

CLARION

CONNECTING YOU TO OUR ALLIANCE FOR COMMUNITY ACTION



(above) Social activist Shasti Conrad shares her experiences at WCC's Annual Conference on August 26 at the Two Rivers Convention Center in Grand Junction.

(at left) During a break, conference attendees took the opportunity to announce, "We are here!"

See more photos from the Annual Conference at wcccongress.org!

You Are Here: Include whole community in your activism

by Brenda Bafus-Williams, Communications Coordinator

"Keep asking yourselves these questions:

- How am I building bridges?
- How am I diversifying my network?
- How can I be more inclusive?
- How am I organizing myself out of my job?"

With these words, keynote speaker Shasti Conrad challenged attendees at WCC's Annual Conference to dream big and bring their best selves to their activist work. Whether she knew it or not, she was also echoing some of the themes in the assessment work WCC has been undertaking for a large part of this year (see page 2).

Shasti is a dynamic changemaker who has demonstrated a talent for political activism for over 10 years. She is currently the US Campaign Manager for the 100 Campaign, which aims to be the largest youth mobilization in history to end child labor.

Shasti inspired the WCC crowd on August 26 in Grand Junction with her own story. She learned the ropes of community organizing through two different US presidential campaigns – one of which landed her a job on President Obama's Whitehouse staff.

"Not bad for an orphan from Calcutta, or a brown girl from Oregon," she quipped.

But Shasti was quick to turn the spotlight

from the national back to the local.

"Today, more than at perhaps any time in our history, the actual work of governing and improving our communities is not led by Washington, DC. This is not a dream. This is not a drill. This is the current state of our affairs," she asserted. "All the more reason it is essential today that you are here."

YOU ARE HERE: Creating a Road Map When the Political Landscape Won't Hold Still was the theme for this year's conference.

Politics: Local and personal

The following are more excerpts from Shasti's remarks.

"All politics are local. And politics are personal. **Lead with empathy.** There is much work to do and we must work together, focusing on our common humanity. We are more alike than we are different.

"After the election, many new groups have formed, like *Indivisible*, *Run for Something*, *She Should Run*, and *The Arena*. They have realized their success is dependent on asking for ground up action because that is where the ideas and innovation are happening. An organization like WCC knows your community better than anyone else, and **you have the ability to experiment, to try to new things and to figure out what will work for your people.**

"There are times when I fear that all of these new groups springing up aren't bringing us together, but splintering us further apart. **We must go back to basics and focus on people**, let go of the rhetoric and buzzwords, and uplift each other instead. I am a big believer that if you focus on getting people in the same room and focusing on issues/objectives, we can empower each other to bring action that includes our whole community.

"This is another lesson the national level is re-learning... we stopped talking to people from other perspectives on both sides and forgot what our communities actually look like.

We have to get out of the echo chamber and remember each other's humanity.

"So what does this mean for us? We must understand and accept today's national landscape and quirky realities. We must work within them. We cannot let our frustration with the dysfunction of Washington keep us from the important work locally.

"This is not a dream. This is not a drill. This is the current state of our affairs."

- Shasti Conrad, activist and WCC keynote speaker

See Shasti Conrad continued on page 5

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Creating a sanctuary of optimism

by Steve Allerton, WCC President

As I write this, our country is in the midst of events that seem out of our control, but are in fact calls to action. The West is on fire. My daughter and her family living in Idaho can no longer see the tops of hills just a few hundred yards away. The ravages of Hurricane Harvey continue, and Hurricane Irma is planning her landfall. The dangerous power struggle with North Korea continues to escalate, and I wonder what will become of the “Dreamers” who call this place home? (see pg. 5)

Here in Western Colorado, I often scratch my head wondering why drilling 108 oil wells in a watershed makes sense to some people (see pg. 3), but absolutely no sense to me. I wonder why young families in Grand Junction have to fight so hard to gain support for a community center. (see pg. 6) Why can't the Mesa County commissioners embrace the idea of energy efficiency like those in surrounding counties?

Terry Tempest Williams writes of the “hostility of landscapes”, which I've taken to mean more than jagged peaks, sizzling desert canyons, and the oppressive heat and humidity of swampland. In many ways, living through hostile landscapes is part of our shared humanity. People are suffering. Livelihoods are at stake, and neighbor is pitted against neighbor.

Yet, sanctuaries do exist. Sanctuaries where people can gather for inspiration, ask questions, make plans to have their voices heard, and insist that elected officials are held accountable.

Western Colorado Congress offers sanctuary where the opportunity exists to move through the haze, deal with challenges, and remain optimistic about the future. I look forward to continuing our work together on our organizing assessment (see article below) as we strive to live out our vision to empower people to protect and enhance the quality of life on the Western Slope.

Bill aims to reclaim mines & prosperity

from the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC)

In June, the House Natural Resources Committee advanced legislation that would send up to \$30 million to Colorado in order to put people to work reclaiming abandoned coal mines.

The RECLAIM Act, sponsored by Rep. Hal Rogers (R-KY), proposes to spend up to \$1 billion nationwide over five years to clean up legacy pollution from abandoned mine sites. The bill includes a provision that prioritizes cleanup of sites with potential for economic development. The appropriation would come from an existing fund designated for abandoned mine cleanup.

If the bill becomes law, workers would be hired immediately to reclaim abandoned coal mines in basins across the country. Once those sites are cleaned up, they would be suitable for businesses or entire industries to locate. Across the country, reclaimed mine land has been repurposed

See **Reclaiming mines** continued on page 3

What do people want? A strong WCC!

by Emily Hornback, Interim Director

This summer, Western Colorado Congress members wrapped up a surge of community outreach as part of our organizational assessment and strategic planning process. Through this joint effort, members and staff interviewed and sent online surveys to folks across our communities to learn more about what issues and concerns are on people's minds and to get feedback on our organization.

We started this journey together in February, setting out to answer some critical questions: Given limited resources – and given the new political landscape – how can WCC be as strategic as possible in the issues and campaigns it takes on? How to do we better build power and engage our communities?

Now that the data is in, it is clear that there is much good will in our communities for WCC and that people want us to be successful in our work.

It is also clear that Western Colorado, like much of rural America, is at a crossroads. The boom and bust of an energy economy has left communities throughout Western Colorado behind the development of a 21st century economy. However, the results of this assessment also show great opportunity for WCC to meet these needs and challenges of our communities going forward.

Here are some key insights into “what people

want” for WCC and the Western Slope:

- To hold their elected officials accountable and put people power back in democracy.
- To end the boom and bust economic cycles that have plagued our communities for generations, and to work to build truly resilient and sustainable rural economies that are healthy for people and the planet.
- To stay true to our community organizing model and build power through the grassroots.

However, it is also clear that we face challenges. Our membership has been shrinking and aging for many years. It is clear that we need to work harder to grow, prioritize, and support the next generation of WCC leaders. We also need to ensure that as we re-grow the membership, it is more reflective of the diverse communities we work in. We need to lift up voices of marginalized people and provide a place of sanctuary and support for people to discover and build their individual and collective power.

We also learned that people are confused about the work of our organization. Some of this is tied to the implicit inability of a hierarchal and top-down society to embrace true grassroots leadership. However, much of it is also tied to our own inability to clearly tell the world our story and share our proactive vision with our broader communities. Many people in Western Colorado

only identify WCC as “left wing enviros” who are obstructionist in nature.

We know that we have so much more to offer. We know that we are driven by a passion and vision to “create healthy, sustainable communities, social and economic justice, environmental stewardship and a truly democratic society.” But we need to make sure we can clearly and simply share this with the world.

So, where are we at in this process and how do we solve these challenges? A Strategic Planning Task Force has been formed, made up of board members, staff and representatives of our local affiliates. This group will meet throughout the fall to use this information to develop a long-term strategic plan to guide WCC in growing membership, increasing funding, building political power, expanding staff and possibly even our geographic scope. We will also be presenting the findings of the assessment to members and asking for feedback on the planning process from our local affiliates.

The goal is to have a plan ready for approval by our November board retreat. Together, we will then take the steps necessary to retool WCC into the powerful force that the people of the Western Slope need it to be!

For more information about the assessment or our strategic planning, don't hesitate to contact me at 970-256-7650 or emily@wccongress.org.

Western Colorado Congress

is a grassroots, democratic organization dedicated to challenging injustice by organizing people to increase their power over decisions that affect their lives.

WCC's community groups and members work together to create healthy, sustainable communities, social and economic justice, environmental stewardship and a truly democratic society.

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Whitewater drilling proposal draws 300+ comments

by Emily Hornback, Interim Director

After a flurry of activity, the public comment period for a proposal to drill 108 oil wells in the Grand Junction watershed outside of Whitewater came to a close on August 28.

WCC members and allies conducted a series of meetings with local government staff, spoke at public hearings, wrote a series of letters-to-the-editor, hosted an EcoFlight over the proposed drilling area, and submitted over 300 comments to the Bureau of Land Management. Now, we await the BLM's final decision on the project.

If the Final Environmental Assessment does not significantly change the proposal to better protect our air and water resources, WCC and our partners are prepared to challenge the decision (yet again).

EcoFlight, a non-profit based out of Aspen, partnered with WCC to host an over-flight of the proposed Whitewater drilling area in August.

Pictured above, participants in the flight were (left to right): Colette Bordelon, KREX; Emily Hornback, WCC; Kristin Winn, WCC and Citizens for Clean Air; Sister Ann Brost from Whitewater; Gary Harmon and Gretel Daugherty, GJ Daily Sentinel; Cassidee Shull, Colorado Association for Viticulture and Enology; Karaline Ann, KKCO; and Jerry Nelson from Citizens for Clean Air.

(below) Whitewater Creek courses through the proposed drilling area, with two drilling pads proposed near it.

See more images from the over-flight of the area at <http://ecoflight.org/8-15-17-grand-junction.html>.



New methane rules under attack

by Emily Hornback, Interim Director

In June, taxpayers across the country celebrated an unprecedented victory in the US Senate by defeating an industry-led attempt to repeal new rules to restrict methane emissions from oil and gas wells on public and tribal lands. (See *Summer issue of the Clarion*.)

However, as expected, the celebration was short-lived. Within weeks, the oil and gas industry and the Trump administration opened a new line of attack against both the Bureau of Land Management's and the Environmental Protection Agency's methane waste reduction rules.

The Department of Interior, which includes the BLM, announced in early July its intent to delay the implementation of the BLM methane rule while it organized an effort to re-write the rules to be more industry-friendly. A federal notice of intent to re-open the rules for public comment has been published, however, the timeline and specific details of the process have yet to be revealed.

WCC and our regional network, the Western Organization of Resource Councils, have not been resting on our laurels while we await these details. WORC has joined forces with other national allies to challenge the delay tactic in court. Four WCC members from across Western

Colorado submitted standing declarations to the suit to represent how important these protections are to the health and well-being of our communities.

In July, WCC and Citizens for Clean Air member Kristin Winn joined fellow WORC members to testify before the EPA in Washington DC. The number of people speaking in support of these rules outnumbered opponents 3-1. If that wasn't enough to send a strong message that these protections are necessary, a federal appeals court simultaneously ruled that the EPA cannot suspend the rules.

WCC is ready to keep up the fight. Strong national rules to stop the waste of our publicly owned resources and reduce air pollution from oil and gas are necessary to protect western Colorado communities. Without national protections, emissions from neighboring states with weak rules blow across borders and pollute our airsheds. Collectively, the U.S. loses more than \$1.5 billion in wasted natural gas every year.

We will do what it takes to keep these rules in place to protect public health and taxpayer-owned resources. In September, members and staff will gather at WORC's headquarters in Montana to prepare for future attacks against the rules.

Reclaiming mines

Continued from page 2

for industrial parks, renewable energy developments, and recreational tourism like kayaking and fly-fishing.

In addition to the House version of RECLAIM that passed through the Natural Resources Committee, there are two distinct versions of the bill in the Senate that will have to be reconciled with the House's bill.

WORC is sending members to Washington, DC, in October to garner Western support for RECLAIM and to help the legislation pass the House. WCC is supporting the effort through two Western Slope members who will join the fly-in. Rodger and Tina Carver from Nucla will speak with their members of Congress about the loss of coal jobs in Western Colorado and the need for federal action to support workers, retain local government revenue, and promote economic diversification in our counties. Passing the RECLAIM Act is one big step in the right direction.

Rep. Jared Polis (D-CO) is the sole co-sponsor from a WORC state, thus far.

WORC is a regional network of grassroots community organizations that includes 12,200 members and 39 local chapters – including WCC in Colorado. WORC helps its member groups succeed by providing training and coordinating issue work.

Applause for our volunteers who make it happen!

WCC is nothing without its member-volunteers. While we try to constantly thank all who contribute to the success of this organization, once a year we shine a spotlight on a few who have made inspirational contributions of time, effort and spirit.

At this year's Annual Conference on August 26, WCC honored Tom McKenney of Ridgway and Leslie Robinson of Rifle with its outstanding volunteer award – the Chuck & Betsy Worley Award. In addition, Cazz Davis received WCC's first-ever Rising Star Award.

Leslie Robinson

In nominating Leslie Robinson for the Worley Award, Bob Arrington said, "Her efforts in enabling and protecting communities [from the impacts of oil and gas development] has been her passion and a major part of her time and daily efforts. From political participation to fundraising, from grassroots organizing to lawsuits against wrongs, Leslie has done it all."

Leslie is the long-time chair of the Grand Valley Citizens Alliance, WCC's local affiliate in Garfield County, and has served on WCC's Board of Directors.

"I often approach "activism" as a game of strategy -- part poker, part chess -- that has no rules," Leslie said. "Luckily, WCC organizers and my GVCA board partners do a wonderful job making sure I don't get myself checkmated."

Tom McKenney

"Whenever the Ridgway-Ouray Community Council (WCC's local affiliate in Ouray County) has a call out for help, Tom McKenney will be the first to offer his services whether it be on an issue committee, kitchen duty at our annual spaghetti dinner, or leading the troops in trash pickup along Highway 550," said ROCC Vice President Kate Kellogg in introducing Tom.

Tom was a founding member of ROCC in the early 1990s, and has also served on the WCC Board, including a stint as Vice President. Over the years he has been involved in a number of issues, most recently affordable housing as a member of ROCC's Social Justice Committee. He also played a major role in ROCC's campaign



WCC honored Cazz Davis (at left) with its first-ever Rising Star Award for her volunteer efforts in Mesa County. Tom McKenney of Ridgway and Leslie Robinson of Rifle received this year's Worley Award for their years of spirited contributions to the organization.

to restrict residential development in Ouray County's Alpine Zone last year.

The Chuck & Betsy Worley Award for outstanding WCC volunteers was established in 1999, and named in honor of two of WCC's Founding Humans and lifelong community activists for peace and justice.

Also nominated for the 2017 Worley Awards were:

- ✓ **Nancy Kelso** of Montrose in honor of her dedication to promoting recycling, as well as for being the driving force behind WCC's annual silent auction;
- ✓ **Andrey Krievies** of Grand Junction in recognition of her leadership in the effort to bring a community and recreation center to Grand Junction; and
- ✓ **Janet Magoon** of Grand Junction for her efforts to protect the local riverfront from industrial development in a campaign that began in 2008.

Cazz Davis, A Rising Star

Since its inception in 1999, the Worley Award has become something of a "lifetime achievement award". In an effort to shine an equal light on up-and-coming activists, this year the WCC staff initiated the Rising Star Award. Recipients of this award will receive \$200 from WCC towards an activist-type training of the person's choice.

The inaugural recipient of the Rising Star Award is Cazz Davis of Grand Junction.

"Cazz brings positive energy and a skillset that includes social media, graphic design, and database building," noted Roxanne Dennis in nominating Cazz for the award. "She demonstrates intellectual curiosity and a warm heart in the work she does for WCC committees and other community efforts in the Grand Valley. Her contributions bear tangible fruit that move WCC projects forward and upward."

Cazz says she is most excited to be part of the effective team that is moving forward the idea of a community and recreation center for Grand Junction. (See article on page 7.)

A new vision for the GMUG Forest

WCC members across Western Colorado have been hitting the trails this summer as part of a grassroots effort to create a sustainable vision for the future of the Grand Mesa, Uncompaghre and Gunninson (GMUG) National Forest, literally building it from the ground-up. The hikes are part of "ground-truthing" efforts to help WCC and our conservation allies make informed recommendations for future wilderness and other special designations for the GMUG.

Ten years ago, WCC played a key role in building a community-led approach to forest management based on conservation biology, which was shelved when the planning process stalled. Now the time has come for us to revive this vision for the forest and ensure that the places we know and love are protected for future generations.

In this era of federal rollbacks and industry reps holding the reins of government, local voices are needed to protect our public lands. If you want to get involved in the GMUG Forest Planning campaign, please get in touch with Emily at emily@wcccongress.org.



On a ground-truthing hike to Hope Lake Special Management Area within the GMUG National Forests. Photo courtesy of Laurie Shannon, Great Old Broads, Ridgway.

Immigration, health care added to platform

by Brenda Bafus-Williams,
Communications Coordinator

At WCC's Annual Business Meeting on August 26, members approved three proposed resolutions which will become part of WCC's issue platform.

The first resolution "supports comprehensive and thoughtful **immigration reform** that builds the strength and unity of working people, keeps families together, and guarantees the constitutional rights, obligations, and human dignity for all community members, no matter where they come from."

A second resolution that received member approval "supports the vision of a **universal health care system** in Colorado that covers all Coloradoans with quality care, allows people a choice of medical providers and eliminates the added expense and bureaucracy of insurance companies. It also supports policies that promote

substantial paid family and medical leave from the workplace."

The third resolution was a reaffirmation of an **economic development resolution** from 1986. It "supports economic development which places greatest importance upon locally generated activities using local resources and local skills including rejuvenation of existing activities and creation of new ones compatible with our environment and present character."

Additionally, the current resolution authorized an assessment of the feasibility of WCC engaging in economic transition work in communities impacted by the declining coal mining industry.

Also during the business meeting, **Steve Allerton was unanimously reaffirmed in his position as WCC President, as was Shari VanderVelde as Secretary.** Congratulations and thank you both for your continued commitment!

Online voting a success!

For the first time ever, WCC members who were unable to attend the annual business meeting were still able to vote online.

The online voting option came as a result of a resolution passed at last year's annual meeting. In WCC's bylaws, which were originally crafted in 1980 before the existence of widely accessible internet connections and "apps" that facilitate just about any function imaginable, a member had to be physically present to vote. For an organization like WCC, whose mission includes fostering "a truly democratic society", providing an option for online participation in today's world seemed a no-brainer.

Using electionbuddy.com, WCC sent a link to the annual ballot to all members with email addresses. Forty-six members took advantage of the opportunity to vote remotely with no glitches reported!

Take action!

Call on Tipton to support Dream Act

The ink was scarcely dry on the Immigration Reform resolution adopted at the WCC annual conference (see article at left) before there was cause to take a stand on the issue with our allies.

After President Trump's announcement on Sept. 6 that he would end the DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) program in six months, WCC members wasted no time in rallying support for these young "Dreamers" who were brought to the U.S. as children.

Now, as the political winds have shifted and Trump has indicated he would sign reform legislation (the Dream Act) if it were passed by Congress, bi-partisan support is growing for a permanent legislative solution. Two different versions have been introduced in the US House and Senate, but **both bills would provide Dreamers with protection from deportation and an opportunity to obtain legal status if they meet certain requirements.**

Colorado's US Senators Michael Bennet (D) and Corey Gardner (R) have already pledged support for such legislation. However, US Rep. Scott Tipton (R), who represents Western Colorado, has not.

Please call US Rep. Scott Tipton (R-CO) at:

- (202) 225-4761 in Washington DC or
- (970) 241-2499 in Grand Junction

and urge him to support the 2017 Dream Act as a first step in fixing our broken immigration system. Make sure to indicate if you live in Tipton's district.

You can thank Senators Bennet and Gardner for taking a supportive stance by calling their Grand Junction offices at:

Gardner: (970) 245-9553
Bennet: (970) 241-6631

WCC board welcomes new members

While they weren't elected as part of the annual conference (see article above), WCC welcomed two new members to its Board of Directors in August.

Rick Baer of Grand Junction is a new **At-Large Director** to the WCC Board.

A native of southwest Colorado, Rick was a journeyman electrician and then organized with IBEW International until his retirement in 2007.

Since January 2013, he has been the Grand Junction Team Leader for OFA (Organizing for America) in its advocating for the Affordable Care Act, comprehensive



immigration reform, and legislative action on climate change. Rick also volunteers for the Hispanic Affairs Project, Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition, HillTop Health Access, Black Lives Matter and the American Red Cross.

New UVA board rep

Marv Ballantyne has been an icon on the WCC Board, having served in varying capacities (including President) since the 1980s. He recently stepped down as representative to the board for the Uncompahgre Valley Association, WCC's local affiliate in Montrose.

Kevin Kuns is UVA's new voice on the board. Kevin worked as an executive in the restaurant industry for 28 years. For the last 16 years, he has served as President and

principal of his own Executive Management search firm. He and his wife Bobbie moved to Montrose three years

ago. They have two children, one in the Navy for seven years and the other at the University of Wyoming.

Kevin is co-chair of the Wyoming Fallen Hero Scholarship Fund and a member of the newly-organized Montrose County Commissioners Advisory Board.

Kevin and Bobbie enjoy spending time in Colorado's great outdoors and have run 9 ½ marathons and two 180 mile relays.

Welcome, Rick and Kevin!



Shasti Conrad: Engage young people

Continued from page 1

"We must chart our own course - HERE. We must diligently focus on our local missions. We must be firm in our point of view, but also be respectful of others. We must reject the toxic noise of Washington, DC today, and instead be humble, HONEST -- and civil. Your work here today is more important and consequential than ever before.

"Final point: **Today, YOU ARE HERE. Who will be here tomorrow?** As we focus on our work today, we must prioritize efforts to

engage with young people from ALL walks of life. We must mentor and guide them, and prepare them to stand tall in our shoes.

"And let's all be sure to **engage young people who may not always look or sound just like us.** Just as my mother, a white woman from the Pacific Northwest, chose an Indian orphan as a daughter and readied her to work 100 feet from the Oval Office as an adult - be sure to engage and empower a diverse and inclusive group of young people to take our place.

"And understand that there will be times when millennials, immigrants, or people of color do things, and it may not look the exact same way that you did it 'back then' or that you do it now, but that's ok. There's a lot to learn on everyone's parts. **Be open to a new way of doing things.**

"We're in a time of upheaval, but if we stick with it, we may get to the other side stronger than we've been, more connected to our neighbors, and more reflective of our diverse communities."

Neighbors of drilling not given proper notice

by Emily Hornback, Interim Director

The grueling battle for landowner and community rights in Battlement Mesa is set to continue well into the fall as Battlement Mesa Concerned Citizens and the Grand Valley Citizens' Alliance gear up for two land use hearings.

BCC is a committee of GVCA, WCC's local affiliate in Garfield County.

The first hearing on six special use permits for two new large-scale well pads, a water storage facility, two pipelines, and a wastewater injection well is set for Sept. 13.

Although the likelihood of

stopping the full proposal is low, residents are determined to push back on drilling Pad A, which is within 500 feet of many homes in this lower income neighborhood of Battlement Mesa.

BCC members and WCC staff recently canvassed the neighborhood that will be directly impacted by this drilling pad. We learned that many residents were told there was nothing they could do to stop the project. They were encouraged to sign waivers that would allow Ursa Resources to disregard current state setback rules. These rules dictate that all oil and gas facilities be at least 500 feet from homes.

Pad A would also house a toxic wastewater injection well within close proximity to the drinking water infrastructure for the whole community.

Upon further research, it is clear that many of these trailer park residents did not receive proper notice of the land use process and subsequent hearings because they are renters – rather than owners – of the property they live on.

Given this information, BCC, GVCA and WCC are prepared to challenge Pad A over concerns of environmental justice and due process.

In this David vs. Goliath struggle, we must stand firm and hold drilling companies and local governments accountable to rules and protections we have fought so hard to attain, despite the odds. Every win we achieve, even if it is small, gets us one small step closer to safe and responsible drilling practices that respect community and environmental concerns.

Local campaigns such as this often give people their first experiences with community organizing and building power to make change happen.

Activist summit builds skills and capacity

by Jeriel Brammeier, Community Organizer

As WCC's enhanced Grassroots Democracy program takes shape, it's clear that activism and organizing trainings are in-demand in our region. On July 21, WCC partnered with D3 Indivisible from Ridgway to fill that need at the D3 Summit.

With 200 activists in attendance, ranging from newly-engaged to experienced, this event was a great opportunity to not only showcase the skills and knowledge of our staff, but also develop facilitation skills within our leaders and summer interns.

Members of WCC's local affiliates – Ridgway-Ouray Community Council, Uncompahgre Valley Association and WCC of Mesa County – were well-represented among the summit attendees.

The summit also provided a venue for activist organizations to make connections and build alliances. From the Great Old Broads, to Colorado Immigrant



Joel Dyar of Grand Junction, one of WCC's team of workshop facilitators, led a session on community organizing at the D3 Summit in Ridgway on July 21. Photo by Lehua La'a.

Rights Coalition, to Speak Colorado, the event highlighted 10 local organizations for activists to get involved with.

D3 Indivisible is one of the many organizations that has arisen

this year as part of a growing activist movement. It has the ability to create conversations in a space where other organizations aren't yet comfortable, and its members have the drive and direction to organize

a large, successful event. With only two months to plan the summit, WCC was able to offer D3 Indivisible some dedicated staff time for planning and structural support.

THANK YOU!

Western Colorado Congress wishes to thank the following generous people and foundations who have made donations since our previous newsletter. We couldn't do it without you!

\$5000 and up

Harris & Frances Block Foundation
Colorado Health Foundation
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John Whipple
Monica Wiitanen

Campaign for community center gains momentum

by Kimberly Langston, Grand Junction

The People for Local Activities & Community Enrichment (PLACE) team had an exciting summer, making great strides in its campaign to build a community and recreation center in Grand Junction!

PLACE, a committee of WCC of Mesa County, was able to:

- obtain a grant from the Colorado Health Foundation;
- successfully garner City Council support to examine a community and recreation center for Grand Junction; and

- secure the final missing piece to move forward – a matching grant from the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) that completed the \$50,000 total funding needed for a feasibility study.

Now, the forward momentum continues with PLACE working with the Grand Junction Parks and Recreation Department to select a company to complete the feasibility study. Through a very specific process, we solicited input from hundreds of experts across the country to help us examine possibilities and challenges around location, operations, funding,

amenities, partnerships, community input and architecture.

Once the consultants are chosen, we anticipate implementing the feasibility study in early November. Multiple opportunities for public input will be included as part of the process and will be advertised well in advance. In the meantime, the PLACE team is staying connected to the community through tabling at public events, attending relevant meetings, building rapport with business leaders, and planning for house meetings to share progress and maintain excitement.

Thank you to the WCC members and our friends in the community

who helped pack the City Council meeting last June and who have signed our petitions of support. The groundswell of commitment to build a community and recreation center has been amazing! The PLACE team is proud of the progress so far, and we will be eager to analyze the results and reveal the findings from the feasibility study later this spring.

In the meantime, PLACE can be contacted via gjcommunitycenter@wcccongress.org if you have questions or would like to receive ongoing communications about the community and recreation center.

Building relationships with our legislators

by Jeriel Brammeier, Community Organizer

WCC's Legislative Committee is in the midst of in-district meetings with our state-level elected officials. So far, in partnership with the leadership of WCC's local affiliate groups, we've met with Senator Don Coram (R-Dist, 6), Rep. Marc Catlin (R-District 58) and Rep. Barbara McLachlan (D-District 59). With a total of 11 officials representing WCC's membership in Denver, we have a busy few months ahead of us!

Establishing relationships with our legislators outside of the hectic legislative session (January to May each year) helps remind them who we are and of WCC's mission to increase our members' power over decisions that affect their lives. It also allows us the opportunity to thank them for any legislation they passed that we supported.

When we get to know our elected officials on a more personal level, we are able to gain a better understanding of why they ran for office and what they are passionate about. With a better perspective of

their vision for the future, we find commonality. This allows WCC to support legislation introduced by our legislators, work with them to run legislation pushed by our affiliate groups, and also hold them accountable to their constituents.

In the short term, in-district meetings help us forecast for the session ahead. Legislators use the off-session to lay the groundwork for the coming year's session -- identifying bills to introduce and participating in interim session committee meetings.

With a politically-packed 2018 ahead of us, it's imperative that we work closely with our elected officials to pass legislation that supports communities in rural Colorado.

Every spring, WCC organizes a People's Lobby Trip to Denver.



Members of the Ridgway-Ouray Community Council met with Rep. Barbara McLachlan on September 6. Pictured from left are: Don Swartz, Vicki Warner-Huggins, Roze Evans, Rep. McLachlan, Dudley Case, Jen Parker, Kate Kellogg, Donna Green and Robyn Cascade.

If you are interested in participating in an in-district meeting, or want an update from our legislative committee, get in touch with Jeriel at jeriel@wcccongress.org. And if you are interested in becoming a more active participant

during the regular session, consider joining our legislative action team that makes calls, writes letters, and focuses on specific bills being introduced. We're ready to have you on the team!

Join the film fest team!

Have you been inspired by Mountainfilm on Tour, brought each November to the Montrose Pavilion by Uncompahgre Valley Association (WCC's local affiliate in Montrose) and Community Options? Would you like to become more involved in bringing this exciting community event to our town?

If you are interested, please contact Beth Gibson at mesagirls2@gmail.com or (970) 208-7301.

MOUNTAINFILM ON TOUR

MONTROSE

Saturday, November 11, 2017
Montrose Pavilion

Doors open at 4:30 pm
for Silent Auction and Cash Bar
Films begin at 6:30 pm
\$10 suggested donation

Co-sponsored by Community Options & Uncompahgre Valley Association (WCC's local affiliate in Montrose)

MOUNTAINFILM ON TOUR

GRAND JUNCTION

Friday, September. 29

THE HISTORIC AVALON THEATRE

Doors open 6 pm | Films 7 pm

Advance Discount Tickets:

\$12 General | \$10 Senior, Military, Students
Kids 10 & Under Free | \$15 Day of Event

Ticket outlets:

wccongress.org
Summit Canyon Mountaineering, GJ
Rapid Creek Cycles, Palisade

“Mountainfilm reminds us of the force of filmmaking, about things that matter, worlds worth exploring and conversations worth sustaining.” – Ken Burns

by Marie Mitchell, Development Coordinator

On Friday, September 29, Colorado’s largest homegrown film festival will be traveling to the Grand Valley area to present **Mountainfilm on Tour Grand Junction**. Hosted annually by Western Colorado Congress and its Mesa County affiliate group, the Tour brings films from the acclaimed Telluride Mountainfilm festival and celebrates what is around us: life, adventure, nature, outdoors and the thrill of enjoying it.

“Word is out that Mountainfilm on Tour is a great way to spend a day and we are delighted by that,” said WCC volunteer Harriet Carpenter. “The traveling Tour touches the lives of over 50,000

people every year and visits more than 100 locations on six continents, including our community.”

As in years past, the 2017 **Mountainfilm on Tour Grand Junction** will have films as diverse as the Western Slope. The event includes 14 short films with four of those having a Colorado connection: “Waking Dragons”, “Chocolate Spokes”, “Leche Y Miel” and “Conservation Generation”.

Special guests connect film to life on the Western Slope

Special guests at this year’s event are first-generation farmers – Harrison Topp and Tyler and Kendra Hoyt – who are featured in the film, “Conservation Generations”. Produced by the

National Young Farmers Coalition (NYFC), the film paints a picture of these young farmers, their approach to water as a precious resource, and the challenges they face.

Some of the other films presented this year include: “Through the Wall”, “Jonah”, “Johanna Under the Ice” and “Ditch the Van” (New Normal Award Winner), reflecting the determination of the human spirit. **Visit www.wccongress.org/news-events/ for the complete festival schedule.**

Inspiring the next generation

As part of the Tour, Mountainfilm for Students brings a free outreach program to K-12 schools.

“The program aims to inspire young people to see the world in a new way, and to meet personalities

who have made differences with their lives,” notes Steve Allerton, WCC President.

Films coupled with food drive

“This year’s event will be like a ‘double feature,’” enthuses Event Coordinator Marie Mitchell. “A film fest to benefit WCC coupled with a mini-food drive to support Western Slope Food Bank of the Rockies.”

Event attendees who bring four non-perishable food items will be entered for a door prize. Mitchell says this is just one small step to collaborate with other grassroots organizations while encouraging the value of community engagement.

Other event activities will include a short live auction as well as music from Thomasina and Friends.



Event Sponsors

Powderhorn Mountain Resort
High Noon Solar
TRIAD Employee Assistance Programs
RimRock Adventures
Nall Family | Carpenter Family
Dufford, Waldeck, Milburn & Krohn LLP
Koinoina Spiritual Community Church
Allerton Family | Marie Mitchell
Church of the Nativity
First Congregationalist UCC
Grand Valley Audubon Society
Chamberlin Architects
Kate Stammler | Sharon Jordan
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Grand Junction Daily Sentinel

In-kind Sponsors

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Recreational Equipment Inc (REI)
Durango Silverton Narrow Gauge
Hampton Inn/ Springhill/ Fairfield Suites in Grand Junction
Sustainability Council CMU
Colorado Baby
Boots N Laces Auctioneer

Thanks to all our volunteers!

Yes, I want to join Western Colorado Congress or renew my membership!



- \$10 Student
- \$35 Individual member (\$25 limited income)
- \$55 Family member (\$35 limited income)
- \$100 Business or organization

I want to help even more!

- \$200 \$500 \$1,000 \$2,500 \$5,000 \$_____
- I want to be a sustaining member – please bill my credit card \$_____ per month.
- I'd like to learn about leaving WCC in my will or other giving options.
- I'd like to remain anonymous.

If you live in a county with a local WCC affiliate or check one of the boxes below, you will become a member of that group as well. (optional)

- Grand Valley Citizens Alliance (Garfield County)
- Ridgway-Ouray Community Council (Ouray County)
- Uncompahgre Valley Association (Montrose County)
- WCC of Mesa County (Mesa County)

Name _____

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- Please bill my Visa MasterCard Discover American Express.
- Cardholder's signature: _____ Exp date: ___/___
- Card number: _____

Make checks payable to:

Western Colorado Congress
P.O. Box 1931, Grand Junction, CO 81502

Save a stamp – make your secure donation online at [wccongress.org!](http://wccongress.org/)

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