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## From the Director's Desk: Cigar

Quote of the month: *"we are still figuring out if we are going to keep carrying cigarettes **because so many people are just quitting.**"*

Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, was famous for believing the human psyche imbued every object with sexual meaning (pleasure). He is attributed with saying, "sometimes a cigar is just a cigar."

Freud hasn't purchased tobacco in 2020, where many of our municipal and county peers at NWCCOG have enacted policy which just took effect, behind the idea that tobacco is not just tobacco.

That cigar, or the \$8 tax, is health policy. Modern science is proving Freud was right on the first matter; we are coming to understand that tobacco and other substances alter how our brain experiences "pleasure," and our local elected are right to disagree with the second matter. From a public standpoint, a smoke is not just a smoke.

When my search for that elusive high-quality \$9 cigar this January brought me to a local liquor store in Eagle, I should have remembered it was a store with only



expensive cigars to my taste, the cost of which usually made me abstain. Cringing already at \$17, I told myself it wasn't too much to celebrate a milestone in my recovery from surgery (yes, people are quite complicated and contradictory in their reward structures... there is a reason they sell tobacco at liquor stores instead of the Yoga studios). It had not occurred to me that in 2020, a cigar would be layered with nearly \$8 in local taxes. To my wonderment, as the cashier unscanned and re-scanned the cigar, he reminded me that the new County tobacco tax was 40% plus sales tax.

Even the Federal Government has gotten on the bandwagon for raising the age of tobacco to 21 and sort of addressing the vaping epidemic lately, but the gold standard



for strategic taxation has to be the [Eagle Valley Behavioral Health](#) initiative, a comprehensive, collaborative effort aimed at addressing an epidemic of mental health and substance abuse. Top drawer stuff. Another local liquor store owner I often chat up was explaining to me why his cigarette rack was nearly empty. His response, "we are still figuring out if we are going to keep carrying cigarettes because so many people are just quitting." He said this a little wistfully, while wondering if not selling cigarettes would be a competitive disadvantage.

The high-country municipalities and counties leading this were recently highlighted in the [Colorado Sun](#). Summit County's vote made it to [U.S News and World Report](#). Make no mistake, this is a policy experiment to begin addressing an acute health issues, not a political publicity stunt.

Even before the data begins to roll in, I can vouch that the new laws are already making local business owners, and customers re-think tobacco. That, is a credit to forward-leaning policymakers.

*Jon Stavney*

Executive Director

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## Eagle Climbing + Fitness

Hottest fitness center in Western Colorado

*Eagle - The capital stack for a project with offices and mixed use space - ideal for a climbing gym - needed one more loan to make the gym a reality. NLF is proud to be the last money in on the hottest fitness center in Western Colorado....*



Climbing is part of who Larry and Courtney Moore are - they met at a climbing competition many years ago, fell in love, got married and fast forward - moved to Eagle in 2012. They knew climbing would be a big part of their lives. Larry managed a tiny climbing wall in Vail for 16 years, where he developed a climbing program of 65+ children and had taken athletes to competitive events throughout the country, allowing him to realize the potential for this fast-growing sport.

All the while, their vision of a world-class climbing gym and full-service fitness facility was germinating. The original concept started about 8 years ago, with the final design for Eagle Climbing + Fitness coming together in 2015. By then they had assembled a crack team of advisers, consultants, and investors.



As a start-up business with no track record and little collateral, Larry knew it would be difficult to get financing through traditional funders. Even with personal financial resources along with partner funding and private lenders, he knew there were still going to be funding gaps. Early in the process, Larry was introduced to the Northwest Loan Fund and Anita Cameron, Director of Business Lending for the program which is part of the NWCCOG. He says, "Anita was on board from day one. She saw our vision and believed in us and the impact we could have on the community. Her help was invaluable. Even though it took years to get to this point, the NLF stood buy my side and continued to believe in our mission."



EC+F was built to encourage all kinds of athletes to improve their skills through practice, classes, teams, competitions, and a variety of local events. It is intended to be a gathering place for climbers, cross-fit aficionados, and yogis at all levels to hone their skills in state-of-the art facilities with highly qualified instructors. Their youth programs include day camps and team programs for all ages from preschool to high school, where professional staff teach the proper

techniques with games and skills development in a fun-filled atmosphere.

Their philosophy is not only about building strong bodies, it's about building a strong social impact through their programs in the community. Their work is about providing inclusive opportunities for all - children and adults, beginners and experts - with diverse climbing and training options in a clean, friendly, environment.

***"Our motto is "Building Strength in Our Community"  
and we strive to do this through bringing people  
together in our gym and providing opportunities to  
learn, grow and have fun with friends and family.  
Thanks in part to the assistance from the NLF, we are  
able to make that dream a reality."***

**Larry Moore**

Groundbreaking started in 2017 and as the building began to take shape, the equipment needed to transform the shell into a topnotch climbing and fitness center began to arrive.



The funds provided by the NLF were earmarked for equipment such as walls, climbing holds, floor mats, ropes, harnesses and more. There are walls in excess of 42 feet for experienced climbers, as low as 28 feet in the children's climbing room and adjustable training walls and 5-degree angle wall for speed climbing, which will be in the Olympics. There is a campus wall allowing for climbers to use only their hands, and a bouldering garden enabling lone climbers the opportunity to get on the wall. In addition to equipment, the NLF funds provided working capital enabling EC+F to hire 25 professionals -both full and part-time- adding to the creation of good quality jobs in the community.





Staying true to their mission the EC+F creates corporate partnership arrangements for additional member benefits and more exposure for their partners. A list of current partnerships includes restaurants, coffee shops, retail stores, vets, physical therapy providers and more. The partner/member benefits create yet another win for strengthening the community. The Moore's have also been working with USA Climbing to help bring climbing competitions to the Vail Valley, with events ranging from youth local competitions to only World Cup Bouldering event in North America. Additionally, they have worked with the American Scholastic Climbing League to help develop High School competitive climbing ranging from the local level to the State Championships, bringing 200+ competitors to the town of Eagle.



The dream of building a high-end climbing and fitness facility with a focus on athletes at all levels and ages, with a professional and friendly staff, a variety of educational and social offerings, comfy couches, multitudes of educational opportunities, extensive class and workshops, along with various social events, including competitions, film premieres, lecture series and slideshows is currently

being realized by Larry and Courtney Moore on a daily basis.

NWCCOG is proud that the NLF is a partner in the success of the Eagle Climbing gym.

## Another Example of why we need Campaign Reform--Tobacco

In the article referenced above about local tobacco law, [The Colorado Sun](#) goes on to note that a similar statewide measure was greased by the tobacco industry during the same election cycle, in spite of Colorado having the highest vaping rate among teens in the nation at 27%. The contrast between state and local outcomes underscores [how outside money skews public will during elections](#) according to NBC news.

Big tobacco influence also had an impact in cutting back the Trump administrations recent limitations on vaping to a mere restriction on certain flavors. Follow the money 10 years back and it will lead you to Citizens United decision. The Washington Post, coyly observed Justice Roberts during the Senate Impeachment hearings wrote, "[John Roberts comes face to face with the mess he made.](#)" USA today puts it more bluntly in "Obama was right, Alito was wrong: Citizens United has corrupted American Politics."



*Volunteers help roll up a giant banner printed with the Preamble to the United States Constitution during a demonstration against the Supreme Court's Citizens United ruling at the Lincoln Memorial on the National Mall on Oct. 20, 2010.*

Chip Somodevilla / Getty Images file



The rapid progress on tobacco initiatives in our region makes another strong argument for local governments being laboratories for public policy, not incidentally because big lobby money doesn't usually influence local decisions. The many NWCCOG member jurisdictions which have passed such measures- Aspen, Basalt and Avon (in 2017), now joined by Pitkin, Eagle, Summit and Garfield Counties, and cities of Glenwood Springs, Eagle, Vail should be proud. Some of them will tell you that they didn't entirely fly under the radar of lobbying influence on these issues. The difference is they do not need buckets of money to keep their jobs like those in Congress.

Coloradans should brace themselves and contemplate how much they enjoy "outside" big money from Super PACS dominating the airwaves. Getting big money out of politics is a rare bi-partisan issue today. Voters should urge lawmakers to deal with Campaign Reform as they dealt with Robo Calling. It is easy to forget that although campaigns have always sought money, that money used to be transparent, had limits and was usually local. So unless you enjoy all the ads you are about to see, tell your Congressman how much they need to focus on campaign finance reform.

## We "CARE"

The Energy Program has been contracting with Energy Outreach Colorado (EOC) since 2016 to bring the benefits of the Colorado Affordable Residential Energy Program (CARE) to low and middle income residents across the region. The CARE program provides energy conservation retrofits to qualifying clients' homes based on the effectiveness of the measure and on the available rebates provided by the utility company that serves that home.



**ENERGY  
OUTREACH  
COLORADO**

Once a client has qualified, our auditors do a complete and thorough investigation of the home. They evaluate all combustion appliances to make sure they are performing safely. They ascertain that there are no other health or safety issues in the home like mold and moisture problems or hazards for the crew. Once the home is deemed safe for the

client and our staff, the auditor begins looking for ways to improve the building's efficiency. They evaluate the "leakiness" of the building shell using a blower door and thermal cameras to identify where best to perform air sealing work. Insulation levels in the attic, walls, and sub-space are measured along with efficiencies of the furnace and the refrigerator, lighting and water usage. A work scope is created based on the most comprehensive, cost-effective package for that home. Our crews perform all the necessary work and the home is given a final inspection. The client is given education about new appliances installed as well as possible behavioral changes that they could make to lower their utility bills.

In 2016, the Energy Program contracted to complete 16 jobs. Since then we have basically doubled the number of homes we've worked on. In 2017, we completed 38 homes. In 2018, it was 71. In 2019, we contracted to complete 150 jobs and actually completed 154. Of those 154 jobs 127 of them received air leakage work. This is one of the most basic yet effective measures we do. The client has paid to heat the interior of their home and if large holes exist in their building shell the heated air just rushes right out. High efficiency furnaces were installed in 18 homes. Health and safety problem issues - (crack in the heat exchanger, flue gasses were coming into the home) were a problem in 4 of the homes, and the other 14 were replaced for energy efficiency reasons. The high efficiency furnaces are rated at 95% or

better. If you were to think about one dollar spent on a natural gas utility bill then heating a home with an older 75% efficient furnace would result in 25 cents of that dollar going up the flue. With a 95% model the loss is one fifth that or a nickel of the dollar spent not being utilized and 95 cents of that dollar actually heating the home.

There are numerous success stories from 2019. The following is just one example of the benefits this program brings to our fellow Coloradans:

***Working single mom Frances has noticed big changes in how well and evenly her home is being heated after participating in the CARE program.***

When a CARE team member first visited with Frances at her 1990 modular home, the team member experienced respiratory problems that eventually drove the conversation outside. During a later visit, the CARE auditor noticed significant indoor air quality issues. After a thorough audit, the auditor found the home's crawlspace was inhabited by raccoons. The intrusive animals had damaged the home's heating ducts smashing the crossover duct and saturating the ductwork with urine. The heating system's ductwork also had a 4" by 10" hole leading into the crawlspace. The Care auditor estimated that 70% of the home's heat was lost into the crawlspace.

"With this hole and the crushed crossover, the family was pretty much just heating under the home," said Dan Mayberry, CARE Program Specialist.



Hole into the crawl space



Smashed cross-over duct

"I had no idea that underneath my house was so bad," noted Frances, who lives in Routt County. "Now that the heating ducts are fixed, my daughter's room doesn't overheat anymore (because the heat is now evenly distributed), so it's a lot more comfortable in her bedroom and the house smells better for sure. I had no idea my bathtub wasn't insulated and that was the reason my bathroom was so cold and I had to use a space heater."

Frances had not looked in the water heater closet in seven years of living in the home. The flue on the water heater was disconnected off the top of the tank and the flue cap was also missing. The disconnected flue was a safety concern. The home also didn't have carbon monoxide detectors installed. In addition to the rain/snow melt leaking in through the roof damaging the ceiling there was also a significant and steady water leak found under the kitchen sink that was leaking into the crawlspace.





Disconnected flu on water heater



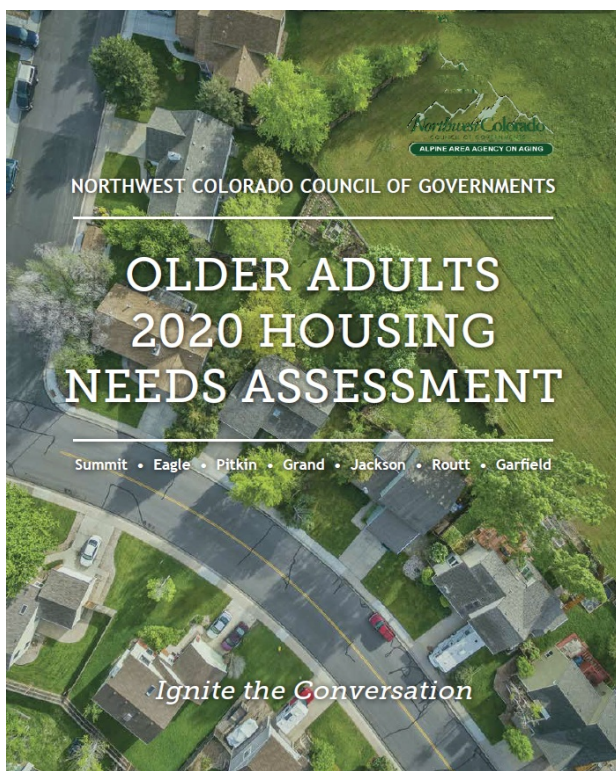
Missing flu cap

After all the heating, safety and water leak issues were repaired, the CARE team's air sealing work reduced the home's air leakage by 27%.

Frances also learned many tips about controlling her energy use, ranging from the savings of LED bulbs to how to use a new programmable thermostat. Now she no longer leaves for her work day during the colder months with both the air conditioner unit and ceiling fan running in the master bedroom, where she likes to sleep cool.

"I think that the CARE program is excellent," Frances said. "I had no idea there was so much that I needed done on my home. The crew was super friendly and professional, and they did an amazing job. They were great to work with, and the whole thing was just awesome."

## 2020 Older Adults Housing Report - A call for Local Presentations



By 2030, 1 in 5 Americans will be over 65. Older Americans in this group already make up 31% of Colorado's workforce. Yet our housing stock is not well positioned to allow them to "Age in their Community." NWCCOG and Alpine Area Agency on Aging are publishing the **Older Adults 2020 Housing Needs Assessment** in February to "ignite the conversation" among local influencers about how we could be better prepared.

In researching the report, written by Impact Marketing through RFP with NWCCOG, it surprised us that the aging population had different housing needs. "We just don't tend to focus on them when we talk about housing," noted Erin Fisher, AAAA

Director," and when we completed our Community Conversations tour last year, it was obvious that housing was their top concern when it came to aging in place."

At the January 23 NWCCOG meeting, Mary Kenyon of Impact Marketing (who was previously the Pitkin County Aging Well Coordinator) presented a draft report to Council. The project is funded through NWCCOG's annual DOLA grant matched by Alpine Area Agency on Aging funding. Following input from Council and last edits, hard copies of the report will be circulated upon request. Starting in February, NWCCOG staff will be available to begin scheduling presentations on the findings at the request of member jurisdictions and partner agencies. To schedule, contact Erin Fisher at [efisher@nwccog.org](mailto:efisher@nwccog.org) or Jon Stavney at [jstavney@nwccog.org](mailto:jstavney@nwccog.org).

## Virtual Dementia Tour

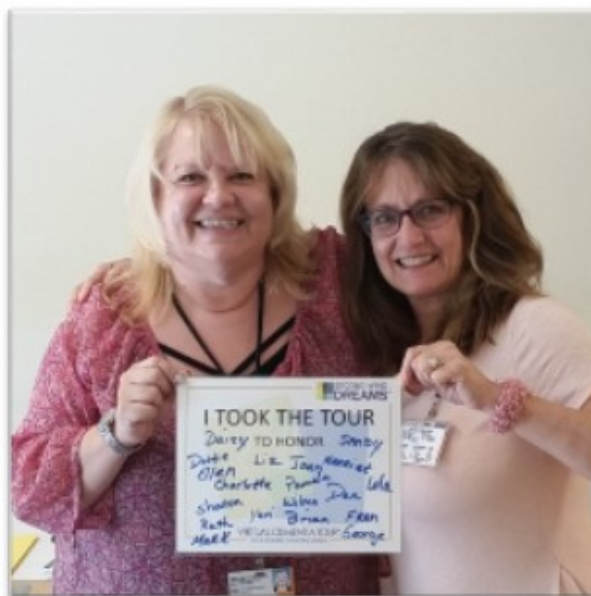
The Alpine Area Agency on Aging has started a Virtual Dementia Tour (VDT) "road show," bringing the experience to the Alpine AAA's Regional Advisory Council in September and Aspen's Whitcomb Terrace Assisted Living in October.

The VDT uses patented sensory tools and instruction to guide participants outfitted with patented devices that alter their senses while they try to complete common everyday tasks and exercises. The Tour enables caregivers to experience for themselves the physical and mental challenges those with dementia face, and use the experience to provide better person-centered care.

Whitcomb Terrace Assisted Living Staff

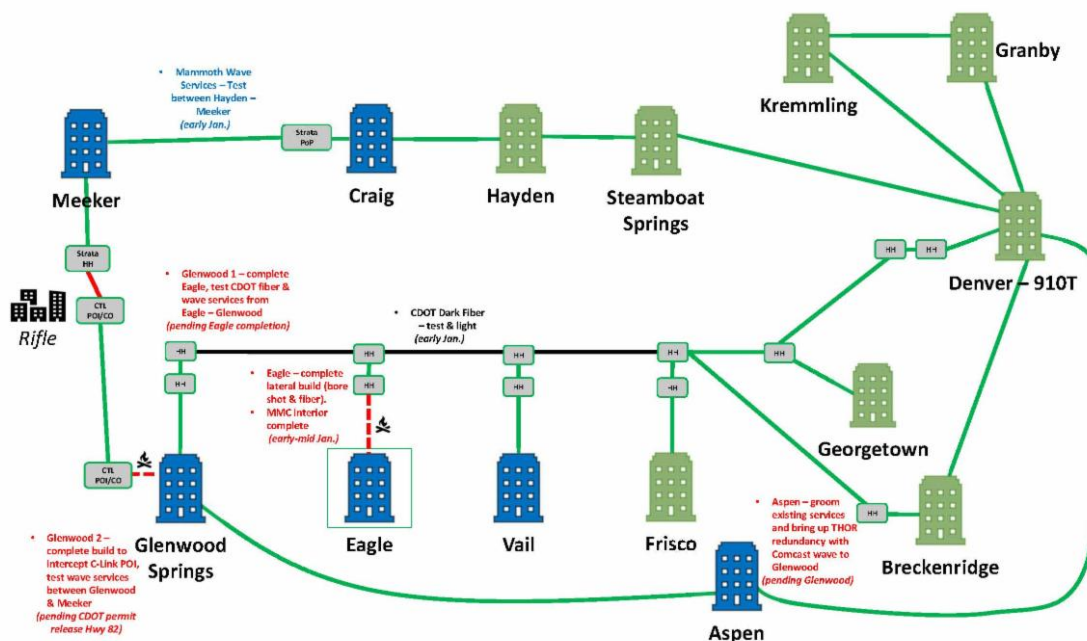


Summit County Community & Senior Center staff experienced the VDT and were so affected by it that they have already scheduled a community-wide event in November. Whitcomb Terrace staff said it would inform their practice and quality care of residents. Both staff and family members discussed "lightbulb" moments during the tour and reported the experience was impactful and enlightening. We are excited to bring this eight-minute experience that seems to allow individuals to better understand their loved one's and resident's perspective and world.



Whitcomb Terrace Assisted Living Staff

## Project THOR in the News



Project THOR which is being lit on a rolling basis now was featured in a number of news articles (dotted lines indicate remaining connections yet to be completed.):

Sky-Hi News January 12, 2020, "[Grand County entities explore fiber options to expand, improve internet.](#)"

Summit Daily, January 20th, 2020, "[Project THOR launches to increase broadband access](#)"

Steamboat Pilot, October 8th, 2019, "[Broadband project set to protect Routt County from outages, improve bandwidth by end of 2019](#)"

Denver Post, December 30, 2019, "[Tired of Waiting for Broadband, rural communities are tapping grants, partnerships to get modern internet.](#)"

## Nationally and locally, Mobile Homes are finally getting attention

Last year, the Colorado legislature, in response to urging from County leaders passed HB 1309, the Mobile Home Parks Act to attempt to give homeowners more leverage with park owners. Following up on a fantastic series of collaborative project [Parked: Half the American Dream, the Colorado Sun provides a great overview of the rollout of the new rules in this article.](#)

## Next NWCCOG COUNCIL MEETING

**Thursday, March 26, 2020**

***Full Council Meeting***

Location: Miller Ranch Room 0025 Mill Loft Rd, Edwards, CO

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

Primary Agenda Items: Approval of final 2019 Financials, program updates

**Northwest Colorado Council of Governments**

**[www.nwccog.org](http://www.nwccog.org)**

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