LEARNING POTENTIAL

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Learning... to achieve your dreams.
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Cover: Jeff Dahl on Red Lodge pulls skier Greg Dahl. Photo by Megan M. Crumley

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Southern Colorado Magazine
Wearing skis and a fire-engine-red helmet, Eric Heil stands in half crouch. He wraps and grips the end of a forty-foot rope like it was the strap on a rodeo bull and gives a quick nod to Eric Goard. Goard grips the reins of Benny, an eight-year-old quarter horse with fire in his eyes, doing everything he can to keep it together, waiting for the signal.

When it comes, Goard screams savagely and drives his heels into Benny, who pins his ears back and tears off like the overnight leg of the Pony Express. Heil squats deeper and leans back as the rope snaps tight, and instantly he’s gliding down Leadville’s main street at 30 miles per hour, leaning and weaving as if he were on a Vail slalom course.

Leadville Equine Skijoring, with an emphatic ‘j’, started in the late 1940s with a conversation and a few drinks at the Golden Burro, a tap house that still stands not far from the starting gate, and gained popularity during the mid-1950s.

Fifty years later it starts with a guy on alpine skis going through a starting gate being pulled behind a cowboy, usually in chaps, on the fastest horse they can find. The trio careens down 805 feet of snow piled two feet deep on Harrison Avenue, which cuts through the heart of town. Not only must the skier master the jumps, but he also must snag hanging rings as he passes. Throw in a clock and a case of beer, and you’ve got a Rocky Mountain tradition.

For Leadville, a town that has a history dotted with fortunes made and lost by prospectors, gamblers and businessmen with names like Carnegie, Guggenheim and Doc Holiday, Skijoring weekend brings a different kind of gold rush. Curious spectators make the trip by the thousands and bring their checkbooks, to line the streets for a weekend, where they stand shoulder to shoulder behind the

Ron Behrendt catches a little lift off of the second jump in the Skijoring course that runs down Leadville’s Harrison Avenue. The longest jump of the day: 65 feet

Wearin skis in the Streets

Story by Seth Mensing Photos by Megan M. Crumley

Southern Colorado Magazine
boundary to see the longest jumps, the fastest times and, of course, the wipe outs.

For the participants it is the competition, the thrill of the ride or run, beating last year's time and, for some, the chance for a little quality family time. Eric Heil, 55, is the oldest skijoring member of the Heil clan of Anchorage, Alaska, which launched nine members of its extended family through the starting gate this year. The youngest Heil, Jake, broke into the sport this year at the tender age of 4.

Don't worry, they aren't sending preschoolers down the track behind a barely contained quarter horse. Instead, they break them in slowly, or slower, with the steed being replaced by a snowmobile with no spirit of its own. Saturday, the first day of competition, is their day to show everyone what the future of the sport looks like.

Passers-by stop to shake their heads as these miniature racers head through the gates and miss the jump but still manage to reach impressive speeds, ranging between 20 and 30 miles per hour. The fastest time achieved: 18.6 seconds to make the full length of the course, mistake free, by the oldest of the young Heils, Travis, who turned 10 years old in May.

After the last of the snowmobile skijorers has gone and the grinning spectators erupt in cheers for the kids, those who know the game start to converge in the center of the course in front of the announcer's stand. It's "Calcutta," and let the gambling begin.

Teams are "auctioned" to hopeful fans, with the auctioneer giving a brief history of the team in the context of the competition and a forecast of their potential. Some of the teams are worth as little as $20, some worth as much as $675. In Calcutta, only the bettors who bid on the top four teams take home money.

At the top of jump number two, a racer kneels stone-faced stretching with yogic concentration, visualizing the path he will take down the second half of the course, tracing it in the air with his hand. Goggles down and helmet on, he tumbles backward like a gymnast in a floor routine, once, twice and lands on his feet at the bottom. The crowd in Calcutta goes back to the sidelines and a Palomino with a cowboy and an American flag whipp ing in the thin air race down the center of the course. Like the World Series for mountain folk, this is serious business and none of the teams are there to lose.

A hush falls over the crowd and with a prompt from the announcer, voices grew in volume.

Continued on page 29
Gas Masks, Saints and Tattoos
The Life of a Young Artist

by F.M. Tapia

She’s an Aquarius who dresses by Aquarian code, bright pink shirt, blue corduroy jeans, green low-top Converse shoes with red shoelaces, and black hair with a pink skunk-stripe down the middle. Pueblo artist Sophia Catherine Fernandez, 25, drinks English tea whenever she can, reads monthly issues of *Juxtapose*, practices yoga off and on, and knows all of the story plots, character names, and special potions in Harry Potter.

Fernandez started drawing when she was 6 years old. She claims that she was encouraged to become an artist by her mom and dad as soon as she showed interest in art. “Also, in elementary school,” Fernandez says, “my teachers really supported my love of art, which is bizarre because the 80s lacked the artistic drive. People seemed to be focused on new technology, business, and . . . well, drugs.”

Although she appreciates the support she received from those around her, Fernandez feels that she would have found a way to create art some how, the support just made it easier.

“It’s hard to describe my work. I really am inspired by Art Nouveau, Japanese prints and tattoos. Those were the really big influences on me when I first started. I also got inspiration from Keith Harring, who does these weird outlines of crazy people, like crosswalk people. My work sort of morphed from there.”

Not only is Fernandez influenced by tattoos, but she has been inked with two pieces of her own art work; a heart with a crown around it to teach her unconditional love, and a larger piece on the small of her back of two fishes intertwined, yin-yang style.

Throughout Fernandez’s art portfolio, there is a reoccurring theme—gas masks. Several of her pieces depict a slender alien form who is sporting a black gas mask similar to those issued during World War II. She incorporates gas masks because they represent the impurities we are facing in our age.
Many of her subjects show religious qualities as well and are also coupled with gas masks. Fernandez feels that the mask represents toxicity, which is opposite of what you would associate with angels and saints. She identifies the masks as negative attributes of our current society.

“I grew up in a Catholic household,” Fernandez says, “so I think a lot of the religious subject matter in my paintings kind of seeps in from my upbringing, except I depict them as contrary and maybe controversial to Catholic beliefs. Usually angels take on a supernatural form, which makes people here on earth feel inferior. In my eyes, that’s where the gas mask comes in. It creates this sense that religious saints and angels are more human than Catholicism might make them seem. It is also the partnership of the pure and the poisoned.”

Fernandez was diagnosed with juvenile diabetes 13 years ago. Although she doesn’t consciously think about diabetes when she is creating, she lumps the stresses of the disease with what’s happening in her life at the time, good or bad. She uses art as a release of emotions, an escape from the routine of insulin shots and nine-to-fives. This, perhaps, is her gas mask material, the toxins of the human condition, her human body.

Fernandez doesn’t consider herself to be a “tortured artist,” but she realizes that she has emotions that she feeds off of to create what she does. In her opinion, artists such as writers, musicians, and visual artists, have a huge ability and responsibility to take something that is inward and change it into an outward experience. A component of creativity is draining in many ways.

Fernandez often feels that creative light and heightened her ability to paint the effects of light.

Although Fernandez was introduced to art at a young age, she didn’t really consider art as a profession until high school when she started exploring more mediums. Before then, she would mostly look at portraits or pictures and freehand what she saw. After producing her own ideas, she noticed a definite drive to become an artist. Trying a variety of tools, mediums and techniques, Fernandez is currently experimenting with acrylic paint because it has flexible and adaptive qualities. She also uses pastels and charcoal from time to time, mostly to do sketches of ideas.

Surrealist Salvador Dali is one of Fernandez’s favorite artists. When she viewed his work at the Dali Museum in Florida last summer, she was astonished at how some paintings were large, stretching several meters into the air, while others were minuscule, but saturated with detail. Her intrigue with Dali stems from his talent to create dream-like portraits. Fernandez can relate to his images on a metaphysical level, often times experiencing déjà vu when she looks at his work.

Attending public school all of her life, Fernandez feels that art has become scarce in school curriculum. Last fall, she worked as a part-time art instructor for Cesar Chavez, a Pueblo charter school that emphasizes strict academic policy. Standing 5’1”, Fernandez was often mistaken for one of her middle-school students.

Continued on page 30
The Rialto Remembered

Story and Photographs by
See, here the floor was all torn up from water damage. Here you can see that the roof fell in from rotting,” Suzanne Phipps says, pointing to pictures of damage. Phipps is Florence Architectural and Cultural Traditions’ project director working to restore the Historic Rialto Theater located at 209 W. Main St.

In 1923, Richard Elhage built the walls of his auto-care shop. Before he put the roof on, he decided the area would be better served with a theater—the Rialto Theater in downtown Florence to be exact. He then added another story and a flight tower to the building. The Rialto became Fremont County’s only performing theater. The first play performed in the Rialto was “Merry-Go-Round.” Admission was only 10 or 35 cents.

In 1927, the McCormick family purchased the Rialto and turned it into a movie theater. They showed old silent films like “Mata Hari” starring Errol Flynn and Greta Garbo until 1931 when the first movies with sound were released. The McCormicks owned the theater until 1969.

After 1969, The Rialto went through many hands until the building was condemned in 1979. The building waited to be remembered as it once was. Its former glory had faded. Its murals and Italian molded plaster had been painted over, plastered over, and even hidden behind 1960’s wooden paneling.

But the Rialto was remembered. FACT, a non-profit organization, bought the Rialto in 1992. The Rialto began to believe that it would once again reach its former glory, but then its roof fell in 1993; and still over thirteen years later, the Rialto Theater has not held a single performance.

“It could be finished six months from now, if I had $200,000,” Phipps says. Just to bring the theater up
to current code, FACT has had to install heating, a sprinkler system and over ten bathroom stalls.

FACT has already sunk several thousands of dollars into restoring the theater. The heating system costs $81,000, and it’s still not finished. The ducts are hanging out of the ceiling waiting to be attached to something solid. The sprinkler system cost them $48,000. Replacing the ceiling beams with steel-reinforced beams cost $18,000 apiece, and they had to put in six.

Community Support
FACT has received government grants to restore the theater, but they have also received support from the community. Many of the companies who have worked on repairing the theater have donated something back. Don Wilkerson with Top Notch Steel donated two of the $18,000 beams that his company built. Both Pioneer Fire Systems, who installed the sprinkler system, and R&R, who installed the heating, donated part of their work.

Many people from the community have also donated their time to working on the Rialto, over 50,000 volunteer hours. They have donated money and items for sale. John Ary, a local business man, donated a 1957 Corvette to the Rialto in 2005. FACT raffled the car off, earning $90,000.

FACT raises money by other avenues as well. They host a sidewalk sale every Saturday and Sunday from 10 am to 4 pm. They also have a gift shop called Intermission for shoppers to stop by. The shop is open irregularly due to the fact that it is run by volunteers. Phipps tries to keep the shop open at least four or five days a week during the summer. Intermission is located in the front part of the theater. All of the antiques and items Intermission and the sidewalk sale sells have been donated and all of the proceeds go to restoring the Rialto to its original condition.

“People have a misconception that you can just throw a coat of paint on it and it’s done.”

“People have a misconception that you can just throw a coat of paint on it and it’s done,” Phipps says. Because the Rialto is a historical project that has received grant money, FACT is obligated to
restore it as close to the original building as possible.

Some things they have to change to bring the building up to code, such as adding duct work and sprinklers. Other things, such as the original door knobs, FACT is allowed to keep because they are low and accommodate the handicapped well.

Elhage brought painters over from Italy to paint the walls. All the original murals have been destroyed or heavily damaged by water, paint, and wear and tear. Phipps says that the murals will be redone in the same colors and styles as the originals. The molded plaster will match the original; and the floors, staircases, balconies and woodwork will all be restored to match the original work. There will be some variation along the ceiling and walls to accommodate the heating, plumbing and sprinkler systems which were not part of the original building.

The doors of The Rialto still have the original leading and door knobs.

The Vision

“The new sound system, not yet installed, will allow FACT to rent the building out for more than just plays. The finished theater will feature live entertainment in all forms from theater, melodramas, dance, big bands, country-western stars, jazz groups, comedy nights and more. There are already several people that want to book the Rialto when it’s done,” Phipps says.

FACT will be able to rent the building to schools, churches, and companies. “We will be very generous [in renting the building] to local non-profit organizations like the Fremont Civic Theater.”

Whoever wants to reserve the building will have to call and reserve it. FACT will not have an office at the Rialto, so the people or company reserving the theater will be responsible for the sale of tickets and advertising. The Rialto will be a reminder of the beauty of old architecture and an encouragement to the world of arts.

FACT currently uses the “now showing” sign to thank generous donors.

The doors of The Rialto still have the original leading and door knobs.
A third place is where you go when you are not at home or at work. Coffee houses have targeted their space towards being third places—they are cozy nooks where people hang out. Coffee’s appeal continues to grow as almost half of Americans age 18 or older drink some type of coffee beverage daily. People have become so addicted that coffee has begun to be perceived like wine: you pick a coffee based on where the beans were grown and the complexity of flavors. More than ever, coffee houses offer more flavors, food, and overall options for drinking.
Wireworks coffee shop occupies a former service station, once known as Locos Mechanics. Its two garage doors, floor drains, and concrete floors still give an industrial ambiance. Its name, however, evokes part of the steel mill—with a pun on what happens when you ingest too much caffeine.

Wireworks is co-owned by Norm Hicks, Ann Cheunu, and Sarah Felt. Norm, Ann, and Greg (an original owner) came from California to start the business in June 2002. They had the vision of creating a space “where people can express themselves—socially, artistically, and musically,” said Norm.

This vision has certainly been fulfilled. Wireworks displays art and photography from local artists such as Patrice Biggi, whose spring 2006 mixed-media canvases are predominately black with exotic yellow, pink, and blue flower petals.

Tuesday and Thursday are chess nights. These aren’t just casual chess games—this is a blitz chess tourna
ment, with five-minute intensive games. It’s mostly regulars playing—left-brained caffeine junkies—but newbies are welcome.

Wireworks hosts similar events for poetry, having dates throughout the year. Also, in light of Pueblo’s desperation for a music scene—cover bands and one-man acoustic fumblings do not count—the owners will have some Colorado Springs bands come down and play.

Norm describes the social space as a “neutral ground for all people to meet up.” There is a queer-pride scene as well as youth-group meetings. Anyone from conspiracy theorists, retired cops, and judges to laborers and traditional families can be seen here. Wireworks has also hosted an urban market with local produce and aids in local pet adoptions.

Norm boasts about his coffee from the Colorado Springs roaster, High Rise Coffee—fair-trade and mostly organic blends. He calls the espresso and the decaf (which is typically ignored by roasters) the rock stars of the High Rise line. Norm also cautions that his espresso isn’t universally loved: it is a round, full dark roast, not for those who disdain the bold blends.

The pastries come from the impressive Hopscotch Bakery, located on Union Avenue: muffins, cookies, and fresh biscotti (when’s the last time you’ve found biscotti that didn’t come in a package?) Their simple coffeecake is a crumbly creation with an extra—tasty sugared top. Wireworks also offers other quick breakfast items and Naked-brand juice.

Norm has several insights on the coffee industry. Although he thinks the most important trend is to-high-fructose corn syrup blends with exorbitant names like Wireworks’ Grasshopper Mocha. He says that “the black drip is tant,” he knows that anyone asks for a sweetened drink, I’ll throw them out.”
A Great Minimalist Space

By Kelsey Mitchell

When you walk into the Pourhouse, the building draws you inward. It has high ceilings, pleasant lighting, and you hear the familiar noises of dumping used espresso, the gradual whirring of steaming the milk, and the usual exchange of coffeehouse banter. A small, athletic female barista, the owner, Tammy Stone, is serving coffee, and people move about at a leisurely pace—a place to relax.

Stone started the business ten years ago, and she has become an important figure in the community. In addition to supplying a social space for Florence, Stone is on the Florence City Planning Committee. She is also the assistant coach for cross country and track for the high school. She likes her job at the Pourhouse because of the closeness of the community. She greets most of her customers by name and converses with them about more than just the weather.

The Pourhouse offers coffee through the Denver roaster Dazbog (www.dazbog.com). Stone usually has three house coffees available daily. One blend is Dazbog’s “Russian Roulette,” a full-bodied blend of light and dark roasts, sweet with a deep smoky finish. To supplement your coffee, the Pourhouse serves apple pie, traditional scones, muffins and other confectioneries, and their espresso shake is a satisfying new twist on a comfort food. Three kinds of homemade burritos are also offered. Stone believes in making a positive impact on our environment: “one small footprint.” She has organic coffee in the Pourhouse and uses organic products to cook with. The Pourhouse even has local organic peanut butter. To also help out the planet, Tammy is a religious recycler, and she rides her bike to work. When she is not busy at the Pourhouse or getting involved in the community, she runs in ultra-marathons like the Leadville 100.

People are in and out of the Pourhouse for a quick fix, and some stay to read or spend some time with their family. It is a mecca of the Florence community.

An eccentric local that you might encoun
ter at the Pourhouse is John. He enjoys his cycling and is known in the community for riding his bike at 2:00 a.m. He comes in because “the coffee is always smooth, and it’s a good place to meet someone to talk to.” When a woman who was trying to do an extended psychological study on the people at the coffee shop was discovered by John, her study was ruined, and she never showed up again. Having a conversation with someone like John is easy because the back of the booths are high enough to give you some privacy.

Pourhouse customers can hear live music too—at 6 a.m. The musicians are the local trio Ash Union, whose lineup includes barista Art Long.

There is no question that Tammy Stone is integral to creating this atmosphere. She proves that all you need is some good coffee, friendly baristas, and an unpretentious, comfortable space to have an excellent coffee shop.

**The Pourhouse**

202 West Main Street  
(719) 784-4071

**Hours:**  
Mon–Fri 6–6  
Sat 7–6  
Sun 8–5

**Prices:**  
Medium Coffee: 1.50  
Medium Latte: 2.30  
Medium Mocha: 3.15

**Wifi:** No

*Fresh organic peanut butter*  
*Photo by Kelsey Mitchell*

*Tammy Stone making excellent coffee*  
*Photo by Chas S. Clifton*
Bad Poetry Night is one signature event at The Daily Grind, located on Pueblo's Union Avenue. While the poems recited may not be Frost Medal or Emily Dickenson Award-winning quality, the night draws a large crowd of people looking to have some fun with their less than perfect pieces of poetic pleasantry.

“I need to set up another “Bad Poetry Night” here pretty soon. There hasn’t been one in a while. People have been asking me about it,” remarked owner Charles Sole. “It’s a night where anybody can come and read their poems or even just come and listen.”

The Daily Grind also offers live musical performances from local bands and one–person acoustic acts every Saturday evening, as well as featuring local artists who can put their paintings and photograph up on the wall for display. Each month a different artist is featured. By featuring local artists, both music and art, Sole says, “It is one way The Daily Grind can support the community.”

The overall theme of The Daily Grind is simple, laid back, and quiet. The house music is soft and alternative. The main lobby has dark red walls that contribute to the calming feel of the place. A room to the right, furnished with couches, barstools, and tables, is decorated with a mural scene that goes from daytime to nighttime as you move through it. Customers can take advantage of the free Wi-fi connection in this room.

The range of customers varies according to the time of day: mornings see a more business-oriented crowd, there are a few college kids in need of their morning caffeine fix that come in. (CSU-Pueblo students get a 10-percent discount.) During the daytime, mostly high school kids and college students looking for a place to relax after a hard day at school can be seen. In the evening, a wide variety of
people from children with their parents to elderly couples stop in.

Other features of The Daily Grind include a small gift shop area located near the front of the coffee shop with different styles of coffee mugs to buy.

While the poetry may be a little sour, the coffee is anything but that. Their café latte has a smooth, rich flavor that goes down easy with a muffin or pastry. You can enjoy the white mocha, which has a slight nutty flavor to it, and is smooth as well. The coffee and chocolate blend together perfectly.

The Daily Grind offers not only hot drinks, but cold as well including iced and frappéd versions of the hot drinks, Italian sodas, fruit smoothies, Coke and Pepsi products, juices, sports drinks, and a few flavors of Sobe. The Daily Grind also offers a delicious chai that has a slight, not overbearing pumpkin taste. Lactose-intolerant customers can substitute soy for milk. The snacks offered include cookies, donuts, brownies, cheesecake, bagels, muffins, and chips. Each month new drink specials are offered.

Charles Sole, his sister, Kris Bride-
La Junta hasn’t been a sleepy town since December 2004, when Kat Walden and Cheryl Lender took over The Barista coffee shop. Walden says her favorite part about owning the only coffee shop in town is “all the people I have met. It’s a fun place. The customers are great.”

No matter what you are in the mood for, The Barista can cater to your taste buds. They serve a variety of authentic coffees from mocha (“our best seller”) to an eye-opening espresso shot.

Feel free to invent something new from their 22 coffee liqueurs—anything from Tiramisu to the popular vanilla. If you are watching your sugar intake you can savor their six sugar-free coffee liqueurs. The Red Eye, a personal invention, is made with the house coffee and espresso. Your morning will never be boring again. The bitter taste of the espresso with the toasty burst of the house coffee will brighten your day up with a bang. No more bags under your eyes.

Not only do they offer a wide variety of drinks accompanied by coffee, they also offer many filling, fruity tastes that are sure to wake you and your mouth up. Try one of their fruitful frappes, iced chai, or smoothies. The frappe differs from the normal smoothie by mixing fruit, milk or juice and ice. These tantalizing tastes range from raspberry, tropical, strawberry banana and chocolate.

Unlike some coffee shops, The Barista offers a solid breakfast menu. The Roadrunner is a popular favorite. This breakfast sandwich pops with melted cheese and ham served on a healthy bagel. You can also have your choice of ingredients placed on a wide variety of toast or a croissant.

Walden and Lender introduced the panini sandwich when they purchased The Barista. They also serve bagel sandwiches, wraps and salads. A favorite is the Pollo Rovente (Red Hot Chicken) with chicken strips, jalapeno mayo, roasted pepper and onions, lettuce, tomato and cheddar cheese gently pressed together by two thinly, toasted pieces of Italian bread.

Don’t think that your senses of smell, sight, taste and touch are the only senses being entertained. Enjoy their free Internet computer station while you sip on your steamy or icy beverage of choice. Local entertainment isn’t always available, but every once in a while poetry readings, local bands and karaoke make an appearance at the Barista. In January 2006, The Red Hat Society conducted their monthly luncheon meeting there.

So step aside from the trends of chain coffee shops like Starbucks and experience the The Barista in La Junta.

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The Barista Wakes up La Junta

*Photo and Story by Julia D. Pearce*

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The Barista

204 Santa Fe Ave.
La Junta, Colo. 81050
(719) 384-2133

Hours:
Mon-Fri 7-6
Sat 8-5
Sun closed

Prices:
Medium Coffee: 1.35
Medium Latte: 2.75
Medium Mocha: 3.00

Wifi: Yes
Pete and Rhea Mugasis opened the Coyote’s Coffee Den on June 1, 2002 because they couldn’t get a good cup of coffee anywhere in Penrose. At the time they were both commuting to Colorado Springs. “We were originally going to open a kiosk,” Rhea says, “But the word kiosk isn’t even in the Fremont County zoning dictionary.” They bought an old restaurant building off of Colorado 115 and turned it into a coffee shop. Their business depends a lot on the traffic and weather, Pete says. “If it’s a snowy day out, we’re pretty slow.”

The original marketing plan depended on commuter traffic with a 70/30 split—70 percent commuter traffic, 30 percent local customers. “It was a 70/30 split,” she said, “the other way. The community has really supported us. The shop has taken on the flavor of Penrose.”

Business has been successful enough for them to open a second Coyote’s Coffee Den in Cañon City at Highway 50 and Justice Center Road.

Pete and Rhea love coffee. They both prefer their coffee black, but that doesn’t hold them back from offering a wide range of coffee mixes. Pete delicately handles a bag of blueberry cream roast, one of his favorites, as he smells it. “The flavor is roasted into the beans,” he says. “A lot of people don’t understand the difference between roasted flavor and the syrups. Generally, with the flavored coffee, it’s a medium roast so you can really taste the flavor.”

The Coyote Den seems to attract friendly, smiling people. Myron Mullett and Mike Hess live in Westcliffe but work in Colorado Springs. Mullett stops at the Den once a week or more to enjoy some coffee or a hot breakfast.

So if you’re flying solo, stop in for their creamy Caramel Macchiato and chat it up with your table neighbor while you drink it. But if you’re in a hurry and don’t have time to chat, you can go through their Road Runner Window and grab a cup of their regional special for the day—like their earthy Costa Rican coffee.

In addition to coffee, the Den serves quiches, croissant and bagel sandwiches, and a new lunch special every day. The giant apple pie for $3.25. It’s well worth the price; the apples are crunchy with the perfect blend of cinnamon. The crust crumbles in your mouth as you eat it.

The Cañon City location has an extended menu, including more lunch choices and alcoholic coffee mixes. You can order an espresso martini or an espresso mixed with vodka.

The Penrose location hosts a Saturday music night in the summer from the first Saturday in June until the middle of September. The crowds range from about 100 to 150 people. Pete throws out some straw bales for people to sit on and lights up the fire pots. Rhea says that they try to bring in types of music that Penrose doesn’t usually hear. “Celtic Night is a big hit,” she says. Their final night of summer is Cowboy Poetry Night. On those nights, Pete digs out a fire pit so that people can sit around it. “It really feels like you’re in the Old West,” he says. 🍂
The Roadrunner Window offers a quick fix for commuters. Photo by Megan M. Crumley
While much of Colorado fly-fishing seems to focus on the 160-plus miles of Gold Medal trout streams in the northern and mid-western parts of the state, one of America’s great rivers gets largely overlooked as it carves through the San Juan mountains and out into the San Luis Valley in the south. The Rio Grande, which will eventually serve as a border between Texas and Mexico, has its origins in snowfields above 11,000 feet and as it makes its journey toward the sea, serves as a fine place for solitude seeking fisherman to cast a fly and surely catch a few trout. And although its fame may be local and its water cold, the Rio Grande has mayfly hatches starting in late May to rival those on the Platte and the Arkansas and a sub-surface feast that has the fish moving as soon as the ice melts. In early May, when the ice has gone and the hatches have yet to start the wide and heavy river is often found empty. The only fly shop around, the Rio Grande Rod and Reel Fly Shop, is at the northern border just before the river disappears into the hills near Creede. Brian McAden, the shop’s owner and guide, is lonely and waiting for the first dedicated anglers to make the spring rush. Those are the ones that laugh at the 40-degree water and the numb fingers and have waited to see the big river free of ice flows, and McAden has been missing them. His knowledge of the river and its fish are impressive, even by guide standards, and locals and out-of-towners alike stop by and end up staying for a lesson.

Now is the time for the big nymphs and streamers—the strikes that you can’t see, but can feel in your soul for days afterward. The fish are hungry and looking for a good meal, so anything smaller than a size 14 will probably be passed up for a better opportunity, even by the smaller fish. South of Creede, the river is wide. Wider than many of Colorado’s northern rivers and in places a drift boat is the best way to go. But for those of us emotionally, and financially, attached to our waders, there is some comfort in finding out that the full span of the river is, in many places,
m makes it a never-ending adventure, so fish with a partner, a staff and a belt because you never know when you might be on your way to the Gulf of Mexico.

Because the water isn't terribly deep, much of the good water is visible from the surface. Large rocks and river's edge log jams dot the stretch from Del Norte to Creede. Getting out to a place where you can cast back on them is the greatest challenge and even in the early spring before the major runoff period, moving about in and fighting the 200+ cfs flows will weary even the most conditioned angler. But once a good stream position is obtained the fishing is on.

Black and olive woolly buggers in a 10 with a long shank seemed to be the most consistent when fished on the swing. The best rig of the day was the bugger trailed by a size 14 Prince Nymph, but because of the bulk a simple roll cast pulled from the downstream current got the job done nicely. Letting it tumble in the deeper troughs that you mapped out on your way to the middle of the stream will elicit some big strikes from fish that this angler never got to see. But the few that did make it to my net were mostly browns with a rainbow thrown in here and there. Stonefly patterns also got some action when drifting alone, without a dropper of any sort.

Much of the river is stocked by the Colorado Department of Wildlife, which has placed a two-fish limit on most of the water with a length requirement of 16 inches. The stocking situation can fill up your day fishing with many small trout. Letting them run into the heavy current might give the feel you were looking for. The brown trout, especially, are mostly more than 14 inches but all were very slender and didn’t have the fight that one might hope for in a Rio Grande fish. Seventeen inches was the magic length for a good fight, and should you let one of the larger fish make it into the heavy current the fight is mostly over.

Catching and retrieving fish in the Rio Grande might take some getting used to for those anglers coming from smaller streams and rivers. The fish vary so much in their fight that it was best to set the drag low enough to let a smaller fish run but high enough to get an effective hook set. When the strike comes, and it is a fish you need to slow down, cranking up the drag mid-run is the easiest way to find the tension that is just right. Being to firm with the stripping hand could make a day on the river incredibly frustrating because when the fly is taken on the swing it is taken with gusto and the line needs to be available for the fish to run with. The water is clear, but not crystal so if it is a question of fishing a 4x or a 5x tippet with the bigger flies, go with the 4x. Chances are the fish will hardly know the difference but the angler certainly will when coaxing them in. A 5x tippet will not stand up to a strike that happens at the end of a swing on a tight line, but a 4x might give you some time to respond.

Fishing on the Rio Grande is more than just hitting the river. The fishing happens to be surrounded by some of the most rugged county that the Rocky Mountains have to offer, and the views are stunning.

The whole drive north on Colorado 149 from US 160 to Creede is a world that is left just as it was made, with a few modernizations. Wide valleys and high cliffs dot the trip to Creede, and all along the way is fishing you will be glad you made the trip for.
Laffing Horse Farm is a place where all things handmade are celebrated. Owners Shawn Hoefer, Jeanette Larson and Elena Augustine make and sell everything from goat’s milk, to organic soap, to handspun yarns.

Laffing Horse is one of only three farms in Southeastern Colorado that specializes in raising animals for their fibers and sells them commercially. The other two are located in Pueblo.

The farm raises a variety of animals for fiber including angora goats, angora sheep, llamas and Jacob sheep, which are a rare breed the owners specialize in.

“We bought the farm in 2000 and started with the goats, which we milked,” said Jeanette. “But we realized the value of their fiber and decided to expand.”

In 2001, she, her husband, Shawn, and her daughter, Elena, invested in a herd of Jacob sheep.

“We liked the idea of preserving a rare breed. Also, Jacob sheep are pretty self-reliant. They require much less work and oversight than our goats.”

The llamas came soon after, as they offered protection for the herd, which was often bothered by coyotes.

Today’s buyers are welcome to purchase the farm’s fibers at the online store, but for crafters who’d like to take a more “hands-on” approach, Laffing Horse Farm offers a unique fiber arrangement.

“Sheep Share,” as it’s called, began three years ago at Laffing Horse Farm. The program allows urban knitters to adopt a Jacob ewe from the farm and own rights to one year of the ewe’s fleece.

The initial adoption fee is $20. From there, room and board adds

By Kendra Hume
$20 per month, or discounted $240 for one year. Each ewe on the farm produces three to five pounds of wool in one year.

A white jacket covers the sheep’s fleece year-round so it is never exposed to the weather and temperature, providing a high-quality product.

Once the sheep is sheared, customers can choose to have the raw wool sent to them as is, have Elena spin the wool into yarn, or even have Jeanette weave the wool into a custom rug.

To put the cost of adoption in perspective, the average skein of wool costs from $6.50 to as much as $15 and each skein weighs 4 ounces.

At that rate, the cost of the three to five pounds of fleece adopters receive is equivalent to the high-end yarns on the market.

In addition to fleece, customers are mailed a photo of their ewe periodic updates. They are also allowed to visit the ewe at any time and join in the shearing of her fleece.

The program, Jeanette says, is a way for the farm to offer customers more than just a product; it offers an experience.

**Fiber Sculpture**

“Creating art is as essential to me as breathing,” says Emily Barnard, a Pueblo fiber artist.

“Painting, sculpting, beading, collage, drawing and photography are all mediums I’ve dabbled in. Two years ago though, I discovered fiber. It encompasses everything I love about art. It’s textural, malleable, colorful and natural. I can ‘draw’ with it, bead it, dye it, paint it, sew it and sculpt with it. The possibilities for creating with fiber seem endless,” Barnard said.

Barnard’s wool creations are certainly inventive. The 28-year-old left the conventional wool crafts like knitting and crocheting and dove into felting.

Felting is the process of creating flat fabric from raw wool using heat, agitation, moisture, pressure and
What’s particularly interesting about her fiber work is what she does with the felt afterward. She’s made everything from insects to household pets.

“My work is often called ‘whimsical’ and ‘humorous’ and that’s exactly what I hope to portray. I’m a huge fan of children’s illustration and pop surrealism and I think my pieces walk a fine line between the two.”

Barnard works with merino wool, heavy crimp alpaca, camel hair, mohair and even dog hair, which she purchases from Colorado fiber farms and an online source on the east coast.

“When I’m working on my sculptures, they develop life stories. I’d like to think they tell them to me since fiber is something of a living thing.”

She has a beetle and a prey mantis that are homosexual life partners and dogs with body-image complexes.

Her animal sculptures are like children to her, which is why she’ll only let them leave her home if the price is right — $500 to $1,200.

She also creates smaller pieces like baby mobiles for cribs that run around $150.

“The great thing about working with fiber in Colorado is the low humidity. Wool acts so differently here. It’s also a prime location for raising llamas and alpacas, whose fiber is fun to work with.”

**Hand-Painted Fiber**

Sheila K. Ewert-Munger is a Kansas native who currently lives in Walsenburg. It was when she moved to Colorado that she returned to her roots in knitting.

After years of rebelling against her family’s fiber traditions (her mother and sister both knit), she embraced

Above: Barnard’s “Nessie” the dog is made of a wire armature, felted merino wool, felted baby alpaca and hand-sewn glass beading. She is 21” tall and 22” long.

Left: “Noodle” is “Nessie’s” best friend. He has a wooden armature and is felted from merino wool. Noodle is 11” tall and 18” long. He has a removable tongue that can be interchanged with his red ball.
the craft, but found the industry lacking.

“I just couldn’t find colors and textures I was looking for, so I decided to make them myself,” she said.

Munger started her custom yarn business in her Walsenburg home. She bought pounds of all-natural wool and cotton yarn online and began the process of experimentation.

The process of producing custom yarn proved to be both tedious and rewarding.

To bring her ideas to life, Munger begins by testing color variations, creating them with Kool-Aid.

Next, she carefully disassembles the giant spools of bleached yarn and mixes her commercial-quality fiber dye to match her sample swatch.

She applies the dye like a painter would on a canvas, balancing the hues into a multi-color yarn.

After allowing it to dry, she repackages it in skeins (4 ounces).

Munger began by selling her custom yarn online, but last spring she took her passion for custom yarn to a new level.

In April 2005, she opened Union Avenue Fiber and Art Gallery in historic downtown Pueblo. It was in part, to expose more crafters to her ideas of what yarn should look and feel like.

Her store offers a Crayola box of colors for knitters and crocheters to choose from in a plethora of textures.

Munger also sells other manufacturer’s yarn in her store, but only all-natural fibers including alpaca, cotton and soy silk.

Though the yarn prices are higher than at the local craft store, the fibers are a higher quality and quite reasonable considering most are hand-fashioned.

Since its opening, the shop has become a popular hangout for knitters and crocheters with passion for custom looks.

In addition to yarn, the store sells finished knitted pieces including Munger’s favorite items to knit: socks.

Accessories for knitters like needles and buttons are also for sale at the store.

But the shop isn’t just a place where crafters can purchase pretty play toys; it’s also a learning environment for the inexperienced.

Munger provides instruction at the shop for people at all skill levels, including beginners.

Camaraderie is also provided for the veteran knitter at the store’s knitting circle which currently meets twice a week.

Dates for instruction and group knitting do change, so interested parties are encouraged to call the store for dates and times or stop by and pick up a calendar of upcoming events.

Southern Colorado Fiber Farms
Laffing Horse Farm
www.laffing-horse.com
Arrowhead Angoras
Pueblo
719-924-0252
Rising Sun Farm
31051 Ford Rd., Pueblo 81006

Southern Colorado Fiber Outlets
Union Avenue Fiber & Art Gallery
130 S. Union Ave. #110, Pueblo 81003
719-583-0183

DJ’s Fiber Crafts
106 W. Main St. Florence 81226
719-784-0775
Alleah Pearce, 22 and an aspiring tattoo artist, moved to La Junta with her husband and two small children and opened “Inkaholics”, a little tattoo shop. Pearce learned tattooing and body piercing with John “Little John” Littlefield in Fort Collins. Her first tattoo was of a pink elephant from the childhood classic Dumbo on Little John. She also did her body piercing apprenticeship with Little John and did her first piercing in 2001.

Pearce, homemaker, wife and mother of two, has her nose, ears and lip pierced. Her arms are covered in a variety of different motifs. On her left arm, she has a dreamcatcher painted with green, blue and yellows. On her right forearm, she has a skeleton clawing through her skin holding a tattoo machine. This tattoo is not very colorful, but shows the talent of using an ink and...
a needle for shading. Her person might look like a tattoo artist, but her personality is nowhere near the typical tattoo artist. Most tattoo artists are men who are covered in macho designs like skulls, religious figures and "mom" encased in a heart.

Pearce has always had an interest in art. She isn't a highly trained artist; she took a few high school art classes, nothing more. She became more interested when she got her first tattoo when she was 16—a kokapelli tattooed on her left arm. Licensed in 2001, she was able to open her own shop or rent a space at a tattoo shop. She started her tattooing career at Joker’s Wild in Fort Collins.

Her shop is very smart, and is located very close to home. It is attached to Pearce’s home. The shop feels serene. Its walls are painted with a starry night theme. On the walls you are lost in a swirl of blue, white, silver and yellow. Even the ceiling is painted. On the wall hangs a black-framed mirror; used for her customers to admire Pearce’s handiwork.

Pearce has beaten all odds and made an unusual business work in an area that doesn't have high traffic for an art like tattooing. Inkaholics doesn't advertise like most tattoo shops do. Her work is from word of mouth. She takes the customers as they come in. She has 4-5 regulars that visit 1-2 times a month.

Pearce produces a range of tattooing: shading, tribal, sentimental, and covering up the customer’s earlier tattoos. She likes doing sentimental pieces because she can add her touch to the tattoo and still keep the meaning that the customer wanted.

She is not too fond of barbed wire. The technique to make it look unified is not easy, but once you get the hang of it, they all look the same. "I don’t like doing barbed wire. The technique to make it look unified is not easy, but once you get the hang of it, they all look the same."
wire because it is one of the most popular design concepts out there,” says Pearce. Cover-ups take major talent. Her longest cover-up took about four hours to do.

Although she likes dealing with all the techniques, her favorite is freehand “tribal,” a mixture of ancient techniques of long deep black lines and geometrical shapes. “I like doing tribal the best because I get to test my imagination on the spot,” says Pearce.

Right now she is doing a tribal piece on her husband that will stretch from his left arm, curve around his back, and going down the opposite leg to his ankle. This will take several sittings and a lot of patience on her husband’s side.

One of the biggest fears many customers have when they get their first tattoo is the pain involved. Dain Epperson, a first-time customer of Pearce, says, “She feels the vibe of the person and she accustoms her touch to the level of pain she feels they can handle. She has a very diverse hand. She also does great work.” Dain got a sentimental tattoo from Alleah: hieroglyphics that go down the back of both arms. The meaning behind this tattoo is between him and Pearce.

Pearce started out just liking tattoos, not she creates them. Tattooing has become such a staple in her and her family’s life that if she were to stop it would probably change her life all together. Tattooing was part of how her family started. She met her husband while she was touching up a tattoo he had done earlier. Pearce maybe unique to the world, but she is a master in the tattooing world.

If you want a new tattoo, Pearce is not the only interesting person you will run in to. Her assistant will make sure you are comfortable and have something to read. Samara, age 2, will even accompany you to the mirror with her own rub-on tattoo and the comment “Ook good!”
Continued from page 3

anthem starts low and builds until everyone is singing in the cool mountain morning. It is a performance the Super Bowl could never have captured.

Then, with the snap of a starting pistol, the racers move in droves to the starting gate with those in the sport division going first. They aren’t the best of the racers, but they are fun to watch. The difference between

Murmurs run through the crowd like an electric current with each horse that steps up to the line. Who is the favorite and who is going to be the one to upset the favorite? Those with money on a team have white knuckles wrapped around a pencil and a sheet with all of the contestants.

Each horse has its fans, and the top racers switch between each, trying to shave seconds off of their time. If they win, they take home a modest purse and the much sought after pride of being the champion. The fastest rider gets a saddle. But the fastest horse does not necessarily have the most fans, and the most fans don’t necessarily root for a horse. In fact, the biggest cheers of the weekend come for Psycho Sadie, the 4-year-old mule from Whitefish, Montana. Donning a blue and white derby mask and with an unmistakable bray, she is the crowd favorite, although not a favorite of those who had money on her. Standing at more than 16 hands, she has the legs for speed but hooves too small to stay on top of the snow. Either way, her rider, who makes the 1200-mile trip every year doesn’t come to win; he comes for the get-away and the chance to show people that mules can run too.

Ron Behrendt takes his chance at the rings with one in hand and one in the air behind him.

sport and open divisions is only the height of the jumps that the skier hits, the time of day, and the amount of money people are willing to bet. But really, it’s just a warm up for the main event.

When the open-division racers take their places and the horses dance in circles on the pavement, the crowd swells considerably. This is what everyone comes to see. The horses are ready and wound up with cowboys gone hoarse from previous races. Racers are limber and eyeing jumps that are higher and a competition that is fiercer.

The horses are ready and wound up with cowboys gone hoarse from previous races. Racers are limber and eyeing jumps that are higher and a competition that is fiercer.

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The fact that she walked to her car after class and drove away was one of the few things that set her apart from the students.

“I have learned so much from that teaching position. The most important thing that I have learned is that I do not want to be a teacher when I grow up! But seriously,” Fernandez says, “I took the teaching project on because the school really needed someone and I had done a few months of being a teacher’s aide there a couple of years ago. I never imagined teaching could be so difficult. Maybe it’s not that it’s so difficult, but it’s very time-consuming. On the other hand, when those kids would turn in their pieces, I would get so excited for them, and I really did see a lot of effort go into most of the kids’ art.”

Fernandez began the semester showing the students a video on Jackson Pollock, an American Abstract Expressionist painter who produced in the first half of the 20th century. Pollock incorporated various instruments to create his abstract art, such as using sticks and paint brushes as splatter devices.

“After they saw the movie,” Fernandez smiles, “I had kids bringing in their own sticks to paint with. They had fun with that assignment. One kid even used a stick for the cliche ever-burning-Pollock-cigarette. I wasn’t too thrilled about that, but it was interesting to see how much these kids allowed themselves to be influenced by a single video portraying an artist. ‘Wow,’ I remember thinking, ‘If this is influential, what else are these kids picking up on in their environment? How can I continue to make this a positive experience for them?’”

Although it has not yet materialized, Fernandez had an idea of constructing a student art show that would feature local talent of elementary and middle school children.

Fernandez might not have to look too far for support with such a project. She was privileged to showcase her work in January at The Daily Grind, a local coffeehouse.

January 2006 also brought mixed emotions of accomplishment and nostalgia, as Fernandez packed her bags, fit as much luggage in her station wagon as she possibly could and left her hometown to pursue schooling in Denver. Although she is currently attending Metro State College, she aspires to one day study art restoration in England or to attend an art institute in the States.

Fernandez embodies a sense of neo-art-nouveau, and this is carried throughout her paintings; dark lines, prints of women, the use of color or lack of color. Eventually, she wants to do studio work for a living, but she also realizes that it is a tough market. Whatever she does, she is sure about one thing, she will always create art. It has become secondary only to living. Further, she is sure that she will carry that small city from Colorado with her in her back pocket, that place that subjected her to just the right conditions for the growth and nurturing of her talent.

“Initially, when I get an idea for a painting, it’s like a flicker in my mind’s eye,” the young artist says, “The more I sketch and paint, the clearer the picture in my head becomes. The finished pieces never look exactly like they do in my head though.”

The young artist paints in her studio apartment in downtown Denver with sketches hanging on the walls, a toilet drip in the bathroom, a fish named Socrates in a fish bowl on the kitchen counter, a line of Tibetan prayer flags strewn from one corner of the window to the other making the infiltrating sun drip patterns on her paintings, and cupboards full of ramen noodles, or the occasional caviar in a can (tuna). She cleans her brushes and sets them in an old spaghetti-sauce glass jar that she has converted into a painting necessity. She is not quite a saint, a bit tattooed, and trying to breathe through that metaphorical gas mask. 🎨

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