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## **Liz Mullen Farewell and Thank You!**



About three months ago, Liz Mullen, Executive Director of the NWCCOG, announced that she was ready to begin the next chapter of her life and that she would be leaving the COG after nearly five years at the helm.

During her tenure she made many major improvements, undertook important innovations, and introduced several new programs to Region 12 and beyond.

Having begun her career with the NWCCOG in 2002 as the Membership Services Director, she immediately became immersed in helping to engage the members by finding mini-grants that would fit their needs, facilitating strategy sessions, and developing surveys to assess service area gaps and opportunities.

She was the Assistant Executive Director for several years while also taking leadership positions with the Elevator Inspection Program, the I-70 Coalition, and the Rural Resort

Regions Initiative where she helped to identify transportation gaps that finally lead to the introduction of the Regional Transportation Coordinating Council. She also spent time as the head of the Homeland Security position that is now NW All Hazards Emergency Management Region.

In 2012, she was named Executive Director and under her leadership the region saw many significant accomplishments. Here is a small sample of the inroads made by Liz and her teams:

- The Northwest Loan Fund was completely revamped, it was recapitalized with a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding, a Business Loan Officer was hired, defaulted loans were contacted and successfully collected, a review committee was formed, and today more than 25 new loans have been made to businesses throughout Region 12 and 4 other northwest Colorado counties affecting nearly 50 jobs.
- The Regional Transportation Coordinating Council was formed as a result of Rural Resort Region's focus, a Mobility Manager was hired, and the program has expanded to help connect seniors, veterans, low income, and individuals with disabilities with rides to critical medical appointments.
- With help from a Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) grant, Region 12 launched a steering committee, led by Liz, to develop a Regional Strategic plan for Broadband that encompassed the needs of Region 12 as well as three other counties in northwest Colorado. The plan was approved, the program was funded, a Broadband Coordinator was hired, and the program continues to make improvements in the Region and beyond.
- Worked with staff to achieve the Economic Development District (EDD) designation, the new NWCCOG-EDD was formed, funding was provided by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), a director hired to manage the EDD for the region, and progress continues to be made.
- Improved the overall working relationships between the Elevator Inspector Program inspectors, State Public Safety personnel, and elevator inspection companies through facilitated meetings and problem solving sessions. The result is a much more cohesive arrangement for achieving compliance as called for by State regulations.

In addition to the list above, Liz worked tirelessly to improve the relationships with the members, she hired a Communications Coordinator, she helped to improve overall financial reporting, and she revamped the personnel review program.

When asked what she'll miss the most about the NWCCOG, she immediately replied, "The people. All of them - the staff, the members, the board, and the residents in our communities. Each of them has added to the immense satisfaction I got from serving them every day."

Jeff Schroll, Executive Board member on the NWCCOG Board said, "Liz has done an amazing job as the Executive Director of NWCCOG. We are sorry to see her go. She had excellent competence and communication skills and really helped NWCCOG through the downturn in the economy while maintaining excellent service levels. We wish her all the best."

And Tom Clark, also a member of the Executive board had this to say about Liz, "I have worked with her on many projects, in all types of economic conditions and she always ensured a successful collaboration. Working together with Liz and the staff has been our secret to success and I am

thankful to have been part of this process. Liz leaves us with a highly respected, highly needed, and non-political regional government organization. Thank you Liz for your hard work."

Her plans for the future are open. Liz intends to take the next two to three months to enjoy the experience of living and playing in Summit County where she plans to catch up on her reading, her knitting, her physical fitness program, visiting with her family, and her skiing.

She will surely be missed and we wish her the best. We know she's got great things in her future.

## Jon Stavney Takes the Helm

This month, Jon Stavney begins work as the new Executive Director for Northwest Colorado Council of Governments (NWCCOG), a membership organization serving five counties and 22 municipalities across the mountain resort region. With experience as a town manager, county commissioner and "small town" mayor, and recent stints as Board President of the Colorado River District, and raft guide, Jon relates to Western Slope issues from a variety of angles.



Jon's journey in public service began as a framing carpenter building second homes in Vail in the 1990s when he attended planning & zoning commission meetings to understand how development decisions were being made in the rural community of Eagle where he and his wife had just moved. At the time much was growth was on the drawing board in Eagle. He says, "I knew that decisions were afoot that would radically re-shape the town. I wanted growth, but in an authentic way." That concern led to his election on the Town Board in Eagle in 1998 and is still a north star for his public service nearly 20 years later.

Stavney considers that decade when Eagle grew 15% annually his on-the-job education in planning, community character and local policy. "We used community quality of life surveys from NWCCOG to benchmark our decisions," he says, "and we made tremendous positive changes to the town while preserving character and quality of life based on that information."

After 18 years in the public realm, Jon sees environment and the people who live Northwest Colorado through the lens of ongoing layers of decisions made by those who chose to show up. "I was just a carpenter with an English degree who eventually became a project manager. I didn't have a degree in local government," he says. "I have a tremendous respect for those citizens who decide to step forward to lead communities, and for the challenge of managing public engagement." One of his goals as Executive Director at NWCCOG is to provide resources and support to those local leaders in a region that spans from Walden to Aspen.

Karn Stieglemeier, NWCCOG Board president and Summit County Commissioner said, "The Council is thrilled to have Jon on board. The combination of private sector and government experience and his enthusiasm for NWCCOG programs gives us confidence in a successful transition."

Jon takes the helm from Liz Mullen who succeeded in a many positions at NWCCOG for 14 years and most recently managed the organization as Executive Director, before stepping down at the end of October.

Jeff Schroll, Gypsum Town Manager, is excited with the appointment saying, "Jon brings a great wealth of knowledge in local government as our new director. He has been active as a board member with NWCCOG and QQ (Water Quality and Quantity Committee). He comes to the organization with a great sense of understanding on what NWCCOG does. He is an exceptional addition to the team and will help make for a seamless transition."

Expect to see Jon out and about in the next few months as he learns the ropes and meets the people involved in this amazing community.

In Jon's spare time he loves hanging out with his family - wife MaryAnn, son Holden 17, and daughter Margo, 14. He also enjoys mountain biking, hiking, photography, snowshoeing, and reading - mostly non-fiction. If you were rafting this summer, you might have had Jon as your guide as he also loves guiding. Jon is pursuing a Colorado Public Management Certification program at CU.

Jon can be reached at the NWCCOG at [jstavney@nwccog.org](mailto:jstavney@nwccog.org)

**Looking for a way to be involved with Mountain Ride  
Transportation Resource Center?**

## Your donation can help keep the rides going...



Again this year, Mountain Ride is participating in the Colorado Gives Campaign on December 6, 2016. Your deductible donation will be made to the Northwest Colorado Council of Governments Foundation on behalf of Mountain Ride. There is a vital need for travel assistance to medical appointments for seniors, veterans, persons with disabilities and people of lower income. Those seeking assistance often do not qualify for state programs. The cost of providing regional medical trips averages \$150 per trip, and for many the cost of such travel can become overwhelming.

The effort of the Mountain Ride program through NWCCOG Foundation is to assist such individuals with travel. Your contribution will go toward Buying-A-Ride. Taking advantage of this program is a great way to show your support and help your neighbors get to those critical appointments. Don't wait -- donate now.



## Welcome Chelsey Voden Transportation Specialist



A rare Colorado native, Chelsey grew up in the Evergreen/Conifer area before moving to the high mountains she loves. She's been in the area for about 7 years and currently lives with her husband in Leadville.

Before joining the NWCCOG, she had jobs in both Vail and in Frisco while attending school at Metropolitan State University to get her degree in Accounting. She's had training at the reservation call-center for Rock Resorts, and customer service experience at the Tivoli Lodge in Vail. She's also done some accounting work in Frisco and she volunteered to help people on the front-range with their tax preparation.

When asked what she's most looking forward to with her new assignment at the COG, she responded, "I am looking forward to helping citizens of our community navigate the public resources available to them. I am also looking forward to getting to know the people that work here, everyone has been super nice

welcoming me to the team!"

She'll be using her skills and experience working with the Mountain Ride Transportation Resource Call Center to help veterans, older adults, individuals with disabilities, and low income families with transportation assistance to and from essential appointments.

When she's not at work at the COG, she's at work at home. She helps her husband with his tow truck company and with remodeling their house. She also is pretty good at repairing her car with a little help from her hubby. They've just finished remodeling the bathrooms in their home and she just finished changing the heads and the transmission in her car -- with some coaching! She also loves to hike, snowboard, snowshoe, and explore everything Colorado has to offer.

## What's Up in Red Cliff?

For the answer to that question just take a look at the photo to the right!

This tower marks a major milestone in bringing technology to the town of Red Cliff. According to an article in the Vail Daily (see link below) the NWCCOG played a key roll in this giant step toward achieving cell and internet service to the town. This new communications tower will ultimately enable residents to enjoy the advantages of having cell phone and internet access.

Along with the mention of NWCCOG, several other entities were credited with advancing the latest technology



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including Eagle County, the Colorado Department of Local affairs and Xcel Energy. You can read the entire story at the [Vail Daily's October 8, 2017 edition](#).

For more information on the Northwest Colorado Council of Governments Regional Strategic Plan for Broadband, visit <http://nwccog.org/programs/broadband/>.

## Stymied By Your Options?

2017 Medicare Annual Open Enrollment goes to December 7, 2016, and if you've got questions, we've got answers. TJ DuFresne, Medicare Coordinator, and her team provide Medicare counseling to those who might need extra help navigating the maize.

Here are just two of the many stories we can share with you about how we've been able to help Medicare eligible beneficiaries get the very best answers to suit their particular needs:

**In the first case**, a beneficiary requested assistance to compare her drug and health care coverage during the Annual Enrollment Period (AEP). She simply wanted to see if she could reduce her premiums, change to another prescription plan to include medication, and discuss a billing issue.

We asked our standard intake questions and discovered that she was eligible for the Medicare Savings Program which provides assistance through Colorado Health First (formerly known as Medicaid). The net impact to this beneficiary is financial assistance with her Part B premium and other out of pocket medical expenses.

**In the second case**, a gentleman called the Medicare Statewide Health Improvement Assistance Program (SHIP) sounding anxious and confused. He stated he was struggling with the decisions offered between a Medigap Supplement Plan and an Advantage Plan to protect himself from the 20% healthcare costs Medicare does not cover. When he mentioned he comprehends everything better in person, we scheduled a face-to-face meeting to help him better understand his options.

During our meeting we were able to explain how all the different parts of Medicare work together. We were also able to help him narrow down his selections based on his personal medical history, his family history, lifestyle, and financial situation. He left the appointment confident he could continue the enrollment process on his own. He expressed sincere gratitude for our assistance and has referred friends to our program.

Each person has unique questions and we work hard to help them understand options that might be best for their situation. Our experts take the time to listen to every caller and offer individualized information. If you or someone you know has questions about Medicare, call T.J. at 970-468-0295 for additional information.

### 2017 Medicare Annual Open Enrollment Be Prepared October 15 to December 7, 2016

**WANT TO SEE IF YOU CAN SAVE MONEY?  
COMPARE YOUR PLANS EVERY YEAR!**

**Advantage and Prescription Drug plans change every year!  
Make your comparisons during the Annual Enrollment Period.**

#### Your Enrollment Options

- Switch to a different Part D prescription drug plan
- Enroll in a Part D prescription drug plan if you don't have one this year
- Switch your Advantage Plan to another carrier
- Switch from an Advantage Plan to Original Medicare only
- Newly enroll in an Advantage Plan, but, you must .....
  - Be enrolled in Original Medicare (Part A and Part B)
  - Live in the plan's service area
  - Cannot have End-Stage Renal Disease (ESRD)

**Medicare Assistance by Appointment: 970-468-0295**



## Project Visibility

Alpine Area (Retired and Senior Volunteer Program) RSVP is excited to be able to provide the Project Visibility training (Person-Centered Care for LGBT Older Adults) in our region on December 9th from 10:30 am to 3:30 pm at Colorado Mountain College in Edwards, room 230. I hope that you will be able to join us!

# PROJECT visibility<sup>®</sup>



## Person-Centered Care for LGBT Older Adults

Friday, December 9, 2016

10:30—3:30 pm

Colorado Mountain College: Miller Ranch Road, Edwards  
Room 230

### What is Project Visibility?

Project Visibility is a dynamic training directed at senior care providers. Its goal is to improve lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) cultural responsiveness for agency personnel. The training features an award-winning film highlighting the experiences of local LGBT older adults, small group exercises, and plenty of time for Q&A.

### Why a training on LGBT elders?

LGBT older adults wonder about the level of sensitivity and awareness on the part of staff at facilities, businesses and agencies. While most agencies feel that they are welcoming to all, this training will examine subtle cultural biases and offer tools to improve inclusiveness.

### In this community training, participants will:

- Develop a new awareness of the strengths and needs of LGBT elders
- Explore concepts of sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity
- Discuss ways to address heterosexual and cisgender privilege
- Gain tools for creating an open and inclusive environment
- Receive a manual packed with resources

*While there is no charge, registration is required.*

**Deadline to register is 5:00 pm on Monday, December 5th**

**Contact C.J. Grove, [volunteers@nwccog.org](mailto:volunteers@nwccog.org) or 970-468-0295 ext. 122**

Reasonable accommodations will be provided upon request for persons with disabilities. Please notify Julia Yager at 303-441-3589, or the Human Resources Division at 303-441-3508 at least 48 business hours prior to a meeting if you need special accommodations in order to participate.

Help Line: 303-441-1617



[www.BoulderCountyAging.org](http://www.BoulderCountyAging.org)

## 2016 NWCCOG COUNCIL MEETING SCHEDULE

**Thursday, December 8, 2016**

**Full Council & Foundation Board Meeting**

Location: NWCCOG Office/Conference Call

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Primary Agenda Items: 2016 budget revisions; approve 2017 budget; adopt 2017 meeting schedule; annual NWCCOG Foundation Board meeting.

**Northwest Colorado Council of Governments**

**[www.nwccog.org](http://www.nwccog.org)**

970.468.0295

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR MEMBERSHIP IN NWCCOG!**