



## 2024: A Year of Collaboration, Innovation, and Gratitude

Our multitude of programs at NWCCOG touch so many clients, so many communities. We have so many folks from Council and beyond who contribute to making this organization tick – looking at you Alyssa, Patti and Carolyn. Reading testimonies from our program clients whose homes were weatherized, whose loneliness has been pierced by Vintage staff, or hearing from anxious IT directors because an entire community relies on Project THOR, I am deeply gratified. Still others come to me regularly saying, “I didn’t know you guys did *that*?”

I admit, sometimes *I* forget we did *that*. Provide eyeglasses to seniors, are the Ombudsman for senior centers, help hospitals prepare for major disasters.

We touch so many people’s lives that at times I believe our staff possesses special powers. They don’t.



They have a secret weapon – our people do work from their hearts which keeps them sharp and motivated.

We have refined internal systems, reinforced supports. Growth in the Elevator and Energy Programs allows us to employ key internal staff without whom our superheroes would struggle; I'm looking at you, Moira, Becky, Greg, Kevin and Elaina. They provide our one-person programs run by Anita, Nate, Dana, Rachel, and myself critical backbone. What once weighed solely upon the Executive Director a decade ago, is today shared across many shoulders. As a result, all of us perform at a considerably higher level.

We've solidified partnerships across the region. I recently asked staff who they most appreciated. They were so effusive, I asked them to put it to paper; **Abracadabra** – this newsletter. We've shouted-out praise before. The COVID year we profiled each Public Health Director and Jill Ryan the Director of CDPHS wrote a public thanks. There are many heroes, but even more people inside COG and across the region who just do their jobs really well. Every day of the year I could thank someone at each of our 31 member jurisdictions for what they do. Hopefully someone does! Some of our newsletter blurbs do. We're fortunate enough that our service brings us to a space of gratitude nearly every day. Not everyone can say that.

At the top of my mind, I am grateful for our program directors who perpetually launch the organization forward so I can lead from behind for the most part. Their excellence allows me the space to think outward by seeking trends, following ideas, and chasing stories that will have meaning to our members who in-turn, directly serve the public – those are my clients. Instead of looking for the next phonebooth, I get to be a Wichita Lineman Manager with the support of the NWCCOG Council, Executive Committee, and Officers.

*Jon Stavney*

Executive Director - NWCCOG

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## Celebrating Another Successful Medicare Open Enrollment



As our State Health Insurance Program wraps up another busy year of Medicare Open Enrollment, it's rewarding to see everything accomplished this year. **During Open Enrollment, we helped over 400 people manage their Medicare choices**, saving them money on monthly premiums and drug costs as they move into the new year.

We are excited to continue growing the SHIP program annually, becoming a well-known expert for Medicare assistance in communities we serve, and providing around **700 one-on-one Medicare counseling appointments this year**. In addition to having one-on-one appointments with beneficiaries, we did **21**

**community presentations** in Routt, Grand, Summit, Jackson, Eagle, and Pitkin counties, **reaching over 362 people**.

We have immense gratitude for the help of our amazing volunteers who have devoted so much of their own time to helping others! We greatly appreciate their devoted work staying up to date on Medicare topics and changes, along with the countless hours they put in during our busy season and throughout the year.

A huge THANK YOU goes out to Karen Eyrich, Patty Kravitz, Ed VanWalraven, Amy Egertson-Throm, Jeni Holloway, Joan Lucas, Judy Hiester, Sherrie Ford, Betsy Packer, Phylis Harrelson, Lori Williams, and Bernedette Kromholz.

So many things are at play to make a program successful, we couldn't do this work without the collaboration of community agencies. From organizing and advertising Medicare presentations, providing a space for us to meet with people, and scheduling individuals for one-on-ones with counselors, these agencies serve as an integral part of the work we do. We would like to thank the following agencies for supporting the SHIP program and for all their ongoing collaboration:

Summit Community and Senior Center  
Golden Eagle Senior Center  
Pitkin County Senior Services  
El Jebel Senior Center  
Eagle County Senior Services  
Rout County Council on Aging  
Mountain Family Center

Jackson County Council on Aging  
Bud Warner Library  
Kremmling Library  
Juniper Library  
Fraser Library  
Basalt Library  
Aspen Library  
Avon Library  
Vail Library

**-Jonah Glassman, Medicare SHIP and Volunteer Coordinator**

## Appreciation and Thanks from the NWCCOG Programs

### ***Thank you to the NWCCOG Economic Development District***

Thank you to our EDD board of directors for your unwavering dedication to the vitality of our region. Your tireless commitment to improving the lives of those around you does not go unnoticed, and the positive impact you have made through your leadership is truly inspiring. The time, effort, and passion you put into fostering a thriving and resilient communities are deeply appreciated by NWCCOG. Thank you for your vision, hard work, and continued support in making the NWCCOG region a better place for everyone.



**-Rachel Tuyn, Economic Development District Director**

### ***A Heartfelt Thank You from Vintage as We Close Out the Year***

As we approach the end of another year, we want to take a moment to express our deepest gratitude to everyone who has been part of our journey in providing services to older adults and their families. To our providers, volunteers, and partners: Your dedication, compassion, and hard work are the backbone of everything we do. You've shown time and time again that caring for others is more than a profession—it's a calling.

To the individuals and caregivers we serve: Thank you for trusting us to be part of your lives. It's an honor to support you and walk alongside you in this journey. Your stories inspire us to do better every day.

And to our community supporters and advocates: Your belief in our mission have helped us create meaningful programs, provide critical resources, and make a lasting impact. Together, we've shown that aging is not just a stage of life but an opportunity to thrive with dignity and connection.

As we look ahead to the new year, we're excited to continue building a stronger, more compassionate network of care. From all of us, we wish you and your loved ones a happy, healthy, and peaceful holiday season.

**-the Vintage Team**

### ***Gratitude in Motion: Acknowledging Achievements of the RTCC and IMTPR***

A huge thank you to the Regional Transit Coordinating Council (RTCC) and Intermountain Transportation Planning Region (IMTPR) for all of your hard work during this past year. Your efforts have significantly improved transportation and mobility collaboration in our region.

The RTCC has made remarkable strides this year, including the RTCC Summit in Frisco that took place in September and brought together 50 partners from across the state, and developing a new strategic plan with actionable projects, some of which are underway.

The IMTPR has also achieved significant milestones, which include drafting new Bylaws and IGAs for approval in early 2025, collaborating with CDOT on the 2050 statewide transportation plan and project prioritization, and designing the region's Multimodal Transportation and Mitigation Options Funding (MMOF) application process.

Your collaborative efforts in identifying regional plan recommendations, priority projects, and multimodal alternatives have been instrumental in shaping our transportation future. The work you've accomplished in 2024 will undoubtedly enhance mobility and accessibility for all residents in Northwest Colorado.

**-Dana Wood, Mobility Program Director**

***Thanks from the Broadband Team***

I am grateful to the Project THOR Stakeholders who continue to work together to provide our network that delivers affordable, reliable broadband to our communities. I am grateful for our communities that are working to ensure that broadband as an essential service is available to as many residents, tourists, businesses and local government organizations.

Finally, I am grateful to the NWCCOG Staff who continue to invest their valuable time in support of our NWCCOG Broadband Programs.

Best wishes for happy holiday season and a great 2025!

**-Nate Walowitz, Regional Broadband Director**

***A Huge Thank You to the Finance Team***

This year has been exceptionally busy for the Finance Office, and I want to take a moment to express my gratitude to the incredible team that made it all possible. First, I'd like to acknowledge our Accountant, Greg Ociepka, whose unwavering work ethic, reliability, and remarkable attention to detail have been indispensable.

I also want to highlight the outstanding leadership of Elaina West, our Finance Manager. Her dedication and vision have transformed the Energy Program Finance Team, making NWCCOG's largest program organized, efficient, and brimming with more potential than ever before.

One of the major milestones of my year was completing a Salary Survey and Wage Range Analysis for our organization. This achievement wouldn't have been possible without the support and participation of our Directors—thank you for your time and input. A special thanks goes to Darcy Owens, Energy Program Workforce Development Manager, for her meticulous and extensive internal study of Energy Program wages, which was a critical component of this project.

Of course, none of our accomplishments would be possible without the steadfast leadership of Executive Director Jon Stavney or the behind-the-scenes efforts of our Office Manager, Moira Vander Meer. Moira is truly the rock that holds everything together, and we're all incredibly fortunate to have her on our team. I am profoundly thankful to have found my way to this remarkable organization, where I am surrounded by such talented, dedicated, and supportive colleagues. It's been a privilege to be part of this team.

**-Becky Walter, Finance Director**

## COG Quirks Feline Good: A Story of Second Chances



Frankie and Sam, both around 12 years old, were previously living in Arizona when fate brought them to the Summit County Animal Shelter after their owner sadly passed away. Fortunately, they caught the eye of a compassionate new guardian, our Finance Director Becky Walter, who was searching for bonded senior cats.

Now residing in what can only be described as *acat paradise*, affectionately dubbed the Cat Spa at Becky's home in Blue River. Frankie and Sam enjoy a sunny room filled with an eight-story cat tower, cozy beds, and soothing sounds of chirping birds. Frankie has quickly adapted to her new life, often plotting culinary heists for salmon filets while completely unbothered by the family dog.

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