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## **Board Member Spotlight Patty McKenny Town Clerk, Town of Vail**



Patty McKenny, Town Clerk, Town of Vail, has served on the Board of the NWCCOG for about a year, but has been familiar with the COG for many years. Before being affiliated with the Town of Vail, she was with the Town of Silverthorne where she was first aware of the works of the NWCCOG. She declines to say just how long ago that was!

Her responsibilities for the Town of Vail are related to routine town clerk duties including things like organizing council meetings, elections, some licensing, and many special events. She says her job is so varied, "I just help make it happen - whatever "it" is!

Thirty years ago, Patty moved to Colorado from South Dakota and now considers Colorado home. She graduated from Colorado State University and moved to the mountains to ski. Once she had a taste of the high country summer, she was hooked and has been here ever since. She says, "I'll be here forever!"

She enjoys working with the NWCCOG because of the consistently high-quality services that are being provided to the communities in Region 12 and beyond. People seem to be impressed by the wide variety of programs under the NWCCOG umbrella.

For fun Patty loves spending time with her husband, children (16 and 13), and her mother-in-law who lives with them. The photo was taken on their house boat at Lake Powell.

## **Staff Member Spotlight**

## Erin Fisher Newly Promoted Alpine Area Agency on Aging Director

Congratulations to Erin Fisher who was recently promoted to Director of the Alpine Area Agency on Aging. Before that she had been the Program Specialist for the AAAA for a little over 2 years.

As the AAAA Director, she is responsible for administering the Older Americans Act and state funds for senior services in the NWCCOG five-county region. She will also plan, develop, and support a coordinated system of services for adults sixty and older by securing federal and state grants and allocating financial support through contracts with providers.

Originally from Georgia, (of course she adds, "Go Dawgs!"), she focused her job search in Colorado. With her freshly minted master's degree in Gerontology, she was a perfect fit for the Program Specialist job. She says, "I'll be forever grateful to Jean Hammes for hiring me and allowing me to work and live in paradise!"



When asked what she likes best about working for the NWCCOG, she says, "I have to pick two. One: I love working for the seniors in our region. They are the reason we do what we do and I genuinely feel that the AAAA makes a positive difference in people's lives. Two: I have the best co-workers. There is a lot of mutual respect within the office and we're just a fun group of people!"



Erin thinks people might be surprised to learn the NWCCOG is the fiscal agent for the Region 12 Aging and Disabilities for Colorado (ADRC). The AAAA also provides administrative support for the program, which empowers older adults and people with disabilities to navigate options for long-term supports. The Region 12 ADRC advisory committee is comprised of community partners with the shared goal of addressing the major challenges faced by many long-term services and supports consumers.

Erin's favorite activities include hiking 14ers, camping, stand-up paddle boarding, downhill and Nordic skiing, Netflix binge-watching (currently Narcos), SEC college football, and traveling.

## New Assignments, New Employees

Congratulations to Amanda Rens-Moon. She is moving from her current job as Administrative Assistant to her new assignment as the Program Specialist for the Alpine Area Agency on Aging.

A Colorado native and CU grad with a degree in English Literature, Amanda has spent most of her life around Rangely, Grand County, and now Summit County. She worked as an Income Maintenance Technician for Grand County Social Services where she determined the eligibility for family benefit programs including Medicaid, LEAP (Low-income Energy Assistance Program), and SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition-Assistance Program).

She also spent time as a Medical Billing and Record Clerk, and the Billing and Finance Coordinator for Grand County Public Health, Home Health, Senior Nutrition, and Home



Care.

She says, "I'm excited that my new role will combine both a solid foundation in data collection and analysis, as well as direct client assistance. I'm excited to spend some of my days studying spreadsheets and entering data, and other days directly helping clients. I CAN'T WAIT to start learning!"

She continued, "I'm also hoping that my past experience will give me a good foundational understanding of a few of the referral options we have in our region, and I'm hoping to hit the ground running!"

## New Employees Weatherization Installers

### Jeremy Miller



Having been born and raised in Silt and now based in New Castle, Jeremy Miller, is fascinated by what he calls the "science behind weatherization technology." The ability to perform a few simple tasks and transform a cold, energy inefficient home into a warm, energy efficient home has Jeremy excited to be part of the Weatherization Team at the NWCCOG.

He heard about the job from a friend of his who is also a Weatherization Installer. He became interested in the job as his friend told about being able to help people cut fuel costs, while at the same time adding warmth and safety to a home.

The prospect intrigued Jeremy and when an opening became available, he grabbed it.

His experience as a welding inspector in the natural gas industry, translated well to the work the team performs with furnaces and water heaters. He also had experience in property maintenance, which further added to his qualifications.

Jeremy has only been on the job a few weeks, but he already has a story to tell. The team was working on a home where they installed extra installation in the attic and the floor with plans to return later to do additional work. When they came back a few weeks later, the homeowner remarked that their heating bill had dropped from almost \$200 per month to about \$100 per month!

"This is what's cool," Jeremy remarked, "it's a job where you can really make a difference in the lives of others."

In his off hours, Jeremy enjoys anything outside - he especially likes to snowmobile and go 4-wheeling.

## Spencer Alley



Another Colorado native, Spencer, is the latest Weatherization Installer to be based in Silverthorne. Spencer moved from Arvada to Summit County about 6 years ago - in part to snowboard and in part to attend Colorado Mountain College. He is nearing the end of this phase of his education and just needs one additional class to graduate with a bachelor's degree in sustainability.

While much of his previous work experience was in the restaurant industry, Spencer got hooked up with the Energy Resource Center in Denver where he was working as an intern. When the job in the Weatherization group became available, he felt like it was the perfect opportunity for him.

He, too, thinks the idea of having a job that really makes a difference in the lives of others is something very motivating. Especially this time of year, when a few essential changes can bring warmth into the lives of a family who might otherwise not be able to afford making those changes. Spencer said, "It's really rewarding to see the noticeable improvements."

In addition to snowboard and school, Spenser loves to watch movies. When asked if he had a favorite genre, he replied, "I like them all!"

## HOLIDAY SAMPLER

In the spirit of the season, here are three stories to help celebrate a variety of beliefs. Whatever your faith, we wish you a Holiday Season filled with joy.

### Giving Thanks at Christmas

It was the day after Christmas at St Peter and St Paul's church in Borden, Kent, England. Father John, the vicar, was looking at the nativity scene outside when he noticed the baby Jesus was missing from the figures.

Immediately, Father John's thoughts turned to calling in the local policeman but as he was about to do so, he saw little Nathan with a red wagon, and in the wagon was the figure of the little infant, Jesus.



Father John approached Nathan and asked him, 'Well, Nathan, where did you get the little infant?'

Nathan looked up, smiled and replied, 'I took him from the church.'

'And why did you take him?'

With a sheepish grin, Nathan said, 'Well, Father John, about a week before Christmas I prayed to Lord Jesus. I told him if he would bring me a red wagon for Christmas, I would give him a ride around the block in it.'

[Reprinted from Short Christmas Stories](#)

## The Festival of Kwanzaa

Kwanzaa is a 7 day festival celebrating the African American people, their culture, and their history. It is a time of celebration, community gathering, and reflection. A time of endings and beginnings. Kwanzaa begins on December 26th, the day after Christmas, and continues until New Year's Day, January 1st.

Each evening a family member, usually the youngest child, lights candles in a special candleholder (kinara) and discusses one of the seven principles of Kwanzaa. These principles are unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith. These are the foundation of Kwanzaa.



On the sixth day, which falls on New Year's Eve, family and friends get together to enjoy a large feast and to celebrate their history, culture, and the upcoming new year.

The holiday of Kwanzaa was created by Dr. Maulana Karenga in 1966, during the period of US history in which African Americans were involved in struggles for their civil rights. This was the period of Martin Luther King, the Civil Rights movement, and Black Power.

Dr. Karenga wanted to create a holiday that would bring African Americans together in celebration of their black culture. He was inspired by the "first fruit" or harvest festivals that were celebrated throughout Africa.

[Reprinted from Kwanzaa on the Net](#)

## The Story of the Menorah

The Hanukkah holiday is an old one. It honors the struggle of ancient Jews to restore the Temple of Jerusalem.

Long ago, Judea was ruled by the Syrian king Antiochus, who said that Jews should give up worshiping Yahweh and worship the Greek gods instead.

Of course, the Jews didn't like this. They refused to abandon Yahweh, and they decided to do something about it.

A man named Judah Maccabee got a group of people together to fight back. These people got more people to join, and they soon had an army. They fought back. For three years, the Jews battled the Syrians for control of Judea. Finally, the Jews won.

They cleaned the Temple of Jerusalem, removing all Greek symbols and restoring the Jewish symbols. The job was finished on the 25th day of the month of Kislev. This is the day Hanukkah is celebrated. The day varies in the Western calendar.

To help celebrate, Judah and his followers lit an oil lamp. The supply of oil was very low, but this lamp stayed lit for eight days. Some thought it was a miracle.

To honor this extraordinary event, Jews today celebrate the Eight Days of Hanukkah and call it the "Festival of Lights." They light a special eight-candle device called a menorah.

People today give each other gifts, make special foods, have special dinners, and remember their ancestors, who fought to take their temple back.

[Reprinted from Social Studies for Kids - The Hanukkah Holiday](#)



## 2016 NWCCOG Meeting Schedule

We'll update this next year!

Northwest Colorado Council of Governments

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