

The Douglas County Neighbor Magazine

Vol. 1 Issue 1 | November 2025

Year-Round
Wildfire
Protection

The Power of
Youth 20 years
of leadership and community

A Safe Haven
Safehouse brings *hope*
to survivors

Preserving
the Land
We Love

30 years of parks,
trails, historic resources
and open space

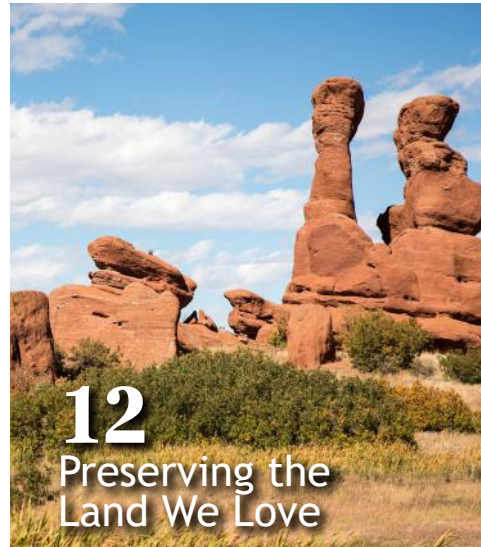
**Big Crowds,
Bigger Memories**

2025 Fair & Rodeo
is our best one yet



The Douglas County Neighbor Magazine

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Stay Connected



Scan the QR code to
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get involved:



Upcoming Meetings & Events

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Committee Meeting
Thursday, Nov. 6

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Nov. 6 | Dec. 4

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Monday, Nov. 10

From the Board of County Commissioners

Dear Neighbor,

We are so excited to welcome you to the very first issue of Douglas County Neighbor! This new magazine is all about you and your county: the people, stories and spirit that make our community a place where everyone can thrive and quality of life comes first.

As your Board of County Commissioners, it has been such an honor laboring on behalf of the hardworking taxpayers of Douglas County to keep this the healthiest, safest and most prosperous county in the state of Colorado. From ending homelessness to securing the only exclusive use county wildfire helicopter in the state to delivering the greatest amount of park and recreational amenities in the county's history, our top priority is serving you.

We believe that strong communities are built on connection, trust and open communication. This magazine is one more avenue to do just that: you will find inspiring stories, useful resources and critical updates on programs and initiatives that impact your everyday life, while also highlighting the incredible individuals, families, businesses and organizations that make our community so special. Think of it as a friendly conversation across the fence — real news you can use, stories that inspire and reminders of just how blessed we are to live here.

From public safety and transportation to parks, trails and county services like elections and motor vehicle, the Douglas County Neighbor is your guide to staying informed and connected. Thank you for being an essential part of what makes Douglas County not just a county, but a true community.

We hope this magazine helps you feel more connected to your county and your community. After all, we're not just commissioners — we're neighbors too.

Abe Laydon

District 1

George Teal

District 2

Kevin Van Winkle

District 3



Parks Advisory Board Meetings
Nov. 12 | Dec. 10

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Thursday, Nov. 13

Historic Preservation Board
Meetings
Nov. 19 | Dec. 17

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Nov. 11 Veterans Day
Nov. 27-28 Thanksgiving Holiday
Dec. 24-25 Christmas Holiday

Scan the
QR code to
view our full
meetings
and events
calendar:



Meetings and events are subject to change. Check the online calendar for the most up-to-date information.

This year, Douglas County residents again had an extra layer of protection against wildfires: the county's very own Helitack (Helicopter-Attack).

Residents might be surprised to learn about drills like "Direct-Fill," where fire trucks pump water straight into the helicopter's tank, or STEP maneuvers, which

"Our annual investment of about \$1.8 million to host a wildland firefighting helicopter in our own backyard just makes sense when you consider the average square mile in Douglas County represents \$150 million in property value," shared Michael Alexander, Douglas County Sheriff Director of Emergency Management. "We leverage our part-

Douglas County's Helitack is Stopping Wildfires and Protecting Our Community

Following a recommendation from the Wildfire Action Collaborative, the Board of Douglas County Commissioners funded the exclusive-use helicopter to ensure citizens had protection from wildfires year round.

As of August 2025, the helicopter has responded to 23 local fires, often arriving within minutes to keep small flames from spreading into the neighborhoods and open spaces we call home. By stopping these fires early, the Helitack has helped prevent the kinds of large-scale evacuations and devastating headlines that have affected so many other Colorado communities.

The Helitack hasn't just served Douglas County—it's also become a trusted resource for our neighbors. Two federal agencies (Pike National Forest and Rocky Mountain National Park), five counties (Jefferson, Chaffee, Lake, Grand and Park), and seven fire districts have all called on our helicopter for help. These entities reimburse the County when the Helitack is used.

Behind the scenes, firefighters continue to stay up-to-date on the latest trainings and protocols.

challenge firefighters to practice hover exits and toe-in landings on steep terrain.

Financially, the program has been a smart choice for taxpayers too. By sharing the helicopter with other agencies at an hourly rate, the county has saved about

\$17,000 this year in availability costs. That means our community gets the protection we need, while keeping expenses in check.

Most importantly, the Helitack has brought residents peace of mind. Knowing a dedicated wildfire helicopter is standing by gives Douglas County families the confidence that, no matter how hot and dry the season gets, we're ready to respond.

nerships with utility companies like Xcel Energy and CORE Energy to access AI-enabled wildfire detecting cameras to respond hard, heavy and fast to new wildfires. No county is doing more to protect our citizen's lives, property and resources from wildfire than Douglas County."

Douglas County's Helitack isn't just about fighting fires—it's about protecting people, homes and the place we're proud to live.

"We are repeatedly reminded that the number one threat to our county is the threat of wildfires," said founder and chair of the Wildfire Action Collaborative, Commissioner Abe Laydon. "Proactively protecting our citizens from catastrophic disaster is our top priority, and we are proud to be the only county in the state of Colorado with an exclusive use helicopter year round." ■





Turning Risk Into Resource

Douglas County will be the first in the nation to build and operate its own biochar facility, putting our community at the forefront of wildfire risk reduction innovation

In July, Douglas County broke ground on the nation's first county-owned biochar facility and waste diversion site, poised for spring 2026 operations in Sedalia off U.S. 85.

The facility will convert organic material, such as slash from wildfire mitigation projects, into biochar, a carbon-rich form of charcoal that can be used to improve soil structure, nutrient and moisture retention, and microbial biomass.

The advantages of biochar are wide-ranging. Processing diseased wood, understory material and other non-salable wood locally will allow the County and its regional part-

ners to allocate more funds to wildfire mitigation and treat more acreage annually. The biochar produced will be sold commercially and is expected to pay for the facility within nine years.

This visionary idea came from the Douglas County Wildfire Action Collaborative, a group of emergency management professionals and wildfire experts focused on preparing for and preventing wildfires in our region.

In the future, the site will also serve as a convenient, one-stop-drop for yard waste, electronics, household chemicals and more.



Rendering of the facility

The woody material in our forests that began as a wildfire threat now carries the promise of healthier forests, smarter waste solutions and stronger community resilience. With this facility, Douglas County is literally turning risk into resource. ■

**We
need
your
input!**

In 2026, Douglas County is updating its **hazard mitigation plan**, which helps protect and prepare the County for hazards like wildfire. With your input, we are identifying updated strategies that will help us reduce risks from hazards. As our experts study the data and best practices for risk mitigation, your voice adds value. Scan the QR code to take a quick survey today!





Investing in the Safety of Douglas County's Youngest Residents

43 School Resource Officers make up the largest team in the state

You'll see them greeting students, participating in school activities, directing the school pickup line and patrolling your local school. They build positive relationships with youth and stay current with the various topics and trends impacting students today while standing ready to respond to any threat.

"Be yourself and be there for the kids," is the motto of Deputy Dan Coyle at Cherry Hills Christian School. "You allow the kids to be comfortable with you, and then when they're comfortable, they tell you things that they normally wouldn't."

"Our SROs are hand-picked by the Sheriff's Office and the School District just to ensure that we've

got a good fit," said Sheriff Darren Weekly. "The bottom line is that SROs are there to save lives, God forbid they are needed in that role."



Douglas County is committed to investing in the safety of its children. For the 2025-2026 school year, the Board of County Commissioners allocated nearly \$8 million in the School Resource Officer Program of the Douglas County Sheriff's

Office. This funding ensures that there are enough School Resource Officers to cover every public, private and charter school in Douglas County.

"Protecting the most precious resource, our children, has been one of our top priorities since the tragic 2019 STEM shooting," said Board Chairman Abe Laydon. "We will never know all the lives that have been saved as a result of providing school resource officers to every school in Douglas County." ■

Scan the QR code to spend a day in the life of a Douglas County School Resource Officer.



Douglas County gets safer every day.

According to new data released by the 23rd Judicial District Attorney and the Douglas County Sheriff's Office in August, crime is down in Douglas County. Burglaries are down 42%, Motor Vehicle Theft is down 24% and Auto Trespassing is down 31%.

Crime is Down in Douglas County

Why? There's a new focus on jailing those who commit crimes under new District Attorney George Brauchler, who took the helm as DA for the new 23rd Judicial District in January.

"Starting on Jan. 14, we said we were going to do things differently," Brauchler said. "If you come here to victimize us, you should expect to be incarcerated."

And more criminals are going to jail. Previously, two-thirds of those convicted of motor vehicle theft went to jail. Now, 100% have been sentenced to time in jail. For those who recklessly try to drive away from law enforcement, 70% of previous cases were recommended for jail time.

Now, the DA recommends jail time in 100% of cases.

The new data also revealed 70% of serious crimes committed in Douglas County are committed by people who don't live here. 45% have an active case in the judicial system already.

"Our community is experiencing the consequences of criminal activity that originates far beyond our borders," Brauchler said. "This data is helping us sharpen our focus, better allocate our resources and support our law enforcement partners in making Douglas County safer for our residents."

Douglas County Sheriff Darren Weekly said while Douglas County is a high target - due to its location along major thoroughfares like I-25 and C-470 - crime is down because of the dedicated partnership of law enforcement and the DA, and thanks to new technology resources, such as flock cameras, license plate readers and drones.

"We are going to do everything we can to apprehend these criminals as they are committing these crimes, and if we don't catch them at the scene of the crime or fleeing from that crime, our detectives will track them down wherever they are, and we will take the time to write search warrants to find them and arrest them and bring them back to the Douglas County jail," Weekly said. "We are going to hold the line together in Douglas County to ensure we have a safe community, a safe place to raise a family, a safe place to operate a business and a safe place to send your kids to school." ■

**Burglaries
down
42%**

**Property
vandalism
down
24%**

**Forcible
rape
down
34%**

**Motor
vehicle theft
down
24%**

**Auto
trespass
down
31%**



THANK YOU FOR JOINING US FOR THE **2025 DOUGLAS COUNTY FAIR & RODEO!**

2025 saw the rebirth of an event that brings out the best in our community. Participants of all ages joined in this year's **UNBRIDLED RODEO** - a unique day of inclusiveness tailored to those with disabilities. Our partners at Developmental Pathways helped ensure that kids of all ages were cowboys and cowgirls for a day, ropin', ridin' and laughing the day away.



There's a reason why **PRORODEO'S** best of the best come to compete in Douglas County's sold-out arena every year. 2025 was no exception. Douglas County is part of the prestigious PRCA Playoff Series.



DID YOU KNOW? Mountain State ProRodeo Circuit cowboys voted Douglas County the **best Large Rodeo of the Year** and **Best Ground** in 2024 (We're in the same circuit as Cheyenne and Greeley!).

Nothing says summer fun like a concert under the stars. **CONCERT** ticket sales spiked 220% in 2025 - meaning thousands of you helped us kick off Fair season with a night to remember featuring Dustin Lynch. We're already getting ready for a bigger and better 2026. Stay tuned!



Not only were concert sales through the roof - more than 50,000 of you walked through our gates during the Fair & Rodeo and got to savor the flavor of the Fair & Rodeo. Thank you for joining us at Farm to Table for a **CULINARY DELIGHT**, and a classic nod to Douglas County's agricultural heritage.



Some of the hardest-working youth in Douglas County saw their efforts pay off at the **JUNIOR LIVESTOCK SALE** with near record-breaking sales. Buyers, animals and the average price per animal all increased in 2025, with sales up 20% or \$100,000 over 2024 numbers. Congratulations and well done to all of our 4-H families!



Not only was the 2025 Fair & Rodeo full of joy, fellowship and families making memories, but it was also an enormous success for our community. Thank you to the 93 sponsors who helped the Fair & Rodeo shine, thank you to our volunteers who helped staff and guests, and **THANK YOU**, Douglas County, for being part of the event of the summer season. ■



Launching Into Our Next Chapter of Aerospace Innovation

Safran and Northrop Grumman bring high-value jobs to Douglas County

In April, Douglas County celebrated a major win in economic development with the grand opening of global aerospace leader Safran Defense & Space, Inc.'s new manufacturing location in Parker. The facility will focus on electric propulsion thrusters, space telemetry systems, satellite communications and ground domain awareness operations. This development has brought at least 20 new high-quality jobs to the community, including engineers, technicians and operators.

Only a couple of months later, Douglas County celebrated a second milestone with the opening of the Northrop Grumman Highfield Integration Facility, an exciting development for both the company and the region. This cutting-edge facility underscores the County's commitment to nurturing local opportunity, bolstering workforce development and fostering education-to-innovation pipelines.

These new businesses reflect a broader, strategic trajectory. Douglas County's business-friendly environment, responsive government and a culture that says 'yes' to transformative projects continues to attract top-tier businesses in every field.

Safran and Northrop Grumman's decisions to expand into Douglas County were influenced not just by the vibrant aerospace industry, but also by the County's notable public safety, top-tier schools and natural beauty—all ingredients that make the area a place where highly skilled professionals want to put down roots and build a community.

Here in Douglas County, we can't wait to welcome with open arms the future businesses our one-of-a-kind community attracts. ■



6 Things to Know About Zebulon Regional Sports Complex

Community input drives need for new activity center

The Name

Zebulon is named after western explorer Zebulon Pike, for whom Pike's Peak is also named.

The Vision

The vision for Zebulon, to be located on 46.5 acres in northwestern Douglas County, is based on community input from surveys and Live Town Hall events. The new regional complex is envisioned to be a hub for youth and adult activities, including ice rinks, basketball/volleyball courts, a sports dome (with indoor turf fields, fitness space, a restaurant and family entertainment), and outdoor fields for soccer, baseball and softball.

The Process

Sterling Ranch approached the Board of Douglas County Commissioners with a vision. Now, as one of the Board's priorities for voter-approved parks funding, Douglas County is beginning to implement the vision. The County is completing engineering studies to determine total cost to develop infrastructure for the site and looking for partners.

The Cost

Sterling Ranch initially estimated the cost of Zebulon to be about \$85 million. Douglas County is currently completing engineering studies to determine final cost of developing road and utility infrastructure to support Zebulon. The County is also seeking partners to design, build, program, operate or maintain elements of Zebulon.

The Economic Return

According to an independent study done by the Metro Denver Economic Development Council, Zebulon will generate over 1.3 billion dollars back into the local economy benefiting all citizens.



The Support

In addition to the thousands of children and adult sports leagues who will be using the fields to recreate and compete, Zebulon has been unanimously supported by elected leaders in Castle Rock, Lone Tree and Parker, who signed a joint resolution.

Your Engagement

Douglas County will continue to host public meetings as this project progresses. All contracts will go before the Board of County Commissioners for consideration during public Business Meetings. ■



Scan the QR code to learn more and sign up for emails.

Preserving the Land We Love

Celebrating 30 years of the Parks, Trails, Historic Resources and Open Space sales tax fund

You know you live someplace special. There's a way of life in Douglas County that encourages community, health and a deep value and respect for our shared natural resources. It's evident every time you pack up the family for game day at the pristine fields of Challenger or Highland Heritage Regional Park. It's evident every time you get lost in the sunset at Bluffs Regional Park, wander through the untouched forest at Dawson Butte Open Space or ride through the unspoiled ranchlands at Greenland or Sandstone Ranch.

Our priority to protect our wild, beautiful and unspoiled public lands unites us all, and has since 1994. That was the first time voters voiced their support for the Parks, Trails, Historic Resources and Open Space Fund, a dedicated 0.17% sales and use tax. Most recently, voters passed an extension of the tax with 87.6% in support. Thanks to powerful local and regional conservation partners, your

tax dollars go even further - for approximately every \$1 of sales and use tax spent by Douglas County, partner agencies and organizations contribute nearly \$3. Here's a look at how some of those tax dollars are being spent:

Historic Resources

The shared history of Colorado and Douglas County gives local communities a deep connection to their surroundings and a sense of place. As early as the late 1850s, Euro-American settlement began in the county. Many towns and homesteads developed as word spread about the discovery of gold, and the vast richness of the County's natural resources. Railroads, farms, dairies, sawmills, mines, resorts and other industries helped to build portions of the County that are still evident today.

Douglas County's Historic Resources staff works for you to preserve

Douglas County's rich history and heritage, tirelessly and accurately preserving properties and resources for public access and education. While many of the sites are woven into the County's open spaces, some specific sites preserved include the Spring Valley School dating back to the late 1800s, the Miksch-Helmer Cabin built in 1871, and Blackfoot Cave, a site that holds evidence of prehistoric people believed to have lived there as early as 1540 AD.

The County's History Repository houses around 200,000 artifacts, ranging from prehistoric fossils to 50-year-old historic artifacts. Over 25,000 of the artifacts can be viewed on the County's virtual museum, which also includes exhibits, virtual historic property tours and offers lesson plans for local schools.

Did you know?

Douglas County has preserved over 65,000 acres of open space and currently, with Pike National Forest, is over 51% open space.



Greenland Ranch

Open Space

The Department of Open Space and Natural Resources is celebrating its 30 years of service to the community, also formed in 1994. In its long history, the Department, made up of rangers, land management specialists, naturalists and environmental resource experts, has been carefully researching the best way to preserve front range properties for public use and posterity. Their goal is to protect some of the most beautiful spaces for current use, and so our children and grandchildren will see the same land we see today. The fund has allowed for the acquisition of some of the last remaining stretches of scenic and public open space properties along Colorado's I-25 corridor.

These properties include Greenland Ranch and Sandstone Ranch

in southern Douglas County, and a partnership to acquire Lost Canyon Ranch near Castlewood Canyon State Park.

The Department of Open Space and Natural Resources is also able to manage and maintain 115 miles of trails for hiking, biking and equestrian use and oversees 65,000 acres in total, which attract an estimated 650,000 people annually. Much of this is made possible by our dedicated volunteer teams, which now number in the hundreds.

Parks

Who doesn't love visiting a local park? In Douglas County, you'll find 17 inviting parks, perfectly maintained and manicured. It's no wonder an estimated 2 million people visit Douglas County Parks every



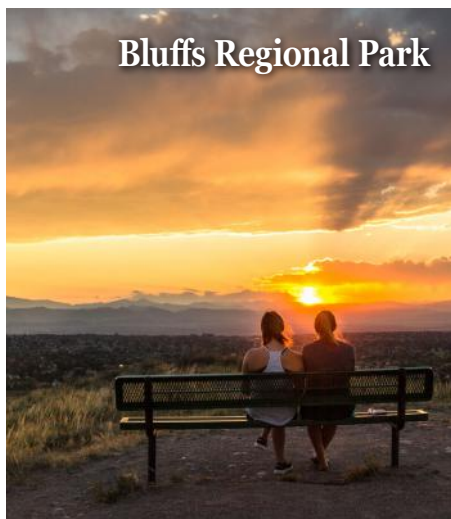
Dawson Butte



Dawson Butte

year. This includes larger regional parks that span 50 acres or more, and smaller neighborhood parks that range from 5 to 20 acres. Whether you're a nature enthusiast, a fitness lover or just seeking a peaceful retreat, our parks offer something special for everyone.

The Douglas County Parks Department maintains more than 6,300 acres of space for youth and adult sports, trails, playgrounds and picnic and gathering areas. In the last 30 years, your support has helped the Parks Department with improvements such as the purchase of six new fields, converting several major fields to synthetic turf and adding miles to trails. Douglas County Parks also facilitates the management of Rueter-Hess Reservoir, quickly becoming a favorite fishing and paddleboarding weekend getaway for locals. ■



Bluffs Regional Park



Challenger Park

The Road Ahead:

US 85 Widening Project Completed Ahead of Schedule

For years, commuters along U.S. Highway 85 faced daily gridlock: a road unable to keep pace with Douglas County's rapid growth. Today, that frustration has been replaced with a smoother, safer and more efficient drive.

The completion of the U.S. 85 Widening and Improvement Project has transformed the corridor from Highlands Ranch Parkway to north of C-470. New lane configurations and dedicated pedestrian facilities give commuters, families and travelers more time back in their day with a safer journey.

This achievement was possible through strong collaboration among Douglas County, CDOT, local municipalities, state and federal partners, and 200 workers who labored nights and weekends to deliver the project ahead of schedule. Leaders and partners gathered on Aug. 20 to celebrate the completion of this long-awaited milestone.

Instead of brake lights and bottlenecks, U.S. 85 now tells a story of connection and progress—an investment that will serve the community for decades. Douglas County thanks motorists, cyclists, commuters and business owners for their patience during construction.

Funding Breakdown

Federal funding	\$29,773,000
State funding	\$3,600,000
County funding	\$64,565,880
Chatfield Basin Developer Contributions	\$10,748,000
GRAND TOTAL	\$108,686,880



Key Improvements

Continuous Flow Intersections (CFIs)

To reduce congestion, CFIs reroute left-turning vehicles before the main intersection, minimizing conflicts and keeping north-south traffic moving. Partial CFIs were built at Highlands Ranch Parkway, Town Center Drive and the westbound C-470 on-ramp.

Pavement and Lane Expansion

Crews placed 105,000 tons of asphalt—nearly double the county's annual paving budget—to expand U.S. 85 to six through-lanes. Additional turn and auxiliary lanes improve business access and connectivity to local streets.

Pedestrian, Bicycle and Transit Enhancements

The project delivered 16,900 feet of multi-use trails and three grade-separated underpasses at the High Line Canal Trail, the C-470 Trail and beneath two railways. Seven new bus stops, four with shelters and bike racks, further expand transit options.

Drainage and Erosion Control

A closed drainage system with 9,300 feet of pipe, 189 inlets and new water quality ponds was installed to manage stormwater and protect infrastructure. ■



Douglas County Youth Initiative: 20 Years of Voices, Leadership and Community

For 20 years, Douglas County has been giving our young leaders a seat at the table, allowing them to shape the future of their community. Through the Douglas County Youth Initiative, nearly 3,000 teens have stepped forward with ideas, energy and leadership, to create lasting change in our community.

Services for Douglas County, was inducted into the Douglas County Hall of Fame. The recognition brought a wave of applause – and more than a few tears – as the community honored her tireless dedication to the Youth Initiative. Since 2012, Marsha has been a steady champion for young people, creating spaces where their voices truly matter.

to create opportunities where kids and teens can thrive.

From celebrating high school seniors who inspire with their service, to ensuring vulnerable youth feel seen and supported, the Douglas County Youth Initiative has become a model of what's possible when a community invests in its youngest members. Currently, the Youth Commission is working with elected officials to identify the best ways to reduce vaping in schools. The Youth Initiative is a collaborative project among Douglas County government, the Douglas County School District, the City of Castle Pines, the City of Lone Tree, the Town of Castle Rock, the Town of Parker, the Library District and the Highlands Ranch Metro District through the Partnership of Douglas County Governments.

"It is such an honor to help support the youth of Douglas County. A heartfelt thank you to the Elected Officials who, in 2005, dedicated their time and resources to begin the Youth Initiative," Marsha shared. "Because of their vision, countless young people have been inspired and supported. To work on behalf of others is not only a joy, but truly a dream come true."

"To work on behalf of others is not only a joy, but truly a dream come true."

On Friday, Aug. 15, partners and students celebrated that legacy at the Millhouse at Philip S. Miller Park in Castle Rock (pictured above). Families, students, and community leaders came together to honor two decades of impact with ice cream, games, laughter and heartfelt reflection. The atmosphere was more than festive – it was a reunion of voices and visions that have helped Douglas County grow stronger together.

less young people have been inspired and supported. To work on behalf of others is not only a joy, but truly a dream come true."

Since its start, the Youth Initiative has launched programs like the Outstanding Youth Awards, Youth Congress, the Douglas County Youth Commission and Wrap-Around, each designed to support young people's mental health, education and leadership. But its true power lies in collaboration: schools, local governments, libraries, nonprofits, law enforcement and families working side by side

During the celebration, a highlight of the evening came when Marsha Alston, Supervisor of Youth

This 20-year milestone isn't just about the past – it's a promise for the future. Together, Douglas County is committed to making sure every young person feels valued, protected and empowered to lead the way forward. ■



A Safe Haven: Douglas County Opens Domestic Violence Safehouse

If you or someone you know needs help, call the TESSA SafeLine at 303-535-3917

The story began like so many others. She thought the fights were just struggles every couple faced. She made excuses, convinced herself things would get better. He kept apologizing and reminding her that he loved her. But instead, the control tightened. The abuse turned physical. Threats on her life became routine, and she feared the violence would transition to their child.

One night, desperate for distraction, she scrolled TikTok with headphones in. That's when she found a video of a woman describing what it was like to finally leave an abusive relationship. The words felt like her own story, told out loud. Gathering her courage, she sent the stranger a message. In reply, she received a phone number—TESSA, a nonprofit that helps survivors of domestic violence.

Making that call in secret was terrifying, but it opened the door. With TESSA's guidance, she created a plan and fled with her child. She remembers the overwhelming feeling of hope, not judgment or fear, as they walked in. Instead of shame, they were surrounded by support. There were resources she never knew existed, and suddenly, she didn't feel alone.

In early 2024, the County launched a domestic violence assessment to identify the needs and service gaps survivors and victims were facing.

Survey responses, combined with other research—including focus groups with survivors, interviews with law enforcement, schools and other experts, and data analysis—revealed a missing link: a safe and anonymous shelter for those needing to leave their homes urgently.

“Abuse here can mean being isolated from friends and family, cut off from financial resources or trapped in a home that looks picture-perfect from the outside but feels dangerous within.”

That's why in November 2024, Douglas County purchased a facility to be used as a domestic violence shelter, and at the March 25 Business Meeting, the Board of Douglas County Commissioners approved a \$350,000 service agreement and partnership with the nonprofit TESSA to increase the number of safehouse beds available in Douglas County.

In August, this partnership led to the opening of a new domestic vi-

olence safehouse to expand that same lifeline to others. More than just shelter, the safehouse offers counseling, advocacy and resources for survivors who need a way out. For many, it will mean the difference between danger and hope.

“Every day, survivors across Douglas County face circumstances that many of us can hardly fathom. Abuse here can mean being isolated from friends and family, cut off from financial resources or trapped in a home that looks picture-perfect from the outside but feels dangerous within. Our new Safehouse exists for them - for the mother who fears for her child, for the survivor who has nowhere else to turn, for the family that needs just one safe night to begin again. This building is more than walls and doors. It is safety. It is compassion. It is the chance to rewrite a story of pain into one of survival and healing, and TESSA is honored to operate it in partnership with Douglas County.” - Anne Markley, CEO, TESSA

Our survivor's story here is just one — but it represents countless others. With the doors of the safehouse now open, Douglas County is making a promise: no survivor has to take that journey alone. ■

Lived Experience Leads:

A tailored approach to solving our toughest problems

Opioid addiction can happen to anyone - in any community. Together, a group of partners from across Douglas County is leading the local effort to invest opioid settlement funds. Helping lead this charge are Douglas County residents with lived experience.

In 2021, Colorado joined a national settlement with opioid manufacturers and distributors for their role in fueling the opioid epidemic. Douglas County, along with its municipalities, created the Douglas County Opioid Council to oversee funding priorities and develop a strategic plan for addressing opioid-related challenges. Since then, the Douglas County Opioid Council has led local efforts to invest opioid settlement funds in programs that prevent addiction, support treatment and recovery, and promote long-term wellness in our community.

In August, the Board of Douglas County Commissioners voted to award grants recommended by the Douglas County Opioid Council to support substance use prevention and recovery efforts. The funding was awarded to HardBeauty for its Peer Support Initiative and to Valley Hope of Parker to connect people in recovery with accessible sober-living environments.

We had the opportunity to sit down with the founder and Chief Innovation Officer of HardBeauty, Racquel Garcia, to discuss the impacts of this funding and the importance of lived experts working alongside government to create solutions to our community's toughest problems. Racquel and her family are Douglas County residents and reside in Larkspur, Colorado.



Racquel Garcia

Q. How will this funding impact your ability to serve the individuals you work with?

A. This funding will allow us to expand programming into both Douglas County Jail and Sky Ridge Hospital. For the first time, HardBeauty will be able to go inside the jail and provide peer support services directly to those who need them most. At Sky Ridge, we're building a response program in the emergency department and in labor and delivery. Eventually the entire hospital will be equipped to offer recovery and support services to anyone struggling with substance use or mental health challenges.

Q. What is the importance of including people with lived experience, such as yourself, when creating solutions to substance use issues in our community?

A. For those of us with lived experience of substance use disorders, we've rarely been invited to the table. For too long, government made the decisions for us, without us. That's why I applaud the Douglas County Commissioners — because for the first time, we're being asked to share our voices, our opinions and our ideas about what happens to us.

Peer support changes everything. It helps stop the revolving door because most of us who've been through substance use disorder would have chosen to talk to someone like me before anyone else. And that's exactly what we offer at HardBeauty.

Q. What change are you most excited to see as a result of this funding?

A. What excites me most is seeing people with lived experience finally leading the charge. In Douglas County, they're truly giving us the opportunity to step forward and guide this work — and that says a lot about the shift that's happening. ■

The Douglas County Opioid Council has a new look! When you see this new logo, you'll know the resources and support come from a trusted, reliable source.



Supporting Older Adults in Douglas County



Older adults are the fastest-growing population in Douglas County, and we're investing \$1.5 million to help them stay connected, independent and thriving. Guided by feedback from the Older Adult Initiative, these new services focus on what matters most to residents: housing, transportation and support at home.

One of the most significant new resources is the Housing Navigator program, offered through the Douglas County Housing Partnership (DCHP). Finding housing that meets both financial and lifestyle needs can be especially challenging for older adults. Housing Navigators help residents identify safe, affordable and appropriate housing options and guide them through the search, application and decision-making process. This personalized service is designed to remove barriers and ensure that older adults can flourish in Douglas County.

"Many older adults in our community have expressed a strong desire for greater connection, easier access to resources and support in navigating complex systems," said Arin DeGross, a Housing Navigator with DCHP.

"They've told us they want help with transportation, financial assistance, food security, mental health solutions and affordable housing. Above all, they want to feel connected, valued and supported — not isolated or overlooked — as they age in place. This is why creating a bridge between resources and older adults is so critical for their health, independence and overall quality of life." ■

Alongside housing support, the County is also funding new and expanded programs, including:

- Home meal delivery through Meals on Wheels
- Help at Home services for light chores and yard work
- Connect & Care calls to reduce isolation
- Accessibility improvements with the CAPABLE program
- Expanded transportation options, including Link On Demand in Highlands Ranch and Lone Tree, and a pilot circulator program in Castle Rock

Scan the QR code to view a full list of housing and other programs, or visit douglas.co.us/oalinks.



Tax Relief for Older Adults Reaches New High

Learn more about property and income tax exemptions available again in 2026



Douglas County's AAA Rating: *What It Means for You*

You know you love living in Douglas County, but do you ever think about why? Beyond our beautiful open spaces and our reputation for having the friendliest DMV staff, we are always planning for the future. Out of more than 3,000 counties in the United States, only a handful have earned the coveted AAA credit rating. Douglas County is proud to be one of them — and has been since 2014.

In August, S&P Global Ratings reaffirmed the County's AAA rating, the strongest rating possible. It's a stamp of approval that reflects not just numbers on a balance sheet, but the health of the local economy, the foresight of County leadership, and the stability that resi-

dents and businesses rely on every day. *So, why does this matter to you?*

Confidence and Stability

Despite having smaller reserves than many of its peers, Douglas County has proven its ability to live within its means, avoid burdensome debt, and even return money to taxpayers when possible. That keeps today's finances stable and tomorrow's taxes predictable.

Stronger Than the Nation

Douglas County's credit is so strong, it can even be rated above that of the United States itself. That means your community is well-positioned to weather chal-

lenges in the economy, while continuing to provide the services you rely on.

A Steady Future

The "stable outlook" attached to the rating signals that Douglas County is prepared for the future — from managing growth and protecting reserves to navigating state tax changes and investing in infrastructure.

The AAA rating is more than a score: it's a promise that Douglas County is committed to protecting its future, and yours. ■

More older adults than ever took advantage of property tax exemptions in 2025, and Douglas County Assessor Toby Damisch wants to ensure all older adults can plan to apply in 2026.

Applications for cost-reducing Senior Tax Exemptions reached 2,665 in 2025. That's more than double the number of applications received in 2022.

"It's nearly impossible to know the ins and outs of tax programs without help," said Assessor Damisch. "I can't think of anything more important for my office to do than to help our residents and take some of the confusion and fear out of the process of saving money. We're grateful that the Assessor's Office has been able to help simplify property taxes and connect thousands of people to the resources they needed."

There are many ways for older adults to reduce their property and income taxes. There are four programs for those 65 and older and one program for anyone 60 years or older.

The best place to start planning ahead is the Douglas County Assessor's website where you'll find all of the qualifications and deadlines to take advantage of these cost-saving exemptions. **Scan the QR code to visit the Programs for Seniors webpage.**



The website also includes instructions for new and existing property owners, property value appeals, reappraisal information, how to understand your tax bill and resources for you to explore and understand where your property tax dollars go in Douglas County.

Damisch adds, "I encourage everyone to use the tools on our website to understand property valuation and taxes. If you don't find what you're looking for, get in touch with my office. We'll keep looking for ways to better serve everyone in Douglas County, and make sure everything we do is accurate and fair." ■



HUMAN SERVICES

Bringing Help Closer to Home

Douglas County has expanded access to public assistance programs with the opening of a new Human Services office in Highlands Ranch.

The new office, located inside the Highlands Ranch Senior Center, began serving residents in January of 2025.

Commitment to Service

By adding this location, Douglas County is making it easier for residents in the northern part of the county to access essential benefits and support. The Highlands Ranch office provides the same high-quality services offered in Castle Rock, with the added convenience of proximity.

Available Services in Highlands Ranch

- Applications for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, Old Age Pension, Aid to the Needy Disabled and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)
- Document submission for verification, documentation or redeterminations
- EBT card services

In collaboration with the Highlands Ranch Senior Center

The Human Services office is co-located within the newly built Highlands Ranch Senior Center. The center includes activity rooms, fitness areas and event space, offering a welcoming environment for older adults and the broader community. ■

Human Services in Douglas County

Highlands Ranch Office

Located inside the Highlands Ranch Senior Center

- 200 E. Highlands Ranch Pkwy., Suite 101
- Open Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
- Services include SNAP, Medicaid, Old Age Pension, Aid to the Needy Disabled, TANF and EBT card assistance.

Castle Rock Office

- 4400 Castleton Court
- Open Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
- All other services and programs remain accessible at this location.



DOUGLAS COUNTY

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS



Ending Homelessness, One Connection at a Time

**Are you or
someone you
know unhoused?**

**Call or text* HEART
at 303-660-7301**

Just three years ago, Douglas County recorded more than 40 people sleeping unsheltered across our communities. Today, thanks to the Douglas County Homeless Initiative, that number has dropped dramatically, and summer 2025 counts confirm that progress is holding steady.

During this year's Summer Point in Time (PIT) count, completed July 28, only four individuals were found sleeping outside county-wide. Castle Pines, Lone Tree and unincorporated Douglas County reported zero unsheltered individuals or encampments. For the first time since tracking began in 2022, Lone Tree recorded no unsheltered homelessness at all.

This success stems from a coordinated effort led by Douglas

County's Homeless Engagement, Assistance and Resource Team (HEART), a unique partnership that pairs homeless navigators with law enforcement to connect people experiencing homelessness with services and long-term stability. Since 2022, HEART has become the cornerstone of the County's "Four C's" approach – Compassion, Code Enforcement, Community Services and Communication.

"Achieving functional zero homelessness with zero encampments in a county of 400,000 people is a major milestone that ensures the



highest quality of life for all of our residents," said founder and chair of the Douglas County Homeless Initiative, Commissioner Abe Laydon.

To further strengthen its outreach, Douglas County recently launched a new option: residents and those in need can now reach HEART with a text* message. By simply sending a message to HEART at 303-660-7301, individuals can be connected to resources more quickly and discreetly.

Meanwhile, the "Hand-outs Don't Help" campaign continues to redirect community generosity in safer, more effective ways.

With more than \$18,000 already raised, donations through the Douglas County Community Foundation Homeless Relief Fund are helping trusted nonprofits provide basic needs and services directly to people on their path to stability.

Douglas County's ongoing commitment shows that, with collaboration, compassion and innovation, homelessness can be met head-on and even reversed. **Scan the QR code to learn more and make a donation to help end homelessness. ■**



In just the past year, HEART made 676 contacts with individuals experiencing homelessness. Of those, 331 accepted help:

22%

Moved into permanent housing

25%

Found temporary housing

23%

Entered emergency shelters

*Text Message Terms of Service: Standard text and data rates may apply. By texting you agree to receive a text response from a member of the Douglas County HEART. To stop receiving messages at any time, reply STOP. Message frequency varies.



Car seat safety
inspections



Mental health
resources and
support for families



Nutrition assistance
for Women, Infants
and Children (WIC)



Support for
individuals with
disabilities



Programs for young
children (*birth to
age 5*)



Support for
survivors of
domestic violence



Helping You Keep Your Family Healthy

Just because cold and flu season is fast approaching doesn't mean Douglas County isn't working year-round to help you get the information you need to keep your family thriving physically and mentally.

Whether you're thinking of starting a family, newly postpartum or spiraling about the thought of your 168-month-old baby starting high school, Douglas County Health Department and the Healthy Families Partnership are here for you on every step of your journey.



Since 2023, the Healthy Families Partnership, your community-based source for family wellness information, has been providing supportive information and services tailored to Douglas County families on topics such as car seat safety, child development, parent mental health and much more.

Healthy Families Partnership in Action

To date, the Healthy Families Partnership has distributed over 3,800 sleep sacks to families in hospitals across Douglas County. Sleep sacks are a safer way to keep infants warm while sleeping, and they reduce the chance of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

- 499 in AdventHealth Castle Rock
- 842 in AdventHealth Parker
- 1,325 in HCA HealthONE Sky Ridge
- 1,150 in UCHealth Highlands Ranch

To the left you will find a collection of some of the community services available to County residents. Be sure to also check out YourHealthyFamily.org for a comprehensive list of tools and information for every stage of your parenting journey. ■

From the Office of Clerk & Recorder



Elections

Tuesday, Nov. 4, 2025,
Coordinated Election

 **DOUGLAS
VOTES**.com

- DouglasVotes.com is your official source for Voter Resources and Election Information
- Ballots mailed to eligible voters beginning Oct. 10
- 23 secure Ballot Drop Boxes open Oct. 10
- 4 Voter Service and Polling Centers open Oct. 27
- Ballot deadline is 7 p.m. on Election Day, Nov. 4



Motor Vehicle

- Castle Rock, Highlands Ranch and Lone Tree office locations
- Schedule a convenient appointment at DouglasDrives.com
- Limited Driver License service by appointment
- Skip the trip and complete your service online
- 6 MVExpress kiosks at local King Soopers stores (pictured)
- Find forms and instructions for your transaction

 **DOUGLAS
DRIVES**.com



Recording

- Visit DougCoRecording.com to schedule an appointment
- Record home and property documents
- Apply for and record Marriage or Civil Union License
- First-time passport application facility
- Passport photo service
- Sign up for Recording Activity Notification (Fraud Alert)

 **DOUGCO
RECORDING**.com

 **DOUGLAS
PASSPORTS**.com



Philip S. Miller Building
100 Third Street
Castle Rock, CO 80104

**When it's time to act, make sure
your family gets the notification.**

Sign up every phone line in your household for
CodeRED emergency alerts at douglas.co.us/CodeRED

 **CodeRED™**



Upcoming Community Events

Town of Castle Rock:
Pie Bake-Off

Saturday, Nov. 8
10:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.
Millhouse at Philip S. Miller Park

Town of Castle Rock:
Starlighting

Saturday, Nov. 22
2 - 6 p.m.
Downtown Castle Rock

Town of Parker:
Mayor's Holiday Lighting

Friday, Nov. 28
5:30 p.m.
O'Brien Park

Highlands Ranch:
Hometown Holiday

Friday, Dec. 5
3 - 7 p.m.
Town Center

City of Lone Tree:
Annual Merry Days

Friday, Dec. 5 -
Sunday, Dec. 7

Douglas County:
2025 State of the County

Thursday, Dec. 11
5 - 9 p.m.
Marriott South at Park Meadows