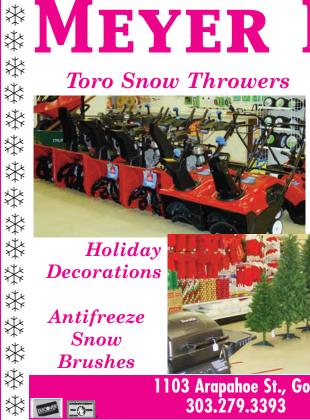
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Flu Shot Clinic Nov. 9th

Jefferson County Public Health has referred Passport Health to provide an **On Site Influenza Clinic at the Community Center**, **31528 Hwy 72** in Coal Creek Canyon. Passport Health's Registered Nurses are adept at giving shots quickly and can give as many as 40-plus immunizations in an hour.

9:00 am to 11:00 am Saturday, November 9th a nurse will be on site to screen participants, provide a vaccine information sheet and administer the vaccine, which is kept under monitored refrigeration. The cost is \$25/ per person/ shot and a consent form they provide will need your signature. There will be some nasal mist at \$40/ per vaccine. They take checks (made payable to Passport Health), exact cash and credit or debit cards.

There will not be any of the 'high dose vaccine' especially for at risk elders. They will only charge our CCCIA sponsor for the clinic if less than 20 people attend. So please plan to 'stay in the canyon' and stay healthy this flu season.

You may call me, Anita Wilks, at 303.642.0362 with any questions or to RSVP (they say they'll bring plenty). If you are a senior with transportation issues, please call for help- (Volunteers to transport seniors may be needed - call me if you're available to help someone near you).

In case of a snowstorm the clinic will be cancelled if we get a foot or more of snow the night before, otherwise I'll see you at the Community Center in our efforts to all stay healthy this winter. Try to wear a short-sleeved shirt under your coat/sweater to make it easier to get to the upper part of your arm.

Influenza is a serious disease that can lead to hospitalization and sometimes even death. Every flu season is different, and influenza infection can affect people differently. Even healthy people can get very sick from the flu and spread it to others. Over a period of 31 seasons between 1976 and 2007, estimates of flu-associated deaths in the United States range from a low of about 3,000 to a high of about 49,000 people. During a regular flu season, about 90 percent of deaths occur in people 65 years and older. The "seasonal flu season" in the United States can begin as early as October and last as late as May.

During this time, flu viruses are circulating in the population. An annual seasonal flu vaccine (either the flu shot or the nasal-spray flu vaccine) is the best way to reduce the chances that you will get seasonal flu and spread it to others. When more people get vaccinated against the flu, less flu can spread through that community. It takes approximately two weeks after you get the shot or nasal spray to provide you with adequate protection from infection.

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KGNU Launches AfterFM 24/7 Music Channel

On Monday morning October 21st music fans in Colorado had a new website and internet radio station to explore. KGNU Community Radio launched AfterFM, an all music channel available at http://www.afterfm.com

"When you say 'After' and 'FM' together it sounds ominous doesn't it?" KGNU Music Director, John Schaefer ponders the thought with a laugh. "Indeed! In the post-apocalyptic front range of the Rockies, the radio stations are all gone and the zombies are heading west... already halfway across Kansas!" Schaefer smiles, imagining the sci-fi landscape. "Actually it's not like that at all. It's way better... and a lot more useful."

AfterFM is a new all-music channel from KGNU. Accessible as an internet-only feed from afterfm.com, the station is a mix of the live music programming currently beaming out of the KGNU transmitters blended with new musical offerings that exist only online.

"People will still be able to hear the one-of-a-kind mix of creative music and essential news that has, I think, endeared the station to radio fans for the last 35 years," explains Schaefer. "The difference now is that if you only want music, we've created a space for you. I would encourage listeners to explore it all. Explore the wisdom of Alan Watts or the amazing information of Alternative Radio. But if you're really just looking for music, we have a place for you too."

The initial launch is only the start of what AfterFM hopes to bring listeners. However, the extra space in the weekly programming schedule is already being occupied by some unique offerings from some familiar hosts.

Dr. Martin was a KGNU favorite on Honky Tonk Heroes before a hectic work schedule pulled him away from his beloved Saturday morning timeslot. AfterFM allows for his return to laptops and mobile gizmos across the globe with Dr. Martin's Medicine Show - a weekly Americana music adventure that makes it's way onto AfterFM Sunday mornings following Roots & Branches.

Other homegrown favorites include Bayou Stomp - a look at classic Cajun & Zydeco music from host Dan Willging. The Skavenger teams up T Valladeres and Sam Fuqua of local band The Mighty Twisters for an exploration of the world of Ska.

Many of the areas top club nights and musical collectives are joining in as well. The initial list of contributors reads like a who's who of the Denver and Boulder music scene: the classic and Northern Soul collective The Mile High Soul Club, local Dubstep advocates Sub.Mission, the beats and crate-digging gems of DJs K-Nee, Low Key, and Big Styles of the So What! crew, the Boulder electronic institution that is Communikey, the lost classics of The Denver Vintage Reggae Society. The list continues to grow each week.

"AfterFM is for music lovers, there's no doubt. We're extremely excited about launching it. But I'm even more excited to see how it grows and expands. It's a big opportunity to create a destination for everything that KGNU brings to the community in terms of music." Schaefer continues, "We're hoping to make it easier to discover the live recordings we've been broadcasting with local bands over the last three decades, as well as the live sessions we have with national artists like Calexico, Matmos, or the Budos Band."

"But really, the exciting thing for us is exploring the new possibilities that these kinds of projects bring to re-invent community radio. This is a bold move from KGNU to explore what might be next on the broadcast horizon."





The History Of Veterans Day Nov. 11th

By Steve Paul Johnson, from Interment.net

It was known as "the War to end all Wars." The first world war is considered today as the event which has had the greatest social and political impact in the annals of human history. It has been estimated that more than 61.5 million soldiers from all nations took part in the war, of which 8.5 million were killed, 12.5 million received recoverable injuries, and 7 million were permanently injured.

The United States, which entered the war late, suffered among the fewest losses, at approximately 116,000. Nevertheless, the impact the war had upon Americans was great. President Wilson, who boasted that he would keep the United States out of the war, shocked the country with his request for war.

November 11, 1918 marked the official end of the war. One year later, President Wilson proclaimed November 11, 1919, as "Armistice Day." It was the first nationwide commemoration of the war.

On November 11, 1920, England laid to rest an unknown soldier in Westminster Abbey, a way to commemorate their

losses in the war. France had carried a similar act the same year at the Arc de Triomphe. On November 11, 1921, the United States followed-up with their own version. An unknown soldier, who had already been laid to rest at a cemetery in Europe, was selected and placed aboard a ship to Washington D.C. It was to fill the new "Tomb of the Unknown Soldier," It was a much hyped and heralded event that received press coverage from coast-to-coast. Thousands of people flocked to see the body lying in state in the Capitol rotunda. There was a funeral procession down Pennsylvania Avenue. Each state sent in floral arrangements to adorn the tomb. President Harding laid a wreath of flowers on the casket. Taps was played. The casket was placed into the tomb at 11:00am. The President requested that all flags be flown at half-mast.

Though this event had been performed a year earlier in England and France, it had a more powerful effect among Americans. That single unknown soldier not only symbolized America's losses, but also each American's losses and sacrifices in the war. In the years following, 27 states had responded to that emotional event by adopting laws declaring November 11 as a legal holiday. The United States Congress reacted by enacting a resolution on June 4, 1926, asking the President to issue a proclamation to display the nation's colors on all buildings on



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Highlander History

November 11. The resolution officially named the day, "Armistice Day." On May 13, 1938, Congress enacted a new law that made Armistice Day a national holiday.

In 1947, just 2 years after the end of World War II, Raymond Weeks, organized a "Veterans Day" parade in Birmingham, AL, to celebrate all of America's veterans. In 1954, Kansas Representative Edwin K. Rees introduced a bill that would change the purpose of Armistice Day to honor veterans of all wars. On June 1, 1954, President Eisenhower signed the bill into law, officially renaming Armistice Day to Veterans Day.

Later that same year, on October 8, Eisenhower issued a proclamation creating a new "Veterans Day National Committee" and naming the Administrator of the Department of Veterans Affairs as its coordinator. The Committee would be responsible for planning all national ceremonies and to set an example for state and local governments, as well as providing suggestions for Americans on how to celebrate Veterans Day.

On Memorial Day of 1958, two more unknown soldiers were reinterred alongside the unknown soldier of World War I. One was a casualty of World War II and the other one of the Korean War. In 1973, a law was passed to add another unknown soldier from the Vietnam war, but none could be found until 1984. In 1968, a law was passed to change the date of Veterans Day to the fourth Monday in October. This was done to give Americans a three-day

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weekend, thus affording them time to visit cemeteries, engage in ceremonies, and visit veteran's memorials. But other Americans felt that November 11 was too much of an important day to forget. Many states continued to observe November 11. In 1978, President Ford signed into law a bill that would restore November 11 as Veterans Day.

Today, the Veterans Day National Committee coordinates all federal ceremonies relating to Veterans Day. Every November 11, a ceremony is held in Arlington National Cemetery, at the "Tomb of the Unknown Soldier". The President recreates the original event by placing a wreath at the tomb, and Taps is played. The Committee coordinates similar ceremonies at "regional sites" across the country. The Committee also prepares a school kit describing how schools should celebrate Veterans Day. Since 1978, the Committee has been hosting a poster contest, whereby high school students are encouraged to create a poster commemorating Veterans Day. One winning poster from each state is selected, and from that group, one is selected as the national winner.

Sources for this article came from various documents published by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and from texts of actual laws and resolutions.



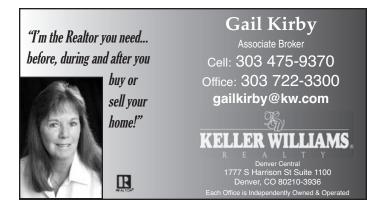
Dreamcatcher Direct Instruction Centers

By Iris Lee, Director of Dreamcatcher and Program Director of Legacy of Learning, mother of two.

Dreamcatcher Direct Instruction Centers has been successfully providing supplementary educational services to learners of all ages since 1997. Instructors teach basic academic skills: reading, spelling, math, writing and critical thinking skills. We also tutor in GED, ACT, SAT, foreign languages, advanced math, writing and science, and offer homework help. Using an evidence-based, data driven curriculum, Direct Instruction, we have consistently achieved a tremendous success rate with ALL students, regardless of their educational histories, behavioral

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patterns, or learning preferences.

Within a year, it became clear that we weren't able to make a difference in the lives of people who could not afford our services. So in 1998, Legacy of Learning was founded as a non-profit partner. A simple criterion was established (must meet the requirements of the Federal Free or Reduced Lunch Program and be two or more grade levels behind their current grade) along with a resolve to never turn anyone in need of help away from our doors. Legacy's mission is: "To provide personalized and effective supplementary education to accelerate learning, increase self-esteem, and positively and permanently alter the dynamics of each student in need in order to transform at-risk youth into youth of promise."

At the heart of our program is the Direct Instruction (DI) curriculum, a systematic, research-proven, multi-sensory teaching methodology that is fast-paced, teacher-directed and highly interactive. Direct Instruction is an evidence-based curriculum developed in the early 1960s. Its efficacy has been verified by over 3,000 studies worldwide. The programs offered by Legacy of Learning help students gain a firm grasp on basic academic skills, allowing them to break free from a persistent cycle of failure, dramatically improving their self-esteem, academic performance, and future prospects as productive, self-reliant members of our community.

During the last 15 years, our instructors have educated thousands of students. Our students are referred to us by local therapists, resource teachers, school principals, judges and other professionals and word of mouth. Each of our programs provides structured, personalized support to meet the needs of individual students in a variety of settings.

Each student begins with a series of national, norm-referenced standardized assessments to establish an accurate grade level. Then, the student is precisely placed at the appropriate level in one of our DI programs: Corrective Reading, Critical Thinking, Reasoning and Writing, Spelling or Math: The Corrective Reading program provides informational reading selections. The four levels of Corrective Reading emphasize guided practice in reading sentences to stories to textbooks so that vocabulary, rate, fluency, accuracy and comprehension can be developed. Each level emphasizes using sound combinations to 'decode' difficult or unknown words. This process is ideal for reversing poor or sloppy reading habits



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PAGE 8 November 2013

common among low performing readers.

The Critical Thinking Skills (Comprehension) program is ideal for students that may be proficient in logical reasoning but have not mastered reasoning skills to the point where applying them is automatic. These students need extra help with learning new concepts, understanding written instructions, reading comprehension, and the mechanics of writing. Critical Thinking Skills starts with oral language and teaches deductions, inductions, analogies, vocabulary and inferences. The second level expands into basic evidence, contradictions, classifications, body systems, economic rules and more vocabulary, emphasizing life skills, reading for information, analyzing arguments and higher-order reasoning. Skills such as paragraph writing, story writing and following both written and oral directions are also added.

The Reasoning and Writing program has six levels. The beginning levels cover all basic skills: sentence development, capitalization and punctuation, editing, reporting, inferring, relevance, and expanded writing. The intermediate and advanced levels include parts of speech and sentence analysis, clarity, inaccurate and unclear directions, misleading and inaccurate claims, arguments, passage writing, parallel construction, vocabulary, descriptions, and grammar.

Spelling teaches over 600 morphographs (the smallest parts of a word that have meaning) and the principles of combining them. The strategies that are taught enable the students to spell thousands of words, including the most commonly misspelled high school and college words.

Math lessons are both remedial and developmental in nature, teaching all of the basic facts and computation skills from basic addition and subtraction up to Algebra. We know that difficulty in school often leads to difficulty in life. Our students, many of whom have low self esteem inside and outside the classroom, learn that they are capable of significant academic achievement, and this dynamic change affords them the opportunity to be successful, contributing members of society. Our program makes a profound and permanent difference in the lives of children, their families and our community.





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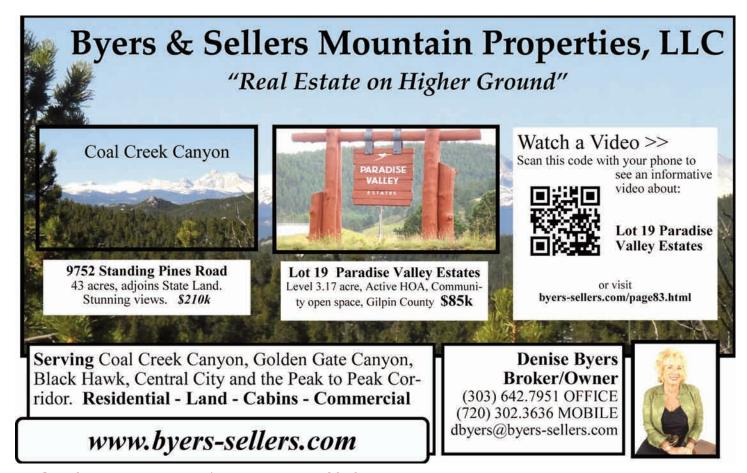
Buffalo Ceremony Held in Yellowstone, Despite Government Shutdown

National Parks across the U.S. were closed to the public since October 1st, when the federal government shut down amidst a political deadlock in Washington, D.C. Despite the closures, buffalo opened the gates to Yellowstone National Park on an afternoon last month.

Led by Blackfeet tribal member and spiritual leader of the Blackfeet Confederacy, James St. Goddard, members of Buffalo Field Campaign and some visitors from afar entered the west entrance of Yellowstone National Park to gather and pray for the well-being and recovery of America's last wild buffalo.

St. Goddard approached Park Rangers to request access to Yellowstone National Park in order to exercise his First Amendment rights through a traditional prayer for the buffalo.





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According to National Park Service management policies, "The American Indian Religious Freedom Act reaffirms the First Amendment rights of Native Americans to access National Park System lands for the exercise of their traditional religious practices."

Park Rangers responded that St. Goddard's buffalo prayer request would have to be run up the "chain of command." St. Goddard said the ceremony must be held before the coming winter for the Central Interior buffalo herds that have not recovered since Yellowstone National Park and the state of Montana slaughtered over half the herd during the winter of 2007-2008.

The Central Interior herds have also been heavily impacted by intensive hunting from the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, Nez Perce, and to a lesser extent, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and Montana hunters. This summer, the Park estimated 1,400 buffalo in the Central Interior - a disturbing and dramatic decline from the 3,500 buffalo that inhabited the region in 2005. Some scientists consider the Central Interior buffalo genetically distinct from the Northern Range buffalo.

While we waited at the entrance, more Park Rangers arrived, as did a group of elder ladies from Ohio, and a

teacher and his students from Utah. The latter approached St. Goddard and his entourage to find out what was happening.

Word finally came down from the Park's "chain of command" that non-tribal members be excluded from entering the Park to participate in the ceremony. That command was rejected and the negotiation finally concluded with approval from Park Rangers to open the gate.

With a Park Ranger escort, the determined company made their way to Fountain Flats to hold their prayer in the presence of trumpeter swans, curious ravens, Yellowstone's geysers, and buffalo bulls grazing along the Firehole River. When the most powerful government in the world was shut down and the gates to America's National Parks closed, the spirit of protecting the buffalo prevailed over these obstacles.

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proliferation of toxic molds. The official EPA position on mold states: "All molds have the potential to cause health effects. Mold can produce allergens that trigger allergic reactions or even asthma. Others are known to produce potent toxins." (WWW.EPA.gov/mold)

Children, elders and anyone with a compromised immune system are particularly at risk. Even our pets may be adversely affected. Spores inhaled into the lungs may result in deadly, pneumonia.

The Mayo Clinic, in 1997, found that 95% of the 37 million Americans suffering with chronic sinusitis symptoms do so because of exposure to mold. "Anywhere there is dust, dirt, cellulose, including paper, wood or cardboard, or any food source, all you need is one mold spore and moisture for mold to grow. Essential oils offer humanity a powerful, all- natural means of addressing the problems of toxic mold and mildew." Edward Close, PHD, P.E.

A healthcare professional, whose home had water damage, paid \$16,000 for "mold remediation." Two days after the treatment, a petri dish in her bathroom grew mold! She apologized to visiting friends for the overpowering smell of industrial chemicals and bleach. She held her meetings outdoors in the gardens.

Young Living Essential Oils produces a blend of therapeutic grade essential oils proven to be effective in killing molds. After diffusing Thieves blend oil, the home was free of molds. The combination of oils used in Thieves

> blend has for centuries been known to protect against pathogens including those responsible for the Black Plague. The recipe is on file in the British Archives.

> Young Living has offered support to any Young Living members impacted by the Colorado flooding. Available is a free product with free shipping. Choices are: Thieves Household Cleaner, Lemon Essential Oil or Purification Blend Essential Oil. All of these products will assist in flood recovery without any chemicals.

For more information on Young Living's essential oils, the lifeblood of plants - call Violet Aandres 303-642-3356 or Connie Reukauf 303-642-3855 or visit Violet.vibrantscents.com



PAGE 12 November 2013

Thistles - Flood Recovery - Turf Field - VOTE

Dear Editor.

I am always sorry to see an article on controlling noxious weeds say that it is useless to pull thistles. I know, from 10 years of pulling thistles, that this is a good alternative to the use of poisons. Not fast, not an immediate eradication, but definitely effective if a person is persistent. I pull thistles and other noxious weeds every year. In areas where I used to pull thousands of thistles, I now search carefully to find and pull half a dozen. Pulling thistles is a wonderful way to spend an early fall day. We live here in the foothills because we love our mountain properties. Go weed pulling. Look at your wild flowers. Check your trees to see that the pine bark beetle repellant you sprayed in June and July did the job. Watch the currents and berries ripening. And pull a thistle in bloom to know that you have prevented thousands of seeds from spreading and that you have gotten rid of one unwanted plant. Just remember, your gardening gloves are inadequate. It takes leather to go up against a thistle! Shari Owen

Dear Editor,

My husband and I lived at 34106 Gap Road from 1977-1979. We've been following the flood related news and I

just happened to stumble upon your magazine's site. Our hearts are still in our canyon, and now that I know about your magazine, we will be able to keep up with what is going on out there. Thank you for posting your content online!

Best wishes to all canyonites recovering from the flooding. Donna Atkins

Starburst Award - The Colorado Lottery has awarded a 2013 Starburst Community Award to Coal Creek Canyon Park and Recreation District for *(Continued on next page.)*







Highlander Letters

excellence in the use of Lottery dollars for the Turf Field at Coal Creek Canyon K-8 School. The Coal Creek Canyon Park and Recreation District utilized a Lottery-funded Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) grant of \$127,454 and Lottery-funded Conservation Trust Fund dollars of \$4,685 for the project.

Prior to the project the playing fields at the Coal Creek Canyon K-8 School were made up of hard-packed gravel, which resulted in many injuries by children playing at recess and during organized sporting events. Parents felt a safe playing field was needed. Years of planning and many volunteer hours have given the community an U10-sized playing field that could previously only be found by leaving the canyon. Children can now run around, dive, slide and fall without having to suffer cuts and bruises. Anyone can play pick-up soccer, football or Ultimate Frisbee game after school hours. For the first time, Challenger Sports held a soccer camp in the canyon after attracting the interest of British Soccer Camp. The camp proved quite popular and was sold out. This kind of opportunity could never have happened without the dedication of the community.

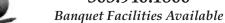
The Colorado Lottery Starburst Community Awards recognize excellence in the use of Lottery proceeds in community projects implemented to enhance a community's environment.

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In fiscal year 2013 alone, the Lottery distributed \$135.6 million in proceeds. Since its creation 30 years ago, the Lottery has returned more than \$2.5 billion to the state.

The Colorado Lottery is a division of the Colorado Department of Revenue. Colorado Lottery proceeds are distributed to three primary beneficiaries: Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO), Conservation Trust Fund and Colorado Parks and Wildlife. These organizations then provide grants and direct funding for parks, recreation, open space acquisition, trails, wildlife and conservation education.

Dear Boulder County Voters,

Equipment testing completed for 2013 election-Boulder County - Ballots and equipment to be used in Boulder County's Nov. 5 Coordinated Election passed a required Logic and Accuracy Test (LAT) held recently. Participants representing local municipalities and districts took part in testing at the Boulder County Clerk & Recorder's Office. The tests confirmed the equipment's ability to properly read ballots and correctly tabulate votes.

The LAT also checked and confirmed that ballots are properly printed for the election and the equipment is accurately calibrated to process ballots. The test included paper, electronic and audio ballots.

Results and test records will be available for review at BoulderCountyVotes.org Each piece of equipment used during the LAT has been cleared of test votes and reset to zero, ensuring the equipment is ready to count live ballots





for the coordinated election.

Visit BoulderCountyVotes.org to check your registration or learn more about the election, and call 303-413-7740 or email Vote@BoulderCountyVotes.org if you have questions.

Key Dates for the 2013 Coordinated Election: Week of Oct. 15: Ballots will be sent to all active, registered voters. Monday, Oct. 28: Last day to register to vote online for the coordinated election. New this year, voters may register in person at a Voter Service and Polling Center up to and including Election Day.

Tuesday, Nov. 5: Election Day. All ballots must be in the hands of the Boulder County Clerk & Recorder's Office by 7 p.m.

Dear Readers,

Colorado Congressional Delegation and Governor to mark Emergency Transportation Funding. Denver, CO - Monday, October 20, 2013 at 10:30AM MST, Colorado U.S. Senators Michael Bennet and Mark Udall, Congressmen Ed Perlmutter, Jared Polis, and Cory Gardner, Governor John Hickenlooper and local state and county officials gathered in Coal Creek Canyon to highlight Colorado's recent access to emergency transportation funds to help rebuild and repair roads, bridges, and highways that were damaged from September's floods.

Colorado's Congressional delegation - House members and Senators, Democrats and Republicans - fought hard to secure a provision in the recent Senate bill reopening the government that lifted the cap on how much emergency transportation funding Colorado could access. Instead of \$100 million, Colorado can now access up to \$450 million.

In Coal Creek Canyon, the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and its contractor, Lawrence Construction CO., have been working diligently over the past several weeks on State Highway 72 to provide a temporary roadway by December 1, 2013. The emergency transportation funds provided in the bill can be used to support these projects, and similar ones throughout the state.

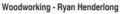
WHAT: Highlighting access to emergency transportation funding WHERE: CDOT Maintenance Yard, 25030 Hwy 72 in Golden (Take Hwy 72 west and travel approximately 2.5 miles past Highway 93) WHEN: Monday, October 20, 2013 at 10:30AM MST.

CDOT was to provide transportation to the site in passenger vans and a project engineer, as well as representatives from the contractor, will be able to answer technical questions. This should allow the press and our congressional representatives to see the damage along Coal Creek Canyon and the repair work being done.

The Mountain Artisans Guild of Coal Creek Canyon invites you to the 13th Annual

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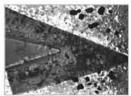


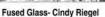


Jewelry - Sammie Kinder

Pottery - Jamie Kirkpatrick

Fiber-Helen Keen







Fiber - Dede Downing

Friday, November 22nd

6:00pm to 9:00pm

Saturday, November 23rd

10:00am to 4:00pm

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Proposed Farm Bill Cuts Food Aid Programs

From Katie Mast

If the House has its way with the nearly expired farm bill, \$40 billion would be cut from the federal food stamps program over the next ten years. These cuts could mean that the 9 million Westerners who rely on the program will find it harder than ever to put meals on the table.

Every five years or so, Congress has the chance to update the 1,000 page farm bill, which also gives farm subsidies and funds conservation projects and school lunches. The last version, passed in 2008, is set to expire on Oct. 1 if Congress doesn't act. A major sticking point is how much money to put toward the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program, or SNAP, which helps feed nearly 15 percent of Americans. Almost half of SNAP recipients are children; the rest are seniors, the unemployed, and disabled adults.

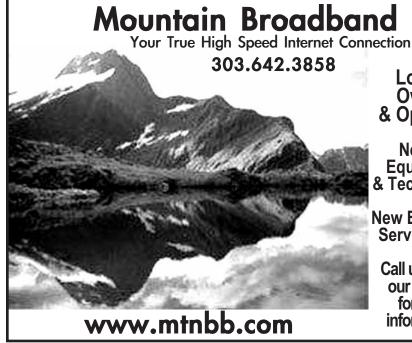
Since the 2008 farm bill was passed, the number of food

stamp recipients has increased by roughly 45 percent, from 28 million to 47 million people. Benefit payments have increased even more quickly, from \$34 billion to nearly \$80 billion nationally. These increases were caused largely by the recession as unemployment and poverty rates increased and more people qualified for help, reports the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a respected D.C. thinktank.

In addition, the Center reports that SNAP is at an all-time high for efficiency and accuracy, with waste and fraud dropping consistently over the past 15 years. The House's proposed cuts would tighten restrictions on food stamps, particularly on who is eligible for aid and for how long. It would allow states to add work requirements, drug testing, and limit indefinite aid for working-age, able-bodied adults with no children. The Senate has also proposed cuts to SNAP, but at one-tenth the amount that the House proposed.

The contention about how much funding to allot to SNAP- which falls mainly along party lines - is a major obstacle in passing the new farm bill. In addition to federal food assistance, which was rolled into the bill in 1973, the farm bill also includes subsidies and crop insurance for farmers. These programs are far from perfect as well. Critics note that large payments often go to corporate farms that could easily weather downturns without federal handouts, and that the programs are fraught with abuses. One of the greatest ironies of the House's proposed version of the bill is that it cuts food access for the poor while increasing farm subsidies - which already reward the wealthiest farmers.

The proposed House cuts would hit hardest in Western states like New Mexico, where one in five people



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PAGE 16 November 2013

lives below the poverty line and receives some amount of federal food assistance. (Nationally, about one in seven people live at or below the poverty line.) In some of the state's poorest counties, far more people rely on federal food aid. In Cibola County west of Albuquerque, 31% of residents receive federal food aid, and in McKinley County in the northwest quarter, it's 36%.

Reductions to SNAP benefits will not only hurt the recipients, says Jason Riggs, SNAP coordinator with Road Runner Food Bank, but will also put increased pressure on charities that supply food. During the recession, Road Runner Food Bank, based in Albuquerque,

saw a 50% jump in need, and the demand for food remains high. Riggs says that his organization is already supplementing food for people who rely on federal aid. For many people, monthly SNAP benefits last less than three weeks, he says. After that, they either skip meals or rely on food bank donations.

With the country focused on the deadline for a national budget and arguments over the debt ceiling, it's unlikely that the House and Senate will be able to agree on updates to the farm bill before it expires. The Senate, whose proposed bill recommended \$4 billion in cuts to SNAP, says it will not approve the House's \$40 billion reduction, and the White House has promised to veto the bill should it

reach the President's desk.

But if cuts to the SNAP program do get made, it could hit low-income Westerners hard, especially families. "Everybody can get together about feeding the children," says Riggs. "But for every child in a food insecure household, there is a mom or a dad skipping meals so their kids can eat."

Katie Mast is an editorial intern at High Country News. "Cross-posted from High Country News, hcn.org. The author is solely responsible for the content."



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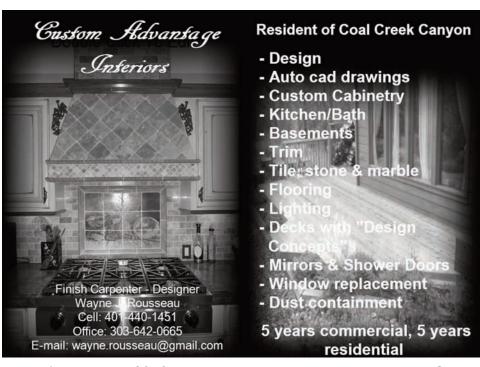
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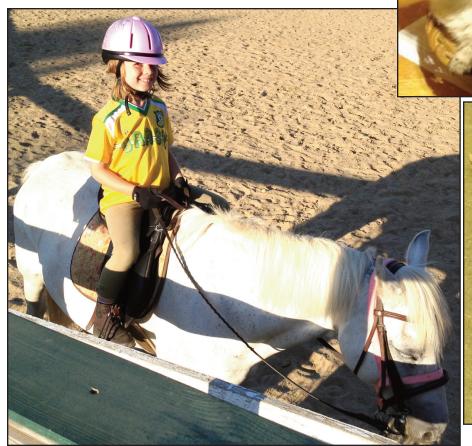


Animals & Their Companions

Left: Aly riding Cameo.

Top: Cat in a basket.

Right: Jack and Below: Addie.



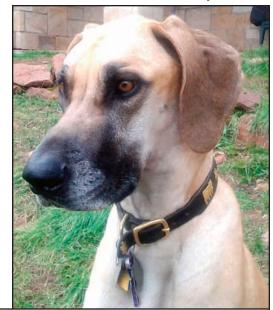




2013

Animals & Their Companions









Top Left: One cover horse
with pasture buddies.
Top Right: Amiko.
Bottom Left:
Smiling Corgi's.

Bottom Right: Lucy.



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Look Where You Want To Go

By Melissa E. Johnson

Why would you give your precious life energy...
to something you [don't] want?
~Dr. Wayne Dyer

While learning to ride her motorcycle, my mother decided to practice in their neighborhood where she found plenty of hills and stop signs. Having made the neighborhood loop, she topped the hill and came to a stop, preparing to make a left turn. That's when she saw it-the neighbor's mailbox just across the way-and though she tried to will herself to not look at the mailbox and, instead, focus on the road before her, as she turned left, eyes still on the mailbox, she veered off course and crashed...into the neighbor's mailbox; the very thing she wanted to avoid.

There is a golden rule of motorcycle riding that says "look where you want to go." Though she knew it in theory, my mother learned this the hard way. There

are many long and complicated theoretical reasons that this rule of riding might be true, but none that make any real sense except the idea of target fixation, which says, in essence, that what you focus on expands.

And so it is in our every day lives. How often do we





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repeat some aspect of the past or dwell on the negative parts of our situation and then find ourselves faced with more of what we don't want, instead of giving attention to what we would most like to create and then taking small steps each day to make that vision our reality? Maybe we're unhappy in our relationship or we dislike our job or we don't like the extra weight we're carrying around like a spare tire, yet instead of creating a positive plan of how to get from here to there we focus in on what we don't like, complaining or feeling sorry for ourselves, repeating the same bad habits, or avoiding the discomfort of change, and so we keep driving our proverbial motorcycles around and crashing into the same mailboxes.

It is impossible to be angry and laugh at the same time.

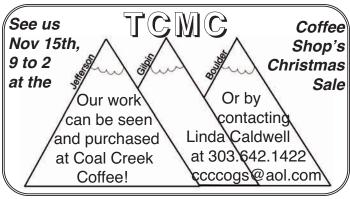
Anger and laughter are mutually exclusive
and you have the power to choose either.

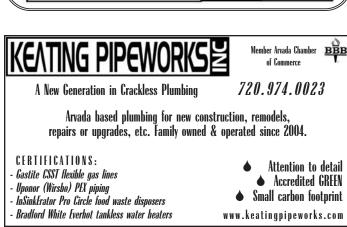
~Wayne Dyer

Choice is the essence of our free will, and it is through our choices that we direct the course of our lives. While we may disagree with the actions of others and even dislike our own circumstances, we have the right, power and opportunity to make choices every day-the attitude we adopt, how we respond to the world around us, where we place our attention, the thoughts we entertain, what we take responsibility for, the meaning we give to the events of our lives, and what or to whom we give our power. It's all energy, and the lightness or heaviness of that energy will determine much about our physical, mental and spiritual health.

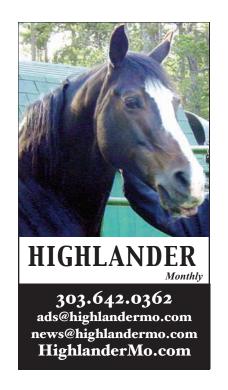
Take another look. Do you really want to go there?

Melissa is a writer, photographer, artist and lawyer. Read more on her blog at www.HeartLaw.blogspot.com.











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The Future Is Not Now

By Pepper Trail

Remember that kid from elementary school, the one with the terrible depth perception? That was me. I fell down stairs, missed the next rung on the monkey bars, and could always be counted on to drop the easiest pop fly. But I eventually grew out of that, and these days my depth perception is probably as good as the next guy's. My spatial depth perception, that is. On the other hand, my ability to perceive and react to the depths of time remains terrible - just like everyone else's.

Lately, I've come to believe that humanity's poor timedepth perception explains our lack of environmental coordination. Basing all our plans on a paltry few decades of experience - or at most a century or two of records - we ignore the clear lessons of the deep past and insist on building and rebuilding in floodplains and fire-prone

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forests. We dam rivers and drain wetlands with little thought for the long-term consequences.

We eliminate enormous populations of passenger pigeons and bison, overfish stock after stock, and still are stunned each time it happens again. There's no question that time has depth. Planet Earth is billions of years old. Events like the advance and retreat of ice sheets are so brief that they hardly register on the geological time scale, which is measured in eons and eras, each many millions of years long.

By comparison, the Earth's spatial dimensions are trivial. I will never climb Mount Everest, but on my Saturday hikes I often average five and a half miles, which is about the height of that highest peak above sea level. I just have to imagine going up a mountain, instead of across a landscape. Plus, we have plenty of other tools at our disposal - cars and ships and airplanes - that allow us to take the measure of the world, to travel to its remotest corners.

By contrast, our experience of time can't be mechanically enhanced. It is simply gained the painful and old-fashioned way: by getting older, day by day and year by year. Of course, we can improve our time-depth perception by using science and imagination. The insights into the history of the Earth provided by geology, paleontology and evolutionary biology are amazing.

It has been millions of years since dinosaurs walked the Earth, but every child holds a vivid imaginative picture of those incredible creatures, thanks to the painstaking work of scientists. And yet, how little thought do we grownups spare for our planet's past! Against all evidence, we believe

that the world we grew up with is the norm, and that any changes we notice are mere temporary fluctuations in the status quo that will pass. This belief in a stable natural world has never been less accurate - or more dangerous than it is today.

Climate scientists and ecologists have no doubt that climate change, or, more aptly, climate chaos, will transform the planet's habitats in the coming decades. But they have surprisingly little confidence in their ability to predict what the world to come will be like. Indeed, climate change ecologists commonly use an ominous-sounding term: "the no-analog future." That is, they believe that the future world will resemble nothing that we've ever seen before. This is in sharp contrast to how most



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of us picture the future.

To the extent that we accept the likelihood of any climate-driven changes at all, we expect simple northward shifts of the habitats we know. Let's say temperatures in San Francisco will come to resemble those in Southern California today. Well, then, we expect that the plant life of the Bay Area will become more like that around Los Angeles. Unfortunately for this orderly picture, studies of past environments suggest that major climate changes shuffle species into new and unpredictable arrangements. The associations that seem so natural and permanent today, say, between pines and oaks in the California foothills, or between sagebrush and juniper in the Great Basin, may fall apart in the future.

What new arrangements will come ... well, if we think we know, we are kidding ourselves. To prepare for this chaotic future world, the best we can do is to try to slow the pace of climate change and preserve as many species as we can, to give nature a chance to adapt with as little dislocation as possible. Back in elementary school, when my depth perception finally started to improve, I figured out that to catch that pop fly, I had to keep my eye on the ball and move to where it was going to come down.

As environmental changes come hard and fast, will we be able to do something similar - anticipate and adapt and keep our eye on the rapidly moving ball? Let's hope so, because our very future will depend on our depth perception - of time.

Pepper Trail is a contributor to Writers on the Range, a service of High Country News (hcn.org). He is a biologist and writer who lives in Ashland, Oregon.



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The Most Isolated Spot In Each State

From Krista Langlois

Let there be no mistake: Rebecca and Ryan Means don't hate roads. "We enjoy driving around on them," Ryan says. "But what we're saying is we have plenty. Maybe as a country we should think about not laying any more down."

Rebecca, 40, and Ryan, 41, are conservation biologists from Florida, and they're on a mission to document the most remote spot in each of the 50 states, measured by its distance from a road. Once they pinpoint the spots using GIS mapping technology, they visit each one by human power and record what they find: Are there non-native species? Evidence of human activity? Trash?

When I heard about their project, I imagined Rebecca and Ryan bushwhacking through thick forest for days. But what their observations reveal most is the aggressive encroachment of human development on wild places. Of the 22 remote spots they've visited so far, the average distance from a road has been only 5.9 miles, and the average distance from a trail 0.5 miles. Ninety-six percent of the remote spots are on public land or conservation easements. Manmade noise from airplanes or motors was recorded at 82% of the sites, and cell phone service was available at 59%.

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As they're only now getting to the Western states, those statistics will likely change. But though the West generally has more undeveloped land than other regions, America's most remote locales aren't all here. Florida, with its reputation for being overrun by golf courses and retirees, boasts a spot on an island 17 miles from a road - nearly as remote as the spot 18 miles removed in Montana's Bob Marshall Wilderness. And believe it or not, Louisiana may claim the most remote location in the lower 48, some 30 miles from the nearest road, and again on an island.

While Ryan and Rebecca measure remoteness in quantifiable terms - calculations that can be repeated in the future to see how things change - they've come to realize the feeling of being removed is largely qualitative. "One of the most frequent comments we get ... is that the remote spot doesn't feel the most remote," Rebecca says. "For example, in New Jersey, people think about the pine barrens as the wild area, and actually the most remote spot was a barrier island from which you could see the skyline of Atlantic City."

Ryan and Rebecca's 4-year-old daughter Skyla joins them on each trip, bringing a child's joy of discovery but also adding to the challenge. Ryan carries the gear and food - his pack was 70 pounds on their recent trip in Montana - while Rebecca carries Skyla. Finding the right spot is difficult too: Maps aren't always up to date, and satellite imagery frequently reveals private logging or mining roads

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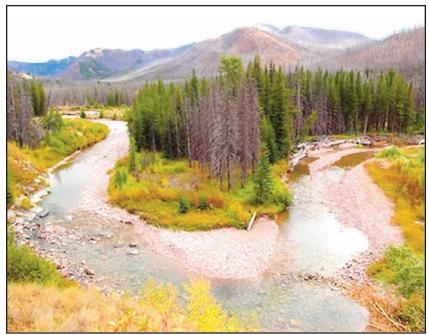
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Highlander Wilderness



that force them to recalculate.

And then there's the issue of publicity. People both online and in person have pleaded with the Means not to reveal their state's most remote spot for fear of spoiling it. So far, the Means haven't released anything more than vague locations, but they eventually plan to make their research fully public.

Most of the spots are on public land "owned by the American people," Ryan explains. "We have no desire to

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keep (them) from the American people." Plus, adds Rebecca, many are choked by trees and lacking vistas, not on a mountaintop or beneath a waterfall. "I don't think there's going to be a mass exodus to these places."

Rebecca and Ryan may come across as anti-road warriors. And while they do believe that roads are responsible for a host of ecological ills, from the spread of invasive species to the interruption of habitat, the goal of "Project Remote" isn't necessarily to halt development. Rather, it's to encourage people to get outside and to call attention to how quickly the U.S. is losing its wild places.

"The landscape of our country seems to change more and more rapidly," Ryan says. "I don't think we as a society are doing a good enough job measuring and monitoring that change and figuring out the impact."

Pictured here: Montana's most remote spot, in the Bob Marshall Wilderness. Follow their progress and learn more at www.remotefootprints.org.

Krista Langlois is an editorial intern at High Country News. Follow her @KristaLanglois2. "Cross-posted from hcn.org. The author is solely responsible for the content."



The Power Of Emotional Support

By Tracy Reseigh

Mike Greenberg is the co-host of ESPN's Mike and Mike, a morning sports talk show. His debut fiction novel

All You Could Ask For is a story about breast cancer. All You Could Ask For is the story about three separate women and their individual breast cancer journeys. Greenberg, the "king of guy talk," writes this book in the voices of the three women. Brooke, Samantha and Katherine do not know each other when the story begins. But by the end they discover how powerful a medicine friendship can be in their respective battles with breast cancer.

The novel begins with each of the three women receiving their diagnosis. Brooke is a stay at home mom with two kids and a husband who still thinks she is the most beautiful girl in the room. Samantha is a 28 year old TV executive who while on her honeymoon discovers that her husband is already cheating on her. Katherine is a Wall Street banker who works for her ex-boyfriend of almost 20 years.

In the first part of this book, Greenberg succinctly introduces the characters, gives the reader an outline of their lives and then describes how they all discover their breast cancer. Part two then tells about how they choose to deal with the diagnosis/treatment of their cancer. Their paths are distinctly different except for one thing, they all

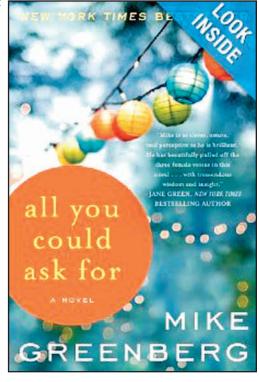
choose to visit an online support group for women with breast cancer.

The online support group is where the characters'

journeys intersect. Once they connect in the support group, the women develop special bonds while they discuss the choices they have made with regard to their cancer, their families and the rest of their lives. The women realize that they do not agree on how each person is handling their treatment, but what they do agree on is that support is the best combatant to their disease.

The Library Journal calls *All You Could Ask For* "a must read for fans of smart women's fiction." I will echo that, but I will also say that the reason I read this book is because I'm a fan of Greenberg's sports show. He really is a "man's man," but the way he writes in the voice of these three different women is surprisingly effective. Greenberg's story is about Brooke, Samantha and Katherine. However, when I was done with this

book it could have been about my aunt, my friend or my sister-in-law, who have all fought this battle. Published by William Morrow, *All You Could Ask For* is available in paperback at Amazon or Barnes and Noble for \$11.56. One final note, 100% of the profits from the purchase of this book will go to the V Foundation For Cancer Research.







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Bills That Make A Difference

From District 16 Senator Jeanne Nicholson, regarding her work last session:

Preventing Catastrophic Wildfires - Since 2002, more than 38,000 damaging wildfires occurred in Colorado and in 2012 alone, there were more than 4,000 wild land fires in Colorado. This is why this session I sponsored an entire package of bills to prevent catastrophic wildfire to protect thousands of Coloradans, particularly those living in the Wildland Interface Area.

Senate Bill 82 - Wildfires Interim Committee
- This bipartisan legislation was recommended by
the Lower North Fork Fire Commission, on which I
served over the interim. This bill creates a permanent
committee to review and propose legislation or other policy
changes to prevent catastrophic wildfire.

Senate Bill 83 - Prescribed Burning Program - This bipartisan legislation requires the Division of Fire Prevention and Control to implement a prescribed burning program. This bill will allow local agencies to enter into agreements for fuel reduction initiatives and it establishes policies for dealing with fires that escaped from prescribed burns.

Senate Bill 269 - Wildfire Mitigation Grant Program - This legislation creates the wildfire risk reduction grant program to help fund wildfire mitigation efforts.

Senate Bill 270 - Wildfire Preparedness - This legislation designates a funding source for the wildfire emergency response fund. This fund, at the governor's discretion, allows for increases in the amount of aerial firefighting resources and hand crews to be made available to local governments during a catastrophic

wildfire.

Carrate

Senate Bill 273 - Biomass Incentives - This legislation incentivizes the use of biomass as a valuable renewable energy source and as a way to mitigate the risk of wildfire.

House Bill 1012 - Wildfire Mitigation - This bill continues income tax deductions for landowners who perform wildfire mitigation measures on their property.

House Bill 1031 - All Hazards Resource Mobilization - This act creates a statewide all hazards resource mobilization plan.

Consumer Protection - It is vitally important that we ensure that businesses operate fairly and honestly and that Coloradans can be sure they

are getting what they pay for. These bills will help citizens throughout the state, particularly the thousands of victims

of catastrophic wildfire.

Senate Bill 182 - Resale Time-Share
Deceptive Trade Practices - This legislation
corrects current Colorado statutes that don't
provide adequate consumer protection for
individuals who whish to sell their time-share.

House Bill 1225 - Homeowners Insurance Reform - This legislation creates additional protections for Homeowner's Insurance Policy Holders to ensure they get the coverage they deserve.

Your opinions are important, you can share them with me at Jeanne.nicholson.senate@state.co.us - you can find out more at www.senatorjeannenicholson.com - you may volunteer to help or donate for my re-election.

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Killing & Grinning

By Tovar Cerulli

The image is familiar: A hunter crouches beside a dead deer or elk, grinning into the camera. What do we make of this picture? We all see the hunter's smile. We all see the beautiful animal, now dead. And we all recognize some connection between the two. From there, though, interpretations can diverge wildly. Critics of hunting are apt to see mindless brutality. The hunter has killed, appears to have enjoyed killing, and now gloats over a carcass. Veteran hunters are apt to see celebration. Through skill, effort and luck, the hunter has succeeded and is justifiably proud. Perhaps the chasm is too wide to be bridged.

Yet, as our national conversation about food draws the public eye to hunting, I hope we can pause to reflect on our own perceptions. In my twenties, as a vegan, I was repulsed by the pleasure hunters apparently took in killing. Two decades later, as a hunter, I understand that people enjoy hunting for reasons that have nothing to do with killing. I also understand that hunters experience a wide variety of emotions when they do kill. "I feel very excited, but I

always feel sad," one deer hunter told me during an interview conducted as part of my master's thesis research. "It's a mixture of awe and sadness. It's a bunch of things."

Such an emotional jumble may sound contradictory. But each feeling was about something different: excitement at her success and the intensity of the hunt, sadness at the deer's death, awe at mortality and the beauty of the animal. For those who deplore all hunting, as I once did, it's tempting to dismiss such distinctions. When we are certain an act is evil, explanations sound like subterfuge. Hunters can blather all they want, we tell ourselves. They still grin at us hideously from beside dead animals.

Their talk of complex feelings is mere camouflage for their murderous lust. For those who hunt, as I now do, it's tempting to dismiss such hostility. When we are certain we have been misjudged, criticisms sound like nonsense. Anti-hunters can blather all they want, we tell ourselves; they condemn us without making any real effort to understand what we do or why. As hunters, though, we share a basic belief with our critics: There is moral meaning in how one feels about killing.

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Among the deer hunters I know, some say that feelings of sadness and reverence are important. All - even the least sentimental - say that killing should not be treated lightly. "It's powerful," one hunter-education instructor told me. "You've taken an animal's life. It needs to be done with respect." They may express joy when they succeed in a hunt. But experiencing glee in the killing itself? That, they find disturbing.

In 2007, Field & Stream columnist Bill Heavey slammed a hunter who, in an online forum, described his sadistic longing to taunt a dying deer with a touchdown-style dance. Everyone I know, hunter and non-hunter alike, agreed with Heavey. We were all disgusted by the idea of someone - hunter, farmer, or otherwise - feeling such obscene glee about killing. That glee is what many critics see in pictures of hunters grinning beside deer and elk. They see it even more readily in videos of hunters whooping and high-fiving after a kill.

Such images, like words, are symbols to which we each ascribe significance. You and I can look at the same photograph, or read the same story, without perceiving the same meanings. If you are the hunter, the image will

probably seem positive. But not necessarily. When the writer Michael Pollan saw a picture of himself with the wild pig he had killed, he said he felt ashamed - not of the killing but of his joyful grin. Such images, he observed, "are a jolting dispatch from the deep interior of an experience that does not easily travel across the borders of modern life."

Living along those borders as I do these days, I am still sometimes jarred by such pictures. Yet a photo tells me little about a hunter's feelings, let alone his morals. A friend once sent me a picture of himself crouching beside a dead deer. The image did not tell me how many years of persistence led to the killing of this first buck. It did not tell me how my friend felt, kneeling on land his grandparents had worked. It did not tell me how grateful he was for the luck, the instant kill, and the venison for his family. His e-mail told me these things, though, and I understood his smile. He was saying grace.

Tovar Cerulli is a contributor to Writers on the Range, a service of High Country News (hcn.org). He is the author of The Mindful Carnivore: A Vegetarian's Hunt for Sustenance.

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Mountain Lion In The Crosshairs

By Pete Letheby

It was just a few years ago that Nebraskans were awe-struck by the mountain lion's return to the state after a century's absence. Now we're getting ready to hunt them down. There are only an estimated 22 cougars currently roaming the state's 77,000 square miles. Yet that's enough to justify a hunting season, at least according to the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

The decision wasn't a surprise. The nine commissioners were appointed by a like-minded governor who leans over backward to please the state's agriculture interests, which demand that any potential threat to their livestock and corn - however minuscule or exaggerated - must be eliminated. "We got along fine without them for 100 years," said one anti-cougar Nebraska farmer. "We don't want them."

"God forbid they don't eat a child," wrote another over-excited rural Nebraskan. "Remember, people, these are killers, not pets, and you are on their food list." So far, humans have not provided much food for mountain lions. Statistics vary, but there have been between 12 and 20 fatal

cougar attacks in the United States in the past 125 years - about one every

six to 10 years. There is no documented case of a cougar ever stalking or threatening a human in Nebraska. There is no record of a cougar even killing a cow or any other livestock in the state.

Nebraskans might be wiser to look over their shoulders for other, more deadly (if less dramatic-looking) creatures.

Those bees and wasps buzzing outside a barn or porch? They kill 40 to 50 Americans each year. That brown recluse or black widow nestled in

one of your home's ceiling corners? You are 40 to 50 times more likely to die from a spider bite than a cougar attack. And your neighbor's German shepherd? It is 400 times more likely to come after you than a cougar is.

In fact, according to CDC statistics, a person living in the United States is 75 times more likely to die from choking on a toothpick than being attacked by a mountain lion. Given the dietary preponderance of meat and corn in Nebraska, there are plenty of toothpicks in our kitchens. Just remember to pick with care, OK?

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Highlander Ecology

Aside from the irrational fear of cougars, a larger question looms here: Who "owns" the wildlife in Nebraska? Is it just the hunters, outfitters, ranchers and farmers? Or is it all Nebraskans? If cougars - and all of our wildlife and natural resources, including our badly mismanaged groundwater - are determined to be a part of the commons, shouldn't all Nebraskans have a say in how we manage them?

That is the argument of New York biologist John Laundre, one of the most eminent cougar-ologists in the country. He is vice president of the Cougar Rewilding Foundation and author of the book "Phantoms of the Prairie: The Return of Cougars to the Midwest." "We need a dramatic change in how wildlife are managed in this country, and the separation of 'game' management and wildlife management is the first critical step," he wrote in a commentary, "Who Owns the Wildlife?" "Let the game agencies with their millions of hunter dollars manage the deer and the ducks, but let new wildlife agencies manage the rest of the wildlife the way they should be managed, based on sound ecological science, not hunter demands."

Before implementing its mountain lion management plan, the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks invited public comment in 2010. The agency received 112 comments. Ninety-six people expressed displeasure with the agency's plan to increase the cougar "harvest," and more than two-thirds of those 96 said they were against the hunting of lions altogether. There were seven comments that were neutral or undecided. Only about 9% of those responding favored increased hunting of cougars. Of course, that did not deter the department from deciding to hunt cougars anyway.

The reality is that a growing majority of Nebraskans - and South Dakotans - want honest-to-goodness wildlife

management and environmental stewardship. Both have been sorely lacking. As one South Dakotan commenter wrote: "It is beyond comprehension why the most rural states are the first to fear and kill a very shy and harmless species." Even without an official hunting season, Nebraskans are now allowed to shoot a cougar - if they are lucky enough to see one. All they have to do is say they felt threatened, aim, fire, and all is fine and dandy. Who will ever know the truth?

But that doesn't make it any easier to understand why Nebraska feels compelled to allow the hunting of a mere 22 mountain lions whose threat to humans is effectively zilch. That got me wondering: If the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission received a couple of reports about invading two-legged, hairy, carnivorous-looking "creatures," might it consider starting a hunting season on Bigfoot, too? Why wait to confirm that a creature exists when you can just start shooting at its shadow?

Pete Letheby is a contributor to Writers on the Range a service of High Country News (hcn.org). He is an editor and freelance writer in Grand Island, Nebraska.

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Stand Up For Wildland Firefighters

By Lindon Pronto

Federal wildland firefighters make up the single largest professionally trained firefighting force in the world. We staff fire engines and earthmovers, work from helicopters and jump from planes, and move as 20-person, well-coordinated crews of "ground pounders." We also put together incident management teams to manage many kinds of relief efforts. Our teams have dealt with emergencies like Sept. 11, 2001, in New York City and Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans.

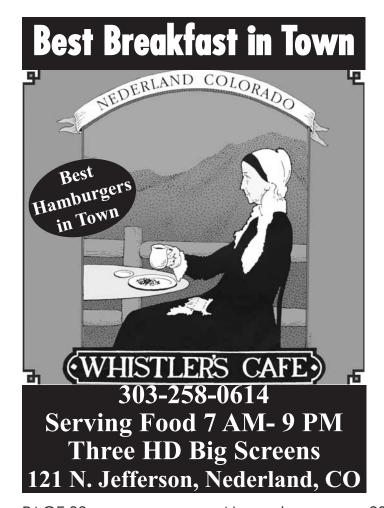
But on paper - for bureaucratic reasons - we are not called "firefighters." Instead, we are called forestry and range "technicians." To us, that distinction is a longstanding joke that's not remotely funny. The failure to recognize who we are and what we do comes at a great price. Few Americans see a green fire engine for what it is, have any idea what hotshot crews face on the fireline, or have even heard of helitack.

Even those closest to us may not fully grasp the long shifts we endure or the risks we take. But we love what we do; anyone who doesn't soon decides that the commitments are too many and the sacrifices are too great. The dangerous conditions encountered in wildland firefighting, combined with the rush of adrenaline and a sense of duty and brotherhood, are exactly the reasons we love our jobs.

We not only accept these aspects of our work, we live for them! There are, however, other aspects of the job that are harder to accept, particularly for those who rely on the work to support families. Few Americans realize this, but federal firefighters are treated and paid considerably less well than our counterparts in private, city and state agencies.

For example, many non-federal firefighters are guaranteed hotel rooms and 24-hour pay when they're working away from home. Federal firefighters, though, usually sleep in the dirt, like convict crews, and we are not paid for more than 16 hours per day on incidents. Federal firefighters regularly work 112-hour workweeks for two or three weeks at a time, yet we are not compensated for at least one-third of that time.

The nickel-and-diming we face goes further: Firefighters are often required to staff fires overnight without pay, and lunch breaks are seldom paid. On prescribed fires, hazard pay is not given even though we are required to carry emergency fire shelters with us. These and other





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Highlander Issues

discrepancies in treatment and pay contribute to dismal retention rates among federal agencies.

Millions of dollars are wasted annually to hire and train new firefighters, though many will leave as soon as they're offered fire jobs with better hours, benefits, pay and pensions. Federal firefighters are generally hidden from public view. We are stationed in the outdoors, and we are (happily) grimy, dirty, smelly and hairy during those 16-hour shifts on the fireline.

The media are seldom permitted to enter our hazardous work zones. Unfortunately, this low profile means that our job is easily misrepresented and misunderstood. The public remains ignorant about who we are and what we do. As wildland firefighters, our faces and stories rarely make the news - unless we die on the job.

The problems we face should be illuminated, but constructive dialogue is hampered by the old-school "can-do" work ethic - coupled with the "shut-up-and-do-your-job" mentality. The lack of public awareness means that our working conditions remain the same, and the problems I've described here go unreported, and therefore unresolved. Still, some stalwart supporters and lobbyists have fought for decades to improve our pay and working conditions.

This year, for the first time, seasonal firefighters were given access to health benefits. A recent bill introduced in Congress would address some of the other issues I've described, but the Wildland Firefighter Protection Act (H.R.2858) is unlikely to be signed into law if no one knows about it. That's why I'm breaking my silence on the subject: I hope that public pressure and support for federal firefighters will carry this proposed legislation into law. Here's a way to stand with federal firefighters:

http://petitions.moveon.org/sign/wildland-firefighter/?source=search

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It hurts not to be recognized for the hard work we do, and to be denied the benefits and financial support systems that other "real" firefighters automatically receive. We have no shortage of personal pride in our work, but that pride often appears to be unshared by our own government, elected officials and the public we serve.

Lindon Pronto is a contributor to Writers on the Range, a service of High Country News (hcn.org). He has been a seasonal wildland firefighter for six years; the opinions he expresses here are his own. He lives in Auburn, California.





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