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OCTOBER 2023



**THE**  
**GIGGLING**  
**LIFE**  
Teaching  
Gratitude  
& Purpose

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## FROM THE EDITOR

### Gratitude ... one bullet point at a time

BY KYLEE COLEMAN EDITOR



KYLEE COLEMAN

Cultivating a habit of optimism is one of the best things I've done for myself over the past decade. You see, I tend to naturally fall along the pessimistic and "salty" skeptic side of an attitude spectrum (is that a thing?). Life can be tough and seeking positivity can be a challenging but rewarding journey.

My journey includes watching the sunrise. In the quiet minutes before my family is awake, I also write. At the top of a fresh, blank page I always start off by listing a few things to be grateful for: a fun tennis date with my husband; an insightful conversation with my 16-year-old. More frequently, it's just a few bullet points of single words: Health. Family. Friends. Laughter. Connection.

Gratitude journaling has shifted my perspective, and I recognize changes in my overall well-being, stress resilience, and attitude. And I'm more likely to extend an extra dose of compassion or grace to those who are struggling.

In this issue, you'll meet 4-H leader Kristi Hurley who is no stranger to cultivating positivity in her life and in the kids she serves at her farm in Adams County. Turn to page 12 to read her story and learn how her animals and work kept her afloat through years of tragic loss and pain. She describes it as a journey "from grief to gratitude."

Do you want to improve your well-being? Start with gratitude. Take a mindfulness walk — notice the sounds of the birds or the crunch of leaves underneath your feet. Send a card to someone in your life and write specific examples of why you appreciate them. Or join me: Set your alarm for 10 minutes earlier each day and jot down on paper a few things that make you smile. I bet you'll soon start to notice the benefits from this simple practice.



A reminder to be thankful is on display at Kristi Hurley's Giggling Life Care Farm. Photo by Kylee Coleman

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ON THE COVER:  
 Kristi Hurley at her farm in Adams County. Photo by Kylee Coleman

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# A COLORADO TRAVELOGUE

Finding “awesome” in all corners of the state.

BY KENT SINGER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR


Many years ago, some creative type in the state tourism office of my home state of Kansas came up with a fantastic promotional slogan: “Kansas. Land of Ah’s.” (I don’t need to explain this, do I? Dorothy? Toto? Ruby slippers?)

And while the Kansas slogan may not be as clever as the more recent Nebraska tourism slogan (you know the one: “Nebraska. Honestly, it’s not for everyone.”), it’s still darned good.

As I traveled across much of our spectacular state this past summer for both business and leisure, I wondered: “What’s the Colorado tourism slogan?” Yes, the signs at our borders with neighboring states welcome folks to “Colorful Colorado,” but that’s not really an attention-getter, is it? Don’t we need a catchy slogan?

But then it dawned on me. I mean, just look around. We’re not exactly hurting for tourists. To the extent our state was ever a well-kept secret, those days are long gone. And while I could (and sometimes do) complain that Colorado has become too loved, rest assured there are still many, many magical places waiting to be explored, particularly in Colorado electric co-op country.



 Summer fishing on the Gunnison River.

My summer travels started in July with a trip to Meeker to attend the annual meeting of White River Electric Association. The folks at White River throw a heckuva party that includes a community dinner and entertainment. After staying overnight in Meeker, Deb and I took the long way home over the Flat Tops Trail Scenic Byway, an awe-inspiring 82-mile drive that connects Meeker to Yampa (fittingly served by Yampa Valley Electric Association). From Yampa we headed south, and I spent a couple of hours fishing the Eagle River (in Holy Cross Energy service territory) before heading back to Denver.

A couple weeks later, we drove over to Grand Junction to attend Grand Valley Power’s excellent annual meeting. (It’s always great to see hundreds of co-op members show up to share a meal and hear co-op news.) The next morning, Deb and I stopped in Palisade to pick up some legendary peaches and enjoy a glass of wine at one of the wineries. We then drove through the heart of Delta-Montrose Electric Association territory on our way to Lake City, which is in the service territory of GCEA (Gunnison County Electric Association). We spent a couple of days casting flies on the Lake Fork of the Gunnison River and enjoying the rustic charm of Lake City.

Toward the end of August, I met a college friend for some hiking near Crested Butte (also in the service territory of GCEA). I’m sure everyone has their favorite hiking trail in Colorado, but for my money — and for the name alone — you can’t miss the Oh-Be-Joyful trail that runs along the stunning mountain stream of the same name. With the wildflowers, waterfalls, and views of Ruby Range, this trail is quintessential



KENT SINGER

Colorado. On the way back to Denver, we stopped for lunch in Buena Vista, the home of Sangre de Cristo Electric Association.

Getting back to work, in early September our team from CREA traveled to Falcon (in the service territory of Mountain View Electric Association) and Monte Vista (headquarters of San Luis Valley Rural Electric Cooperative). We presented our CREA “Town Halls” to the staff members and board directors at Mountain View Electric and San Luis Valley REC and had great discussions about CREA’s services and projects. Our steak dinners at Quincy’s in Monte Vista were superb!

My summer concluded with a recent trip to northeastern Colorado where I had the privilege of playing golf at an incredible course called Ballyneal, located just south of Holyoke in the service territory of Highline Electric Association. Sculpted from the sand hills of Phillips County, this links course is as authentic and challenging as any of the famed courses of Scotland or England. Ballyneal is one of the highest-rated courses in the world, and it’s a true gem on Colorado’s Eastern Plains.

These trips around Colorado reminded me how lucky I am to work for Colorado’s electric co-ops and how lucky we all are to live and work in this incredible place. As *Denver Post* founder and publisher William G. Bonfils once proclaimed: “Tis a privilege to live in Colorado.”

Oh, and that tourism slogan? How about: “Colorado. Land of Awesome!”



## What's a Smart Breaker Box?

New developments in home electrical panels

BY JENNAH DENNEY

Every home has an electrical panel, otherwise known as a breaker box. The design hasn't changed much over the years. However, through recent innovation, the smart technology-enabled electrical panel is changing the way we think about a breaker box. Smart breaker boxes, which can operate on their own or in conjunction with a standard electrical panel, make an excellent option for people who want to increase their home's energy efficiency.

Many consumers are upgrading to smart breaker boxes to make their home electrical systems safer and more reliable. It's recommended to hire a qualified electrician to install the smart panel, which can be done using a home's existing electrical wiring and infrastructure.

Many smart breaker boxes are designed to easily connect to other smart devices in your home. With the capacity to remotely monitor and adjust energy consumption, these devices provide several advantages that make them a worthwhile investment for anyone looking to consume less energy.

One advantage that smart breaker boxes provide is convenience for homeowners to monitor and control how much energy they use. With smart circuit breakers, you can receive real-time data that allows you to pinpoint appliances or devices that

consume excessive energy. This real-time tracking allows you to adjust your energy use where needed, which ultimately saves money on monthly energy bills and reduces energy waste.

These devices are all about managing your electrical load. While the technology to track how much energy a home uses has been available for years, the ability to control how that energy is used is a new development. A smart breaker box can reveal how much power each circuit is using and turn each one on or off. Some smart breaker boxes allow you to establish schedules based on importance, such as refrigeration and heat to be on 24/7 but less important loads like Wi-Fi or the television to turn off during scheduled times, for example, when no one is home.

Smart breaker boxes offer additional benefits for those with home solar systems. These boxes help solar energy systems run more efficiently by determining how much energy is being used and how it can be stored. Through intelligent load management, they can provide longer battery backup life for those with energy storage. Additionally, integration with other smart home devices, such as thermostats and virtual assistants, further enhances the connected-home ecosystem.

With smart breaker boxes like the SPAN Panel shown above, you can control and monitor every circuit in your home from a smartphone or tablet. *Photo courtesy of SPAN.*

Safety in electrical devices is highly important to consumers, and smart breaker boxes provide enhanced safety features that consumers appreciate. Smart breaker boxes can identify abnormalities and other potential electrical problems, then quickly shut off power supply if a circuit shorts or becomes overloaded, avoiding electrical fires and other dangers. Many smart breaker boxes include surge protection to help protect against power spikes and other issues.

There's no denying that smart home technologies have changed how we use our homes, and smart breaker boxes are no exception. With advanced safety features, real-time energy tracking and control, and the ability to use energy more efficiently, these devices are a smart investment for anyone who wants to make their home's system more reliable, safer, and energy-efficient.

Jennah Denney writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.

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# Eating Veggies Never Tasted So Good

BY CASSI GLOE CCL PUBLISHER

Each summer I grow zucchini, and there comes a point toward the end of each gardening season where I'm desperate to use all of my harvest. At that point in the late summer, we're grilling, sautéing, roasting, making noodles (or "zoodles" as they're called), and leaving zucchini on the neighbor's doorstep.

This was until I discovered my Grandma Helen's chocolate zucchini cake in my mom's recipe box.

Hands down, this is one of the tastiest ways to sneak some vegetables into your diet.

In baking, zucchini adds a wonderful texture and moistness and helps boost the nutrition too (though this cake isn't exactly "healthy"). The recipe uses two cups of zucchini, yet you wouldn't know it.

No wonder it is a family favorite. My nieces and nephews even request it for their birthday cake.

Here is my family's recipe for chocolate zucchini cake topped with Grandma Helen's fudge frosting. I hope you enjoy it as much as we do.

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Looking for more ways to use up your garden zucchini?

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- **Skillet Eggs and Polenta Breakfast**

To find these recipes and more, visit us online at [coloradocountrylife.coop](http://coloradocountrylife.coop) or scan the QR code to the right.



## Chocolate Zucchini Cake with Chocolate Frosting

- 1/2 cup oil
- 1 egg
- 1 1/4 cups sugar
- 2 tsp vanilla
- 2 cups peeled and grated zucchini
- 1/3 cup cocoa
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 1/2 tsp baking soda
- 2 cups flour

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

In a large bowl, cream together oil, egg, sugar, and vanilla. Add peeled, grated zucchini. In a separate bowl, sift together cocoa, salt, baking soda, and flour. Add sifted ingredients to wet ingredients and stir. Pour batter into a greased and floured sheet cake pan and bake for 18-20 minutes at 350 degrees. Use a toothpick or fork to check doneness in center. Allow to cool before frosting.

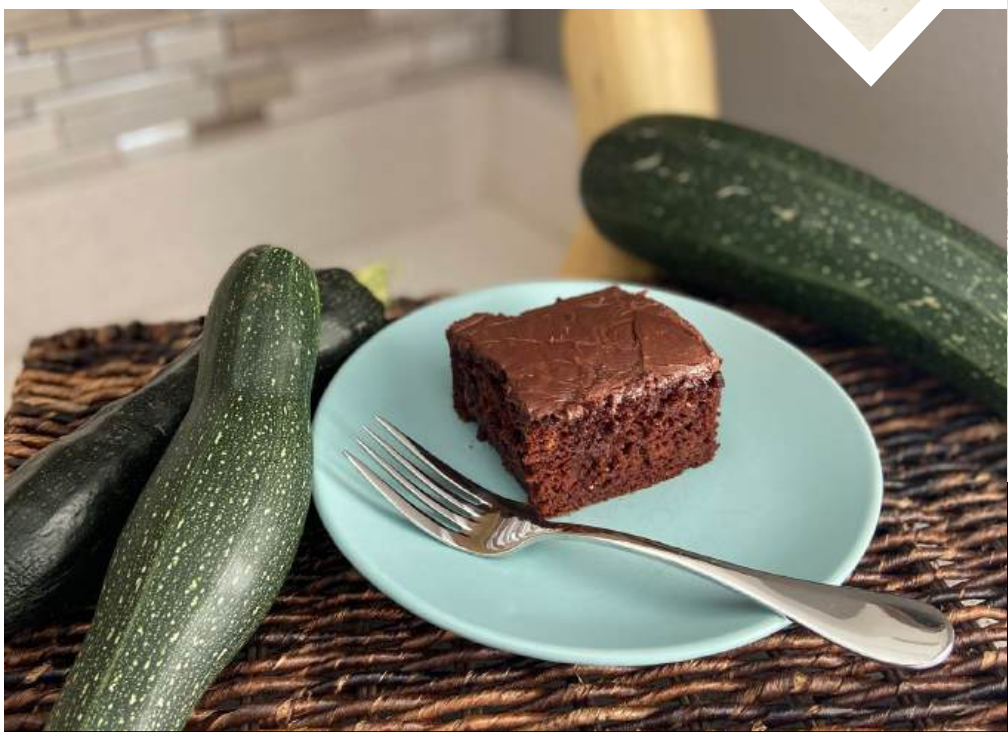
### For Creamy Fudge Frosting

- 1 stick unsalted butter
- 1/3 cup milk
- 1/4 cup cocoa
- 1 lb powdered sugar

In a saucepan, melt butter over low heat. Add milk and bring to boil. Remove from heat and stir in cocoa. Transfer to mixing bowl. Using an electric mixer on low, slowly add powdered sugar. Mix until smooth.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Many zucchini recipes are written to accommodate their water content. The amount of dry ingredients properly balances the zucchini.



### TO PEEL OR NOT TO PEEL? THAT IS THE QUESTION

In general, many bakers prefer not to peel zucchini. We do to avoid any green flecks and to avoid the texture of the peel in the final baked good. It's entirely up to you!

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# THE GIGGLING LIFE

## Teaching Gratitude & Purpose

BY BECKY JENSEN

“How is everybody doing?” Kristi Hurley asks her class of 10 children, ages four to 13. The kids sit at a long row of picnic tables covered in red-and-white-checked tablecloths that run the length of the barn. Several girls cuddle velvet-soft rabbits. A Nigerian Dwarf goat named Charlotte has scampered onto a table where she bleats, demanding attention. She’s just a baby. A boy reaches for Charlotte, gently hugs her miniature body, and pats her coarse brown coat. Both kids are in heaven.

Kristi bends down into a pen filled with fresh straw, scoops up a newborn lamb, and cradles it in her arms. The mother, a therapy sheep named Dolly, doesn’t seem to mind. Kristi helped deliver the lamb, Woody, in the middle of the night. Woody is off-the-charts adorable, and all 10 kids erupt into a collective “Awww.” Kristi is tired after such a long night, but her eyes sparkle as she launches into the birth story. The lamb had

gotten stuck. Kristi had pulled Woody free and helped him take his first breath. In her hands, she holds life, which is precious.

“I am so grateful for this little guy,” she says to the children, “and for all of you. Now, who’s ready for goat yoga?”

This is how class begins at The Giggling Life Care Farm, an animal therapy center located in the rural fringes of Thornton, Colorado, only 30 minutes away from downtown Denver.

Founded in 2019, the therapy farm is the passion project of Kristi Hurley, a woman on a mission to connect children with the healing properties of gratitude, animal care, and time spent on a working farm. It’s been her dream since she was a kid.

“It was amazing,” she says of her childhood in rural Dubois and Casper, Wyoming, during the 1970s and ’80s. She points to her dad — a cowboy raised in a humble sheepherder’s wagon — as a major influence on her appreciation of animals and rural living.

He taught Kristi and her siblings how to care for cows, sheep, horses, and other livestock and encouraged his children to join 4-H. “I’ve always loved animals,” she says.

After high school, Kristi moved to San Diego, California, where she went to college and earned a degree in behavioral science. It’s also where she met her husband, Jon, settled down, and started a family. While she was pregnant with their second son, Kristi earned her master’s degree in education and began substitute teaching. After her third baby, she volunteered as an art teacher. Kristi was young, her days were busy, and she never had reason to question the fragility of life.

But in 2006, Kristi’s world was rocked by a cluster of three tragedies. Her cousin died suddenly from a heart attack. One month later, she lost her younger brother to suicide. Shortly after her brother’s death, his best friend was shot and killed in Iraq.

“It was so much loss,” she says, admitting



◀ Rubie is all smiles during chicken yoga during an afterschool program at The Giggling Life Care Farm. Photo by Kylee Coleman.

that she sank into a deep depression. “It was like a bomb had gone off in our family. The trauma was just too much, and I didn’t know how to cope.”

### GETTING BACK TO HER ROOTS

During a trip to visit one of her surviving brothers in Colorado, Kristi drove past a small farm that was in foreclosure. She developed an instant and protective attachment to the rundown property, which looked and felt as sad and broken as she did. Something in Kristi’s gut told her it was time to get back to the land and her ag roots and that this farm would be a great place to raise her children. Desperate for a fresh start in a rural setting, Kristi made an offer on the acreage.

“Who buys a house in another state without looking at the inside first? No one,” Kristi answers, marveling at her impulse decision that made no sense on paper, still amazed by her husband’s unconditional support.

While Jon stayed behind in California to sell their house and transition his business, a very pregnant Kristi packed up their three boys and moved to Colorado. The farm was in worse shape than she remembered; there were no fences and few outbuildings; everything was overgrown. The house, in Kristi’s own words, was disgusting.

The family was soon gifted two horses, and Kristi was about to give birth to a baby girl, which supercharged her desire to fix up the place. She admits now that the renovation project gave her focus and purpose during a time when she felt lost and adrift. “That’s when my massive self-growth journey began,” she says. “It was the hardest time in my life, but it was also the most beautiful. I was bringing new life to the farm and new life into the world with the birth of my daughter. It was a journey from grief to gratitude.”

Right away, Kristi involved her children in the care and feeding of the animals. She had a hunch that getting closer to the land, and to animals, was healing for everyone. Kristi would discover that her hunch was backed by hard science.

According to the Yale School of the Environment, “A growing body of research points to the beneficial effects that exposure to the natural world has on health, reducing stress, and promoting healing.” And the National Institutes of Health reports that “Interacting with animals has been shown to decrease levels of cortisol (a stress-related hormone) and lower blood pressure. Other studies have found that contact with animals can reduce loneliness, increase feelings of social support, and boost your mood.”

“Moving to the farm,” Kristi adds, “was about getting back to a simpler way of life, digging in the dirt, spending time with animals. It was the best thing I could have done for my kids and for our family.”

As the farm began to blossom, so did Kristi. She started a blog that focused on the power of gratitude, where she shared her personal stories of loss and offered hope after profound tragedy. She became a certified life coach and wrote several books. And in addition to their two original horses, Kristi adopted two donkeys, two chickens, two dogs, and two rabbits on their Noah’s Ark-like farm.

### FLOODED BY MORE LOSS

Just as they were finding peace and happiness, a second wave of tragedy struck Kristi and her family.

By 2018, a fire destroyed much of their farmhouse. Her oldest son’s best friend died. And Kristi’s nephew, who had been a big part of their lives, was killed in a motorcycle accident.

Grieving or not, life went on at the farm. It had to. The garden needed watering, eggs had to be gathered, and livestock needed to be fed. Once again, the farm gave Kristi and her family purpose. They all leaned into the quiet meditation of daily chores and turned to their animals and each other for emotional support and healing.

“It was so heavy,” Kristi says, describing their second round of tragedies. “It was too much for the kids. But being on the farm — being outdoors, grounded in the dirt, watching my kids find laughter through the animals — it saved us again.”

Kristi was determined to share the healing power of her farm with others, especially children. Jon encouraged her to put a business plan together.

In early 2019, she began teaching therapeutic classes at The Giggling Life Care Farm. In addition to offering lessons in the care, feeding, and grooming of farm animals, Kristi created calm environments, like the cozy Bunny Bowl, a round enclosure where



▶ Miss Rikki teaches the warrior pose at the care farm in Adams County. Photo by Kylee Coleman.



children quietly read books as they snuggle with rabbits. And there's the long row of rocking chairs, where kids pet or groom animals while peacefully rocking. During every activity, Kristi reinforced the values of gratitude and a positive mindset. Word spread about the classes and attendance grew.

By January 2020, Kristi acquired her certification in equine assisted therapy. "I've been riding horses all my life, but when I started putting kids on horses, I thought, 'This is another level,'" she says, citing the importance of formal therapy training. Kristi has watched horses identify kids on the spectrum, or kids who have been bullied at school, and "choose" them during a lesson.

"The horses will gently nudge them and stand beside them," she explains. Kristi has seen quiet tears flow from kids after making a connection with a horse. "And that horse will follow them around the rest of the day and never leave their side."

Just when The Giggling Life Care Farm seemed to be hitting its stride, the rug was pulled out from under Kristi yet again.

In early March 2020, a neighbor's horse fell on Kristi and broke her leg. Less than one week later, a freak accident with another horse left Kristi with a second broken leg and fractured ribs. Again, she turned to her farm for healing.

Just as Kristi embarked on her long road to recovery, the world went into lockdown. During the early months of the pandemic, Kristi changed her farm's programming to meet the needs of kids during COVID-19. She provided virtual visits to the farm, which served as a lifeline to children who felt lonely, anxious, and isolated. As soon as she could walk again, Kristi began teaching in-person classes to swarms of eager children.

"These kids were traumatized," she says of the pandemic. "They needed to get outside, and they needed the comfort of animals."



▲ Alex learns how to lead a horse at The Giggling Life Care Farm. Photo by Kylee Coleman.



▲ Kristi Hurley holds the lamb she helped deliver at the farm in Spring 2023. Photo by Becky Jensen.

### THE FARM TODAY

Today, Kristi's in-person classes are back to pre-pandemic numbers — serving up to 150 kids per week in the summer, and 100 kids each week in the fall. Classes at The Giggling Life Care Farm are open to all children, not just kids who have suffered trauma. The farm is also helpful for children on the autism spectrum and kids with anxiety disorders.

Classes at The Giggling Life Care Farm include the Tiny Tots program, goat yoga, summer day camps, afterschool programs, horse camps and riding lessons, home school enrichment, and more.

"It's all about unplugging, being outdoors, breathing, slowing down, and sharing time with animals," Kristi says.

A firm believer in the 4-H motto that "Young people learn by doing," Kristi created the Boots & Buckles Club through the Adams County 4-H program. Through Boots & Buckles, kids learn to care for animals and show them at the Adams County Fair by leasing and boarding livestock at Kristi's farm.

### CIRCLE OF GRATITUDE

Back in the barn, Kristi asks her class of 10 children to return the rabbits to their hutches. Once outside, the kids follow her like ducklings to the sheep enclosure where they unroll blankets on the ground. Miss Rikki, the goat yoga instructor, guides the class through several poses, encouraging her students to hiss like snakes and moo like cows.

"Are you ready to show me how strong you are?" she asks as she moves them into Warrior Two pose. "I am strong!" she says to the class. "I am strong!" the kids repeat with conviction. They all shift into Table Top pose, hoping Charlotte will hop across their backs. The baby goat is off doing her own thing, roughhousing with lambs twice her size, which makes the children giggle.

At the end of class, everyone gathers in a circle as Miss Rikki asks each child to share what they are grateful for. Charlotte nibbles on the hood strings of someone's sweatshirt. "Woody!" shouts a little boy, thankful for the newborn lamb.

"My friends," whispers a shy teenage girl. "Horsies," offers another child.

"The donkeys," says his friend.

"Every animal here," says another girl, smiling.

"I am grateful for all of you," Kristi says for the second time today.

When asked to describe her farm in one word, Kristi struggles. There are too many feelings and not enough words. Miss Rikki can't help but chime in.

"Magic," she says. "That's how I always describe the farm. It's pure magic."

Becky Jensen is an award-winning writer and podcast contributor who lives and works in a little cabin on a big river in Northern Colorado. She's a former farm girl turned mountain mama and a proud member of Poudre Valley REA. You can find her at [beckyjensenwrites.com](http://beckyjensenwrites.com).

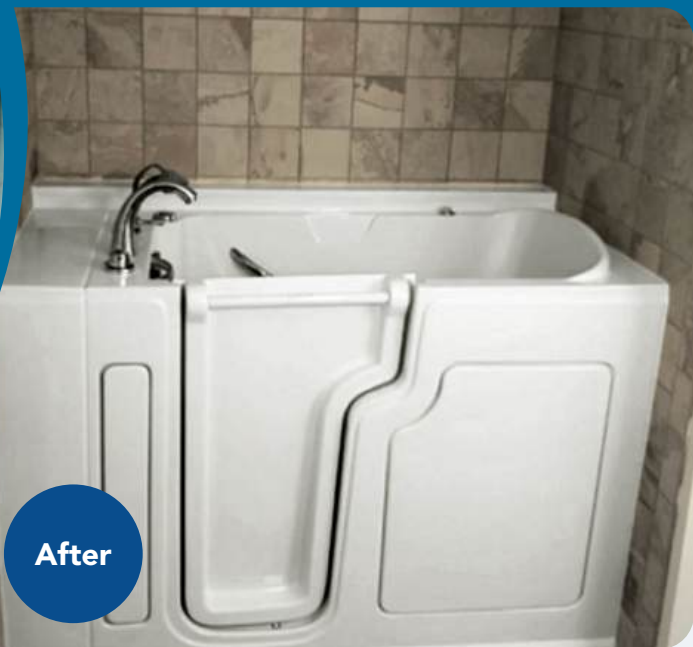
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# FIVE REASONS ELECTRIC CO-OPS ARE GREAT PLACES TO WORK

Energy careers are uniquely stable and innovative

BY PAUL WESSLUND

The electricity in your home may seem like an impossible miracle to explain. But one way to understand it is to think about the variety of skills and job roles it takes to make that power happen.

Running electric utilities takes just about every skill imaginable. Some jobs call for the physical ability to climb a utility pole, while other roles require the technical know-how to create intricate cybersecurity systems. Some need the interpersonal skills of talking with co-op members about how they can lower their electric bill, while others call for the logistical knowledge to get essential equipment delivered through a challenging supply chain.

An industry that depends on such a vast range of abilities offers job seekers a variety of career opportunities.

This year, Careers in Energy Week is October 16–20. To highlight this industry and the many career paths it offers, here are five ways the unique characteristics of electric co-ops make them a great place to work:

1. **Stability.** You can count on homes and businesses needing electricity now and in the future. One analysis predicts electricity demand will grow even faster in the 2020s than it has the previous two decades. Energy careers offer excellent benefits, paths for career advancement, and the opportunity for longevity — electric co-op employees typically stay in the industry more than 15 years.

2. **Excitement.** While utility work is dependable, it's also at the cutting edge of innovation. The number of electric vehicles on the road increases each year, which means new workforce skills are needed to figure out how to keep all those cars and trucks plugged in and charged. Renewable energy is on the rise, too. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, two of the 20 fastest-growing occupations are wind turbine technician and solar voltaic installer. The energy industry is changing, and it's an exciting time to be part of it.

3. **Variety.** The skills and education needed in the utility industry are varied. Positions may require advanced college degrees, trade school certificates, apprenticeships, or on-the-job training. And the range of positions is staggering — accountants, social media managers, IT specialists, engineers, and human resources professionals, just to name a few. Other positions include drone operators who inspect power lines; data analysts who coordinate the flow of electricity; and power plant operators who oversee electricity generation.

4. **It's local.** The thing about electricity is that maintaining the service needs to happen nearby. That means that much of the work takes place near your hometown. Not only can a utility worker make a living and raise a family in the place they choose to live, if they decide to move

to another part of the country, there will likely be energy career opportunities there as well.

5. **Satisfaction.** Any lineworker will tell you even when they've just climbed down from a pole in the middle of the night during a rainstorm, there's no better feeling than knowing the power outage you've just restored brought light and heat back into the homes of hundreds of people. The same goes for the utility truck dispatcher back at headquarters and the media specialist getting the word out about the status of power restoration. Equally important are the system resilience planners working to avoid an outage in the first place and the engineers creating an energy system for the future with renewable energy technologies and utility-scale batteries. Utility workers know they're powering their neighbors and the nation.

The people behind the power at your electric co-op get to know even higher levels of job satisfaction and find purpose in their work.

Electric co-ops offer a unique business model led by the members who use the electricity. It's a form of business with a commitment to improving the quality of life for the local community.

Paul Wesslund writes about consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. *Photos above courtesy of Tri-State Generation and Transmission.*



## FEELING REJUVINATED 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 70s 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](https://ZebraCBD.com/Colorado) or at 1-888-762-2699.

# ENERGY EFFICIENCY FOR BETTER BUILDINGS

Whether your home or business, the buildings you enter daily consist of several layers that create one building envelope, or shell. The envelope begins with the foundation in the ground and ends with the roof, and includes everything in between such as walls, windows and doors. To save energy and maintain comfort, an envelope should limit the transfer of heat in or out of the building. Improve your building envelope by applying weatherization best practices.

## + AIR SEAL CRACKS AND HOLES

Caulking and weatherstripping are cost-efficient air-sealing techniques that help maintain a comfortable temperature in your space. Air-seal gaps around windows, doors, electrical outlets, and other wall or ceiling penetrations to reduce drafts. Weatherstripping around the interior of door frames and window sashes will also limit drafts in these areas and improve the energy efficiency of your home.

## + ENSURE ADEQUATE INSULATION

One of the best ways to reduce your energy bills and increase the comfort of your home is by ensuring adequate and effective insulation in your home. The Department of Energy recommends that a home have 12 to 16 inches of attic insulation. However, not all insulation has the same effectiveness for energy efficiency, and as insulation ages that effectiveness declines. There are also several methods for insulation depending on where you live and the part of your home you are insulating (walls, crawlspace, attic, etc.) so it's best to contact a local certified contractor. Check your local building codes for requirements.

## + RESEARCH INCOME-QUALIFIED PROGRAMS

Some income-qualified programs provide air sealing and insulation, along with making sure your home is safe, if you have combustion appliances like a gas furnace or water heater. Certain programs even cover up to 80% of the median area income and provide these improvements at no cost to the homeowner and in many cases renters as well.

To learn more about income-qualified programs, rebates, and incentives for energy-efficient upgrades, contact your local co-op or public power district. Visit us at [www.tristate.coop/electrify-and-save](http://www.tristate.coop/electrify-and-save)



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# Growing Giant Vegetables

BY VICKI SPENCER MASTER GARDENER | GARDENING@COLORADOCOUNTRYLIFE.ORG

Gardeners everywhere look forward to fall harvest, but the most anxiously anticipated harvest might well be that of giant vegetable growers. The fruits of their labor far exceed the size of an ordinary gardener's. Vegetables grown for competitions are truly gigantic — often weighing more than 1,000 pounds.

One can hardly imagine the mounting excitement at annual weigh-offs as entries are transported in trucks and hoisted onto scales with forklifts or, in some cases, small cranes.

Last October, grower Chad New broke the 2016 Colorado state record of 1,685 pounds when his 1,783-pound pumpkin, Howie, tipped the scales at the Nick's Garden Center weigh-off in Aurora. (Yes, growers become so attached to their pumpkins that they give them names.) Second place holder (and Howie's relative) Greta weighed a close 1,729 pounds at the Fort Collins Nursery's annual competition. She later made a special appearance at Aurora Fire Station 11 to promote Fire Prevention Week while Howie was showcased at the Denver Botanic Gardens where you might have seen her at the October Glow at the Gardens festival.

The connection between Howie and Greta began after Greta's grower, Brad Bledsoe, went seeking a sound male pollinator. He reached out to Chad New early in the growing season. New gave Bledsoe a tour of his greenhouse and later provided him with Howie's genetically superior male flowers. The rest, as they say, is history.

Most people agree the secret to growing giant vegetables is to start with the right seeds. Fortunately for the novice, there are lots of giant vegetable growers and associations willing to share seed at a minimal cost. In fact, you may be surprised at the number of seed providers offering products on the internet. To find a reputable grower, you could explore giant grower associations. One place you might start is with World Class Gardening, which facilitates the exchange of authenticated seeds by linking buyers to original growers. You can also hook up with local growers as Bledsoe did by attending the annual weigh-offs in your area and rubbing elbows with the competitors.

Once you find your ideal seed, you will need to find the ideal growing site, considering sunlight and soil pH. Soil pH should be between 6.7–7.0. Since Colorado soils tend to be alkaline (7.5 or more), you might need to enrich your soil with good-quality compost. To extend the growing season, you will need to germinate your seeds early and protect seedlings from variable weather conditions after planting them outside. You will also need to water and apply fertilizer regularly. There's no room for neglect if you aspire to raising a winner.

Even though we often think about giant pumpkins in October, giant vegetable growers don't limit themselves to pumpkins alone. Some growers have branched out to other gourds. Others have experimented with green beans, kohlrabi, tomatoes, and sunflowers.

Regardless of what strikes your fancy, there is likely to be someone out there who has tried stretching their green thumb to win a world record and is willing to help you get started.

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



## It's time to share your best photos for the annual *Colorado Country Life* photo contest.

This year's photo contest theme is **Heart of Colorado**. We're asking you to share — in photos — what you love about Colorado and what makes our state special.

### 2024 Categories:

- Lovely Landscapes
- Activities You Adore
- A Fondness for People and Animals
- Smitten with the Seasons

**Cash prizes:** \$150 first place  
\$75 second place | \$50 third place

**Winning tips:** 1. Use the highest-resolution setting on your digital camera. 2. Capture scenes full of vivid color. 3. Make us feel something with your photo (awe, laughter).

### Things to keep in mind:

- Each person may submit up to two photos per category.
- Submit digital JPEG photos only.
- Photos must be at least 300 dpi at 8" x 10".
- All vertical photos will be considered for the cover photo. If you have a photo you think will make the perfect cover of *CCL*, it must be at least 300 dpi and 9" wide x 13" tall.
- Winners will be announced and published in a Spring 2024 issue.
- The contest is open only to members of a Colorado electric co-op.
- The contest is open for entries through Friday, December 1, 2023.

**See full rules and enter online** at [coloradocountrylife.coop/2024photocontest](http://coloradocountrylife.coop/2024photocontest).

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to go directly to the entry form on our website.





# Fools Rush In

BY DENNIS SMITH | OUTDOORS@COLORADOCOUNTRYLIFE.ORG

Doves and waterfowl account for most of the shotgun shells burned by Colorado small-game hunters, but the dusky grouse is not without its share of fans. Formerly known as blue grouse and sometimes called “fool hens,” these large birds are a gastronomic delight for those who take them in the early season while they’re feeding on grasshoppers, whortleberry, chokecherries, and mast crops.

They typically winter in high-country stands of Douglas fir and lodgepole pine but migrate downhill to breed in spring. Often, they’re found in subalpine meadows and creek bottoms adjoining the aspen-sagebrush interface throughout the summer and early fall. The males tend to migrate back uphill ahead of the females who remain behind to raise the chicks until their biological clocks urge them back to the high country.

Duskies are gregarious birds, and where you find one, you’ll usually find more. In fact, it’s possible to hunt all day and not flush a single bird, only to bust several family groups one after the other in some mysteriously attractive spot known only to these elusive birds.

My son and I experienced exactly such a phenomenon many years ago in the Poudre River drainage. We were new to Colorado and on our first hunt for “blues,” as they were called back then. We began scouting a network of old forest service roads somewhere south of the Red Feather Lakes region, following a tip from an old timer. “Find some little cricks in the high country where the sagebrush and quakies meet, put down lots of shoe leather, and you’ll find the birds ... eventually,” he told us. We’d ride a few miles on our four-wheeler, hunt some likely looking terrain on foot for an hour or two, return to the quad, and lurch on to the next spot, over and over again for most of the day without having flushed a single grouse.

We were beginning to suspect we’d been made the butt of some silly old timer’s prank when we suddenly jumped a flock of nearly 30.

## STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION

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Extent and nature of circulation	Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months	Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date
A. Total number of copies printed (net press run)	190,829	185,018
B. Paid and/or requested circulation		
1. Paid/requested outside-county mail subscriptions	190,099	184,110
2. Paid in-county mail subscriptions	0	0
3. Other non-USPS paid distribution	506	619
4. Other classes mailed through USPS	0	0
C. Total paid circulation (total B1 through B4)	190,605	184,729
D. Free or nominal rate distribution by mail		
1. Outside-county copies	53	68
2. In-county copies	0	0
3. Other classes mailed through USPS	0	0
4. Other classes mailed outside USPS	171	221
E. Total free or nominal rate distribution (sum of D1 through D4)	224	289
F. Total distribution (sum of C & E)	190,829	185,018
G. Copies not distributed	0	0
H. Total (sum of F & G) — should equal net press run shown in A	190,829	185,018
I. Percent paid circulation	99.88%	99.84%
J. Electronic copy circulation		
a. Paid electronic copies	0	0
b. Total paid print copies + paid electronic copies	190,099	184,729
c. Total print distribution + paid electronic copies	190,829	185,018
d. Percent paid (both print and electronic copies)	99.62%	99.84%

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Cassi Gloe, Publisher  
09/22/2023

Some flushed wildly at first, and we took three on the wing with our shotguns but then noticed the rest of them just sat on nearby rocks and tree branches, looking at us like a bunch of fools. That’s when we realized where they’d gotten their nickname from. We also realized we could take them with our .22 handguns, and we quickly collected a limit of the chunky birds.

It’s been years since we’ve hunted dusky grouse intentionally, but we always seem to come across a few during our deer or elk hunts. Occasionally, we’ll pot one or two, bring them back to camp and sauté them in hot butter or bacon fat. They taste just like — well, grouse.

Dennis Smith is a freelance outdoors writer and photographer whose work appears nationally. He lives in Loveland.



     READERS' PHOTOS

 FUNNY STORIES



**WINNER: Britta Hubbard**, a GCEA member, reads CCL at her ancestral home in Rauris, Austria. This home was finished in 1934 by her grandfather.



**Norm and Diane Hays** (front), members of Y-W Electric, and **Shan and Sally Hays**, members of GCEA, take CCL to Zadar, Croatia, and hear the Sea Organ, which plays music by way of sea waves and tubes located underneath a set of large marble steps.



MVEA members **Dave and Teresa Dower** take CCL to see the bull elk bugling and fighting for their female herds in Estes Park.



**Rick and Charlotte Bowen**, PVREA members, enjoy CCL on an Arctic Train excursion in Narvik, Norway, during a Viking Cruise to Iceland and Norway to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary.



**Marie and Jim Ellegood**, Empire Electric Association members, pose with CCL in front of the home of the Prince-Bishopric of Würzburg, Germany.



**When my five children seemed to** have too many squabbles one day, I sat them all down one evening and talked about what it means to be a peacemaker.

Then when they all seemed to understand the importance of having a more peaceful home, I asked whoever was willing to try hard to be a peacemaker to raise his or her hand.

Four of them raised their hands, but 10-year-old Rachel sat smugly with her hands in her lap.

When I asked Rachel why she was the only one not raising her hand, she replied with a smile, "How can we be peacemakers if there's nobody causing a problem? I'm just helping them so they can be peacemakers if they want to be."

**Alicia Riley**, Grand Junction  
Grand Valley Power member

**After school one day last month**, my daughter took my two grandsons for donuts to celebrate making it two to Friday. The older grandson commented that the donuts were dry and not very good. The 5-year-old adamantly disagreed. "They are too good!" he said.

"Well, I don't think you're a donut connoisseur," his mommy responded.

Indignantly he answered, "I am too a donut-kind-of-sir!"

**Richelle Schauer**, Fort Morgan  
Morgan County REA member

**One day I was watching a friend's** little boys. I was doing laundry, and I put some clothes in the dryer. The 4-year-old asked, "What is that?" I said, "It's the dryer." Then he went over and stood in front of the washer and asked, "Is this the wetter?"

**Echo Williams**, Monticello  
Empire Electric Association member

**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 [coloradocountrylife.coop](http://coloradocountrylife.coop). Each month we'll draw one photo to win \$25. The next deadline is Friday, October 14.

**We pay \$15** to each person who submits a funny story that's printed in the magazine. At the end of the year, we will draw one name from the 2023 published funny stories, and that person will receive \$200. Send your stories to *Colorado Country Life*, 5400 Washington St., Denver, CO 80216 or email [funnystories@coloradocountrylife.org](mailto:funnystories@coloradocountrylife.org). Don't forget to include your mailing address so we can send you a check.

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**The Woodpecker's Omen**

There was a knocking on the side of my house.  
I was confused.  
What's that rapping about?  
Rat-a-tat-tat – Rat-a-tat-tat  
I jumped up ...  
What the heck is that?  
I looked up ...  
A flicker looked in ...  
It's a woodpecker ...  
I began to grin.  
What are you doing away from the leaves?  
Pecking on windows instead of on trees?  
Who knows why things happen so strange and so rare.  
I just know that I'm thankful that the bird was out there.  
Opportunity knocks  
is the omen of old.  
Reach for the stars.  
Don't let dreams grow cold.  
Oh, Mr. Woodpecker,  
Thanks for your visit.  
If I wouldn't have listened  
I would have missed it.

**Ruby McCall**, Orchard Mesa  
Grand Valley Power member

**ARE YOU A POET?  
DO YOU WRITE POETRY?**

Submit your best works on the Reader Engagement page at [coloradocountrylife.coop](http://coloradocountrylife.coop) or send by email to [poetry@coloradocountrylife.org](mailto:poetry@coloradocountrylife.org).

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# Keep Cozy This Fall

## Tasty hot drinks from Colorado companies

Coffee ... hot cocoa ... tea ... apple cider: Who doesn't love holding a warm mug of their favorite piping-hot beverage on a crisp, cool fall day? Warm hands, warm belly — it's an experience.

There's something for every taste in this list of Colorado companies that are making the best hot drinks. Discover your new favorite or get a jump-start on your holiday shopping, as these all will make for the perfect gift. Either way, "Cheers!"

### ▶ CharlieJoe Chai

CharlieJoe Chai is an exhilarating journey for your taste buds, a revitalizing experience for your soul. Immerse yourself in a symphony of fresh spices with every sip. Choose from three user-friendly signature chai concentrates: Original, Spicy, and Vanilla Bee, each revealing direct-trade black tea from Assam India with cinnamon, ginger, cardamom, and more, creating a comforting and invigorating explosion of taste. CJC's smooth, velvety texture and delicate sweetness make it the perfect indulgence for intimate autumn moments. A portion of all proceeds from this Indian beverage is dedicated to rescuing children in need in India.

Find CJC at Colorado's own Ziggie's Coffee, Jax Outdoor Gear, and other amazing locations through Gold Seal Distributing. It is also available online at [charliejoechai.com](http://charliejoechai.com).



photo courtesy CharlieJoe Chai



photo courtesy Animas Chocolate

### ▶ Animas Chocolate Co. Smelter Hot Chocolate Mix

Made from a "smelting" of chocolate scraps, Animas Chocolate's Smelter Hot Chocolate Mix is the most decadent drinking chocolate you'll ever enjoy. Visit the downtown Durango chocolate cafe to try the traditional drinking chocolate, or any of the beloved variations (such as The Miner, a peppermint variation, or El Bandito, a Mexican-style drinking chocolate made with cinnamon and cayenne chile). While you're there, be sure to pick up a bag of the Smelter Hot Chocolate Mix to take home. Shop online at [animaschocolatecompany.com](http://animaschocolatecompany.com).



photo courtesy Fenceline Cider

### ▶ Fenceline's Hot Mulled Cider Kit

Get cozy and embrace the changing season with Fenceline's Hot Mulled Cider Kit. This delightful set has everything you need to create a comforting and aromatic experience. Made from hand-picked local apples grown in Montezuma County, the juice is bursting with natural flavors and sweetness. The mulling spice blend adds a perfect balance of warm and fragrant notes to create a delicious and soothing beverage.

Each kit comes with two Fenceline mugs, so you can savor every sip of this autumnal delight in style. Don't miss out on the chance to create joyful memories and bring warmth to your days all throughout fall. More information can be found online at [fenceline.co](http://fenceline.co).

Enter to win a Fenceline Hot Mulled Cider Kit from CCL.



Scan Me

Scan the QR code to go directly to the entry form, or visit [coloradocountrylife.coop/monthly-contests](http://coloradocountrylife.coop/monthly-contests).

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