



## From the Director's Desk -

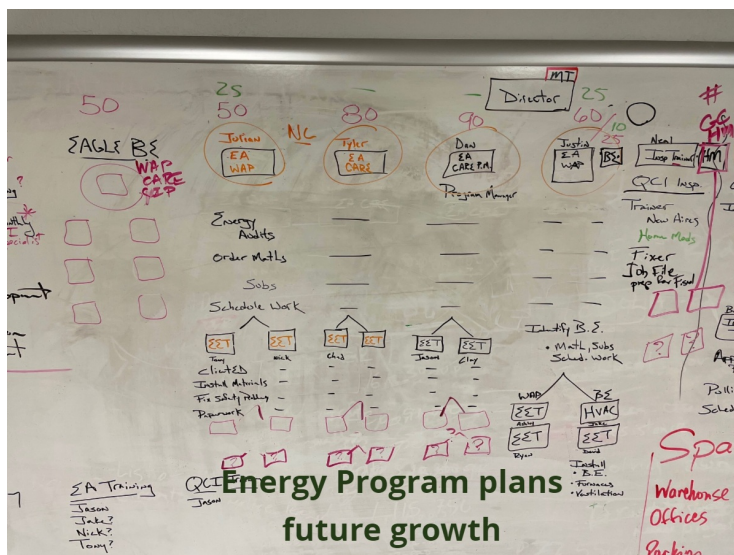
# Staff finds Work Meaningful at COG

Employee engagement is News. Cultivating esprit de corps is always a challenge, especially through the past 18 months. With most daily work being remote, including NWCCOG's monthly staff meetings, it was gratifying at the November meeting, to hear from team members who shared what made them proud, and what they look forward to in 2022. The gratitude for meaningful work and for each other was unmistakable.



A legacy issue of the [Harvard Business Review](#), cites the *Progress Principle*, in which "Of all the things that can boost emotions, motivation, and perceptions during a workday, the single most important is making progress in meaningful work. And the more frequently people experience that sense of progress, the more likely they are to be creatively productive in the long run."

That phenomenon was on full display as employees celebrated each other's successes.



One recurring theme shared was the belief that the **value of the work being done had a positive impact on the lives of individuals**. Moreover, many programs were recognized this year. From the Energy Program which was just highlighted in an NPR story, a team member remarked about the increased numbers of families they served this year and the excitement of serving even more families in 2022. The program is poised to open another satellite office in Eagle County, and with increased funding from the Infrastructure bill the program is poised to add between 10 and 20 employees next year. Doug Jones, Director of

the Energy Program is excited to help people have lower energy bills, and warmer and safer homes, he is also "proud of contributing to overall positive environmental impacts" of the work they are doing.

Closely related to impacting the lives of individuals was being able to **positively impact the communities we serve**. Rachel Tuyn, Director of Economic Development was proud of working with

each of the counties in our region to fund community collaboration projects. [See here for a complete list of the projects](#). She's also looking forward to hosting the Economic Summit next year after a year of the COVID hiatus. Speaking of community impact, Project Thor under the guidance of Nate Walowitz has won honors for providing safety and emergency communications through fire and flood. [See full story here](#).

Another common theme was **the confidence that when faced with challenges** and ever-changing scenarios, they were able to confront the issues head-on. Erin Fisher, Vintage Director, said of her team, "I'm so proud of the way they handled the very challenging preceding year of COVID – they are extraordinarily flexible, imaginative, creative, and dedicated – infused with perseverance and grit." The biggest lift for Vintage in 2022 will be serving Routt County. "We're ready to take on the additional opportunities presented by adding Routt County to the region and we are in full stride," noted Fisher. Charles McCarthy, Mobility Manager **faced a great deal of uncertainty** this year with non-emergency medical services being eliminated from Mountain Ride. The journey was transformative for the organization and Charles has been asked to speak about it to a group of Easter Seals representatives sharing the steps taken to provide education and information critical to ultimate success of the Mobility project. Yep; full stride.

**Partnerships and collaboration**, both internal and external, were a common theme. Early next year the Home Modification program to help seniors age in place will be launched. It is a partnership between Vintage and the Energy Program being launched in Grand County. According to CiCi Peterson, Vintage Program & Data Support Specialist, "The partnerships are in place, the forms and processes have been developed, and the finishing touches are being ready in advance of the announcement. Stay tuned." NWCCOG has many partners that place confidence in our employees. For instance, the success of the BEECH project in Dotsero was the result of collaboration of a joint effort between CEO, Northwest Colorado Council of Governments, Eagle County, Walking Mountains Science Center and Holy Cross Energy.

Project Thor was arguably the granddaddy of COG collaboration efforts. In a [Colorado Sun times](#) piece, Tamara Chuang noted, "...this wasn't built by a typical telecom. It took a band of local governments and partners from 14 rural communities to stitch together the 481-mile network." It continues to be a monument to collaboration.

Another theme in which COG employees take great pride is that **reputation matters**. When so many others are struggling to find strong employees, the NWCCOG has been fortunate not only to hire well, but also to retain and build an amazing team. One high-functioning team is the Elevator Program which is poised to add another inspector in 2022 just to keep up with additional work from adding the Town of Snowmass Village, and from a successful compliance program. New hires can be seen throughout the organization, from Energy, to Elevators, to Administration. In 2021 COG worked hard to assess competitive salaries and make the appropriate adjustments. It's a good place to work.

**Employee development and cross-training** is not just a catch-phrase; at NWCCOG the entire Administration team evolved into new jobs with increased responsibilities. Becky Walter, Fiscal Manager, and Elaina West, Fiscal Coordinator are learning all aspects of this amazingly complex organization's finances. Walter said, "I've learned everything from scratch this year, I'm looking forward to next year when the myriad tasks will be more familiar." With the promotion of West to Fiscal Coordinator, and hiring of Talai Shirey as office manager, cross training was in full swing. The goal is to enable employees – across the organization -- stress-free time to go on vacation for a week or two knowing the organization will run just fine in their absence.

I have been excited for NWCCOG programs finally getting deserved recognition and greater visibility. The final recurring theme is that **communication is critical**. To that end, the new NWCCOG Website was unveiled this year with the intent to tell our story, to provide valuable resources, to engage with the community and to listen to what people are saying about us. The website has been a labor of love. I am proud of the extraordinary information that resides there.

In 1983, Steve Jobs was trying to entice John Sculley to leave a wildly successful career at PepsiCo to become Apple's new CEO. Jobs reportedly asked him, "Do you want to spend the rest of your life selling sugared water or do you want a chance to change the world?" The employees of NWCCOG have decided they want to change the world.

At COG, meaning is embedded in the work, and employees take nourishment from it, and the organization is propelled by their pride. It is a virtuous cycle.

Have a safe, happy, healthy Thanksgiving,

**Jon Stavney**

Executive Director - NWCCOG

[JStavney@nwccog.org](mailto:JStavney@nwccog.org)

**Colorado Public Radio News gives rave reviews**

# to NWCCOG Energy Program

A recent article in the [Colorado Public Radio News](#) describes not only how the Infrastructure Bill could help low-income residents eliminate the reliance on fossil fuels, it also details a success story made possible by the NWCCOG Energy Program.

The story starts:

“One night three years ago, Laura Rascon’s daughter woke her in a panic.

The family lives in the Dotsero Mobile Home Park, a small community sandwiched between Interstate 70 and a line of mountains just east of Glenwood Canyon. The shoddy doors and windows left plenty of cracks for chills to press inside. Their propane furnace was also broken, so each family member carried a space heater from room to room to stay warm.

That evening, 9-year-old Coral Chavez admitted she brought the glowing face of the heater too close to her bed. Rascon rushed to her daughter’s room to find flames creeping up a blanket, which she tossed out the front door. The fire died in the snow, but the entire experience left Rascon terrified.

Today, Rascon is looking forward to a far less anxious winter thanks to the federal Weatherization Assistance Program. For the last 45 years, the U.S. Department of Energy program has supplied grants to reduce the energy bills of low-income households. However, the work on Rascon’s home and others in Dotsero went beyond extra insulation, caulking and new windows.

In March, the Northwest Colorado Council of Governments also replaced all of the propane-powered appliances with electric alternatives. Rascon’s kitchen now centers around a new induction stove with a smooth glass top. A cold-climate heat pump outside the backdoor works as an air conditioner in the summer and a furnace in the winter. Another heat pump provides hot water.

“It was really satisfying at the end of the project to see our staff capping off the propane lines here,” said Doug Jones, who manages the energy program for the council, which is one of six Colorado groups that received the federal grants.”

Just one more example of why our employees are proud of their contributions to changing the world.



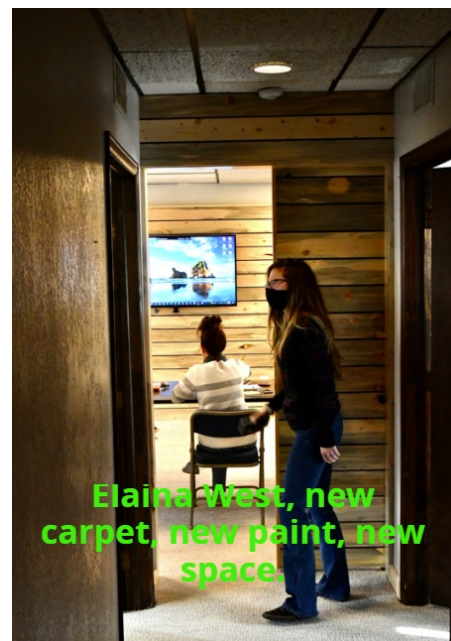
Neal Ashforth, NWCCOG installer, adding insulation to the underside of a home in the Dotsero Mobile Home Park

## While you were out... Changes to the office

Most of our team spent many of the past 18 months working remotely which left the office empty and begging for a face-lift. We put that time to good use, replacing the carpets, redesigning the floor plan to expand the conference room facilities, and make the overall flow of the office space more conducive to optimal team-work.

Thanks to carpenter Justin Stirt across the street from our office who did beautiful work. The rest of the remodel was a team effort with Jon doing the demolition work, Elaina West, Fiscal Coordinator, doing the painting, and David Lambert from the Energy program fixing the ceiling. To encourage employees back to the office, many took the carpet project as an opportune time to upgrade their desks or move. The Fiscal team, Elevator Inspection Program, Broadband and Vintage each moved to locations they preferred in the office this fall.

We are eager for the time when we can welcome the Membership to see the changes and feel the momentum around the office.



Elaina West, new carpet, new paint, new space.

## Welcome Chad Smith



Chad Smith, Energy Installer joined the team in New Castle. Originally from Abilene, TX, Chad moved to Garfield County 6 years ago. Colorado is a good fit for Chad, whose passions include working with the Ski Patrol in the Winter and the Roaring Fork Mountain Bike Association (RFMBA) as their Trail Crew Manager in the Summer.

Smith said of his new assignment with NWCCOG, "I'm excited to stay working in the Non-Profit world on a level where we are providing free work to families in need and to grow my knowledge base on construction principles and practices."

His wife shares Chad's love for skiing, mountain biking, and fly fishing. Whenever they can, they invite their 6-year-old Australian Shepard along for the fun.

### **Next Council Meeting - Thursday, December 2, 2021**

#### ***Full Council Meeting, EDD Board & Foundation Board Meeting***

Location: Zoom Conference Call, On-site location TBD

Time: 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Primary Agenda Items: 2021 budget revisions; approve 2022 budget; annual NWCCOG Foundation Board meeting.