

Youth Voter Initiative hits the streets!

Learn more on page 3

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Taking a lesson from the surprising artichoke

by Steve Allerton, Alliance President

We have two artichoke plants growing in our plot at the Koinonia Community Garden which overwintered and have produced vibrant purple blooms this year. They are certainly an unexpected treat. Prior to blooming, the artichoke itself is rather coarse, tough and prickly. As it slowly opens it reveals its beauty and is a welcome sight to a variety

of pollinators.

Now that Western Colorado Alliance has successfully launched its new brand, we remain committed to the work that lies ahead and are planning for our Annual Conference in August. (See pages 4-5.) The theme this year is centered on "Homegrown Prosperity". My guess is that these two words will occur to us in different ways. Together we'll have an opportunity to learn

what this may mean for our Alliance and the work we do on the Western Slope.

My hope is that you all will join us in August to renew acquaintances, make new friendships, and help us grow in the work. Though at times the work can be coarse, tough, and rather prickly, the result may surprise us in ways we could never imagine.



Time to roll up our economic development sleeves

by Emily Hornback, Staff Director

We want life to be simple. We don't want to have to work three jobs to stay here.

We want to keep things the way they are.

The world is changing -- how do we lead the conversation as opposed to having it done to us?

-- Comments gathered in 2017
Western Colorado Alliance assessment

Over the past few years, our Alliance for Community Action has done a lot of listening. After gathering extensive feedback on our organization and our work in 2017, we responded by updating not only our name and logo, but also our mission and vision

statements. With these updates, we responded to direct feedback from our communities about the need to get back to basics: community organizing and training for everyday Western Slope folks so we can build the world we want to see.

We also heard loud and clear that the world we want to see must include a rural economy that provides a future for working families in western Colorado. We are living through a political era where the global economy is transforming itself and, largely, leaving rural communities behind.

This information is not new. Our members across western Colorado have lived through the impacts of boom and bust cycles. Many of us remember Black Sunday when Exxon closed its oil shale

operations in 1982 and laid off 2,000 workers overnight.

And one only has to look through our filing cabinet to see how issues we have worked on for decades are tied to the cycles of extractive industries. Whether we were fighting aspen clear-cutting, radioactive waste dumps or drilling rigs next to homes, many of our campaigns have been - at their core - attempts to balance the impacts of industrial development with ecological and community health.

Jobs vs environment is always a false choice

For decades, we have been told that rural economies were dependent on these industrial projects, and the conversation boiled down to the usual

refrain of "jobs vs. the environment." And for decades, we have pushed back on that narrative, insisting that we do not need to choose between our health and a job.

Our Alliance members have always known that there is a different economic future to be built on other resources, skills and knowledge found here in western Colorado. And at times, we have come together to help bring it into being by passing laws to allow farmers to sell goods directly from their kitchens and by opening up renewable energy financing in our region.

In fact, many of the issues we have worked on for years have been dabbling in the arena of rural economic development, but we have stopped short

See **Economic development** on p 3



brings people together to build grassroots power through community organizing and leadership development.

Our Alliance's vision for the future is one where engaged local voices are leading communities across Western Colorado that are healthy, just and self-reliant.

Grand Junction Office

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Our Alliance's Board of Directors

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Youth Voter Initiative views voting as a right and responsibility

by Jeriel Clark, Community Organizer

It's not easy to build a young leaders program. In years past, our organization has worked hard and struggled to engage local youth. Now, we are struggling just to keep up with them.

When Veniece Miller, a local high school student who attended our annual People's Lobby trip in March, asked if we had any summer internship opportunities, we knew we couldn't turn her down. Nor could we turn away the dozens of local young people who have surfaced since then, looking for ways to make a difference in 2018.

During our in-depth community assessment last year, two issues continued to rise to the forefront of our conversations: 1) increasing our emphasis on civic engagement and 2) creating space where younger people can plug into Western Colorado Alliance. And after analyzing the voting patterns on the Western Slope, we decided the best approach would be to combine these two issues by creating a youth voter registration program.

Through our Youth Voter Initiative, our goal is not to persuade local youth to vote for a particular party or candidate, but to view voting as a right and a responsibility, always. And in remembering that the messenger is as

important as the message, this program is being built by local students.

In the first month of her internship, Veniece has led the way in researching and identifying the right voter registration program for our students, traveled the state to meet with the experts and held meetings with young people who are excited to take on the role of Grassroots Democracy interns.

These students officially launched the program during the 4th of July parade in Grand Junction while riding in and walking alongside their "Vote Boat" float. While several students, including one dressed as Captain America, cooled off a hot and willing crowd with water guns, many more walked through the crowd, wearing t-shirts they designed and registering people to vote.

With a successful kick-off event, our Youth Voter Initiative is underway! The students are now preparing to bring this program into their schools for the 2018-2019 school year. With 17 students already signed up, our goal is to train at least 25 students in Mesa, Montrose and Garfield Counties to register students in nine local high schools.

These students represent the whole political spectrum, and are working together to ensure they use their voices in the years to come.



Before the July 4th parade in Grand Junction, Alliance intern Veniece Miller (at left) explains to other Grassroots Democracy interns how to register someone to vote. Photo by Jeriel Clark.

If you want to help our Grassroots Democracy interns be successful in their schools this Fall, consider making a donation at bit.ly/SupportYouthVoterInitiative. And if you know a student who might be interested in becoming a Grassroots Democracy intern, she or he can go here for more information: bit.ly/youthvoterinitiative.

Economic development

Continued from page 2

of tackling the issue head on. Based on what we heard last year, the time has come to stop dabbling, roll up our sleeves, and get to work building an economic vision for Western Colorado through a community organizing process.

Thankfully, we are not alone in this work. From the coalfields of Appalachia to the inner city of Detroit, communities across the country are coming together to create diverse and resilient local economies that work for everyone. It is time for us to join this national conversation and bring a vision for "Homegrown Prosperity" in western Colorado, built from the ground up.

We will be kick-starting this conversation at our Annual Conference on August 25 (see pgs 4-5) with a series of workshops on rural economic development.

We are honored to welcome guest speaker Eric Dixon from the Appalachian Citizen Law Center to share stories from the heart of coal country as people work for a "just transition" in the face of a collapsing coal economy.

We hope you can join us in these conversations as we build our vision for diverse and resilient rural economies that work for all of us.

Visit HomegrownStories.org!

A regional project featuring stories about food and farm systems that honor the health of families, the land and our communities, including some Western Colorado Alliance members!

A project of the Western Organization of Resource Councils (worc.org).



BUILDING HOMETOWN PROSPERITY
IN WESTERN COLORADO

BROADBAND

CLEAN & RENEWABLE ENERGY

PUBLIC LANDS

LOCAL FOODS & AGRICULTURE

GRASSROOTS DEMOCRACY

SATURDAY, AUG 25
TWO RIVERS
CONVENTION
CENTER
GRAND JUNCTION

THE DAY AT A GLANCE

BUSINESS MEETING

10:00 AM

- Reports, elections and small group discussions (See details on pg 5.)

WORKSHOP BLOCK 1

2:00 PM

- **Building Homegrown Prosperity from the Ground Up.** We'll utilize our own knowledge and experience to interpret basic data on our local economies, and together build a vision for what "home-grown prosperity" looks like in our region.
- **Pouring a Strong Foundation.** Our Youth Voter Initiative aims to provide a framework for young people to become involved in their communities. Come learn about the creative ways they are engaging their peers, and discover how you can get involved and/or support their work.
- **Capitol Confidential.** A conversation with Sol Malick, our Alliance's Denver-based lobbyist, about the results of the 2018 legislative session and forecasts for 2019.

HAPPY HOUR

6:00 PM

- Join us at Charlie Dwellington's to continue the conversation and enjoy local live music. Cash bar. (across the street from Two Rivers)

DOORS OPEN

9:00 AM

- Check-in, snag a donut and coffee, check out the displays, and visit with friends, old and new.

LUNCH

12:15 PM

- **Welcome** from Emily Hornback, Staff Director
- **Rising Star and Worley Awards** for Outstanding Volunteers (See details pg 5.)
- **From Appalachia to the West:** *How grassroots voices will lead the way to a future beyond boom and bust, with Eric Dixon.*

WORKSHOP BLOCK 2

4:00 PM

- **Building Homegrown Prosperity from the Ground Up.** We'll utilize our own knowledge and experience to interpret basic data on our local economies, and together build a vision for what "home-grown prosperity" looks like in our region.
- **Raising the Roof: Elevating Our Work Through Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.** Learn how these values are vital to building Homegrown Prosperity as well as strong relationships within our communities.
- **Wiring It for Sound.** Learn how the power of stories can help us hear one another – within our families and our communities – even over the buzz-saw of polarizing politics.

OUR ALLIANCE'S 38TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

If you think about it, building Homegrown Prosperity is a lot like building a house. You start out with a vision of what you want to build – in our Alliance's case, we envision a Western Slope that is home to diverse and resilient local economies that work for **all** of us.

If it's going to work for all of us, then everyone needs to be involved in creating the blueprint – which sounds a lot like Grassroots Democracy to us.

Well, the metaphor kind of takes off from there. Whether you're most interested in "pouring a foundation" or "raising the roof" or "wiring it for sound," we hope you'll find some topics of interest in our agenda!

ERIC DIXON

As our keynote speaker, Eric Dixon will share how grassroots organizations across Appalachia have come together in the face of a collapsing coal-based economy to build a vision for Appalachia's Bright Future.



Dixon coordinates policy analysis and engagement efforts for the Appalachian Citizen Law Center, particularly around abandoned mine land reclamation, renewable energy, and electric utility issues.

PAY IT FORWARD

If \$35 is more than you can swing for registration (which includes lunch), call Stefanie at our office (970-256-7650) to ask about our Pay It Forward scholarships! And if our Alliance has enriched your life, please consider donating a scholarship or two. It's fast becoming a tradition for our generous members to "pay it forward" so that some fresh new faces can attend the conference free of charge.

Nominations open for Alliance officers

An important piece of our Alliance's Annual Conference is always the Annual Business Meeting. **Nominations are open until August 11** for this year's election of President and Treasurer. **To nominate an Alliance member (including yourself!) for one of these positions, contact Vice President Reed Kelley at josephinebasin@gmail.com.**

Our Alliance's Nominations Committee is putting forward the following candidates, both of whom are incumbants running for re-election.

Steve Allerton: Candidate for President

It has been an honor to serve as President of the Board of Directors for Western Colorado Congress and now Western Colorado Alliance for Community Action. I look forward to serving another two-year term should I have your support.



The last two years have presented challenges and a great deal of learning as we have embarked on a five-year strategic plan, renewed our mission and vision, and have realized a name change that fully describes our intentions. All of this could not have been accomplished without our members, a dedicated Board of Directors, and an experienced, mission-driven staff.

Throughout my career in human services (12.5 years) and an educator (25 years), I have found myself

in various positions of leadership. I've mentored both beginning and experienced teachers, organized and facilitated school-wide learning opportunities, and trained foster parents to work with challenging youth.

Dudley Case: Candidate for Treasurer

An attorney and accountant, I have spent most of my career with the U.S. Treasury Department in Chicago. Since retiring to Ouray County in 2009, I have been involved in numerous nonprofits, and currently sit on the boards of the Ridgway-Ouray Community Council (Secretary), Uncompahgre Watershed Partnership (River Watch Volunteer), Voyager Youth Program (Treasurer), Ridgway Spirit Fest, and The Ridge HOA (President and Treasurer). I volunteer with the Ouray County Historical Society, Ouray County Ranch History Museum and the Ridgway Railroad Museum. And I'm also a professional landscape photographer.



On a more personal note, I actively support our Alliance's endeavors to create healthy, sustainable communities, social and economic justice, environmental stewardship and a truly democratic society. I try very hard to help our Alliance avoid and resolve any organizational challenges that it faces as well as fostering a working relationship between our members, groups and the communities that we serve.

Shine a light on a Rising Star!

Honor an outstanding Alliance volunteer by nominating him/her for one of two awards to be given at this year's Annual Conference! Nominations may be made by an individual, local affiliate group or committee.

Nominations for either award should be submitted to brenda@WesternColoradoAlliance.org by Aug. 1. Be sure to include a persuasive statement of the nominee's involvement in our Alliance and/or one of our local affiliates.

Worley Award

The Chuck & Betsy Worley Award was established in 1999, and honors individuals who have made outstanding volunteer contributions to our Alliance. The award is named in honor of two of our Founding Humans who were life-long activists for environmental and social justice.

Rising Star Award

Last year we started a new tradition with the Rising Star Award, specifically honoring new volunteers. To be eligible, a nominee must have joined or become active in our Alliance in the past two years.

PLEASE REGISTER BY AUGUST 13

LUNCH will be served buffet style and prepared gluten-free.

This registration includes ____ (#) vegetarians.

DAYCARE Let us know if you need access to free daycare in order to attend. Please indicate the age of your children. _____

BREAKOUT SESSION PREFERENCES (see page 4)

2:00 pm: Block 1

____ Building Homegrown Prosperity

____ Pouring a Strong Foundation

____ Capitol Confidential

4:00 pm: Block 2

____ Building Homegrown Prosperity

____ Raising the Roof: Elevating our Work through Diversity, Equity & Inclusivity

____ Wiring It for Sound

Register at our website (WesternColoradoAlliance.org) or mail this form to:

**Western Colorado Alliance
PO Box 1931
Grand Junction CO 81502**

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Email _____

Please bill my Visa MC Discover AmEx

Card no.: _____ CVV: _____

Exp. Date: ____/____/____ Phone _____

<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Amount</u>
_____ Adults (includes lunch) at \$35 each	= _____
_____ NEWBIES @ \$25 each	= _____
<i>(If you're NEW to our Alliance OR if you're a member bringing a NEW person, you can both register for \$25 per person!)</i>	
_____ Kids under 12	= FREE
_____ Pay It Forward scholarships at \$35 each (see page 4)	= _____
TOTAL	= _____

Yes! Building Grand Junction community center is feasible!

by Marty McDanel, Grand Junction

On July 16, a standing room-only crowd heard the recommendations from PLACE for a Community Center for Grand Junction. The study showed that 88% of those surveyed think a Community Center is important, and an almost equal number were willing to pay an additional 1/3-cent sales tax to build the facility. This would cost the average family about \$40 a year in increased sales taxes.

In presenting the proposal, PLACE members Kimberly Langston and Andrey Krievs emphasized the many comments on the survey saying, "Do it right, do it now!"

PLACE, in coordination with the City Parks and Recreation Department, initiated an extensive feasibility study to evaluate the need and interest in a Community Center.

PLACE (People for Local Activities & Community Enrichment) is a team of our Alliance members in Mesa County which began building support for such a facility in 2015.

Top desired amenities were aquatics, fitness areas, community meeting areas and gym space. Additional amenities would include a childcare area, a bouldering wall for teens, specific teen and senior spaces and a walking track.

Based on the results of the survey,



Supporters of a proposed Grand Junction community center packed City Hall to hear the results of a feasibility study done on the project.

PLACE is recommending building the new Community Center at Matchett Park. In addition, PLACE is recommending renovation of the Orchard Mesa pool and gym to provide additional space in a cost effective manner.

PLACE is requesting that the City

Council make its decision to refer the proposal to the April 2019 ballot by August 15. Should the council not refer the measure, PLACE would need to begin collecting signatures to petition being on the April 2019 ballot.

Farm bill impacts more than farmers

by Leah López, Community Organizer

The 2018 Farm Bill - which is currently being debated by the US Congress - is much more than an agricultural aid package. *In fact, it influences you every day.* Policies in the farm bill help determine what type of food is available to you, how much it costs, and the tools available to your community to protect farm and ranch land and promote renewable energy and energy efficiency. Farm bill policy can help ensure fair markets and prices for family farmers and ranchers, and provide nutrition assistance to hungry families and schoolchildren.

This package of federal legislation is revisited and enacted every five years to set the general direction for America's farm and food policy.

As part of the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC), our Alliance urges Congress to pass a farm bill before the current bill expires on September 30, 2018, that prioritizes and incorporates the following concepts and policies:

- Invest in local and regional food systems
- Restore fair & competitive markets
- Protect healthy families

- Fair access to credit and crop insurance
- Protect conservation funding
- Reinvest in research for the public good

House version of the farm bill

After failing in May, a second attempt to pass the very partisan H.R. 2 was successful in a close 213-211 vote in June. 191 Democrats and 20 Republicans voted against the bill. All Democrats in WORC's member states opposed the bill, while all Republicans supported the bill.

Senate version of the farm bill

The Senate passed its own version of the 2018 farm bill by a 86-11 vote, with great bi-partisan support, setting up a conference with the House this summer. Disagreements in conference negotiations are likely to be over conservation programs, environmental protections in national forests and low-income nutrition assistance (SNAP).

Read more about the WORC farm bill platform and how it might impact your community by visiting the Local Foods & Agriculture page on our website (WesternColoradoAlliance.org).

--- WANTED ---

foodies
farmers
backyard gardeners
ranchers
retailers
restauranters
canners
home cooks
& everyone who eats!

Help us continue the work of building healthy food systems in Western Colorado

Contact Alliance organizer Leah López for more info & ways you can get involved
leah@westerncoloradoalliance.org
970-256-7650

Battlement Mesa awaits ruling on “most reckless” proposal

by Troy Redding, Community Organizer
and Emily Hornback, Staff Director

Battlement Concerned Citizens are enduring a summer of suspense as they await a final decision from the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (COGCC) on a proposal to drill 24 natural gas wells 500 feet away from homes and the Colorado River. The so-called “A Pad” is the latest pad proposed by Ursa Resources and has been deemed the “most reckless and dangerous” proposal in the state due to its proximity to homes, waterways, and the water treatment system in Battlement Mesa.

Earlier this year, the Garfield County affiliate groups of Western Colorado Alliance -- Battlement Concerns Citizens and the Grand Valley Citizen's Alliance -- rallied with residents across the state to submit hundreds of comments against the proposal, asking that the COGCC move the pad further away from the Tamarisk Village neighborhood.

As a result of increased pressure and scrutiny, Ursa has at least moved the pad back to the required 500 feet minimum distance from the nearest home. However, the overall plan remains unchanged and residents have maintained their opposition to the pad. A final decision from the COGCC could be made any day.

Ballot initiative would increase setbacks

In the meantime, BCC members have not been idle. Residents are still fighting to keep oil and gas development a safe distance away from occupied structures and have been circulating petitions for ballot Initiative 97. This initiative aims to prevent new oil and gas development within 2500 feet of occupied structures and environmentally vulnerable areas. With BCC's help, we hope to increase protections for people living near oil and gas development.

BCC and GVCA are also working

to improve air quality monitoring and air quality protections both in their community and at a state level. As drilling occurs closer and closer to homes, residents have been exposed to bad air and unpleasant odors, resulting in health problems including nosebleeds and headaches. The health issues seem to flare whenever these odors are particularly intense.

Pushing for better air quality

In an effort to address these concerns, BCC has pressured drilling companies to do something to control these awful odors and are working to improve the air quality monitoring systems in Battlement.

BCC's local efforts dovetail with statewide efforts to update and strengthen air quality rules related to oil and gas production. Since February, Alliance members have been participating in an Air Quality Control Commission task force to strengthen air pollution standards for oil and gas

facilities, requiring annual testing and prompt repairs when leaks are detected. We are also pushing for tighter emission requirements when drilling occurs next to homes. Work on these rules will continue throughout the year, so stay tuned for the next opportunity to comment in support of clean air.

This August, our Alliance will also be working with EarthWorks Action to see leaks from oil and gas equipment first-hand. We'll be out in the field, using a forward looking infrared radiometer (FLIR) to look at oil and gas sites in Garfield and Routt Counties. Using this equipment, we will be able to see leaks containing methane and many other gases that are invisible to the human eye.

Get in touch with Troy (troy@WesternColoradoAlliance.org) if you would like more information about the FLIR trip or are interested in participating!

Mountainfilm on tour in November

Mountainfilm on Tour is coming to Grand Junction and Montrose again this fall, bringing a selection of culturally rich, adventure-packed and inspiring documentary films curated from the Mountainfilm festival held every Memorial Day weekend in Telluride, Colorado.

Both events will explore themes connected to Mountainfilm's mission: to use the power of film to inspire audiences to create a better world.

If you would like to help our team pull together the Grand Junction event -- anything from selecting the films to organizing the silent auction -- contact event coordinator Stefanie Harville at 970.256.7650 or stefanie@WesternColoradoAlliance.org To help Uncompahgre Valley Association, our Alliance's local affiliate in Montrose, contact Beth Gibson at mesagirls2@gmail.com or 970.208.7301

MOUNTAINFILM ON TOUR

GRAND JUNCTION

Friday, November 9
at the historic Avalon Theater

*Two great events --
save the dates!*

MOUNTAINFILM ON TOUR

MONTROSE

Saturday, November 10
at the Montrose Pavilion

Yes, I want to join or renew my membership in Western Colorado Alliance for Community Action!

- \$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 \$_____
- I want to be a sustaining member – bill my credit card \$_____/month.
- I'd like to learn about leaving WCC in my will or other giving options.
- I'd like to remain anonymous.

Make checks payable to:

Western Colorado Alliance

P.O. Box 1931, Grand Junction, CO 81502

Save a stamp – make your secure donation
at WesternColoradoAlliance.org!

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

My check (or first installment) is enclosed.

Please bill my Visa MasterCard
 Discover American Express.

Cardholder's signature:

Exp date: ___/___ CVV: _____

Card #: _____

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Hikes help 'ground-truth' characteristics of public lands

by Leah López, Community Organizer

Western Colorado Alliance and conservation allies around the Western Slope are planning hikes into the beautiful places we're all working to protect through the Grand Mesa-Uncompahgre-Gunnison (GMUG) National Forest Plan revision and the San Juan Mountains Wilderness Act.

Join us as we find new reasons to love the wild places of western Colorado while also "ground-truthing" or verifying features on Forest Service maps.

Visit www.downtomeet.com/Cheers-to-our-Public-Lands/home to RSVP and/or find updates on any of these hikes:

- July 21st - **Carson Lake Hike & Happy Hour:** Co-sponsored by the Alliance, Conservation Colorado, & Great Old Broads for Wilderness.
- Aug. 18th - **Wildcat Trail Hike & Happy Hour:** Co-sponsored by Great Old Broads for Wilderness, Conservation Colorado, and the Alliance.
- Sept. (to be determined) - **Kelso Mesa Hike:** Co-sponsored by Western Colorado Alliance, Conservation Colorado, & Great Old Broads for Wilderness. Postponed until cooler weather - check downtomeet.com for updates.



On a scouting hike to Kelso Mesa in June, Leah López and Andy Goldman enjoyed spectacular views atop the cliffs overlooking North Fork of Escalante Creek. While there, they also "ground-truthed" or verified GPS coordinates against a Forest Service map. Photo courtesy of Jim Riddell, Grand Junction.