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ASSOCIATION

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the Montrose Mirror

DMEA HOLDS RATE HEARING AFTER REGULAR MEETING DEC. 16

Resolution 2025-17 re: Rate Tariff Changes adopted in 7-2 Vote



DMEA Director Wendell Koontz (standing) spoke during the Call to the Public at DMEA's Dec. 16 regular meeting. He said, "I want to thank the board. The North Fork Miner Trail; it has taken 40 years. Finally, we have a way to get kids off HYW 92. The lights and security out there make our kids safe." Photo by Gail Marvel.

By Gail Marvel

REGIONAL-On Tuesday, Dec. 16, the Delta Montrose Electric Association (DMEA) Board of Directors Regular meeting was called to order at 3pm. Ryan Sedgeley was absent; Emily Sanchez attended by Zoom, all other board members were present in person.

The call to order was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance, determination of a quorum, and agenda approval.

Introductions: Attendees were comprised of board members, department heads, staff, and guests. Guests included DMEA members Joseph Gill (virtual), Duane Helderlein, and Delta County Commissioner Wendell Koontz.

General Business:

Membership & Meter Report and the November 2025 Regular Meeting

Continued pg 34

CELEBRATE 40 YEARS OF THE TRUE GRIT CAFÉ!



Photo courtesy of the True Grit Café.

By Caitlin Switzer

RIDGWAY-Step through the doors of Ridgway's True Grit Café, and the friendly atmosphere and warm welcome are sure to lift your spirits; the menu highlights comfort food and includes many longtime favorites. In the coming weeks, the True Grit will celebrate its 40th year in business, with a community celebration planned Jan. 1 through 4, from 5 to 8pm. Expect food, prizes, and music by David Nunn.

"The Grit" as many call it, is the only eatery that has ever been located in the iconic building, constructed by local Rancher and True Grit Founder Dee Dee Decker.

As the beloved café celebrates, locals have shared interesting facts and photos from the restaurant's storied past, many of which are now online. The web site states, "The True Grit Café opened on New Year's Eve in 1985 and was built to honor the filming of the Academy Award winning movie 'True Grit' starring John Wayne. The movie was filmed in 1968 in and around Ridgway and Ouray. The internal south wall of the True Grit Cafe was the original external wall of 'Chambers Grocery' from one of the

Continued pg 3

**BOCC Holds Final Meeting of 2025:
"A Tumultuous Year!"**

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Dear Readers:

We appreciate your letters! We like reading and hearing opinions from all perspectives. We are sharing herewith our updated guidelines: In the past we have had one rule, to be implemented at the editor's discretion. We are now including two more suggested "Rules" for letter writers.

RULE 1. The Dead Horse Rule has been in place from the start of the *Mirror*. This is somewhat self-explanatory, but there are times when something has been said so many times it can run afoul of the "Dead Horse Rule," in which case we will inform the writer. This rule now includes requests to re-print letters that have already run.

RULE 2. While there are always exceptions, a letter can often say what needs to be said in one page or less. Our pages are 8.5 X 11, we use a 10 pt Calibri font; letters that are roughly 800 words fit well within this suggested guideline.

RULE 3. Please limit repetitive mud-slinging to avoid bumping up against Rule 1. Also, in the case of those writing to intentionally discredit a public official or candidate for public office, please provide a link to the source of your allegation if possible. Unsourced, unproven allegations are not credible, and could in fact be untruths. Finally, opinions expressed in letters and commentary are those of the authors themselves, and do not reflect the views of the *Montrose Mirror* or editorial staff.

*Thank you,
 Caitlin Switzer,*

the **Montrose Mirror**

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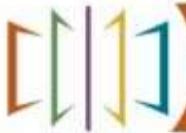
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We welcome community contributions and commentary! Please note, submitted content does not necessarily reflect the views of the *Montrose Mirror* or its editorial team.

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MONTROSE REGIONAL
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TRUE GRIT CAFÉ

From pg 1



first scenes in the movie. The enduring popularity of the movie brings visitors from all over the world to eat at the True Grit Café. Our walls are covered with pictures of the iconic star's film legacy. We specialize in Quality Comfort Food, serving more than 9,500 Burgers a year and over 5,000 hand-breaded Chicken Fried Steaks – a locals' favorite.” Present Owner Tammye Tuttle, who has owned and operated the Grit for close to three of its four decades, said, “It’s never been anything but the True Grit Café.” Tuttle added that she appreciates the vision of the restaurant’s Founder. “I love the vision that she had all those years ago,” Tuttle said, “She built a beautiful restaurant—it’s an old West build, and a lot of locals were part of it.

“I love being part of the iconic history of Ridgway,” she said. “I love that we have been serving our community that long. It’s just so cool.”

Be sure to drop in during the 40th Anniversary Celebration and be a part of the True Grit Café’s history, as well as its future. The Café is located at 123 North Lena Street in Ridgway. The phone number is 970-626-5739. Business hours are 11am to 8pm Thursday through Tuesday and closed on Wednesdays.

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OPINION/EDITORIAL: LETTERS

IT'S NOT DIFFICULT; JUST LEAVE THE EGOS AT THE DOOR

Editor:

I think it's time the "warring" Republicans stop the petty bickering and sit down together and bluntly ask "how can we come together to advance our party." Take a page from the Democrat playbook: "stick together no matter what." Get specific grievances on the table and find the areas where you CAN agree...for example; you've both been guilty. It's not difficult; just leave the egos at the door. It's time Republicans stop this nonsense and stick together in "lock step" for the sake of Montrose and our citizens. It is Common Sense People! If this nonsense continues Montrose will look just like Denver and the Front Range. Colorado will be Lost.

Carol McBride, Montrose



A black and gold-themed poster for a 40th anniversary celebration. The top left corner features the text "JANUARY 1ST - 4TH". The center features a large, gold-colored "40 YEAR CELEBRATION" text. Below it is a gold shield-shaped logo for "THE TRUE GRIT CAFE RIDGWAY COLORADO" with "40 YEARS OF GRIT 1985-2025" at the bottom. The bottom left corner features a circular image of a person playing a guitar with the text "MUSIC BY DAVID NUNN" around it. The bottom right corner features a graphic of a wine glass with the text "Free glass of sparkling wine with meal". The bottom center contains the text "MUSIC | FOOD | PRIZES", "THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING TRUE GRIT CAFE FOR 40 YEARS!", the phone number "(970) 626-5739", the address "123 N LENA ST. RIDGWAY, CO 81432", and social media links for Facebook and Instagram. The background is dark with gold balloons and confetti.



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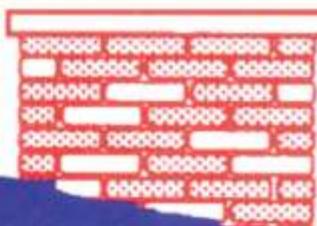
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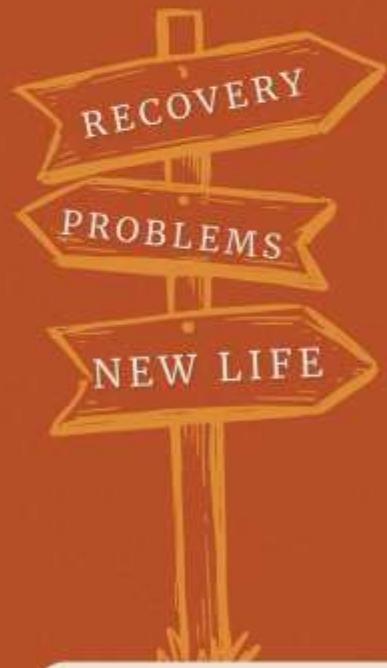
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OPINION/EDITORIAL: LETTERS

THE BUSINESS CASE FOR EV'S

Editor:

First, let me say, it takes carbon to make the wheels go round. Whether it is coal, oil, gasoline, diesel, natural gas. Even if you drive an EV, around 60% of electricity comes from fossil fuels. EVs have gotten a little bit of a bum wrap because they get wrapped up as part of the climate change debate.

But what is overlooked is the fact that they are simply superior technology. An EV is about 85% efficient vs 35% for an ICE vehicle. ICE vehicles have hundreds of moving parts while an EV has less than 10. Due to all the moving parts, ICE vehicles lose most of their energy to friction and heat. As a result, EVs have much lower fuel and maintenance costs.

My current EV gets 3.3 miles per kWh which costs 11 cents per kWh in off-peak hours. That is about \$3.33 per hundred miles. So, while still using carbon, EVs are

simply much more efficient in converting carbon into motion. Then you throw in no oil changes or other maintenance costs, the savings are huge. My first manufacturer recommended maintenance is to check the brake fluid after 2 years.

EVs are facing a lot of headwinds. There is propaganda from the oil companies, the political climate and traditional car dealers. Car dealers do not make their profits selling cars, but rather in the service department, so they prefer to sell ICE vehicles.

There are also concerns about cold weather range. I have found in our climate we have about a 20% decrease in winter range. Some are concerned about battery degradation. With 60,000 miles on my EV, it is showing the battery performance is still at 98%.

There are concerns about purchase price. When EVs first came out, there was often

a 25% premium over the ICE equivalent. However, in today's climate, they are not much more expensive than a comparably equipped ICE vehicle.

Now EVs are not for everyone. If you do not have home charging, electricity is too expensive. Public high-speed chargers charge between 50 and 60 cents per kWh. This is almost as expensive as gas or diesel. Also, if you are towing a travel trailer cross-country, an EV pickup is a hassle. Not that they don't have the torque, they have more than the biggest ICE pickup, but because of decreased range when towing and the increased time spent at chargers.

Virtually all EVs are in the 250+ mile range. For daily commuting, even to Telluride, EVs make sense. But if you want to keep blowing \$100 bills out your exhaust, be my guest.

Austin Ray, Ridgway



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BOCC HOLDS FINAL MEETING OF 2025, 'A TUMULTUOUS YEAR'



Pastor Ben Garate delivered the final Invocation of 2025. Meeting Screenshot.

By Caitlin Switzer

MONTROSE-The Montrose County Commissioners held their final meeting of 2025 on Wednesday, Dec. 17. All Commissioners were present, with BOCC Vice Chair Sean Pond attending virtually.

BOCC Chair Sue Hansen gavelled the meeting to order, and asked Melissa Howie to lead in saying the Pledge of Allegiance.

Delivering the Invocation was Pastor Ben Garate of Calvary Chapel. "Merry Christmas to all of you, thank you for how you serve this community of Montrose...Father we ask that you would bless us and help us share from our hearts...thank you for these people..."

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Constituent Julie Yarnell spoke during the public comment period, "...2025 has been a tumultuous year..." She said that repre-

sentation of voters had been based on political affiliation, and noted "the wearing of baseball hats during public meetings."

AGENDA CHANGES

BOCC Chair Sue Hansen said that General Business and Administrative Item D-1, "Consideration and possible approval of the Chair's signature on a [release of liability for Sinner Sunny Transport Settlement...](#)" had been eliminated.

CONSENT AGENDA

Consent Agenda items were approved, with [Resolution No. 59-2025](#) assigned to

Item 15; [Resolution 60-2025](#) assigned to Item 16; [Resolution 61-2025](#) assigned to Item 17; and [Resolution 62-2025](#) assigned to Item 20.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Commissioners entered Executive Session with the "County Attorney, Interim County Manager, and Planning and Development Director, pursuant to C.R.S. 24-6-402(4)(b) and (e) for legal advice and direction for negotiations pertaining to construction of workforce housing on the West End to support the Four Seasons Resort project."

Following Executive Session, commissioners voted to adjourn.

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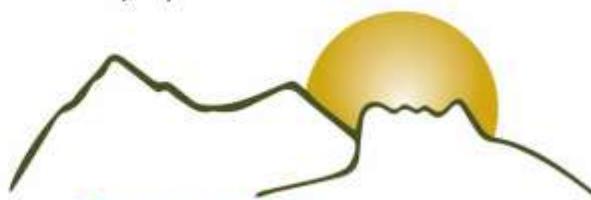


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REGIONAL NEWS BRIEFS

CITY TO CLOSE FOR CHRISTMAS, NEW YEAR'S HOLIDAYS

Special to the Mirror

MONTROSE — City of Montrose offices will be closed on Christmas Day, Thursday, Dec. 25, and New Year's Day, Thursday, Jan. 1. Montrose City Hall, Visitor Center, Municipal Court, Animal Shelter, Montrose Pavilion, Black Canyon Golf Course, and City Shop will be closed. Police officers will be on duty and responding to calls, although Department offices will be closed both days. The adjusted trash collection schedule for Dec. 25 will be as follows:

For residences with Thursday collection, trash pickup will instead occur on Tuesday, Dec. 23, and Wednesday, Dec. 24.

-For routes west of Townsend Avenue, trash pickup will occur on Tuesday, Dec. 23.

-For routes east of Townsend Avenue, trash pickup will occur on Wednesday, Dec. 24.

Recycling collection for customers with Thursday, Dec. 25, pickup will instead occur on Friday, Dec. 26.

The adjusted trash collection schedule for Thursday, Jan. 1, will be as follows:

-For routes west of Townsend Avenue, trash pickup will occur on Tuesday, Dec. 30.

-For routes east of Townsend Avenue, trash pickup will occur on Wednesday, Dec. 31.

Recycling collection for customers with Thursday, January 1, pickup will instead occur on Friday, Jan. 2.

For more information, visit CityOfMontrose.org/Holiday.



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OPINION/EDITORIAL: LETTERS

SCHOOL BOARD THREATENED BEFORE THEY HAVE A CHANCE TO DO ANYTHING

Editor:

The three new School Board Directors attended their first official meeting after being sworn in on December 2. The only thing they had done up to this point was to get elected. They hadn't made public comments or written letters talking about what they plan to accomplish. They had already won the public over by promising there wouldn't be hidden agendas, that students needed to come first, to name a couple. Their crime was they showed up!

Phoebe Benzinger spoke at the community input and threatened the newbies three times by saying "We'll be watching you." Without giving them a chance to have done anything as Board Directors, she threatened them.

Apparently, after the victory of the recall against Scott Mijares, Phoebe and her "partner," Linda Gann (and others), seem to feel empowered to try again and recall the conservative Board Directors after six months. Why? Is it because they hate conservatives? Is it because they take pleasure in harassing people? The reason cannot be because the Directors have done anything wrong...they haven't had the time!

Mrs. Benzinger and Mrs. Gann, we will be watching YOU! You need to give the new Directors a chance to prove their mettle. Stop the harassment and help solve problems instead of make new ones.

Sincerely,
Leah Vandersluis, Montrose

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OPINION/EDITORIAL: LETTERS

LIBERALS WILL USE SAME MOB RULE TACTICS AT SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS THEY USED AT COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING WHEN ELECTION DIDN'T GO THEIR WAY

Editor:

A month ago, I congratulated the new school board members and mentioned that their election is confirmation that area voters have had enough of woke insanity. I also cautioned that area conservatives must be prepared to aggressively support their new board because area liberals will use the same mob rule tactics at school board meetings they used at county commissioners' meeting when election didn't go their way. Like arrogant Democrats nation-wide, they are so convinced of their superiority that they cannot accept defeat and let the people actually chosen by the majority do the jobs they were elected to do. Because they can no longer win at the polls, they rely on a small group of vocal, radical activists to disrupt and hinder the effectiveness of elected officials. I had to chuckle when I saw the first glimpse of what is to come with Linda Gann's 12/15 Mirror letter. The new board members were elected by a pretty solid majority of voters holding views contrary to those of Gann's, but she now seems to think she speaks for "our community" and the board members should somehow give some weight to what she thinks. Likewise for Phoebe Benziger telling the school board that "I am watching you." Of course, the school board welcomes everyone's input and involvement, but let's not think for one moment that those who lost the election will somehow keep dictating what happens with our county schools. The new conservative majority on the school board was elected to stop the woke insanity, and that's what they will attempt to do. That is where the new school board is headed.

An example of the woke nonsense was Gann's absurd comments about our new school board president asking fellow board members and the audience to have a moment of silence to reflect on the importance of their actions and decisions.

According to Gann, "That smacks of crossing the line between church and state." Where do I start. First of all, the phrase "separation of church and state" is nowhere in the Constitution. The term has been based on the 1st Amendment's Establishment and Free Exercise Clauses, which merely state that Congress "will make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." The founding fathers intended the 1st Amendment's Establishment Clause to protect religious freedom in America. They did not intend to establish a wall of separation between church and state. They wrote the 1st Amendment to prohibit the establishment of a national religion, not to prohibit public religious expressions. The federal courts overstepped their judicial powers and basically re-imagined the 1st Amendment into something it was never meant to be, opening the doors for the ACLU and other liberal organizations to file suits dictating rules of religious expression. Ten commandment displays, prayer in the public arena, Christmas displays, etc. somehow became controversial. Second of all, and perhaps more importantly, even if "separation of church and state" was in the Constitution, or even if you accept that the federal courts somehow had a right to institute "separation of church and state," under no stretch of the imagination could asking for a moment of silence to reflect on the challenges ahead be interpreted as an egregious violation of that concept. The only conclusion one can reach is that Gann is just part of that small group of vocal activists that will stoop to any low to stymie the effectiveness of the new school board. With that revelation, nothing else she had to say in her letter, or might have to say in the future, has any relevance to anyone other than herself. It's clear that more than a few of our local Democrats drank from the same Kool-Aid as their national counterparts. It is appar-

ent that liberals follow a consistent pattern. For example, Democrats opened the border, ruined the economy ... and ruined your healthcare ... but now blame Trump and Republicans for trying to clean up their messes. Democrats instituted Obamacare and named it the Affordable Care Act ... made healthcare unaffordable ... and temporarily subsidized it with taxpayer money ... until time expired. Democrats now demand to know why Trump hasn't fixed the problem that they created. Obamacare was a fraud. Democrats attempted to cover up with subsidies that did nothing to address the underlying cost of healthcare but only shifted that cost to taxpayers. Another example: We are taxed ... taxes go to USAID ... leftists create NGO's ... USAID money goes to NGO's... Leftist in NGO's do zero work ... NGO's pay leftists huge salaries ... leftists donate part of those salaries back to Democrats ... now Dems freak out over Trump killing USAID and stopping their slush fund.

Liberals are more concerned about being mean to narcoterrorists than they are about what the terrorists are doing to Americans. Democrats have created an America where asking for a moment of silence in a school board meeting to reflect on the challenges ahead is "highly inappropriate," but noticing Islamic violence and daring to speak out about it is condemned as "Islamophobia." Noticing is a bigger offense than murdering defenseless Jews in Australia, plowing cars into Christmas revelers, burning holocaust survivors in Colorado, ambushing 20-year-old national guard members walking the streets, or the murder of 8,000 Christians so far this year in Nigeria. Sorry, but it is not Islamophobia to identify a trend and notice that mainstream Muslims have declared a brutal war on the rest of the world. September 11th in America and October 7th in Israel were not anomalies. *Ed Henrie, Montrose*



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REGIONAL NEWS BRIEFS

DAMON TODD APPOINTED OURAY COUNTY CLERK AND RECORDER

Special to the Mirror

OURAY COUNTY— Ouray County is pleased to announce the appointment of Damon Todd as the new Clerk and Recorder following a formal interview process with commissioners on Wednesday, December 17, 2025. He will serve the remainder of the term previously held by Cristy Lynn, who resigned in October for personal reasons. This term will conclude in January 2027.

Todd brings a wealth of experience in customer service, management, budgeting, and technology. During his three years at the Clerk and Recorder's Office, he has developed extensive knowledge in motor vehicle transactions, document recording, and the electoral process. "I am excited to assume this role and to continue providing excellent customer service to our citizens and visitors. This position is critical to county government, and I am grateful for the opportunity to serve," remarked Todd.

Cristy Lynn expressed confidence in Todd's capabilities, stating, "Damon is truly committed to working harder than anyone I've ever known. He is ready to dive in fully and is undoubtedly the best candidate to fill my vacancy until the end of the term in 2027, as well as to run for office at that time."

The Clerk & Recorder is an elected official and a vital public representative for the County. This role is directly accountable to the electors of Ouray County and entails significant supervisory responsibilities, necessitating frequent interactions with the general public both inside and outside the County Courthouse.

The County Clerk performs various duties, which are diverse in nature. Responsibilities include overseeing a Chief Deputy Clerk and four deputy clerks and recorders, all of whom are cross-trained in three primary areas: Recording, Motor Vehicle, and Elections. Furthermore, the Clerk is responsible for managing an annual budget and advocating for state-level policies that benefit both the Clerk's office and Ouray County.

This management position is hands-on, requiring the Clerk to oversee the office and its deputies at the Ouray County Courthouse. The Clerk is expected to be present during public hours, which are Monday through Thursday, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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We have shared our bounty with soup kitchens, food pantries, schools, churches, veterans, children, grandma's & grandpa's, the homeless and disabled, single moms, your neighbors and mine.

We know you are making your lists and checking them twice. We hope you know we have not been *naughty but we have been very nice.*

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REGIONAL NEWS BRIEFS

GOFUNDME ACCOUNT SET UP FOR KIJA KEITHLEY



Special to the Mirror
MONTROSE-Friends of Kija Keithley have set up a [GoFundMe account for her](#). Kija is a young woman from Montrose and a hard-working single mother. Here is the text, and the link is above: "As many of you know, Kija was born with a life-threatening disease that affects her everyday life. In 7th grade, she was also diagnosed with diabetes. For the past four months, she has been struggling with an unknown condition. Kija had been hospitalized due to severe complications with her organs and admitted to Saint Joseph Hospital. As of now, it's likely she will be here until the end of the year."



Kija. Mirror file photo.

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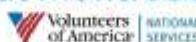
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OPINION/EDITORIAL: LETTERS

THE QUEEN BEE'S REIGN: HYPOCRISY AND CONTROL IN MONTROSE COUNTY

Editor:

Montrose County is undergoing a major **purge** of experienced staff, largely under the influence of **Commissioner Sue Hansen**. Residents increasingly see patterns that mirror the accusations once aimed at former Commissioner Scott Mijares during his recall. This time, the moves appear personal and vengeful.

The Hypocrisy of the Current Purge

Mijares, recalled for allegedly fostering a **toxic workplace, forcing resignations, and showing fiscal irresponsibility**. They called him erratic and quick to remove officials over policy differences. **Mijares stressed transparency and fiscal restraint, questioning dubious spending** in a revenue-limited county. Hansen, local media allies, and out-of-state dark money tied to George Soros funded organizations drove the recall, leading voters to replace him with Kirstin Copeland.

Now, **Hansen's board presides over comparable turnover**. Reports highlight more than **20 vacant positions** amid leadership upheaval. While Mijares acted on principle, Hansen seems intent on settling scores and ousting those not fully loyal to herself. A local publication once condemned Mijares for acting like the **county CEO**. Today, Saint Sue Hansen centralizes power similarly, yet receives mostly praise from the same source. **The hypocrisy is glaring.**

A Snarky Attitude Overlooked

Hansen displays a snarky, dismissive style, interrupting colleagues and downplaying concerns. Public meetings feature sharp clashes where she warns of risks yet backs actions prompting resignations. This conduct has escaped serious scrutiny, due to her alliances. Her strong work ethic, which is notable, as she is a hard-working individual, no doubt, **links closely to a drive for control**. True leadership empowers others; **Hansen centralizes focus on herself**. The "Queen Bee" label fits, as she ensures no one else shines. The true narcissist is on full display. In rural government, this breeds resentment and ham-

pers collaboration.

Removing Competent Staff

Interim County Manager **David White**, a former commissioner, **steered the \$126 million 2026 budget to approval**. Hansen praised him publicly in early December. Days later, the board terminated his contract, weeks after she regained "the Chair."

White's deep institutional knowledge stabilized staff. Sources say **he was advised against applying for the permanent County Manager position**, likely because his expertise threatened Hansen's dominance.

Former Emergency Manager Scott Hawkins, an award-winning professional, secured wildfire preparedness grants. He resigned December 1 after reported pressure from Hansen over personal dislike. Other grant winners, including one securing \$150,000, shown the door. Prioritizing loyalty over skill in a rural county weakens governance and public safety. Concerns mount over lost expertise when stability is vital for finances and emergencies. **Key roles remain vacant.**

A Clear Trend

Those familiar with Hansen's history find this unsurprising. She consistently targets challengers or personal dislikes, even beyond her official role as Commissioner which has authority along with the other Commissioners of the BOCC over hiring the manager, attorney, and public health director. She exerts heavy informal pressure elsewhere. **The hypocrisy is stunning and troubling.** Vindictiveness thrives in Montrose under Hansen.

Cozy Ties and Self-Promotion

Hansen enjoys close ties with local media, sparking suspicions. She has won "Best Elected Official" in reader polls for years, heavily promoted despite the publication's declining readership. Many see these as **managed publicity, not true acclaim**. Positive coverage during staff changes bolsters her image. **Online discussions question the awards**, viewing them as ways to silence critics and reward

allies. This reflects classic narcissistic "Queen Bee" traits.

Taxpayers deserve skilled staff delivering results in budgets, safety, and grants. Hansen's style, while on the surface emits a sense of control, **risks morale and efficiency, with vacancies signaling dysfunction**. Criticisms once unfairly aimed at Mijares now play out under more ego-driven leadership.

Rumors has it that Commissioner Sue Hansen has already identified a preferred successor for her District 2 seat, which becomes open in November 2026 due to term limits. That individual will almost certainly receive the same enthusiastic backing from her network of allies that has bolstered her position over the past seven years.

With her political prospects no longer tied to Montrose County's strong Republican majority, Hansen has shifted leftward in recent years. She has expressed a desire for the county to become **"a lighter shade of red"** and changed her registration to unaffiliated in early 2025. This move surprised and disappointed many longtime supporters who had repeatedly elected her unopposed as a Republican. Voters in Montrose County will face an important decision next November. **Residents should reject any superficial appearances and closely monitor developments in the coming months.** We intend to do the same.

Beneath the polished exterior operates a politician deeply focused on personal ambition and her own place in local political history. We remain dedicated to exposing the reality and preventing the illusion from enduring.

Michael J Badagliacco, "MJB"

Michael is a father of five, grandfather of three, United States Air Force veteran, international recording artist, and Editor-in-Chief of the Colorado DOGE Report. He is passionate about the United States of America and the founders' genius in crafting the Constitution.

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REGIONAL NEWS BRIEFS

DELTA HEALTH CELEBRATES REMARKABLE NURSES: HONORING DAISY AWARD NOMINEES

Special to the Mirror

DELTA—Jessica Carlson, Registered Nurse (RN), for the Delta Health Emergency Department, was recently honored with **The DAISY Award® For Extraordinary Nurses**. The award is part of the DAISY Foundation's program to recognize the super-human efforts nurses perform every day.

Jessica was nominated by a fellow staff member, who shared that she helped a patient who was in Hospice, find a place that could assist him in rehoming his pets. The nurse who nominated her said, "The relief and gratitude this patient expressed was unforgettable. That is who Jess is. She is the nurse who is willing to bring clean clothes and shoes from home for patients in need. She is the colleague who comforts another nurse's dying patient so they may experience dignity in their final moments. Her compassion has no limits." The fellow nurse also expressed, "The environment in the Emergency Department makes it easy to become hardened and detached, but Jess' kindness and humanity shines through. She not only impacts patients' lives in extraordinary ways, but she also inspires her co-workers, including myself to be better nurses and better people. Jess truly embodies the spirit of the Daisy Award."

"Jessica demonstrates genuine compassion, even in challenging situations," said Amber Medina, BSN, Delta Health Emergency Department Director. "She believes everyone deserves respect and consistently gives her best to every person she encounters."

Ten other Delta Health nurses were also nominated for this quarter's DAISY Award: Elaine Walters, RN, David Brodhead, RN, Susan Anderson, RN, Colleen Zweigle, RN, Rebecca Enrique, RN, Jodi Slagter, RN, Anna Wiltse, RN, Yvonne Solaas, RN, Angela Dupuis, RN, Erik Borling, RN.

The not-for-profit DAISY Foundation is based in Glen Ellen, CA, and was established by family members in memory of J. Patrick Barnes. Patrick died at the age of 33 in late 1999 from complications of Idiopathic Thrombocytopenic Purpura (ITP), a little-known but not uncommon autoimmune disease. The care Patrick and his family received from nurses while he was ill inspired this unique means of thanking nurses for making a profound difference in the lives of their patients and patient families.

Said Bonnie Barnes, FAAN, CEO and Co-Founder of The DAISY Foundation, "When Patrick was critically ill, our family experienced first-hand the remarkable skill and care nurses provide patients every day and night. Yet these unsung heroes are seldom recognized for the superhuman work they do. The kind of work the nurses at *Delta Health* are called on to do every day epitomizes the purpose of The DAISY Award."

Honorees receive a DAISY Award pin and daisy stems. The Daisy Award winner also receives a beautiful and meaningful sculpture called A Healer's Touch, hand-carved by artists of the Shona Tribe in Zimbabwe. The Healers' Touch sculpture represents the bond between nurses and their patients.

To nominate a nurse for a DAISY Award, go online to deltahealthco.org/bee-daisy-awards/ and submit a digital nomination form. Printed nomination forms can also be found throughout the hospital and at all Delta Health clinics.

In addition to the DAISY Award for Extraordinary Nurses, the Foundation expresses gratitude to the nursing profession internationally in over 4,600 healthcare facilities and schools of nursing with recognition of direct care Nurses, Nurse-led Teams, Nurse Leaders, Nurses Advancing Health Equity, Nursing Faculty, Nursing Students, Lifetime Achievement in Nursing and through the J. Patrick Barnes Grants for Nursing Research and Evidence-Based Practice Projects, Medical Mission Grants their new Health Equity Grant program. More information is available at <http://DAISYfoundation.org>.



Jessica Carlson, Registered Nurse (RN), for the Delta Health Emergency Department, who was recently honored with The DAISY Award® For Extraordinary Nurses. Courtesy photo.

REGIONAL NEWS BRIEFS

DELTA COUNTY RECEIVES GRANT FUNDING FOR PROBATION CONSOLIDATION AND MODERNIZATION PROJECT

Special to the Mirror

DELTA—Delta County has substantial grant funding for its Probation Consolidation and Modernization Project, allowing the County to move forward with long-needed improvements to probation facilities that support public safety and access to justice.

The project includes \$335,000 in grant funding from the Colorado Judicial Department's Underfunded Courthouse Facility Cash Fund, combined with \$80,000 in local funds committed by Delta County. Together, these funds will be used to renovate a county-owned building at 215 W. 5th Street, known as the "Blue Roof Building," and create a centralized probation facility within the justice complex.

For years, probation staff and services in Delta County have been spread across multiple small, aging locations. This has created challenges for staff safety, client confidentiality, accessibility, and coordination with the courts.

"This project addresses real, day-to-day issues that have been worked around for a long time," said County Commissioner Craig Fuller. "This renovated building will give probation staff a safer, more functional workspace and give community members a clearer, more accessible place to receive services. This is a practical investment that improves how the justice system works for everyone."

DELTA POLICE DEPARTMENT EXECUTES SEARCH WARRANTS ON SUSPECTED ILLEGAL GAMBLING ESTABLISHMENTS

Special to the Mirror

DELTA— at approximately 11am on Friday, December 19, 2025, the Delta Police Department executed search warrants at two separate suspected illegal gambling establishments within the city limits of Delta. The search warrants were served at 220 Main Street for the establishment known as the "Bee Hive" and 721 Hwy 50 #C for the establishment known as "Time to go Fishin."

An arrest has been made and officers continue to collect evidence at this time. The Delta Police Department would like to thank our partners with the 7th Judicial District Attorney's Office, the Delta County Sheriff's Office, the Olathe Police Department, the Montrose Police Department and the Colorado Bureau of Investigation for their assistance with the case.

Updated information will be provided as it becomes available for release. No further information is available at this time.

The Delta Police Department takes situations like this very serious and recognize the dangers to our community. All criminal charges are merely an accusation, and the defendant is presumed innocent until or unless proven guilty.

The Delta Police Department Strives to serve the community through integrity and honor, while in constant pursuit of excellence.

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OPINION/EDITORIAL: LETTERS

SUPPORTING HOPE SCHEPPELMAN FOR U.S. CONGRESS

Editor:

I was encouraged to learn that Hope Scheppelman, a candidate for U.S. Congress in Colorado's 3rd District, has signed the pledge to introduce or co-sponsor the U.S. Term Limits Constitutional Amendment. At a time when trust in Washington is at historic lows, that commitment matters.

Sadly, Congressman Jeff Hurd still refuses to sign the same term limits pledge, one that many members of Congress and the U.S. Senate have already endorsed. Our founders never intended Washington to be a lifelong career. They envisioned citizen-leaders who would serve, then return home, not political insiders who build power, wealth, and influence decade after decade.

Hope Scheppelman understands something else that Washington often ignores: term limits alone are not enough. That's why she has pledged to introduce the SHARE Act (Securities & Holdings Allocated for Representative Earnings) to finally end insider trading by members of Congress.

Under her proposal, lawmakers and their families would be subject to the same trading rules as everyday Americans. All congressional investments would be pooled into a federally managed, fully transparent account, traded identically. And if those portfolios succeed, 50% of the net gains would be returned directly to the American people. No special trades. No secret advantages. If lawmakers profit, the people should too. Hope Scheppelman isn't running to enrich herself. She's running to fix a system that has forgotten who it works for.

Sharon Scuttie, Colorado City

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One of the original homes in Montrose, has been lovingly cared for, carefully updated and maintained. The main floor business was a styling salon for many years that evolved into a cottage retail store with room for classes and workshops. The original use of the home is noticeable in the front parlor, living, dining, bedroom, bath and kitchen.

REGIONAL NEWS BRIEFS

HOLIDAY MAGIC IN ACTION: COBBLE CREEK ANGEL TREE

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Pictured are the Cobble Creek "angels," Commissioners Sue Hansen and Kirstin Copeland, and our Health & Human Services staff picking up the gifts that will soon be delivered to families. Thank you for helping turn compassion into action. Montrose County photo.

Special to the Mirror

MONTROSE COUNTY-The Cobble Creek Angel Tree group truly showed up for our community this season, providing gifts for 60 children served through our Human Services program. The group also provided cheer to many other local families, serving 197 families in total. Each family also received a \$100 grocery card, helping make the holidays a little brighter and warmer.

We are incredibly grateful for the generosity and heart behind the Cobble Creek Angel Tree initiative. Your kindness is making a real difference for families all across our area.



OPINION/EDITORIAL: LETTERS

NEW SCHOOL BOARD DESERVES TIME TO DELIVER

Editor:

Linda Gann's recent opinion piece attempted to raise concerns about the direction of the Montrose County RE-1J School District under its newly elected board and President Neisha Balleck. While community vigilance is always welcome, **Gann's criticisms appear extremely premature**, coming just weeks after voters elected a conservative majority committed to parents' rights, academic excellence, and refocusing on core education.

Rather than challenging the board before it has had a fair opportunity to implement changes, we should allow time for these leaders to address longstanding issues, such as declining student achievement and perceived ideological influences in classrooms.

That said, Gann and others sharing similar views, like her partner in "ideological wokeness", **Phoebe Benziger** who took a shot across the bow in an apparent attempt to intimidate the new board at the December 9 school board meeting, stating "**I am watching you**," seem more focused on opposing the board's direction than on any constructive suggestions. Like her ideological ally, Gann appears committed to maintaining approaches that prioritize **left-wing ideologies** over a return to proven traditional and sound fundamentals-based education.

A Moment of Silence for Reflection
Gann questions School Board President
Balleck's request for a moment of silence at the start of meetings, suggesting it "smacks of crossing the line between church and state". In fact, a **neutral moment of silence for contemplation** is a longstanding, secular practice upheld in court rulings when it does not promote specific religious activity. It encourages thoughtful decision-making in service of students and reflects a serious approach to governance. President Balleck's request was entirely benign and made no reference to religion. A moment of silence is hardly controversial. Even Congress often begins sessions with similar pauses or invocations.

As a constitutional note, the phrase, "separation of church and state", originates from private correspondence: an 1802 letter from President Thomas Jefferson to the Danbury Baptist Association. While the left loves to use the phrase, **no mention of the phrase appears in any founding documents, including the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, or the Federalist Papers** (the primary commentary on the Constitution).

The First Amendment however states specifically; "...**Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof**...." The fact that Gann would attempt to demean Ms. Balleck for asking for a benign moment of silence smacks of religious bigotry and an attempted attack upon Ms. Balleck's character.

Vista Charter School and Local Control
 Regarding Vista Charter School's potential oversight shift to the Colorado Charter School Institute (CSI), Gann frames this as a loss of local control. Many conservatives, however, see state-level authorization as expanding parental options and reducing bureaucratic obstacles to innovation. Charter schools like Vista, focused on alternative pathways, offer choices emphasizing high standards. The board vote to postpone such discussions which demonstrates thoughtful deliberation and openness to further community input.

Supporting Montrose Classical Academy
 Gann also critiques the board's consideration of **Montrose Classical Academy (MCA)**, arguing it must serve every demographic in exactly the same way. **Classical education, emphasizing core knowledge, character development, and rigorous academics**, benefits all students, including those with disabilities or English language needs, through appropriate accommodations and structured support.

Many families seek this model to address low proficiency rates and prioritize excellence over divisive curricula. **Approving MCA aligns with voter interest in greater school choice and reversing policies per-**

ceived as prioritizing ideology over achievement.

Board Training and Resources

Gann questions the use of a consultant from ChalkForge, citing costs and overlap with training from the Colorado Association of School Boards (CASB). School boards have discretion to seek multiple resources for effective governance. **Many in Montrose view CASB's approaches as misaligned with local values**, favoring alternatives that emphasize student outcomes and fiscal responsibility. Voters signaled a desire for change after years of challenges, including declining scores.

Looking Ahead

Gann references other districts as cautionary tales, but **reforms focused on transparency and parental involvement aim to refocus RE-1J schools on fundamentals**, fundamentals that appear to have been lost in the sea of woke ideology that is contrary to Montrose's traditional values. Voters elected this board to improve achievement and prioritize core education.

Parents should remain engaged, which includes supporting efforts to **empower families, raise standards, and ensure safe learning environments that will prepare our youth for the future**. Change requires time after prolonged challenges. This board deserves the opportunity to deliver on the mandate Montrose County families provided.

I, like many others in Montrose, look forward to seeing **progress toward renewed emphasis on classical fundamentals and proven educational approaches** that serve our youth effectively. Let's allow the board time to implement its vision and deliver results.

Michael J Badagliacco, "MJB"

Michael is a father of five, grandfather of three, United States Air Force veteran, international recording artist, and Editor-in-Chief of the Colorado DOGE Report. He is passionate about the United States of America and the founders' genius in crafting the Constitution.

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DMEA HOLDS RATE HEARING AFTER REGULAR MEETING DEC. 16

From pg 1

Minutes were approved.

Finance, Audit & Rates – Damon Lockhart, Chair.

Lockhart said, “We have a meeting scheduled for February 12th.”

Engineering, Construction & Energy Services – Enno Heuscher, Chair.

Heuscher said, “We have a meeting on March 27th”

Member Relations – Kevin Williams, Chair.

Williams said, “We have not met.”

Executive – Stacia Cannon, Chair.

Cannon said, “We also have not met.”

Informational Item - CEO Report Jack Johnston.

Johnston began with a report on a two-day geopolitical event that included cyber security.

Reporting on DMEA he said, “We are trending well on liability. Tree trimming showing improvement. System design is one - two weeks out. It was a slow month on net metering. We have a new digger truck.” In the area of cyber security some employees fell victim to in-house phishing. Without naming names, Johnston said, “They fell into the trap of hunting topics. We’re at 96.3 percent.”

Community activities included Youth Leadership Camps, Sparks Sessions scheduled for 2026, and the Delta and Montrose Parade of Lights. He said, “We took third in the Delta competition.”

Johnston continued, “On the legal side there is always a lot going on. HR has open enrollment and Performance Reviews. Employees have participated in the Angel Tree with donations coming out of their pockets. For the Family Fund staff raised \$10,576. We will round up to \$11,000 and match it to \$22,000. This shows the generosity of employees and staff.”

Reporting on Elevate Johnston said, “The weather is shifting where our focus is. November financials will be presented in January. November was a warmer month; our revenue follows the weather. We’re 1.7 percent down. We’re comfortably above our debt services requirements.”

Informational Item: Director Reports

Western United Electrical Supply Corpo-



Chief Legal Officer Sarah Abbott (standing) made opening statements at the Delta Montrose Electric Association (DMEA) Rate Hearing held on December 16, 2025. Abbott said, “This is not a Q & A. We will not engage in back and forth. [If questions are raised] staff will follow-up later.” Twelve co-op members attended the three-hour meeting in person. Photo by Gail Marvel.

ration (WUES) Report – Jack Johnston.

Johnston said, “No meeting. We meet five times a year. They are \$21M in sales lower than last year. YTD sales are up \$131M. There is \$5M in retired capital credits.”

When asked what items were affected by tariffs, Johnston said, “They try to buy domestic as much as possible, but I’m not sure. I’ll ask.”

Colorado Rural Electric Association (CREA) Report – Damon Lockhart.

Lockhart said, “We had a combined meeting of CEO’s and directors of CREA and discussed different items. The legislative session is coming up, and we met with lobbyists of Capstone. We had three hours’ worth of conversation (i.e. wildfire, PUC, RTO opt-out). Ken Singer (CEO) retired after 16 years. We sold the property at 58th and Washington. Really close to having things paid off on the new building with the sale of the property. We will be getting \$50,000 back [refund].”

Much to his chagrin, Johnston pulled out the \$50,000 check he’d had in his back-

pack for eight or nine days. Laughter rippled through the audience as Johnston turned the check over to Chief Financial Officer Bob Farmer. Johnston said, “Thanks for the reminder, Damon...”

Lockhart continued, “They passed the budget. Nothing outstanding there to speak of. Slight increases that were within reason. Their annual meeting is coming up in February.”

Conferences, Webinars & Meetings

Kevin Williams reported on the Montrose Regional Economic Outlook Conference. He said, “It’s not a particularly rosy economic forecast. Unemployment has ticked up, wages falling, workers trying to leave jobs. AI could replace all of us — that was a cheery thought. In Colorado we are becoming an old state, an expensive state to live in, and everyone is moving to Texas. Montrose county now has a population of 45,000 and they are predicting 48,000 in 10 years. The death rate is more than the birth rate.” Williams also participated in a Rocky Mountain Institute webinar.

DMEA HOLDS RATE HEARING, REGULAR MEETING From previous pg

Emily Sanchez is currently attending the NRECA Winter School in Nashville.

2026 Board Election Services: Chief Administrative Officer Kent Blackwell. Blackwell presented the results of the RFP. The staff recommendation was to continue to use Survey & Ballot Systems (SBS) for the annual election. Approved unanimously.

Member comments:

Comments unrelated to the rate hearing were taken. Delta County Commissioner Wendell Koontz said, "I want to thank the board. Last week we connected to Elevate and my wife likes Yellowstone. Friday Night Lights in Hotchkiss means a lot to our little community. The North Fork Miner Trail; it has taken 40 years. Finally, we have a way to get kids off HYW 92. Thank you. The lights and security out there make our kids safe. In 2025 the Garnet Mesa [solar] is a hell of a project. I appreciate it, it's valuable to our community."

Following his appreciation, Koontz switched gears, "There is a Renewable Energy Study that is poorly done. It takes away local control; it called local control an obstacle. If you have something I can do to help DMEA, we're here to work together. There is a Gunnison Basin Roundtable on March 16 at 6 p.m. at the Montrose Pavilion. They will give a State of the River update. There is an upcoming JOLT conference." Koontz updated the board on chargers in Delta County.

Joseph Gill (virtual) had no comments.

Following the break for dinner, the board reconvened at 6pm for the Rate hearing. Ryan Sedgeley, who was absent from the regular meeting, was in attendance for the Rate Hearing.

Rate Hearing:

Action Item: Resolution 2025-17 re: Rate Tariff Changes

DMEA received feedback on the proposed rate increase (written/phone) from 69 members. Although 12 members attended the hearing in person, not all of them addressed the board; two members attended on zoom.

While residential is the largest DMEA rate class (30,889), it is not the largest revenue generating class. Beginning in January, residential customers can expect

their monthly statement to increase by \$7.50 a month (plus taxes). When all rate classes are combined, the proposed increase of 7.49 percent is projected to increase DMEA revenue by \$435,000 a month.

Chief Legal Officer Sarah Abbott made opening statements. She said, "This is not a Q & A. We will not engage in back and forth. [If questions are raised] staff will follow up at a later time. We have written comments."

However, as the hearing proceeded with public comment, the board did respond to audience questions pertaining to the rate increase. General organizational questions were left for staff follow-up.

Chief Financial Officer Bob Farmer gave a PowerPoint presentation. He said, "The last rate adjustment was September 1, 2019. We design rates that recover our cost. Our cost is a driver and inflation related. This is an access fee rather than rate for electricity. It's a modest increase compared to other utilities. Time-of-use will be discontinued. Our current power supplier for wholesale energy does not have those subsidies. [If approved] the rate increase will take effect January 1st and the impact will be on the February bill." Farmer's presentation was detailed and offered justification for the rate increase. He used the cost of the new digger truck as an example of increasing costs. He said, "The new digger truck was \$449,895. In 2019 it cost \$309,845. That's an increase of 45 percent."

Public Comment:

Note: In some cases, the last name of speakers was not captured. Spontaneous audience questions/comments could not be attributed to a specific person.

David White said, "I don't blame you. Six years is a long time to go without an increase. I urge you not to wait six years the next time. The impact for residential rates has a domino effect. You [residents] will pay sales tax, public safety tax, franchise tax, Rec District tax. It's inflationary impact. They [the city] will collect sales tax courtesy of you guys. You're probably going to approve it. I don't blame you, but we're getting hit left and right as consumers."

Cedaredge resident Jennifer said, "I have a lot of questions. The rate increase is more than fair. How are you offsetting the rest of the cost? What does that do to the reliability of our electricity? [I'm] curious what plans are and the reliability of our solar power continuing."

Unidentified man said, "Thank you for your due diligence."

Scott said, "The time-of-use issue. Standard rate is lower than off-peak rate. I apologize for the letter I wrote to you. My math is correct, but off [lack of information]. I'm heating 800 square feet with time-of-use. The system was designed for time-of-use. There should be some type of grandfathered [exemptions]. My original calculation was 150 percent increase, when I recalculated my increase would be 43 percent. My system is worthless. I appreciate DMEA keeping costs down for the last six years. I'm not unreasonable, I just have to say something."

Former DMEA board member Mark Eckhart said, "I'm a small manufacturer in the Cedaredge area. [Information put out] basically gave me what the price increase was going to be and nothing else. There was no clarity in what you sent out. I appreciate six years with no rate increase. I'm not a big fan of access fees. No matter what you do, it's coming out of your pocket. You are charging small commercial more than anyone. Small AG runs five or six months [a year]. When DMEA raises rates, you have to pay. When I raise my rates, I lose customers. Co-op's are in a little bit of a bubble about what's going on in the world. What drew me in was clarity — it wasn't there. It took too long to post the information. The presentation [by CFO Farmer] was pretty good information. Clarity is needed from the board and the staff."

Dual Delta/Montrose resident Roger said, "Rates on consumption, we can adapt. This is a public hearing. You guys are going through the motions of how you are going to vote. Let's go back and look at rate for usage. This could be done the same way. When was the last time members were paid when there was a profit? How much does Uncompahgre Valley Water Users contribute to our grid? If we are

DMEA HOLDS RATE HEARING, REGULAR MEETING From previous pg

not-for-profit, how can we donate to other organizations without member approval [scholarships, parades]? When you vote, just remember, we came."

Delta resident Roberta said, "If I'm trying to save money, I can't cut back on that basic rate." The audience responded with laughter when she said, "My husband said, 'Don't get thrown in jail!' I read those things over and over. I didn't know I was getting subsidized in 2020. All things continue to go up. I know you want to have parades. I can't drive very good at night. I'm a member here, but my name is not on the membership list. Change the price for kilowatts, not the basic rate. I can turn off the refrigerator. Think about when you vote. I appreciate you guys."

Audience question, "How will customers be notified [if you approve the increase]?"

Audience member quipped, "By your bill."

Audience question, "When did you first start working on this?"

DMEA Marketing & Communications Director Katie Yergensen noted different forms of public communication:

-Oct. 30 - News release "After Six Years of No Increases: DMEA Rate Hearing Scheduled".

-Nov. 3 - An all-member email.

Nov. 10 - Rate hearing notice was published on the website and posted in lobbies.

Holding his phone in the air an audience member said, "My flip phone doesn't get that information."

Closed Rate Hearing: Board discussion. Responding to the questions of six years with no rate increase, CEO Johnston said, "We had three changes in leadership, COVID, and a cyber-attack. Now looked like the right time [stability]." Johnston has served as CEO since Dec. 13, 2022.

Steve Metheny said, "Since we haven't had a rate increase in a long time, we may have to revisit the budget and postpone bringing down costs. What would it look like if we asked staff about revenue requirements? Not safety type things but

postpone or defer things that might make sense. Are there things we need to do in the budget? Phase in base changes. A transitional model, since it has been so long since we've had a rate increase. We need the revenue, the basis of how we do this."

Enno Heuscher said, "I agree with Steve. I think it's hard hit. I prefer a soft hit. Balance it a little more."

Kevin Williams said, "I struggle with the right thing to do. I have a responsibility to support the revenue we need. On the other hand, I have a responsibility to members who struggle. Take a close look at what we offer on low and fixed income [members]."

Williams proposed an amendment to the resolution. After lengthy discussion, the amendment failed in a five-four vote.

On Zoom Emily Sanchez noted that customers cannot save on the access fee, but they can still find savings in their use of electricity.

Ryan Sedgeley offered two separate amendments to the resolution; both failed for lack of a second on the motion.

Prior to the vote on the resolution Metheny said, "I still think we should reduce costs. Costs we can delay that would take some pressure off this."

Just shy of a three-hour rate hearing, all the board members contributed to discussion and referenced membership questions. Resolution 2025-17 was adopted in a vote of seven to two. Metheny and Williams were the two nay votes, however, their reasoning for their nay votes differed.

Following the vote Lockhart said, "I want people to know that Unclaimed Capitol Credits are what we use for community activities [parades, organization support, scholarships]. That doesn't come out of the budget. Unclaimed Capital Credits come from people who have moved away [in some cases passed away] and we cannot find them. We are required to use Unclaimed Capital Credits for the membership."

Executive Session

Privileged CEO Report

Confidential Corporate, Litigation and Regulatory Matters

-Proposed Operation Round-Up Bylaws Updates

-Capital Credit Retirements

Board Policies Proposed Updates

-105: Director Districts and Regions & Election of Directors

Confidential Board Governance Matters

Reconvened Regular Meeting:

Approved Resolution 2025-15 re: Operation Round-Up Bylaws

Approved Resolution 2025-16 re: Capital Credit Retirement

Approved Board Policies a. 105: Director Districts and Regions & Election of Directors

Adjourned

Background- During meetings the board hears verbal summary reports of their monthly meetings and activities. Co-op membership has access to some of the written staff reports submitted for board approval, i.e., minutes of the previous meeting, CEO report, and action items (resolutions). Following the meeting members can access packet information through SmartHub, the online service which allows members to manage their DMEA accounts.

Dist. 1 – Ryan Sedgeley, 970-220-6086
ryan.sedgeley@dmea.com

Dist. 2 – Steve Metheny, 970-209-6172,
steve.metheny@dmea.com

Dist. 3 – Jacob Gray, 970-778-9512, ja-cob.gray@dmea.com

Dist. 4 – Emily Sanchez, 970-209-4582,
emily.sanchez@dmea.com

Dist. 5 – Kevin Williams, 406-839-1603,
kevin.williams@dmea.com

Dist. 6 - Damon Lockhart, 970-314-1071,
damon.lockhart@dmea.com

Dist. 7 – Enno Heuscher, 970-270-6523,
enno.heuscher@dmea.com

Dist. 8 - (North Region) Stacia Cannon,
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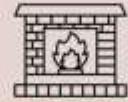
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YOUR BRAIN ON NATURE – HYGGE AGAIN, WITH FLURLUFTSLIV



By Dr. Lauren Hall Ruddell, PhD.

Greetings Mirrories!

OLATHE-Once again, winter has rolled around like it does every year. Although as I write this, the temperatures are near record-breaking highs. The official high for this date was 58F, while today will reach a modest yet still pleasantly toasty 55F. So it seems counterintuitive to write my annual column article on winter activities that promote mental health in this dark and often cabin-feverish season.

I will start with Hygge, which I have written about before. It usually takes place indoors, but often in the embrace of 'cozy' natural elements. Wood, candles, fireplaces, plants, wool socks, knit sweaters, and deep furry blankets are all elements that advocates extol. Specific guidance on creating this cozy, slow living space for yourself can be found in [The Little Book of Hygge by Meik Wiking](#).

In this work, the author explains the concept that promotes contentment and a feeling of being sheltered from the harshness of life. At its core, *Hygge* taps into emotional regulation—the ability to manage one's emotional state. In my case, it's avoiding seasonal affective disorder.

Research by Gross (2002) shows that people who create calming, familiar environments are better able to regulate stress. A warm-lit room, soft textures, and shared meals or long phone calls with loved ones act as subtle yet powerful buffers against depression. It's a Scandinavian cultural norm, and believe me, it works.

Denmark consistently ranks among the world's happiest nations, and many attrib-



Photo courtesy of Taylor Brandon.

ute this to the widespread adoption of *Hygge* values. *Hygge* winter lifestyle practices nurture happiness at this challenging season by slowing life down and making space for warmth and connection. It's not all about interior design, although that helps a whole lot, I have found. It's about a shift from frantic action to much needed pausing for rest and reflection. Another major component of the Scandinavian way of coping with winter is *friluftsliv*, a Norwegian term that translates to "free air life." It embodies a lifestyle deeply rooted in the appreciation and love for the outdoors, especially in Nordic countries, where it is seen as an essential aspect of daily life at all seasons, and not just winter. Engaging in *friluftsliv* involves immersing oneself in nature regardless of the weather, promoting physical activity, social interaction, and above all, mental well-being. The practice of *friluftsliv* is well-regarded for its mental health benefits, offering improvements in mood, stress reduction, and overall mental resilience. *Friluftsliv* emphasizes regular contact with nature, allowing individuals to experience the calming and mood-enhancing effects of the natural environment. The sights, sounds, and smells of a

forest or a mountain trail contribute to sensory stimulation that promotes relaxation and reduces negative mental states. The serene and tranquil environments associated with *friluftsliv* appropriate landscapes provide an ideal setting for stress reduction. Whether listening to the gentle rustle of leaves or the flowing of a stream, these natural sounds create an atmosphere conducive to relaxation. The calming effect of nature helps lower cortisol levels, the body's primary stress hormone, thus reducing overall anxiety and stress. The Swedes like to say that there is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothes, so wind, snow, and rain should be no obstacle to getting at least a little mindful enjoyment of nature outdoors. Proponents like to emphasize that *friluftsliv* as a family or with friends strengthens relationships by creating shared experiences and memories. This practice fosters communication, patience, and understanding among participants, enhancing relationship satisfaction and family dynamics. They also stress the importance of engaging in this activity in a digital-free way. Spending time in nature encourages individuals to disconnect from technology, reducing the mental fatigue

Continued next pg

YOUR BRAIN ON NATURE – HYGGE AGAIN, WITH FLURLUFTSLIV From previous pg

caused by constant notifications and information overload.

This break from digital devices allows for mental rejuvenation and improved concentration, which in turn helps with emotional self-regulation.

When the days grow very short and dark thoughts begin to mound up at the backs of our idle minds, accomplishing outdoor recreation goals, whether ice climbing, Nordic skiing, or snowshoeing, these activities instill a sense of achievement and -worth. This boost in self-esteem is beneficial for mental health, as it reinforces positive self-concept and resilience. Regularly setting and achieving physical goals in nature prepares individuals to handle life's various challenges with a similar

mindset. I have friends in Cedaredge who engage in telemark skiing whenever the blues start to dog their days, and they swear it changes their perspective on life for days afterward.

One explanation for this common experience is offered by empirical studies of friluftsliv, which give voice to how aesthetic experiences in nature are related to a sense of awe and the small self (Løvoll and Sæther, 2022).

Snowy mountains are perfect for this. These experiences involve a strong feeling of connectedness to nature and feeling at home in nature, which are considered positive emotions. Even in winter, nature is a place where the positive emotion of belonging flourishes. This feeling of be-

longing nourishes wellbeing and self-transcendence and prompts us toward a reorientation of our lives, goals, and values. Think New Year's Eve resolutions, only more enduring.

So once you have opened those hygge Christmas gifts and snuggled your brains out, devote a little time to friluftsliv to really give your self-esteem a boost, connect with nature, and banish the mental demons of winter until spring (and mud-season) arrives with shorter nights and a promise of earth, and ourselves, renewed for another year.

"Ha' det godt!" (Danish for 'Have a Good One')

Best,

The Mindful Naturalist

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OPINION/EDITORIAL: LETTERS

LOVE OUR COUNTRY, RESPECT OUR LAWS, OUR VALUES, ASSIMILATE AND CONTRIBUTE IN A POSITIVE WAY

Editor:

Do you know there are some parts of America not American? There are some states that have allowed Muslims to set up their own cities totally as independent communities. They are all governed by Sharia Law and most don't speak our language nor respect our laws, our way of life and our society. They live virtually separate from our American society. These people are a danger to our country and our whole way of life. Why...because they don't assimilate; they intend to overtake our society and our country. Just look at what's happening in Europe. This should be a BIG RED FLAG for us. We need to be proactive and prevent their blatant invasion so this is stopped now. Luckily the states are dealing with the situation as this cannot be allowed in our country. Their religion is totally against everything our country stands for and our way of life. We couldn't be more different. People who are permitted into our country need to love our country, respect our laws, our values, assimilate and contribute in a positive way to the well-being of our nation. Anything less should be unacceptable.

Carol McBride, Montrose

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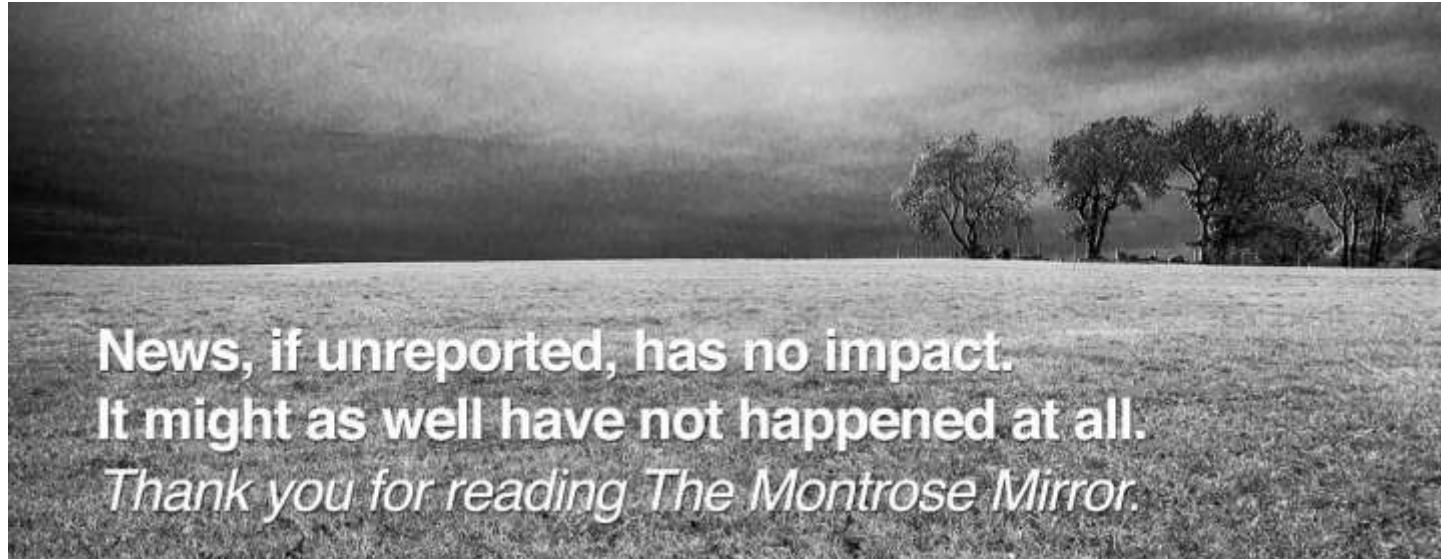
To the editor,

Politicians who care about the environment should support public funding for cultivated-meat research. For those who don't know, the protein is grown from animal cells, without slaughter. While the technology is still being developed, scientists believe cultivated meat will eventually require a fraction of the greenhouse-gas emissions that slaughtered meat does.

Increased public investment in cellular-agriculture development will help bring the new protein to market faster, where it can hopefully begin to displace the ecologically-devastating output of factory farms, by offering an identical, cheaper product. Forward-thinking politicians should do everything in their power to back this effort. We can build a greener food system.

Jon Hochschartner, Granby, CT

News, if unreported, has no impact.
It might as well have not happened at all.
Thank you for reading *The Montrose Mirror*.



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OPINION/EDITORIAL: LETTERS

APPARENTLY, MS GANN DOES NOT LIKE THE ELECTION RESULTS

Editor:

Linda Gann's editorial in last week's Montrose Mirror edition is quite revealing. First, she is critical of new board member President, Neisha Balleck, taking a "moment of silence" that she claims "smacks of crossing the line between church and state". Hey, Linda, the often misquoted and misunderstood phrase "church and state" is not in the U.S. Constitution or the Declaration of Independence. It is a term misconstrued from a letter Thomas Jefferson wrote in 1802 to the Danbury Baptist Association. Jefferson wrote "...I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof', thus building a wall of separation between Church and State".

Neisha Balleck's moment of silence or even an outright prayer is not an establishment of religion. Our founding Fathers were concerned about State religions, i.e. the state sanctions or endorsement of a specific denomination or church subsi-

dized by the taxpayer against their will, yet they also believed in the individual's right to practice their faith. There is no establishment of religion by expressing a moment of silence or an explicit prayer. The first amendment of the U.S. Constitution is very clear that "Congress shall make no law respecting of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..". Apparently, Ms. Gann is trying to prohibit the free exercise of Balleck's personal belief. If Gann is correct in her accusation, then maybe she should target Congress first since they usually open their sessions with a prayer.

Americans have a right to believe or not to believe in any religion or in God, but remember Americans have the constitutional right of freedom of religion, not freedom from religion.

Secondly, Gann's concern about the so-called removal of local oversight of Vista Charter School is hypocritical. I don't remember her expressing any concern about the threat of the State Board of Education taking control of our local School District if the Board continued to reject the appointment of Montrose Clas-

sical Academy (MCA) as a charter school. In fact, the State Board of Education in a bi-partisan 8-1 vote approved of MCA. Returning back to Vista Charter School, the Board as Gann rightly pointed out voted to postpone the decision.

Third, Gann in my opinion, is also hypocritical by proclaiming "our community deserves to know where this new board is headed".

Apparently, Ms Gann does not like the election results. The people have spoken by voting for a new board that promised to reverse poor student performance, promote classical education, school choice, and no more condoning the status quo of failure. It would have been nice or helpful if Gann had demonstrated such concern with the previous Board.

I recommend we give the Board an opportunity to deliver results. After all, the Board has only met publicly once, and yes, the community deserves to know this new Board will keep its promises that will ultimately benefit our students and our community.

AT Maymi

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REGIONAL NEWS BRIEFS

SUE HANSEN WINS BEST ELECTED OFFICIAL AWARD FOR FOURTH YEAR IN A ROW

Montrose County Clerk & Recorder Tressa Guynes Voted Second Place and Sheriff Gene Lillard Voted as Third Place

Special to the Mirror

MONTROSE-Montrose County Commissioner Sue Hansen continues to earn the trust and confidence of the community. For the fourth consecutive year, she has been voted Best Elected Official in the Montrose Daily Press Best of the Valley Readers' Choice Awards, which is a testament to her steady leadership and commitment to public service.

Commissioner Hansen has served Montrose County for seven years, with one year remaining in her current term. Her record reflects a deep dedication to the county, including being named Freshman Commissioner of the Year in 2018. In addition to her duties on the Board of County Commissioners, she serves on numerous committees and boards that address a variety of community needs. Sue is also the founder of the annual West Slope Water Summit, which over the past seven years has drawn hundreds of attendees. The conference provides community members with valuable education on water law, policy, and the complex issues shaping the future of water in the region. Her involvement underscores a commitment to advocating for the county's long-term interests.

"It is an honor to serve the people of Montrose County," Commissioner Hansen

said. "Public service is a responsibility I take seriously every day. I am grateful for the community's trust, and I will continue working to ensure Montrose County remains a place where families, businesses, and future generations can thrive."

Clerk & Recorder Tressa Guynes, who earned second place in the Best Elected Official category, continues to demonstrate exceptional leadership, professionalism, and service to Montrose County. Appointed in 2015 and elected in 2016, Guynes brought more than 30 years of experience in public administration from the State of Mississippi, where she advanced through roles in governmental management, budgeting, regulation, and ultimately served as Secretary of the State Senate.

Known for her commitment to accurate, timely, and courteous service, she oversees elections, vehicle registration and titling, is the recorder of deeds, the custodian of all county public records and property records, marriage licenses, and documentation support to the Board of County Commissioners.

"Serving as Montrose County's Clerk & Recorder is a privilege," Guynes said. "I am proud of my team's dedication and grateful for a community that values integrity, professionalism, and excellent

customer service."

Sheriff Gene Lillard, voted third place in Best Elected Official, has served as Sheriff for seven years and has spent nearly five decades as a resident of Montrose County. His law enforcement career began in 1976 and spanned 43 years, culminating in retirement as Commander before being elected Sheriff in 2019. Under his leadership, the Sheriff's Office has strengthened partnerships with local, state, federal, and regional organizations while promoting a proactive, community-based policing philosophy.

"Serving as Sheriff is one of the greatest honors of my life," Sheriff Lillard said. "My commitment is to protect and serve with honesty, integrity, and respect. Montrose County is my home, and my team and I work every day to ensure it remains a safe, strong, and thriving community."

Montrose County proudly recognizes Commissioner Hansen, Clerk & Recorder Guynes, and Sheriff Lillard for their accomplishments and their unwavering dedication to public service. Their achievements, along with the hard work of all Montrose County elected officials and the many volunteers who serve on boards and committees, reflect the strength of a community built on commitment, collaboration, and integrity.

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REGIONAL NEWS BRIEFS

RED RIBBON WEEK BRINGS PREVENTION, PARTNERSHIPS, AND POSITIVE CONNECTIONS TO DELTA COUNTY SCHOOLS

Special to the Mirror

DELTA— Students across Delta County schools participated in **Red Ribbon Week** activities on December 16, 17, and 18, promoting healthy choices and drug-free lifestyles through engaging, age-appropriate education and positive interactions with community partners.

This year's Red Ribbon Week was a collaborative effort between the Western Colorado Area Health Education Center (WCAHEC), the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Delta County Public Health, the Delta County Sheriff's Office, local law enforcement agencies, including Cedaredge Police Department, Hotchkiss Police Department, and Delta Police Department, as well as local Fire and EMS agencies.

Red Ribbon Week is the nation's largest drug-prevention campaign, encouraging youth, families, and communities to take a stand against substance misuse. Activities throughout the week focused on education, prevention, and empowerment rather than enforcement. Helping students understand the importance of making healthy decisions while knowing they are supported by caring adults in their community.

DEA Special Agent Chris Lindsay played a key role throughout the week, doing an outstanding job engaging with students through open conversation and hands-on learning.

By bringing DEA vests and helmets for students to try on, it sparked discussions about public service, safety, and the wide range of career paths available in law enforcement and beyond. The DEA also provided Red Ribbon bracelets and ribbons, which were distributed to students as reminders to make healthy, positive choices.

"These interactions encouraged students to think about their interests, future goals, and the good decisions they can make today," said Shirley Tatoo, STEPP Coordina-



Red Ribbon week at Northfork K-8. Courtesy photo.

tor. "As well as the steps they can take to work toward achieving them."

A highlight of the week was the participation of Reggie, Delta County Public Health's Bigfoot, who brought the "Escape the Vape" campaign to schools. Reggie helped reinforce prevention messages by handing out stickers, giving high-fives, and connecting with students in fun ways.

At one elementary school, students enjoyed a particularly memorable recess, where law enforcement officers and Reggie joined students for friendly foot races, creating an atmosphere of fun, trust, and positive relationship-building.

"Connecting with students during Red Ribbon Week was fun, meaningful, and a powerful reminder of why STEPP's prevention work matters," said Tatoo. "Giving us the chance to reinforce positive choices and support the decisions they're already making."

Planning for Red Ribbon Week was facilitated through coordination efforts by Lyndall Young with WCAHEC and the Delta Montrose Opioid Response Group, helping

to align partners, schedules, and prevention messaging across Delta County schools.

"Events like Red Ribbon Week show the power of community partnerships," said Lyndall Young, WCAHEC. "By showing up together – in classrooms, at recess, and even alongside a Bigfoot – we can deliver prevention messages that students remember."

Delta County Public Health thanks WCAHEC, the DEA, the Delta County Sheriff's Office, local law enforcement, DEA Special Agent Chris Lindsay, Troy Eliason - DEA Resident Agent in Charge, Ryan Jenkins - Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Technical Sergeant James M. Beeble - U.S. Air Force, Major Pelletier - U.S. Air Force, Fire and EMS partners, and school staff for their continued commitment to youth health, safety, and prevention.

For more information about Red Ribbon Week or local prevention efforts, contact WCAHEC- Lyndall Young at lyoung@wcahec.org

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REGIONAL NEWS BRIEFS

MONTROSE HIGH SCHOOL ROTARY INTERACT CLUB AND NUVISTA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION PARTNERSHIP CREATES GRANT PROGRAM



BJ Coram, President of NuVista Community Foundation, and Sara Plumhoff, Foundation Board Member, present a check for \$10,000 to the Montrose High School Rotary Interact Club. The grant from the NuVista Community Foundation will fund the new Youth Development Grant Program, which will give grants to nonprofits working in Montrose County who have new programs that support Youth ages 8-18 in the areas of Social & Emotional Well Being or Leadership & Development. Courtesy photo.

Special to the Mirror

MONTROSE— NuVista Community Foundation (NVCF) is excited to announce a new partnership with the Montrose High School Black Canyon Rotary Interact Club called the Youth Development Grant Program.

The NVCF approached Kathy Gaber, Work Based Learning Instructor at MHS, with an idea to create a Youth Philanthropy program with a \$10,000 grant. Gaber, who is a member of the Black Canyon Rotary Club suggested working with the MHS

Black Canyon Rotary Interact group, as they have a committee that comes up with a philanthropic project each year. And, so a new partnership was born.

“We are thrilled to be able to work with the Montrose High School Black Canyon Rotary Interact group on this grant program,” says NuVista Community Foundation President, BJ Coram. “Our hope is that this philanthropy program helps students learn more about issues facing local youth and encourages impactful giving. The focus on building stronger communities is important to The Club and to The Foundation; there is a natural alignment in missions.” Coram presented the \$10,000 check from the NVCF at a Club meeting on Tuesday, December 16th.

The students on the Philanthropy Committee are managing the entire process and program – from deciding what the focus of the grants should be, to building an online application, deciding what the application review process would entail, creating marketing materials, promoting the grant program to nonprofits, reviewing the applications, and planning the community event to award the funds.

The Youth Development Grant Program is now accepting applications. Nonprofit organizations who are creating new programs (or updating existing programs) can apply for a grant up to \$5000. The organizations must be providing services in Montrose County for youth ages 8-18. In addition, those services or programs must be focused on Social & Emotional Well Being or Leadership & Service for the youth in that age group.

The grant application review process will involve a two-step process. **STEP 1:** The first step will be based on the original application that is submitted. From the initial group of applications, the reviewers will choose a smaller group of applicants to move forward into the second step of the process. **STEP 2:** The finalists will be

chosen to participate in an in-person, interactive presentation in April 2026, date TBA. One person from the organization will give a 5-minute presentation (that will be timed!) to the community and a panel of judges. At the end of the presentations, up to three (3) organizations will be chosen as recipients of the Youth Development Grants.

The deadline to submit applications is February 15, 2026 at 11:59pm. Specific details regarding eligibility and criteria, as well as the link to the online form can be found online here: <https://sites.google.com/student.mcsd.org/rotary-youth-development-grant/home> or there is a QR code that can be scanned:

For more information about the Youth Development Grant Program, contact Ally Metzer at ally.metzger9@gmail.com, or Sara Plumhoff, Director Grants & Special Initiatives, 970-497-5302 or splumhoff@nuvista.org.

About MHS Rotary Interact Club

Rotary provides an inclusive platform for young leaders to better the communities around by being mindful of challenges, creating solutions, and leading or supporting impactful initiatives. The Club was established in 2021 and is sponsored by members of the Montrose Black Canyon Rotary Club. This student-led club is focused on leadership, service/philanthropy, and building a better world locally and globally.

About NuVista Community Foundation
The NuVista Community Foundation is a 501(c)3 foundation established to educate individuals, improve financial stability, and build stronger communities in Western Colorado by providing creative financial solutions to those who might not otherwise qualify.



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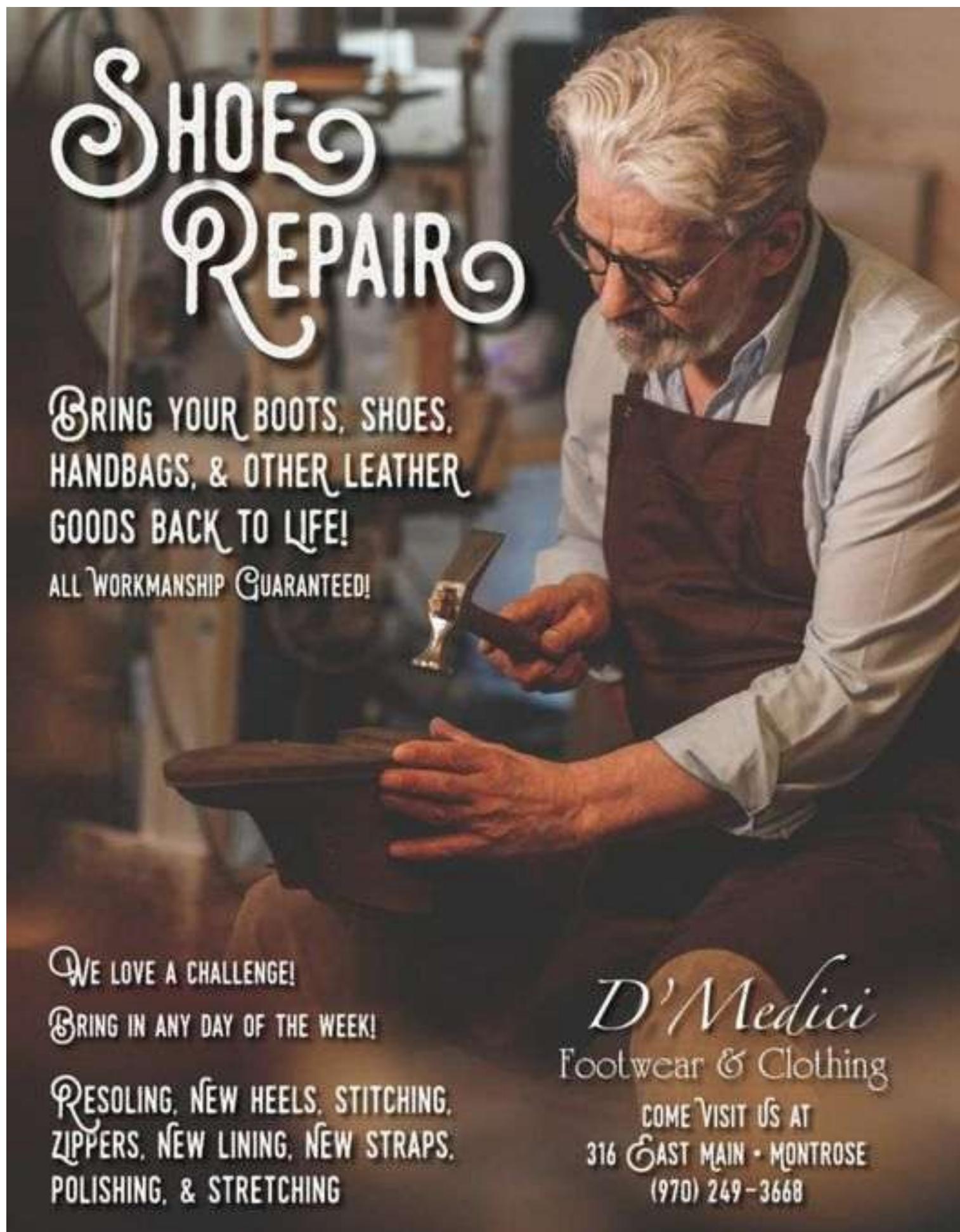
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REGIONAL NEWS BRIEFS

MONTROSE COUNTY BOCC ADOPTS 2026 COUNTY BUDGET

Montrose County Approved a \$126 million budget for 2026

Special to the Mirror

MONTROSE - The Montrose County Board of County Commissioners has formally approved and adopted the County's budget for the fiscal year 2026 following a public hearing held on December 10, 2025.

During the public hearing, the Board of County Commissioners reviewed and evaluated the proposed budget documents. After consideration of public input and staff recommendations, the Board voted to adopt and appropriate the 2026 budget as proposed. Key highlights of the 2026 budget include:

-2026 Budget Reduction - The 2026 budget of \$105.4 million (excluding interfund transfers) represents a 9.2% decrease, or roughly \$10.7 million, compared with the revised 2025 budget.

-Reduction in capital improvement budget - The \$30.6M capital improvements budget is \$15.3M less than that for 2025.

-Investment in North Campus: The most significant capital project is the construction of the North Campus, scheduled for completion in 2026, with a total project cost of \$27M. The facility will house the Human Services, Public Health, and Human Resources departments and provide the community with easier, more accessible access to County services. The County expects to issue \$6.5M in debt to finance a portion of the North Campus facility.

-6.6% Growth in Operating Budget - The operating budget of \$74.8M represents a 6.6% (or \$4.6M) increase. Labor costs total \$40.8M, the non-personnel operating budget is \$34M.

-Investment in Workforce- The labor budget provides for 5.5 additional full-time employees (Event Center and Fairgrounds, Human Services, and Public Health) and a 3.6% market adjustment.

-Debt Service Impact - The most significant increase in the non-personnel operating category is the estimated \$756K debt service payment for the North Campus.

-Increase in DA Office Funding - The County's funding for the District Attorney's Office will increase 25% (or \$393K) to \$1.97M in 2026.

-2026 Property Tax Revenue Growth - Property Tax, the County's largest revenue item, will increase \$596K (or 3.2%) to approximately \$19.2M.

"The County's annual budget is one of our most important tools for responsibly managing public resources," said Sue Hansen, Chair of the Board of County Commissioners. "We appreciate the community's engagement in the budgeting process and thank our staff for their diligent work in preparing the 2026 financial plan."

The resolution formally adopts the 2026 budget by fund, including the required TABOR emergency reserve, in accordance with state law.

The proposed budget presentation may be found [here](#). The adopted budget will be posted to the website in January once it is certified to the state before January 31, 2026. As a reminder, county financials are available 24/7 [here](#). For more information about Montrose County, please visit montrosecounty.net.



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OPINION/EDITORIAL: LETTERS

WHAT IS OUR TIPPING POINT?

Editor:

Last week there were two "Letters to the Editor", both focusing on Tina Peters and Trump's attempt to have her moved to a Federal prison.

Stop right there! Tina Peters is NOT a political prisoner. March 2022, Peters was tried and convicted by a jury of her peers on seven of ten counts, including several felonies, for attempting to influence a public servant, criminal conspiracy, and official misconduct. She allowed unauthorized access to voting machines in Grand County while serving as the county clerk. Data was stolen from the voting machines and distributed to conspiracy theorists. Grand County is not a hotbed of liberalism. Again, she was found guilty by everyday people, in her community.

Why does one even attempt to support that Trump has every right to pardon Peters?

She was charged under state law. That doesn't really matter. The fact is, she was found guilty, not by a Biden-appointed judge, not prosecuted by a Biden-appointed county attorney, she was found guilty by her community.

Pardons under Trump? He has pardoned at least twenty people erasing tens of millions of dollars in restitution they were ordered by the court to pay.

In those cases, victims of fraud by those "pardoned", will no longer receive any compensation. These are everyday Americans who trusted Trevor Milton, or David Gentile, or Joseph Schwartz with their hard-earned monies, and now lost any hope of having those stolen funds re-

turned to them. A pardon to ex-Honduran president Juan Orlando Hernandez who was serving 45 years in prison? Convicted of smuggling cocaine, over 400 tons, into the United States and possessing illegal machine guns, pardoned by Trump? Blowing up boats in the Caribbean but allowing a major drug trafficker to be released? Wow.

Let's go back to history, before Trump tries to change it any more. January 6th. Nearly 200 of the 1500 plus who Trump pardoned, used violence against Capitol Police and Metropolitan Police Officers. Flag poles, broken furniture, barricades, pepper spray; all were used against the police. Officers were choked, beaten, bludgeoned. All were pardoned.

One man I can never pardon nor can several million Americans is Donald J. Trump. First, the words he has used against female news reporters. If a school teacher told your child that she was a "piggy", "stupid", "ugly both inside and out", would you just let it go? Or would you stand up and say how inappropriate that was? But it is all right for the president to say these words?

But now he has taken one step way over the line. Rob and Michele Reiner, it appears, were murdered by their son. What Trump wrote was that Reiner and his wife passed away, *"reportedly due to the anger he caused others through his massive, unyielding, and incurable affliction with a mind crippling disease known as TRUMP DERANGEMENT SYNDROME, sometimes referred to as TDS. He was known to have driven people CRAZY by his raging obses-*

sion of President Donald J. Trump, with his obvious paranoia reaching new heights as the Trump Administration surpassed all goals and expectations of greatness," blah, blah, blah.

Afterwards when asked by a reporter about these comments, Trump doubled down and said,

I wasn't a fan of his at all. He was a deranged person as far as Trump is concerned."

No compassion. Just more vile and cruel words. Do we just keep accepting this? What is our tipping point?

In contrast, here is what Rob Reiner said regarding Charlie Kirk's assassination and his gut reaction to it. *"Well horror. Absolute horror. And I unfortunately saw the video of it, and it's beyond belief what happened to him. And that should never happen to anybody. I don't care what your political beliefs are. That's not acceptable. That's not a solution to solving problems.*

He went on to praise Erika Kirk by saying, *"And what she said, to me, was beautiful and absolutely, you know, she forgave his assassin, and I think that that is admirable."*

So who is a bigger man?

"Rob Reiner responded with grace and compassion to Charlie's assassination," were the words of Turning Point USA spokesperson Andrew Koltvet.

Could not Donald Trump respond likewise to Rob and Michele Reiner's deaths, with grace and compassion? Inconceivable and disgraceful.

Jon Sering, Montrose



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OPINION/EDITORIAL: LETTERS

HYPOCRISY, LIES, AND DEFLECTION

Editor:

Self-Inflicted Ouster and Blame-Shifting

Ray Langston's recent letter to the editor is a masterclass in profound hypocrisy. He quotes the adage that "poor leadership always blames others for its failures", yet he faults the Montrose GOP Central Committee for party divisions and his own removal. In reality, Langston's February 2021 ouster stemmed from his own misconduct. An overwhelming 83% of the Central Committee voted to remove him for by-law violations, abusive behavior, verbal assaults on women and men, theft of campaign materials, and financial improprieties. This was a democratic decision to uphold standards, not a cabal.

Attacks on Free Speech: Projection at Its Finest

Langston portrays himself as a defender of free speech, claiming the committee silenced dissenters and labeled critics RINOs. This is projection. As GOP chair, he threatened to punish members for unauthorized communications, slandered opponents, and disrupted events with outbursts. He yelled at women to "shut up," used profanities at rallies while holding the American flag, and verbally attacked an 82-year-old leader and elderly guests. His secretary resigned due to abuse. A former county chair called his actions a First Amendment violation. His behavior led to a 2024 five-year ban from county Republican events.

Breaches of Primary Neutrality

Langston accuses the committee of primary endorsements starting in 2020, causing division. Records show he violated neutrality by attacking Lauren Boebert verbally and in writing, stealing her literature (prompting a police report), and delaying its return until intervention. Boebert traveled from Rifle to retrieve her materials. He allowed the Republican Women's group to withhold support and blocked post-primary endorsements.

Financial Mismanagement and Lack of Accountability

Langston criticizes others for poor stewardship yet failed to provide treasurer reports for 18 months, offering only verbal updates. He ignored a motion to support Trump, diverting funds to Georgia senators without approval. Cash donations lacked accountability. He misused ad budgets, prioritizing preferred candidates over Party approved candidates Trump, Gardner, and Boebert. He bought unauthorized gift cards for volunteers from these funds. And nearly five years later, his final December 2020 report remains unsubmitted.

Repeated By-law Violations

Langston was removed twice for breaches, including appointing spouses against rules and rejecting vacancy processes. He dismissed challenges, vowing retroactive by-law changes, a tactic he now decries. His 2022 removal as candidate support chair for neutrality violations was upheld on appeal.

Inconsistent Political Alignments

Langston dismissed January 6 concerns as "totally Bull***t" and called the left "Nazis," yet defended Don Coram, who supported bills like expanded s*x education for children as young as 10 years old and fentanyl decriminalization, while aiding Democrats.

Leading the Undemocratic Recall of Commissioner Mijares

Langston played a central role in the 2025 recall of Commissioner Scott Mijares, elected in 2024 and sworn in January 2025, even before Mijares was seated. By July 2025, Langston teamed with left-wing activists Phoebe Benziger and Linda Gann to launch the petition. Langston was an initial organizer alongside Benziger (former school board member and planning commissioner); Gann co-chaired the signature and campaign efforts. They cited transparency and fiscal issues, but the early timing suggested intent to overturn the election. Voters approved the recall narrowly by just 659 votes on November 4, 2025, replacing Mijares with Kirstin Copeland after nine months.

A Legacy of Chaos

Ray Langston is no victim but an instigator of chaos through abuse, rule-breaking, and undemocratic tactics. His actions have harmed the Montrose Republican Party and local governance. True leadership respects by-laws, elections, and unity. The party and county will thrive by rejecting his approach and embracing principled conservatism.

Monty George,

Chairman of the Montrose County Republican Central Committee

On behalf of the Montrose County Republican Party

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by Tim Jones



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COMMUNITY OBITUARIES

MIKEY LORENZO FLUKER

October 30, 2000 — December 5, 2025

MIKEY LORENZO FLUKER, a beloved son, brother, and friend, entered eternal rest on Friday, December 5th, 2025 at his home in Montrose, Colorado, at the age of 25. Born on October 30, 2000, in Titusville, Florida, Mikey was the cherished child of Adrianna Alisa Pratt Fluker and Glenn Fluker Sr.

For the past 20 years, Mikey called Montrose home. A proud graduate of Montrose High School, he was known for his warm spirit, bright smile, and love for family. Mikey was a devoted member of Waves of Mercy Church, where he found joy in gospel music and treasured moments reading with loved ones. His kindness and gentle presence touched everyone he met, leaving a lasting impact that will never be forgotten.



SHARON LAMB

1943-2025



Sherri was born in Clifton, CO to Ralph and Gladys Stout, the second of two daughters. Her parents and her sister, Carole, preceded her in death. Sherri spent her youth in the Palisade area, graduating from Palisade High in 1961. She married William (Troy) Lamb in [Anchorage, AK](#) in October 1962 and they traveled the US for the next 22 years while he was in the Air Force, raising three children along the way. Sherri was a stalwart supporter of her family and loved camping and fishing. She enjoyed bingo and a good chat with her friends. She is survived by her husband, Troy, of Montrose, CO; her daughter, Vicki Downing, of Montrose; her sons, Eric (Lori) Lamb of Mesa, AZ; Brad (Rose) Lamb of [Santa Fe, TX](#); four grandchildren; and nine greatgrandchildren. Nieces, nephews and great-nieces and nephews also added great joy to her life. No services will be held at this time but a memorial celebration is planned for the future.



ISSUE 553 Dec. 22, 2025

ART&SOL

COLORADO OUTDOORS - NATURE AND KIDS FOR MIND, BODY, AND SPIRIT



Middle and high school youth from the Partners Youth Mentoring Engagement Program experienced rafting on the Gunnison River this summer. Outdoor experiences like this help them develop their social skills, teamwork, and ways to be resilient so they can be successful when facing life's challenges. (Photo Courtesy Partners Youth Mentoring)

by David Padilla, Friends of Youth and Nature, and Partners Youth Mentoring
 REGIONAL-Growing up in the small town of Olathe Colorado where the population of cows overpower the population of people, it was sometimes hard to find time for

outdoor recreation. Luckily for us, we are a short drive to some beautiful hiking trails, rivers, and lakes. The towering Rocky Mountains of Colorado have some amazing hiking trails from easy to extreme. Many popular places to recreate locally are in the San Juans, a nearby rugged mountain range. Mt Sneffels, our closest 14er, is a popular destination for people who enjoy a tough yet beautiful climb. A very popular local hike is to Blue Lakes, named for their turquoise coloring, situated beneath the 14,150 ft. Mount Sneffels. A great place to chill and hang out is Ridgway State Park – where hiking, fishing, camping, and waterboarding can offer a family friendly place to recreate and create lasting memories.

Rafting has become quite popular with families and youth in our area, offering a variety of river experiences from relaxing floats to challenging fast flowing rapids. Many sections of our local rivers can be relatively tame and offer a very exciting place to get away from it all for a few hours, an entire day or even a multi-day adventure. This summer, some of our local youth were able to do just that! Friends of Youth and Nature offered a raft trip on the Gunnison River in the Gunnison National Conservation Area for area youth who have not had that experience before.

Here are some of their responses to this impressionable experience:

Antonio was super excited being outdoors

and being in the river. It was the first time he had ever been rafting. He said, "It gave me such a feeling of freedom and peace. Life is sometimes difficult at school and home, and the river was so calming!"

After experiencing his very first river trip, Gael described his experience. "I had such a blast with my new friends that I made over the summer. We got to experience something that none of us have ever experienced before! The sound of the river made me feel so calm. The most fun part was the water fight!"

Sabastian said the whole trip was super exciting. "It was an experience I will never forget and I want to get out and do it again next year. They gave us lunch at the end of the trip and the cookies were amazing!"

"We should have worn different clothes! I wore sweatpants and they were way too hot. It's a good thing we had a water fight to cool us off," Monica shared.

"From the beginning to the end of this raft trip, these kids were so respectful. They felt welcomed and comfortable with the group. I so enjoyed how all the kids bonded together. Watching them experience something for the first time was so fulfilling. I never got the chance to do anything like this when I was young, so it made this experience especially rewarding," said FOYAN board member David Padilla, "Without Friends of Youth and Nature and Partners Mentoring these kids would never have these opportunities.

Continued next pg

COLORADO OUTDOORS - NATURE AND KIDS FOR MIND, BODY, AND SPIRIT From previous pg

"Most of these kids came from the Engagement Program in the middle and high school programs in Montrose County. Experiences like this help them develop their social skills, teamwork, and ways to be resilient so they can be successful when facing life's challenges."

FOYAN chair Anita Evans shared, "I have never received so many hugs at the end of one of our outdoor events. These kids were so genuinely thankful. It filled my heart and made it even more worthwhile."

Outdoor experiences like this, particularly for youth during the challenging years of middle and high school, can be thrilling and fun. But these experiences also help

develop new friendships, teamwork, and self-confidence.

Outdoor activities can play a crucial role in building resiliency and promoting mental well-being in our youth. If you would like to help us get more kids outside to experience new outdoor adventures like this, please visit our website (below) to make a donation.

For more ideas on how and where to get your kids outside or to donate to our programs, visit the Friends of Youth and Nature website: (www.friendsofyouthandnature.org).
FOYAN is a non-profit that promotes opportunities for youth and families to go outside, experience outdoor activities

and explore nature.

Partners of Delta, Montrose and Ouray is a nonprofit organization dedicated to building one-to-one mentoring partnerships between young people and responsible, caring adults.

Youth with a mentor in the Partners programs benefit from increased self-esteem, academic improvements, prosocial bonding. Having a mentor opens a world of opportunities for a youth, shaping a successful future one experience at a time.

Partners serves youth ages 6 -17 that could benefit from a positive adult role model. Interested? Learn more at www.partners-west.org



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970-249-1881

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MONROSE PAVILION

A PORTION OF ALL TICKETS BENEFIT MONROSE HIGH SCHOOL MUSIC DEPARTMENT

CLUE: ON STAGE @ Magic Circle Theatre

By Sandy Rustin (Adapted from Jonathan Lynn's screenplay)

Directed by John Lange

Assistant Directors: Janel Culver & Keele Carver

Article by LaDonna Bubak

MONTROSE-Step into the billiard room -- or possibly the conservatory, or even the study -- for an evening filled with rapid-fire banter, campy characters and hilarious mayhem. With *Clue: On Stage*, Magic Circle brings the beloved board game and film classic to life in a razor-sharp who-dunit that's part farce, part slapstick, and entirely irresistible.

Murder is on the menu when six unsuspecting strangers -- Professor Plum (Rich Burt), Miss Scarlet (Kristen Hartley), Colonel Mustard (Kevin Cohenour), Mrs. Peacock (Jill Vincent), Mrs. White (Jamie Hurst) and Mr. Green (Riley Little) -- arrive at Boddy Manor for a dinner party that turns into a deadly game. When their host winds up murdered and the body count starts rising, the stuffy butler, Wadsworth (Chuck Richardson), and the keen-eyed maid, Yvette (Zoe Tuttle), join the guests in a race against time to figure out who-dunit before the final twist has the audience either on the edge of their seats or rolling in the aisle.

Running this side-splitting (and family friendly) show is director John Lange -- with Janel Culver and Keele Carver assistant directing -- delivering chaos, charm, and comedy in equal measure. Rounding

out the ensemble cast are the wickedly talented Arthur Pierce, Kim Easley, Emily Arrington, Cole Patterson, Ben Lowe and Tony Ryan.

With its clever plot twists, witty dialogue and zany hijinks, *Clue* is a must-see for fans of the board game and lovers of mad-

cap theatrical romps. Take a stab yourself at figuring out whodunit, not to mention where and with what!

Runs Jan. 9-24. Tickets available at the Box Office (970) 249-7838, mcp@montrose.net or at magiccircleplayers.com.



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MRS. CLAUSE FOR A CAUSE!



Mrs. Clause (whose alter ego Leah Cole lives in Montrose) made her annual visit to town to share joy, gifts and lots of fun with local children, her helpful friends, and Santa too. Sunday was a day for special needs children and their families , warming hearts despite the winter weather.



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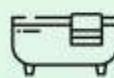
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MIRROR CHURCH DIRECTORY

ALL SAINTS ANGLICAN CHURCH

Address: 2057 S. Townsend, Montrose, CO 81401.

Office Hours: By appointment.

Contact Information: (970) 249-2451

<https://www.allsaintsmontrose.org/> **Rector:** The Rev Preston Gordon, pgordon@allsaintsmontrose.org

Worship Service Times: Sundays 9AM,

Sunday Worship. Wednesdays 11AM, Mid-week prayer and communion, Wednesday, Noon, Multi-denominational Community Prayer Hour.

All Saints Anglican Church is an Evangelical Anglican Church committed to the ministry of Word, Sacrament, and Spirit. Our music is a combination of traditional hymns, contemporary, and modern songs.

We invite kids preschool and up to join our kids worship time during the 9am Sunday service. We would love to welcome you here. Following the service, join us for snacks and conversation. On the third Sunday of the month we celebrate a potluck meal together.

Vision: We see Jesus Christ restoring hope: in us and in our world.

BIBLE BAPTIST CHURCH

Independent Baptist
112 Main St.
P.O. Box 262

Olathe, Co 81425

Tuesday-Friday Phone: 970-808-1021
www.biblebaptistchurcholathe.com
Pastor Gabe Skillo

Sunday School 9:15 a.m.

Sunday 10:30 a.m.

Sunday 6 p.m.

Wednesday Bible Study/Prayer 7 p.m.

CEDAR CREEK CHURCH

affiliation: Evangelical Free

Address: 222 South Townsend Montrose, CO 81401

Office Hours: 10am-2pm Tuesday- Friday

Contact: 970-252-1163

ccc@cccmontrose.org

Pastor: Curt Mudgett

Sunday worship:

worship Service: September-May at 10:15am **Discipleship Hour** at 9am

Worship Service: June-August at 9:30am Nursery available for 0-4 during worship service

Wednesday Prayer: 5:30-6:15pm

Cedar Creek Church is a welcoming and friendly group of people that takes God seriously, but not ourselves.

We enjoy gathering for encouragement, meals, prayer and having fun!

Our mission is to exalt Jesus Christ by being a Word-centered community of believers who are equipped for a life of worship, prayer and service, and to reach our neighbors for Christ.

Please make plans to come check us out soon!

CELEBRATION CHURCH

Denomination: Southern Baptist Church (SBC – Southern Baptist Convention)

Address: 2900 Sunnyside Road, Montrose, CO 81401

Office Hours: By appointment

Phone: (970) 497-4925

Email: celebrationmontrose@gmail.com

Website: <https://celebrationmontrose.org/>

Worship Service Times: 9am and 10:45am

Senior Pastor:

Pastor Brandon Mathis

Church Description/Mission: Celebration Church makes disciples that make disciples. Our core values include the Scrip-

ture, discipleship, community, service, prayer, love, and unity.

Demographics: Multi-generational

Celebration Kids: (age birth to 5th grade) programs offered both services.

Student (middle & high school) at 9am.

Adult -Discipleship classes 8am and 10:45am.

CHRIST'S CHURCH OF THE VALLEY

Name of Church: Christ's Church of the Valley

Denomination Affiliation: Non-denominational Christian Church/Church of Christ

Address: 10 Hillcrest Plaza Way. Montrose, CO 81401

Office hours: Tuesday & Wednesday 9am-noon and by appointment.

Contact information:

Phone: 970-249-0530

Email: CCVMontroseCO10@gmail.com

Website: ccvmontrose.org

Name of current Senior Pastor: Ken Lawrence

Worship service times: 10:30 a.m.

Mission: Christ's Church of the Valley is a loving and welcoming church whose purpose is to help people to know and grow

in our Lord Jesus Christ to the glory of God.

Description: CCV is a multi-generational church family. While we are currently predominately seniors, we are becoming more multi-generational.

Sunday School & Childcare: CCV has adult Sunday School at 9 a.m. and Youth Church during the 10:30 a.m. worship service.

CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH

Denomination: Christ Lutheran Montrose

Affiliation: Lutheran Church Missouri Synod

Address: 1980 N. Townsend Ave., Montrose, CO 81401

Contact: 970-633-0226

Website: www.montroselutheran.org

Email: montroselutheran@gmail.com

Pastor: Tim Onnen

Worship: Sundays at 9 AM

Sunday School and Adult Bible Class at 10:15 AM; Women's Bible Study Fridays at 9 AM. At Christ Lutheran Montrose you will

find friendly people gathered in a welcoming environment being comforted and encouraged by the forgiveness and love of Jesus, and sharing that with one another. We are a small congregation of seniors and middle-aged, sprinkled with young children and teenagers.

MIRROR CHURCH DIRECTORY From previous pg

COMMUNITY SPIRIT CHURCH

United Church of Christ (UCC)

Address: 504 N. 1st Street (HAP Building)

Office hours: Call or text for appointment

Phone: 970-765-7070

Email: spirit@communityspiritucc.org

Website: communityspiritucc.org

Current Pastor: Rev. Wendy Kidd

Worship service: Sundays at 11am

Mission: Our commitment to a more inclusive and accepting world is steadfast, and we will continue to work towards a future

where everyone can live freely and authentically.

Demographics: We are a small congregation of mostly adults and seniors, however, we are always ready to welcome families and children.

COVENANT HEBRAIC FELLOWSHIP

Denomination affiliation. No affiliation

Address Office hours N/A

Contact: 720-951-9941, office@ccfmontrose.net, www.ccfmontrose.net

Name of current Senior Pastor. Led by elders

Worship service times. Noon on Saturdays. Children's Church will be offered as needed.

Covenant is a Hebraic roots community

that studies the Torah as well as the rest of Scripture. We learn about the Hebrew roots of the language and believe that the Lord's feasts are for today. We are predominantly made up of older folks, but have some young blood, too.

FIRST CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

Denomination: Church of the Nazarene

Address: 705 South 12th Street

Office Hours: Tuesday - Thursday 9 am - Noon and by Appointment

Contact Information: Office Phone 970 249 -9213, mncfirst@gmail.com, www.montrosenazarenechurch.org

Pastor: Interim Pastor Ian Hyde

Services Sunday: Worship 10:30 AM, Discipleship Hour: 9:30 AM. Discipleship Hour has classes across all age groups. Nursery for children UNDER 3 is available during Worship.

Mission Statement: Montrose First Church of the Nazarene exists to make

Christlike disciples in Montrose Colorado and around the world. Demographics: Our church consists of older and younger people. We have younger families with children and young teens and older adults as well. We also support the work of Calvary Ranch Colorado and its addiction recovery ministry.

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

MONTROSE

Affiliation: Presbyterian

Address: 1840 E Niagara Rd. Montrose

CO. 81401 Office Hours: M-Thu 9AM -

12PM

Contact: 970-249-4732, inform@fpcmontrose.com,

www.fpcmontrose.com

Pastor: Rev. Dr. Jesse G. Mabanglo

Worship Service times: 9:30AM, *We strive to encourage, challenge and*

support one another through spiritual growth, worship, and service in our community, country, and world. We also encourage children and youth to grow their relationship with Christ through our children and student ministries.

HILLCREST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Denomination affiliation: United Church of Christ

Address: 611 South Hillcrest Drive, Montrose, CO 81401

Office hours: By appointment

Contact information:

Phone number: (970) 249-9047

Email address: office@montroseucc.org

Website: montroseucc.org

Current Pastor: Rev. Wendy Kidd

Worship service times: Sunday, 10 a.m. Hillcrest Congregational UCC is a welcoming, open and affirming church, open to all no matter who you are or where you are

on life's journey.

Church demographics: HCUCU welcomes all ages to worship with us. (predominately family, youth, seniors, singles)

We offer inter-generational worship with a children's "prayer-ground" and activity packets. A cry room is also available.

MONTROSE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Denomination Affiliation: United

Methodist

Address: 19 S. Park Avenue Montrose CO. 81401

Office Hours: M-Thu, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Contact Information: 970-249-3716, office@montroseumc.org, [\[montroseumc.org\]\(http://montroseumc.org\)](http://mont-</p>
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Current Senior Pastor: Rev. Kevin Young

Worship service times:

9:15 AM to 10:15 AM: Children's, Youth, and Adult Sunday School; Christian Education & Fellowship.

10:30 AM: Sanctuary & Virtual Worship
Montrose UMC is a leader in being fully

inclusive, loving, and just servants of Christ. Our church family welcomes people from various cultural and faith backgrounds: single, married, remarried, with or without children, from diapers to dentures. Wherever you are on your spiritual journey we invite you to come discover hope, joy, peace, purpose.

ROSEMONT BAPTIST CHURCH

Affiliation: Southern Baptist

Address: 1598 E. Niagara Road, Montrose, CO 81401

Office Hours: Tues-Thurs, 9am-4pm

Contact information:

Phone: 970.249.4887

website: www.RosemontBaptist.org

email: office@rosemontbaptist.org

Senior Pastor: Rolland Kenneson

Worship Service Times: Our engaging and relevant Sunday Worship Service is at

10:45 AM. We also have Bible Study for All Ages Sunday mornings at 9:15 AM. We provide a professionally-staffed nursery throughout both.

Rosemont Baptist's desire is to passionately bring people face-to-face with the life-changing power of Jesus Christ.

We are a multigenerational church from different walks of life who love Jesus, love each other, and love our community. Everyone comes dressed in whatever is comfortable. We love meeting new people no

matter what stage of life they are in.

Children's services: We have a fun Sunday School for children from four years old through youth. We provide Children's Church during the Sunday Worship Services where children four years old through 9 years can learn to be worshippers of Jesus.

We provide a nursery for children under four years old with paid staff providing excellent care during Sunday Morning Bible Study and Worship Service.

MIRROR CHURCH DIRECTORY From previous pg

SPIRITUAL AWARENESS CENTER

Denomination affiliation: Independent Spiritual and Interfaith Community
Address: Services at Lions Park Community Building, 602 N. Nevada, Montrose
Office hours: Tues-Fri, 9 am to 4 pm, Home Office – 970-252-0908
Contact information: Rev. Dr. Arlyn Macdonald, 970-252-0908, arlyn@spiritaware.org, www.spiritaware.org
Name of current pastor: Rev. Dr. Arlyn

Macdonald, Senior minister; Rev. Ruby Salaz, Assistant Minister. Spiritual Counseling available.

Worship service times: From November 9 -December 14, the regular Sunday gatherings will meet from 9:30-11 am for a six-week SAC/Meditation program with Sangdrol Blanchard of Meditation Spaces. Meditation time and guest speakers are planned. Virtual services are temporarily cancelled. Chai Chats will continue to

meet on Wednesday mornings at 10:30 am at Pun Hill Himalayan Restaurant, 710 N. Townsend, Montrose.

The Spiritual Awareness Center is an interfaith spiritual community welcoming spiritual seekers and people of all faiths, providing a safe place to explore and nurture the individual's unique connection to the Divine through Unity services, classes, meditation, and family and community projects.

People of all ages are welcome.

ST. STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

Denomination: Anglican-Reformed Episcopal Church (REC)
Address: 2405 Sunnyside Road, Montrose 970-249-4868
Contact: [ststephensmont-](mailto:ststephensmont-rose@yahoo.com)

ststephensmont-rose@yahoo.com

www.ststephensmontrose.com

Rev. Dec. Garrett Agajanian

St. Stephen's is a community of caring Christians rooted in the godly traditions of the past, focused on the challenges of the

present, hopeful for the future, continuing in the Faith once delivered to the saints, using the 1928 Book of Common Prayer.

Sunday: Holy Communion 10 am.

Fellowship following service.

Children's nursery available (unstaffed).

VICTORY BAPTIST CHURCH

OF MONTROSE

Denomination Affiliation: Independent Baptist
Address: 2890 N Townsend Ave., Montrose, CO 81401
Office Hours: Monday-Friday 8am-12pm
Contact Information: Phone (970) 249-

6874; email at info@vbcmontrose.org; website: vbcmontrose.org

Current Pastor: Roland Kassales

Worship Service Times: Sunday School at 9:30am, Sunday AM Service at 10:30am, Sunday PM Service at 6pm, Wednesday Night Service at 6:30pm (all services include childcare)

Victory Baptist Church exists to exalt God, edify saints, and evangelize the lost.

Demographics: Victory Baptist serves everyone with age-appropriate classes, groups, and activities. Families with children make up the majority of VBC with young adults, singles, middle-aged couples, and seniors comprising the rest.

Church Directory

Mirror Editorial Staff

MONTROSE-As a way of serving the faith community in Montrose, the Montrose Mirror is in the process of establishing a Church Directory. If your congregation or fellowship would like to be included in the directory, please supply the following information to the Montrose

Mirror:

Name of church

Denomination affiliation

Address Office hours

Contact information (phone number, email address, website)

Name of current Senior Pastor

Worship service times

Please give a one sentence description of your church and its mission in the Montrose community.

Brief description of your current church demographics (predominately family, youth, seniors, singles).

Do your church services include Sunday School and childcare?

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Thank you for reading

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COMMUNITY NEWS BRIEFS

OLATHE HIGH STUDENTS SECURE \$5,700 IN SEED FUNDING AT SPARK LAB PITCH EVENT

Special to the Mirror

OLATHE— Seven Olathe High School students are turning their innovative ideas into reality after earning a combined \$5,700 in seed funding at the school's inaugural Spark Lab Pitch Event on Wednesday, Dec. 17. The event is part of Montrose County School District's (MCSD) ongoing efforts to expand career-connected learning opportunities through regional partnerships.

Spark Lab, a program run by Colorado nonprofit Homegrown Pathways, is made possible locally through a partnership with the Western Slope Career Collaborative (WSSCC) and MCSD.

Through mentorship, resources, and community support, students develop projects that address real-world challenges while exploring personal interests and career pathways. This fall, MCSD launched Spark Lab at Olathe High School as part of its broader career pathways initiative. Students in Randall Spaur's Introduction to Entrepreneurship class worked with Homegrown Pathways mentors to refine ideas, solve real-world problems, and deliver polished two-minute pitches to a panel of local business and economic development leaders.

"Spark Lab gives our students a unique opportunity to explore entrepreneurship while gaining practical skills they will carry for life," said MCSD Superintendent Dr. Carrie Stephenson. "These students didn't just share ideas; they demonstrated creativity, confidence, and a real understanding of how their work can positively im-

pact our communities and strengthen the local economy."

That community-minded focus was reflected in the projects students pitched, including culinary and livestock ventures, a photography business, community art classes, automotive detailing, fashion design, and a documentary exploring social media's impact on young adults. After the presentations, teacher Randall Spaur addressed the students, saying, "I cannot put into words how proud I am. When we began, you had amazing ideas but were not sure how to bring them to life. Now you are standing here as empowered young entrepreneurs. I cannot wait to see what you do next."

These innovative projects were supported by seed funding from Homegrown Pathways' Youth Venture Fund, which grew from an initial \$3,000 to \$5,700 thanks to contributions from the Morgridge Family Foundation and Rocky Mountain Steel. Funding awards were determined by project readiness, sustainability, and potential community impact, providing students with the resources needed to transform their ideas into actionable ventures.

Student award recipients included:

- Cesar Garcia Ramirez, Nourishing Sweets — \$1,000
- Jack Combs, Theft By Pixels: A Distracted Generation — \$800 plus paid internship
- Braylon Lujan, Real Faith Detailing — \$600
- Miley Pegram-Grater, Ghosts Journeys — camera package (\$700 value) plus \$400
- Dallee Dahl, Dahl Livestock — \$800

-Taylor "Eko" Armstead, Eko Locations Art — \$1,000

-Lovly Guerra Garcia, Garcia Fashion — \$400

"Spark Lab helps young people see themselves as creators, problem-solvers, and community leaders," said Colin Lacy, Founder and CEO of Homegrown Pathways. "When students see the importance of their ideas and real dollars supporting them, it's a transformative moment."

This vision is reflected in Spark Lab's close alignment with the Western Slope Career Collaborative, a regional initiative created through a grant written by Montrose County School District to expand meaningful career pathway opportunities for students.

From its inception, WSSCC has included Montrose County, Delta, Gunnison, and Ridgway School Districts, focusing on high-demand pathways such as healthcare, construction trades, the outdoor industry, and tourism, with Dr. Stephenson serving as President of the WSSCC Board.

MCSD and WSSCC look forward to continuing and expanding their partnership with Homegrown Pathways as Spark Lab reaches more students across the region. The program is currently underway at Peak Virtual Academy, where students will present their projects at a pitch event in February.

For more information on MCSD's career pathway initiatives or the Spark Lab program, visit www.ccr.mcsd.org/career-pathways and homegrownpathways.org.



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SAVE THE DATE! LOCAL EVENTS CALENDAR

ONGOING-

ALTRUSA INT'L believes in "Leading to a Better Community" and is always looking for new members. We meet in Montrose on the first three Tuesdays a month at the Field House: 25 Colorado Ave, 12-Noon. Pick a day that works for you & please join us! Through our local Altrusa Club, members unite their varied talents in service to others, achieving as a group what individuals cannot do alone." <https://www.altrusamontrose.org/> P: 970-765-7666 E: Altrusa.Montrose@gmail.com

BLACK CANYON AUDUBON SOCIETY provides a monthly program on the 2nd Thursday of the month at 7 pm at the Montrose Field House, 25 Colorado Avenue, Montrose. blackcanyonaudubon.org

Tuesday - 1st and 3rd Tuesdays-*Black Canyon Audubon Society hosts monthly birdwatching field trips in the Montrose area on 1st Tuesdays of the month and in the Delta area on the 3rd Tuesdays of the month. Check out the website for field trip details at blackcanyonaudubon.org.*

COLUMBINE QUILTERS meet at Welcome Home Alliance Warrior Resource Center, 4 Hillcrest Plaza Way Montrose. 1st Saturday except for July at 9 am.

FRIENDSHIP QUILTERS meets at the Montrose County Events Center, 4th Thursday Jan - Oct, 3rd Thursday Nov - Dec, 9am.

HEALING COLLECTIVE OF WESTERN COLORADO-Every 1st and 3rd Tuesday of the month from 12-1pm the Healing Collective of Western Colorado meets at 220 N Stough Ave. It is open to all wellness providers in the area who would like to collaborate with and learn from other local practitioners.

MONTROSE FARMERS MARKET (970) 249 0705 Centennial Plaza, 433 S. 1st St. Montrose, CO 81401

www.valleyfoodpartnership.org. Year-Round Farmers Market, Saturdays 9am-1pm (Summer), every other Saturday 10am-1pm (Winter). Accepts SNAP and Double Up Food Bucks.

MONTROSE ALTRUSA-1st Tuesday of the month Program meeting; 2nd Tuesday of the month committee meeting; 3rd Tuesday of the month Business meeting. Meetings are held at the Field House on the corner of Colorado Avenue and Rio Grande Avenue at Noon.

FREE THINKERS meet 1st Sunday of the month for information call 970 417-4183

BOSOM BUDDIES BREAST CANCER SUPPORT GROUP, Wednesdays noon-12:45, 645 S. 5th Street

MONTROSE HISTORICAL SOCIETY meets 1st Wednesday of the month @ Montrose Events Center, 1036 No 7th Street 7 pm (970) 249-2085 www.montrosehistory.org

MONTROSE AREA WOODTURNERS Montrose Area Woodturners meet second Saturdays 9 am. Chapter of the American Association of Woodturners. For location and information contact: Al Head 970-209-0981 or aheadaviation@outlook.com

NURSE FAMILY PARTNERSHIP-Breastfeeding Support Group on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of every month. An infant scale will also be available to check your baby's weight. Breastfeeding Support Group (Bring your questions and your family!) Montrose County Event Center (1036 North 7th Street Room 3) 10am - 12pm. Questions? Please call 970-252-5015.

BINGO EVERY FRIDAY, SATURDAY, SUNDAY at 7pm at the American Legion Post 24 Olathe doors open at 5:30. Sunday Bingo will start at 1:30pm. More info call Tom 970 260 8298.

MIRROR IMAGES: OUT & ABOUT



A view from above of Mrs. Clause' visit to Montrose on Sunday, Dec. 21. Photo is by B. Switzer.

READ ALL ABOUT IT



IN THE **MONROSE MIRROR**