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COUNTRY LIFE

JANUARY 2024

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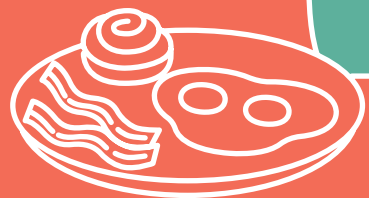


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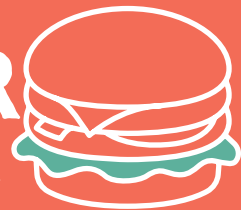


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NEW YEAR, NEW EATS

BY KYLEE COLEMAN EDITOR



KYLEE COLEMAN

January 1 rolls around and the platitudes start to fall out of our mouths. You know the ones. We've heard — and said — them all before:

- New year, new me!
- This will be my best year yet!
- This is the year I'll ... [get organized, lose weight, save money — fill in the blank with your goal]!

I can confidently say that these New Year's resolutions are not part of my plans for 2024.

Instead, I have food on my mind.

Last summer, we asked readers to nominate their Colorado favorites across six food categories. And wow. I need these winners in my life.

I have it all mapped out. From Denver, I'll drive down to Colorado Springs to try out the best barbecue. From there, I'll head south to hit the green chili champion in Blanca, then up to Pitkin for a burger. I'll drive over to the Western Slope for brunch and ice cream and then finish the trip in Lyons with a piece of the best pie in the state.

853 miles and nearly 15 hours of fabulous food-filled stops? Now *that's* a New Year's resolution.

Read about all of the winners on page 16.



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MONTHLY GIVEAWAY

Make road trip plans to visit all of the winning restaurants in our Best of Colorado contest. CCL will help you get started — this month we're giving away a \$50 gift card for gas.



Visit the Reader Engagement page on our website at coloradocountrylife.coop



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2024 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Lowering the Temperature

BY KENT SINGER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



KENT SINGER

The start of every new year in Colorado means the start of another session of the Colorado General Assembly. This year, the second regular session of the 74th General Assembly will convene on January 10, and, given the 120-day limit established in the Colorado Constitution, it will adjourn on or before May 8.

The 2024 legislative session will mark the 40th year that I have been involved with Colorado's legislative process. After graduating law school in the spring of 1984, I moved to Colorado to take a job as a staff attorney in what was then called the Legislative Drafting Office, one of the nonpartisan staff agencies that support the work of the Colorado legislature. Now called the Office of Legislative Legal Services, this agency drafts the hundreds of pieces of legislation — and thousands of amendments — that are considered each year by the legislative body.

After working for the legislature for a few years, I went into private law practice and continued to do work involving ballot initiatives and other legislative matters. For the last 27 years, I have represented the interests of Colorado's electric co-ops at the legislature, either as CREA's general counsel or executive director. I have testified on various pieces of legislation in many different committees on dozens of occasions and worked with hundreds of legislators in both houses and on all sides of the political spectrum. I have enjoyed this work tremendously, and I have a deep reverence for our representative democracy that manifests itself through our legislative process.

So, it concerns me when I witness what has been going on in our legislature for the last several years. This is not a criticism of any individual legislator or political party, and it's not a criticism of any policy that the legislature has adopted. No. My concern is for what I consider to be a basic lack of good faith and common courtesy that is pervasive at our legislature, an unwillingness to think about or consider a different point of view or to work to compromise in a way that respects multiple points of view. I understand that elections have consequences and that parties in the majority have the right to focus on their legislative agenda. But that does not mean that the views of the minority party, and the millions of Coloradans it represents, should be ignored or discounted.

Of course, another plague on our legislature is the prevalence of social media and the many platforms for expression that too often lend themselves to showboating and the airing of petty grievances. To be honest, I think it would be great if all legislators would choose not to post on X. (I guess those are no longer "tweets"?) There are very few issues that lend themselves to effective debate in spurts of 280 characters.

It used to be that I would look at our dysfunctional U.S. Congress and be grateful that my work involves the state legislative process where bills are heard in committee, votes are taken, and some semblance of legislative order prevails. This is still largely true in Colorado, although in too many cases the fate of bills is predetermined. Committee hearings are largely exercises in "checking the box" with no

true opportunity for debate or discussion. It has become the norm in recent years for witnesses in committee hearings to be limited to two or three minutes of testimony, hardly enough time to explain positions on complicated pieces of legislation.

There is no doubt in my mind that this difficult legislative environment has caused many folks who considered running for the legislature to change their minds. It has also caused at least two new legislators to resign; this is a huge loss for the body and a sign that things must change. Thankfully, the leaders of both parties in both houses recently met to discuss how to address the lack of civility at the state Capitol; hopefully, this is the start of a bipartisan effort to quash the theatrics and focus on the work of legislating to benefit all Coloradans.

Despite these challenges, CREA will continue to work every day to represent the interests of Colorado's electric co-ops and the consumer-members they serve. We will continue to do our part in 2024 to promote the civil exchange of ideas and to support the efforts of legislative leadership to lower the temperature under the Gold Dome.

Kent Singer is the executive director of CREA and offers a statewide perspective on issues affecting electric cooperatives. CREA is the trade association for 21 Colorado electric distribution co-ops and one power supply co-op.

POSTCARDS FROM GUATEMALA

Larry Donathan of Montrose-based Delta-Montrose Electric Association and Ezra Velez of Glenwood Springs-based Holy Cross Energy joined crews from Arkansas and Oklahoma on a mission to bring power to rural Guatemala. The crew left December 3 for a two-week project to deliver electricity to nearly 200 rural structures in 38 villages. In the spirit of cooperation, Colorado Rural Electric Association, Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperatives, and Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas partnered with NRECA International — the philanthropic arm of National Rural Electric Cooperative Association — and Heifer International to electrify more villages in rural Guatemala.



Thanks to generous donations, the project also raised more than \$10,000 to provide each household with school and hygiene supplies. [Read more about their travels and the team's experiences in these postcards from Guatemala.](#)



Day 1 - December 3, 2023

The Energy Trails team, consisting of electric co-op volunteers from Oklahoma, Colorado, and Arkansas landed safely in Guatemala! They drove to a hotel in Cobán where they will be spending the night. It has been a long travel day, and they're all ready for a good night of rest.



Ezra snaps a photo with a local boy.

Day 2 - December 4, 2023

The team set out this morning with all their gear in the back of small trucks to make a long trek to their hotel in Fray Bartolome de las Casas. During their journey, they were able to see some towns and villages, as well as some of the beautiful landscapes that the region has to offer. This is where they will stay for the duration of the project in the region of Alta Verapaz in north central Guatemala.

Day 5 - December 7, 2023

After an early breakfast with the whole Energy Trails crew, Larry reported that the travels to the village took about two hours. With their sack lunches in tow, his crew got started around 11 a.m. and by the end of the day had completed wiring six homes. By now they've wired over 50 homes, preparing each to be set up for electricity.

"Every house we go to is memorable in one way or another," he said. "The people have been very curious and friendly." Just like at home in the U.S., people are very grateful and excited to get power to their homes. Larry said, "At home, we take it for granted, but people are still excited and grateful when we

show up to repair an outage — they're happy to get their power back on. Here in Guatemala, they're happy to see us show up and just excited to get power."



He described the villagers as very generous. Though the women and kids are shy at first, they still want to be a part of the experience.

Larry said the best thing he brought along from home was his rechargeable headlamp. Today, his headlamp ran out of charge, and he realized how difficult it was to complete the job without proper lighting.



Larry Donathan (right) and his Energy Trails crew finish wiring a house for electricity.

Day 11 - December 13, 2023

Yesterday, the Energy Trails team finished up wiring the last couple of houses around noon — right on schedule despite the rain.

"It is awesome to experience life down here," Holy Cross Energy's Ezra Velez said. "Yesterday, one of the villages was like one, big family — kids were running behind the truck, carrying the tools and wire into the house. It is the people here that make the whole experience awesome."

Each household the team wires receives a gift bag that has colored pencils and crayons, coloring books, and toothbrushes. "They just light up when they get the bag," he said. "I also brought with me about 10 pounds of candy. The kids are shy until they see the candy," he laughed. "These are the feel-good parts of the trip."

"The roads are crazy," he said, but having a lot of Colorado mountain driving experience has been helpful for Ezra. "I have learned I am a pretty good driver. A lot of things happen in the middle of the road here — kids playing, people talking, motorcycles, tuk-tuks, micro cars, lots of Toyotas, and big trucks. There's lots of dogs sleeping in the middle of the road. You have to be prepared for anything when you come around a corner. It's quite the adventure."

Ezra has kept in touch with his wife and 11-year-old daughter — he's excited to show them more photos when he gets back home. "I am thankful to CREA and Holy Cross Energy to give me the experience and allow me to come down here."



Ezra Velez gives a bag of school supplies to a family after he wired their home for electricity.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT AIR PURIFIER

Room air cleaners are effective along with a central unit

BY JAMES DULLEY

Dear Jim: For my son's allergies, I should also use a room air purifier even though we already have a heat pump filter. What are the features and ratings to compare when selecting one? — Sandy R.

Dear Sandy: Selecting a room air purifier can be confusing with all the types, sizes, and costs. There are also various effectiveness and electricity usage differences among the units. The proper filtration type, depending upon your son's allergies, is more important than the size or price.

Using room air purifiers does not eliminate the need for the main furnace filter, which removes particles that stay suspended in the air through the ductwork. This not only helps indoor air quality, but it keeps the heat exchanger clean for better furnace efficiency.

The Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers has testing standards to rate the effectiveness of different types of room air purifiers — it's called the CADR rating, which stands for clean air delivery rate. Seeing these ratings on the various models allows you to compare the effectiveness

without having to consider the design, appearance, or the type of filter material.

First, check with your allergist to determine which allergens are causing the most problems for your son. The particle size varies significantly for various allergens, so it is important to know which ones need to be removed from the room air. Many of the particles and allergens in room air are relatively large (mold, pollen), so they do not stay suspended long enough to make it all the way to the furnace filter. They puff up each time someone sits on a sofa or bed, so room air purifiers are more effective for removing these.

The CADR rating tests are done for the three most common particles in the air: household dust, tobacco smoke, and pollen. Most allergens are in this range of particle sizes. Each air purifier will have three individual rating numbers, one for each particle



▲ Air purifier units vary in size and CADR ratings. Check with your doctor about which allergens are causing the most problems for your family to determine what sort of filtration you need.

size of the above allergens. A filter that is good for pollen may not be very effective for smoke.

To use the CADR rating when selecting a model, calculate the square footage of the room and multiply it by 0.67. For example, if you need to remove pollen from a 10-by-12-foot bedroom, the air purifier should have CADR pollen rating of 80 or higher.

If you are not sure which particles you want to remove and just want generally cleaner room air, a model with a HEPA filter and a carbon element (which also removes odors) is a good overall choice. A multiple-speed model for rapid filtering or for slow, quiet operation at night is a plus.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, **air cleaners** are just one of three basic strategies to improve indoor air quality.

Typically, the best way to improve indoor air quality is to **eliminate individual sources of home pollution** or reduce their emissions. Many times, source control is the more cost-efficient approach to protecting or improving indoor air quality.

Another way to improve your home's air quality is to **increase ventilation**. Open a window or a door and run your attic fan on a nice day. Single-room fans, such as bathroom fans and kitchen fans, that exhaust outdoors are also helpful. Be aware that ventilation may not be the most efficient way to control air quality because it can make your HVAC system work harder to heat or cool your home.

You may receive flyers in the mail with offers for air-duct cleaning and claims that having a company clean your duct work will improve the air quality and efficiency of your home. However, duct cleaning may not always be necessary for air quality, and there is no indication that just cleaning your air ducts will improve your system's efficiency.

Duct cleaning may be necessary if:

- There is visible mold in your duct system or there was a recent flood that caused mold or mildew in your home.
- There is something in the ductwork impeding airflow, such as debris or an infestation. Major renovations or new construction can put construction debris into the duct system, so post-construction is an ideal time to consider duct cleaning.
- Your heating registers are releasing dust into the air.
- Home residents have allergies or asthma problems that have not been alleviated by other changes.

If you decide to have your air ducts cleaned, take time to learn as much as you can about air-duct cleaning, get estimates from at least three service providers, check references, and be wary of air-duct cleaning companies that make broad claims about the health benefits of their services.

Find out more about indoor air quality, air-duct cleaning, and air purifiers at www.epa.gov/indoor-air-quality-iaq.



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Join the Cooperative Movement

You may not realize it, but, if you are reading this magazine, you are probably a member of a cooperative — an electric cooperative.

Colorado Country Life is mailed to electric cooperative members as a service from your local electric co-op. It is the co-op's way of keeping its members up to date on co-op news, events at the co-op, programs and rebates, board of director elections, and rate changes.

If you like doing business with a cooperative and are interested in connecting with other co-ops, visit colorado.coop online. This website lists all kinds of cooperatives located in Colorado. You'll find your local electric co-op, ag co-ops, credit unions, and many more. There are 65,000 co-ops in the United States and hundreds here in Colorado.

Engage with these various co-ops and live out the sixth cooperative principle: cooperation among cooperatives.



What is That Green Box?

As more and more electric lines are buried in neighborhoods and throughout your local electric co-op's territory, more big green metal boxes — about the size of a mini fridge — are likely to be seen. These are pad-mounted transformers.

They may look different, but they serve the same purpose as those gray cans normally seen on top of power poles. They step high-voltage electricity down so it is more useful and safer for your home. The only difference is that the pad-mounted transformer connects to underground power lines rather than overhead lines.

These green boxes look pretty innocuous in your neighborhood, but they should be treated with the same respect you show overhead power lines. They route a lot of electricity and a lot of danger lurks inside.

Never open one. Report it to your electric co-op if you find it unlocked or the lock broken. Teach children to stay away from them. Don't use them as a bench while waiting for a bus. Don't play on them. Never use them as a step stool to reach something overhead.

That big green box is an important part of the electric grid.

feeling chilled?

HEAT YOUR SPACE SAFELY

1. Keep flammable items at least 3 feet away
2. Place on a flat, level surface
3. Make sure the cord is not frayed or cracked
4. Plug it directly into an outlet
5. Follow all instructions and use models endorsed by a reputable testing lab
6. Do not use an extension cord or power strip, which can overheat
7. Do not use around small children or pets
8. Do not use one with a damaged plug or prongs

Safe Electricity.org

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Feeling Rejuvenated With CBD

Everyone feels the hurt as you age, but CBD can help you deal with it

By Beth Giles

Life really does fly by. Before I knew it, my 60s had arrived, and with them came some new gifts from dear ol' Mother Nature—frequent knee pain, stress, low energy and sleeplessness. Now, I'm a realist about these things, I knew I wasn't going to be young and springy forever. But still, with "golden years" nearly on my doorstep, I couldn't help but feel a little cheated. That is until I found my own secret weapon. Another gift from Mother Nature.

It began a few months back when I was complaining about my aches and pains to my marathon-running granddaughter, Jen. She casually mentioned how she uses CBD oil to help with her joint pain. She said that CBD gave her more focus and clarity throughout the day and that her lingering muscle and joint discomfort no longer bothered her. She even felt comfortable signing up for back-to-back marathons two weekends in a row this year. That made even this self-proclaimed skeptic take notice.

But I still had some concerns. According to one study in the Journal of the American Medical Association, 70% of CBD products didn't contain the amount of CBD stated on their labels. And, as a consumer, that's terrifying!

If I was going to try CBD, I needed to trust the source through and through. My two-fold research process naturally led me to Zebra CBD.

First, I started calling my family and friends. Call me old fashioned but I wanted to know if there were people whom I trusted (more than anonymous testimonials) who've had success using CBD besides my granddaughter.

Secondly, I wanted cold hard facts. Diving deep into the world of CBD research and clinical studies, I came across Emily Gray M.D., a physician at the University of California at San Diego (UCSD) Medical School and medical advisor to Zebra CBD who is researching the effects of CBD. Dr. Gray wrote "early results with CBD have been promising and we have a lot of research underway now. I've had several patients using CBD with good success. It's important that you know your source of CBD and how to use it properly."

After hearing it from the doctor's mouth, I returned to my research, asking more people and was amazed by the number of close friends and family who were already on the CBD train. Apparently, I was the only one without a clue! And funny enough, a couple of friends who commented were using the same brand as my granddaughter—Zebra CBD. There was no consensus as to why they were using CBD, but the top reasons given were for muscle & joint discomfort, mood support, sleep support, stress and headaches, as well as supporting overall health & wellness.

Eventually, even the most skeptical of the bunch can be won over. With a trusted CBD source in mind, I decided to give it a go.

When I viewed Zebra CBD's selection online, I was impressed by its array of products, including CBD oils called tinctures, topicals, chewable tablets, mints and gummies. After reading on their website that all their products are made with organically-grown hemp, I ordered... and it arrived within 2 days!

The first product I tried was the Rub. Now this stuff was strong. Immediately after rubbing it on my knee, the soothing effects kicked in. It had that familiar menthol cooling effect, which I personally find very relieving. And the best part is, after two weeks of using it, my knee pain no longer affected my daily mobility.

The Zebra Mint Oil, on the other hand, had a different but equally positive effect on my body. To take it, the instructions suggest holding the oil in your mouth for about 30 seconds. This was simple enough, and the mint taste was, well, minty. After about 15 minutes, a sense of calm came over my body. It's hard to describe exactly. It's more like an overall sense of relaxation—as if I just walked out of a spa, and now I'm ready to seize the day. Needless to say, I've really enjoyed the oil.

While it hasn't been a catch-all fix to every one of my health issues, it has eased the level and frequency of my aches. And it sure doesn't seem like a coincidence how much calmer and more focused I am.

All-in-all, CBD is one of those things that you have to try for yourself. Although I was skeptical at first, I can safely say that I'm now a Zebra CBD fan and that I highly recommend their products.

Also, I managed to speak with a Zebra CBD spokesperson willing to provide an exclusive offer. If you order this month, you'll receive \$10 off your first order by using promo code "**CL10**" at checkout. Plus, the company offers a 100% No-Hassle, Money-Back Guarantee. You can try it yourself and order Zebra CBD at ZebraCBD.com/Colorado or at 1-888-762-2699.



Celebrating All Curd Nerds

BY CASSI GLOE CCL PUBLISHER

Saturday, January 20 is a day dedicated to all cheese lovers. To help you celebrate the glorious occasion of National Cheese Lovers Day, CCL's test kitchen teamed up with Rocking W Cheese & Milk and created a few cheesy recipes that showcase the Olathe-based dairy's mouthwatering artisan cheese.

Rocking W cheese products come from seventh-generation Webb dairy; the folks there know a thing or two about fresh milk and making premium cheese. Each variety of their cheese is handcrafted in small batches with herbs and spices added at just the right moment to bring the cheese to its peak perfection.



Rocking W Cheese & Milk is nestled in the small town of Olathe. Open since 2008, this local business offers fresh milk and artisan cheese. In fact, Rocking W is the only artisanal cheese producer on the Western Slope. Its creamy rich cheese comes in a large variety of flavors. Visit rockingcheese.com to browse their wide selection and to find markets where you can buy their products.

Whether you grab a simple cheese and cracker snack, add a slice on top of a sandwich, or build a picture-worthy charcuterie board, give these Colorado cheese producers a try.



FIND **MORE RECIPES** ONLINE AT COLORADOCOUNTRYLIFE.COOP.



Chipotle Jack Snacking Sticks

8 oz Rocking W chipotle jack cheese, shredded

1 ½ cups flour, plus more for dusting

1 tsp salt

½ tsp red pepper flakes

1 stick cold unsalted butter, cubed

6 tbsp half-and-half

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. While oven is preheating, combine shredded cheese, flour, salt, and red pepper flakes in a food processor. Process mixture until coarse meal. Add cubed cold butter and process again until mixture is coarse with pea-size bits of butter. Transfer to a bowl, add half-

and-half, and mix. Transfer dough onto a lightly floured surface and knead until the dough comes together. Cut dough in half and set one aside. Roll out one dough block into a rectangle that is 1/4 inch thick, trimming sides with a sharp knife or pizza cutter. Cut dough into strips about 1/4 inch wide. Be as accurate as possible for even baking. If they are too thick, they won't crisp up; if they are too thin, they will break.

Transfer the cut strips to prepared baking sheet, leaving 1/4 inch space between each.

Bake for 10–12 minutes or until lightly golden brown on top. Remove from oven and transfer strips to a baking sheet to fully cool.



WHO FIRST ADDED CHILE PEPPERS TO CHEESE?

While the exact origins are a bit of a mystery, many believe Mexican immigrants in California were the first to experiment with adding chile peppers to cheese.

— thefoodwonder.com

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Illustrations by Lisa Padgett, Green Dog Graphic Design



READERS' CHOICE BEST OF Colorado

Colorado Country Life magazine is thrilled to announce the winners of its yearly and highly anticipated Best of Colorado awards. Last year, CCL asked readers to nominate their favorite foods across six categories: Best Green Chili, Best Brunch, Best Hamburger, Best Pie, Best BBQ, and Best Ice Cream. The awards celebrate the unique and diverse food scene in Colorado. Nominations included establishments from all four corners of the state — the Western Slope to the Eastern Plains, and from Fort Collins to the San Luis Valley.

Find their stories on the following pages and make sure to work them into your future Colorado road trip itineraries.

Readers who nominated their favorites in three or more categories were entered to win \$100. The randomly selected winners are: Julie Frye, a San Isabel Electric member; Jim Gano, a Poudre Valley REA member; and Rachel Moore, a GCEA member.

Special thanks to Melinda Taylor, Cassi Gloe, Mollie Shepardson (Spoons), and Jake Schellenberg (Stumbling Moose) for their contributions to this story.



Photo courtesy of Lu's Main Street Cafe.



BEST GREEN CHILI Lu's Main Street Cafe, Blanca

The signage in front of Lu's Main Street Cafe states that the Blanca diner has the "BEST Green Chili!" According to CCL readers, it's true. And they're not the only ones who think so. Locals, southern Coloradans, and people who travel through the area know this, too.

Durango resident and La Plata Electric Association member Pat Berg says, "Lu's is a small cafe in the small town of Blanca that can be easily overlooked; but it's one of the best in our area. Really worth the stop!"

Empire Electric Association members Mike and Judy Pritzlaff from Mancos report that they would not have realized the potential of the roadside stop. When they drove through Blanca, "Lu's parking area was busy with ranch trucks and a couple of semis," which Judy says is always a good sign for the quality of a local place.

Next time you're at Great Sand Dunes National Park or driving through southern Colorado, make your way to Lu's Main Street Cafe located at 609 Main Street in Blanca.

Photo courtesy of Spoons bistro & bakery.



BEST BRUNCH

Spoons bistro & bakery, Grand Junction

Spoons bistro & bakery in Grand Junction is more than just a dining establishment; it's a place where every meal you savor makes a meaningful difference. Spoons was originally intended to serve patients at the Ferris Hospice Care Center and has since evolved into a community eatery that offers breakfast, lunch, and brunch seven days a week, along with dinner five nights a week.

When you dine at Spoons, you're not just treating your taste buds; you're also contributing to a cause that touches the lives of western Colorado families in profound ways. The restaurant's transformation into a full-service establishment means that it provides additional support to the mission of HopeWest — a nonprofit organization that provides palliative care, hospice care, the Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly, and grief support programs.

Through the years, Spoons has remained dedicated to using the freshest local ingredients. Chef Martin Marez crafts diverse dishes that are destined to become your favorites. The restaurant proudly sources from local producers, including Pear Blossom Farms, Homestyle Bakery, Main Street Bagel, and more, ensuring that every bite bursts with authentic Grand Valley flavor.

"The brunch menu is delicious," regular patron Diane Watkins says. "They offer five versions of eggs Benedict that all have a different flair." Her favorite is the crab. Diane appreciates that Spoons focuses on local items like Enstrom and Palisade peaches to incorporate into their menus.

Whether you're enjoying a delectable meal on Spoons' expansive patio or savoring your meal inside the comfortable bistro setting, your dining experience truly makes a difference. At Spoons, the philosophy is simple: fresh, local, from the heart.

"Check it out," Diane says, "you will not be disappointed."

Spoons is located at 3090 N 12th Street in Grand Junction.
970-255-7237 | spoonsbistroandbakery.com.

Photos courtesy of Bird Dog BBQ.



BEST BARBECUE

Bird Dog BBQ, Colorado Springs

The Colorado Springs area is lucky to have Bird Dog BBQ — voted winner of Best Barbecue in the state by readers. Celebrating 20 years of Colorado barbecue excellence, Bird Dog BBQ prides itself on making great Oklahoma-style barbecue by using oak-smoked meat to produce a mild flavor allowing for the taste of the meat to shine through. At Bird Dog BBQ you will always be given the option when ordering to complement your food with some made-from-scratch, gluten-free barbecue sauces on the side. They have sauce options like other barbecue joints — mild, hot, and extra hot. You will also find a creative sauce concoction called "Wasabi-Q" on the menu. Using their counter-side service line format, visitors can watch and talk to the people plating the food.

Bird Dog BBQ has three locations:

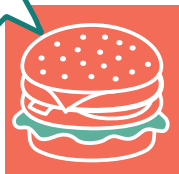
- 5984 Stetson Hills Blvd #200, Colorado Springs, CO 80923
- 4153 Centennial Blvd, Colorado Springs, CO 80907
- 6965 Mesa Ridge Pkwy #190, Fountain, CO 80817

Purchase sauces and find the menu online at birddogbbq.com.





▲ Bacon jam burger. Photo courtesy of Stumbling Moose Lodge.



BEST BURGER

Stumbling Moose Lodge, Pitkin

Stumbling Moose Lodge is a small, rustic, family-run mountain destination. Guests can explore Pitkin and the surrounding Gunnison National Forest to create outdoor adventures, and then come home for dinner to what was voted the best burger in Colorado by *Colorado Country Life* readers.

Originally from Oklahoma, the family of six who own and operate the lodge say service and simplicity are at their core. But their burgers are anything but simple. The hamburger meat is locally sourced. Juicy, flavorful, and cooked to perfection, this patty is the foundation upon which the rest of the burger is built. The two most popular burgers are the Bacon Jam Burger and the Hatch Green Chile Cheeseburger.

A fire-roasted hatch green chile is melted between two slices of cheddar cheese. The combination adds a tangy and slightly spicy kick to the burger, enhancing the overall flavor profile. The smoky flavor of the roasted chile paired with the gooey, melted cheddar cheese creates a delightful and satisfying taste experience. It's a perfect addition for those who enjoy a bit of heat in their burgers.

"My favorite menu item is the Bacon Jam Burger," diner Suzy Metzler says.

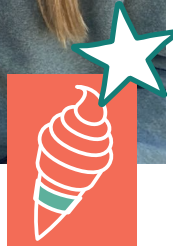
Described as smoky and irresistible, caramelized bacon combined with a carefully crafted mix of spices creates a sweet-savory jam that adds a depth of flavor.

But the food is only part of why Metzler loves Stumbling Moose. "It's a great addition to our small town of Pitkin," she says. "In the summer and early fall, live music is happening on their outdoor patio in the evenings."

Find more information about the Stumbling Moose Lodge on Facebook at facebook.com/StumblingMooseLodge.



▲ Good friends enjoy the best ice cream at Graff Dairy. Photo by CCL reader Beth Keddy.



BEST ICE CREAM

Graff Dairy, Grand Junction

Described as "The place in town for anything ice cream related," Grand Junction's Graff Dairy is the go-to for quality homemade soft serve ice cream, milkshakes, malts, banana splits, ice cream sandwiches, and sundaes. Traditional flavors fill their menu, and tasty specialty flavors of the week keep people coming back for more.

People rave about the creamy and rich soft serve. Friendly staff and a charming atmosphere make locally owned and operated Graff's Dairy CCL's winner of the Best Ice Cream category and a Colorado favorite.

For address, hours, and more information, visit graffdairy.com.

Photo courtesy of Colorado Cherry Company.



BEST PIE

Colorado Cherry Company,
Loveland, Windsor,
Pinewood Springs

Colorado Cherry Company is a fourth-generation owned and operated business in the heart of the high country and the clear winner in the Best Pie category of the contest.

The original roadside pie stand in Loveland was initiated by Grandma Lehnert. A second retail location in Pinewood Springs outside of Lyons is also full of their bestselling products for sale to locals and visitors heading home from Rocky Mountain National Park.

CCL reader Anna Smith is a regular patron of Colorado Cherry Company. For her family, it's a must-stop on the way home from their day trips to the mountains. "The memories our family makes on those visits always include cherry pie," she says.

Known also for ciders, juices, jams, and jellies, Colorado Cherry Company makes fresh pies daily. The seventh and final ingredient in all of their pies is love.

Find products and location information at coloradocherrycompany.com.

Share the love for
Valentines Day! Or
Celebrate
National Cherry
Pie Day February
20th with us!

Visit us in the month of
February, mention that you
saw us in Colorado Country
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any bakery purchase and
20% off of any **CHERRY**
bakery purchase!
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coloradocherrycompany.com



What categories would you like to see for next year's Best of Colorado awards? In the past, we've covered food, restaurants, entertainment, sights to see, music venues, locally made products, and more. Under what category would you place your Colorado favorite?

Email your category ideas to editor@coloradocountrylife.org.



First Gear Skid School

Teaching electric co-op crews how to stay safe on the road

BY KYLEE COLEMAN EDITOR

Orange traffic cones create a figure-eight track in a parking lot at the Adams County Fairground. It appears to be a rather standard driving school setup. But a 2007 navy blue Toyota Highlander SUV with an odd contraption hooked to the bottom sits in the empty lot. This is the first clue that this isn't a typical driving school.

Distracted driving is a growing problem. According to the Colorado State Patrol, distracted driving leads to more than 15,000 crashes every year in Colorado. That's an average of 42 crashes per day. In 2022 alone, CSP troopers investigated 600 injuries and fatal crashes attributed to distracted driving. Driver distraction — which includes eating, drinking, grooming, daydreaming, talking and texting on handheld devices, and many other actions that take a motorist's eyes and mind off the road — is a contributing factor in many crashes, despite many instances going unreported.

It's one man's passion to teach people how to stay safe and stay alive while driving. As a licensed EMT, Michal Michalkow has seen it all: drivers — young and old — whose cars are wrapped around trees and power poles, flipped in ditches, or crunched in a head-on

collision. "Vehicles are weapons," he says, "and one little distraction while driving can cause someone to lose a life." Michalkow believes every accident is preventable. For 12 years, he's been teaching drivers how to regain control when a car loses traction on snow, ice, gravel, and standing water, or in a collision. That odd contraption on

Electric co-op crews and CDL drivers practice driving this truck outfitted with a skid attachment. It offers an opportunity to learn how to keep control of a vehicle that has lost traction on the road.

the bottom of the Highlander is a skid car attachment that simulates these conditions with the flip of a switch.

During the training, a driver turns the wheel to complete the figure-eight course and midconversation and midconcentration, the SUV suddenly goes ... well, the best way to describe it is "squirrely." The skid contraption is engaged, and the Highlander fishtails and starts to spin across the empty parking lot and through the cone course. Michalkow coaches the student over blaring music. "Don't hit my cones," he warns. "Look where you want the car to go." This seemingly unconventional way to teach a driver about the mechanics and physics of a skidding car is effective.

Many people don't know what a skid car is, nor can they predict what the experience will feel like. "When Michal puts the vehicle into skid mode, it causes you to lose control of the vehicle, similar to skidding on snow, ice, or a wet road," Empire Electric Association Safety and Compliance Administrator Jules Bitsilly said. "At first, I didn't know what to expect. I saw YouTube videos of it, but still wasn't sure about it."



Michal Michalkow teaches skid car driving classes at the Adams County Fairground in Brighton.



▲ A skid car attachment simulates a car losing traction on the road. Students learn how to regain control of a skidding car.

Bitsilly learned quickly that it has the real feeling of skidding in those conditions. “Michal was coaching me during the drive and at times it was difficult to control the vehicle,” Bitsilly said. “It was challenging to master the techniques he was trying to teach you. My arms and shoulders were tired after those maneuvers.” Michalkow says that the repetitive motions of the driving portion of the class become ingrained into a driver’s muscle memory so they can respond comfortably and not panic when they encounter a vehicle skid or collision.

Just like Bitsilly, CREA Director of Safety and Loss Control Jenna Hirsch wasn’t sure what to expect from the class. “I knew nothing about the training going into it, only that it was yet another driver’s training course,” she said. And in her career as a safety professional, she’s been through countless driving classes. The skid car experience was surprising to her. “I did worse than I anticipated,” she continued. “But by the end of the course I improved in my ability to handle some intense driving situations.”

That is a common initial response to the training. “[At first] I did worse in the skid truck than I expected. I felt confident going into it, but Michal put me in my place,” Poudre Valley REA Working Foreman Hadley Lemburg said with a laugh. “There are a lot of distractions during the driving

portion of the class, and Michal keeps you on your toes, makes you think about what’s happening, and keeps it entertaining while teaching valuable skills.” Lemburg took the training, and it was

his recommendation and experience at the driving school that encouraged the co-op’s safety committee to look into it.

Linecrews typically rank in the top 10 most dangerous professions according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, so it’s no secret they have dangerous jobs. “There are inherent risks involved in our line of work such as working with high-voltage power lines, climbing poles, inclement weather, and hazardous terrain — among others. We have safety rules and guidelines for all those typical lineworker tasks,” PVREA Vice President of Operations Ben Ludington said. “After Hadley’s recommendation, we took a step back and identified another at-risk scenario crews often face — driving to the job site.” Reporting to outages in the middle of the night on icy road conditions is understandably hazardous. But as Ludington reported, even in bumper-to-bumper traffic, driving a utility vehicle on I-25 is a high-risk task.

PVREA linecrews are not the only employees who are benefiting from the training. PVREA’s safety committee recognized an organization-wide need for enhanced driving training. “No matter if our employees work out in the field or are stationed in the office, every employee can benefit from safe driving training,” Ludington continued. “Safety is 24/7, not

just when we’re at work or driving to and from the job site, but also in our personal lives when we’re with our families.” PVREA plans to put its entire workforce through the training, and it will be a part of the onboarding process for all new employees. “This training is much like teaching CPR — it has the potential to help our employees, their families, the members we serve, and the communities we live and work in.”

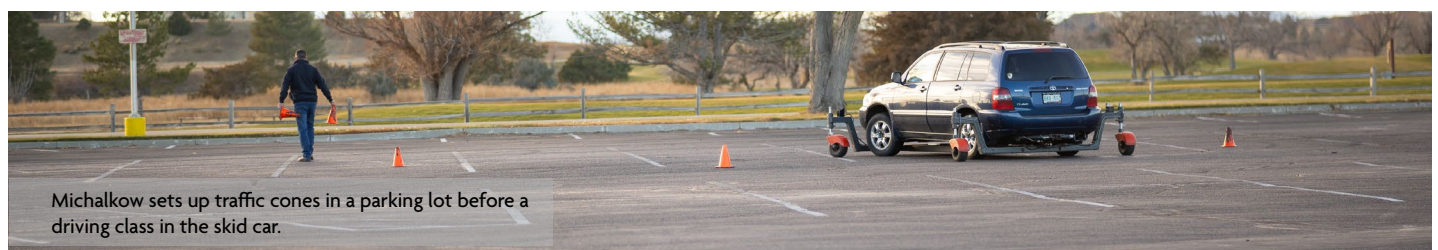
Hirsch agrees. “Vehicle accidents are costly — property damage, workers, compensation claims, and injuries,” she said. “Anything we can do to improve those statistics, help our employees learn to better handle tough situations, and keep our employees safe is well worth the time, money, and effort.”

“The scenarios, stories, conversation, and videos during the class really hit home and left a mark. It’s something I will remember for years to come,” Hirsch continued. “Michal’s ability to connect with students on a deep level — while keeping the classroom portion interactive and fun — was surprising.” The hands-on driving portion of the course was the best she’s encountered; she reported that it offers real-world scenarios and plenty of practice.

Michalkow says that many employers and organizations are realizing the benefits of the course. “If they can prevent one incident, someone goes home alive, and the training has paid for itself,” he said.

Hirsch recommends that everyone go through this training, not just co-op crews and employees. “Put everyone in your life through it — spouses, kids, employees,” she encouraged. “Driving is one of the most important but dangerous tasks we do daily. Anything we can do to improve our performance and reaction in all scenarios is worth its weight in gold.”

For more information, visit firstgearskidschool.com.



Michalkow sets up traffic cones in a parking lot before a driving class in the skid car.



Fiddle-Leaf Frenzy

Fickle? Fad? Simply fabulous.

BY VICKI SPENCER MASTER GARDENER | GARDENING@COLORADOCOUNTRYLIFE.ORG

Who would have thought a tropical rain forest tree could become so popular in Colorado’s semiarid climate? But indoor climate can be controlled, so *Ficus lyrata*, commonly known as fiddle-leaf fig, quickly became the hottest interior design trend.

In its native habitat of western Africa, the fiddle-leaf tree reaches a height of up to 50 feet. Indoors it typically reaches six to 10 feet, making it a design focal point. It features large heavily veined glossy leaves pointing upright on a slender trunk. Although leaf shapes vary, their narrow middle makes them resemble a fiddle.

Since fiddle-leaf figs thrive in warm, wet conditions, they can be challenging in Colorado homes. Fortunately, fig trees are fairly hearty and thrive when given the proper amount of sunlight and humidity and consistent temperatures. Light should be bright but filtered in late afternoon to avoid burnt leaves.

Fiddle-leaf figs prefer 60–85 degrees Fahrenheit with 30%–65% humidity. Lacking a humidifier, I mist leaves or add moisture by washing them occasionally with a warm, damp cloth. The clean leaves

look brighter and aid photosynthesis. While misting, I remove dead or yellowing leaves, which are no longer needed.

Rotating plants once a week encourages even growth. A bushier appearance is achieved by pruning the top of the main stem. Cut back crossing branches to let the tree breathe better. When removing stems, try propagating them. Cut a 12-inch stem with a few leaves and pinch off all but one. Place the stem in a jar of water with filtered light and wait for roots to appear. Plant the cutting in potting soil when roots are one inch or longer.

Fiddle-leaf figs favor moderately moist soil. If they don’t get enough water, the leaves lose their bright green color and wilt. If they get too much water, the roots rot and the plant dies. It helps to plant them in pots with drainage holes. Since the plants are sensitive to high salt levels, you can place them in the sink and flush the soil until water drains out the bottom. Let the soil dry before the next watering.

Fiddle-leaf figs may grow two feet each year, so each spring you should replant in a container that is about two inches larger. When the plant is too large to repot, you can

replace the top two inches of soil instead.

If you like the fiddle-leaf fig’s dramatic appearance, but have a small room, you can choose a smaller cultivar. *Ficus lyrata* ‘Compacta’ may reach five feet in height but has smaller, more compact leaves. *Ficus lyrata* ‘Bambino’ is a dwarf variety that only reaches a few feet tall.

Although not common, fiddle-leaf figs may be prone to getting spider mites, scale insects, and bacterial or fungal diseases. You can detect these issues by watching for leaf damage (such as spots or dark patches) and small bugs on the leaves. These issues won’t become serious if you treat them right away with an appropriate fungicide, pesticide, or other remedy.

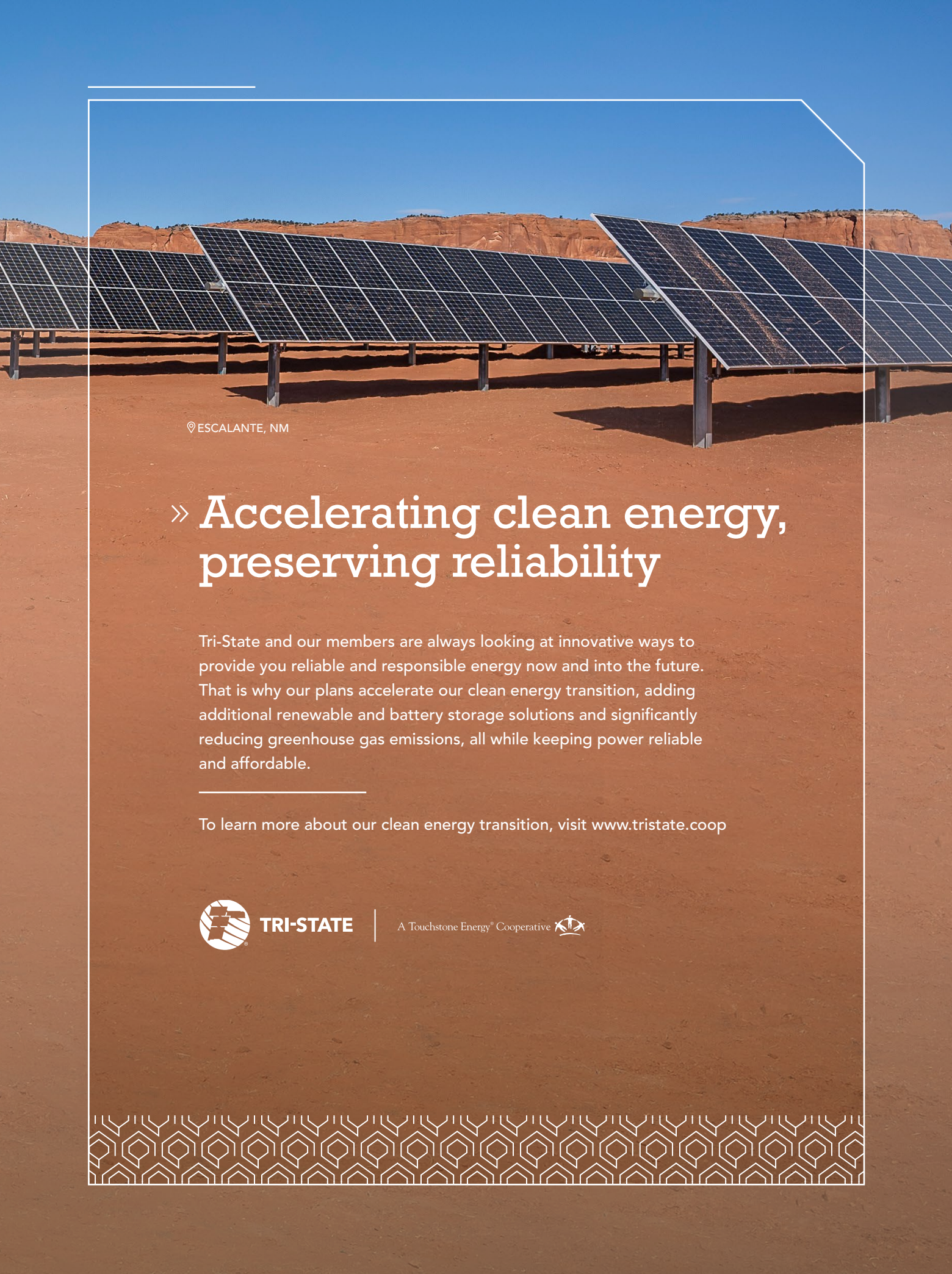
By giving fiddle-leaf figs a little special attention, you will be able to enjoy them for years.

Master Gardener Vicki Spencer has an eclectic background in conservation, water, natural resources, and more.



LEARN MORE ONLINE

Read previous gardening columns at www.coloradocountrylife.coop. Click on Gardening under Living in Colorado.

A photograph of a large solar farm in a desert landscape. The solar panels are arranged in rows, tilted towards the sun. The ground is reddish-brown sand, and there are red rock hills in the background under a clear blue sky.

📍 ESCALANTE, NM


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Budget-Friendly Ideas to Freshen Up Indoor Spaces

Whether you're fatigued by seeing the same decor every day or simply looking for an opportunity to refresh indoor spaces with an appealing mini makeover, rethinking your favorite room in the house doesn't need to be an expensive ordeal.

Even if your budget is tight, you can still make small changes to transform a room. Consider these ideas:

Color

Bring stylish flair to your space with a new color scheme. Rather than replacing all the furniture, which can be costly, focus on smaller accessory pieces such as pillows, rugs, and decorative items. Create variety by using multiple hues of the same color or mixing two or more complementary colors.

Rearrange Furniture

Morph your room by simply rearranging what you already own. Adjusting the orientation of your furniture and decor can let you see your favorite room from a whole new perspective.

Source: Family Features.

Plants

Buy a few houseplants — including a fiddle-leaf fig — to enliven your space and purify the air. Look for succulents, snake plants, monstera, and spider plants. Transfer them to pots that complement your decor.

New Accents

Introduce new accent furniture. Smaller and less cost-prohibitive than centerpieces like a couch, for example, accent pieces such as end tables or a coffee table can provide subtle changes to the look of a room. You could also opt to refinish a piece of furniture you have on hand to create a look that's all your own.

A new look for your favorite room can go a long way, so find ways to update your space for a comfy retreat you can enjoy. Find more ideas at [eLivingtoday.com](https://www.elivingtoday.com).



Popular CoQ10 Pills Leave Millions Suffering

Could this newly-discovered brain fuel solve America's worsening memory crisis?

PALM BEACH, FLORIDA — Millions of Americans take the supplement known as CoQ10. It's the coenzyme that supercharges the "energy factories" in your cells known as *mitochondria*. But there's a serious flaw that's leaving millions unsatisfied.

As you age, your mitochondria break down and fail to produce energy. In a revealing study, a team of researchers showed that 95 percent of the mitochondria in a 90-year-old man were damaged, compared to almost no damage in the mitochondria of a 5-year-old.

Taking CoQ10 alone is not enough to solve this problem. Because as powerful as CoQ10 is, there's one critical thing it fails to do: it can't create new mitochondria to replace the ones you lost.

And that's bad news for Americans all over the country. The loss of cellular energy is a problem for the memory concerns people face as they get older.

"We had no way of replacing lost mitochondria until a recent discovery changed everything," says Dr. Al Sears, founder and medical director of the Sears Institute for Anti-Aging Medicine in Palm Beach, Florida. "Researchers discovered the only nutrient known to modern science that has the power to trigger the growth of new mitochondria."

Why Taking CoQ10 is Not Enough

Dr. Sears explains, "This new discovery is so powerful, it can multiply your mitochondria by 55 percent in just a few weeks. That's the equivalent of restoring decades of lost brain power."

This exciting nutrient — called PQQ (*pyrroloquinoline quinone*) — is the driving force behind a revolution in aging. When paired with CoQ10, this dynamic duo has the power to reverse the age-related memory losses you may have thought were beyond your control.

Dr. Sears pioneered a new formula — called **Ultra Accel II** — that combines both CoQ10 and PQQ to support maximum cellular energy and the normal growth of new mitochondria. **Ultra Accel II** is the first of its kind to address both problems and is already creating huge demand.

Over 47 million doses have been shipped to men and women across the country and sales continue to climb for this much sought-after brain fuel. In fact, demand has been so overwhelming that inventories repeatedly sell out. But a closer look at **Ultra Accel II** reveals there are good reasons why sales are booming.

Science Confirms the Many Benefits of PQQ

The medical journal *Biochemical*

Pharmacology reports that PQQ is up to 5,000 times more efficient in sustaining energy production than common antioxidants. With the ability to keep every cell in your body operating at full strength, **Ultra Accel II** delivers more than just added brain power and a faster memory.

People feel more energetic, more alert, and don't need naps in the afternoon. The boost in cellular energy generates more power to your heart, lungs, muscles, and more.

"With the PQQ in Ultra Accel, I have energy I never thought possible at my age," says Colleen R., one of Dr. Sears's patients. "I'm in my 70s but feel 40 again. I think clearly, move with real energy and sleep like a baby."

The response has been overwhelmingly positive, and Dr. Sears receives countless emails from his patients and readers. "My patients tell me they feel better than they have in years. This is ideal for people who are feeling old and run down, or for those who feel more forgetful. It surprises many that you can add healthy and productive years to your life simply by taking **Ultra Accel II** every day."

You may have seen Dr. Sears on television or read one of his 12 best-selling books. Or you may have seen him speak at the 2016 WPBF 25 Health and Wellness Festival in South Florida, featuring Dr. Oz and special guest Suzanne Somers. Thousands of people attended Dr. Sears's lecture on anti-aging breakthroughs and waited in line for hours during his book signing at the event.

Will Ultra Accel II Multiply Your Energy?

Ultra Accel II is turning everything we thought we knew about youthful energy on its head. Especially for people over age 50. In less than 30 seconds every morning, you can harness the power of this breakthrough discovery to restore peak energy and your "spark for life."

So, if you've noticed less energy as you've gotten older, and you want an easy way to reclaim your youthful edge, this new opportunity will feel like blessed relief.

The secret is the "energy multiplying" molecule that activates a dormant gene in your body that declines with age, which then instructs your cells to pump out fresh energy from the inside-out. This growth of new "energy factories" in your cells is called mitochondrial biogenesis.

Instead of falling victim to that afternoon slump, you enjoy sharp-as-a-tack focus, memory, and concentration from sunup to sundown. And you get more done in a day than most do in a week. Regardless of how



MEMORY-BUILDING SENSATION: Top doctors are now recommending new **Ultra Accel II** because it restores decades of lost brain power without a doctor's visit.

exhausting the world is now.

Dr. Sears reports, "The most rewarding aspect of practicing medicine is watching my patients get the joy back in their lives. **Ultra Accel II** sends a wake-up call to every cell in their bodies... And they actually feel young again."

And his patients agree. "I noticed a difference within a few days," says Jerry from Ft. Pierce, Florida. "My endurance has almost doubled, and I feel it mentally, too. There's a clarity and sense of well-being in my life that I've never experienced before."

How To Get Ultra Accel II

This is the official nationwide release of **Ultra Accel II** in the United States. And so, the company is offering a special discount supply to anyone who calls during the official launch.

An Order Hotline has been set up for local readers to call. This gives everyone an equal chance to try **Ultra Accel II**. And your order is backed up by a no-hassle, 90-day money back guarantee. No questions asked.

All you have to do is call TOLL FREE **1-800-961-9179** right now and use promo code **COUA124** to secure your own supply.

Important: Due to **Ultra Accel II** recent media exposure, phone lines are often busy. If you call and do not immediately get through, please be patient and call back.

Call and find out if you qualify for a **FREE BOTTLE** of **Ultra D3 Plus** - with **FREE SHIPPING** too!



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Ski the Gems

BY CRAIG JOHNSON

There's no better bonding time for me and my daughters than skiing in the Colorado Rockies. We spend the drive up talking and listening to music (I'm still trying to convince them that '80s music is the best), and when we get to the slopes it's equal parts adventure, fun, and friendly competition. Like most people, we love to ski the big-name resorts, but they can come with a hefty price tag. A walk-up day pass might set you back nearly \$300, and that doesn't take into account the costs of parking, meals, or equipment rentals. A day trip for a family of four can easily cost well over a thousand dollars!

There are alternatives that balance an excellent skiing experience and a more affordable cost. The Centennial State has 28 ski resorts, offering something for everyone — easy green runs, long blue groomers, bumps, freestyle terrain, steeps, and backcountry bowls. Single-day adult lift tickets at some of Colorado's smaller resorts — often referred to as the "gems" — cost anywhere between \$69 and \$150, though advance ticket purchases may cost even less.

Want to explore a gem this winter? Here are a few to consider:

Loveland (skiloveland.com) is hidden in plain sight, located on the eastern end of the Eisenhower Tunnel just off I-70. Loveland features 1,800 skiable acres served by nine lifts, with snow cat service along the Continental Divide taking skiers to the highest run in the state at 13,010 feet above sea level. The 360-degree views from the top of the divide are stunning. Uphill access is also available. Parking is limited, which helps to keep the crowds and lift lines to a minimum.

Granby Ranch (granbyranch.com) is a family-owned ski resort located just outside Granby off Highway 40. The resort features approximately 500 skiable acres with four lifts and a vertical drop of nearly 1,000 feet. The resort includes two mountains: East Mountain with beginner and intermediate terrain, and West Mountain with mostly

expert terrain and a few intermediate runs, featuring long, easy runs, bumps, steeps, and freestyle terrain. The resort offers uphill access and night skiing on weekends for those who can't get enough runs in during the daylight hours.

Located approximately 20 miles from Salida off Highway 50, **Monarch** (skimonarch.com) offers roughly 800 skiable acres served by five lifts and two beginner lifts. Unlike most resorts, Monarch does not use snow-making equipment. With a base elevation near 11,000 feet, Mother Nature amply provides an average of 350 inches of snow annually. While most of the runs are fairly short in comparison to other Colorado ski mountains, adrenaline junkies can ride the snow cat or take a short hike to the top of the mountain and experience double black diamond skiing through the trees at the Mirkwood Bowl.

Skiers have enjoyed skiing in the Roaring Fork Valley at **Sunlight Mountain Resort** (sunlightmtn.com) since 1966. Visitors to Sunlight can take in the incredible vistas of Mount Sopris and the Elk Mountain Range while enjoying nearly 730 acres of skiable terrain with a vertical drop of almost 2,000 feet. About half of the runs at Sunlight are rated beginner or intermediate, which makes it a great option for new skiers. Sunlight is only 20 minutes from Glenwood Springs, where visitors can find reasonably priced lodging and a variety of shops and restaurants. Glenwood Springs is also home to the world's largest hot springs pool, ideal for relaxation after a day on the slopes.

With all of these great options, there's no excuse not to get out and enjoy the Colorado slopes this winter.

Congratulations

Pamela Campbell, a member of Mountain View Electric Association won December's cookie baking tools giveaway.

San Isabel Electric members Marjane and Jim McCallum were the lucky winners of the \$200 funny story end-of-year drawing.

Visit Reader Engagement at www.coloradocountrylife.coop to find more ways to win.

Colorado
COUNTRY LIFE

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In English

cpw.info/KeepColoradoWildPass
cpw.info/KeepColoradoWildPassSpanish



En español



Illusion

You are a winter day
When the temperature
Sinks below zero
But the sun is bright
And the sky
Burns so blue
That it turns black in photos
Deceptively warm
Unknowingly chilling your soul.

You are ice crystals
Condensing onto aspens
An illusion of overnight snow
Joining to branches
That sparkle and glitter
At the first hint of sun
Dazzling and wondrous
But so bright
You can't quite see it
For what it is
And as soon as the sun
Hits full force
You melt away.

You are champagne powder
Soft and cushioning
Beneath my skis
A fleeting instance of joy
A moment of euphoria
But as I float
Through a swell of snow
Your substance disperses
The slightest touch
Sending all of your molecules
Scattering to the wind.

Valerie Powell, Steamboat Springs
Yampa Valley Electric member

The Old Grouch

Sparrows on my fence,
finches all around,
they're searching for food
and scratching the ground.

I'm rather busy;
I'm reading the news;
don't puff your feathers
or sing dreary blues.

I know it's quite cold
but don't bother me.
I'll sit on the couch
and drink my hot tea.

The clouds are gloomy
and winds start to blow;
I grab a blanket
and watch embers glow.

Your eyes are piercing,
stop staring this way.
I'll close the curtains
and sit here all day.

The weather is fierce;
the fence starts shaking;
Feathers are ruffled
and trees are quaking.

Ice is now forming;
I blast the heater;
I trudge through the snow
and fill the feeder.

Larry Madigan, Colorado Springs
Mountain View Electric member

The High Plains

Some say the plains
of this great land of ours
are quite simply boring
for unending hours.
But where else, I ask you,
is there to be found
such a grand display where
silence abounds?
Where there is exceedingly
much to explore,
no boundaries to hold you,
no cobbled decor?
Where whispering winds
are the songs of the night
and spectacular sunsets
bring such delight?
And hidden beyond,
where one dare not breach,
are the creatures who scurry
to dash out of reach.
While the folks who have
chosen
to make it their home
have proudly embraced
what they always have known.
Its splendor is grassland,
and wheat fields and more.
Its strength is derived
from those gone before.
Its essence, compelling,
though not what it seems.
For its promise is endless
to those who would dream.

Linda Rae Schaal, Burlington
K.C. Electric Association member

Solstice

Stillness
A pause as the cold settles in
Vast expanses of white
Bare sentinel trees
Snow crunches beneath my feet
The warmth is missed
But the stillness is welcome
As I slow down ... and breathe

Jennifer Rivas, Lyons
Poudre Valley REA member

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   READERS' PHOTOS

 FUNNY STORIES



Tom and Lucy Butler snap a photo with CCL at Qumran Caves in Israel during a C.S. Lewis Institute tour of the Holy Land.



Kathryn Stephen, a member of Grand Valley Power, with her sister, **Jeanne Bryson**, on a Panama Canal cruise stopped in Cartagena, Columbia. They're pictured here with CCL in front of the Cathedral of Catherine of Alexandria with the golden dome.



WINNER: SDCEA members **Art and Linda Wilson** from Buena Vista bring CCL to the Saint Paul Asylum in Saint Remy de Provence, France, where Vincent Van Gogh was hospitalized. Van Gogh painted more than 150 paintings in the one year he was here.



Members of GCEA and San Isabel Electric, **Steve and Maryvonne Cleveland** take CCL to the Tuscany region of Italy for their 55th anniversary trip. The statue of hometown explorer Verrazzano graces the town square of Greve in Chianti.



Y-W Electric members **Jim and Marcia Pieper** take the magazine to Kilauea volcano in Hawaii.



Poudre Valley REA member **Guy Fernandez** reads his copy of CCL in the middle of the Atlantic ocean heading for Manhattan after a Mediterranean cruise.



The first snow of the season seems to take me by surprise every fall, and this year I discovered my daughter had outgrown last year's winter coat. I was scrambling to find something fast that would fit and decided to order her a lovely fur-trimmed parka online. When it arrived, I was happy to see that it fit well, and also happy to read the tag and share with my daughter that her coat was made out of recycled plastic bottles. As she modeled her new coat in the living room, her envious little brother demanded to know, "When do I get my coat made out of trash?"

Rebecca Sundhagen, Peyton Mountain View Electric member

My grandchildren were in the car with me, 6-year-old Ella and 5-year-old twins Matthew and Evie. We were following their dad to the garage where his car was going to be worked on; he was about a block ahead of us. Evie suddenly asked, "Why is Daddy's car going so much faster?" Ella replied, "Well, there's one person in that car, and there are four people in this car."

Marilee Bennett, Hugo K.C. Electric member

After Christmas, I traveled to visit my son and his young family. I went to help with cooking and cleaning, as they had a new baby. As I was loading my car to leave, I quipped that I was concerned that they would starve after I was gone. My 4-year-old granddaughter smiled up at me and said, "It's OK, YaYa, we still have candy canes on the Christmas tree."

Stephanie Hamilton, Dallas GCEA member

We pay \$15 to each person who submits a funny story that is printed in the magazine. At the end of the year, we draw one name from the published stories, and that person will receive \$200. Send your stories to *Colorado Country Life*, 5400 Washington Street, Denver, CO 80216 or email them to funnystories@coloradocountrylife.org. Remember to include your mailing address, so we can send you a check!

Don't forget to pack a copy of CCL for your next trip!

Show us where you enjoy CCL for a chance to win! Simply take a photo of someone (or a selfie!) with the magazine and share it with us on the Reader Engagement page at www.coloradocountrylife.coop. Each month we'll draw one photo to win \$25. The next deadline is **Wednesday, January 17**.



““

A lot of people won't have the chance to go to Washington, D.C., to visit a Smithsonian Museum, and this exhibit brings the experience close to home.”

—Jennifer Macias,
Colorado Humanities
history programs coordinator

Smithsonian Museum Traveling Exhibit Highlights Rural America

Since 1900, the percentage of Americans living in rural areas dropped from 60% to 17%. Yet, Americans still rely on rural communities for food and other resources. The Smithsonian's Museum on Main Street traveling exhibition “Crossroads: Change in Rural America” looks at that remarkable 20th century societal change and how rural Americans responded.

A partnership of the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service and Colorado Humanities, Museum on Main Street is traveling “Crossroads” to eight Colorado towns this year.

“We are excited to bring this to rural Colorado communities,” Colorado Humanities History Programs Coordinator Jennifer Macias says. “A lot of people won't have the chance to go to Washington, D.C., to visit a Smithsonian Museum, and this exhibit brings the experience close to home.”

Through a selection of photographs, objects, film, audio, and interactive displays, “Crossroads” takes a broad look at the characteristics and impact of rural America. This focus on rural America gives people an opportunity to see areas of overlap and to highlight what is different about each community.

Even though each community is different, rural American communities share similarities. “A unifying theme is family

structures,” Macias says. “While the family unit might look different from place to place, the exhibit highlights that the larger idea of ‘family’ is what helps rural areas flourish.”

Designed for small-town museums, libraries, and cultural organizations, “Crossroads” serves as a community meeting place to bring people together. “History is a unifying topic of conversation because it's a shared experience, a collection of peoples' stories and lives,” according to Macias.

Macias reports that when “Crossroads” was in Alamosa and Walsenburg in 2023, it “helped people realize that their local rural history is important to the narrative of Colorado history and American history.” Emphasizing that Colorado has an important indigenous history and that Mexican Americans and Latinos contribute to the state's history, she says, “‘Crossroads’ recentralizes the idea that you can't have a history of America or a history of Colorado without including the histories of these rural towns.”

The map on the next page shows where the exhibit will be this year. More information about these dates and locations can be found at coloradohumanities.org.


 A rural crossroads. Photo courtesy of [Freemages.com](https://www.freemages.com/)/Bettina Schwehn.



Photo courtesy of Museum on Main Street, Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service.



Crossroads: Change in Rural America traveling exhibit sets up in local museums, libraries, and humanities centers across the country. Photos courtesy of Museum on Main Street, Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service.



Linemen work to bring life-changing electric service to rural areas in the early 1940s. Reprinted with permission. @National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

Crossroads: Change in Rural America

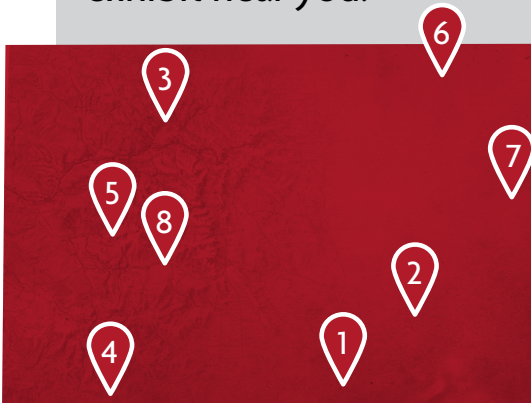
Where to find the exhibit near you.

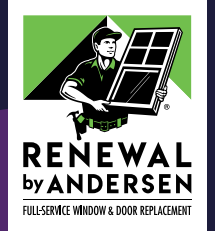
1. **TRINIDAD**
through January 13
2. **LA JUNTA**
January 22 – March 2
3. **YAMPA**
March 11 – April 20
4. **IGNACIO**
April 29 – June 8
5. **PAONIA**
June 17 – July 2
6. **STERLING**
August 5 – September 14
7. **BURLINGTON**
September 23 – November 2
8. **GUNNISON**
November 11 – December 21



History is a unifying topic of conversation because it's a shared experience, a collection of peoples' stories and lives."

— Jennifer Macias,
Colorado Humanities
history programs coordinator





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