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From the Director's Desk:

Walking a mile for better understanding: empathy, teen vaping,
minimum wage, aging...

The saying goes, "Don't judge another person until you've walked a mile in their shoes."

It seems a quaint, Depression-era notion today. Who walks a mile anywhere? Who judges status by shoes? Who wears shoes til they are worn through? Who withholds judgement until they see, listen and come to an understanding themselves? Really? Be honest.

The experience of personal isolation, and the power of empathy hit home for me during an 8-minute exercise led by our crew at Alpine Area Agency. [The Virtual Dementia Tour](#) is a trademarked exercise that began as P.K Beville's Ph. D. that induces participants to exhibit the traits of a condition, experience it, and be allowed to feel "a window into their world" as an aging person does. Be prepared for it to be a visceral, rather than intellectual experience.



Those 8-minutes put me in my mother-in-law's shoes. I flashed-back to elders, now passed, with whom I was impatient. As I struggled through glasses, headphones, gloves and shoe inserts designed to simulate impairments to navigate daily activities, I became quietly frustrated and agitated. I felt very alone. So much of my current self-esteem & image are based on how gracefully I believe that I navigate through my world and connect with others. I felt the isolation of impairment. I felt the inevitability of my own mortality. It made visible my own vulnerability, and the narrowing that accompanies age. It was overwhelming, though the debrief underscored the object of the exercise-empathy can invoke action. The exercise unsettled me. AAAA staff will be taking this Virtual Dementia Tour to an organization near you. I highly recommend it if you want to step into the shoes of someone with dementia. *"...if you spot some hollow ancient eyes, please don't just pass 'em by and stare, say hello in there. Hello"* - John Prine, 1971

Now were such an empathy exercise to exist for us to understand each other, our current politics might be corrected. How do we understand the deep anger people feel, or the experience of racism, the lives of immigrants, for those disenfranchised & hopeless economically? Instead, we form our impressions instantly, accept media, technology and politics grouping us. The art of empathic-focus takes time.



Allowing ourselves to be sorted without first taking that walk has consequences. On the heels of race related shootings in three towns in recent weeks, Sahil Chinoy, graphics editor for the New York Times depicted how our potential for "organized mass violence" increases as we allow ourselves to be sorted politically through a handful of simple [identity questions](#). People have become disturbingly predictable. Increasingly we willfully isolate ourselves through "identity

politics." The article points out that identity politics, once accused of the left is now widely embraced.

Oddly, our first step to understanding and feeling compassion for others may be personally refusing to be reduced to the rallying cries, labels, and package of norms that any particular identity group espouses. This rejection of in-group identity may be a counter-cultural act in the age of hashtags. As we allow our humanity to be distilled of complexity, we impede our ability to walk a mile with others.

Walking that metaphorical mile requires a will-to-care; a will to reach out beyond our comfort, beyond our own identity. The rewards of taking that time are telling. There have been times in our nation's history when our identity was broadly shared and the law followed with leaps of inclusion, and we have emerged from troubled times with prosperity and expanded justice for all. Many of our Constitutional amendments seemed to move us away from discrimination, toward a more just, inclusive society. That is certainly not the current trend. Today, fewer of us care enough to take the time to understand those close to us, like an aging relative, or the immigrants who work among us. Or those neighbors down the street.

Inclusiveness feels like it is rapidly eroding. To the point, Ken Cuccinelli, acting director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services was asked this month if the words written by Emma Lazarus inscribed at the base of the Statue of Liberty, "remained part of the American ethos?"

*"give me your tired, your poor,
your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
the wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door"*



His reply to the elegant poem dripping with empathy, "they certainly are," he told NPR, "give me your tired and poor-who can stand on their own two feet and who will not become a public charge." The judgement packed into that rewrite is stunning. So much for a "golden door." That such a statement can emerge from the lead U.S. immigration official's mouth today without widespread rebuke shows how far we have come from walking a mile in an other's shoes. So much that is happening at the national level, especially in immigration policy, is intended to underscore identity politics and draw us away from our humanity and our most aspirational ideals-away from empathic-understanding and head-long into judgement.

Lazarus' poem resonates with hope, expresses a shared vision of opportunity, and a deep empathy for a shared human condition of suffering. Unpack "yearning to breathe free:" which implies the shores are open to those who seek the gleaming light of this nations shared aspirations, that are open to human beings who simply aspire to "breathe free." This was always been aspirational. Our lack of empathy allows us to emphasize personal freedoms while ignoring the shared freedoms that bind us.

Who identifies with "the wretched" anymore? Who really identifies with their mother-in-

law? Who speaks policy elegantly enough to be worthy of poetry?

Our struggle to identify with "the other" is hardly new, but it is high time we began.

Taking the time and effort to do so could save us from our wretched selves.

Jon Stavney

Executive Director

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Camber Brewing - Another NLF success story

Having been steeped in the corporate life in Denver for several years, Nick Crabb and his wife Karen, along with three four-legged family members moved from the front range to Fraser to find a better work/life balance. They also wanted to take advantage of the mountain-living lifestyle while finding a community they could connect with. After having lived in Fraser for a few months, they realized something was missing in the town - a brewery!



Nick and Karen had a dream to fill that need, and they were able to be included in the Fraser downtown revitalization project which helped out with a sign and an awesome mural on the building - [Camber Brewing](#) was born.

Nick had been honing brewing skills at home where friends and family convinced him his beer was good enough to be sold in the open market. Even though he'd never done anything entrepreneurial, his parents had owned businesses so he was aware of the risks, rewards, hard work, and commitment that owning his own business would entail. He's quick to point out that neither he nor Karen are trust-fund kids and he's proud of the fact that he's worked to raise money and build out the business pretty much on his own - with a little help from friends and family - for which he is super grateful.



When putting the final touches on Camber Brewing plan, he realized he needed additional funding for equipment. He searched the internet for non-traditional financial resources where he found the [Northwest Loan Fund](#) which was one of the top-rated resources for lending. Nick met Anita Cameron, Director of Business Lending at the NWCCOG - home of the

NLF. She helped him navigate the process to a successful outcome. According to Nick, "Anita is awesome. She is a really easy person to work with and helped me feel comfortable all along the way." The funds provided by the NLF helped to purchase the essential equipment.

Even though a competing brewery opened just a block away shortly after Camber opened, Nick sees it as a good thing. With beer tourism becoming more popular, having multiple breweries in the same town is an advantage contributing to the prosperity of all breweries.

When asked what sets Camber apart, Nick answered that his focus is on American ales that are superbly "drinkable" - not just for aficionados, but for the casual drinker as well. He went on to say, "The beers need to be approachable and not overpowering." His unique, self-taught brewing style ensures there is always a fine, smooth finish to his beers which is what helps to separate his product from the rest of the pack.

He invites us all to stop by for a brew any time - and by the way, the popcorn is always free.

Teen tobacco and Vaping-THREE COUNTIES act in August and send consideration of tax to voters



[The Colorado Sun](#) reported last year that Colorado has the highest rate of vaping among teenagers in the nation at 27%, double the national average according to the [Healthy Kids Colorado Survey](#). This was not news to three Counties recognized as being in the top 10 healthiest in the nation with the [longest life expectancies](#) who have heard it from teenagers, schools and their municipal peers in recent years. Each is taking action on the

issue this month. CPR news recently reported that "[Colorado is a Hotbed for Teen Vaping but Lacks the Tools to Help Kids Quit](#)" Eagle, Summit and Pitkin county leaders are having none of that.

August 13, Summit County BOCC certified a ballot question for all nicotine products. According to County Manager Vargo, "the sales tax would be \$4.00 per pack and 40% on all other nicotine products with a 10% increase annually until it reaches 80%. The towns and county are working cooperatively on an IGA related to the tax question and each jurisdiction is considering increases in age and licensing requirements for all retail sales of nicotine products."

Pitkin County Manager, Jon Peacock confirmed that Pitkin County is aligning its tobacco policy in with early adopting municipalities and nearby Eagle County noting, "last week the board approved the first reading of a tax question that if approved will increase the sales tax on a pack of cigarettes to \$3.20/pack in 2020 and then increase it \$.10/year until the tax reaches \$4.00/pack." This would go to the voters. Pitkin BOCC also received recommendations from the Board of Health to raise the purchase price for tobacco products to 21, licensing retailers and implementing a "full flavor ban on all tobacco products." He notes "there are some concerns about the licensing authority granted to counties" which they are working through before bringing a resolution to the BOCC.

Eagle County was out in front of this issue more than a year ago taking a very measured approach to tobacco policy, including cultivation of advocacy among students, more than a year of periodic information sessions, a road show to each municipality and the full attention of Mandy Ivanov, Health Promotion Coordinator for Eagle County Public Health. County Manager, Jeff Shroll in early August, in an email to Mayors and Managers, revealed that the BOCC is "preparing to make decisions," and was seeking follow up in asking municipalities to support the County (or are considering themselves acting) on:

- Raising the age to purchase cigarettes and tobacco to 21 (not including cessation products)
- Requiring licensing of local retailers that sell cigarettes and tobacco
- Imposing a tax on cigarettes and tobacco products.



Eagle County also distributed a printed [Community Opinion Survey](#) including FAQ in an Eagle County Public Health Program as it moves toward passing a resolution on the first two bullets (Aug 20th Agenda) and placing the third, a tobacco tax

to consideration by the voters. Also attached is a [white paper](#) developed by Eagle County Public Health staff on the topic.

It is worth noting that municipalities had power to act on these matters before Counties were granted that right. Several high-country municipal NWCCOG members were early adopters in addressing this issue, including the Towns of Aspen, Basalt and Avon, each of which have been urging their local county commissioners to act to limit access to teens. Avon Mayor Sara Smith Hymes has noted how convenience retail businesses in town have seen a migration of revenues to nearby County located businesses since the tax passed there. She has

been urging Eagle County to rebalance the equation. It is looking like she will get her wish in 2019.

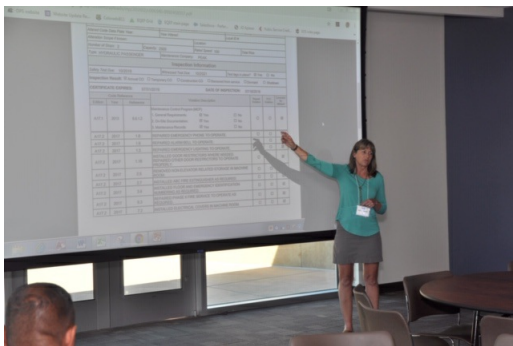
In March of this year NWCCOG Council received updates from Eagle County Public Health Director Chris Lindley and Summit County Assistant Manager, Sarah Vaine on innovative countywide mental health efforts which included tobacco policy. It is great to see our Public Health Agencies being leaders in the state on tobacco, as well as mental health.

"You've come a long way, baby."

The steps toward addressing teen tobacco and vaping consumption are happening in a different marketing landscape. Remember when Big Tobacco was able to advertise on TV and billboards? In 1968, Phillip Morris launched Virginia Slims, the first cigarette branded for women. Since then marketing of tobacco has become much more insidious if less obvious to many. In recent years, the focus has been on children, if without the flagship slogan.

What else has come a long way? The NWCCOG Elevator Inspection Program.

Elevator Inspection Program Honored



It was with pride that I attended the Colorado Division of Oil and Public Safety outreach meeting in Grand Junction on August 15th to hear our elevator team present alongside the State OPS team on the "Keys to Compliance" to a room full of conveyance owners, mechanics and local jurisdictions. Greg Johnson, Public Safety Manager for OPS introduced the NWCCOG EIP as an exemplary program. We have great people

who have transformed this program that operates on this rule of thumb: "if a conveyance is accessible to the unwary public... we inspect it."

It was not lost on me that 26 months ago, Johnson, and David Harris (who we later hired that December to manage the NWCCOG Program) sat me down to explain that more than half of the 2000 conveyances in our region were out of compliance. Additionally they were operating on expired Certificates and we had no mechanism for enforcement. They warned that the State of Colorado would be taking this program back from NWCCOG in short order if we didn't transform the program from top-to-bottom in nearly all respects.

So, we have come a long ways. Since July of 2018, we have issued 1,069 Temporary Certificates demanding further action on a timeline, of which 293 became Notices of Violation, and 80 went to Enforcement Orders and two elevators were shut down. This has not been without some resistance. Although as Harris states, "we are the eyes and ears for conveyance owners... when people get exposed they get engaged." An understatement for sure.



The work continues towards full compliance in the EIP, and the path now is extremely well planned & defined. Harris gives credit to his team. At the meeting in Grand Junction, Harris had Admin Assistants Sue Hobrock and Bryanne Busato present on our GIS mapped website, and all of the many rewritten forms & policies. He was able to confidently state, "our transparency, website, current practices- nobody else in Colorado is doing what we do at this level."

Are we ready to set local minimum wages? Not so fast..

Sometimes prudence is the best course of action. Inquiries to the same counties out in front of teen tobacco and mental health confirm that each is slow walking their new powers to adopt a local minimum wage.

This past year the Colorado legislature passed the buck on this one to local governments. In recent months, I've had the opportunity to listen to Commissioners in Eagle and in Summit County who invited their municipal partners in to discuss acting on HB12-1210, a measure passed last session that empowers towns and counties to raise the minimum wage



(within limits and conditions). It acknowledges that the cost of living varies across the state. First item of note is how encouraging it is that these two counties, like some others in our region, have a mechanism in place and the habit of having discussions across jurisdictions. That this is being discussed locally in a fragmented manner is yet another result of Colorado's preference for local control. In both forums, while agreeing that many workers do not make a living wage, officials appeared extremely cautious about the topic. Most were interested in exploring the many unintended consequences, as well as the possible impacts to local businesses.

In a Summit County BOCC work session, a number of businesses as well as the Summit Chamber were on hand voicing a mixture of caution and opposition. The

Summit Chamber is considering a stand to officially oppose local involvement in setting a minimum wage. In Eagle County, the Mayors Managers back in March asked many questions of the Vail Valley Partnership, and it appears the discussion has been gone dormant.

While it is easy to note how large corporations-often retailers-underpay their workers resulting in tremendous social costs to taxpayers through governments, the discussion gets stickier when the discussion turns to the many "mom & pop" proprietors in the high country. Even while the lack of livable wages is widely acknowledged, the impacts of a simple regulatory tool, raising the minimum wage, are not obvious.

Some jurisdictions such as La Plata County and Region 9 Economic Development District have embraced a carrot approach by framing the discussion in terms of a living wage and allowing businesses that pay above that threshold to brand themselves. At this point in time there does not appear to be the political will in the high country to raise minimum wage in any comprehensive, strategic manner.

New at NWCCOG



Evan White, our newest Energy Program installer, was born in southern California, but lived in the Vail Valley throughout middle and high school where he developed his love of hiking, biking and skiing. Even though he left the Valley for a few years, the draw of the high-country brought him back.

He's had a wide variety of experiences that have helped prepare him for the job of an installer including roofing, landscaping, bike technician and kindergarten teacher's assistant. Even says of his opportunity to be in the Energy Program, "I am looking forward to helping families stay warm and save money. It is really a great feeling to know that I'll be helping others."

In addition to the outdoor sports activities living in the high country provides, Evan also enjoys music, traveling and playing video games.

[Other Employment Opportunities:](#)

We're looking for additional Energy Program Installers, and Program and Data Support Specialist for The Alpine Area Agency on Aging.

Senior Housing Needs Assessment Request for Proposal

Colorado is preparing for a 68% increase in people age 65 and older and this older adult population increase creates several challenges for housing, ranging from affordability to accessibility. This study will explore the current available housing and

assess senior housing needs so that the NWCCOG and its members, change agents, and aging advocates can ensure that the housing needs of seniors will be met.

This RFP is asking the candidate to provide an inventory of existing senior housing, both publicly supported and solely in the private sector throughout the 7-County Region.

[For more information about the RFP click here.](#)

NEXT 2019 NWCCOG COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday, August 22, 2019

Full Council & EDD Board Annual Planning Meeting

Location: Summit County Community & Senior Center Hoosier Room, Frisco, CO

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Agenda Items: Strategic Planning for 2020

Northwest Colorado Council of Governments

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