’s Day, weather/safety and volunteers permitting. Between Christmas Eve and New Year’s, weather allowing, the lights will be on nightly. Please respect private property and stay on public roads to view the ornaments.

This holiday lighting tradition is sponsored by Newmont Cripple Creek & Victor gold mine, on whose property most of the headframes are located and the Southern Teller County Focus Group who coordi-



nates generator crews. Volunteers from the communities staff the generators and line power connections each weekend. Other sponsors include the City of Victor, Cripple Creek Parks & Recreation, Cripple Creek Fire Department, and the Cripple Creek District Museum. Support also comes from Black Hills Energy crews who help refurbish the lamps on the ornaments.

More information and maps are at STCFG.com.

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Schools-to-Pasture Field Trip

by Flip Boettcher

The Schools-to-Pasture program, under the auspices of the non-profit Rangeland Living Laboratory (RLL), is off to a good start with the launch of the program last week. About 20 Guffey Community Charter School students participated in the day-long AgroEcology field trip program to the 450 acre La Dolce Vita (LDV) Ranch, located a little northwest of Guffey.

There were three learning corrals (stations) focusing on three ecological cycles: water, nutrient and energy, using the living laboratory model.

The students broke into three groups: K-2 grades, 3-5 grades and 6-8 grades, and rotated around to each of the three corrals, which were a short walk apart.

Anna Clare Monlezun, CEO of RLL and Giovanni Taormina, COO of RLL and both owners of the LDV Ranch, were the teachers at the first corral this writer visited.

They were talking about the energy cycle and that cows eat lots of fiber and have

four stomachs for digestion or ruminating.

After the lecture portion, the students had solo time to think and work in their journals. The students prepared "field journals" ahead of the field trip. They contained activity sheets with diagrams and vocabulary for each learning corral, as well as field sheets for recording observations and measurements from the experiential activities. RLL provided all of this content, which was printed out and bound in their journals, said Anna Clare.

The next corral was taught by Emily Gallagher with Gamma Grass Livestock talking about nutrition cycles, carbon and cows and how nutrients get into plants.

The last corral was taught by Dr. Roy Roath, professor emeritus in rangeland science at CSU. He talked about the erosion dams, that they slowed the water down and caught debris. More water means more plants and wild roses are an indicator that there is water there. He also talked about the three



Second corral with Emily Gallagher, Gamma Grass Livestock, teaching nutrients.

plant groups: forbs, grasses and shrubs.

The students broke into twos and had five minutes to count all the different plants they could find. The group talked about soil density and picked two spots to check the soil infiltration rate of water using an infiltrometer.

Each corral had a set of general concepts, principles and vocabulary with the

students learning using the living laboratory model.

Even though it was very windy, it was a beautiful sunny day. The students seemed interested and engaged, asking and answering questions and having a good time.

The RLL is looking for ranches near the Lake George Charter School, the Fairplay School and the Bailey School for ranches willing to participate in the Schools-to-Pasture program. There is no cost to the school, the rancher or their families. RLL has funds for 3-5 more Schools-to-Pasture programs. Anyone interested or knows of anyone interested in participating can contact RLL at <https://rangelandlivinglaboratory.org>.

FMI on RLL Schools-to-Pasture program, see the Ute Country News November article, page 4.

Santa's Elves are Missing in Downtown Victor

Join the fun and win big!
by Jon Zalewski

Santa's elves have gone missing in Downtown Victor, and Santa needs your help to find them! This holiday season, the Victor Main Street program invites families, friends, and holiday revelers to participate in the exciting Victor Elf Hunt, running through December 24, 2024.

How to Participate:

1. Pick up your playing card at the Claim Jumper General Store in the Post Office Building.
2. Search for the elves hidden in the window displays of 10 participating businesses in Downtown Victor.
3. Complete your card by finding all 10 elves, filling in the location and dropping it off in the drop-off box inside the Claim Jumper by December 24th for your chance to win a \$200 VISA gift card.

Whether you're shopping, dining, or enjoying a festive drink in Victor, the Elf Hunt is a fun way to engage with the local businesses and get into the holiday spirit. No purchase is necessary to participate — just come out and enjoy the magic of the season!

Support local businesses:

This event is part of the "I Love Victor" initiative by Victor Main Street, which aims to promote and celebrate the unique character of Victor while supporting the town's local businesses. By participating, you're not just having fun; you're helping to sustain the vibrant community of Victor, Colorado.

FMI and to stay updated on the event, follow Victor Main Street on Facebook at Facebook.com/VictorMainStreetProgram or reach out via email at VictorMainStreet@Gmail.com. You can also call 719-492-1768 for additional details.



Colorado Pharmgirl

A meaningful life
by Peggy Badgett

I'd read a few books about post-career years, but nothing really prepared me for the feeling of being adrift and ungrounded after I sold my farm, quit my career, and moved West. For several years, immersing myself in hiking, biking, and snowboarding adventures distracted me from the question of finding meaning in my life. But that issue continued to whisper in the back of my mind. When mud season hit in November and derailed outdoor activities, I had nowhere to hide.

Many predicted I had stretched my gap year into retirement too soon. Were they right? I did have goals: finish my third book and discover my voice in art. But I have yet to meet either. Am I a watercolorist, or barn quilt designer? Am I a novelist or columnist? Was I pouring effort into things that truly mattered, or just wasting energy on books and a website no one was going to read? Was I painting works destined to hang only on my shed walls? There were lots of dark days when nothing I completed seemed worthy of producing.

I didn't want to be a drain on our society by using health care resources without contributing something of value. Guilt flooded through me every month when my social security arrived at the bank knowing my kids were putting in hours to help fund that check. When help-wanted posters appeared in business doorways, I pondered applying for a job. But even a part time position could be fraught with conflict, especially if I was scheduled for a shift on a powder day or a morning when creative inspiration finally appeared.

Then, as I lamented my continued sadness after putting my last dog down, my daughter Amie suggested dog-sitting through an app on my phone. After a



Peggy is rocking out at Red Rocks!

background check, I was connected with potential clients and quickly built a customer base. It was a perfect solution; enjoying the company of someone else's fur baby without the expensive veterinarian bills and kibble. I felt needed again.

Throughout my pharmacy career, I had served on the local school board, adopted a mile of highway near our small town, and entertained hospice patients while their families enjoyed an evening out. I wanted my kids to understand that it was important to take care of others and our planet. Now that I am settled into a mountain home I love, I can continue pursuits like that. I pick up trash whenever the opportunity arises and joined a trails board, Buena Vista Singletrack Coalition. Walking dogs for the local animal shelter is probably next. Maybe I'll discover a community role to help others in the near future.

Recently my middle daughter Amie flew into town for a Red Rocks show. One

of the biggest benefits of retirement is having the freedom to embrace a weekend escapade with her. Yes, I was probably one of the oldest attendees shimmying to Akon, but I didn't care. After the concert, we stayed a few nights in Denver and rented scooters to ride to coffee shops, amazing restaurants, and Meow Wolf. It was a great time (even though I scooted slowly!)

I want to make the rest of my time on this planet meaningful and joyful. I just need find that delicate balance between artistic endeavors, athletic challenges, worthwhile societal programs, and hanging out with my wonderful circle of family and friends.

Peggy Badgett is an artist and writer. She has several years' worth of adventures you can read for free on her website pharmgirl.org, and can be reached at coloradopharmgirl@gmail.com. Her first book, Rooster at the Drive through is available for sale at Shipping Plus.

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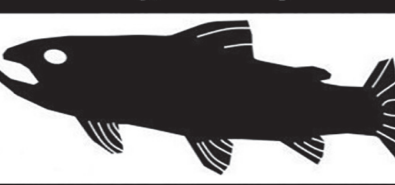
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COLORADO
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~OUT AND ABOUT~

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12 Virus, Vaccines & Dementia: New Info from CU Anschutz 12-1:30 p.m. Pre-registration is required call 800-272-3900.

- NAMI Colorado: <http://www.namicolorado.org/>
• Suicide prevention: <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/> or dial 988

CAÑON CITY

LIBRARY

- 6 Tree Lighting in Macon Plaza 5:30-7:30 p.m. Santa and Mrs. Claus will be here, music by the madrigals and the dulcimer club, cocoa, cookies, fake snowball fight.
14 Santa and Mrs. Claus will be here 10-2 p.m., bring a camera and take a pic with the jolly couple.
19 Free Legal Clinic 2-5 p.m. Call 719-269-9020 to schedule.
• 1st Friday Lego Club 3 p.m.
• 2nd Friday Creative Crafting 3 p.m.
• B.O.O.K. (Babies on our knees) story time Mondays 10:30
• Chess Club Wednesdays 2 p.m.
• Cribbage Club Fridays 10-noon.
• Dulcimer Club for kids 2nd and 4th Wednesday 3:30-4:30 p.m.
• Mahjong Club Tuesdays 1-4 p.m.
• Metaphysical Group Saturdays 10:30 a.m.
• Rummikub Club meets 3rd Monday of each month 1 p.m.
• Story Swap Book Chat 1st and 3rd Tuesdays 3 p.m.
• Story time and craft Tuesday and Thursdays 10:30 a.m. All at 516 Macon Ave unless otherwise specified. FMI 719-269-9020 www.ccpil.lib.co.us

COLORADO SPRINGS

- 10 & 11 Holly & Ivy Holiday Concert 7 p.m. at Pikes Peak Center, performed by USAF Academy Band.

CRIPPLE CREEK

- 4 American Legion Post 171 will meet at 5 p.m. at the Heritage Center in Cripple Creek for their Christmas potluck dinner and party. Otherwise, Post 171 meets the first Thursday of every month at 6 p.m. at 400 Carr St. Food and refreshments at 5 p.m.
11 Aspen Mine Center Christmas Dinner 11:30-1 p.m.
12 Winter Wonderland Reception 3:30-6:30 p.m.
13 Soup for the Soul & Greatest Gold Camp Cookie Contest 11:30-1 p.m.
13 Headframe Lights Tour 5:30 p.m. (shuttle)
14 AMC Craft Fair 9-3 p.m.
14 Kids Crafts & Santa Visit 10 a.m.
14 Christmas Parade noon.
14 Colorado Springs Choral Concert 3:30 p.m. at Cripple Creek Baptist Church 137 M First St.
19 Toys for Tots 4:30-7 p.m. at CCV High School
19 Third Thursday of the month is the Two Mile High Club monthly meeting at 5:30 p.m.

Mueller State Park

by Anna Miller

- Tip of the month: This time of year the trails may be snow covered, icy and bare in spots. Come prepared with spikes and lots of clothing layers.
6 **Nature Nook** 11:30-1:30 p.m. at the Visitor Center.
9 **Nature Journaling Workshop** 1-3 p.m. at Visitor Center Auditorium (register in advance).
20 **Nature Nook** 11:30-1:30 p.m. at the Visitor Center.
21 **Nature Ornaments** 10-12 p.m. at the Visitor Center Auditorium.

- 23 **Junior Naturalist** — Winter Detectives 1-2 p.m. at the Visitor Center.
28 **Guided Hike** Elk Meadow* 9-11 a.m.
30 **Winter Adaptations** 1-3 p.m. at the Visitor Center.
1 **Jan First Day Hikes** – TBD
1 **First Day Forest Bathing** 12-2:30 p.m.

*Indicates to meet at the Trailhead of the same name.
FMI 719-687-2366

- in the lower level of the Double Eagle Casino complex 442 East Bennett Ave.
• GED Classes Mondays & Wednesdays 1-3 p.m. New students (min. age 16) may join GED classes after completing orientation and \$40 registration fee. FMI Katy@cpteller.org.

ASPEN MINE CENTER

- 29 Commodities distribution 9-1 p.m.
• Mondays AA meeting 3-4 p.m. upstairs conference room.
• Tuesdays BINGO 10:30 a.m. for seniors.
• Wednesdays Luncheon 11:30-1 p.m. upstairs dining room, every Wed. FREE!
• Mexican Train on Thursday 10:30 a.m.
All programs at 166 E Bennett Ave. FMI 719-689-3584 x124.

DIVIDE

- 6, 20 Teller Senior Coalition BINGO! 10-11:30 a.m. at Little Chapel Church 69 CR 5. RSVP 719-687-3330 ext. 66. Call to set up a ride 719-687-0256.
9, 23 Little Chapel Food Pantry Distribution 2-5 p.m.
22 Winter Wonderland at Colorado Wolf and Wildlife Center 9-11 a.m. Join us for a holiday Celebration! Festivities include breakfast burritos with the wolves. \$40 for 12 and older, \$20 for ages 6-11 (no one under age 6 is permitted). Pre-paid event, limited space, reservations required! FMI 719-687-9742 or www.wolfeeducation.org.

FAIRPLAY

- 11 Free Legal Clinic 2-5 p.m. at the library. Call 719-836-4297 to schedule.

WIZARDS OF THE PEAKS

- 29 BINGO at Ellen's Place 5 p.m.
• Sunday Open Play starts 11 a.m.
• Boozy Board Games every other Monday 6 p.m.
• Monday Industry Night: Monday Night Magic 7 p.m.
• Tuesday Industry Night: TTRPG 7 p.m.
• Thursdays Learn to Play Thursdays 6 p.m. December features Lumps — A Coal Dice Game
• Friday Night Magic 7 p.m.
• Saturdays All Ages Pokemon 3-5 p.m.
• Saturdays Adult RPGs 7 p.m.

FLORENCE

- 21 Get your Casey Jones on and come to the Model Trail Open House at the Florence Pioneer Museum and Research Center 100 E. Front St. 10-4 p.m. There will be running trains and static trains, coloring pages and activity books from Operation: Lifesaver (train safety), hot cider and home-made pizzelles. All aboard: www.florencepioneermuseum.org.

JOHN C FREMONT LIBRARY

- 4, 11, 18 Wool Gatherers 10-noon
6, 13, 20, 27 Story Time 10:30 a.m.
6 Cañon City Workforce Center 11-1 p.m. to answer any

- career related or job search questions.
9 Last day of Friends of the Library Christmas Auction.
12 Marty Lamm from Florence Pioneer Museum presents "Florence Trains" 2 p.m.
18 Narcan Kiosk training 2 p.m. with the Fremont County Dept of Health.
23 Matinee Monday Movie 2 p.m. "A Christmas Story" Popcorn is provided, bring your beverage.

SWEET RADIANCE

- located at 201 West Main St. 7 Grand Reopening 10-5 p.m.
12 Sip and Dip Saturday 10-5 p.m.
15 Board Game Night 3-5 p.m. FMI 719-323-5199

FLORISSANT

- 7 & 8 Christmas Bazaar 9-3 p.m. Sat and 12-3 p.m. Sun, 16 crafters and vendors are inside the main building and 30+ crafters and artists are displayed in the Gift Shop.
21 Annual Christmas Party with Santa. Bring the kiddos and take pictures. Goodie bags, cookies, punch and hot cocoa will be served.
• Every Thursday (except Christmas and New Year) Potluck and live music 6-8 p.m. Come meet your community and join the fun.
• Every Tuesday Quilt of Valor Guild meets 9-noon. If you are a quilter and would like to join us, please stop in and meet us, join our group. We make Quilts of Valor for our local and surrounding community Veterans.

LIBRARY

- 11 Florissant Bookworms Book Club 10:30-12 p.m.
13 Food Crafts at 11am. Come as a family and learn cooking skills while making something fun! In December we're making holiday quesadillas!
13 Tarot Club 3 p.m. Teens and up are welcome to join this group and learn all things tarot. December's theme is restoration.
17 Read Amok Book Club themed "teachers" Bring up to 5 books within the theme to share! 11-12:30 p.m. December's theme is Party!
17 Free Legal Clinic 2-5 p.m. Call 719-748-3939 to schedule.
20 Holiday Card Creation at 11 a.m. Join us as a family and make holiday cards to send to your friends and family!
20 Friends at the Table Cookbook Club December's theme is Holiday! Bring a dish to share! 11:30-1 p.m. RLD is closed on December 24th, 25th, and 31st!
• Romp and Roll the second and fourth Wednesday of each month from 10-11 a.m. Play group/open gym for kids 5 and under. Engage in active play!
• Tuesdays Tai Chi 10-11 a.m. Come relax with us!
• Thursdays Yarnia! 10-12 p.m. Craft and share your knitting and crocheting love with others!
• The second and fourth Tuesday of each month join us for Hooks and Needles, an additional club for crafting! 10-12 p.m.

- The third Wednesday of each month join us for Crafting Together, a club where we finish our abandoned art projects 10-11:30 a.m.
• Storytime every Friday at 10 a.m. FMI 719-748-3939

GUFFEY

- LIBRARY
3 Walking, Talking Threads 12:30-3 p.m. Meets every first Tuesday of the month. Take a nice brisk walk around Guffey Town and meet back at the library to crochet, knit, and talk away.
11 Free Legal Clinic 2-5 p.m. Call 719-689-9280 to schedule.
18 Rocky Mountain Rural Health Outreach 11-2 p.m. Weather permitting, RMRH representatives will be offering free health screenings, sound financial medical advice, free clothing and much more.
• Guffey Literary Society will not meet due to holidays and travel. FMI 719-689-9280 or Guffeylib@parkco.us.

HARTSEL

- Country Church of Hartsel meets at the Hartsel Community Center 80 Valley View Drive 10 a.m. Sundays. Everyone is welcome! FMI call Jimmy Anderson 719-358-1100.

LAKE GEORGE

- 11 Free Legal Clinic at the library 2-5 p.m. Call 719-748-3812 to schedule.

MANITOU SPRINGS

See Dec happenings on page 15.

VICTOR

- 13 Victor Parade of Lights 6 p.m. Main St.
13 Victor Christmas 6:45 p.m. at Victor Elk's Lodge
13 Victor Jingle Bell Ball 7 p.m. at Victor Elk's Lodge
Through Dec 24 Victor Elf Hunt, see page 12.
8 Through Jan. 1 Gold Camp Holiday Headframe Lighting weekends when weather is permitting.

WOODLAND PARK

- 7 & 8 The 26th Annual Tweeds Holiday Home Tour 10-5 p.m. each day. FMI <https://www.wphht.org>
7 Pampering Spa Day at Mountain Vapor Lounge noon-2 p.m. RSVP required. Weather permitting.
8 WP Wind Symphony Christmas Concert at Church of the Nazarene Hwy 67 and Evergreen Heights, 7 p.m., doors open 6:30 p.m. FREE — donations welcome. FMI <http://www.woodlandpark-windsymphony.com>

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

- 4 Core Title Group Fundraiser & Toy Drive 5-8 p.m. Ute Pass Cultural Center. Come and enjoy dinner, drinks, and silent auctions. All for a good cause! Please bring a new toy benefiting Community Partnership Family Resource Center holiday gift program. RSVPACooper@coretitlegroupcllc.com
6 Christmas Dinner & Show 6-10 p.m. Shining Mountain Golf Course. Singing, dancing, jazz band featuring The Satin Dollz and costumed carolers. Family fun at Santas craft shop, indoor snow play area, and meet & greet with Santa. To benefit Community Partnership Family Resource Center. FMI & Ticket Sales www.goldhilltheatres.com or 719-687-3555.
13 Crossroads Co-Parenting Seminar 9:30 a.m.-8:30 p.m. Teller County court approved parenting and divorce class seminar. \$35 fee. Pre-registration required. FMI Michelle@cpteller.org.
15 Kidsongs Sing Along Christmas Show & Toy Drive 3-5 p.m. Gold Hill Dine-in

- Theatres. Meet Santa & Mrs. Claus, big screen show with tree lighting, sing along, and indoor snow. Bring a toy to leave under the tree benefiting Community Partnership Family Resource Center holiday gift program. FMI & ticket sales www.goldhilltheatres.com or 719-687-3555.
20 Kidsongs Sing Along Christmas Show & Toy Drive 7:30-9:30 p.m. Gold Hill Dine-in Theatres. Meet Santa & Mrs. Claus, big screen show with tree lighting, sing along, and indoor snow. Bring a toy to leave under the tree benefiting Community Partnership Family Resource Center holiday gift program. FMI & Ticket Sales www.goldhilltheatres.com or 719-687-3555.
21 Cookies & Milk with Santa 11-1 p.m. Meet & greet with Mr. & Mrs. Claus, stocking giveaway, photo opportunities, letters to Santa, and holiday craft activities. Fun for the whole family. FMI 719-686-0705.

- Addiction Support Wednesdays 9-4 p.m. Face IT TOGETHER provides free personalized, nonjudgmental peer coaching for those impacted by addiction. Walk-ins welcome. FMI www.wefacetogether.org
• Career Center Tuesdays & Thursdays 10-3 p.m. Closed December 24. Pikes Peak Workforce Center helps with job searching, resume assistance, and unemployment applications. Walk-ins welcome or schedule appointments with George@cpteller.org
• Family Café Monday through Thursday 9-12 p.m. Closed December 23-26. Enjoy coffee, Free Wi-Fi, Kid's Corner, and a space for parents and caregivers in our community to connect.
• GED Classes Mondays & Wednesdays 10-12 p.m. New students (min. age 16) may join GED classes after completing orientation and \$40 registration fee. FMI Katy@cpteller.org.
• Pearson VUE Testing Center Mondays 9:30-5:30 p.m. Closed December 30. Schedule your certification or licensure exam at www.pearsonvue.com. Fees vary. FMI Katy@cpteller.org.
• Playgroup Tuesdays, Wednesdays & Fridays 9:30-11 a.m. No Playgroup December 24, 25, 27. Walk-ins welcome. Parents and caregivers with children ages 5 & under. Older siblings are welcome. FMI Aimee@cpteller.org.
• Telehealth Location Monday through Thursday 9-4 p.m. Closed December 23-26. Comfortable private rooms and equipment available for any virtual appointment including health care, therapy visits, interviews, parent-teacher conferences, and more.
• Yoga with Leah Mondays. First come, first served, no late entry. Bring your own mat and props. All levels welcome. FMI Michelle@cpteller.org.
• Yoga with Leah Wednesdays 5-6 p.m. No Yoga December 25. First come, first served, no

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Holiday happenings in Manitou Springs

by Jenna Gallas

Visit Manitou Springs welcomes you to escape and enjoy the holiday season with these upcoming events to get you in the giving spirit.

Letters to Santa Dropbox will be located at the Town Clock Park from December 1-19. Make sure to put your return address on your letter so Santa knows where to send his reply!



Elf Hunt Returns

Three little elves are hiding in various local Manitou Springs stores, each marked with a sign indicating their number. The elves will change locations weekly, keeping the hunt fresh and exciting.

Participants who spot all three elves can enter a weekly drawing to win \$25 in Manitou Money by calling 719-685-5089 or emailing monica@manitouchamber.com. Follow #ElfHuntManitou on social media for updates, clues, and a dash of festive fun. Share your discoveries and connect with fellow elf hunters this season!

Holiday strolling brass

Music to get you in the spirit! Strolling brass musicians will wander Manitou Ave on Sundays in December to spread holiday cheer. Sundays December 1, 8, 15, 22 from 12-2 p.m. in downtown Manitou Springs. FMI, please contact Jenna Gallas at jenna@manitouchamber.com or 719-685-5089.

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Hometown Rustic Creations

by Flip Boettcher

Just east of the Abby and next to the Quality Inn in Cañon City, nestled in a small mall on the frontage road on the north side of State Highway 50 behind the 10 foot carved bear is a delightful new shop Hometown Rustic Creations, at 3055 East Hwy 50 suite F.

The shop, which opened August 1 of this year, is the perfect spot to shop for Christmas or for that special unique gift you are looking for.

Hometown Creations is owned and operated by Jenny and Justin Mathias, both born and raised in Fremont County. Hometown Creations features 26 different local vendors all from Fremont County, including, but not limited to, Cañon City, Florence, Penrose, Williamsburg, Coal Creek and Rockvale. Every week the shop gets new items in, said Jenny. Everything is hand made.

The shop name came from the fact that the carved wooden bears are rustic, it's a local hometown market and it's everyone's creation, said Jenny.

Items in the shop include wood carvings, metal art, handmade jewelry, epoxy art, holiday décor, crochet items, goat milk soap and lotion, quilts and lots more!

The wooden bears are made at Kevin Santana's Cañon business in a duplicator and finished off with a chainsaw, according to Jenny.

The shop is inner connected with the next door Cigarette Mart, which the couple bought October 31, 2023, and has been at that location since November 1987, added Jenny.



Jenny and Zoey inside the shop.

Cover: The front of Hometown Rustic Creations and Cigarette Mart.

Hometown Rustic Creations is open Monday-Saturday 9-5 p.m. and is closed on Sunday. Phone 719-315-1583. Visit htrusticcreations.com. Or hometownrusticcreations24@gmail.com.

Stop on by, you can't miss it behind the 10 foot wooden carved bear.

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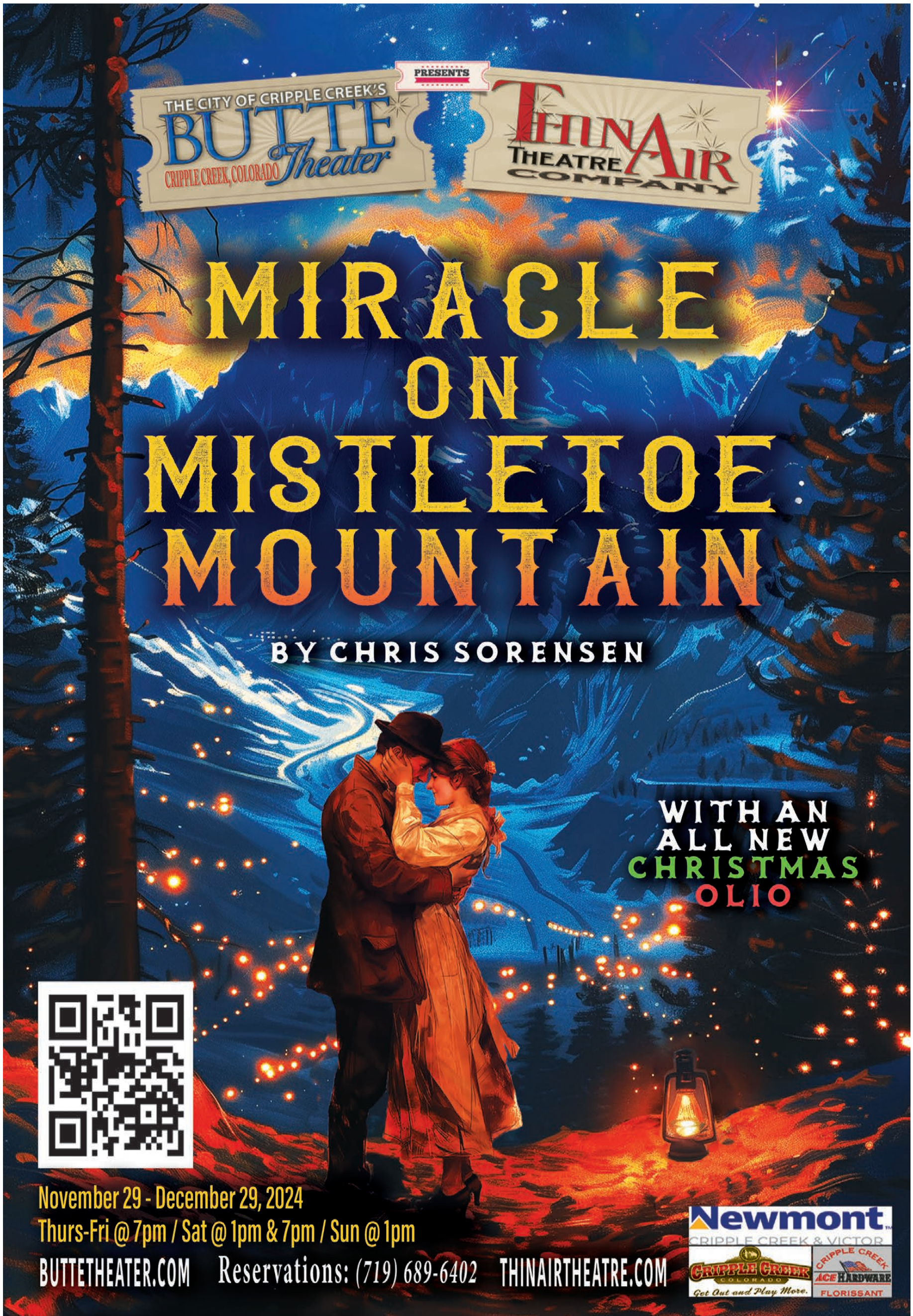
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