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From the Director's desk... Guest Author Erin Fisher

Director Alpine Area Agency on Aging

The Alchemy of Aging



Erin Fisher

It's not every day you get the opportunity to go to a conference about death. Let's be honest; it's not every day you WANT to go to a conference about death. But when the opportunity to learn from three professional women with decades of experience and knowledge about aging and dying presents itself, you take it, even if it means sitting in a mortuary for a day and a half.

On June 7th and 8th, Amanda and I attended The Alchemy of Aging Project: Turning Old into Gold at the Greenwood & Myers Mortuary in Boulder. The speakers were Dr. Victoria Howard, Kim Mooney, and Megan Carnarius, RN and presentations ranged from "How I Learned about Old Age," "Giving Death Voice," "Five Birthdays, Five Death Days, and 100 Grief Candles." There were multiple opportunities for reflection and meditative silence, and I can assure you that meditation about death takes on an entirely new twist when seated inside a mortuary. Jokes aside, I was surprised at how much we talked about life...not death. In fact, life is so much sweeter when you do think about death on a regular basis. I was so inspired to bring death into my everyday life that I downloaded an app called "We Croak." We Croak sends me five random reminders each day that I'm going to die. The push notifications literally say, "Remember! You're going to die!" and then gives you some quip or quote about

life and/or death. The theory is taken from part of the Buddhist tradition in Bhutan that you're happier if you think about death at least five times a day. Side note, Bhutan is considered the happiest country on Earth. Coincidence? I think not.

One of the many mindfulness exercises that we were led through during the conference was thinking about our own death. Not just death in general, that ethereal, untouchable, often unsettling notion of what death is or might be, but actually sitting with the fact that one day I will be no more. My body will disintegrate and I will cease to breathe, my heart will stop, my life force will depart from my body. That's a very different thought process than the general idea of death. We were, very bluntly, told "Imagine this is the last five minutes of your life. This is it. What do you think about?" And then we were left to stew in our own thoughts for the next five minutes. Some thought about all their loved ones. One woman said she just stared at her hands for the entire time, thinking that they would slowly turn from a healthy pink into a gray, lifeless color. I, being less imaginative, just stared straight ahead and promptly settled on a jar of honey across the room.



My first thought: "Gosh. I just love honey so much." Then my eyes drifted to the coffee on the table in front of me. "Coffee is the best thing ever. I LOVE coffee!" Then drifting over to the window where I saw the Flatirons guarding over Boulder. "I LOVE mountains! I LOVE Colorado! I LOVE EVERYTHING AND EVERYONE and I can't believe I'm just walking around with honey and coffee and mountains every day and not appreciating every sip and every hike and every single day that I get the privilege to breathe and love and just be human with a living body, because one day...maybe in five minutes or five decades...that privilege ends." (I said I wasn't imaginative, not dramatic).

That night, I had the privilege of seeing one of my favorite bands play a free concert at the Gerald R. Ford auditorium in Vail and I promptly burst into tears within the first 30 seconds of their set because it was just. so. beautiful. I

couldn't believe how I got to be so lucky to be there, outside on that incredible summer mountain evening, listening to music that filled my heart, with a person I care about, in a body that allows me to experience life to the fullest. That entire weekend I would cry at the drop of a hat, not because I was sad or dwelling on the tragic aspects of death, but because I was filled so completely with gratitude for every single little thing surrounding me that I take for granted 99% of the time. Everything glistened and glowed and was beautiful in a way that I hadn't seen before, because I saw them with a new perspective that clued me in that I won't always get to experience life, so I better not take it for granted anymore.

If we can learn to enjoy our fleeting and brief lives just as they are, perhaps we will be more focused on the deep values of life like love and joy, so let's emulate the Bhutanese people and get comfortable with thoughts of death. I'll leave you (hopefully not permanently...yet) with one of my favorite quotes so far from my We Croak app: "If I had my life to live over again, I would form the habit of nightly composing myself to thoughts of death. I would practice, as it were, the remembrance of death. There is not another practice which so intensifies life. Death, when it approaches, ought not to take one by surprise. It should be part of the full expectancy of life." -Muriel Spark

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Zinke on the state of wildfires



Word from Congressional delegation representatives at recent NWCCOG council meetings is that Interior Secretary Zinke will be making an important announcement in Grand Junction soon. If it is for what is expected, Club 20 and our delegation deserve a major shout-out for bringing the BLM headquarters there.

While in Steamboat Springs recently, a reporter from the Steamboat Pilot was awarded an [interview](#) with the Secretary. The interior secretary, like our NWCCOG Council, has a lot to say about this summer's intense wildfires, first claiming that the intensity of wildfire in

California is because the government has "been held hostage by environmental terrorist groups" that oppose clearing dead timber. It is easy to forget that those "terrorist" environmentalists are often neighbors or ourselves giving voice within the system of due process for clean air, clean water and healthy forests as well as sometimes, just the beauty of the view from their backyard. Whether it is a fire break, a mine or a proposal to take more water from the stream it is encouraging when the long-view prevails. We certainly need to stop demonizing each other for participating in complex discussions about our environment.

We do know from a report-in by NWCCOG Chair Karn Stiegelmeier at the recent meeting (see article below), that when local groups and governments collaborate over time with the USFS they are able to get controversial forest fire mitigation projects approved. One saved two neighborhoods during the Buffalo Mountain Fire. Karn remembers how much heat (pun intended) they got from neighbors when that Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) project was proposed.

As for Zinke's recent acknowledgement that climate change is a factor, the Summit Daily on Monday August 20th published an article "Science Says: The warmer it is, the more fire we see," that had some interesting facts.

- the five hottest April-September years in the west saw triple the acreage burned of average years
- the difference in temperature for those years was a mere 1.2 to 2.4 degrees
- for every 1.8 degrees higher temperature, 15% more rain is needed to counter the increased dryness of the fuels.

Looks like there may be many more fires in our future. Let's be prepared.

Good news.....and not so good news



John Bristol, economic development director for Routt County and Steamboat Springs, had quite the good news/bad news month. The Steamboat Pilot named him a 20 under 40 winner and then last week it was announced that Smart Wool was leaving Steamboat ... for Denver, taking 70 jobs of \$70K each or more with it. It's parent company was persuaded to come to Denver with a significant amount of State ED money. [Read the full article here.](#)

John, an active participant of the NWCCOG EDD group and a speaker at the NWCCOG ED Summit, had this to say about the Smartwool move, "It is tough. Landing their parent company VF in Colorado is great, but the cost is losing a major employer in rural Colorado. I'm hopeful the State EDC will, at a minimum, add Steamboat into the Rural Jump Start program during their September meeting."

As for the honor of being named a 20 under 40 winner, you can read the complete story about this self-described "economic development nerd" [here](#). NWCCOG congratulates John on this very cool honor!

Buffalo Mountain Fire Report In By Jon

NWCCOG Council Chair, Karn Stiegelmeier provided a recap of lessons learned during the recent Buffalo Mountain Fire. In short, "practice from last years events improved organization and response," for instance, "many more people were signed up for local 911 upgrades and notices than last year." More than 1,400 units were evacuated in a neighborhood with "lots of visitors, friends and short-term rentals and very few full-time residents" made it hard to track and communicate people. Most of that work was done door-to-door. There were issues communicating with Spanish speakers who didn't understand evacuation orders. One weakness was a lack of ability to translate during the incident, though there were "many reliable volunteers who would come to translate at community meetings." Lesson for others, do cultivate a cadre of Spanish speakers for such situations.

Two factors saved the neighborhood. First, Stiegelmeier noted that the rapid response by air resources was fortunate due to crews being positioned in Grand Junction, and secondly, the big lesson-WUI mitigation work from a decade ago saved the neighborhood. Stiegelmeier has been around long enough to remember the opposition to the project that turned out to save the neighborhood in 2018-how it was going to ruin views, destroy quality of life. From a USFS perspective-Scott Fitzwilliam is scheduled to speak at the Summit County BOCC meeting on September 12, from 11 to 1pm about lessons learned, for one, noted Stiegelmeier, it is a bad idea to approve a subdivision immediately against a wilderness boundary. This added many complications which were overcome, such as allowing chainsaws-which Fitzwilliam was authorized as Forest Supervisor to allow during a wildfire. Another lesson that has been learned and absorbed in Summit County is to make piles when doing mitigation work. This fire break was done old style, leaving the timber jackstraw over the landscape. This was enough to stop the fire but didn't allow fire crews



Karn Stiegelmeier



Buffalo Mountain Fire Credit: CBS

to enter the WUI zone as they would have preferred. Stiegelmeier also noted that she would like to see "more conservative protocols consistent across the forest and neighboring counties" about fire restrictions. Summit was hampered by a readout error from the one weather station in their county that is used to measure ERFC. It was inaccurately under reporting the data as 70% when protocol says it needs to be 90% to trigger restrictions. The PPT for the Buffalo Mountain Fire is on the NWCCOG website with the August 16th [meeting documents](#). The focus on fire restrictions consistency were a consistent theme of the Council

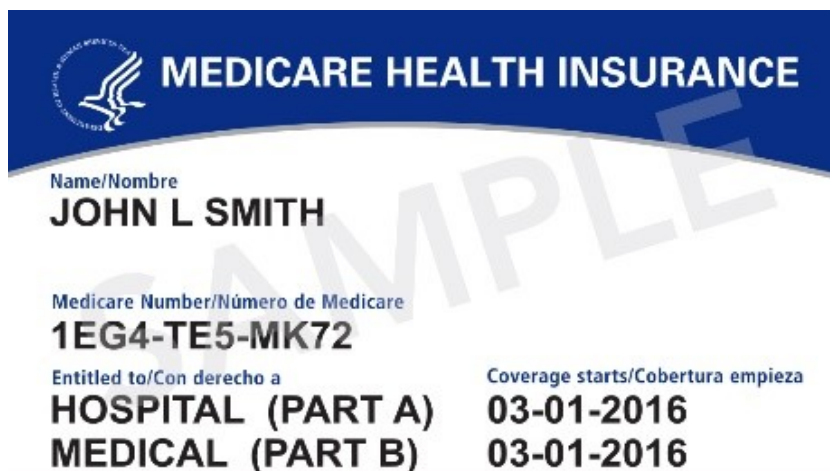
discussion across all incidents.

Commissioner Clapper from Pitkin provided perspective on the Lake Christine Fire, as did participants from Basalt. She underscored how useful it was to be able to observe and assist as Pitkin officials did for the Lake Christine Fire which was only blocks away from the county line in Eagle County. She said she would like to have understood more about the power grid, the failure points of this and other utilities, including cell coverage prior to the incident. There were many comments from Commissioner Child, and Bill Infante of the Basalt Town Council how taken by surprise many residents in El Jebel were when the wind "flipped" the fire giving some residents who thought they were beyond reach only minutes to evacuate.

Also on the [website](#) is the PPT of the Sugarloaf & Golf Course Fires in Grand County, which Commissioner Cimino presented to the Council via phone. He doubled down on many points already made, for instance, the challenge of sheltering so many visitors, especially in the middle of the Town of Grand Lake with so many STR units. Cimino was energized by the opportunity to communicate as a public official at community meetings-talk about a teachable moment. He too lamented the challenge of meeting criteria for fire restrictions-BOCC in Grand County implemented fire restrictions on June 26th the very day that these two major fires broke out when they only met 3 of 7 factors prior to that date.

Stay tuned for NWCCOG's Fall Summit for Elected Officials on Disaster planning. Dates will be announced soon.

Changes coming to your Medicare ID cards



You may have heard that new Medicare cards are being issued to everyone with Medicare. In fact, you may have already received yours. But if not, hang tight - mailing takes some time across the country, and you might get your card at a different time than friends or neighbors in your state. In the meantime, keep using your current Medicare card until your new one arrives.

We've got 3 ways for you to find out when your card is in the mail:

- Check out the map on Medicare.gov/NewCard.
- Keep an eye on your email if you are registered.
- Log in to your MyMedicare.gov account to see if your new card has mailed. Don't have an account yet? Sign up now at MyMedicare.gov.

Want to learn more? Here are [10 things you should know](#). This article also warns of scam artists that may be trying to get confidential information. Read this article and become informed and be protected.

Community Conversations

If you have legal questions, we've got the answers. Sign up for this FREE session.

2018 Senior Law Day

September 12th
9:45 am - 2:45 pm

Summit County Community and Senior Center
0083 Nancy's Place - Frisco

FREE!

RSVP Required by September 4th

Lunch provided

970-468-0295 ext. 107

www.2018summitseniorlawday.eventbrite.com

Please let us know of any accommodations you may need to attend
Por favor avísenos de cualquier adaptación que necesite para asistir.

Presentations include:

- Estate planning
- Long-term care
- How to protect yourself and your accounts online
- Changes in tax law
- Capacity to make legal and medical decisions
- Wills & trusts
- Ask-a-Lawyer workshops



Thank you to our sponsors!



Interested in sharing your vision for aging in the future?

Every four years, the Alpine AAA is required to submit an Area Plan to the State Unit on Aging every four years in a format specified by the State Department, which includes goals and measurable objectives and identifies planning, coordination, administration, supportive, and nutrition services, as well as evaluation activities to be undertaken. The next Area Plan is due March 31, 2019 and we are planning ten community conversations across the region to gather input on the Area Plan. Please take some time to attend one of these events and let your voice be heard.

Community Conversation

WHAT
MATTERS
TO YOU?



Join this unique opportunity to share your vision of aging in the county

Are you interested in the future of our aging community? Do you care what our community has to offer as you age? The Alpine Area Agency on Aging is inviting people of all interests to participate in a Community Conversation. These interactive conversations are an opportunity for you to share your vision of the future, and offer your opinions, concerns, and suggestions. Your input will inform the update of the Alpine Area Agency on Aging's Four Year Plan. If you have questions or would like more information, please contact Erin Fisher at aaa12@nwccog.org / 970-468-0295 x107.

Eagle County

September 5 10am-11am	Maloit Park Senior Wellness Center at Vail 1951 South Hwy 24, Minturn, CO 81645
September 6 11am-12pm	El Jebel Senior Center 0020 Eagle County Drive, El Jebel, CO 81623
September 11 1pm-2pm	Golden Eagle Senior Center 715 Broadway, Eagle, CO 81631

Grand County

September 10 1pm-2pm	Silver Spruce Senior Apartments 106 South 6 th Street, Kremmling, CO 80459
September 18 12:30pm-1:30pm	Granby Community Center 129 3 rd Street, Granby, CO 80446
September 18 5:30pm-6:30pm	Grand Lake Recreation & Event Center 301 Marina Dr, Grand Lake, CO 80447

Jackson County

September 13 1pm-2pm	JCCOA Senior Center 312 5 th Street, Walden CO 80480
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Pitkin County

September 6 5:30pm-6:30pm	Redstone Inn 82 Redstone Blvd, Redstone, CO 81623
September 7 1pm-2pm	Pitkin County Senior Services 275 Castle Creek Rd, Aspen, CO 81611

Summit County

September 10 5pm-6pm	Summit County Community & Senior Center 83 Nancy's Place, Frisco, CO 80443
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Safety Tip

To Speed or Not to Speed



We often get in a hurry to be somewhere, and circumstances cause us to be "running behind." So some of us are tempted to go a little heavy on the gas pedal, and maybe just set the cruise control to 9 miles above the speed limit. We think "No big deal - I won't get a ticket for going just 9 miles over." The thing is, according to the National Safety Council, "Speed Kills: Always Has, Always Will." Speed limits are in place for a

reason.

In 2014 the speed limit was raised on a 24 mile long stretch of Interstate 295 between Portland and Brunswick, ME. The limit was changed from 65MPH to 70MPH. In the following three years, vehicle collisions increased 66 percent. As a result, the speed limit was returned to 65MPH in March 2017. The preliminary results indicate a drop in collisions since. Keep in mind, this was only a 5MPH change!

The comedian George Carlin once said, "Have you ever noticed that anybody driving slower than you is an idiot, and anyone going faster than you is a maniac?" This observation is worth a chuckle, but when we really consider what this means it definitely points out another area of concern. We all think we are better drivers than the people around us. And we think that by "speeding" we'll arrive to our destination that much quicker.

The irony is that for most commutes, driving faster doesn't actually result in arriving at the destination much sooner. The difference between driving 65MPH and 70MPH on a 10-mile trip is only about 45 seconds, and this assumes constant speed. Add in traffic congestion, school buses, construction, traffic lights, and merging traffic and you'll never save even 45 seconds!

What's the right answer? Follow the traffic rules, observe the posted speed limits, and leave enough following distance between your vehicle and the one in front of you. You'll get to your destination about the same time, you'll save gas, you'll be in a better mood when you arrive, and you'll reduce the odds of being involved in a collision. There really isn't a down side.

Article excerpted from: [SafetyNet Blog - Speed limits are for everyone.](#)

2018 NWCCOG COUNCIL MEETING SCHEDULE

Thursday, October 25, 2018

Full Council Meeting

Location: Community & Senior Center Fremont Rm, 83 Nancy's Place, Frisco, CO

Time: 10:00 a.m. - noon

Primary Agenda Items: Review of draft 2019 budget

Thursday, December 6, 2018

Full Council, EDD Board & Foundation Board Meeting

Location: Eagle County Government Garden Level Classroom, 500 Broadway St., Eagle

Time: 10:00 a.m. - noon

Primary Agenda Items: 2018 budget revisions; approve 2019 budget; adopt 2019 meeting schedule; annual NWCCOG Foundation Board meeting.

Northwest Colorado Council of Governments

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