

Heading into 2024: Aurora State of the City

The State of the City, hosted by the Rotary Club of Aurora, was held December 15, 2023, at the Hyatt Regency Aurora-Denver Conference Center. Aurora Mayor Mike Coffman reflected on 2023 and talked about his goals for the city in 2024.

He first thanked the voters and recognized City Council members, welcoming Stephanie Hancock, who was sworn in the week before.

Mayor Coffman shared that growing up in Aurora, he was disinterested in school, but after enlisting in the United States Army at the end of his junior year, his attitude and focus changed, and he became highly disciplined and determined. He also learned in the Army infantry, when he went to the first sergeant about a 'problem' – that there were no 'problems' (in the U.S. Army), only 'situations.'

He then referred to the 'situations' facing the City of Aurora and talked about 'solutions' to address them in 2024:

- **Increase Aurora's inventory of affordable housing.**

The city of Aurora was the first city in Colorado to commit to the affordable housing goals of the voter-approved initiative, Proposition 123, providing state incentives for those local governments that increase their affordable housing inventory by three percent year over year. Coffman praised Council Member Francoise Bergan for promoting the latest technologies in modular housing to make housing more affordable for Aurora's working families and said he looks forward to working with Council Member Crystal Murillo to make sure that as Northwest Aurora is redeveloped, residents and small businesses are not forced out of their neighborhoods.

- **Recognize the impacts of a prolonged drought and climate change and manage sustainable growth through Aurora's leadership on water conservation.**

Council Member Steve Sundberg continues to lead efforts to conserve water on all city-owned properties, and to help existing property owners reduce their water usage.



Aurora Mayor Mike Coffman

- **Champion economic drivers in the community to include the Anschutz Medical Campus, the Fitzsimons Innovation Community, and Buckley Space Force Base, as catalysts for economic development.**

In addition, as part of Aurora Sister Cities International, Coffman and Council Member Alison Coombs recently went to Chihuahua, Mexico, where they met with business leaders and toured manufacturing facilities and will be exploring economic development opportunities between the two cities.

- **Work with the state legislature to increase the number of mental health beds in the state.**

Coffman emphasized the need to draft legislation about mental health because it intersects with two of the most critical issues facing the state – crime and homelessness. Aurora currently has two co-responder programs that put mental health clinicians in the field with police and firefighters. Together, those teams have helped thousands of people in crisis who did not need a traditional police or fire response. These teams have saved patrol officers and paramedics thousands of hours, allowing them to focus on the more critical calls.

- **Continue to make progress on reducing the crime rate.**

Working with then Interim Police Chief Dan Oates and 18th Judicial District Attorney John Kellner, five legislative proposals were written to bring down the crime rate in Aurora and across Colorado. Then Mayors John Suthers of Colorado Springs and Michael Hancock of Denver supported these public safety agendas, and the proposals were supported by Governor Polis.

Four out of five items passed the legislature and were signed into law by the Governor:

- Making all auto thefts a felony
- Securing grant funding for license plate readers so police departments across the State of Colorado can track down more stolen vehicles
- Prohibiting firearms that do not have serial numbers – so-called “ghost guns”
- Raising the cap on the number of juvenile detention beds in Colorado, so we can keep juveniles charged with violent crimes off the streets before their court dates

The only agenda item that did not pass would have prohibited more convicted criminals from having firearms.

The Public Safety, Courts & Civil Service Policy Committee, chaired by Council Member Danielle Jurinsky with Vice Chair Mayor Pro Tem Dustin Zvonek and Council Member Steve Sundberg are working with Interim Police Chief Art Acevedo on a resolution that will lay out the 2024 public safety priorities necessary to continue to bring down the crime rate in Aurora. The resolution includes resources, training, changes to the municipal code necessary to reduce crime, and changes to state law, that if passed by the legislature, will make our city and the state safer.

Regarding youth violence, Council Member Angela Lawson will continue her work on Aurora's youth violence prevention

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President's Letter

Who's ready for 2024?
I certainly have a feeling of excitement and anticipation for what the new year will bring!

It's such a wonderful time for new beginnings and opportunities to challenge ourselves to do important things both personally and professionally. One of the gratifying things about being a Chamber of Commerce is that we get to advocate for our business membership - to help them succeed and to stand up for them when they feel like they don't have a voice. We take immense pride in getting to know our membership and helping them succeed.

Over the last few months, we have been planning for the future of The Chamber. We have revised our by-laws and are



Naomi Colwell
President & CEO

working on strategic and succession plans. The strategic plan will give us defined direction and goals to achieve - and once completed, will be shared with membership.

And in line with the future of The Chamber, please help me in congratulating the promotions of Rene Simard to COO and Mitzi Schindler to vice president of Communications. Rene will also maintain his role

as chief of Military Affairs. We also recently expanded the staff to include Director of Membership Development Steve Phillips, Director of Finance Penny Krueger, and Director of Events Sophia Bibbey. The team is ready to help members so that their

businesses and the community will prosper.

A sneak peek of one of our 'Wildly Important Goals' (WIG) is to grow our membership, so I ask you to spread the word of your Chamber. Let your favorite businesses, stores, restaurants, and neighborhood hangouts know about us, as we want to get to know them. If it's easier to drop us an email with their contact info, please email me at naomi.colwell@aurorachamber.org; I'll reach out to them personally.

Finally, as 2023 fades in the rear-view mirror, join us in making a difference in 2024. We look forward to creating new partnerships and cultivating exciting opportunities for everyone in the community.

Naomi Colwell
President and CEO,
Aurora Chamber of Commerce

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DON'T FORGET: "Every employee of a Chamber member is a member of The Chamber"
Please route this issue to your sales reps, account managers, marketing directors, HR and PR departments. You can also access each month's newsletter online at our website, www.aurorachamber.org, so you can forward it to every employee in your company!

**THE CHAMBER'S
MISSION**



The mission of the Aurora Chamber of Commerce is to give a voice to the business community and serve as an advocate for its members, creating a positive business environment that encourages their growth and long-term economic vitality

ChamberCommittees

An Inside Look

ARTS + BUSINESS CONNECTION

Art and Recreation as Therapy for Veterans

Tuesday, November 7, 2023

By Mark Smith, PhotoSmith Colorado, and ABC Chair

Art and recreation as therapy for Veterans was the subject of the November 7, 2023, Arts + Business Connection held at the Rocky Mountain Regional VA Medical Center.

Sarah El Hage, CTRS, recreational therapist with the VA explained the myriad of therapies offered to help Veterans deal with PTSD and other service-related issues. The concept is that recreation and/or art can be a positive distraction, as well as a way to feel creative, productive, and healthier. Therapies include a variety of recreational therapies as well as creative therapies such as writing, painting, sculpture, theatre, and music. El Hage said that another purpose for so many activity choices is to be able to specifically target the needs of each patient.

As a recreational therapist, El Hage went into detail about how recreation therapy at the VA supports physical, emotional, cognitive, social, and spiritual healing and wellness - benefiting Veterans with increased quality of life, physical mobility and strength, enhancement of leisure awareness and skills, increased mental alertness and social skills.

She went on to explain that art therapy is equal to using art as a language. If Veterans don't want to – or can't – talk about difficult things, they can use art to communicate. The goals of art therapy are to build self-esteem and increase creativity and self-expression.

El Hage also shared information about the 2024 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, scheduled for May 11 -18, 2024, in Aurora! She suggested ways to get involved – including spreading the word about the festival, volunteering, and attending the events.

Following the presentation, the group toured



Kilwin's Chocolates and Ice Cream store owners Andreu Sureda-Guixa and Azyade Fares talk about how chocolate brings people closer together – and can make them happy.

the Veteran art displayed throughout the first-floor concourse of the building.

Sweet Connections: How Chocolate and Ice Cream Bring You Closer to People

Tuesday, December 5, 2023

By Mark Smith, PhotoSmith Colorado and ABC Chair

The Aurora History Museum (AHM) hosted the Arts + Business Connection's holiday celebration December 5, in the AHM's Community Gallery. Museum Director T. Scott Williams started the party by welcoming the group of chocolate lovers to the Museum.

Kilwin's Chocolate Shop owners Andreu Sureda-Guixa and Azyade Fares then talked about the joy of chocolate and provided chocolate treats to accompany their presentation titled Sweet Connections: How Chocolate and Ice Cream Bring You Closer to People." Their story of connection included how their second meeting was over hot chocolate in Paris.

Before embarking on their adventure of owning a Kilwin's, Sureda-Guixa had been in the corporate world but was not happy. After a vacation in Colorado, they decided

that chocolate, ice cream, and making people happy were essential to them, and Colorado provided that opportunity. As with many business owners, they both enjoy conversations with their customers and they especially relish hearing the often-said statement at their shop: "Oh, my God, this is SO good."

They reiterated how chocolate is often associated with positive feelings and celebrations – and even offered that as chocolate is eaten and enjoyed, the world becomes a better place. Sureda Guixa and Fares cited the benefits of chocolate to include providing wonderful social interaction, and health benefits of mood enhancement and antioxidants.

Following the presentation and sampling, attendees networked and strolled around the Festival of Wreaths created by community members displayed in the Gallery. The Festival is an annual fundraiser organized by the Aurora Museum Foundation, Aurora History Museum and Historic Sites. Proceeds from this year's sales of wreaths will go towards the restoration and installation of Aurora's iconic Cactus Motel sign, which will have a permanent home in AHM's Ruth Fountain Gallery with Trolley Trailer #610.

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Attendees at the November 7 ABC meeting at the Rocky Mountain Regional VA Medical Center.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation in the City of Lone Tree

Wednesday, November 1, 2023

By Tim Harris, Horrocks Engineers, and Transportation Committee Vice-chair



Justin Schmitz



On the first of November, The Transportation Committee heard updates from the City of Lone Tree Director of Public Works and Mobility Justin Schmitz and Mobility Manager Dan Raine.



Dan Raine

Schmitz gave an overview and status report on the Advancing Lincoln Avenue project, which will improve operations on Lincoln Avenue and

through the I-25/Lincoln Avenue interchange. Since studies began in late 2021, the city has developed a proposed action including new ramps and structures at I-25 and at the Lincoln/Havana intersection. Pending funding, the plan is to begin construction of the first phases in 2026. The city is coordinating that project with CDOT's construction of a mobility hub to serve transit users on the south side of the Lincoln/I-25 interchange.

He also talked about some recently completed projects, including a C-470 trail bridge at Acres Green, pedestrian safety improvements on Park Meadows Drive, and reconstruction of the Park Meadows/Acres Green intersection along with multiple concrete and asphalt pavement projects throughout the city.

Upcoming projects in Lone Tree include a C-470 trail connector to RTD at Park Meadows, a signal rebuild at County Line Road and Acres Green Drive, and Havana Street bike lane improvements.

Raine gave an update on the City's evolving and expanding Link on Demand service, which offers free, on-demand transit service throughout the city by use of an app or a call center contact. Since its creation in 2014, the service has provided almost half a million rides and continues to increase ridership, improve its ability to meet demand, and has upcoming expansion of its service area to include the Meridian area.

Transportation in and Around Buckley Space Force Base

Wednesday, December 6, 2023

By Tim Harris, Horrocks Engineers, and Transportation Committee Vice-chair

Lt. Col. Jason Bartels, the Base Civil Engineer; Jeanette Russo, Operations,

Engineering; MSgt Danielle Yared, Security Forces; and Adam Bernas, director of Business Operations from Buckley Space Force Base provided a broad overview of the transportation in and around the base.

Lt. Col. Bartels began by putting transportation coming into and leaving the base into a realistic perspective, by saying that "While less than a thousand people reside on the base, the population soars to 14,000 every day with commuters, all through the 6th Ave and Mississippi Ave gates. Balancing mobility and security is further impacted by the 90,000 military retirees in the area who travel onto the base to access the commissary and pharmacy facilities.



The base coordinates construction activities and signal timing with the City of Aurora and CDOT to minimize delays for motorists on public and base streets. The only public transit service allowed on the base is RTD's Access-a-Ride, and bicycle travel does not seem to be a popular option. That said, in 2022, special permits were issued to 215 Uber drivers, allowing alternative access. Because of this innovative transportation option, Space Base Delta 2, Buckley Space Force Base was awarded 2022 Program of the Year at the Chamber's Annual Awards Dinner, April 7, 2023.

Russo described the roadway maintenance program, which follows a 10-year plan focused on upkeep, rather than replacement of their 40 lane-miles and 60 parking lots inventory.

Bernas outlined their procurement methods which utilize the SAM.gov system, providing opportunities for small businesses, and additional opportunities to establish or use contracts available to other Front Range military installations.



WIB held a reception to raise awareness for Gateway Domestic Violence Services.

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS, EDUCATION, AND ENERGY (PUBLIC ISSUES)

State of the Aurora Public Schools District

Thursday, November 2, 2023

At the November Government Affairs meeting, Aurora Public Schools (APS) Chief Financial Officer Brett Johnson updated attendees about the state of APS for 2023-2024, and provided a brief introduction about Michael Giles Jr., the new Superintendent of Aurora Public Schools.

Giles was unable to attend the meeting, but Johnson shared that Giles is the 17th superintendent of APS, joining the district in July 2023, following 20 years with Cherry Creek School District (CCSD). During his tenure with CCSD, he was the Assistant Superintendent of Equity, Culture and Community Engagement as well as the Assistant Superintendent of Performance Improvement. He also served as a school counselor, dean of students, assistant principal, principal, and executive director.

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There was no Government Affairs, Education, and Energy Meeting in December 2023.

WOMEN IN BUSINESS

Drive for Gateway Domestic Violence Services

Tuesday, October 24, 2023

For their October meeting, The Women in Business Committee hosted a wine and cheese reception and drive for Gateway Domestic Violence Services, to raise awareness and provide financial support for the shelter in Aurora. The organization provides a safe and caring space for women and their children who are fleeing domestic violence - offering emergency shelter and extended-stay care, a crisis line, licensed

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counseling, and court advocacy.

Gateway Domestic Violence Services serves The City of Aurora, Arapahoe County, Adams County, and Douglas County, with the mission of preventing and eliminating intimate partner violence through counseling, residential care, empowering people for social change, and creating a culture that values healthy relationships.

Kicking off the Holiday Season with Cheer and Painting

Wednesday, November 28, 2023

The Paint Cellar at Southlands hosted the Women in Business (WIB) holiday get together, with pizza and drinks and the opportunity to paint a couple of ornaments. A wonderful way to start the holiday season! WIB Chair Carmen Hanagriff with Elevations Credit Union welcomed the group before they started the festivities.



YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

Judi's House

Wednesday, November 8, 2023

On Nov 8, The Young Professionals were invited to Judi's House for happy hour and a tour.

Judi's House is a community-based nonprofit bereavement center for children and families with the mission of helping children and families grieving a death find connection and healing, and a vision that no child should be alone in grief.

When former NFL quarterback Brian Griese was 12 years old, his mother Judi died of breast cancer. Realizing he wanted to give back to grieving children and young adults, Judi's House was founded in 2002 by Griese and his wife, Dr. Brook Griese, a clinical psychologist specializing in childhood trauma and loss.

The Young Professionals did not meet in December 2023.



169th Field Artillery Soldiers show off their equipment.

DEFENSE COUNCIL

CONG Field Artillery Training Center

Thursday, October 26, 2023

The October 2023 Defense Council was hosted by the Colorado National Guard (CONG) Field Artillery Training Center and was held at the Army Aviation Support Facility on Buckley Space Force Base. Colonel William DiProffio, 169th Field Artillery Brigade Commander, provided an historical unit perspective dating back to 1909 when during WWII, the unit landed at Sicily, Salerno, and Anzio, and also participated in the liberation of the Dachau Concentration Camp. More recently, they were part of

Katrina Response efforts and were deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Council members also received military, congressional, community reports, and a presentation by the Veterans Administration about their Supported Employment Engage & Keep (SEEK) program. Following the meeting, attendees were able to see some of the 169th's equipment. Breakfast was sponsored by Drury Inn and Suites.

City of Centennial Hosts Defense Council

Thursday, November 16, 2023

November's Defense Council was hosted by the City of Centennial and was held at the South Metro Denver Realtor Association (SMDRA) Event Center. SMDRA's Nick Bakone welcomed attendees, and Centennial City Manager Matt Sturgeon provided an overview of the city and some of the economic development projects, including new aerospace and defense companies in the city.

The City of Centennial was established in 2001 and operates under a hybrid model of public and private services. The founding vision was one of limited government, with a relatively lean staff and cost saving contracts for a variety of services from public works to law enforcement.

The Arapahoe County Sheriff's office provides law enforcement support to Centennial. Arapahoe County Sheriff Tyler



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It was a full house at the Young Professionals event at Judi's House.

Brown was in attendance and explained how his department supports the City of Centennial and all of Arapahoe County. He talked about the "Paw Patrol," a popular program that pairs labrador retrievers with school resource officers to support student mental health.

Council members also received the standard military, congressional, community reports. Ann Bagwell, with BOK Financial Mortgage, was the breakfast sponsor.



Centennial City Manager Matt Sturgeon addresses Defense Council meeting attendees.

City of Aurora and Aurora EDC Provide Updates

Thursday, December 7, 2023

December's special Defense Council meeting focused on the the City of Aurora's current and future development.



Aurora City Council Member Steve Sundberg was the first presenter, and discussed the economic development successes and opportunities in Ward 2, which includes Buckley Space Force

Base and is the largest geographic ward in Aurora.

City of Aurora Development Assistance Manager Jacob Cox, provided an extensive update on the numerous projects underway in Aurora. Some of the highlights were a twenty percent expansion to the Gaylord Rockies Resort; more than 5,000 residential units and 4,000 acres of development at The Aurora Highlands; approximately 2,500 residential units and 2.5 million square feet of office and commercial space in the Aurora One master plan; and eleven million square feet of built industrial space at the Majestic Commerce Center. There are 163 square miles of development opportunity in the City of Aurora.

Aurora Economic Development Council Director of Development Jonathan Woodward discussed the Fitzsimons Innovation Community that consists of 80 companies

and employs more than 800 people. Future office projects include Westway Enterprises consisting off 90,000 square feet of secure office space, and Innovus which will be a 200,000 square foot Class A office space complex.

Following the meeting, council members were invited to attend The Chamber's holiday party. Hundreds of toys were donated to support the Marine Corps Toys for Tots program. ■



United States Marine Corps Toys for Tots program representatives Sergeant Theron Lewis, Lt. Colonel Luis Izquierdo, and Sergeant Dennis Burn.

STATE OF THE CITY (CONT'D)

programs, and Council Member Ruben Medina will move forward in conjunction with the school districts, for development of a citywide after-hours program for teenage youth.

• Reduce homelessness, both sheltered and unsheltered.

Aurora is a "work first" city about homelessness, understanding that many will need to undergo treatment before they are work ready. The "work first" policy goal is for stable housing earned through employment. In Aurora, the Ready to Work program, run by Boulder-based Bridge House, offers housing, employment, and supportive services for those who want to change their lives.

Unfortunately, there are unsheltered homeless that are resistant, even when offered help and a safe place to stay. A new, strictly enforced camping ban will make living in encampments no longer possible. To deal with these individuals, there is a proposal to create a specialized court to manage low-level offenses

committed by individuals experiencing homelessness. The court will focus on getting them into treatment in exchange for dropping the charges if they complete the court-ordered requirement conditions of their probation.

The new camping ban policy will be effective when this new court, along with all necessary wrap-around services, is set up and fully operational.

In addition, Mayor Pro Tem Dustin Zvonek is working to set up a navigation and resource center that will combine all existing homeless services into one location, with the goal of getting people on their feet, and into a job and stable housing.

Mayor Coffman closed his speech by saying "Yes, the city faces problems – or situations – that are being addressed – and we also have many incredible opportunities before us. The state of the city is strong, and the future of Aurora is very bright." ■

MemberNews

Tyrone Adams and Colorado Association of Realtors Honored by Common Sense Institute

The Colorado Association of Realtors (CAR) and CEO Tyrone Adams were honored by the Common Sense Institute with the Champion for Prosperity award at their December 2023 Free Enterprise Summit. The Champion for Prosperity award goes to an organization that consistently enters the public policy debate and leads policymakers towards solutions that advance for opportunity, prosperity, and the free enterprise system.

CAR's mission is to be the collective voice for real estate and consumer property rights, and to advance Colorado REALTORS® as industry leaders in knowledge, ethics, and professionalism.

Common Sense Institute is a non-partisan research organization dedicated to the protection and promotion of Colorado's economy. ■



Tyrone Adams



Ribbon Cuttings & Groundbreakings

Ribbon cuttings
mean business: **150 Jobs**



V-Esprit Active Adult Community - 5240 S Shalom Park Circle, Aurora, CO 80015

It was a lively celebration to cut the ribbon for the new Villas Patio homes at V-Esprit Active Adult Community. With scissors in hand is Managing Director Matt Quinn, who is part of Pathfinder Partners, which is the ownership group. Also present, to his right is Co-founder of Pathfinder Partners Lorne Polger, and Co-Founders of V-Esprit Cindy Wagner and Peter Torrens. V-Esprit is a maintenance free, 55+ active adult community located on a beautiful 14-acre neighborhood campus with apartments and patio homes. In attendance from the Aurora Chamber of Commerce were Director of Finance Penny Krueger, Director of Events Sophia Bibbey and Chamber Ambassadors: Chartashia Miller, NAACP and IT Coaching; Sanjay Tyagi, Schooley Mitchell of Denver; and Trusted Risk Advisor Brian Weiher. Jackson Burrow, constituent advocate with the office of US Representative Jason Crow was also in attendance. (11/9/23) <http://www.v-esprit.com> (303) 400-2399

Hero's Pizza and Tavern and American Legion 1992

16070 E Dartmouth, Aurora, CO 80013

Hero's Pizzeria & Tavern, which serves as the American Legion Post 1992, celebrated Veterans Day (November 11) with a ribbon cutting on November 10, 2023. It was a packed house to thank those who are serving and those who have served. Hero's Owner Dave Seubert and his daughter Michelle (to his left) cut the ribbon accompanied by Veterans, friends, and Chamber Ambassadors, members, and staff. In attendance from the Aurora Chamber of Commerce were President/CEO Naomi Colwell, Vice President of Communications Mitzi Schindler, and Chamber Ambassadors: Deb Kirschbaum, Priority Properties; Oma Mohamed; Farouk Mohammed; Anne Overstreet, Minuteman Press; and Sanjay Tyagi, Schooley Mitchell of Denver. (11/10/2023) <https://www.heropizzeriaatavern.com/> (303) 680-6424.





5th Element Center for Dance – 10660 E Colfax Ave, Ste D, Aurora, CO 80010

5th Element Center for Dance's ribbon cutting at their new location was a lively event – complete with performances by students and instructors Jayy "Moon" Johnson, Vidya Shaker, Grace Arakawa, and the Platinum Divaz. Executive Director Janei Maynard cut the ribbon, accompanied by board members Nanette Jones, Sandy Thomas, and Roehelle Smith, DC. The mission of 5th Element Center for Dance is to foster personal & artistic development through the hip hop arts for youth to grow into compassionate, knowledgeable, and expressive artists who are connected to themselves & their communities. (12/5/23) <https://www.fithelementdance.org> (720) 477-0527



Pediatrix Primary + Urgent Care of Colorado

14262 E Cedar Ave, Aurora, CO 80012

In early December 2023, Pediatrix Primary + Urgent Care of Colorado celebrated the grand opening of their new clinic in Aurora, CO. Pediatrix is a physician-led health care organization that partners with hospitals, health systems, and health care facilities to offer clinical services across numerous specialties and subspecialties supporting the continuum of care from birth through adulthood. The event was attended by Pediatrix CEO James Swift, MD; SVP Chief Asset Development and Management Officer Clark Jones; and Tracy Butler, MD; as well as numerous members of the Aurora business community. In attendance from the Aurora Chamber of Commerce were President/CEO Naomi Colwell, COO Rene Simard, Membership Director Steve Phillips, and Chamber Ambassadors; Chartashia Miller, NAACP and IT Coaching; Jon Mize, Vasa Fitness; and Trusted Risk Advisor Brian Weiher. (12/4/23)

<https://www.pediatrix.com/> (303) 381-9996



The CO Spot – The Shops at Northfield

8302 Northfield Blvd, Space 1570, Denver, CO 80238

The CO Spot, specializing in Colorado-branded merchandise, celebrated a ribbon cutting for their new location in The Shops at Northfield. The CO Spot storefront also houses their graphic design studio and has pre-made graphic t-shirts for sale. With their onsite, state-of-the-art equipment, they can print on-demand merchandise in a fraction of the time as most printers, some items within hours. This new location is in addition to their store in Aurora, Artistic Apparel, Graphics & Signs. Appetizers and drinks were provided, and there was a wheel spin game for attendees to win discounted and free items. CO Spot owners Marlon Wells and Jouanna Crossland-Wells cut the ribbon, in the company of family, friends, and Aurora Chamber Director of Membership Development Steve Phillips and Chamber Ambassadors: Kaitlin Cordova, Restoration 1 of West Denver; and Trusted Risk Advisor Brian Weiher. (12/15/23) <https://thecospot.com/> (303) 363-4020



GGirls Closet

2600 S Parker Rd, Bldg 1-119, Aurora, CO 80014

GGirls Closet, a socially responsible business that offers clothing consignment services to help support and generate funds for Title One schools and non-profit organizations, held a festive ribbon cutting on December 14, 2023. Owner Patricia Gillmore and her daughter, Zoe, along with vendors from Gloria's Treasures, 2 Flippin' Chicks, and Explore Mile High, and Chamber members and Ambassadors, enjoyed samples of Cajun and Southern cuisine provided by Taste of Back Home Food Truck, along with desserts, beer and champagne – and of course – some shopping! GGirls Closet uses multiple e-commerce platforms and in-store shopping for an all-inclusive variety of new and used fashion for every style. In attendance were Aurora Chamber Director of Membership Development Steve Phillips, and Chamber Ambassadors: Deb Kirschbaum, Priority Properties; Lisa Miller; Kristine Minty and Kari Engen, 2 Flippin Chicks; Jon Mize, Vasa Fitness; Oma Mohamed; Farouk Mohammed; Anne Overstreet, Minuteman Press; and Trusted Risk Advisor Brian Weiher. (12/14/23) <http://www.ggirlsclaset.net> (720) 287-3216



CROSSPURPOSE

CrossPurpose

1671 Altura Blvd, Aurora, CO 80011

On October 25, 2023, Jason Janz, CEO of CrossPurpose, Pastor Scott Kalevik of Living Hope Community Church, and Dillon Baynes, co-founder, managing partner of Columbia Ventures, hosted a groundbreaking ceremony for their new project, "Elevate at Aurora." It is a mixed-use development that cross-pollinates affordable housing, best-in-class career development for high-needs families, and meaningful community engagement through the local church. Sitting on 4.7 acres, the 137 net new unit development will offer families high-quality, affordable housing and a 15,000 square foot Community Service Facility within an on-premises ecosystem designed to foster multi-generational, multi-lingual upward mobility. Special guests included Mayor Mike Coffman, and City Council Members Steve Sundberg and Ruben Medina. (10/25/23) <https://www.crosspurpose.org/> (720) 724-9544



Dollar General Facility to Open in Aurora

On November 10, 2023, Chamber member Dollar General hosted a tour of their new facility in Aurora. It's big enough for 16 football fields, covers 21 acres, will employee 400 people, and will service more than 300 stores in eight states. The facility is scheduled to open in summer 2024.





Introducing the Emerging Leaders Class of 2024

Learn more about the Emerging Leaders Program at
www.aurorachamber.org/emerging-leaders



Nick Assaf
AXL Academy



Kimberly Gilmour
*Aurora Mental
Health & Recovery*



Mark Mascardo
*Fitzsimons Credit
Union*



Marissa Caine
AXL Academy



Erica Hines
*Community College
of Aurora*



Omari Mitchell
Good Chemistry



Brandon Cantrell
*Aurora Mental
Health & Recovery*



Lynn Holat
*Community College
of Aurora Foundation*



Monica Paez
*Community College
of Aurora*



Danelle Carrel
*Aurora Police
Department*



Nicholas Hunt
*140th Wing,
Colorado Air
National Guard*



Sheriff Rasheed
*Community College
of Aurora*



Leslie Clark
Visit Aurora



Angelica Irwin
Citywide Banks



Georgia Reiss
*Advocates for
Children*



Megan Dempsey
*Community College
of Aurora*



Remy Juarez
Kaiser Permanente



Allison Schwab
*Aurora Mental
Health & Recovery*



Julie Dobrini
*Aurora Mental
Health & Recovery*



Melissa LaCelle
*Aurora Mental
Health & Recovery*



Amy Thompson
Citywide Banks



Jena Ferguson
UCHealth



Jessica Leitch
Advocates for Children



Jamie Underwood
*Aurora Mental
Health & Recovery*



Sabrina Flick
*140th Wing,
Colorado Air
National Guard*



Matthew Lewandowski
*Adolfson and Peterson
Construction*

**Emerging Leaders is a program of
The Aurora Chamber of Commerce**



MemberContributions

Most Businesses Spend More Than They Should on Expenses – Up to 35% more!

If you are interested in exploring how to reduce expenses, the Business Expense Reduction Program is being offered to Chamber members with no investment and no risk. The program is with Schooley Mitchell (SM) of Denver, a well-established member of The Chamber.

The Chamber has used this program to reduce some of its operational expenses.

The concept of the Business Expense Reduction Program is simple:



Sanjay Tyagi

- Risk free review of current business expenses
- On average savings of 28%
- SM fees are simply a share of the savings - your share is pure profit
- SM does not represent any vendors or accept commissions from them. They are independent consultants acting only with your best interest in mind
- Includes monthly "Watch Dog" service to ensure there are no vendor billing errors, add-ons or service changes – at no cost to you
- SM utilizes specialized software, benchmarking tools and best-in-class pricing databases

Schooley Mitchell has experience of saving money for tens of thousands of clients across the country since 2004.

Email sanjay.tyagi@schooleymitchell.com or call 303-317-3110 to schedule a briefing. ■



Why Pronouns for Business?

In business, employees and customers are top priorities. It's important to ensure that both are respected and have positive experiences.

Whether you know it or not, some may identify as transgender or nonbinary¹. Often, transgender, and nonbinary people get misgendered², which can make them feel disrespected, uncomfortable, and unseen. This can result in employees quitting and in losing customers. In extreme circumstances, they may perceive intentional misgendering or refusal to use someone's pronouns as harassment and/or discrimination.



Tyrone Adams



All of this can be avoided by being aware of pronouns and recognizing how important they may be for others. Even if you take your own pronouns for granted, you should consider sharing your own pronouns and confirming what pronouns other people use.

Here are a few quick tips:

- Share your pronouns when introducing yourself and ask others what pronouns they go by
- If you misgender someone, simply acknowledge, apologize, and move on
- If someone is taken aback by you asking about their pronouns, you can respond, "I didn't mean to offend you. I just didn't want to make any assumptions about you, as I hope that you wouldn't make of me."
- If someone refuses to share their pronouns, simply refer to that person by their name
- If you are unsure of someone's pronouns, you can start with they/them

- Include pronouns on email signatures, name tags and business cards. This should always be optional and never mandatory

Pronoun usage is not "political," and certainly not new. We have been using pronouns for hundreds of years. We all use them in place of someone's name. Unfortunately, some people have been misgendered the whole time. As businesses are focusing on DEI initiatives; ensuring that LGBTQ+ people are treated with respect and dignity includes understanding the importance of pronoun usage.

For additional information about Pronoun Usage and other LGBTQ+ Inclusive topics, contact Johnny Humphrey, Director of Inclusivity Services, at The Center on Colfax, at jhumphrey@lgbtqcolorado.org. The Center on Colfax is a member of The Aurora Chamber of Commerce. ■

¹Nonbinary refers to a person who doesn't identify as male or female, or as a combination of both.

²Misgendering means referring to someone by the wrong set of pronouns.

Unique Workforce Development Programs Supports Aurora Students, Community

The strength of a community is found in the strength of its people; the best investment we can make in our community is to support and educate the next generation. This investment is especially important in healthcare. While healthcare needs grow along with the aging population, healthcare provider and staffing shortages continue to strain Colorado hospitals. To help combat this, The Medical Center of Aurora (TMCA), part of HealthONE and HCA Healthcare, is focusing on workforce development programs that directly impact the young people in our community. Both the shadowing/observation program and the high school internship program provide hands-on experiences for students to engage with the industry, make meaningful connections, and get a strong start in their careers.

The TMCA shadowing/observation program creates an exposure experience for students interested in healthcare and welcomed 50 students in 2023. Aurora Public Schools



The Medical Center of Aurora staff and Fall 2023 Executive Internship participants.

high schools, New Legacy Charter School and Overland College Prep are amongst our current partner schools. In addition, TMCA has partnered with the Cherry Creek School of Innovation in a program that provides eight hours of observation at TMCA's affiliated Centennial Hospital for high school juniors.

Students cycle through positions such as physical therapy, certified nursing assistant, pharmacy, behavioral health and food/nutrition services.

The high school internship program takes things a step further. While this opportunity exposes high school seniors to the full range of hospital departments – from radiology and surgery to labor and delivery and neurology – the program encourages students to focus their interests over the course of the semester. Students observe surgeries, engage with patients, and gain real-world experience in a healthcare career path that interests them.

TMCA, in partnership with Pickens Technical College and the Aurora Public Schools Executive Internship Program, was pleased to host 13 interns in 2023. And as a result of these workforce development programs, the hospital has hired four former students in various guest services and patient transport roles. ■

Promotions within The Chamber

The Aurora Chamber of Commerce is pleased to announce the promotions of Rene Simard to Chief Operating Officer, previously serving as the Executive Vice President; and Mitzi Schindler to Vice President of Communications, previously serving as the Senior Director of Communications.

In his new role, Simard assists the president & chief executive officer in managing and overseeing personnel and programs to ensure the execution of day-to-day operations and implements strategies to meet the goals and objectives of The Chamber.

Simard is also the director of the Aurora Chamber's flagship Leadership Aurora program and the newly created Emerging Leaders program. Additionally, he is the Chief of Military Affairs, managing the Aurora Chamber's Defense Council, a joint organization of over 500 members



Rene Simard
Chief Operating
Officer

representing military commands; federal, state, and local elected officials; aerospace and defense organizations; and local business leaders.

Simard retired from the U. S. Air Force after more than 28-years of service in 2006. In his final assignment, Simard was the Command Chief Master Sergeant for the 460th

Space Wing at Buckley Air Force Base, Aurora, Colorado, where he advised the base commander on matters influencing the health, welfare, morale, effective utilization, and quality of life for more than 3,000 enlisted personnel assigned to the base's area of responsibility.

In her new role, Schindler is responsible for implementing communication strategies to support The Chamber's mission of serving and representing Chamber members so their businesses and our



Mitzi Schindler
Vice President of
Communications

community will prosper. Schindler oversees all Chamber communications, including The Chamber's Impact newsletter, e-blast, social media, and the membership directory. She also serves as the assistant director for Leadership Aurora and Emerging Leaders programs and is the Chamber liaison for the Transportation and Arts +

Business Connections Committees.

Prior to The Chamber, Schindler worked for the University of Colorado for 23 years, serving as director of Publications and Internal Communications, and as the Public Relations liaison for the University's move from the Ninth Avenue and Colorado Blvd Campus to the former Fitzsimons Army Medical Center – now the Anschutz Medical Campus. ■

[Photo by Mark Smith, Photosmith Colorado]

Member Renewals

ACI Learning	Highpoint Church
AECOM	Holiday Inn Denver East
Alpine CARSTAR Auto Body	HR Green
Amazon	Hytek-Solutions, LLC
AmeriForce Environmental	InnovAge Colorado PACE - Aurora
Arapahoe County Sheriff's Office	Koelbel and Company
Artistic Apparel, Graphics & Signs	Law Office of Anna L. Burr
Aurora Federal Credit Union	Legends of Aurora Sports Grill
Aurora Public Schools	Lendlease
Belco Credit Union - Aurora City Place	May Farms
CEDS Finance	Mesa Moving and Storage
Collins Engineers, Inc.	Mile High Mortgage Tailor
Colorado Department of Labor & Employment	Northrop Grumman
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Business Relations Unit	Nothing Bundt Cakes - Southlands
Colorado Insurance Broker - Brian Weiher	Perennial Services Training
Community Banks of Colorado-Greenwood Village	Providence Financial & Insurance
Community Housing Partners	Ron Cole
Counterterrorism Education Learning Lab - CELL	Ronald McDonald House Charities of Denver
DeNOVO Solutions, LLC	Roof Brokers, Inc.
Elevations Credit Union	Ryden & Associates
FirstBank - Aurora, Havana	South Metro Fire Rescue
Fitzsimons Innovation Community	SVN Commercial Denver
Fresh Fenders Express Car Wash	The Center on Colfax
Gilmore Construction	The Mathes Insurance Agency
GMCO Corporation, Inc.	Tony's Services Inc.
GOGO Charters Denver	United Veterans Coalition of Colorado
Heather Gardens Association	Verizon
Heather Gardens Brokers	Waste Connections
	West & Main Homes - Bev Marsh

New Members

5th Element Center for Dance
Amy Schamberg Wellness, LLC
Ascent Insurance Solutions
Ashley Faller, Compass Real Estate
BNG Clean Fuel Corporation
Chelsea Place - An Anthem Memory Care Community
Cherry Creek State Park
Cullum & Brown
Cynthetic Systems
De La Shey Lingerie, LLP
Goodwill of Colorado
Green Diamond Clean, LLC
Heartland Payment Services
Hero's Pizzeria
Huntington National Bank
Infinite Development Strategies
Katie Creative LLC
Overwrite LLC
Province Car & Dog Wash at Buckeye
The CO Spot
WarriorNOW
Westway Enterprises, LLC

Advertisers: Chamber members can use the IMPACT to advertise products and services to other members. Advertising space only available to members. The IMPACT also accepts preprinted inserts. Contact The Chamber for details.

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