



New structure at Boulder County separates strategy and administration



Courtesy Photo

New Director of Community Planning and Permitting, Dale Case

By EMILY LONG
Editorial@lhvc.com

From the perspective of the public, the implementation of recently announced changes to Boulder County's structure has been extremely quick. In November of 2019, a significant shift in administration and management of county departments was announced, and it has already been implemented, as of Jan. 14, 2020.

Internally, however, the conversation had been going on for a long time, as far back as the Fourmile Canyon Fire in 2010.

The new structure makes several significant shifts in how the county is run. The main goal of the restructuring is to separate the strategic planning and public-facing work of the county commissioners from the day-to-day operations and management of their office.

This has been implemented by several steps, including the creation of a new county administrator position, appointed

by the county commissioners and reporting directly to them.

Jana Petersen, formerly the administrative services director since 2010, was named as the new county administrator. She emphasized the increasing complexity of Boulder County's organizational structure and the need to separate the political work of the commissioners from the administrative work of their office.

Petersen said the new structure allows the commissioners to "focus on 'what and why', turning over the 'how and the who', to the rest of county government."

According to Michelle Krezek, the newly appointed Chief of Staff to the Boulder County Commissioners, "This isn't really a new concept. We have been having conversations starting after the Fourmile Fire about how the county can better respond to disasters."

Krezek said, "If you look at all the counties in Colorado, there are very few that don't have some kind of administrator or manager, so we were sort of an oddity." After the Fourmile Fire, and again after the September 2013 floods in Boulder County, county employees and administrators noticed that certain processes flowed a lot more smoothly in disaster response, where separate departments worked together in the same location.

Dale Case, the newly appointed Director of Community Planning and Permitting (formerly the director of the

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► LEFT HAND LAUREL Meg Heitlinger



Courtesy Photo

Meg Heitlinger, president of the Heatherwood Elementary PTO, hangs a note on the school bulletin.

BY AMY SCANES-WOLFE
Editorial@lhvc.com

Meg Heitlinger moved here from Minneapolis in 2006 for the same reason many people come to Colorado--"the idea of

living from snow to sunshine."

Twelve years later, Heitlinger became the much beloved president of the Parent Teacher Organization at Heatherwood Elementary.

"It seems that Meg is here at

Heatherwood more days than she's not," said Mary Lietz, Principal's Assistant. "She is constantly pitching in, supporting our school and leading our PTO Crew. She is smart and eloquent and delivers a strong message to our community with a smile on her face."

Heitlinger's background prepared her well for the role. She works in marketing for the consumer products industry. Prior employers include Izzy's, Two Moms in the Raw, and Bamboobies, which produced breastfeeding support products for moms. "I have good experience with getting messaging across," said Heitlinger.

Heitlinger was working for Bamboobies when she started getting involved with the Heatherwood PTO. When Bamboobies sold in the summer of 2018, she seized the

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Longtime Niwot business owners wary of incorporation



Photo by Vicki Maurer

A sign outside Niwot Market promotes Niwot's low sales tax rates.

BY JOCELYN ROWLEY
Editorial@lhvc.com

Carrie Wise of Wise Buy Antiques is not prone to angry outbursts, but a recent push to bring a municipal government

to Niwot has provoked more than one. Now she is joining with other incorporation opponents in an effort to head off a move that she said is antithetical to the town's unique character.

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"I think Niwot's really good the way it is," Wise said. "Don't mess with it if it's not broken. I can't help it if the people on the next block didn't get what they want from Boulder County, but we shouldn't change everything because of that."

Wise has found an outlet for her frustration in "Niwot for Common Sense," an informal coterie of area residents and business owners who have cast a wary eye at an incorporation feasibility study released last month by the Niwot Incorporation Committee. Founded last fall, NCS membership is now up to eight, a number they expect to see grow as the



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Community Calendar

LID MEETING

The Niwot Local Improvement District Advisory Committee will hold its monthly meeting at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 4, at the Mountain View Fire Station (8500 Niwot Rd.).

BASEBALL & SOFTBALL REGISTRATION

Early bird registration for the 51st season of Niwot Youth Sports baseball is open through Feb. 29. The program is open to players from ages 4-14 of all abilities. Practices start in early April and games run from early May through June. Girls Softball registration opens Feb. 1. NYS is also looking for umpires, volunteer coaches, team parents and team sponsors. For more information, visit niwotyouthsports.com.

ALZHEIMER'S SUPPORT GROUP

Alzheimer's Association Dementia Caregiver Support Group meets on the first Wednesday of each month from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at the Niwot United Methodist Church (7405 Lookout Road).

This free service is for family members and friends who care for and care about people with Alzheimer's Disease and other forms of dementia..

TRAINING COURSE

Boulder County Area Agency on Aging is sponsoring Powerful Tools for Caregivers, a 12-hour course for family caregivers of older adults. Classes will be held on Mondays from 1 - 3 p.m. at the Eagle Place Community Building (N. 79th Street, Niwot), starting on Feb. 17

through March 23. There is no charge, but pre-registration is required. For more information, contact Juliette Kershner, Boulder County AOA, at 303-678-6116 or InfoCaregiver@bouldercounty.org.

COMMUNITY GRANTS

Left Hand Giving Circle is seeking applications from nonprofits that support any of the diverse needs facing veterans and their families. Up to \$7,500 in grants will be awarded this grant cycle. Deadline for submissions is Feb. 21. For more information, visit their website lefthandgivingcircle.org or call the Longmont Community Foundation at 303-678-6555.

COMMUNITY PET SPOTLIGHT

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Meet Chocolate, a 13-year-old Shi-Tzu-poodle, and Caribou, a seven-year old Alaskan Malamute, who live with companion Cindy Silvis. The pair average about 25 miles a week walking the sidewalks and trails of Niwot, and know the routes so well that they often demand that their human walk a certain direction.

We look forward to seeing your pets in our spotlight. Please email your photos and captions Editorial@lhvc.com



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Dogs sniff out human remains on Niwot trails

By AMY SCANES-WOLFE
Editorial@lhvc.com

If you were walking the Niwot Loop Trail last Tuesday afternoon, you likely bumped into Kodi and his owner Jayne Zmijewski.

Kodi may have looked like any other yellow lab, but he wasn't out for leisure; he was helping facilitate a training mission. His title--Search and Rescue Dog.

"They're like family dogs," explained Zmijewski, "but when there's a mission, they know they have a job to do."

Zmijewski is part of a team of dedicated search and rescue volunteers who are on call 24/7, 365 days a year. "We are part of the emergency services department, with all their regulations and rules and uniforms, but we're not paid."

Zmijewski also belongs to Search and Rescue Dogs of the United States, an organization currently headed up by Jeff Hiebert, a ranger for Boulder County Parks and Open Space. The Niwot trails are one of twenty locations this group uses to train dogs for



Courtesy Photo

Lakota, one of four Labradors Jayne Zmijewski has trained for Search and Rescue.

the diverse situations they will encounter in real life.

Dogs have many powerful tools, including endurance, patience, and an incredible sense of smell, which can pick up scents over two miles away. "Dogs are an added advantage to a search and rescue team," said Zmijewski. "One dog can cover an area that it takes 16 foot teams to cover."

Most dogs are trained in three investigative capacities---trailing, air scent, and human remains. Trailing and air scent allow dogs to track

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EVENTS

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2/7	Reading: Jerry Keenan, author of <i>West of Green River.</i>
2/14	Music: An evening of Brazilian Jazz with Barbara Paris and the Keith Waters Trio. Complimentary refreshments and libations will be served. Tickets \$15. To reserve your seats call or visit Inkberry Books.
2/15	Reading: Patti Ashley, author of <i>Letters to Freedom: From Fear, to Love, to Grace.</i>

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Boulder Library Champions announces 2020 plans

How does forming a library district help our community meet our funding needs?



Courtesy of Boulder Library Champions

Creating a property-tax funded library will help the City of Boulder direct funding to other priorities.

BY JOCELYN ROWLEY
Editorial@lhvc.com

A proposal to create a library district is gaining steam with Boulder City Council, but the question of whether to raise property taxes to pay for it is ultimately one for the voters. At a 2020 kickoff celebration

on Jan. 24, the Boulder Library Champions announced that it is seeking volunteers and donations to help win over those voters before November.

"If you have energy, and are wondering what to do right now, it's a great time to get involved in fundraising," BLC's Michael Carcaise said. "We're

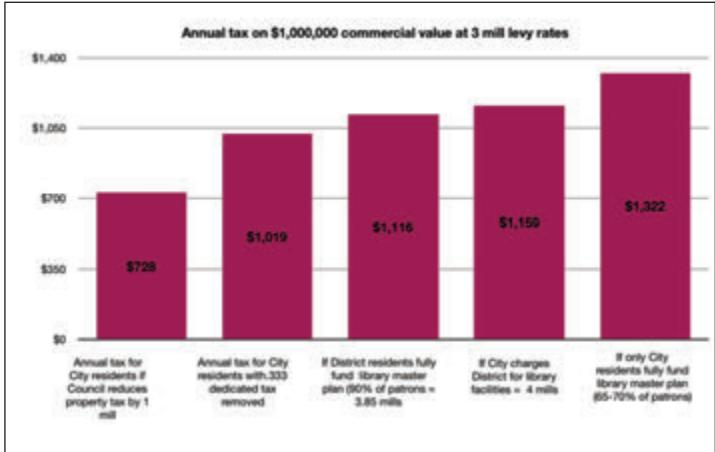


Photo by Dani Hemmat

The estimated tax impact of various library district funding scenarios.

in the on-year of a presidential election, there's a senate race in our state, and up and down the ballot, there's a lot of energy, and there's going to be a ton of noise. We have to break through, and to communicate to voters is an expensive proposition, whether that's through the mail, digital advertising, or putting bodies on the doors."

The group is seeking to raise between \$50,000 and \$75,000 for the upcoming 2020 bid, which will go towards expens-

es such as advertising, events, and direct mail. The BLC is also asking for assistance in "knocking on doors, canvassing people, and talking to neighbors," and put out a special plea out for volunteers proficient in "marketing magic" and social media outreach.

"A lot of it is going to be a ground game," BLC founding member Joni Teter said. "A place where we could really

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INCORPORATION

Continued from Page 1

debate over self-rule heats up in the coming weeks.

While NCS members have a number of misgivings about an incorporated Niwot, their top concern centers around the hefty tax increases outlined in the feasibility study. According to the incorporation committee, converting the town to a municipality and funding its initial years of operation will require an additional property tax levy of 7.5 mills on both residential and commercial property in town, boosting annual tax bills by thousands of dollars for the latter. Bert Steele of Niwot Market said that's too high for many retail outlets, including his, which often operate with a slender profit margin.

"There's pressure coming from everywhere, driving up costs, so the property tax is a concern because we want to do more for the employees and fix up the store...This is a small community, and we're paying a lot now, and it doesn't make sense to do it to ourselves."

Steele is also dismayed by a proposed increase in local sales tax rates, from 5.985 to 8.895 percent, exceeding both Longmont (8.815%) and Boulder (8.85%), and effectively wiping out what had proven to be an effective lure for out-of-town shoppers, as well as a little extra change for Niwot customers.

"There's no additional sales tax here, and I think that's really good for the customers and it gives us a little bit of a competitive edge," he said. "I appreciate that, and I would hate to see that go away."

Wise predicted ruinous consequences for Niwot's economic viability under these potential taxing scenarios.

"I'm really fearful for the commercial district, because it's just getting overtaxed for what it is, and [proponents] saying that it's going to be vibrant, well it's more than likely going to be the opposite of that, because rents will have to be raised."

She was especially vexed

by what she termed a "lack of transparency" in the group's treatment of the 1% LID special district tax.

"The incorporation committee failed to tell us that the 1% sales tax that we voted on and that's dedicated to the commercial district, if we incorporate, it goes away," she said. "It should be in the Pros & Cons [section of the study], but they didn't do that. They did finally put it into the budget, but only after Tim and I pushed them."

(The projected incorporation budget does include a line item for an "Economic Vitality Fund," with a note that it should be earmarked "to support economic vitality, marketing and promotion, and infrastructure for the Niwot commercial district.")

NCS member Pat Murphy raised another concern. According to her analysis of the proponents' budget, those same commercial entities will bear a disproportionate share of the property tax burden, with 50 properties contributing more than a quarter of total revenues.

"It seems like they're asking 50 commercial people to pay 25% of fixing the town's roads," the longtime proprietor of Niwot Real Estate said. "I'm a small businessperson, and I like to see small businesses succeed. If rents go up, that will get passed on to the customers."

Murphy also raised the alarm about the potential for encroaching development should the town elect to incorporate. As veteran of the campaign to keep Niwot safe from Boulder and Longmont planners through the transfer of development rights, she is sensitive to the threat of creeping growth.

"I was involved in a lot of land use issues," she said. "What I see is that annexation or rezoning could take place. Everybody likes our small town, and, if all of the sudden, the budget is light and there's a piece of adjacent property, someone might think it might be a great way to get some income...My goal is to protect what people in the past and what people in the future like

about Niwot—that it's small. Annexation can change it, and zoning can change it.

She also rejects claims by incorporation proponents that Niwot's relationship with Boulder County has deteriorated in recent years. Citing a number of local projects funded or supported by the county, such as Children's Park, Murphy said, "We're getting great

service. They've helped with doing downtown, they helped us with TDRs to help keep the town small. The county's been good to us."

Finally, Steele wanted to be clear that just because Niwot Business Association officers are cheering incorporation, it is far from a universal sentiment with the organization's membership.

"This is a huge thing to figure out, and I feel pushed," he said. "I view it as a really big decision, and I want everyone to really think it out and look at both sides of this."

The NCS is launching a website at www.niwotforcomonsense.org. The group is also planning a series of upcoming public engagement events in Niwot.



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\$2M+	0	0	3	1
	8	-	8	4

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Photo by Jocelyn Rowley

Eliot Popenhaugen, Joni Teter, and Michael Carcasse from the Boulder Library Champions address a group of supporters at the group's 2020 kickoff celebration on Jan. 24.

LIBRARY DISTRICT

Continued from Page 4

use some help is with our communications and messaging. The people who are in here right now are policy wonks, and don't have that skill."

Teter acknowledged that there are still some major unknowns about the campaign, largely because they are awaiting city council action on the proposal. Earlier this month, council agreed to fast-track its discussion of the potential district, and Teter takes that as a hopeful sign that they will vote to create the district by resolution at its study session in February. If council rejects the proposal, however, the BLC is prepared to go forward with a 2020 ballot initiative to create the district, after a petition drive in the spring of 2019 gathered the required number of signatures.

"The better way is for city council and the county commissioners to form it by resolution, so it's done up front," Teter said. "The intergovernmental agreement is done before the election,

so we know how facilities will be transferred to the district, how employees will be transferred, and come fall, the only thing to vote on is the funding."

In either event, BLC members said their messaging will focus on the benefits of a dedicated source of revenue for the library, both for patrons and the city.

"If we could get a fully funded district done, we can add better services for our youth; we can have better services for our Lantinx community; we can do better outreach, and—this is kind of unsexy—but we can also work on the maintenance backlog," council member Aaron Brockett told the gathering. A self-described "huge supporter" of the district proposal, Brockett is a member of the BLC, and co-hosted the event.

"There are all kinds of needs the library has, and when you think about our community and how we can make it better from an equity standpoint, the free services that the library offers for education and getting knowledge out to members of our community are enormous."

The property-tax funded

district would also free up to \$10 million per year in the city budget. According to Brockett, that is enough money to pay for upgrades to Boulder's aging fire stations and systems and to fill some gaps in the transportation budget.

"The city has some significant unfunded needs in our future that we're hoping to take care of," he said. "The library is supported almost entirely out of the city's general fund, so that money could be used for literally any other function of city government."

Still, the group knows that a tax increase to fund the library could be a "tough" sell to area voters. The proposed entity will be funded by an estimated 3.85 mill levy on property owners in the city and in unincorporated areas to the north, which translates to just under \$180 annually for the median home within the boundaries (\$648,000). For businesses with a commercial value of \$1 million, it will be an additional \$1,116.

"The City of Boulder is relatively friendly to tax increases, but it's never easy," Brockett said. "And it does have an impact for some folks. It will take some convincing."

The Champions hope to start the process of convincing voters in earnest later this spring, and are optimistic about their chances of convincing both the council and the electorate that the benefits of "long-term, sustainable funding for the library" are worth the cost.

"One tax that isn't hard to pass in Boulder is open space," BLC member Michael Caplan said. "What we're actually working for is to create open space in people's minds."

If you would like to help bring a library district to Boulder, the Champions urge you to contact members of the Boulder City Council

cil and the Board of County Commissioners and voice your support in the coming weeks. They are also recruiting volunteers and supporters for the 2020 campaign.

For more information or to make a donation, visit boulderlibrarychampions.org

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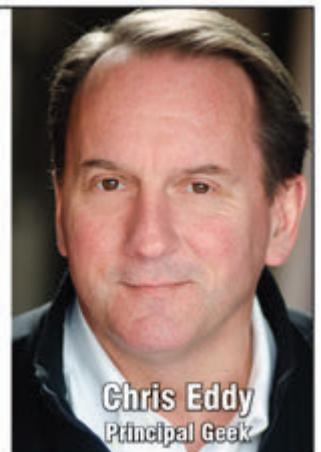
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LAUREL

Continued from Page 1

opportunity to become an independent marketing consultant. That role gave her more flexibility in her schedule. As the mother of two students attending Heatherwood Elementary, she felt the time

was right to take on the role of PTO president.

"Our mission is to connect students, family, and staff," said Heitlinger. Heitlinger helps coordinate events like back to school and movie nights, which bring students and parents together across grade levels. She also coordinates fundraising efforts.

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Restaurant fundraisers are popular, and just this past weekend, a parent volunteered her time to teach a yoga class at the school. Booster fund money goes towards supporting paraeducators, who help give students more individualized attention.

Heitlinger's favorite part about her role is "getting to know the school community and understand how the school works... We have a very supportive community."

In her spare time, Heitlinger embraces the opportunities that first drew her to Colorado. She and her kids are constantly active,

biking, swimming, exploring the great outdoors, and taking advantage of museums and other urban opportunities. "It's the benefit of both worlds out here - just minutes outside of the city, you get to see cows, horses... It's a nice blend." Heitlinger also skis and rides horseback in the hunter-jumper style.

Heitlinger encourages other parents to explore possibilities for getting involved with the school. "Everybody is busy, and I appreciate being a parent, balancing work and home, and trying to support your family,... but there are lots of ways to be supportive,

whether it's money or time through volunteering." She reiterates that people are often pleasantly surprised by how easy and rewarding it is to contribute to the Heatherwood community.

Historically, the PTO presidency has been a two-year commitment. When her term comes to a close this summer, Heitlinger is sure she will continue to explore ways to support the school. In the meantime, she is deeply appreciated.

"We are very grateful for her time and energy," said Lietz.

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BOCO

Continued from Page 1



Courtesy Photo

County Administrator Jana Petersen

land use department) said, "It goes back to a lot of the experience we had at the Fourmile Fire and the flood [in 2013], how we organized and had different people from different disciplines at the same place."

Case's new County Planning and Permitting Department takes similar services that were previously housed in two separate departments, Land Use and Transportation, and put them under one roof. The remaining services that were previously under Transportation are now in another new department, Public Works.

The goal of this part of the restructure is to ensure that county residents are "not ping-ponging people back and forth between different departments and different locations," said Case. The change will create "a better

one-stop-shop where people will be able to get answers and be able to identify things a lot quicker, and save people trips."

Case added that the new structure "saves a lot of time and energy for everybody."

An additional benefit that Case has already seen in his newly consolidated department is that the reorganization of staff positions and desks has created "lots of tremendous ideas and energy" among staff.

At the 2020 Annual Reorganization Meeting held by the county commissioners on Jan. 14, Commissioner Elise Jones admitted the process appeared extra speedy from the outside, saying, "We should have had a more inclusive conversation. We should have had better communication about this and we are committed to doing better." County residents can view the meeting on the "Boulder County BOCC" YouTube channel any time.

The drive to make the



Courtesy Photo

Michelle Krezek, Chief of Staff to the Boulder County Commissioners

administrative changes was sped up by "a relatively unprecedented turnover of commissioners next January," said Jones, "because we wanted to establish, test, and fine tune the structure this year," before the county faces that turnover in 2021. Two of the current commissioners, Elise Jones and Deb Gardner, are term-limited, with current commissioner

Matt Jones the lone holdover next year.

One final significant change in the structure involved the creation of a new Office of Sustainability, Climate Action, and Resilience, affectionately dubbed "OSCAR."

"Really, the idea was to bring together sustainability, kind of on steroids," according to Chief of Staff Krezek.

"Climate is such a big issue, it impacts a lot of the work we do across the county," and the idea was to broaden and support that work in one place.

Petersen, the new county administrator, stressed that while the "changes are going to take time, thought, and effort," it will continue to be "business as usual" at the county for most residents.

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market

SAR DOG

Continued from Page 3

people who are still alive using scents deposited on the ground

or in the air. The subjects are often lost hikers, wandering toddlers, or people with Alzheimers. When someone passes away, the scent of their body slowly changes, so sniffing out human remains is a whole other business.

It was human remains training that was underway on the Niwot Loop Trail on January 22nd. Samples of human remains were planted strategically along the creek bed for the dogs to sniff out. Though Kodi and a couple of

bloodhounds were just practicing, there were two young dogs actively learning to track.

Dogs have to learn to screen out distractions like rabbits and squirrels. And owners learn to recognize their dog's cue for when they find what they are looking for. "He will come back and take me to the subject," Zmijewski said of Kodi, "coming back and forth until I get there."

Zmijewski reinforces the find by rewarding Kodi with a toy. Many people use treats as a reward, but she prefers not to. "I don't want him thinking about a hot dog he smells at a campfire a half mile away when there's a toddler missing."

Not all dogs like search and rescue missions. But American Labradors are particularly well suited to the task. Bred as hunting dogs, they have a good sense of smell and enjoy the chase. "It's a game for them," said Zmijewski. Kodi is the fourth labrador Zmijewski has worked with.

It usually takes at least a year of intense daily training to certi-

fy a dog for search and rescue. Training the dogs is easy, but training the owners to train the dogs is much more difficult.

Which is why Zmijewski was quick to put out the call for volunteers. This volunteer-staffed organization provides invaluable services for the community. And there are ways to get involved that don't require owning a dog.

"We're always looking for fresh bodies to look for," said Zmijewski. Volunteers provide an article of clothing--a hat, a sock, or a scarf--for dogs in training to sniff. Volunteers then "hide" or hit the trails, and the dog is put on the chase. The dog gets practice finding the volunteer, and the volunteer gets to have a nice hike.

Though Zmijewski works with Larimer County Search and Rescue, Front Range Rescue Dogs is a similar organization based in Boulder: <https://www.frontrangerescuedogs.org/>. For more information, you can also visit: <http://www.sardogsus.org/>.

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Trooper Tips: Older Drivers



Courtesy Photo

Master Trooper Gary Cutler

By MASTER TROOPER GARY CUTLER
Editorial@lhvc.com

Driving is a feeling of freedom you get when you're able to just travel wherever you wish. But, there may come a point in time when either you or someone close to you must make the decision to put the keys away and find another way to commute.

Talking to an older person about their driving can be difficult and is often delayed until their driving is to a point of being dangerous. But if delayed too long, it can be a hesitation that can turn fatal.

I speak from personal experience when I lost my grandmother in a crash. The signs were there prior to the fatal crash, but we failed to see them as a serious enough problem and hesitated in having her stop driving. It started with a few scratches here and there on the car, and pulling into the garage a little too far. Perhaps, if we had acted upon

those signs we may have had her around longer.

Years later when another driving situation approached my family, we didn't hesitate to take action. My father began to show signs of having trouble driving due to early onset dementia, and we took steps to keep him from driving and possibly hurting himself or someone else. A problem you may face is the older driver believing they are driving fine, when in fact you are seeing dangerous problems. I won't tell you it was easy to have the conversation. My father was upset with us for a while, but I would do it again to make sure it keeps everyone safe.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration shows that in 2018, 19% of all fatal crashes were caused by drivers 65 years and older. Now this doesn't mean just because you turn 65 you should have your driver's license taken from you. Far from it, it just means it's time to start being aware of any changes. For a start, keep track of eyesight, physical fitness, and reflexes.

If you are an older person, try to avoid driving in bad weather, driving at dusk or night, where it may be harder to see things, or if bright lights have started to bother your eyes. Other ways to make sure you are being safe is to give yourself more distance between cars, and to constantly scan the road ahead. Look to ways you can extend your driving by being aware of any changes that could be dangerous on the roadways for you

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and others by adjusting those problems as they arise.

For family members with aging relatives, plan ahead so when the time comes everyone involved knows what needs to be done. Have a discussion with family members about what should be done, and how everyone should

respond when and if the time comes.

Be sensitive to ways you can preserve the older driver's self-respect. Present concerns in non-threatening terms. Use "I" messages rather than "You" messages. Focus on a plan that maximizes community safety and try to look for

ways that can put into place that allow the older person to continue to drive if possible by changing habits.

Don't wait to take steps that could save lives. For more information on driving for the elderly visit www.nhtsa.gov.

As always, safe travels!

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SRO Underwood has dream job at Niwot High

By HANNAH STEWART
Editorial@lhvc.com

Imagine this: it's baseball season for Colorado schools and ball fields across the state are filled with young boys, eager to play the game they love. But one such field in Arvada is a little different than the others—that's because many of the coaches are officers with the Arvada Police Department and they use their radar guns to measure pitch speeds.

Boulder County Sheriff's Deputy Eric Underwood credits this early exposure to law enforcement for some of his initial interest in the profession. In high school, he would go on ride-alongs with officers and his father knew many officers who spoke about the profession.

Then, "In 2014, my mom died and I wanted to make a differ-

ence. I thought, at the time, I had the maturity and physical and mental capacity to do it [become a police officer]," Underwood said.

With that goal in mind, Underwood realized that he wanted to work in schools. Drawing on his own positive experience in high school, and thanks to some encouragement from friends who had experience as SROs at other schools, he decided to apply to the police academy and become an SRO.

"SRO" stands for "school resource officer," and repeatedly, Underwood said that he wants to be a resource for the kids at Niwot. "My door's always open. If parents have questions, come to me directly...I spend my time getting to know as many kids as I can, so that I'm a resource."

He is certainly acting in that capacity for Niwot High's students, and the teachers too. For



Courtesy photo

When it comes to school security, SROs like Niwot's Officer Underwood are working hard. "We're always going to look at everything from different angles to see what works best for the community"

perspective.

"It's very rewarding, it's a different type of policing," Underwood explained. "It's very unique and takes a very specific type of officer to be a successful SRO."

Niwot High is Officer Underwood's first assignment since graduating from the police academy, and he expressed a lot of gratitude for having this opportunity come so soon in his career. He hopes to be able to stay on the staff for as long as possible, especially so that he can further develop relationships with students.

"[It's exciting] watching kids mature," he said. "To watch kids grow in such a positive way, I hope I get to be an influence in that."

However, despite the fact that Officer Underwood enjoys his job and, for the most part, is able to focus on building relationships with students, it is important to remember that his position at Niwot High is to provide safety for the campus.

"Some people are a little bothered that there's an armed officer in the school, others love it,"

he said. Underwood went on to explain that he is always on the alert, looking for ways to make sure that students and staff feel safe. He, along with the other Boulder County SROs, are constantly facilitating dialogue between the district and law enforcement. "I think about it [school safety] way more often than the students and staff realize."

Much of the discussion around school safety has come from the frequency of potential threats to schools. Niwot High had a bomb threat only last month. In response, school districts nationwide, including SVVSD, have been constantly trying to improve safety procedures and resources, which has included an increase in the number of SROs the district employs.

"I think they've [SVVSD] done a very good job working with us [law enforcement]. We love that partnership...the security world of schools is always evolving, and all we really want is that open dialogue and partnership [between districts and law enforcement]."

NHS SPORTS

SCHEDULE

JAN. 29 THROUGH FEB. 7

<p>Wednesday, Jan. 29 5 p.m. - Wrestling triangular</p> <p>Thursday, Jan. 30 5 p.m. - Wrestling @ Northridge</p> <p>Friday, Jan. 31 5:30 p.m. - Girls bb @ Northridge 7 p.m. - Boys bb @ Northridge</p> <p>Thursday, Feb. 6 5 p.m. - Wrestling triangular Friday, Feb. 7 5:30 p.m. - Girls bb vs. Longmont 7 p.m. - Boys bb vs. Longmont</p>	<p>Saturday, Feb. 1 8 a.m. - Wrestling @ Thornton Invitational</p> <p>Tuesday, Feb. 4 7 p.m. - Girls bb vs. Thompson Val. 7 p.m. - Boys bb @ Thompson Val.</p>
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Late surge by Niwot falls short in two conference games

By JOCELYN ROWLEY
Editorial@lhvc.com

The Niwot boys basketball team moved to 8-7 on the year, after dropping a pair

of close games to Northern League rivals. On Jan. 21, the Cougars scored 25 4th-quarter points in a 64-56 losing effort to arch-rival Silver Creek. Niwot had another

strong second half against Centaurus on Jan. 24, but it wasn't enough to overcome a 14-0 deficit to start the game, and the Cougars went on to lose 54-47.



Senior Kyle Reeves puts on the moves against a Centaurus defender on Jan. 24.

Photo by Quinn Gossett



Photo by Jocelyn Rowley

Seniors Milo Ostwald guards against Centaurus shooter on Jan. 24.



Photo by Jocelyn Rowley

Seniors Milo Ostwald guards against Centaurus shooter on Jan. 24.



Senior Cooper Sheldon goes to the line for Niwot late in the game against Centaurus on Jan. 24.

Photo by Jocelyn Rowley

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Misha Barrett takes the court for Niwot



Photo by Jocelyn Rowley

Niwot special needs student Misha Barrett is getting a chance to play with the traditional high school program this season.



Photo by Jocelyn Rowley

Niwot's Misha Barrett (with the ball) dribbles past a Northridge defender to make a push for the basket in a tournament game on Jan. 18.



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BY JOCELYN ROWLEY
Editorial@lhvc.com

When he's on the court "making it rain" for Niwot, shooting guard Misha Barrett looks like any other underclassman hustling for a chance to leave the 'D' team behind. It's only when you get a chance to talk to him that you realize that the hardworking three-point specialist has significant cognitive deficiencies, thanks to an anoxic brain trauma suffered at birth. But that hasn't stopped him from playing the game he loves, and now he's getting a chance to do it for the team he loves.

"It feels great to be a Niwot Cougar," Barrett said after a recent game against Greeley Central. "I've been dreaming about this moment since middle school. I've been wanting to make the team for Niwot, and I didn't have the opportunity before. Now I have the opportunity."

It's an opportunity he took a long road to get to. Born in Ukraine, he was orphaned at an early age, and spent time in three state-run institutions with an older sister. The pair were adopted and brought to the U.S. by Johnny Barrett and his wife Twyla when Misha was six, but it took years of therapy to recover from his tumultuous beginnings.

The youngest Barrett's talent for basketball revealed

itself in third-grade, when his dad Johnny Barrett entered him into a "Pass, Dribble, Shoot" contest sponsored by the Optimists. Misha took first place, and, ever since, it's been hard to keep him off the court.

"My parents got me into basketball, and I just started living it," he said.

When he reached high school, Barrett played for the Silver Creek Raptors unified team, where his penchant for scoring made him a "rock star" among the other players. This year, however, he decided to bring his talents back to his home school, and was selected for Niwot's fourth team during a tryout in November.

"I'll give it up for the unified team. I had a lot of fun with that team, but here I'm having the best time of my life playing for my Niwot Cougars."

Barrett typically plays guard for the Cougars, but will gladly play "any position my coach wants me to." He enjoys the more physical style of the high school game, as well as the opportunity to contribute on defense. However, he said his preference is playing offense, "because it gives me the opportunity to shoot and score points for my team."

D-team head coach Jeremy Johnson said that adjusting to a more competitive level has proved challenging for Barrett at times, and that it takes "a

little extra coaching" to get him to understand the plays.

"His biggest challenge is being able to retain information—knowing where to be at, and when to be there," Johnson said.

However, the coach also called Barrett a "competitor" and praised the junior's hard work. "He's confident, but now that he's playing at a more competitive level, when he scores buckets and has success, it makes him feel a lot better. So what I'm trying to get him to understand is that it's not about self, it's more about teamwork."

Unfortunately, it seems like Barrett's teammates could use a refresher as well. The Cougars D-team is currently winless, which Barrett said has been the hardest part of an otherwise "awesome season."

"I like to tell him that they have a perfect record, 0-8," Johnny Barrett said. "He hates it when I say that."

When he's not on the court for his beloved Cougars, Barrett is a special needs student in his junior year at Niwot. He serves as a manager for the Cougar football team, and is also on Niwot's unified track team. Outside of school, he is active at church, and volunteers with his dad at church and civic events, including Niwot road crews. He also loves pizza almost as much as he loves basketball.

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Lopez runner-up at Berthoud



Senior Jovani Lopez (285) won by decision over Scott Hill of Horizon in the semi-finals at the Diny Pickert Invitational on Jan. 26.

By JOCELYN ROWLEY
Editorial@lhvc.com

It was a light crew for head coach Bobby Matthews at the

2020 Diny Pickert Invitational at Berthoud High on Jan. 26, as several Niwot wrestlers battled illness. That made for a light score in the final



Senior Keith Hemmenway pinned Kai Saito of Littleton in consolation round 2 at the Diny Pickert Invitational on Jan. 26.

team standings, where Niwot placed 14th overall with 34.0 points.

Niwot heavyweight Jovani Lopez earned his seventh trip to the podium this season with a 2nd-place finish in the 285-pound class. He was runner-up for the third time to Oscar Aranday of Skyline,

who won in a 2-1 decision. Lopez went 3-1 on the day, and improved to 23-6 on the year.

Keith Hemmenway missed another trip to the podium when he lost to Jacob Loomis of Horizon by decision in the third consolation round, just outside the top 6.

Niwot will be back on the mat again in Longmont on Jan. 29, then at the Thornton Invitational on Feb. 1.

1/26 Diny Pickert Invitational, Berthoud HS

Team Scores—Weld Central 144, Skyline 140, Berthoud 129, Fort Morgan 128, Loveland 126, Moffat County 115.5, Horizon 111, Sterling 97, Holy Family 75, Vista Peak 64, Elizabeth 60, Glenwood Springs 37, Littleton 36, Niwot 34, Middle Park 32, Centaurus Hs 21,

Niwot results

106 — Cons. Round 2 - Brody Wiser (Moffat County) over Angel Aldama (Fall 2:05)
113 — Cons. Round 3 - Matthew McCarthy (Holy Family) over Parker Limi (Fall 0:58)

126 — Cons. Round 1 - Trace Frederickson (Moffat County) over Satchel Hart (Dec 5-1)

152 — Cons. Round 2 - Jacob Loomis (Horizon) over Keith Hemmenwa (Dec 6-1)

285 — 1st Place Match -Oscar Aranday (Skyline) over Jovani Lopez (Niwot) (Fall Dec 2-1)

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