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# Meet Northern Colorado's emerging young leaders

BizWest Media publishers Jeff Nuttall and Christopher Wood present 40 Under Forty for 2020, our program that recognizes emerging young leaders in Northern Colorado who make a difference in their companies, industries and communities. Those being honored had to be younger than age 40 by Dec. 31 of this year.

As always, we are grateful to our Title Sponsor: Banner Health; as well as our Associate Sponsors: Alchemer, Canvas Credit Union, DaVinci Sign Systems, Flood and Peterson Insurance and Palmer Flowers.

Thanks also go to the members of our selection committee, who spent many hours poring through the nominations: 40 Under Forty alums: Stephanie Gausch, Weld Food Bank; Madison Golden, United Way of Larimer County; Ann Hutchison, Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce; Amanda Miller, The Place Setting Co.; Heather Buoniconti, Food Bank for Larimer County; Rochelle Reynolds, I-25 Kia; Nick Kenny, Greeley Philharmonic; Travis Storin, city of Fort Collins; and Chris Garcia, University of Northern Colorado; Alicia Johnson,



Christopher Wood



Jeff Nuttall

Electric; Kara Pappas, Larimer Humane Society; and, Megan Larson, MRock Creative.

Thanks also to Amanda Miller and Nikki Lucas with The Place Setting Co. for helping us manage this event, along with Rich Bussen of BizWest! Thanks again to BizWest's Chad Collins for the design of this insert and Dallas Heltzell for writing the profiles.

*Jeff Nuttall and Christopher Wood are publishers of BizWest, the Business Journal of the Boulder Valley and Northern Colorado. Reach them at [jnuttall@bizwest.com](mailto:jnuttall@bizwest.com) or [cwood@bizwest.com](mailto:cwood@bizwest.com).*

Evans City Council; Bevin Parker, Maximum Painting; Brandon Wells, The Group Inc., Justin Martin, Bret's

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## Jacob “Jake” Arnold

Director of brokerage  
Waypoint Real Estate LLC



Whether it's in his role as a real-estate broker or as a father of two children younger than age 4, Jacob “Jake” Arnold says, “I feel like I am always on the run.”

Arnold started Fort Collins-based Waypoint Real Estate four years ago with four people, most of whom had been his co-workers at Brinkman Partners. The firm quickly grew to more than 20 associate brokers.

Before his three years at Brinkman, he had earned a master's degree from Minnesota State University in Mankato, Minnesota, worked for Wells Fargo Bank in Mankato, and Palmer Capital in Sacramento, California, then took his first job as a real-estate broker at Niehaus Properties in Portland, Oregon.

As director of brokerage at Waypoint, Arnold said, “I have ensured our culture and office atmosphere are the type of place that inspires everyone, and drives positivity, encouragement and optimism. I have helped the team by expanding our client base as well as identifying investment opportunities for both my co-workers and clients.”

Commitment to Community, an in-house program at Waypoint, funnels 1% of the company's gross revenues to local charities and nonprofits. Over the years it has donated time and money to local organizations such as Ram Strength, Habitat for Humanity, Champ, and the Boys and Girls Club.

Arnold leads the Northern Colorado Commercial Association of Realtors. He is active with the Fort Collins Housing Catalyst development committee and is board president for Villages Ltd., a Housing Catalyst-affiliated organization providing affordable housing options and services to the community.

## Sharla Aronson

Owner  
Aronson Family Dental



Sharla Aronson does more than create healthy smiles at the Fort Collins dental practice she opened in 2011. She's also a mentor.

Her constant study of leadership skills, she said, “has resulted in a positive, supportive team of women working together” and pursuing “big personal goals. I'm proud that I've had employees move on to attend dental hygiene school, finish a master's, and start businesses.

“When my first child was born with hearing loss, I became acutely aware that health is not a given. I became passionate about maintaining health and found functional medicine,” she said. “Through this, I became aware of the risks of mercury fillings and the impact of oral infections on the gut and heart.” She's now the only dentist in Northern Colorado certified in safe amalgam removal, and one of 12 dentists nationwide to complete a holistic dentistry program.

After dental school at the University of Colorado's Anschutz campus, Aronson worked at North Beach Dental in Fort Collins, a pediatric dental office serving low-income children and disabled adults. “As the only general dentist with hospital privileges,” she said, “I was able to reduce the waiting list of disabled adults needing dental treatment, mostly through pro-bono work.”

She also has provided free dental care at the Colorado Mission of Mercy and screened school-age patients for Project Smile. She serves on IBMC's advisory committee to help ensure that its dental-assisting curriculum is relevant for job placement, and donates to organizations including Zonta International and Life for the Innocent.

## Crystal Bidwell

Senior business manager  
Ditesco



“Everyone will have a legacy, and I see mine in my son,” said Crystal Bidwell. “I find myself trying to exemplify what one's inner attitude can do to change their life path and harness the power of belief. Being in construction also helps to keep his attention during these lessons, as hardhats and dump trucks are, after all, pretty cool!”

Bidwell oversees all administrative and financial aspects of Fort Collins-based Ditesco's engineering and construction-management business.

“The keystone in my role was creating systems that encourage internal fellowship,” she said. “My approach was simple; I recreated the same warm-blanket feeling we strive to provide externally. Significantly, each employee should not only know their value but feel it, too.”

She helped create a community volunteer program at Ditesco and works with youth sports programs in Fort Collins.

Before coming to Ditesco, she worked at the Lathrop Law Office, Old Town Computers and Loveland-based A-Concrete Inc.

Although Bidwell earned bachelor's and master's degrees from Colorado State University, she said “most people are surprised when I tell them I am a high-school dropout and my first job was selling tomatoes on the side of the road for local farmers. The mental challenge at that age prepared me for the grit and discipline needed today. It's a memory filled with humility and the important lesson of how one's inner attitude can change their outer world. If I can instill this idea in my now 6-year-old son one day, I know I will have personally succeeded.”

## Emily Brazil Jones

Broker associate/partner  
The Group Inc. Real Estate



“I love pearls for a variety of reasons,” said Emily Brazil Jones, “and, in fact, my daughter's middle name is Pearl.”

And in her professional life, she dispenses pearls of wisdom to buyers and sellers as a broker associate at The Group Inc. Real Estate in Fort Collins.

Real estate started as a personal interest for Brazil Jones, who worked 10 years in corporate event planning. Since college at the University of Colorado Boulder, she purchased, managed and sold multiple properties in Fort Collins, Denver and Vail.

She started her full-time real-estate career in January 2019 and four months later became listing agent for Lennar Homes in Northern Colorado. “As a result of this partnership,” she said, “I now know all 225 Group Partners by name, countless others in the real-estate community and have found an incredible place to call home at The Group.”

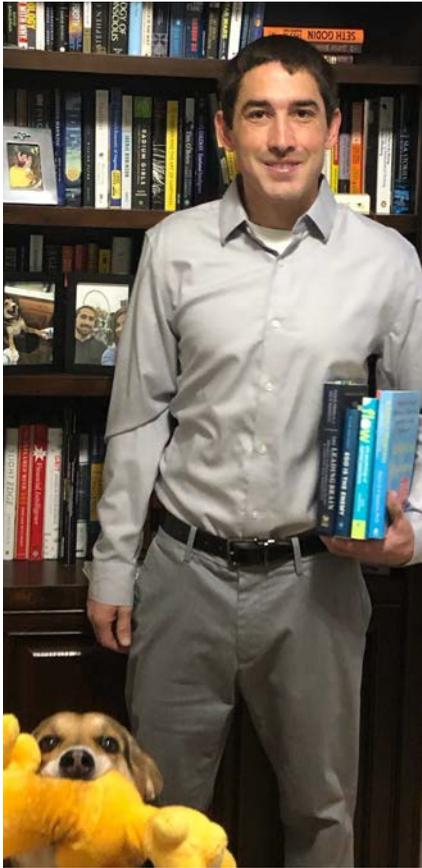
After a year in the industry, Brazil Jones closed 67 properties and more than \$32 million in sales. She joined the Fort Collins Board of Realtors as Young Professionals Network chairwoman and in September received the board's Rookie of the Year award.

She serves on the board of Project Self Sufficiency, a cause important to her as a single mother of children ages 5 and 9. She's also a member of a Local Giving Circle, a group of friends who meet twice per year to combine funds and designate a specific cause that needs help.

She enjoys tennis, golf, snow skiing, water skiing, tennis and traveling.

## Travis Coulter

Vice president for pre-construction  
ECI Site Construction Management Inc.



Some influential books have steered Travis Coulter's personal growth and leadership development. He said they "helped me to find common ground between my passions for psychology, philosophy and business and helped shape my desire to always be a student, servant leader and find any opportunity to help those around me learn and grow."

An employee of Loveland-based ECI Site Construction Management Inc. for 15 years, his first position was in general labor. "Since I've held nearly every role from equipment operator to project manager and now vice president for pre-construction," he said, "I developed multiple new programs and roles to help ECI grow. ... I recognized that the company's growth required new dynamics and roles, so I started graduate school in 2018 and graduated in June of this year with a master's degree in organizational leadership from the University of Denver."

BizWest honored ECI as top in its flight for the 2019 Mercury 100 Fastest Growing Companies in Northern Colorado, and it has built iconic projects including the Poudre River Whitewater Park, Coulter serves on the Multiple Sclerosis Society's Northern Colorado leadership council. "I am lucky to have the support of my co-workers and ECI as a whole to create a MS Walk team that has been in the top 10 for fundraising over the past few years," he said.

Coulter also initiated the idea of paid time off for volunteer work, and ECI now gives employees eight paid hours each to spend at volunteer organizations of their choice.

## Tracie Crites

Mayor  
Town of Frederick



"I believe that the town of Frederick is a place where we believe in rolling up our sleeves not just for ourselves but for each other," said Mayor Tracie Crites. "We believe in playing outside until the stars flicker on and protecting the hallowed ground of childhood. We believe in a lifelong commitment to actions as good as our intentions. ... In Frederick, the life we dream of is ours to create. It is how we are built on what matters. We are Fred, and we wave our flag as proudly as we wave our hand in friendliness to one another."

A graduate of Carroll College in Helena, Montana, Crites directed marketing for the Larimer Humane Society before owning Bloom Marketing for three years, then directed business development for Corkat Data Solutions. She now is executive director of marketing for cybersecurity firm Breach Secure Now and has been named one of the IT Channel's 100 most powerful women in information technology.

As Frederick's youngest elected mayor and its second female mayor since 1907, Crites said her role is to "spread light through citizen engagement, business cultivation, and partnerships with staff and beyond. ... I hear and see my community and share their desire to be built on what matters: each other." She dedicates her mayoral stipend of \$500 per month to a different Frederick nonprofit or community event each month.

"Above all things," Crites said, "I am a mom to three young children who watch and model my every move."

## Jamie Davis

Director of business development  
KCI – Krische Construction



When Jamie Davis isn't strategizing about her work, she's golfing, practicing her goose and duck calls or standing in a river with her fly rod. She has a passion for the outdoors, poking around in the mountains for some big game and spending time with friends and family, including her two children.

As director of business development for KCI – Krische Construction in Longmont, the Windsor resident said her impact "is directly tied to my ability to influence others by building credibility, fostering long-lasting relationships, listening, communicating and taking action. I have built a company culture where people do not want to leave and people are wanting to come work for us."

Davis raised more than \$40,000 for community organizations through activities such as an annual charity golf tournament, generated events that gave back to Crossroads Safehouse and Aims Community College, and served on the Legacy Committee for Colorado Youth Outdoors. She also has been involved with Respite Care, Northern Colorado Unify for Youth, Food Bank of Larimer and Weld County, Women Give, Longmont United Foundation, High Plains Library District, Berthoud Golf Team, the Windsor High School basketball Program and the RE-4 School District Flip Flop Gala.

A graduate of the University of Kansas, Davis has been in the architecture and construction industry for 15 years.

"When a challenge comes my way, I go about it with a positive attitude and a smile," Davis said. "I grow when situations around me are tough, and I don't back down to a challenge."

## Matthew Estrin

Owner  
Tower 56 Distilling



For Matt Estrin, Tower 56 Distilling in Greeley "represents all of the hard work, blood, sweat and tears that went into opening and operating this business" and "the passion my family and I have to be a positive influence in the world around us."

"My business has seen some incredible success since opening our doors in June of 2018," he said. In 2019 it was voted Best Bar, Best Cocktails and Best Distillery during the Greeley Tribune's Best of Greeley competition, then repeated for Best Cocktails and Best Distillery this year. Three of its spirits won gold medals and one took silver at the Denver International Spirits Competition. Its gin won platinum and innovation awards at the SIP Awards Spirits competition, and this year two of its spirits won double golds and the "best in category" recognition at the American Distillers Institute Spirits Competition. During the Rocky Mountain Craft Spirits Festival, Tower 56 won the People's Choice Award in a field of more than 25 distilleries.

The distillery gave more than \$13,000 to various charities in 2019, as well as countless bottles, gift cards and merchandise for charitable events. Each month, Estrin's business highlights a nonprofit, and at the end of that month a portion of revenue is given to that organization. Estrin partnered with the Greeley Philharmonic Orchestra as a title sponsor and supports the Greeley Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Development Authority. He's a member of the Greeley Satellite Rotary Club and volunteers at his children's school.

## Rebecca Everette

Development review  
manager  
City of Fort Collins



“Everyone in Fort Collins recognizes these yellow signs, but few ever think about the people behind the sign: developers, community members and the hard-working city staff,” said Rebecca Everette, development review manager for the city of Fort Collins. “Development review is a collaborative, meaningful process that ensures new construction adds value to our community.”

A Magna Cum Laude graduate of Colorado State University in 2009, Everette earned a master’s in urban and regional planning from the University of Denver in 2013. She made the leap from private consulting to Fort Collins city government in 2014, rising from associate planner to city planner, senior environmental planner and development review manager.

“In every position I have had the opportunity to lead high-profile projects that directly impact the quality of life and health of our community, including long-range plans, new policy and regulation, neighborhood programs, and development review,” she said.

Her work has won awards and attracted attention from other municipalities hoping to learn from her successes. She has presented at state and national conferences on topics ranging from “town and gown” partnerships to approaches to growth management, effective public outreach, improving access to nature and cultivating multi-generational work teams.

Everette and her family support many local causes including United Way, Cultural Enrichment Center of Fort Collins, Larimer County Food Bank, Samburu Youth Education Foundation and KUNC-FM 91.5. From 2013 to 2018, she served as president and secretary of the Fort Collins Ultimate board of directors, a nonprofit that supports the growth of Ultimate Frisbee.

## Bianca Fisher

Executive director  
Greeley Downtown  
Development Authority



Bianca Fisher is “fiercely proud” of the Greeley Downtown Development Authority’s new marketing campaign, because she said “Downtown Greeley: The Place to Be” is a tribute to “the local businesses, creatives and investors who make downtown the heart of our city.”

She also likes the “Courage” mural by Armando Silva and Wes Sam-Bruce because “being a part of downtown development takes courage and vision and tenacity.”

With a bachelor’s degree from the University of Northern Colorado and working on a master’s from the University of Denver, Fisher has worked with the DDA for more than a decade, rising from administrative assistant to project coordinator, associate director and finally executive director.

“I have impacted our organization by strengthening community relationships, streamlining projects and procedures, establishing processes to ensure fiscal health, and creating a vision for Downtown Greeley’s future,” she said. “I have grown in my leadership capacity to recognize the strengths of my team and empower them to do what they do best to create a more strategic, efficient work environment.”

Fisher was featured by VoyageDenver as an “Inspiring Woman” in 2019 and graduated from Leadership Weld County and Leadership Northern Colorado.

She has served on the boards of two nonprofits, the Greeley Family House and the Immigrant and Refugee Center of Northern Colorado. She has helped both with event planning, organizational transitions and strategic visioning.

Her family has helped feed the hungry through the Weld Food Bank, furthered cystic fibrosis research, supported those with developmental disabilities at ARC, and supported students in Greeley School District 6 through the Success Foundation.

## Brandon Fox

Director of student  
success and retention  
Front Range  
Community College



“Ever since I figured out I was a dog person and adopted Metro and Boston years ago, they have been my biggest fans,” said Brandon Fox. “The challenges faced this past year have required a lot of adjustment, and while compared to my regular coworkers they are less talkative and try to steal my lunch a lot more often, they have made my workdays the past year a little less lonely.”

With a bachelor’s degree from Kansas State University and a master’s from the University of Nevada-Las Vegas, Fox began his career in education as a coordinator of student activities for Colorado Mountain College, then supervised student government and housing and worked with several other departments at Washington State University’s Tri-Cities campus and Long Island University-Brooklyn. Now, as director of student success and retention at Front Range Community College in Fort Collins, he serves on the Student Affairs Leadership Team and as second to the dean of students. He supervises five departments including veterans’ support, counseling and academic support.

Fox was recognized as Advisor of the Year, received an award of excellence from the chancellor and has presented at three national higher-education conferences.

At FRCC, Fox oversees the campus food bank and food drives and works to secure affordable housing for students. He donates to student scholarships, student emergency grants, and the food pantry, and volunteered to lead the campus response to the coronavirus pandemic.

“After losing my grandfather to COVID-19,” he said, “the fight against the virus became personal.”

## Allis Gilbert

Executive director  
McKee Wellness Foundation



“I didn’t understand what people meant when they say their dog looks like them or has a similar personality until Colby entered my life,” said Allis Gilbert. “He is my pal for adventures, laughs, making dinner, and supervises yard work. He embodies my approach to life and makes me smile and laugh daily. He rounded out our family, which includes my 9-year-old daughter, husband and our older golden, Gus.”

Gilbert has displayed dogged dedication as executive director of the McKee Wellness Foundation in Loveland. She has developed and led the broadening of its mission to ensure an inclusive process for grant-making. Additionally, she has developed new programs and funds focused on veterans and Thompson Valley school-agers in Thompson Valley, raising more than \$350,000 for a new veteran support fund and distributing more than \$182,000 to both programs in two years.

Gilbert holds a bachelor’s degree from Southern Illinois University-Carbondale and a master’s from Ohio University, and is working on a doctorate from the University of Southern California, where her dissertation will focus on addressing organizational gender barriers women encounter in their careers and ascent to leadership.

She was nominated as a 2020 Woman of Distinction and was recognized as a high-potential young professional in the Banner Health system.

As the COVID-19 pandemic deepened, Gilbert developed a program to support front-line employees’ day-care costs, meals, and a range of moral support initiatives. Over six weeks, she granted out more than \$155,000 to front-line workers and created a veterans’ fund.

## Kara Harbison

Assistant principal  
Poudre School District



"I cannot think of a better way to highlight my passion and profession as an educator than my school picture," said Kara Harbison. "Even at the end of my busy days as an assistant principal, you will find me with a smile on my face."

The 2020-21 school year marks the 17th year of work in the Poudre School District for Harbison, a Colorado State University graduate with a master's in special education from the University of Northern Colorado. Her roles at PSD have included student teacher, paraprofessional, substitute, general- and special-education teacher, teacher mentor and coach, and administrator. She currently serves as assistant principal at Linton Elementary School.

"Advice I often give mentees looking to go into administration or grow in their teaching careers is to look for ways to learn from everything you are a part of," she said, "especially the less ideal pieces." She said she remembers to speak her mind, "even if my voice shakes."

Harbison also works to advocate for families and students who are struggling and often marginalized, including those with disabilities, those of color and those in the LGBTQ community. Also, she added, "helping women recognize they too can be a leader, have a family and be successful any way they choose has been time well spent."

She supports organizations such as Respite Care and volunteers to collect and distribute food and basic necessities for families in need. She also works with Project Smile and the North College Business Association in Fort Collins.

## Kaycee Headrick

Chief executive  
Boys & Girls Clubs  
of Larimer County



"The Boys & Girls Clubs of Larimer County's flag "represents thousands of kids in our community who have a safe, fun and enriching place to go when they need it the most," said Kaycee Headrick, the club's chief executive. "Each day I am honored to be a part of this incredible organization."

However, she added, "the Boys & Girls Clubs have had a far greater impact on me than I have had on it. Boys & Girls Club has been a catalyst to my growth, both personally and professionally throughout the years. I walked into my first club when I was 19 years old and within 10 minutes realized I had found my purpose. This organization has taught me to give a voice to the voiceless, listen to understand, and step up to lead when challenges arise."

Since Headrick started in her current role in 2017, the clubs have opened more than seven new locations in Larimer County and have significantly expanded services to families, especially in light of COVID-19.

Headrick earned a bachelor's degree from the University of South Dakota and a master's from the University of Phoenix. Her first work with the Boys & Girls Clubs was as youth development specialist in Brookings, South Dakota. She's a 2019 graduate of Leadership Fort Collins.

Beyond the clubs, Headrick volunteers her time on a few local committees such as the Live Loveland Task Force, Colorado State University's Employer Advisory Board, Rotary, Directing Change and the Rocky Mountain Professional Association.

## Elisabeth "Lisa" Jensen

Director  
Stork Support  
of Northern Colorado



"For many low-income families, getting ready for the arrival of a new baby can be so stressful," said Lisa Jensen. "Stork Support helps a family feel prepared and cared for even with simple items like a pack of diapers, wipes and a can of formula."

Jensen, a Windsor resident with bachelor's and master's degrees from Colorado State University, said the idea of Stork Support came to her three years ago, when she noticed a gap of services and resources for families without cars who were in need of baby items. "I started collecting no longer needed baby clothes and baby gear to help deliver them to families who couldn't pick them up themselves," she said. "In the past three years, I have learned so much about the need of our low-income communities and that many are afraid to ask for help."

Stork Support communicates to the families mostly via social-media platforms. She said individuals in need are more likely to explain their situation and to ask for help if they can chat to someone who is more like a friend, rather than a social worker."

When she created Stork Support, she said, "I discovered another gap that needed to be filled, and that is to connect resources and organizations to help support each other. There is so much sorrow and heaviness in our world, especially during COVID-19 times. If you are able to, why not be a light in someone's life to help guide them out of darkness."

## Katharine Lotspeich

Regulatory consultant  
AGPROfessionals



A newborn Holstein dairy calf symbolizes Katharine Lotspeich's work for Greeley-based AGPROfessionals. As an on-staff compliance assurance professional, she said, "I work with confined-animal feeding operations all over Colorado to help livestock producers navigate a challenging regulatory environment, provide support and assistance for government inspections, and connect producers to other AGPROfessionals staff to develop and implement plans for operational changes and improvements."

Since she joined the company in 2017, its compliance program has grown by more than 20%. She helps agriculture producers become ever more sustainable and energy efficient, added development of onsite manure digesters to her portfolio and begun developing public-relations services for agriculture clients.

A Utah State University graduate, Lotspeich developed the Millennial Ag Podcast, which honed her perspective on topics ranging from federal dairy policy to mental health.

Before coming to AGPROfessionals in 2017, Lotspeich was a legislative aide to state Rep. Jon Becker, R-Fort Morgan, and state Sen. Jerry Sonnenberg, R-Sterling. She was a dairy focus consultant for Cargill Inc. and director of communications and external affairs for Colorado Wheat.

She has coached the Platte Valley FFA Milk Quality team for the past three years; she volunteers with FFA and 4-H members to prepare their dairy animals for exhibition; and she has spent more than 100 hours working to feed hungry people at the Weld County Food Bank, to which she donates produce from her share garden. Her podcast held a virtual 5K earlier this year with proceeds providing more than 1,600 meals in Weld County.

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## Ben Lucas

Senior manager for business development

Learfield IMG College/Rams Sports Properties



“Working in sports and being a runner in 2020 has posed unique challenges,” said Ben Lucas. “Virtual events, virtual races and cancellations have dominated both landscapes. In both, however, the only way forward is to keep moving and taking on each obstacle that shows up each day.”

His work at Learfield IMG College and Rams Sports Properties has evolved from account executive to his current role as senior manager for business development. In that role, he leads his team’s sales efforts by aligning a partner’s goals with those of both Colorado State University and the overall community. “Most visible is our \$37.7 million campuswide partnership and naming-rights agreement with Canvas Credit Union,” he said. He mentored new Learfield hires in 2019 and serves on the 26-member Colorado State Athletics’ Together Council.

Before coming to Learfield, the CSU graduate was a sales representative for the Denver Nuggets and Colorado Avalanche.

At Leadership Fort Collins in 2017-18, Lucas said, “our project was collecting hand warmers and winter clothes for Homeless Gear, and we created and fulfilled its third largest collection/fundraiser of the year.” He helped Noble Energy give back more than \$3,000 to Partners Mentoring Youth in the ‘Kicks for the Cause’ program. Last year, in a partnership between Woodward, CSU Athletics and the Poudre School District, he helped provide \$25,000 per year over five years to CSU’s community outreach programs geared toward elementary and middle-school students. This summer, he raised \$600 for Matthews House and completed the Wild West Relay.”

## Nikki Lucas

Chief of staff and collaboration

The Place Setting Co.



“My clipboard is always with me on event day; you always know the person with the clipboard has all the details,” said Nikki Lucas. “The ‘You Got This’ plaque signifies a mantra of mine for years but especially in 2020. This year has not been easy, but with saying, ‘You Got This’ and ‘You can do hard things,’ it’s a reminder to step up to challenges faced with a smile and determination.”

Since joining The Place Setting Co. in Fort Collins in 2019 as a senior-level event and project manager, the firm has doubled its monthly clients and increased its number of annual events — including virtual events this year.

A graduate of Colorado State University and Leadership Fort Collins 2009, she earned a Six Sigma Green Belt, received a project-management certificate from CSU and is working toward a project-management professional certification. Before coming to The Place Setting Co., she worked for the Community Foundation of Northern Colorado, the Fort Collins Downtown Business Association, the Health-e-Careers Network, Dow Dupont and Jolly Events.

Lucas volunteers for the Fort Collins-based Alliance for Suicide Prevention of Larimer County and serves on its board of directors, first as vice president and now as secretary. She focuses on internal projects so its staff can focus on outreach, awareness and education, and has averaged 300 hours per year of contribution to the organization.

She and her family contribute financially to the Food Bank of Larimer County and CSU’s “School is Cool program” and student scholarships.

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## Dave Maddocks

Director of finance and accounting  
Brinkman Construction



“So many of the skills I’ve relied on in my career in accounting and finance were actually developed through my experience playing in bands and recording,” said Dave Maddocks. “Music taught me to collaborate, effectively communicate and stay true to myself.”

The past six years have been a song of success and growth for Maddocks at Brinkman Construction. He joined the company with three staff members reporting to him and now oversees three high-performing departments. He leads the financial vision and strategy for the nearly \$200 million company, as well as initiatives that benefit its employees including transition to 100% employee ownership and leading the strategy for Brinkman’s retirement plan and profit-sharing benefits.

A Magna Cum Laude graduate of the University of Northern Colorado’s Monfort School of Business with bachelor’s and master’s degrees, Maddocks is an active member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and the Construction Financial Management Association. He graduated from the Leadership Fort Collins Class of 2020.

As the leader of Brinkman’s payroll and benefits, IT and accounting teams, Maddocks has pressed leadership to make strategic changes focused on enhancing company culture and taken an active role in removing the boundaries between the operations and finance teams.

He and his wife support several organizations that address human trafficking, access to clean water and food insecurity, both in Fort Collins and abroad. He has volunteered with many local nonprofits including Volunteers of America, United Way of Larimer County and Food Bank of Larimer County.

## Zachary Minniear

Senior project manager, partner  
RLH Engineering Inc.



At Windsor-based RLH Engineering, Zack Minniear has worked on projects throughout the Front Range. He coordinates the work of architects, contractors and third-party consultants for school-bond improvement programs and special-district recreation centers.

“Ultimately, I help a group of stakeholders achieve their construction goals, from planning to execution in the field,” Minniear said. “Each project is unique and challenging in its own way. The absolute best part of my job is understanding others’ vision and delivering a successful project according to their goals and needs.”

The Colorado State University graduate joined RLH more than eight years ago as a project technician, then was promoted to assistant project manager and project manager; both promotions were fastest in company history. His current position as senior project manager came with an ownership stake in RLH, which has nearly doubled in both staff and capacity since he was hired.

As a military veteran, he said, “attention to detail has served me well in both my personal and professional endeavors.”

Minniear successfully petitioned the state of Colorado to accept novel solutions to complex issues addressed within the Air Pollution Division. RLH is a contributing member of the Colorado Environmental Professionals Association, and Minniear is involved with revising state statutes applicable to his industry.

In his spare time, he volunteers with CSU’s environmental health program, mentoring upperclassmen and serving as a panelist and guest speaker at networking events. He is a board member of the nonprofit Windsor Community Foundation and attended Leadership Northern Colorado in 2019.

## Dr. Jaclyn Munson

Owner  
Fort Collins Family Eye Care



As owner of Fort Collins Family Eye Care, Dr. Jaclyn Munson’s vision is better vision — as well as prevention.

“Coloradans are preventive by and with nature,” she said. “We educate ourselves and are bold at going first to explore new territories, new trails and new concepts. Bringing a preventive mindset to the core and culture of Fort Collins Family Eye Care has been my greatest contribution to expand the level of patient wellness in this region. We are going first, sharing a new preventive eye-care experience, an all-encompassing patient-education model. The unique menu of diagnostic technology and the expertise shared with my team will uncover the earliest signs and threats to eye health,” she said. “This mindset has spurred my professional growth to push the envelope on behalf of a generation that desires more options, best patient experiences and efficiencies.”

Educated at Northeastern State University and the Oklahoma College of Optometry, both in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, Munson founded Colorado’s Dry Eye Society, published industry articles for national-scale cohesion in patient care.

Munson serves as a volunteer for United Way of Larimer County’s Community Impact Committee, is involved with the spiritual growth and formation of others at St. John XXIII and Our Lady of the Valley Catholic churches, is a guest lecturer for various community collaboration groups and health organizations, has coached women’s basketball and hosts workshops for patient education and advocacy at her practice.

“My question to the community,” she said, “is, ‘Where can we help next? We are ready!’”

## Drew Nelson

Founder and chief executive  
NITROcrete LLC



Drew Nelson founded NITROcrete LLC in Fort Collins three years ago by offering a cool new technology — literally.

It’s a component of concrete that’s cooled with liquid nitrogen. By replacing ice cooling, the industry status quo, Nelson said NITROcrete improves safety, operational efficiency and sustainability for concrete producers.

“I’ve always strived to stay grounded in pragmatic leadership,” he said. “NITROcrete emerged from Peak Innovations in Johnstown, where we manufactured concrete batch plants. Beginning as the executive vice president, I served through diverse phases of company development.

“In 2008, the recession wrecked the construction sector. To survive, I helped us lean into innovation. We emerged by earning a reputation for precision blending for what I can best describe as ‘weird materials.’ That technology ended up solving pervasive problems with reliable and safe concrete cooling by using liquid nitrogen — which, as it turns out, is another weird material we excelled at handling.”

Nelson moved the company from an eight-person operation in Johnstown to its current team of more than 50 people in Fort Collins, with systems contracted in more than 120 locations across North America, Brazil and Singapore.

He holds a bachelor’s degree from Cedarville (Ohio) University and a master’s from Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio. Last year, his company ranked tops in its flight in BizWest’s Mercury 100 Fastest Growing Companies, posting 731% growth over two years.

Nelson and his wife and longtime business partner, Katie, financially support the Peruvian orphanage where he spent a summer volunteering in college.

## Sergio Ortiz

Operations manager  
The Neenan Co.



Work, family and sports hold life lessons for Sergio Ortiz.

“Design and construction present a platform to make a difference for businesses, communities and how we live,” said Ortiz, operations manager for The Neenan Co. “Boxing challenged my perseverance, and baseball gives every team member an opportunity to contribute. Most importantly, my girls show me how to lead with courage through vulnerability. I am truly grateful for everyone in my life.”

From a working-class family in Loveland, Ortiz decided to complete his bachelor’s degree at Colorado State University after starting a family at age 21. He obtained an internship position with Neenan and left a full-time department manager position with full benefits for an opportunity for him and his family.

“My unique background works well with Neenan’s unique integration between design and construction,” Ortiz said. “This approach focuses heavily on leadership, communication and relationships.”

Ortiz lists creation of a project-manager training program, setting sustainability standards and bringing inclusiveness to the hiring process among his accomplishments since joining Neenan.

“Over the past 12 years, I have spent countless hours investing my personal time with what I see as future construction leaders, engaging with students from multiple programs to give insights, and even speaking at a CSU graduation,” Ortiz said. “I have built iconic Fort Collins projects such as Powerhouse, Mitchell Block, The Music District and Washington’s music venue.”

He facilitated Neenan’s charitable donations to organizations such as Liberty Commons High School, Matthews House, Habitat for Humanity and various youth sports programs.

## Stephanie Pouse

Partner, director  
of operations  
The Brahma Group Inc. /  
Brahma Roofing  
& Construction



Stephanie Pouse enjoys the moments she can spend in places such as Lory State Park with her fiancé, Dean, and her mountain dog, Odin.

“When I’m not on construction sites for The Brahma Group Inc. or Brahma Roofing & Construction,” she said, “you’ll find me at trailheads, discovering new dispersed camping locations, exploring mountain towns or enjoying various outdoor activities with friends and family.”

At the two sister companies, Pouse said, “I’ve had the opportunity to create, test and optimize systems that allow us to best serve our residential and commercial clients. By consciously stepping out of the office and into the field, I’m able to better understand the needs of our clients and our teams, internally and externally. Through this intentional practice, I’ve set standard operating procedures and best practices in place that have proven to increase sales and client satisfaction — all of which have contributed to the six-figure launch of Brahma Roofing & Construction” this fall.

Since women represent approximately 0.5% of the roofing industry and less than 10% of the construction industry as a whole, Pouse said, “a large part of my mission and the mission of our businesses is to create more opportunity for women within these industries.” As part of that mission, she co-founded the BuildHer Collaborative.

With every contract signed, a portion is donated back into the communities in which Brahma builds. In addition, Pouse chairs a local nonprofit that focuses on helping young girls find their voice through creativity, communication and connection.

## Brieana Reed-Harmel

Municipal fiber manager  
City of Loveland / Loveland  
Pulse



“As an electrical engineer, I have spent my career making my community a better place through highly reliable power and now high-speed broadband from 100% fiber optic cables,” said Brieana Reed-Harmel, who was hired eight years ago by the Loveland Water and Power as a senior electrical engineer but in 2016 became municipal fiber manager for Loveland Pulse.

As manager of the city’s broadband project, she oversees everything from teams and contractors to business and financial plans, research, communications, presentations and more.

“I was the first — and am one of only two — women in Colorado to directly lead a municipal broadband utility, and I am one of only a handful in the U.S.”

A graduate of Portland (Oregon) State University, Reed-Harmel also has served as project manager for the community-owned Foothills Substation and Solar facility and co-sponsored Drive Electric Northern Colorado.

She has volunteered and donated to KidsPak, United Way and the Larimer County Food Bank, and is a member of Thompson Valley Rotary. “Through COVID,” she said, “we have been helping our at-risk or in need neighbors with acts of service like running errands, conducting socially distanced visits, and more.”

She sees Pulse as a community service as well.

“As the world continues to become more connected, access to the internet has become an essential service for information and communication,” she said. “We are making sure that no one in Loveland is left behind due to location, income, or any other factors — at home, at school or at work.”

## Amanda Repella

Data program lead /  
economist  
Larimer County Economic  
and Workforce Development



“I often consider definitions across both my professional and personal life: how the meaning of a concept and the downstream implications of that meaning change over time,” said Amanda Repella. “The concept of ‘adventure’ has taken on a markedly different definition since the addition of our son, with considerably fewer miles hiked or pedaled, but we’re on the journey together and headed in the right direction.”

As an economist for Larimer County Economic and Workforce Development, Repella hopes research and data support helps Northern Colorado head in the right direction as well.

“I have built my department’s reputation as a regional source for economic-development data expertise,” she said. “I used to see data as a tool for understanding our world and identifying opportunities to make positive impacts, but in this role, I’ve come to view both data and analysis expertise as key tools for building relationships and strengthening regional and organizational collaboration. I have witnessed firsthand how developing organizational data expertise and then being open to use that expertise to benefit partner organizations can strengthen partnerships and expand networks.”

Partnering with the Northern Colorado Regional Economic Development Initiative, she helped design a Regional Cluster Strategy that “may change how leading economic developers identify, describe and prioritize industry clusters,” Repella said. “The International Economic Development Council recognized the value of this work by publishing our case study in the Summer 2020 IEDC Economic Development Journal.”

She and her family contribute to the Food Bank of Larimer County and Stork Support.



**Scott Smith**  
*Executive Director*

**&**

**Nikki Lucas**  
*Board Member*

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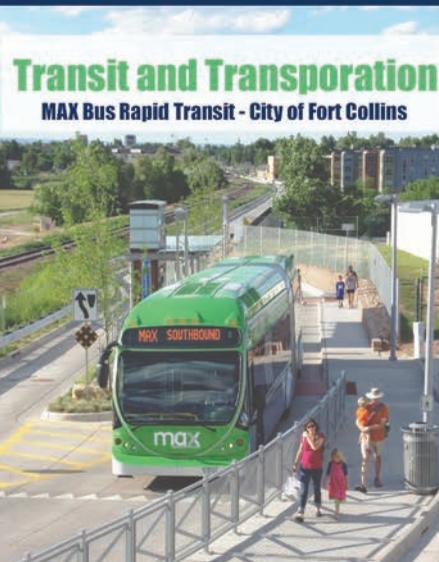


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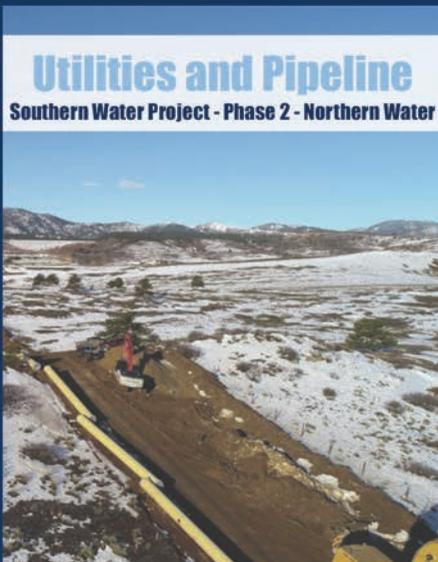


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## Dr. Elise Rigney

Owner / chiropractor  
Impact Chiropractic



Dr. Elise Rigney said she started Impact Chiropractic in Fort Collins in 2012 with “actually negative zero dollars” to her name, “but I had the drive and passion to help others. I began as a one-woman show and since then have been able to expand and hire on 10 amazing women to our practice, with the plan of adding two more female doctors by the end of this year.” She will add offices in Greeley and Loveland in 2021. She also runs ChiroIntensive, a consulting company for chiropractors.

Rigney, who earned a bachelor’s degree from the University of Minnesota and a doctorate in chiropractic from Northwestern University, has won Best of Colorado recognition for the past six years and earned certification this year from the Academy Council of Chiropractic Pediatrics.

“When COVID hit,” Rigney said, “we wanted to find a way to support small businesses in our area. We opened a tab for the day at locally and family-owned Snack Attack and fed more than 100 people. We also take months at a time and donate our new-patient appointment fees to different nonprofits in town” including Animal House, Alzheimers Foundation, Lights for Life, GRIT athletics, Young Life, Girls on the Run, Realities for Children, WomenGive, Partners Mentoring Youth, Habitat for Humanity, the Rocky Mountain High School wrestling team and children’s sports teams.

She offers free health screenings at the City Health Fair, Fort Collins Fitness Festival, Taste of Fort Collins, Peach Festival, Animal House BrewFest Fundraiser and NewWest Fest.

## David Rout

Executive director  
Homeward Alliance



David Rout’s niece and nephew live in New Jersey “but are always in my heart,” he said. “They remind me of how lucky I am to have a family that loves me, a safe place to call home, and the privilege to do work that I think is meaningful — but also inspire me to create change in a world where most people are not so fortunate.”

That quest for meaning led Rout in 2012 to Homeward Alliance as an intern working toward his master’s in social work at Colorado State University. At that time, the organization then called Homeless Gear had a budget of \$40,000 annually and no full-time employees. Its sole mission was to collect and distribute life-sustaining supplies to people experiencing homelessness.

Rout was named executive director in 2014. He and the founder of Homeless Gear launched or absorbed 11 additional programs and initiatives. Today, Homeward Alliance has 32 full-time employees and serves 5,000 individuals and families each year with a projected 2021 budget of \$2.5 million.

Rout serves on boards including Outreach Fort Collins and the city manager’s Homelessness Advisory Committee.

The Northern Colorado Continuum of Care, launched in 2019, brings regional control of federal Housing and Urban Development funding to Larimer and Weld counties. NoCo CoC selected Homeward Alliance to collaborate with HUD, the state and numerous stakeholders. “These changes empower our region to chart our own course,” Rout said, “which we believe will lead to an increase in federal resources for homeless and affordable housing in Northern Colorado.”

## Allison Seabeck

Executive director  
Warehouse Business Accelerator



“As a business person, a mom and a runner, I rely on my GPS smart watch every day for data and tools to enable me to progress toward personal and professional goals,” said Allison Seabeck. “At the Warehouse Business Accelerator, I help business leaders connect to tools and resources that enable them in building their companies and creating jobs in Northern Colorado.”

In her first year at the scale-up accelerator for technology and advanced manufacturing businesses, the Summa cum Laude graduate from the College of William and Mary has increased the nonprofit’s visibility and community awareness and shaped strategy to enable its vision of prosperity for Northern Colorado.

She previously served for 10 years at Fort Collins-based Prosci Inc., a global industry leader in the discipline of change management. At age 30, she was tapped to take over as president of the company when the founder retired. In Seabeck’s five years at the helm at Prosci, the company’s revenue and profits tripled, it made two successful international acquisitions, and was named to Forbes Magazine’s “Best Places to Work” list.

Seabeck serves on the board of Alternatives to Violence, Loveland’s safehouse for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and human trafficking. As charitable donors, she and her husband donate annually to organizations including House of Neighborly Service and the Food Bank for Larimer County. She also is an active member and volunteer with the Loveland Road Runners / Sweetheart City Racing running community, explaining that “I believe in supporting a healthy, active community.”

## Megan Slusser

Executive director  
Greeley Village Assisted Living & Memory Care



Each color of flower represents Megan Slusser’s reasons for volunteering for the Alzheimer’s Association’s Walk to End Alzheimer’s. She said orange is for support in finding a cure, purple is for the loss of a loved one to Alzheimer’s, and yellow is for caring for someone with Alzheimer’s.

Slusser started in the senior-care field as a care associate 20 years ago, then served as an activities director and sales and marketing director before being named executive director of Greeley Village Assisted Living & Memory Care six years ago.

“The opening of a community was a newer learning opportunity for me,” Slusser said, “and has happened, with the Greeley Village team with great success. I am very proud of this accomplishment, and it helped me acquire new skills in development.”

She chairs the Weld Walk to End Alzheimer’s, and takes pride in raising funds, educating and spreading the word about The Walk and the many resources and benefits the Alzheimer’s Association offers the community.

As a member of Northern Colorado Women in Business, she said, “I am able to assist in other charitable services and giving, most recently the Weld Food Bank, in support of other members. I grew up serving charitable organizations through volunteering and fundraising and still take the opportunities whenever I can.”

She previously served eight years as regional manager of the sales team at Portraits International in Portland, Oregon.

Her current professional achievement, she said, “is gracefully navigating COVID-19 in a hospitality/health-care environment and still having hair.”



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Dr. Jaclyn Munson!*



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## Scott Smith

Executive director  
Alliance for Suicide  
Prevention of  
Larimer County



“It is so important for me to give back to the community through my work,” said Scott Smith. “It not only helps others, but it keeps my cup full as well.”

As executive director of the Alliance for Suicide Prevention of Larimer County, it’s Smith’s mission to help people who feel their cup is empty.

When he was hired in March 2019 and moved to Northern Colorado from Durango, ASP had a staff of two and a \$120,000 annual budget. Under Smith, it has a staff of eight with a \$440,000 budget. And there’s more.

“With community input, I was able to create a new area of programming to meet the needs of the highest-risk populations for suicide (adult men, veterans and LGBTQ youths) through our Peer Outreach Programming. We were able to fully fund and hire a different coordinator for each of these populations.”

Smith also increased ASP’s collaboration with other agencies and the community, earning the organization recognition as Agency of the Year in 2019 from the city of Fort Collins’ Commission on Disability.

Smith, who holds a master’s degree in social work from the University of Denver, has worked to expand ASP’s grief programming, which supports people who have lost a loved one to suicide. He also created a fund to help pay for often expensive post-prevention services and supports for low-income residents in Fort Collins during their time of greatest need.

Said Smith, “It is such an incredible honor to have these opportunities to help others.”

## Dana Spanjer

Chief operating officer /  
partner  
Spanjer Homes



“Fishing is one of my favorite ways to explore new territory and enjoy nature,” said Dana Spanjer. “There are few things more satisfying to me than catching a trout on a dry fly.”

As chief operating officer and partner at Spanjer Homes, she’s hooked on making sure her 42-year-old company has a foundation as firm as the houses it builds.

Being a second-generation owner, she said, “I bring a fresh perspective on leadership, management and technology. The technological advancements I introduced — information flow, client access portal, billing and financial management — have been the biggest impact, not only for improving the company process but also the experiences and service to our clients, trade partners and employees.”

With a degree in environmental geology from the University of Montana, she entered the company as a part-time administrative assistant in 2011 and worked her way up to director of sales and marketing. She obtained her Colorado real estate license in 2016 and became COO two years later.

She’s actively involved with the National Association of Home Builders and Home Builders Association of Northern Colorado, and is a member of NoCO HBA’s government-affairs council.

Most of her community service and charitable giving is through her membership in Fort Collins Breakfast Rotary. In April, she helped organize a virtual 5K run and food drive, raising more than \$12,000 for McBackpack and Poudre School District’s McKinney Vento programs. She volunteers each year at the All American Car Show, supporting Hearts & Horses and Operation Gratitude.

## Allie Steg Haskett

Vice president for university  
enhancement  
University of Northern  
Colorado



“I’m the proud mom of two wonderful boys, Charlie, 10, and Henry, 7,” said Allie Steg Haskett. “Probably as a result of my work as vice president for university advancement at my alma mater,” the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, “my boys are also huge Bears fans and join me in proudly wearing the blue and gold.”

“I came to UNC as a student and quickly assumed leadership roles within my sorority and student activities,” she said. “My student and part-time experiences served as a springboard for what has become my professional career in philanthropy and higher education.”

Steg Haskett joined UNC’s staff in 2005 as assistant director of alumni relations. Over the past 15 years, she progressively assumed additional responsibilities and now serves as the youngest member of the president’s cabinet. She rose to her current position from roles as director of corporate and foundation relations and assistant vice president for development.

She led the university’s first comprehensive fundraising campaign, ultimately resulting in UNC donors providing more than \$54 million in philanthropic support. While working full time, she earned a master’s degree in nonprofit management from Regis University.

Steg Haskett volunteers at the Weld Food Bank and serves on the city of Greeley’s University District committee. As a single mother of two boys, she also volunteers at their school. She is a regular donor to UNC athletics and various scholarship funds as well as many other community nonprofits. For the past 12 years, she has supported the Matthew Tieman Memorial Scholarship.

## Keller Taylor

District general manager  
Spectra/Budweiser Events  
Center



Sold-out concerts and sports events in arenas and amphitheatres is just part of the fun for Keller Taylor, whose role as district general manager at Spectra includes overseeing the Budweiser Events Center in Loveland.

“While I’ve been able to build a set of diverse events as well as exceed budgeted financial results annually,” he said, “I think that seeing employees grow into larger roles or rehiring former employees — which I’ve done three times to date — is easily the most fulfilling. I started with Spectra as an intern during my undergraduate work and have worked in multiple states, cities and venues, so I feel my reach both within my organization and my industry is something that makes me successful daily.”

Taylor holds master’s degrees in sports administration and facility management as well as business administration from the University of Ohio.

“Having spent my entire career in the facility-management world, I endeavor daily to live by a couple of key mantras: transforming events into experiences (my company’s credo) and remembering that every event is someone’s first event,” he said. His management of the Stride Bank Center in Enid, Oklahoma, prompted that city to declare April 13, 2016, “Keller Taylor Day.”

Taylor serves on the boards of the American Red Cross, Colorado State University Hospitality Program, Loveland Chamber of Commerce and Loveland Parks and Recreation Commission, and volunteers time with the Boys & Girls Club of Larimer County, Habitat for Humanity of Fort Collins, Larimer County Food Bank and Northern Colorado United for Youth.



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## Kirsten Jane Thom

Senior program manager  
SummitStone Health Partners



“Like a candle, behavioral health lights the way in times of darkness and is ever changing to meet the needs of those we serve,” said Kirsten Jane Thom. “I am an optimist, knowing that people can and do recover with appropriate treatment.”

Her career at SummitStone Health Partners has progressed from clinician to senior leadership, from therapist to team lead, to supervisor, then manager, and recently to senior manager.

“Throughout my career, integrated mental-health and substance-abuse care has remained a primary focus of mine,” she said. “At SummitStone, I championed the first group to consider how these two facets of behavioral health co-occur and must be treated together. I am also an advocate for medication-assisted treatment for those recovering from addiction and have worked with community partners like the health district, county and city hall, drug courts, probation and parole to overcome the associated stigma, educate about the life-saving and taxpayer benefits of this investment, and ultimately move the community forward in providing top-level care.”

Thom graduated summa cum laude from the University of Colorado Boulder and earned a master’s degree in social work from Colorado State University.

A passionate advocate for children’s welfare and mental health in her community, Thom believes that providing support to after-school and weekend sports programming promotes an opportunity for a positive, drug-free environment.

She is heavily invested in community speaking engagements, specifically through faith-based organizations. Thom is a vocal advocate for the community behavioral health ballot initiative and subsequent Larimer County Behavioral Health Center.

## Rebecca Toll

Research associate, CSU  
Co-founder, Periscope Theory LLC



“Collaboration and community building requires patience, adaptability, and a place to share everyone’s ideas, which is why markers and sticky notes have become my go-to tool for engagement,” said Rebecca Toll. “Whether it is addressing behavioral health in schools, redefining an organizational mission statement or creating a strategic plan, I believe our communities have the ability to seek solutions and realize the change necessary to cultivate the conditions where everyone is thriving, participating and leading together.”

After a decade in the nonprofit field, Toll joined Colorado State University in 2017 with the goal of strengthening university/community partnerships that aid the work at the Prevention Research Center to advance school health and wellness across Colorado.

“This work builds on the years of community building I did in the Larimer County nonprofit sector, where I promoted the importance of collaboration, leadership, and strategic partnerships,” she said. “This has culminated in the co-founding of my consulting business, Periscope Theory LLC, where we work with organizations to build these skills and deepen their impact.”

A 2017 Leadership Fort Collins graduate, she has spoken at more than a dozen local, state, and national conferences and co-hosted the first CSU Gender Summit.

Toll volunteers with Homeward Alliance, the Murphy Center and the Bohemian Foundation, and serves on the advisory council at her son’s school and participates in committees through CSU’s Office of the Vice President for Diversity and as a resource on strategy development for many initiatives and coalitions, including the Poudre School District Foundation and Directing Change.

## Betzy Valdez

Vice president, Hispanic Women of Weld County  
Founder, Empowered Leader



Family is everything to Betzy Valdez. “Everything I am, I do, and continue to do is for them,” she said. “I am proud of my roots, my culture, my heritage.”

As vice president of Hispanic Women of Weld County, she works to help the Hispanic community in Greeley and surroundings connect and collaborate with other organizations in Northern Colorado such as Women 2 Women, Habitat for Humanity, the city of Greeley Parks Division and others, including creating a website and grow the group’s social media presence.

Last year, Valdez founded Empowered Leader, in which she works to provide opportunities for growth, connection and community involvement.

She was recognized by VoyageDenver Magazine as a “Trailblazer” and selected as a Latino Leadership Institute Fellow at the University of Denver.

She also is a digital marketing assistant at DaGama Web Studios and has volunteered with Habitat for Humanity, the Weld Food Bank, Grace Upon Grace and street cleanup projects.

“We are facing such challenging times,” Valdez said, “but to know that our connections can make an impact in someone else’s life is simply amazing. I get to connect to the Spanish-speaking community in Greeley and that brings me great joy. I love to create and organize volunteer opportunities, which bring people together for a good cause, no matter where it is. This is something I am known for, and others reach out to me when they’re interested in volunteering in our community. I’m happy to know I’m someone they can count on.”

## Samantha White

Enrolled agent / owner  
West Ridge Bookkeeping & Accounting



Her family is the driving force behind Samantha White’s hard work and dedication to her community. “I work hard so they can see that hard work and dedication is the only way to achieve your goals,” she said.

As enrolled agent and owner of West Ridge Bookkeeping and Accounting in Greeley, she helps individuals and small businesses plan strategies that save money by decreasing the amount of tax they owe and making smarter spending decisions. “We differ from other firms,” she said, “because we offer a large variety of accounting options.”

White began her accounting career 13 years ago at an H&R Block office run by her friend Carolee Anderson. A decade of working for Anderson grew the office to become the franchise’s national leader by 2015, so White opened her own office the next year in Greeley. She opened a second office in Worthington, Minnesota, and a third the next year in Colorado Springs. Her federal licensing allows her to represent tax clients in any state.

White is former chair of the nonprofit Greeley Young Professionals steering committee, which works directly under the Chamber of Commerce. The group volunteers for organizations such as Weld Food Bank, Santa Cops and Habitat for Humanity. She also enjoys volunteering for groups such as Leanna’s Closet and the Humane Society, and does bookkeeping and tax work for various nonprofits including Kawasaki Kids, an organization that promotes awareness of Kawasaki disease in children. The chamber named her Ambassador of the Year in 2017.



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Nikki Lucas  
*Chief of Staff and Collaboration*

## Caitlin Wyrick

Branch manager  
First National Bank  
of Omaha



Through the nonprofit Heart and Sol, Caitlin Wyrick has been able to attend cultural events and educate the Loveland community about the richness of cultural diversity — including at the annual Day of the Dead festivities.

That understanding helps her serve a diverse customer base as branch manager for the First National Bank of Omaha branch in Loveland. Besides a track record of employee development and branch success in her 12 years with FNBO, Wyrick serves on the bank's Belonging and Inclusion Group, where employees provide feedback to leadership and co-workers. She works to facilitate management sessions that discuss specific topics regarding legal and ethical policies that are inclusive and bring diversity awareness.

A 2018 Leadership Loveland graduate, she has created an investment partnership between the bank and the Loveland Downtown District, she said, "which means that we contribute at a high level to ensuring our downtown is thriving and dedicated to growth." She also serves on the district's events committee, and also has been a member of the Loveland Library Board and the Downtown Development Authority board.

Besides her work with Heart and Sol, Wyrick has partnered with the city and Stories Without Borders to provide community listening sessions that are focused on discussing racism and how people can be better allies for each other. She works with the Thompson School District to support the local League of Latin American Citizens clubs and the teachers that lead those programs. She has served as treasurer of a local LULAC club.

## Janese Younger

Senior vice president  
FirstBank



Janese Younger loves to travel. She especially adored Istanbul and Prague because of their buildings' design and architecture. In her journey as senior vice president at FirstBank, she builds leaders, designing an architecture of success for her staff members.

"Training and developing individuals is my greatest accomplishment and strength and where I have experienced my most fulfilling area of growth," Younger said. "My years in school, volunteer opportunities and side jobs slowly changed my shy child persona, but the true test was beginning my job at FirstBank. I enjoy challenging others to think through problems and how to best approach them on their own, while providing a safety net if needed."

She developed a Spanish Banking Center in Greeley to serve the needs of the Hispanic community there. "In the past three years, the Spanish-speaking loan portfolio has grown by approximately 25%, which includes consumer and commercial lending," she said. "While I am not fluent in Spanish, I continue to train and develop Spanish-speaking officers to meet their goals and find new ways to inspire staff to grow within the organization to ensure we have bilingual individuals at all levels."

Younger said her secondhand experience of housing instability solidified the importance of affordable housing as housing prices and rental rates continue to grow while income remains flat. Her role as chairman and treasurer for Neighbor to Neighbor since 2016 has enabled distribution of \$1 million in rent assistance to more than 1,400 families during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Congratulations!

NoCo 40 Under Forty



## Sergio Ortiz

2020 Honoree for Leadership and Commitment to our Community



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