

From the Director's Desk: Your Neighbors:

Have they suddenly become satanic villains?

"We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, will when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

--Abraham Lincoln's first inaugural address, March 1861



Less than forty five days until Election Day in November, and then Friday, as if this year had not been tense enough, exhausting enough, divisive enough, the passing of Ruth Bader Ginsburg and the immediate commitment to replace her before the election just amplified the divisive politics up to 11.

The year twenty twenty was already historic. The turning of the wheels of change are uncomfortable to those who live through it. They can be times that bind a people closer together, a time when people look out for each other, identify with others through a common humanity, and a time for the social safety net mechanisms to show value. Many changes that define the American experience emerged from such times. If you look, there are many positive signs. The social fabric is weakened, but it is holding... so far. Listening to many voices today, you wouldn't think we have anything in common with more than half the population. To quote Mr. Rogers, [Who are the people in your neighborhood?](#)

We just don't seem to see each other clearly as people anymore. With all the labels and conspiracy theories right now, it is a struggle to get beyond the labels. We must strive to see that "we are not enemies, but friends," and move toward "the better angels of our nature" as Abraham Lincoln said.

News Flash: We seem to have forgotten that we usually actually DO know our neighbors and who they are. Like you, and me, they are flawed, but good people going about their lives. They are worthy of our baseline trust and respect.

We also seem to have forgotten that we have more in common which unites us than actual differences that divide us-if we choose to see it that way. You may not know all their deepest thoughts, but you "get" who your neighbors are through all those



passing, casual interactions.

Actually, we know many people who touch our lives at a gut level better than we understand. We know those who comprise our community through multiple common interests, work, commerce, and activities. The people who we know are kind, compassionate, empathetic and love their families and communities-so where are all those terrible people? We are

more than our politics, more than our beliefs or the group identities we embrace. These truths are why I believe strongly in the power of community. It is harder to play the "us" vs "them" game when you share a post office, a grocery store and local governance.

By extension of knowing our neighbors, and our own community, we know our countrymen better than what we are being persuaded to believe right now. Suddenly there seems to be a lot more of "them" and fewer of "us" in the U.S., and "they," we are told, are out to ruin "our" way of life. I don't buy it.

How is it that we became fearful victims believing the evil intents of our neighbors, countrymen and fellow humans so easily? How is it so many people take hateful propaganda designed to persuade us as reality over what they see? Such perceptions have been constructed to divide us, to believe that "they" are terrible, and not like us. They are meant to dehumanize. Such talk is a precursor to violence. This is being done to steer us to tribal parties, to cling to certain media and to persuade us out of thinking for ourselves and seeing for ourselves.

Exercise: So place a neighbor down the street in your mind. Or the guy who owns the sandwich shop you like, or the gal who owns the coffee shop you frequent. They just put a yard sign for the other party up, or you saw their bumper sticker. Do you jump to the following conclusions? Or is the cognitive dissonance between what you know about your neighbor or that shop owner, and the following statements too much? Which image do you defer to?

Democrats: Your neighbors are outright white nationalists, racists and undereducated idiots. They support the most corrupt, transactional president in a generation, and they really want all those fringe groups to become the new norm. They like the President's behavior. They think an international pandemic is actually a hoax for political purposes. They don't "believe in" science. The Republicans want to ruin your country. They are in favor of incompetence, buffoonery, and foolish tweets which they find amusing. They like bullying, lying or any other thuggery that advances their side. They support not having neither a domestic plan for COVID or anything else, nor a coherent foreign policy. They really think cozying to dictators and abusing allies is in America's best interests. They are in favor of

corruption. They support moving toward oligarchy, fascism, or despotism. They think you are lurking in the bushes waiting for an opportunity to do them physical harm when chaos breaks out. They want chaos. Your neighbors really like the current state of things today. They have completely lost their minds and abandoned their values.

Republicans: Your neighbors are satanic, pedophiliacs bent on upending democracy to create a Socialist society where everyone becomes a loafing, opioid ward of the state, funded by your hard-earned tax dollars. Your neighbors want systems to be gamed by welfare queens or others. They hate capitalism and the accumulation of wealth. They want to take away each-and-every one of your guns. They want you to wait years to see our favorite doctor. The Democrats want to ruin the country. Your neighbors like the state of things today. Your neighbors prefer a multi-racial, LGBTQ, MeToo, snowflake state with no police officers, no national defense and a society where education, childcare, healthcare, pot and killing babies is free to all and funded by the state. They think you are lurking in the bushes waiting for the opportunity to do them harm when chaos breaks out. They really do mean "defund" the police because they prefer vigilante militias to law and order. Your neighbors have completely lost their minds and abandoned their values.

Really?

So which version of your neighbor down the street, the one mowing the lawn now, or the one whose shop you are considering not frequenting any more, which image is reality-the summary of cartoonish labels in the paragraphs above? Which version would your social media, perhaps your chosen national media, and your candidate want you to believe? And ask yourself why?

Don't forgot that, even those with whom you interact daily with whom you may not even share a language, you actually do know them accurately from your experience. The truth is much less dramatic. They are more like you than not.

So, whatever "side" you are on, aren't we all tired of hearing these characterizations of our neighbors? Can we commit to not perpetuate? My humble recommendation, look around for yourself, put an asterisk on the COVID situation, realize we are in a time of historic changes. Make some real connections with those "others" whom your subconscious fears may be hiding in the bushes. Realize the 'them' in the rhetoric are people you know, exchange your disdain for respect and this too shall pass.



Don't give up on an expectation that things can be better. They can be much better. We need to act in such a manner as to improve the situation, not contribute to the deterioration of what we share. Trust in the humanity of your neighbors, all of them.

OTHER STORIES IN THIS NEWSLETTER

- FEMA highlights Vintage Program's Mental Health Efforts
- COVID RISK quiz - how do you rate?
- Broadband Breck
- Notorious RBG
- Resources (Pro and Con) Amendment B - Gallagher

FEMA Highlights Vintage Programs

Emergency Planning should include Mental Health

Along with the challenges we've all faced with COVID-19, there have been additional challenges in the east and south east with hurricanes and floods, and in the west with wildland fires and air quality that is at an all-time rating of horrid. We're all told to make a list of valuables we will need to take with us, or to make plans to meet up with our family should we be separated, to make sure we've got enough food and water, and oh, don't forget about making plans for our precious pets.

As a reminder - as if we needed one - September is National Preparedness month and FEMA celebrated by naming a few organizations that have done an especially good job of providing mental health resources - an oft forgotten essential component in coping with loss. It's not on anyone's list of things to plan for during an emergency. Except for organization like NWCCOG's Vintage Program (formerly Alpine Area Agency on Aging).

The team at Vintage has worked especially hard to focus on providing mental health resources to vulnerable members in our community - especially during these times of crisis. From providing socially distanced birthday parties - complete with giant birthday cards, cakes, and balloons -- to delivering life-like robotic pets - Vintage managed to mitigate the negative impacts of isolation for so many.



To combat isolation, @ECPublicHealth and Vintage delivered flowers and balloons to older adults on their birthdays. They're also providing furry comfort to older adults in the form of robotic pets – yes, you read that right!



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FEMA Region 8 @femaregion8 · Sep 11

Replying to @femaregion8

Visit yourvintage.org and ready.gov/seniors for more information on how to support older adults in disasters. #MakeAPlan #DisastersDontWait



For more information, visit yourvintage.org.

COVID RISK QUIZ!

NY created a survey that gives you a % risk of contracting and dying of COVID. It's interesting. See how you rate:

[CLICK HERE](#) -

It takes 10 minutes and you get immediate results with analysis.

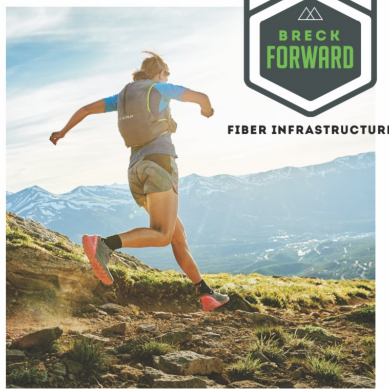
Broadband wins

Success Story: Breckenridge Fiber9600

Things move fast in Breck. The Town recently invested in an extensive network of public fiber to accelerate innovative solutions to major challenges. The Town of Breckenridge was the first to connect to Project THOR through a Summit County hosted Meet-me-Center location to support their ambitious municipal broadband project, known as Fiber9600 (9600 is the elevation of the town) as a part of the multipronged Breck Forward sustainability initiative. Breck was interested in enhanced publicly owned broadband to achieve a number of smart city initiatives, including [BreckPark](#) a pay by phone app supported pay to park system served by solar powered payment kiosks throughout town.

**WE'RE
SPRINTING
INTO THE
FUTURE.**

**FIBER9600
IS HERE. DO
YOU WANT
TO BE NEXT?**



This coupled with Breckenridge's transportation and parking planning allowed the for the town to better manage large numbers of guests each year, mostly by car via a single highway connection to I-70.

Breck's very popularity was part of the problem. The highway segment in 2018 had a peak weekend of winter visitors that created complete gridlock on Highway 9 when the trip count skyrocketed for a single weekend from an average peak of around 18,000 vehicles per day to over

27,000 vehicles. The town needed real-time tools for assessing available parking and communicating logistics to visitors but their cell coverage and broadband coverage from the mountain and throughout the town was too inconsistent to support those tools. Cell coverage has also been an issue for Breckenridge and Fiber9600, along with an imminent public Wi-Fi system being launched will improve coverage and capacity of the infrastructure.

The April construction update on the town website for Fiber9600 notes, "Now more than ever we see how critical fiber is as infrastructure... We want to ensure that when businesses can open their doors again, they have access to reliable and affordable internet options. We want to ensure that those working from home can have reliable connection to ensure their educational, personal and career choices." The Town continues, "Our town is investing in fiber infrastructure that will enhance broadband service as soon as it is in place, and ensure that our digital communications, global connectivity, and community technology are future-fit. It will positively impact our local lifestyle, our ability to recruit and retain employees and compete as a tourist destination. We are building Fiber9600 not just to catch up, but to confidently leap light years ahead."

The Town of Breckenridge partnered with [ALLO Communications](#) to manage the municipal broadband infrastructure citing, "we believe that when more than one or two providers are available in the marketplace, there is a substantial positive impact to consumers regarding cost and quality of services provided." Muninetworks.org [reported December 16, 2019](#) that the first residential connections were made to Fiber9600 within the first year of the project.

The town took some flack for starting with an open network concept before negotiating with ALLO through what is initially to be an exclusive lease and network operation agreement, as reported in the Summit Daily in May 2019. The Town was already served by two national Internet Service Providers (ISPs) including Century Link and Comcast. The [Summit Daily](#) just broke the story about "[Breckenridge aims to start building it's own high speed internet](#)" the prior month. Things move fast in Breck and will be moving much faster in the future. ALLO Communications has a webpage for updates in Breckenridge that includes a blog with the title "[ALLO There, Breckenridge.](#)" Find more information about the project at [Fiber9600.com](#).

NOTORIOUS Dissenter

RBG - A life well lived



How do you go about your work when you are surrounded and outnumbered by people with whom you often disagree? Much has been said about the loss of this icon. She was a true beacon of determination and hope - never one to be discouraged after a hard-fought battle - especially after a loss - which happened frequently.

The Washington Post reported on her long and storied career saying: "She said in her 1993 confirmation hearings what she wanted: The Constitution, she pointed out, had been written for a few White men of property. But the story over time was of ever-expanding

circles of inclusion - as history, amendments and jurisprudence expanded American equality to Black people, women, gays and lesbians. She wanted to stretch those circles out, to make America fairer, to make justice bigger.

For her whole judicial career, she was outvoted in that goal."

Her courage and optimism spoke volumes about who she was as a person and how she respected the view of others - even in defeat. She was asked about overcoming the disappointment of having had many of her goals thwarted and she replied, "Dissents speak to a future age. It's not simply to say, 'My colleagues are wrong, and I would do it this way.' But the greatest dissents do become court opinions and gradually over time their views [become the dominant view](#). So that's the dissenter's hope: that they are writing not for today, but for tomorrow."

"I'm dejected, but only momentarily, when I can't get the fifth vote for something, I think is very important. But then you go on to the next challenge and you give it your all. You know that these important issues are not going to go away. They are going to come back again and again. There'll be another time, another day."

Even with her ideals and goals at opposite ends of the spectrum from Justice Anton Scalia, it is well documented that they became and remained fast friends through their tenure on the Court. This is yet another example of how we can look past our neighbor's differing views and remember that we are all human beings many similar hopes, dreams, and values.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg will always be remembered as a force of nature and the issues she fought for will always come back, another time, another day.

If you'd like to learn more about "Amendment B" on the November ballot (the legislature's proposal to repeal the Gallagher Amendment), here are the "Pro" and "Con" campaign websites.

Pros: [Click Here](#)

Cons: [Click Here](#)

[See NWCCOG Coronavirus Resource Guide here](#)

NWCCOG strives to not duplicate resources compiled elsewhere. For municipal actions taken, [CML](#) has the best resource. For current public health orders, those should be

sought from your county website. There are numerous resources for businesses or individuals kept up to date regularly. If you would like guidance on what is the best resource for your needs, contact Jon and I will guide you there.

[Coronavirus Anxiety Workbook](#)

THANK YOU

So many of our Members are doing tremendous front-line public service through this difficult time; if you are one of them, Thank you, you are appreciated more than ever for your public service. I've been privileged to be on daily update calls with both Eagle County and Summit County EOC, and it is assuring to listen in to collaboration going on in real-time.

NWCCOG offices are closed to the public and most staff are working remotely so please contact them by phone or email. AAAA is in full-tilt mode adapting to meet the needs of Older Americans across the region. Energy Program Employees are working with strict safety protocols for themselves and their clients. The Elevator Inspection Program has suspended mosts field inspections and are catching up on a back-log of remote work. More than half of our programs and nearly 50 employees regularly work remotely. For more detailed and current status, please call your usual contact at NWCCOG.

*If you know someone who would enjoy our newsletter,
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Next NWCCOG COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday, October 22, 2020

Full Council Meeting

Location: Virtual

Time: 10:00 a.m. - TBD

Primary Agenda Items: Review of draft 2021 budget

Northwest Colorado Council of Governments

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970.468.0295

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