

# Colorado<sup>®</sup>

## ||| COUNTRY LIFE

OCTOBER 2024



# ONE TOUGH LADY

Reflecting on  
a career in corrections

COLORADO COUNTRY LIFE IS THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE COLORADO RURAL ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION.

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# Busy Hands, Happy Heart

BY KYLEE COLEMAN EDITOR



KYLEE COLEMAN

My friend Liz came to visit me when I was stuck on bedrest about 30 weeks into my first pregnancy. Those days at home were spent watching movies, reading *What to Expect When You're Expecting*, and flipping through my small collection of “how-to” baby books. Keep in mind this was before remote work, smartphones, and social media ... you can imagine that I was looking for anything to help break up the days a little bit.

So when Liz showed up with a set of six wooden double-pointed knitting needles and two skeins of yarn, I was excited to see what she had in store to help me pass the time. That afternoon, she taught me how to knit the sweetest little baby hat.

I was always a crafty girl. I sewed my own Easter dresses, quilted, and dabbled in paper crafting and scrapbooking. But when I got knitting needles and yarn in my hands, it felt so natural and comforting, creative, and productive.

That first baby hat I knit sent me on a journey of great delight. I've now spent decades living and breathing knitting, purling, yarn “over-ing,” and stitching amazing creations — socks, blankets, scarves, mittens, and even the cutest pair of monster pants for my nephew.

On page 22 of this issue, you'll find other Coloradans who have fallen in love with their creative process and work. October 1 is World Handmade Day, and we are happy to celebrate Colorado makers whose arts and crafts inspire us.



Knitting these monster pants proved to be a great pastime. Photo by Kylee Coleman.

**LET US KNOW HOW WE'RE DOING!**



*Do you enjoy your CCL magazine?*

Scan this QR code with your smartphone or tablet camera and take a short survey to share what you think about this magazine. You can also email [info@coloradocountrylife.org](mailto:info@coloradocountrylife.org) with your feedback.

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**MONTHLY GIVEAWAY ENTER TO WIN**

**Enter this month's giveaway — turn to page 18 for details!**

Need a different way to enter our contests? Mail a letter to Contests c/o CCL, 5400 Washington St., Denver, CO 80216. Please include your name, address, phone number, and the name of your electric co-op.

We love hearing from you! Visit [www.coloradocountrylife.coop](http://www.coloradocountrylife.coop) to find ways to connect with *Colorado Country Life*. You'll find contests, giveaways, and more on the Reader Engagement page.

# Wildfires: Risks & Solutions

## A statewide viewpoint

As I write this column in early September, I'm crossing my fingers that Colorado residents and communities get through the rest of 2024 without being impacted by more wildfires. Some of this year's wildfires have caused significant damage to homes and other structures in addition to the loss of life.

Wildfires are always top of mind for Colorado's electric co-ops. We have witnessed numerous devastating wildfires over the last 10 years or so, with the worst fires in Colorado history taking place during that period. While none of those fires were caused by electric co-op facilities, we're always concerned about the possibility that co-op lines or other equipment could spark a fire in co-op territory.

Regardless of the ignition source of a wildfire, as we have seen all too often, the consequences can be devastating. While our first concern is always for the safety of people and property, we are also concerned about the ability of electric co-ops to provide electricity in the event power infrastructure is damaged or destroyed. Every electric co-op in the state takes very seriously its responsibility to provide the power that is needed to sustain the folks who live in co-op service territories.

As I've noted in this space many times, Colorado's electric co-ops go to great lengths

to reduce the risk of co-op facilities igniting a wildfire. By way of undergrounding lines, installing fire-resistant poles and wires, and changing operating protocols, co-ops and other electric utilities in Colorado are investing millions of dollars to help keep our communities safe. Co-ops are also deploying new technology that will help assist in the early detection of wildfires.

Even with these investments, given the thousands of miles of power lines that cross the state, there is always the possibility that a fire could be caused by co-op equipment.

You may think that co-ops and other utilities are protected by insurance policies that would pay for claims brought in the event of a fire that caused damages or injuries to the public. That's just not the case. Insurance companies across the country are either refusing entirely to provide insurance against these risks or are charging premiums that cost nearly as much as the policy coverage. Given the extraordinary damages that have resulted from fires in California and other states that were caused by power lines, insurance companies have basically decided not to insure against those risks.

Knowing that the wrong spark in the wrong place could literally bankrupt a co-op, we're exploring legislative solutions that might give co-ops some liability



KENT SINGER

protection. That protection would not come easily; it would only be available to those co-ops or other electric utilities that could demonstrate that they have taken all reasonable steps to mitigate the risk of a wildfire. If a co-op has taken all reasonable measures to reduce the risk that its facilities could cause a wildfire, we believe that those co-ops should receive some protection from legal liability.

You will likely be hearing more about this issue in the coming months as we work with our member co-ops to educate the public and the Colorado General Assembly. CREA and its members believe that wildfires pose an existential risk to co-op communities and to the ability of co-ops to serve those communities. We hope to find a way to mitigate that risk in the coming months and will keep you apprised of our progress.

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.

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# CHIMNEY MAINTENANCE FOR FIREPLACE EFFICIENCY AND SAFETY

BY JAMES DULLEY

**Q: I plan to use my fireplace more to lower my utility bills. I see some deteriorated spots on the outside of the chimney, and it has not been cleaned recently. What type of maintenance items can I do myself?**

**A:** Before doing any chimney maintenance yourself, have a professional chimney sweep inspect and clean it before you build your first fire. House fires due to chimney issues occur in tens of thousands of homes each year, claiming many lives and costing hundreds of millions of dollars.

Although the deteriorated spots on the brick chimney need to be addressed, problems inside the chimney present the greatest risk. Creosote buildup is the primary problem — it is very flammable when it gets hot.

When creosote catches fire inside the chimney, it is not always obvious. One telltale sign is a sudden increase in the draft up the chimney from the intense heat, but this still can be easy to miss.

The intense heat may cause the tiles — which protect the chimney — to crack and come loose. This allows heat from fires to penetrate the brick and start a fire in your home. Sometimes loose tiles will block the chimney, and the smoke drafting back indoors will alert you.

When the professional cleans the chimney, puffed black creosote may mean there was a chimney fire. Once it is cleaned, an inspection along the chimney's entire length with a camera should be done to check the tiles and mortar.

Be leery of a chimney sweep or company that does not do the camera inspection and claims you need a new liner or sealing procedure costing thousands of dollars. An unscrupulous chimney professional

claimed my chimney needed a liner, but a subsequent camera inspection by a different company indicated the tiles and mortar were sound.

For those who are handy and not afraid of heights or do-it-yourself projects, products are available to make many chimney repairs. Companies — such as SaverSystems — carry supplies for professionals and offer their products in smaller quantities for homeowners to buy.

Although brick feels very hard, it is permeable to water. Over time, moisture can deteriorate the mortar. This is particularly bad with freeze-thaw cycles over winter.

Inspect all the bad spots on the mortar using a chisel and hammer. Remove all the loose mortar. Use cement-colored elastomer to fill the spots. Afterward, coat the entire chimney exterior with a water repellent formulated for brick.

If the mortar is bad, the chimney crown likely needs some repairs. Chip away any loose cement and fill in the pits with an elastomer crown repair. Some types are formulated specifically to cure in freezing temperatures.

The metal flashing between the roof and chimney is the final area to seal. If the flashing is badly rusted, replace it. Most often, brushing on a thick coating of flexible flashing compound is an adequate fix.

Whether you hire a professional to make repairs or do some of them yourself, check your chimney before the first fire of the winter season.



▲ Make sure a chimney sweep does a camera inspection and shows you the video.



▲ The metal flashing between the roof and chimney should have a water-tight seal. If the flashing is badly rusted, replace it.



▲ Check your chimney crown for loose parts needing repair.



## CORRECTION

September's Ask the Energy Expert featured links to find information about tax credits for energy efficiency improvements. We published an incorrect URL. The correct web address is [energyoffice.colorado.gov/hptc](https://energyoffice.colorado.gov/hptc).

# CYBER CRIME: HOW TO OUTSMART THE BAD GUYS

BY MIKE KANSGEN DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY



MIKE KANSGEN

In a world where even your digital coffee maker might be plotting against you, staying safe online has never been more important. With cyber criminals now using artificial intelligence to craft eerily convincing scam emails and phone calls, it feels like we're living in a haunted house with something terrifying around every turn. But don't panic. There's hope. Here are eight practical cybersecurity tips that will help you outwit online trolls.

## 1. Use Strong, Unique Passwords — You must start somewhere

Creating strong, unique passwords is like building a digital fortress. Sure, it's tempting to use "password123" for everything — it's easy to remember, right? But with data breaches happening left and right, that trusty password might already be in the hands of a hacker. Just imagine giving the evil bad guys a master key to all your accounts — yikes! Instead, try using a mix of random words, numbers, and symbols. And even better, throw in a password manager (more on that in a bit) to handle the heavy lifting.

## 2. Enable Multi-Factor Authentication — Because one lock is never enough

You've probably encountered multi-factor authentication by now. Think of it as adding a deadbolt to your digital door. With MFA, even if a hacker gets your password, they'll need another form of verification like a code, fingerprint, or face scan to get in. It's like making them solve a puzzle before they can steal your information. So, if you haven't turned on MFA yet, now's the time.

## 3. Be Wary of Phishing Scams — Don't take the bait

Phishing scams are like those infomercials that promise you the world but deliver disappointment. They masquerade as trustworthy emails, calls, or messages trying to

trick you into handing over your personal information. Remember, if it smells fishy, it probably is. Verify the sender's email address, avoid clicking on sketchy links, and if someone claims to be a coworker or friend, ask yourself, "Would they really ask me to pay bail for my jailed grandson with Apple gift cards?" If you're not sure, reach out to someone you trust before you do anything. Don't let a scammer scare you into making rash decisions.

## 4. Keep Your Software Updated — Seriously, do it

Updating your software is like getting your yearly physical: nobody loves it, but it's a necessary part of life. Updates often include patches for security flaws that hackers would love to exploit. Yes, it's a hassle, and yes, it always seems to pop up at the worst times; but trust me, just go with it and perform the update. Or you can enable automatic updates and let your devices take care of themselves. A little inconvenience now beats a massive pain later.

## 5. Use a Good Password Manager — The hero of digital security

Remember that password manager I mentioned? It's time to embrace it like a long-lost friend. Managing multiple strong, unique passwords can be a nightmare, but a password manager turns it into a breeze. It can generate, store, and even auto-fill your passwords so you don't have to remember them all. It's like having a digital butler who's excellent at keeping secrets. Plus, most password managers work on all your different devices, store secure notes better than your brain, and even alert you if one of your passwords has been compromised on the dark web.

## 6. Regularly Monitor Your Accounts — Be your own cyber detective

Think of account monitoring as your personal spot-check maintenance for your

digital life. Regularly check your accounts for any suspicious activity, and set up alerts for unusual behavior such as failed login attempts. If something looks odd, act fast and change your password. You can also contact the service provider for additional guidance. Staying vigilant can make all the difference between a minor scare and a full-blown disaster.

## 7. Educate Yourself and Stay Informed — Knowledge is power

In the ever-changing world of cyber threats, staying informed is like using your flashlight on a dark trail: essential for survival. Follow reputable sources for cybersecurity news, take online courses, and attend a workshop from time to time to boost your knowledge. The more you know, the better equipped you'll be to spot the latest scams and protect yourself from cyber monsters. And remember, Google and other search engines are great tools — search for information about recent scams and stay one step ahead of the cyber crooks.

## 8. It's Time for Codewords

Remember those secret codewords you used as a kid? It's time to bring them back, but this time for grown-up reasons. Scammers love to pretend they're your coworker, family member, or friend, but they won't know the magic word. Create unique codewords for your inner circles and use them to verify identities before sharing sensitive information. If someone can't provide the codeword, they're not who they claim to be — end of story.

## Bottom line: Cybersecurity is not something you do alone

Staying safe online isn't just about protecting yourself — it's about looking out for your

family, friends, and coworkers, too. By following these tips, keeping your devices updated, and using a solid password manager, you'll be well on your way to outsmarting the cyber villains.

Scammers just love to steal money and gain access to sensitive information by scaring and fooling us. In fact, it makes them happy when they succeed. We do not want scammers to be happy, though — we want them to experience the sadness of failure. So, stay informed, be prepared, and outsmart a scammer today!

Mike Kansgen is the new Director of Information Technology for Grand Valley Power. He has worked in the Information Security field in the Grand Valley for more than 20 years.

**BOARD MEETING NOTICE**

Grand Valley Power board meetings are open to members, consumers, and the public. Regularly scheduled board meetings are held at 9 a.m. on the third Wednesday of each month at the headquarters building located at 845 22 Road, Grand Junction, Colorado.

The monthly agenda is posted in the lobby of the headquarters building 10 days before each meeting and posted on the GVP website.

If anyone desires to address the Board of Directors, please let us know in advance and you will be placed on the agenda.

**COMMENTS TO THE CEO**

You are a member of a cooperative and your opinion does count. If you have any questions, concerns, or comments, please let Tom Walch know by writing to Ask the CEO, P.O. Box 190, Grand Junction, Colorado 81502, or send an email to me at [twalch@gvp.org](mailto:twalch@gvp.org). Visit our website at [gvp.org](http://gvp.org).

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**SOLAR CHANGES WITH THE SEASONS**

*As the weather changes, a few factors may impact your bill.*

**Weather:** Cooler temperatures increase the overall efficiency of a solar system. However, due to the shorter days, solar panel output is less during the fall and winter seasons, which directly decreases the amount of kWh produced.

**Cost:** As production decreases, usage typically increases during on-peak hours after sunset.

**Banked kWh After Billing:** If usage exceeds generation during any billing period, GVP first uses kWhs from the accrued bank. If no banked kWhs exist then a member will be billed for any usage.

**Questions?** Call GVP to learn more: (970) 242-0040

## Beware of Aggressive Solar Sale Tactics



**Watch out!**

Door-to-door solar sales in GVP's service territory may use aggressive sales tactics.



**Don't fall for it!**

Door-to-door sales may make bold claims: "This will eliminate your electric bill" or "Your electric rates are going up 30%." These are untrue and meant to convince you to sign an agreement "now."



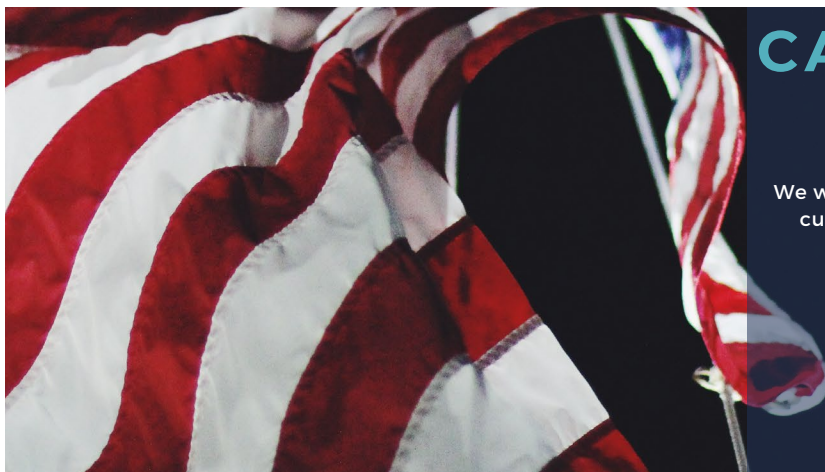
**Don't sign!**

Don't sign any contracts before you call GVP. Your best interests are our concern. Some installers only care about making a sale and profit - not about you. GVP supports over 1,000 members with home solar and will answer your questions.



**Don't click!**

Social media ads often mimic the appearance of an article, exaggerate savings or the need for financing, or urge you to share your address, contact information, or utility bill.



## CALL FOR PHOTOS

**Are you or a family member part of the United States Military?**

We would like to honor our GVP members who were or are currently in the military by sharing photos and stories across our social media platforms.

Please send your information to Tanya Marchun at [tmarchun@gvp.org](mailto:tmarchun@gvp.org)

**by October 31, 2024.**





# Your Membership Matters

*October is National Cooperative Month*

We are a community-focused cooperative of more than 16,000 members in Mesa County. Our core business is to provide safe, reliable, and affordable electric service. But more is expected of us. We are expected to preserve and advance rural values. We are expected to protect our environment. Our members want us to be leaders in our communities. In a very real sense, we are in the quality-of-life business. We are **Empowering Lives with Hometown Service.**

--Tom Walch



## The Cooperative Difference

### **Open Membership**

Our members are a vital part of our organization, and all have the opportunity to participate.

### **Democracy in Action**

Co-op leaders and decision-makers are elected by members.

### **Shared Economic Benefit**

Members share in earnings that exceed operating costs.

### **Independence**

Outside interests take a backseat to those of our members.

### **Education**

Training and education make our team more effective; our community is stronger when we promote the education of our youth.

### **Cooperation**

We are better when we work together: with one another, with other cooperatives, and with others in our community.

### **Community**

We exist to serve our community and make members' lives better.

## Being a Grand Valley Power Member means:



Your are served by a community-focused electric cooperative.



Your board members are consumers just like you.



You share in earnings that exceed operating costs, a.k.a. CashBack Credits.



Your household is eligible for scholarship and youth program opportunities.

# Grand Valley Power Commits to Protecting Water for Our Rural Communities

BY JOSEPH BURTARD BOARD DIRECTOR



JOSEPH BURTARD

Grand Valley Power has joined the growing effort to secure the future of western Colorado’s rural communities with a \$100,000 pledge towards the preservation of the Shoshone water rights. The donation will be given to a nonprofit foundation set up by the Colorado River District to support the purchase of the water rights associated with the Shoshone Hydroelectric Power Plant. GVP’s contribution, spread over 2024 and 2025, will come from unclaimed patronage capital and will not affect the cooperative’s rates or your electric bill.

But more importantly, the board’s decision to join the effort showcases GVP’s dedication to safeguarding the sustainability and prosperity of the local economies that depend on reliable water and energy resources.

The Shoshone Hydroelectric Plant, established in 1909, controls one of the oldest and most significant water rights in Colorado. These rights ensure that up to 1.02 million acre-feet of water flows down the Colorado River annually, benefiting agriculture, recreation, and rural communities like ours. It is more than just a hydroelectric facility; it is a lifeline for our farms, ranches, and towns that rely on dependable water and energy to thrive.

For rural communities, water and energy aren’t just resources — it’s our way of life. The preservation of the Shoshone water rights ensures that farmers can irrigate crops, ranchers can sustain

livestock, and local economies can flourish. In times of drought, when water is scarce, Shoshone’s water rights provide a safety net that keeps our fields green and our livelihoods secure. Without this support and protection, the impacts on agriculture, recreation, ecosystem, and quality of life in western Colorado would soon look entirely different.

GVP believes that protecting water is protecting the future of our rural communities. To learn more about the Shoshone Hydroelectric Power Plant, Colorado River District, and how GVP is contributing to this essential cause, visit [keepshoshoneflowing.org](http://keepshoshoneflowing.org) or contact GVP. Together, we can ensure that our community’s most valuable resources — water and energy — remain secure for generations to come.

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

If you recently made or plan to make energy efficiency upgrades to your home, you may be eligible for federal tax credits. The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 empowers homeowners to save up to \$3,000 annually to lower the cost of efficiency upgrades by up to 30%.

A few upgrades covered through the IRA include new exterior doors, windows, insulation, heating/cooling equipment, and other major appliances. If you have completed or are considering an efficiency upgrade, visit [www.energystar.gov/federal-tax-credits](http://www.energystar.gov/federal-tax-credits) to learn if you qualify for tax credits.

Source: [energystar.gov](http://energystar.gov)

**Trick-or-Treat  
Safety Tips**

- Accompany young children
- Cross streets safely in designated crossings and as a group
- Stay on well-lit streets and sidewalks
- Only visit homes with the front light on
- If older children are trick-or-treating alone, create a route and agree on what time they should be home
- Sort and check candy before eating

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# Introducing the lightest folding power chair in the world

*The Journey Air Elite features the latest carbon fiber technology for the ultimate in portability and performance*

Mobility issues affect over 1 in 5 Americans. These individuals, and their loved ones, know how decreased mobility can result in loss of independence, pain and falling hazards. They are often stuck at home, missing out on a variety of activities, in a vicious cycle that diminishes their quality of life. In the past, mobility devices like scooters and power chairs were too heavy and bulky to transport easily. Now, carbon fiber material invented for the aerospace program has been used to create the ultimate mobility device. It's called the Journey Air Elite ... and there's nothing else like it on earth.

At only 26 pounds\*, the Journey Air Elite combines lightweight portability with world class performance. It's simple to use joystick and powerful dual-motor drive system enables you to zip around quickly and safely. It's easy to maneuver, never tips, fits easily through doorways, and can go right up to a table or desk. Once you are done, just one pull on the seat handle folds it up. There's a fold-down back to make it even easier to stow and store. It features flat-free tires and rear anti-tippers for added convenience and safety.



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\*Do not attempt

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\*26 lbs is chair weight without the easily removable battery. Journey Air Elite is a personal electric vehicle and is not a medical device nor wheelchair. It is not intended for medical purposes to provide mobility to persons restricted to a sitting position. Journey Air Elite is not covered by Medicare nor Medicaid. **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO LIFT OVERHEAD. Lifting overhead poses risk of injury or death.** © 2024 Journey Health & Lifestyle

# A TOAST TO FALL FLAVORS



We can all rely on a grilled cheese sandwich to be an easy stand-in for a meal. Short on time? Grilled cheese. Not sure what to make for dinner? Grilled cheese. Forgot to thaw the chicken? Grilled cheese! While a simple grilled cheese sandwich is delicious on its own, adding an apple offers crunch and sweetness to make it extraordinary.

## Apple, Bacon, and Brie Grilled Cheese Sandwiches

Servings: 2

### Ingredients

- 1 tbsp. butter
- 4 slices sourdough bread
- 1 tsp. honey mustard, plus additional for serving (optional)
- 4 slices cooked bacon
- 1 Envy apple, cored and thinly sliced
- 1 3/4 oz. Brie cheese, sliced

### Instructions

- Butter one side of each slice of bread.
  - Lay out two slices of bread, buttered sides down. Top with honey mustard, then layer with two bacon slices, apple slices, and brie cheese slices. Top with remaining bread slices, buttered sides up, to create two sandwiches.
  - Heat a grill pan or skillet and cook sandwiches until golden brown on each side and cheese begins to bubble.
  - Cut sandwiches in half and serve with a side salad or extra honey mustard, if desired.
- Recipe and photo of sandwich courtesy of Envy Apples.*

### DID YOU KNOW?

Envy apples are a cross between Braeburn and Royal Gala apples. They have balanced sweetness and a satisfying crunch.

Source: [www.envyapple.com/us/](http://www.envyapple.com/us/)



### DO YOU HAVE A RECIPE TO SHARE?

Send yours to Recipes c/o Colorado Country Life, 5400 Washington St., Denver, CO 80216. Email [recipes@coloradocountrylife.org](mailto:recipes@coloradocountrylife.org) or submit it online through the Reader Engagement page on our website at [www.coloradocountrylife.coop](http://www.coloradocountrylife.coop).



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# Holiday Gift Guide!

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- Space reservation deadline: October 1 and November 1 (First of the month, one month prior to each issue)
- Rates: one month: \$508.00 or two months: \$965.20

*Reader information based on GfK MRI Research Inc. Custom Division.*

## STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION

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*Cassi Gloe*

Cassi Gloe, Publisher  
09/17/2024

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)	179,326	177,432
B. Paid and/or requested circulation		
1. Paid/requested outside-county mail subscriptions	178,457	176,622
2. Paid in-county mail subscriptions	0	0
3. Other non-USPS paid distribution	580	552
4. Other classes mailed through USPS	0	0
C. Total paid circulation (total B1 through B4)	179,037	177,174
D. Free or nominal rate distribution by mail		
1. Outside-county copies	75	78
2. In-county copies	0	0
3. Other classes mailed through USPS	0	0
4. Other classes mailed outside USPS	219	180
E. Total free or nominal rate distribution (sum of D1 through D4)	294	258
F. Total distribution (sum of C & E)	179,331	177,432
G. Copies not distributed	0	0
H. Total (sum of F & G) — should equal net press run shown in A	179,331	177,432
I. Percent paid circulation	99.84%	99.85%
J. Electronic copy circulation		
a. Paid electronic copies	0	0
b. Total paid print copies + paid electronic copies	178,457	177,174
c. Total print distribution + paid electronic copies	179,326	177,432
d. Percent paid (both print and electronic copies)	99.52%	99.85%

# ONE TOUGH LADY

Reflections on family and a fulfilling career at the Buena Vista Correctional Facility

BY PAMELA A. KEENE



Don't ask Connie Hatfield if she's ever planning to slow down. You'll hear a resounding "no!" In many ways she's even more busy today than when she worked full time, including nearly 30 years as a corrections officer at the Buena Vista Correctional Facility.

At 88, she's still living a full life, walking six or so miles each day, and simply enjoying the surrounding scenery of the four Collegiate Peaks. She also keeps up with her adult children, her five grandchildren, and four great-grands.

As one of six siblings growing up in Jackson, Wyoming, Connie came from hardworking, determined, and industrious roots. Her dad's side of the family — the Roberstons — pioneered the Jackson Valley; he did tradesman work and raised a few cows. Connie's mom traveled alone by train to Jackson from Michigan when she was 13 years old to help with her sister's family.

The family home had no electricity or running water until the 1950s. Connie's mom built a fire each day to cook meals. And in the cold and unforgiving winters, Connie and her sisters slept in a feather bed huddled together to keep warm.

Her upbringing was rugged and unique. "We didn't have much really, we were so darned poor," she said. "Looking back, I guess you could say I'm glad we grew up that way, because we didn't need anything. We were happy with what we had. We just learned to manage."

After one year of college, Connie took a job as a clerk typist in Jackson at the Agriculture Stabilization and Conservation Service.

◀ Connie Hatfield walks six miles each day and maintains her ranch in Buena Vista. Photo by Kylee Coleman.

#### Inset photos

Top: Connie started off working as a secretary at the Buena Vista Correctional Facility in 1967.

Middle: Connie working in the cellblock.

Photos courtesy of Connie Hatfield.

Bottom: Connie in 2022. Photo by Gary Hatfield.

Over the next few years she worked in the office at General Dynamics at Warren Air Force Base in Cheyenne.

Connie and her husband, Russell, met by chance in 1958 at the Log Cabin Dance Hall in Jackson, when he asked her to dance. A masonry contractor from Laramie, Russell was in town working on a construction project at the Jackson Airport. They married about 6 months later.

“Being from Colorado, Russell wanted to move back there, so in 1966 we settled in Buena Vista where we bought a 65-acre ranch,” she said. “This is such a beautiful part of the state; we just fell in love with it.”

“The ranch had a trailer where we lived until we built our house, and that’s where we raised our three children. It’s where I still live today.”

In 1967, Connie took a job as a secretary at the Buena Vista Correctional Facility, not knowing that she would stay there for the rest of her working life.

“Taking that job was probably one of the wisest decisions I made in my life, even though I didn’t realize it at the time,” she said. “At first I was just typing records and diagnostic reports, but within a few years I was talking to the inmates to write up their social histories.”

After several years, she and the only other female secretary were reclassified as sergeants. However, men in the prison system doing the same work were lieutenants.

“That said to me that this is a man’s world, because we were only sergeants. My friend and I appealed, but lost,” Connie said. “I just went back to my work and kept doing what I was doing.”

Several years later a lieutenant’s job came open, and she had a chance to have a job title that reflected her responsibilities. She and her friend both applied.

“I prayed about it, thought about it really hard because I wanted the job, but she was my friend. The day before the interview, I withdrew my name,” she said. “I knew she

needed this job more than I did; I thought, ‘My day will come.’”

Later, Connie’s responsibilities broadened to handle case management, inmate supervision, plus assisting with work and vocational assignments.

“As a case manager, I had a caseload of more than a hundred inmates,” she said. “It was my responsibility to call them to my office if they filled out a request to see me and make suggestions to their problems. Sometimes it was issues with other inmates, family problems, work assignments, and other staff.”

If an inmate didn’t request a visit with her each month, she would initiate a meeting just to see how things were going.

She had to keep track of all the inmates and write up prisoners for various infractions including alcohol in their cells, rowdy behavior, or refusals to follow the rules.

“One of the first days I worked in the cellblock, I smelled jack — alcohol — coming from one of the cells, so I told a lieutenant about it. He took a walk but said he didn’t smell anything until he opened up the empty cell and saw the brew in the wastebasket.”

“When the inmates returned to their cells later, one of them found out what had happened and confronted me: ‘Who’s your snitch?’ he asked. My response: I pointed at my nose and said, ‘See this? I don’t need a snitch.’ I wrote up my first report that morning.”

Time and again, she said, she was tested by various prisoners. “It was their way of dealing with having a female in this kind of job, but I always stood my ground. I was 5 foot, 2 inches tall and weighed 115 pounds. My size could have put me at a disadvantage, but I didn’t let it.”

Connie said she couldn’t be scared to work in the cell block, because she’d been working at the prison for more than a dozen years already. Her attitude, her sense of humor, and her outlook kept her safe. “I

could break up a fight better than the men on staff, and it only took one time to prove it,” she said, smiling.

“Once, two inmates got into a fight. As I got between them to break it up, I yelled, ‘You guys, knock it off,’” and I heard another inmate say, ‘Don’t hit the lady.’”

“It was up to me to break up the fight and handle the situation, so I locked one of them in his cell and told the other one to go down and wait by the desk. Then I got him locked in his cell. By then, the intervening inmate had already gone back to his with no problem.”

One day as inmates were returning from lunch, she was knocked down when an inmate jumped her.

“It made a lot of noise and could have been a problem,” she recalled. “Coincidentally, I had taken sexual assault training the day before — and while this wasn’t that kind of situation, I had learned that by grabbing a finger and bending it back as hard as possible, you can get anyone to do just about anything. It worked.”

“I couldn’t believe how many inmates came to me afterwards to apologize for that one inmate’s actions.”

Connie said she’s a big believer in giving people the benefit of the doubt and having patience. It paid off. In 1984, another opening came up for a lieutenant case manager; Connie’s name was at the top of the list.

“I’d done well on the written test, but the actual verbal interview was a bit tougher. So I just sat down and wrote up my history: I’d gone to college and earned my two-year degree in corrections, taken many classes, and undergone all kinds of training to keep up with the changes over the past 18 years. I had been doing case work from the beginning of my time there, and I had done a good job,” she said matter-of-factly. “I got the job.”

Connie remained in that role until she retired in 1994 from her job after 27 years of service.



“

I hope they learned from me because I certainly learned from them over the years. The bad thing is that you never really know what happened to those inmates. I just hope they have made a good life.”

— Connie Hatfield

She looks back on that time with mixed emotions.

She said there were plenty of times when she was in those cellblocks and inmates would sit beside her desk and talk with her. “I’d just listen, and I think that’s all they really needed — someone to pay attention to them and actually hear them.”

Connie recalled some of the things they said to her over the years. One young inmate was from a very wealthy family in Colorado Springs. He worked as her clerk and wanted to know why he had to wear orange when he went to court. “I explained to him that he was an inmate and that’s how it’s done. His reply? ‘I never thought I’d learn anything from a little old gray-haired lady in prison.’”

Another inmate told her she was the funniest person he knew. She said they always called her Mrs. Hatfield. “I knew — and they knew — that I had the upper hand,

but I was never too forceful.”

“I hope they learned from me because I certainly learned from them over the years.”

Does she have any regrets?

“The bad thing is that you never really know what happened to those inmates. I just hope they have made a good life,” she said.

In addition to her career at the prison, she worked side by side with Russell both in his masonry business and in raising registered cows; she handled paperwork and keeping all the records.

“He kept telling me to retire,” she said. “About five years after I did, he just decided to sell all the cattle and buy a truck big enough to pull a fifth wheel.”

They traveled in the fifth wheel back and forth from Buena Vista to Tonto Basin, Arizona, in the winter, later purchasing a park model there.

◀ Connie reminisces about life on the cattle ranch and winters in Arizona with her husband, Russell. Photo by Kylee Coleman.

Russell died in 2011. She continued to travel back and forth to Arizona for about 10 more years.

When she talks about Russell, her voice softens.

“We had a good married life together. He was a kind man, a good partner, a good dancer, and very good looking,” she recalled. “You could say that we were like bookends. He died just one week before our 53rd wedding anniversary. I sure have missed him.”

She sold the park model in Arizona to focus on life in Buena Vista. Her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren come to visit. Lunches with good friends and weekly card games fill her time. She takes her long walks and reflects on her life.

“I’m thankful for the good life I’ve had and the people in it,” Connie said softly. “I’ve made good choices and am glad for the way things have turned out.”

Pamela A. Keene writes personality profiles, and lifestyle, gardening, travel, health care, and consumer articles. She is an avid gardener, has visited seven continents, and is an award-winning photographer.



◀ Connie at her ranch at the base of the Collegiate Peaks in Buena Vista. Photo by Kylee Coleman.

# CELEBRATING COOPERATIVE MONTH ALL YEAR

BY MARY PECK



▲ To celebrate Cooperative Month last year, Highline Electric Association rented out the theaters in Julesburg and Holyoke and invited members to a two-part movie series. Photo courtesy of Highline Electric.



▲ GCEA hosts a popular event Coffee with Your Co-op. Members get free coffee and can talk to GCEA representatives about rebates, net-metering, and the co-op's EV loaner program. Photo courtesy of GCEA.

October's traditions of football, leaf peeping, Halloween, and all things pumpkin spice include the annual celebration of Cooperative Month — a month dedicated to recognizing the vital service that cooperative businesses deliver to local economies and communities across the United States.

The designated month is an opportunity for co-ops to educate their members on the unique structure and purpose of co-ops: They are owned and operated by their members, who share in both the benefits and the profits of the business.

The cooperative business model operates in diverse sectors including agriculture, finance, housing, and, of course, energy. Colorado alone is home to 22 electric cooperatives. Collectively, they serve nearly 1.5 million electric customers in territories that cover more than 70% of the state's landmass.

Co-ops are founded on principles of democracy, equality, and cooperation. By focusing on member needs rather than maximizing profit, co-ops ensure that economic power is evenly distributed and that resources are used to benefit

members and communities. Co-ops are guided by seven cooperative principles including voluntary and open membership, democratic member control, and concern for the community.

Co-op Month is more than a celebration; it also serves as a reminder of the power of community and the importance of business models that prioritize people over profits.

## LOCAL CO-OPS LEAD

Highline Electric Association is all in during Cooperative Month; last year it rented out the theaters in Julesburg and Holyoke and invited members to a two-part movie series, showing *Hotel Transylvania 1* and *2*. This year, the Holyoke-based co-op is offering promotional coupons for local pumpkin patches throughout October. Highline's Member Services Specialist Jessie Heath said the idea is to offer some fall fun to co-op members while encouraging them to support local businesses.

October is a great time to increase overall awareness and information about co-ops, but Colorado's electric cooperatives serve their communities in caring and creative ways year-round.

"In 2021, Highline started volunteering to work the community concession stand at the Phillips County Fair," Heath said. "Proceeds from this go to the local food banks and pantries in Phillips County."

On the Western Slope, Gunnison County Electric Association invites members to Coffee with Your Co-op and other events throughout the year. At these events, the co-op provides information about ways members can electrify to reduce carbon emissions while saving money. Members learn how the co-op's programs work, including community solar, net-metering, rebates, and GCEA's electric vehicle loaner program.

GCEA's Member Relations Supervisor Alliy Sahagun shared that members appreciate the chance to learn new ways to save money and help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. "Our co-op is run by people who live in our community, so when we hold events in various parts of our service territory, members love to come out and see us because we are their neighbors and friends," she said.

In San Isabel Electric's service territory in southern Colorado, Communications





San Isabel Electric reports that one of its unique and most popular outreach efforts is the co-op's food trailer. There's no agenda, just sharing some delicious hot dogs with members and a chance to talk to people from the co-op face-to-face about anything they'd like. *Photo courtesy of San Isabel Electric.*

Manager Paris Daugherty said that one of its unique and most popular outreach efforts is the co-op's food trailer.

"We bring the food trailer to different locations throughout the warmer months and serve free hot dogs," Daugherty said. "There's no agenda, just sharing some delicious hot dogs with members and a chance to talk to people from the co-op face-to-face about anything they'd like."

Morgan County REA's members are treated to a member appreciation picnic every June at the co-op's headquarters in Fort Morgan. Along with the draw of great food, members get to visit their cooperative, and see safety demonstrations and electric vehicles on display; they also have a chance to take home a door prize.

"We have had increased attendance every year," Communications Director Maddie Pollart said. "People love the chance to come eat, catch up with friends, and check in with their local electric cooperative."

### BEYOND THE DESIGNATION

Colorado's electric co-ops have been essential to their communities for nearly a century. In an ever-changing world, they naturally continue to grow and evolve. Yet the co-op commitment to equity, member control, and service to the community remains constant.

"Morgan County REA's history and the history of this area are woven together," Pollart said. "Many MCREA employees are also members of the communities we serve. The small-town values that make our area special are the same values that make up the cooperative model."

Mary Peck is a freelance writer based in Northern Colorado and enjoys sharing stories of rural communities.

## THE SEVEN COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES

The cooperative business model is governed by a set of seven key principles. They were originally compiled by Charles Howarth, a founder of the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers — an early co-op for laborers — in England in 1844. Learn more about the meaning behind each principle at CREA's website: [crea.coop/our-mission/7-co-op-principles/](https://crea.coop/our-mission/7-co-op-principles/).





# ALLIUM AMORE

BY VICKI SPENCER MASTER GARDENER | GARDENING@COLORADOCOUNTRYLIFE.ORG

I've always loved science, so when a high school counselor encouraged me to take Latin, I agreed. It was the common language for scientific work in the Middle Ages and was used to name species of organisms. In the 18th century, Carolus Linnaeus continued using Latin when he established his system of binomial nomenclature to identify each kind of plant by genus and specific name. This system is still used to identify plants.

In high school, I didn't realize my Latin lessons would have benefits extending far beyond the classroom. When I planted my first garden, I was pleased to find I was not intimidated or confused by flowers' Latin names. However, like most people, I typically refer to plants by their easier to remember common names.

The common name for Allium is ornamental onion, but "allium" means garlic in Latin. The Allium genus includes onions, chives, leeks, as well as garlic. It's a distinctive garden plant with long stems supporting globe-like blooms composed of hundreds of densely packed individual flowers.

A delightful feature of Allium is that it comes in various heights and colors with

different bloom times. This variation allows you to incorporate Allium in different garden designs. Larger varieties such as Gladiator, Goliath, and Globemaster grow 40 inches tall with flower heads nearly 8 inches wide. These varieties are particularly powerful when mixed among other plants. You can achieve color variation by planting Red Mohican which features deep-red heads extending above tiny white florets, or Zamin with its lovely blue florets. You can achieve contrast with smaller varieties like Graceful Beauty Allium which grows 16–18 inches and blooms in early summer.

Long-lasting Allium can provide a colorful bridge while other flowers in your garden transition from spring to summer. After the Allium clusters fade and turn to seed, they retain their ball shape. No need to remove seed heads. They will continue adding interest and texture for weeks to come.

Since Allium are perennials, they can be instrumental in the design of a mature garden. They can be placed sporadically for interesting repetition throughout the garden. Or several Allium can be planted close together to create a forceful focal

point. They can be stunning when planted among ornamental grasses. Or they can be useful when planted with lavender and yarrow for a deer-resistant garden.

Allium bulbs should be planted in the fall before the ground freezes. Although fairly tolerant of any type of soil, they should be placed in well-drained areas because the bulbs could rot from too much moisture, especially during dormancy. Gardeners are particularly fond of Allium because they typically remain pest free and are even known to repel aphids and other pests.

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



## ENTER TO WIN!

This month, CCL is giving away a package of 20 Heavenly Hues Allium bulbs from Breck's for you to plant in your garden this fall. Find the entry form online at [www.coloradocountrylife.coop/monthly-contests](http://www.coloradocountrylife.coop/monthly-contests). Or enter by mailing your name, address, phone number, and the name of your electric co-op to CONTESTS c/o CCL 5400 Washington St., Denver, CO 80216.





## Feathered Fine and Fierce

BY DENNIS E. SMITH

I was in the driveway loading my car with fishing gear one rainy afternoon not long ago when a red-tailed hawk sailed over my head so low I could have hit it with a broomstick. It was clutching a dead bird in its talons, probably a dove. It floated across the street, lit atop the neighbor's cucumber trellis, and began feeding on its prey. My camera was sitting on the front seat of the car, so naturally I wondered if the hawk would let me take its picture.

I began snapping pictures from where I stood because I figured he would fly off the minute he saw me take a step in his direction. I assumed it was a male, but I honestly couldn't tell you because the males and females look a lot alike. And, while females are usually significantly larger and heavier than males, that distinction is difficult to make unless both members of a pair are together. In this case, there was only the one. I am fairly certain it was a young bird, though, because it still bore the dark-colored horizontal tail bands of a juvenile. Apparently, they retain those color bands until they are 1 to 1 1/2-years-old, after which they acquire the solid, red-brown tail colors for which they are named.

Interestingly, though, not all red-tail hawks have red tails. Their tail feathers can vary from reddish-brown to black and sometimes even white — and several shades in between. There are regional differences, too: Eastern populations have

slightly shorter wings, white throats, white breasts, and a well-defined band across the belly. Western birds are more variable with light and dark phases, streaked or mottled tails, and so on. Some sources recognize at least a dozen subspecies of red-tailed hawks. Consider that they look very similar to Swainson's, broad-winged, red-shouldered, and rough-legged hawks, and you can understand why most of us find them tricky to identify.

A few years ago I was sitting in my chair in the living room when a tremendous crash at the nearby window scared the you-know-what out of me. I looked up to see a puff of feathers floating in the air and a splotch of feathers and “stuff” smeared across the pane. I assumed a dove had slammed into the window, but when I went outside to check, I found a huge red-tailed hawk lying on his back, shredding a Eurasian collared dove.

The hawk gave me a very indignant look, righted itself, and lumbered into the air on enormous 4-foot wings, the hapless dove still clenched in those fierce talons. I hollered at him — “Don't ever do that again!” — went back inside, and immediately poured myself a tranquilizer. I also moved the chair to a safer place.

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

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**Solemn Autumn**

Summer has now ended and  
The equinox has passed.  
Slumber nights have begun their waxing  
Fields rich in growing greens have gasped  
their last ...

So cry, cringing Cottonwoods ...  
And you, too, auburn Ash ...  
Shed your tears on your leaves  
Yet another hotter season has flashed ...

As the sun still shines shrill  
Over cornstalks proud and tall  
Pumpkin patches grow pregnant so  
Very soon — sweet ears and pies for all.

But, remember, in December comes winter's  
first seize,  
Yes, fare-thee-well, solemn autumn as Orion  
draws nigh  
His winds whistle lonely ... Earth moans in  
sharp freeze:  
All northerns shiver and shudder and bid  
heat, "Good-bye."

So let us huddle deep, my friends, and  
hibernate fetally  
And thank God for ALL seasons as we dream  
of spring's breeze ...

**William Penfield**, Berthoud  
Poudre Valley REA member

**The Spirit of Fall**

The spirit of Fall is upon us  
With its leaves so crisp:  
Crinkle, crackle, snap,  
As the sharp wind howls.  
Colors that shift and change,  
The trees that peacock their beauty,  
And drop the pinecones from their boughs.

The spirit of Fall is drawing near  
With cinnamon and spice:  
Dotting the stores,  
With decorations, preparations  
For Halloween and Thanksgiving.  
We gather together to sing and praise,  
Love and laugh, bundle up tight.  
Watch a fire that flickers and sways in the  
night.

The Spirit of Fall is here.

**Zoe Ellsaesser**, Berthoud  
Poudre Valley REA member



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

**This year's photo contest theme is Home Sweet Home Colorado.**  
We're asking you to share in photos what makes Colorado "home" — Is it the beautiful views? A bird's nest? Is it the people or pets in your life? Maybe it's something special about your hometown or something that makes your house your home.

<p><b>2025 Categories:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hometown Views</li> <li>• The Homestead</li> <li>• Nature's Homes</li> <li>• Leave a Light On</li> </ul> <p><b>Cash prizes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$150 first place</li> <li>• \$75 second place</li> <li>• \$50 third place</li> </ul>	<p><b>Things to keep in mind:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each person may submit up to two photos per category.</li> <li>• Digital JPEG photos only.</li> <li>• Photos must be at least 300 dpi at 8" x 10".</li> <li>• All vertical photos will be considered for the cover photo. If you have a photo you think will make the perfect cover of <i>CCL</i>, it must be at least 300 dpi at 9" wide x 13" tall.</li> <li>• Winners will be announced and published in a Spring 2025 issue.</li> <li>• The contest is open only to members of a Colorado electric co-op.</li> <li>• The contest is open for entries through <b>Friday, December 1, 2024.</b></li> </ul>
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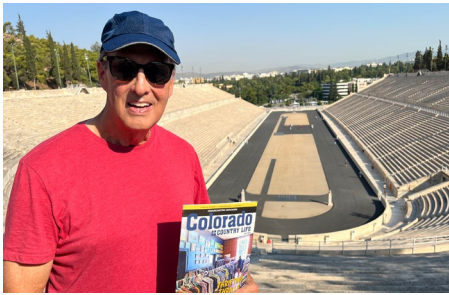
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at [www.coloradocountrylife.coop/2025photocontest](http://www.coloradocountrylife.coop/2025photocontest). Scan the QR code with your smartphone to go directly to the entry form on our website.

*Photo by Sangre de Cristo Electric Association member Megan Frantz.*

   READERS' PHOTOS



**WINNER: Felix and Darlene Lopez** take CCL on their trip to Tampa Bay, Florida. They are members of San Isabel Electric Association.



Highline Electric Association member **Lewis Frank** brings his July edition of CCL to Olympic stadium in Athens, Greece.



San Isabel Electric member **Terry Wise** enjoys CCL in Creede, Colorado.



**Alison Fust**, a Highline Electric Association member, visits her 50th state — Alaska! Thanks for bringing CCL along for this milestone trip!



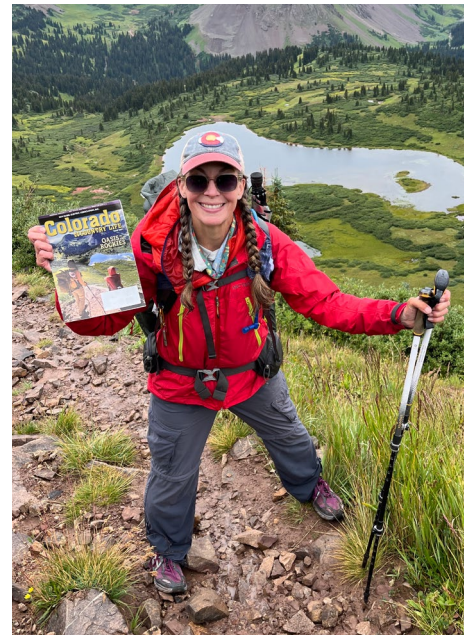
Poudre Valley REA member **Guy Fernandez** stops in Haines, Alaska, with his copy of CCL during a cruise on the Queen Elizabeth.



Highline Electric Association board member **Jim Lueck** and his grandkids tour a lavender farm near Big Springs, Nebraska, and bring CCL for a photo.



**Cheryl Ammeter**, a San Isabel Electric member, poses for a photo with CCL at the Bronx Zoo on a warm summer day.



CCL writer **Becky Jensen** thru hikes the Colorado Trail this summer. Here she stops at Taylor Lake near Kennebec Pass to get a photo with the CCL cover of the same place. Becky said, "After days of thunderstorms, we were soaked and it's a miracle I managed to keep the magazine dry for this photo. Just that morning, my son Jake and I hiked through frigid, sideways rain to climb and descend Indian Trail Ridge — all above 12,000 feet — just before we reached Taylor Lake. But the rain stopped as we descended, and we got the shot."



**Larry Painter** — a Mountain View Electric Association member — stops at Schonbrunn Palace in Vienna, Austria, for a photo with the magazine.

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# HANDMADE IN COLORADO

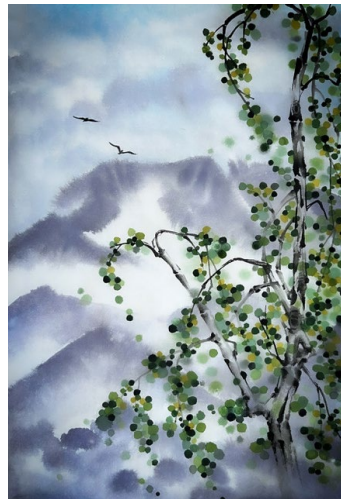
The shorter days of October are upon us. For some, that may mean more time indoors in front of the television, baking, or perhaps sitting with a good book. But for others, it's another month of continual indulgence in honing one's craft or enjoying someone else's. As we celebrate World Handmade Day this fall, we've found some Colorado artisans and the treasures they create.

BY GAYLENE GARCIA GRANGER



## Tintype Photography by Tim Brown — Methodist Mountain

Ever wonder what you would look like if you lived during a different time in history? Well, we know a Colorado photographer who can show you. Tim Brown uses the tintype process to create the most surreal and captivating photographs that look like one of your grandmother's keepsakes. Brown's custom-built studio, with expansive window lighting, is one of only two in the entire United States that is made specifically for this art and passion. Each photo is taken using the natural light, and prints are developed in his darkroom. Brown shows his clients the entire process, including the unique nuances of costumed posing, the specifically timed exposure, and the hand-pouring of the chemicals that make each photo custom and unique. The result is a stunning photograph made of silver that will last more than a lifetime. To book your session and have a blast from the past, visit [timbrownphotography.com](http://timbrownphotography.com).



## Brush Painting by Leigha Nicole — Crestone

One look at Leigha Nicole's artwork will tell you that a lot of time has gone into creating it. Nicole studied her craft with teacher Dr. Ning Yeh in the Po Mo (throw ink) style of Chinese brush painting. Her work has since evolved over time, and her own style has become a combination of traditional Chinese brush painting, Sumi-e, and Western watercolor. Today she uses watercolors and ink on handmade rice paper to create interpretations of nature and wildlife, often featuring the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. Nicole offers virtual and in-person private and group painting classes out of her studio in Crestone. Book your spot at [splendidartwork.blogspot.com](http://splendidartwork.blogspot.com). You can also see her work at [www.crestoneartisansgallery.com/leigha-nicole](http://www.crestoneartisansgallery.com/leigha-nicole).

## Holly Halter's Hippi Chick Art — Gunnison

No matter what kind of day you're having, seeing Holly Halter's craft will bring a smile to your face. She says, "The theme of my work is whimsy both to celebrate what is good in our world and to provide an escape from what is not good in our world." She was commissioned to decorate the Gunnison community garden and made colorful flowers out of aluminum cans. Her whimsical art can be found on note cards, Christmas ornaments, and greeting cards. To purchase or view Holly's handmade art visit Hippi Chick's Facebook page [@holly.halter.75](https://www.facebook.com/holly.halter.75) or pop into the Gunnison Gallery on Main Street.



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