



PLATT PARK POST

WINTER 2025

NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

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STREET BEAT**
Every Issue!



NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES BY TOM SNYDER

Happy holidays everyone!

It's been a unique year around the world, to say the least. Regardless of the craziness, I hope the year ends well for you and your loved ones, and that you get out and enjoy a bit of the holiday spirit right here in this wonderful corner of the world we call home.

Even though we recently wrote about the new restaurants [Kazaki](#) and [Margot](#), both located in the shared space at **Denshu Den** (1551 S. Pearl St.), it's worth noting that each was awarded a **Michelin Star** by the international [Michelin Guide](#) in September. Winning a Michelin Star for the first time is a huge deal because it is perhaps the most prestigious award in the culinary world. It signals that a restaurant has achieved exceptional quality, creativity, and consistency. Basically, it joins the global elite. It's kind of the culinary equivalent of earning an Oscar.

Prior to 2023, there were no Michelin-starred restaurants in all of Colorado. There are now seven in the Denver area, and two of them just happen to be on our beloved South Pearl Street. Pretty amazing! Once again, congratulations to founders Toshi Kizaki and Justin Fulton of Kazaki and Margot, respectively.

Speaking of restaurants in the neighborhood, a new one recently opened that might have slipped under your radar: [Yemen Grill](#), on the northwest corner of Evans and Downing. Maybe not a Michelin-starred place, but way, way cheaper, and already earning a 4.7 rating on Google with almost 400 reviews in just a short time. Not sure I'd ever had Yemeni food before, so of course I had to drop by and check it out. The cuisine is decidedly Middle Eastern but with its own unique twists.



We started with an appetizer of hummus and pita bread. It was delicious and only \$5.99 for a very generous portion, I might add. Then, just to get a taste of a variety of things, we tried the Mix Grill Rice Platter, which came with sikh lamb kebab, chicken kebab, shish tawook, and tekah lamb served over traditional Yemeni rice. I can't really explain what each

of those were exactly, but the flavors were amazing, and the portions were so big that the two of us took almost half of it home. With two Diet Cokes (no alcohol served), the whole tab came to under \$50. Lots of other interesting options on the menu, so we'll definitely have to go back. They had a wonderful, friendly staff, a pleasant atmosphere, and easy parking in the back. Open daily from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Definitely worth checking out!

Redevelopment News

Redevelopment plans have been submitted to Denver for the old **Hanson's Tavern** lot at the corner of Louisiana and South Pearl St. The plans call for a three-story building that will cover the entire lot. The preliminary concept includes a restaurant on the corner and additional retail space along the Pearl frontage. The second and third floors will be office and residential, so there will also be an underground parking garage. No timetable has been set yet, but look for work to begin sometime in 2026, with a likely completion date in 2027.

The old theater and former home to **Thrillseekers Climbing Gym** at 1912 S. Broadway has had its share of problems since the new owners purchased it in 2018. In August, the property went into foreclosure over an unpaid loan. The current owners intend to pay off the loan and rescue it from foreclosure in the coming months. No further plans have been announced for the space, so stay tuned on this one.

Neighborhood Trends

In my years working in real estate, primarily in Platt Park, I've paid close attention to trends in the neighborhood. Since the pandemic, I've sensed a new one clearly emerging.

Back in the early 2000s, the prevalent trend was all about buying and fixing up our turn-of-the-century bungalows, which still dominate most of our blocks. DIY projects ruled the day as new homeowners eagerly put their remodeling touches on these classic homes. The 2008 recession put a bit of a damper on all that, and a new trend began to emerge.

For the better part of the following decade, pop-tops (adding a second story to those bungalows) became the hot ticket. Design styles varied greatly, from simple four-walls-and-a-roof additions to elaborate configurations with decks, balconies, and intricate design details both inside and out.

If you get out and about the neighborhood much now, you've likely noticed the current trend. On virtually every block, it seems, you'll see homes that have been scraped (the old structure torn down and replaced with something entirely new). Of course, remodeling bungalows will always go on, but pop-tops have become increasingly rare, while scrapes seem to have become the new normal.

Ultimately, what drives this is money and scarcity. On the money side, Platt Park has now seen home prices occasionally top the \$3,000,000 mark, which signals that the economics of scraping work here. The scarcity piece is that they're not building any more Platt Parks out there, so if you want to live in a cool neighborhood and have your dream home, scraping becomes attractive. Unlike duplex construction, which was

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A big crowd showed up on September 19 in Platt Park for our annual Movie Night. The Denver Brass Quintet played as the overture. Fire Engine #16 and the Denver Library Book Mobile made appearances. Stir-Pan Creamery offered sweets, and everyone enjoyed singing along with WICKED.

written out of our neighborhood by the zoning rewrite of 2011, any lot of any size is now a candidate for a scrape, and we're seeing examples of that quite literally everywhere in the neighborhood.

Love them or hate them, they're a reality that's likely here to stay. In ten or twenty years, will Platt Park look and feel different? Probably... just as it has evolved over the last twenty. Change is inevitable. But with the deep affection we all seem to have for what goes on in and around our homes, I'm confident it will long remain an amazing place to live, regardless of the trends.

As we wrap up another year, here's wishing you peace, laughter, and plenty of good cheer this holiday season. May your days be filled with friendly faces, full plates, and maybe a few extra steps around the park to walk it all off.

As always, see you around the neighborhood.

Tom Snyder



The Platt Park People's Association, a city of Denver Registered Neighborhood Organization, serves more than 3,000 homes and businesses in the neighborhood bounded by Broadway on the West, Downing on the East, I-25 on the North and Evans on the South. 3PA membership is open to all neighbors and business owners who live or own property within these boundaries. Have a voice in your neighborhood and with the city: Join 3PA.

Stay informed, learn about upcoming events, and more! Visit www.3pa.org or email board@3pa.org

Please join us for our first public quarterly meeting of 2026 on **January 20th at 6 PM** at **Cameron Church** located at 1600 South Pearl Street.



Monthly Climate Cafes

We meet in the Back Room at HOJA (1284 S Pearl St.) to support each other as we navigate the multi-layered reality our neighborhood.

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For more info contact Paddy McClelland:
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The Platt Park Postcard is a series created by neighbors Barbara Lewis and Sharon Withers to highlight the colorful history of our community. What are you curious about? Email us at catalystbel2@gmail.com

Beats of the Past

During 2025, we've shared stories about music history in Platt Park: Lincoln's Roadhouse, the Denver Folklore Center, Swallow Hill, and Brewgrass at Cameron Church. To close out this series, we honor the loss of a 65-year-old tradition, Herman's Hideaway, and recall musical festivals on South Pearl Street.

At Herman's Hideaway, three generations of the Roth family brought 40,000 bands/sets to Platt Park. As the legendary Chris Daniels, former director of Swallow Hill, recounted in Westword, Herman's was "THE Denver venue that launched his band, Chris Daniels and the Kings, along with David Booker, Big Head Todd, The Samples, The Subdudes, Opie Gone Bad, and countless others." Touring acts, like Widespread Panic and Dave Mathews, also played at Herman's.



Recalling the connection between the audience and musicians, Daniels described it as "an electrical exchange of voltage back and forth that could make the clouds part and a shaft of light come down out of the sky like a Ghostbusters movie. If you were playing or in the audience on one of those nights, you will never forget it."

Although Herman's Hideaway closed in 2024, music still saturates the walls of the building. Coco Bongos, a Latin dance club, leased

the space and is open Thursdays through Sundays, until 2 am.

Between 2007 and 2019, the South Pearl Street Association, under the leadership of Mark Gill, hosted 26 musical festivals.

"We started doing music festivals on the 1200 Block of South Pearl with Blues and Brews," said Gill. "We had no idea how it was going to go, but we were able to draw a great crowd and sell a lot of beer right off the bat. The next year we added another summer festival to the calendar with our BrewGrass Festivals." Memorable bands at Blues and Brews included national acts John Lee Hooker Jr., Big Bill Morganfield, and Marcia Ball, as well as local bands, like the Informants and Erica Brown. BrewGrass featured Oakhurst and Halden Wofford & the High Beams as well as Greensky Bluegrass, who now headlines Red Rocks shows every summer. Profits from the music fests and the Farmers Market helped pay for the three arches over Pearl Street today, and a lot of other improvements along South Pearl.



Photo Credit: Mark Gill

Will the music festivals continue? Gill notes, "It would be a lot more difficult to do these days with all the new residential development and City of Denver noise ordinances, but you never know. Our OktoberFest celebration, spearheaded by Aden Holt, has picked up the mantle festival-wise, at least for now."

You never know how or where music will pop up in Platt Park, but different kinds of music have enriched our history, and music will surely continue to color our future.

Get Ready to Roll with Stir Pan Creamery

By Walker Knight

When Brandon Muñoz first saw an anti-griddle at a South by Southwest festival in Austin ten years ago, it changed his entire career path. This machine (at -25°) freezes whatever it touches on contact... sweet dairy-fresh cream, infinite flavor options, and your imagination combine as you witness your concoction get mixed, chopped and rolled with the rat-a-tat rhythms of stainless-steel spatulas. The end result is interactive AND delicious! Customers have said the ice cream is so thick you can almost chew it. Adults like to see how it's made, and kids are mesmerized.



Brandon was living in Frisco when he bought his first anti-griddle and started experimenting with flavors. At his day job, a sympathetic boss let him test out flavors and recipes with 30 of his fellow employees. Not long after, Brandon found an opportunity to open his first store at a breakfast-only restaurant in Frisco. [Stir-Pan Creamery](#) was a hit! A second location in Breckenridge opened soon after.

Now a Lakewood resident, Brandon set his sights on Platt Park to open his first Denver location. "It's all about local community support, and I love chatting with the customers. I feel like we have a full connection with the residents."

From the beginning, the classic flavors have been his solid foundation, and the 17 featured at his store at 1221 South Pearl Street don't change. There may be an occasional special, but the crowd pleasers are constant. Top notch ingredients, like ice cream base from a local dairy, Ghirardelli Chocolate sauce, and a real key lime are just a few of Stir Pan's options. Stop by and watch your favorite combination of flavors get built right in front of you... and say hi to Brandon when you do!



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A Letter from Lucky District 7 Councilwoman Flor Alvidrez

Denver City Council, District 7

Hello Platt Park neighbors. Denver is currently facing a serious budget shortfall, and the decisions we make today will shape our ability to provide essential services in the future. Since taking office, I have consistently pushed back on using the City's reserves and contingency funds to backfill recurring budget gaps and overspending. These funds are meant for true emergencies and long-term stability, not as temporary fixes that lead to deeper cuts later.

Many residents have asked about the recent news that DP Media Network (owner of The Denver Post) stopped paying rent to the City on July 31, 2025, leaving approximately \$2 million unpaid and over \$27 million still owed on their lease. I did not support the City's purchase of the Denver Post building due to concerns about unnecessary debt and whether the building was truly needed, especially given that it was justified as future space for courts and parking magistrates.

Now, as we face layoffs, including positions in court services, the very roles this building was meant to support, we continue servicing debt on a facility with a tenant that is in default. This is not fiscal responsibility, which is why I continue to advocate for stronger financial oversight and accountability.

During this year's budget process, I fought to ensure that the 2026 elections are fully funded. Next year will include major statewide races, including the Governor's election, which will require additional resources for voter access and election administration. Our 2026 budget cannot be built on the same assumptions as 2025.

I have also advocated for restoring funding for parking magistrates and for investing in our crime lab so investigators can respond to crime scenes and resolve cases efficiently. A safe and functional city requires adequate staffing and forensic capacity.

As we move into the holiday season, I am also mindful of growing concerns around food insecurity. With potential changes to SNAP benefits at the federal level, many families may face additional strain. I am working with local partners to ensure our food banks are supported and that residents know where to access assistance if needed. No one should struggle to put food on the table during the holidays or any time of year. You can always call 211 for support.

If you have questions or would like to discuss the budget or food access resources, or upcoming ballot issues, please reach out. I am always available to listen.

Sincerely,
Councilwoman Flor Alvidrez
Lucky District 7

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A Letter from Senator

Robert Rodriguez

Senator of District 32, Colorado State Senate

Hello neighbors, this is Robert Rodriguez, your state senator for District 32 and Majority Leader of the Colorado State Senate. Despite turmoil and challenges often coming from Washington, D.C., many good things are happening here at the state level. My work at the Capitol is always focused on you – bringing down costs, supporting labor and small businesses, and ensuring a safe, vibrant future for Colorado families – so I want to check in with you and let you know what we’ve been working on and where we’re headed.

In the regular 2025 legislative session, our focus included making Colorado more affordable, improving public safety, preventing gun violence, protecting our residents’ rights and freedoms, boosting our economy, and supporting students. We passed legislation to crack down on junk fees that drive up housing costs, require a firearm safety course prior to purchasing some of the most dangerous firearms, protect free and fair elections through the Colorado Voting Rights Act, clarify constitutional protections for all people regardless of immigration status, successfully bring the Sundance Film Festival to Colorado which will boost Colorado’s economy, and increase K-12 per-pupil funding.

We returned in August for a six-day “special session” to address urgent impacts of the federal budget bill, which caused a \$1 billion budget shortfall here in Colorado by slashing corporate

taxes. We were able to shore up the budget in part by passing bills to close corporate tax loopholes. Also, we protected access to healthcare and supported the Supplemental Food Assistance Program (SNAP). I am proud of the work we have done, often acting in real-time to come up with collaborative and innovative solutions to help Coloradans.

I have been personally championing the passage and implementation of common-sense regulations on the use of artificial intelligence (AI). We have all noticed the seemingly light-speed progression of AI capabilities in recent years, even months. It is crucial that consumer protection guardrails keep pace to protect Coloradans from potential harms. In 2024, I led the passage of the nation’s first comprehensive AI legislation, SB24-205, which established penalties for developers and deployers of AI systems that engage in discriminatory practices based on categories such as age, race, sex, and religion that occur in algorithmic decision-making in areas such as employment, education enrollment, healthcare, and housing. This year I led the passage of SB25-288, which cracked down on AI-generated intimate “deepfakes”. In the upcoming legislative session, I will continue to bring all parties to the negotiating table to keep improving our AI regulatory framework.

As we gear up for the next regular legislative session in January, challenges lie ahead, including tough budget constraints here in Colorado and uncertainty at the federal level. There are also plentiful opportunities to keep improving the lives of Coloradans. I look forward to working with all of you to ensure that our district continues to be a wonderful place to live. Best wishes to you during the winter and holiday season.

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SCENES FROM SOUTH PEARL OKTOBERFEST



OKTOBERFEST = OKTOBER-BLAST!

What a great September day on the 1800 block of South Pearl! Thousands gathered to enjoy live music, German attire contests, bratwurst, stein hoisting, turkey legs, face painting, pretzels, and of course... BEER!

THAT'S A WRAP! FARMERS MARKET SEASON CLOSSES FOR 2025

November 9th marked the final Farmers Market of 2025. With more than 180 vendors popping up every Sunday since May, the last market is always a little bittersweet. Looking forward to a fresh new batch of produce in the Spring!

DECORATE OUR TREES & WIN!

Did you know South Pearl boasts 60 holiday trees in giant planters along our sidewalks? This year, we're inviting our neighbors to help decorate them for a chance to win \$100 in South Pearl bucks and ultimate bragging rights!

YOUR HOLIDAY ART IS ON DISPLAY!

You sent in your incredible holiday artwork, and now it's brightening our street! Check out the winning pieces showcased on our lightposts along the 1400 and 1500 blocks of South Pearl!

SOUTH PEARL WINTERFEST RETURNS AND THE HORSES ARE BACK!

December 5th and 6th are the dates for our annual Winterfest on the 1500 and 1800 blocks of South Pearl. Welcome our horses back with wagon rides, live music, an open-air market, Olde World Santa Claus, merchant open houses, s'mores, cocoa, cider, toddies, and roasted chestnuts for all!

60-FOOT HOLIDAY TREE LIGHTING!

Join us December 5th as we kick off Winterfest with our annual holiday tree lighting in Platt Park at dusk! The park will be full of candy canes, glow sticks, and Santa's helpers spreading cheer! Once the tree lights up, we'll parade into Winterfest. Bring the kiddos and come celebrate with us!



A Centerpiece for the Community: Cameron Church

Assembled and Edited by Walker Knight

[Cameron Church](#) is the longest continuing Methodist congregation in South Denver. Its roots go back to 1888, when its five charter members and a circuit riding preacher named John Collins apparently struck a deal. Mr. Collins would become the first minister of the church, and they would help build a fellowship.

It was, at the time, a church without a building, but less than two years later construction was completed on a new church at the corner of East Iowa Avenue and Washington Street at a cost of \$3,000. (That original church is now an interesting private residence.) Legend has it that the building was named after General Robert Cameron who gave \$250, strongly suggesting that the building was made possible by small donations. By 1892, the church was able to support a full-time pastor.

Cameron was now thriving. Washington Street, just one block from South Pearl, was in the very heart of the new Town of South Denver. South Denver was incorporated in 1886 in large part to put a stop to the expansion of the number of saloons and roadhouses in the previously unincorporated area.

Town residents instituted numerous ordinances to cover every possible type of nuisance and misdemeanor, including a liquor license that cost \$2500, a huge sum in those days. Also forbidden in this small town were gambling, dog fights, cock fights, lewd dress, vulgar language, reckless operation of a horse, dancing on Sundays or selling liquor to anyone “insane, idiotic or distracted.”

The silver panic of 1893 brought an economic setback that forced South Denver to allow annexation by the City of Denver. The silver panic surely impacted the church, but somehow Cameron kept growing and expanding its role in the community. Bulletins published as early as 1893 reveal church meetings being held every night except Saturday. By day, Cameron was hosting meetings of the Junior League, the Ladies Aid Society and others serving the needs of the South Denver area. In

January 1909, the church board began exploring the potential for more space. After holding its first rally in April, excavation began before year's end for a new church at the southeast corner of South Pearl and Iowa Avenue, positioning Cameron to become an anchor at one end of the popular South Pearl commercial strip.

The Cameron Church of today was designed by Colorado Springs architect Thomas P. Barber. It features a domed ceiling in the sanctuary that rises 150 feet and is capped by a round stained glass window in a floral design. Frank Watkins, whose family still operates a stained glass studio in Englewood, designed the four large stained glass windows overlooking Iowa Avenue. University of Denver Chancellor H.A. Buchtel (for whom Buchtel Blvd. is named) laid the cornerstone for the church on March 9, 1913; however, the expanding congregation had already held its first church service two years earlier, as soon as the Sunday school wing was completed. The new building more than doubled the capacity of the first, with the sanctuary able to seat 500 and the Sunday School area accommodating 400. Even then, it may have appeared too small, because by 1915 church membership had reached 500. That same year, Cameron formed its own orchestra, one of many musical endeavors it was to initiate in the years to come.

World War I soon pushed a new reality on the young church. An honor roll in a 1918 church newsletter listed 33 men serving in various branches of the United States military. At the top of the list was Rev. John Edwards who left as pastor of Cameron to become a chaplain. Now the church assumed a new role, organizing an auxiliary to the Denver chapter of the Red Cross,



Platt Park neighbors gather for public 3PA meeting at Cameron Church.

with women gathering to knit for the fighting men.

These were tough years for the church. It was built for \$35,000, and by 1917 church debt had been reduced to \$15,150. Unfortunately, 18 years later the debt was the same. Interest payments had lapsed, and by 1935 another church was ready to take over the property. Earlier church history suggests that women had been a strong force in guiding and supporting the church. Now they rose up again, holding fund-raising dinners and pursuing other efforts to raise \$15,000 in just five months. In April 1937, the mortgage papers were burned at the morning service. Again, this proved to be a church of the people.

World War II took away many young people again. A 1944 church bulletin featured another honor roll and announced a memorial service for a fallen soldier. Good times and bad followed, with the only constant being the rise and fall of the membership and

the fluctuation of finances throughout Cameron's existence.

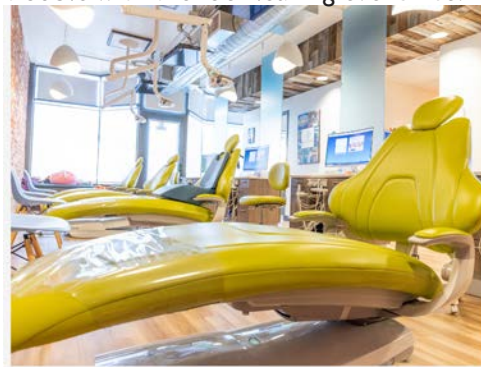
But Cameron's doors remain open and many come, not just for the Sunday church services, but for so much more. Since 1913, Cameron has been a centerpiece for the community, hosting basketball league games, serving groups that help the poor, sponsoring Boy Scout troops, hosting pageants, musicals and concerts. Since 2015, an independent bluegrass group called the Denver RetroGrass gathers several times a week to play at the church and welcomes any and all to join in. During the summer this group takes the music outside to perform for passersby. At other times they perform for Sunday services. Donations made by and to the Denver RetroGrass go to the church to help with expenses, because there are always expenses. As one member tells it: "Two weeks before the dedication of the church the roof leaked, and we've had trouble with the roof leaking ever since!"

JOIN YOUR PLATT PARK NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

Do you enjoy the neighborhood you live in?
Want to help maintain our neighborhood character?
Want to meet your neighbors through fun events and neighborhood forums? The Platt Park People's Association is a registered neighborhood organization with the City and County of Denver. The 3PA is notified directly by the city of various activities in the neighborhood.

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Students Step Up for McKinley-Thatcher on Colorado Gives Day

By Lucy Murphy, PTA Member / Parent Volunteer

Each fall, Colorado Gives Day offers a powerful reminder that even small acts of generosity can yield profound effects. This year, students at McKinley-Thatcher are building on our school values – Leading by Example, Being Kind and Considerate, Working Together, and Challenging Themselves – so they can create a stronger school, neighborhood, and future for themselves. As parents, we are standing by, watching in awe and reminding ourselves of the old adage, “many hands make light work.”

Last year, our school and neighborhood community came together for our first-ever Colorado Gives Day campaign, raising over \$15,000 to support critical programs where school funding is lacking. This includes funding support staff positions like our beloved paraprofessionals, librarian, school nurse, and counselor. Funds raised by our PTA also support a variety of programs that impact student learning, such as STEM, visual arts, PE, and the school’s “Wonderful Wednesday” activities that inspire student creativity. This year, we’re dreaming bigger and we’re doing it with the help of some of the youngest fundraisers around.

Grant Beacon Middle School

By Tyler Fuller, Assistant Principal

We are off to an amazing year at Grant Beacon Middle School. We continue to focus innovatively on critical thinking, character development, blended learning, and student access to enrichments in order to create an environment where all kids can thrive and grow. In September, we celebrated being a “green/performance” school with our faculty, staff, and students with green decorations, treats, and festivities.

Please come join us for our “Enrichment Showcase” on December 10th from 5-7 pm. At Grant Beacon, all of our students engage in high-quality enrichments from over 50 community providers annually. Examples include yoga, aerospace engineering, coding, YouthBiz, theatre, French, boxing, DPS athletics, cinema/movie making, guitar, drumline, and many, many more.

Our recruitment is increasingly gaining momentum. In only 3 weeks, we have invited over 50 families on tours to see our learning environments, teachers, and students in action. When 5th grade students “shadow” at Grant Beacon, they leave with smiles saying, “I want to go to Grant Beacon next year!” Please spread the word to families you know to sign up for our weekly Tuesday tour by scanning the QR code above. Remember that the school choice window opens December 2nd!



This year, our students are chipping in, not with their piggy banks (though some might try!), but with their voices, their creativity, and their leadership. Students will be writing letters to grandparents and special friends and doing extra chores at home or in their neighborhoods for donations (we’re calling it “Chores for a Cause”). Our students are stepping up to help make Colorado Gives Day 2025 our biggest year yet.

Our children are learning what it means to be part of something larger than themselves - and they’re learning that generosity doesn’t just come in the form of a check. It can look like effort, imagination, and heart. That’s the real story here: when students lead by example, adults follow.

With a fundraising goal of \$25,000, we’re asking our McKinley families and neighbors to join us in supporting the teachers, experiences, and programs that make our school special. Every donation, no matter the size, helps us close the gap between what public education funding provides and what our kids truly deserve.

In a time when public schools face rising costs and uncertain budgets, this kind of local support is more than an act of generosity - it’s essential. And when our kids are out there doing their part, writing heartfelt notes and folding laundry for donations, it reminds us what’s at stake.

This year, on Colorado Gives Day, follow their lead. Help McKinley-Thatcher students keep learning, growing, and leading the way. Donate by December 9 by scanning here:

Together, we can show our students and our city what’s possible when a community chips in.



Performance at 2024 Enrichment Showcase by Grant Beacon students, led by community partner, Sangre de México.



Asbury second graders celebrate their map-making project at Sweet Cow on South Pearl Street.

Asbury Elementary School

By Lauren Walser, Asbury Elementary PTO co-president

Second graders at Asbury Elementary School reaped the ultimate reward for completing their latest class project: ice cream at Sweet Cow! It was a hard-earned indulgence. Throughout the month of October, these students learned all about maps, including their different elements and how to read them. Eventually, they created their own maps of the neighborhood and charted a course from the front doors of Asbury to the front doors of Sweet Cow. Then they put their cartography skills to the test, following the routes they designed. If they were successful (they all were!), they got a scoop of their favorite flavor.

The second grade map unit is part of Asbury's Project-Based Learning (PBL) method of instruction. Through PBL, students explore a driving question or real-world problem and actively apply classroom knowledge and skills to arrive at solutions. PBL requires collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, public speaking, revision—all important life skills they'll carry from elementary school to college to their careers and beyond.

A highlight of these PBL projects is that they get kids out of the classroom and into the community—and as we always say, our community is our greatest strength. You can see it in the way our local businesses and institutions support our students' learning. Our second-grade cartographers take their map lessons to Sweet Cow. Kindergartners walk to DU and meet with faculty in the fall to round out their unit on trees, and again in the spring to learn about preference testing in preparation for the Great Guinea Pig Race. In fourth grade, students study art and activism (or "artivism"), culminating in a poetry slam performance and art exhibit at Free Cafe on East Evans Ave.

Our community shows up for our school over and over—and our students grow stronger and more confident because of it.

Decker Branch Library Winter Updates



By Quetzalli Hammar

Winter season is now upon us, and the best place to enjoy the colder weather is inside the library!

Our Winter of Reading program is back! Beginning January 1 and ending February 28, this program is for adults who miss the fun of summer reading programs. As with previous years, adults are encouraged to come into the library to pick up their materials. Have fun engaging in challenges, winning prizes, and discovering new resources through your library! Interested adults are also encouraged to attend Decker Branch's "From Page to Screen" program, where we will be reading and discussing Carson McCullers's short story, "A Tree. A Rock. A Cloud", alongside a screening of a short film adaptation by director Karen Allen. This special program is on Saturday, January 24 at 1:30pm. For more information about Winter of Reading, visit denlib.org/wor.

Also included in winter fun, families of children 12 and under are invited to join us for our first ever Family Book Celebration! We will be reading our favorite books about owls and dissecting owl pellets. Our Family Book Celebration will be on Saturday, January 17 at 10:30am.

Check out the Upcoming Events page on our website to learn more about these and other winter programs at Decker Branch by scanning the QR code above.

We will offer Baby Storytime on Tuesdays at 10:30am and Toddler Storytime on Wednesdays at 10:30am until Wednesday, December 17, after which we will be taking a short holiday break, returning on Tuesday, January 6.

We hope to see you all soon! Happy reading!

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Give yourself the Gift of Peace of Mind

By Jill Wisheart of ExitElegantly.com

Year-end is the perfect time to review our life plans, update essential documents, and invest time decluttering and organizing what matters most.

The statistics are sobering. While 46% of seniors have advance directives, fewer than half have given copies to their healthcare providers, designated agents, or loved ones. Having your carefully prepared documents tucked away in a binder, drawer, or file cabinet offers no help when you cannot speak for yourself. Research consistently shows that properly prepared and shared documents reduce stress, improve the quality of care, and prevent unwanted medical treatments.

Many seniors want to age in place; recent studies reveal that being well-organized is critical to maintaining independence. Documents and clutter contribute significantly to a major amount of household disorder and trip hazards, putting your safety at risk.

The best time to think about your needs is before you need them. This checklist provides twelve essential steps to protect yourself and ease the burden on those you love.

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1. Create or update your advance directives

to ensure your healthcare wishes are known and followed.

2. Review your will/trust.

If you have more than \$83,000 in assets, a valid will or trust is essential.

3. Update beneficiary designations on all accounts.

4. Review account titles

to confirm they align with what's specified in your trust or will.

5. Verify you have a current, valid photo ID.

You will need this for countless transactions.

6. Compile an updated asset and liability list

including all accounts, properties, valuable possessions, outstanding debts, mortgages, loans, and credit cards.

7. Update your password list

and ensure trusted individuals know how to access accounts.

8. Distribute copies of your documents.

Your agents, executor, doctors, lawyer, accountant, and loved ones should all have current copies.

9. Have a written plan for when life changes

to ensure you have a roadmap during times when you may not be thinking clearly.

10. Make or review your funeral plans,

relieving your family of difficult decisions during grief.

11. Declutter your important documents

and store them in one secure, known location.

12. Realize you can't do it all.

Pick the steps that will make the biggest impact on your current and future life.

Start the Conversation

The holidays bring loved ones together, making this an ideal time to discuss life changes, support needs, and end-of-life wishes. While these conversations may feel uncomfortable, they are acts of love that spare confusion and conflict during already difficult times.

Don't let another year pass without these critical matters being resolved. Give yourself and loved ones the gift of preparedness. It's one present that truly keeps on giving.

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A Letter from Representative Steven Woodrow

Representative of House District 2 to Colorado State House

The Holiday Season is a time for reflection, family, and friends. It is also a time when your State Representatives and Senators are preparing for our return to the Capitol for the next legislative session, commencing January 14, 2026.

Last Session, both chambers worked together with the Governor's office to fill the \$1 billion gap in our state budget. While we found ways to increase revenues without cutting essential services, we quickly faced budget turmoil as a result of the federal budget bill. During a Special Session called by the Governor in August we did find ways to stem the bleeding. Unfortunately, our budget woes are far from over. Per the latest revenue forecast, we are facing an additional \$1 billion hole in our budget this coming year.

Why do we keep facing these issues that other states seem better equipped to avoid? The answer, whether you agree with the policy or not, is TABOR.

TABOR, the shorthand way we refer to the "Taxpayer Bill of Rights", is a constitutional amendment that limits our ability to raise taxes to pay for the things we need. Under TABOR, our state budget is only allowed to grow by inflation plus population. While that sounds like a decent enough idea, who

doesn't think that the government is wasteful and should find ways to stretch each dollar collected? It doesn't make much sense in practice. I'll put it this way: if overall inflation is 3%, but healthcare costs outpace that average and are 5.5%, then we're behind 2.5% on our healthcare spending from where we were the year before. This means less money for doctors and nurses, fewer hospitals, and reduced levels of care. The actual result of TABOR is that we are chronically underfunded. Don't believe me? At last count 75 school districts are now on 4-day weeks. We simply don't have the money to keep them open for 5 days.

When we collect tax money above the "TABOR cap," we have to refund those dollars to taxpayers. This usually amounts to \$50 - \$100. While that is important, it is the reason we can't pay for essential services, such as healthy school meals, SNAP benefits, Medicaid eligibility/coverage, and other programs that rely on our State's General Fund. TABOR also impacts our county and local governments. When we are faced with a budget deficit like we are heading into in the 2026 Legislative Session, there are no refunds. This impacts everyone. The Senior Homestead Exemption is one of the TABOR refund mechanisms that will go unfunded this year and in following years. The legislature will prioritize budget adjustments this Session but the time for tax reform is long overdue.

Your engagement is of paramount importance. I urge you to tune in to this Legislative Session and get out and vote in 2026. Ballot measures that need your approval to help us make investments in our people and our communities are likely. These can pass only if we all turn out and participate.



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