

COLLEGE AVENUE

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A Rocky Mountain Student Media Publication

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From Your Editors

The Colorado landscape offers adventures in many forms. Whether it's hiking through the mountains, casting a line out on the river, climbing a boulder, or completing trail restoration, there are a plethora of opportunities to explore Colorado's great outdoors. In Fort Collins, and at Colorado State University specifically, a large community of people are eager to embark on these outdoor adventures. In this edition we hoped to explore these communities and share their passion and dedication towards pursuing these adventures.

We aspire to celebrate the outdoors as you flip through the pages of College Avenue Magazine. We hope you find wonder in the history of Rocky Mountain National Park, intrigue at the story behind climbers' motivations, compassion for the community of the CSU Fly Fishing Club, fascination from the stories of those who restore trails, and more from this edition. The stories you're about to discover are more than highlights of the outdoors: they are deep dives into how people engage in these activities, and they explore the passion people have to give back and restore the nature they love. Embark on your own adventure as you open this magazine and discover the outdoor communities around us.



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November 2022

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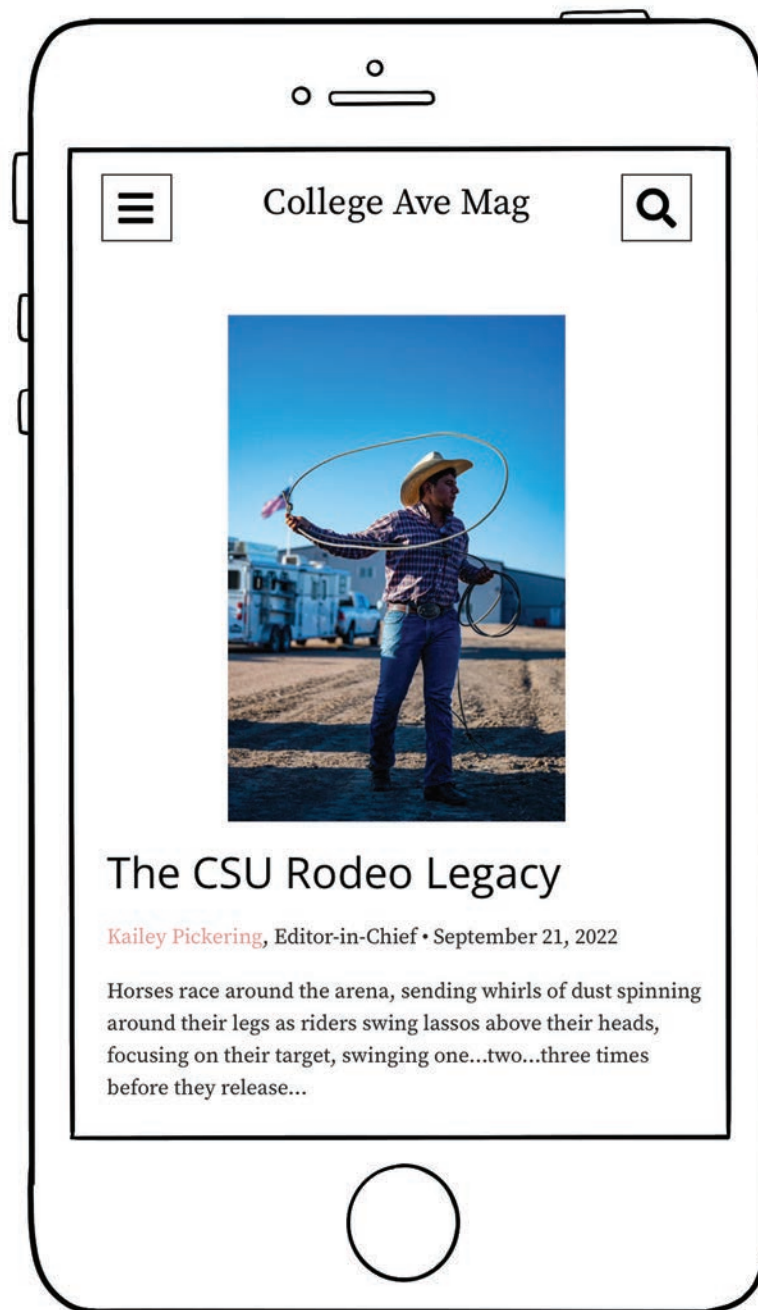
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ROCKY MOUNTAIN

NATIONAL PARK

*Attracting Visitors
Since 1915*

By Lindsay Barker

Rocky Mountain National Park’s sprawling mountain ranges provide a feeling of escape and solace to visitors. The variety of wildlife and recreational activities along with captivating scenery make the park one of the most popular in the country. Since its founding in 1915, the park has gone through many changes but the reasons people flock to Rocky remain the same.

In recent years, the park has experienced an influx of visitors. With increased visitation comes increased impact on the parkland and an increased need for management.

“From 2012 to 2019, Rocky saw a 42% increase in visitation,” says Kyle Patterson, the park public affairs officer. “That’s almost 1 million and a half more visits in that time period... we were the third most visited national park in the country.”

This influx may be due to Colorado’s overall increasing population, according to Patterson. “We are a national park that’s an hour and a half easy, drive from a large population of people,” Patterson says.

Colorado and its vast mountain ranges provide a welcome escape for people. Visitors come to Rocky for the outdoor recreation, wide-array of wildlife, and breathtaking views. However, Rocky is experiencing a problem where the influx of visitors can make it difficult to enjoy the park the way it was originally intended.

“In 2015 we saw this 20% increase in one year and we really saw a lot of our problems in the park exacerbate leading up to that year,” Patterson says. “We need to manage these areas more and more for the impacts of the crowding and congestion that (visitors) were experiencing.”

Patterson described 2015 as the imploding point for these issues, with the 20% visitation increase making it progressively difficult to manage overcrowding and the human impact that comes with it. Trails were widening, bathrooms were overused, and visitors were even becoming aggressive with each other over parking spots, Patterson says. Lines to get into the park were hours long, causing congestion and frustration in the surrounding areas of Estes Park and Grand Lake.

“The biggest thing we’ve been focused on is our visitor use management,” says Darla Sidles, superintendent of Rocky Mountain National Park. “We’ve been experimenting with some different visitor use management pilots over the last six years to find our best course of action to ensure that these resources are here for future generations and to improve that visitor experience.”

Most recently, the park is using the timed entry permit system, which allows visitors to reserve a pass to enter the park on a specific day in a specific time frame, usually from morning to afternoon depending on the area of the park. The system has been beneficial so far, with other national parks following the same course, Sidles says.

“I enjoy planning for the future and really thinking ... ‘How do we do better?’

How can we be more effective and efficient in accomplishing the mission?” Sidles says. “That’s a big piece of it too, is just looking to the future and trying to make things better for the resources, the public, and our staff.”

This mission of preserving the park’s natural resources and scenery while allowing visitors to thoroughly enjoy the land has been steadfast throughout Rocky’s history. The park’s founders probably never imagined the magnitude of visitors it would host in the future. Understanding why and how the park was established can add a new level of appreciation for the land and help visitors form a broadened perspective.

Before Rocky was founded in 1915, it was inhabited by indigenous tribes for thousands of years. The Ute and Arapaho tribes were the main inhabitants, along with other tribes like the Eastern Shoshone, Apache, Comanche, and Cheyenne traversing through the land, according to the Rocky Mountain Conservancy. Conflict in the area was prevalent with only the Continental Divide separating the Arapaho and Ute tribes.

Gold was discovered in Colorado in 1858 and brought many prospectors and miners to the region, one of these being Joel Estes, who Estes Park is now named after, according to the *Loveland Reporter Herald*. The onslaught of people meant depleted resources for the indigenous tribes, and eager excavators slowly pushed the tribes out and into the surrounding regions of Wyoming, Oklahoma, and Utah. Treaties made between the U.S. government and the tribes were often broken, and by the late 1800s, the indigenous presence

(Right) Fog clears over Hallett Peak and Flattop Mountain in Rocky Mountain National Park as the sun rises over Emerald Lake Oct. 16 (Michael Marquardt | College Avenue Magazine)

(Right) Sunrise over Hallett Peak and Flattop Mountain in Rocky Mountain National Park during winter. (Michael Marquardt | College Avenue Magazine)

(Pg 10) The view from the top of Trail Ridge Road in Rocky Mountain National Park June 27, 2021. Trail Ridge Road is the highest-elevation paved road in the country. (Gregory James | College Avenue Magazine)

in the area was essentially removed, according to the Rocky Mountain Conservancy.

Throughout the late 1800s and into the early 1900s there were private lodges and ranches sprawled across the region that is now Rocky. The land was a scenic destination for hunters, fishermen, and recreators alike. The push for land preservation and conservation was in full swing, led by Theodore Roosevelt, Gifford Pinchot, and John Muir, according to the National Park Service.

James Grafton Rogers, co-founder of the Colorado Mountain Club (CMC), and Enos Mills, naturalist and CMC member, would spearhead the efforts to establish Rocky Mountain National Park, according to Katie Sauter, CMC archivist. The CMC was founded in 1912 by both Rogers and mountaineer Mary Sabin in an effort to promote enjoyment and preservation of the Rocky Mountains, according to the Colorado Mountain Club Collection.

The CMC was a group of outdoor enthusiasts who would often venture to the Rocky Mountains for pack trips, hikes, and other activities. They cherished the land and made it a priority to preserve it for future generations. Since its origination, the CMC has grown into a state-wide organization, with over 5,700 members today, according to Sauter. Like its founding members, the group still plans hiking trips to Rocky, and emphasizes the importance of outdoor recreation and preservation.

In an attempt to honor and preserve the indigenous history of the land, CMC member Oliver Toll and three Arapaho tribe members set out on a pack trip in 1914 to identify and name features in the park. Harriet Vaille

Bouck and Edna Hendrie planned and arranged the project, but did not actually attend the pack trip, according to Sauter.

“Rocky Mountain National Park is one of the parks currently that has the most native names out of any of the (national) parks,” Sauter says. “That was pretty instrumental in passing the bill (to officially establish the park), it was very impressive.”

On January 26, 1915, President Woodrow Wilson signed the Rocky Mountain National Park Act, according to the National Park Service. The National Park Service itself wouldn’t be established until a year later in 1916 through the Organic Act.

The official creation of Rocky Mountain National Park meant the land would be protected and appreciated for generations to come, and that it has. Rocky’s steady visitation rates and influx of visitors in the past 10 years proves this, with millions of people traveling to Rocky every year.

“When you think of all the changes that have happened in the last 100 years, people come to Rocky for the same reasons; its scenic beauty, watchable wildlife, and recreational opportunities,” Patterson says. “Anytime we talk to visitors or they connect with us, those are always the top three reasons that people indicate they come to Rocky. When you think of all of these things that have changed, those three things have stayed the same, which is pretty refreshing.”

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Dedication and Passion



HOW THE CSU CYCLING TEAM RACES ON



By Avery Coates

Photo Illustrations by Avery Coates

At 6 a.m. on a weekday, most college students are getting much needed sleep before a long day of class. However, for members of the Colorado State University Cycling team, 6 a.m. is when their day begins. Freshman Isabel "Isa" Naschold spent her mornings in August going on morning rides. "When it was hot, I would wake up at like six and go for a ride and then come back and go to class," Naschold says. While class remains a priority for these athletes, they participate in extensive training outside of school. "I train probably about 15 to 17 hours a week," Andreas Broxson, sophomore, says. "And then I aim to ride 240 miles a week."

To maintain peak condition for this daily workout, cyclists must eat accordingly. "I have a nutritionist," Broxson said. "I try to aim for like 5,000 to 6,000 calories a day." Cyclists live an unwavering lifestyle in order to have a peak performance. With little to no offseason, their entire life revolves around staying in shape, being healthy, and getting better at their craft. The team consists of three disciplines; cross country, road, and downhill cycling. Each discipline competes in separate races fitting their skill sets. The club, which was originally called the Spring Creek Velo Club in the 1970s, holds The Oval Criterium, hosted by CSU.





(First Page) Isabel Naschold bikes down the stairs in front of the CSU Administration Building Oct. 20.

(Previous Top Left) Andreas Broxson bikes through the CSU Plaza Oct. 20.

(Previous Top Right) Andreas Broxson rests his arms on his handlebars, showing off his CSU gloves Oct. 20.

(Previous Middle) Andreas Broxson and Isabel Naschold show off their jerseys Oct. 20.

(Previous Bottom) Andreas Broxson's foot rests on his pedal Oct. 20.



(Top Left) Andreas Broxson and Isabel Naschold have a conversation as they bike through the CSU Plaza Oct. 20.

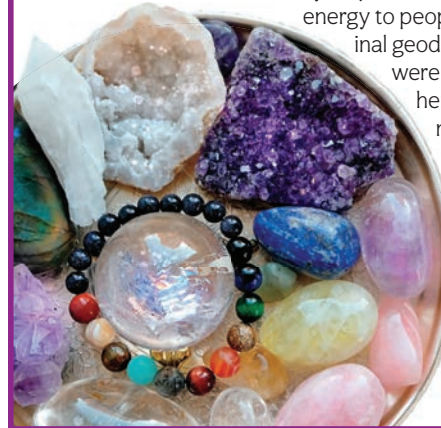
(Top Right) Andreas Broxson focuses as he bikes through the CSU Oval Oct. 20.

(Bottom Right) Isabel Naschold performs a wheelie in the CSU Oval Oct. 20.



Crystal Joys offers a beautiful selection of authentic gemstones, jewelry & home decor. Located in downtown Fort Collins since 2016, Crystal Joys has been a beloved favorite to shop for gifts. Locally owned and operated, Crystal Joys also has a partnership with Sample Supports to employ people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. As a result, many of the items are handcrafted in the Fort Collins location and can be found in the "Handmade with Love" collection.

Crystal Joys began in the early 1980s as a traveling gemstone jewelry store, making appearances at renaissance festivals, metaphysical fairs, and craft markets across the United States. Joy Renee founded the family business through her love of rocks and the belief that they helped to bring joy and positive energy to people's lives. The original geodes sold in the store were hand dug by Joy and her family from rock mines and quarries throughout the US. Joy also traveled internationally to find unique and rare geodes. Joy then began creating original pieces of gemstone jewelry and the store



Crystal Joys

Perfect Gifts

became known for the beautiful hand strung necklaces and gemstone pendants. Joy was also a Reiki Master and Psychic Healer and would perform 1:1 healing sessions with people at the fairs while her husband and children ran the store. Her daughter is now the owner of Crystal Joys. Shop online or in-store to find thousands of unique products, ranging from crystal pendants to fossil jewelry to statement pieces for your home. Each item is sourced from all over the world and is truly one of a kind. Use code CSU11 to get 10% off your next purchase in-store or online at crystaljoys.com.

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HIT THE TRAIL:

Places to Start Hiking in Colorado

By Gregory James

Photos by Gregory James

It's no secret that Colorado is known for its abundance of opportunities to partake in high-risk adventures. Whether you're white water rafting down some of the state's roaring rapids, climbing some of its mountains, or skiing on some of its wicked slopes, the opportunities are endless for the avid adrenaline junkie. But there also exists a different side of Colorado outdoor adventure. For those wanting a more laid back experience that still allows one to get out and exercise, hitting the hiking trail can check all of the boxes.

Trails near Fort Collins like Horsetooth Rock or Horsetooth Falls are relatively easy hikes for those new to hiking. Additionally, places like Gateway Natural Area provide scenic views of the Poudre Canyon on their many trails. For those ready to tackle their first fourteener, Mount Bierstadt off of I-70 is a good hike to start with but should be attempted after some practice with smaller hikes.

These are just a few of the natural areas available to explore in Colorado to get you started on the path to lacing up your hiking boots and hitting the trail in colorful Colorado.



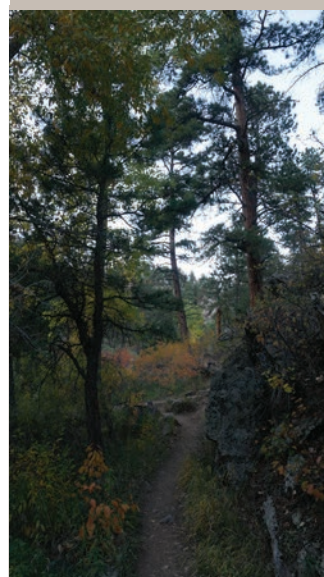
(Bottom Left and Top Right) A mountain goat grazes on grass on the side of Mount Bierstadt July 9.

(Bottom Right) The Horsetooth Falls trail Oct 16. The trail is one of two main ways to ascend to the peak of Horsetooth.

(Left) A mountain goat walks on a ridge along the hike to the peak of Mount Bierstadt July 9.



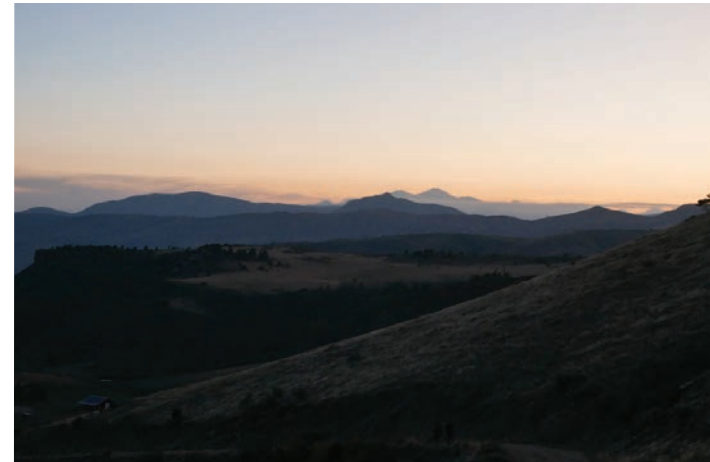
(Right) The Horsetooth Falls trail Oct 16.



(Left) A Fort Collins couple hike Horsetooth Falls Trail Oct 16. The Hike is a popular scenic climb through the foothills.



(Right) Two hikers descend Horsetooth Rock Trail as the sunsets Oct. 16.



(Left) Cyclist bikes up a path on Horsetooth Trail Oct. 16.



(Left) The summit of Horsetooth Rock Oct 16. The Peak is a popular hike in the Fort Collins area.

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By Milo Gladstein

Photos by Milo Gladstein

The crew piles into a Sprinter van with pads, shoes, chalk, beer, weed, and everything needed to have a successful day out climbing. Old-school rap music sets the tone in transit to Red Feather Lakes. On the way to the boulders, weather is assessed as clouds roll in, and dogs bark in the back of the van. The day starts by scouting out new boulders and billy-goating along the cliff.

Just as the crew gets gear out to climb, it begins to rain. Ben Scott, Dan Yager, and Jason Tarry take shelter under trees and boulders.

“Well, what now?” Yager asks.

“I don’t know,” Scott replies. “Guess it’s time to smoke some weed and wait it out.”

In between trying routes, climbers share jokes and talk about a variety of topics, often discussing sports, work, or the meaning of life. Jokes are made, joints are smoked, beers are downed, and everyone is constantly

laughing. But once the shoes come on, holds are brushed, and hands get chalked, the switch gets flipped and it becomes an entirely different activity.

Climbing demands dedication and persistence to succeed. “Sending” is the term climbers use when they finish a route. “Projects” refer to challenging routes picked very meticulously. Once a goal is set, it’s as if a switch is flipped and it’s time to buckle down and get serious.

Yager breaks projecting down into three steps: solving each move, unlocking clipping positions, and linking pieces. The first step refers to conceptualizing body positioning and sequence for the route. Days, weeks, and sometimes, in extreme circumstances, years are spent calculating each and every move, scrutinizing over each crystal on each hold, finding all the crucial footholds, and eventually memorizing each sequence. Next, unlocking clipping positions protects the climber as they ascend the route. The rope is clipped into a quickdraw, consisting of two carabiners joined by a webbing. Projecting often feels like putting together a puzzle. The final step is putting the puzzle together. Each piece is laid out in front of the climber, who then must link all the pieces together.

Climbers find a project that is special to them, either through developing a new area or looking through a guidebook. “Developing for me, it’s finding something that’s never been done,” Tarry, a lifelong climber, says. “It’s the first man on the moon... That itch, that drive that makes you want to see what’s around the bend.”

Guidebooks help climbers navigate an area and pick projects. Ben Scott, president of the Northern Colorado Climbers Coalition (NCCC), has written the Poudre Canyon and Red Feather Lakes guidebooks.

“To me, it’s always been about sharing,” Scott says. “Ever since the beginning, I’ve always been interested in guidebooks and sharing media and just trying to promote the psyche.”

There are many challenges that come with guidebooking for Scott.

“You have to really put yourself in the shoes of someone who’s never even heard of Red Feather Lakes, before and how they’re going to understand the area and break it down and find everything,” Scott says.

Many climbers have put years into their pursuit to improve and progress in the sport. Dedicated climbers train for hours a week. it can become almost like a second job due to the dedication the sport often demands. This can often lead many climbers to attach their worth to how well they perform on the rock; when an attempt doesn’t go as planned, it can lead to breakdowns, screams, and tears.

“(Projects) have to be really special to get to that top echelon, and you have to train really hard,” Tarry says.

Climbing is intense both physically and mentally; it demands every ounce of effort and focus. Yager, former MMA fighter, American Ninja Warrior competitor, and board member for the NCCC, found a passion for climbing.

“After retiring from mixed martial arts, I was in search of something that fulfilled me physically and mentally that challenged being in the cage, and I found that on the rock,” Yager says.

Many climbers have projecting down to a science that works specifically for them. This includes detailed training plans based on what the specific route demands, mental training, and time management skills. For people who have families and jobs, it is important to take advantage of every opportunity you get on the rock and in the gym to maximize effort.

“It’s mental training focused on a singular goal,” Tarry says. “In order for me to stay focused on a singular goal, it’s everything from documenting the sequence in a journal, to trying to replicate the sequence with some holds on my home wall, to working specific power based on the moves required in the route, (to) using the bouldering gyms to work on that power endurance.”

Along with the mental training comes the physical demands. There are many physical aspects that are important for climbing. “Power” refers to being able to generate enough strength to make a big, explosive move. “Power-endurance” is how long a climber can sustain that power. For Tarry, power takes priority, followed by power-endurance and, finally, endurance. Rest is an important part of the process to insure recovery and steady progression.

“(Power endurance is) the first thing that

Ben Scott cleaning off a new boulder in Red Feather Lakes Oct. 14.

Illustration by Olive Mielke



(Right Top) Ben Scott gathers his thoughts and mentally prepares to try hard on Beach Hoppin' in Red Feather Lakes Sept. 30.

(Right Middle) Blows chalk off his hand during the second ascent of A-Ron's Challenge in Red Feather Lakes Oct. 14.

(Bottom) Dan Yager, Jason Tarry, and Ben Scott take shelter from a thunderstorm in Red Feather Lakes Sept. 30.

(Pg 23) Jason Tarry puts on climbing shoes before attempting Brown Bomber' in Red Feather Lakes Sept. 30.

I noticed goes, being able to maintain a high level for an extended period of time," Tarry says.

Climbers invest time, thought, and preparation before sending a project. As important as it is to perform move after move, resting on a route is just as crucial. Taking a second to take some deep breaths and gain some strength back can be the difference between sending and falling.

"Calm the heart down and calm the breathing down," Tarry says. "Because if you can calm it down, then you can perform at your peak again. It's about being able to execute, execute, maybe get a quick shake, and then execute again."

Once the groundwork is laid out, it is time for a send attempt. This calls for an entire plan itself. When projecting, climbers often get into a groove of certain days to get out and try their project. They get up early,

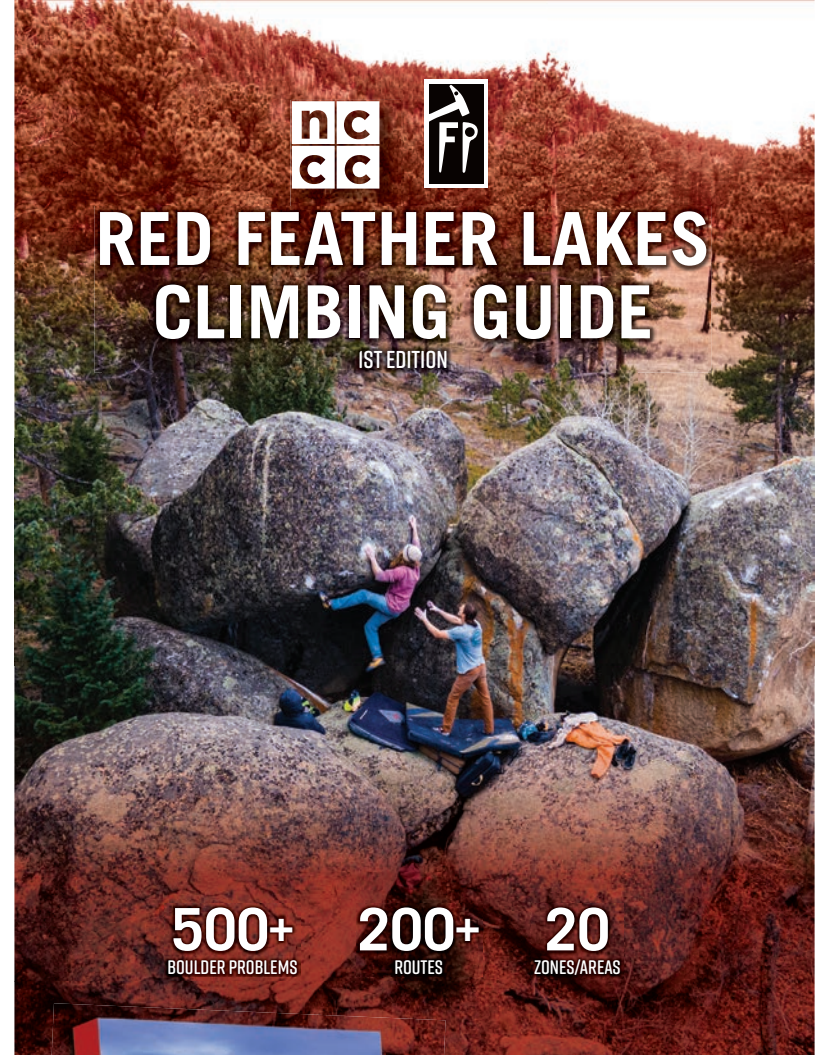


eat the same breakfast, and head out to the cliff. Once at the climb, the same warm-up routine leads to send attempts. Projects can last anywhere from days, to weeks, to months, and even years.

"Ben and I bolted Ivory Tower a decade ago," Tarry says. "It's a two-pitch climb, and when we saw it, we said, 'that's the line to do.' It was scary, it was windy, and you had to jump across this gap to the detached block, so it's kind of an epic just to get there."

When the route was first bolted 10 years ago, Tarry couldn't figure out one sequence on the climb. It was beyond his ability. Coming back to it after a decade, he completed the sequence, putting each piece of the puzzle together to send the route.

There is so much that goes into projecting and developing. It is important to look at every piece of the puzzle, train hard, flip the switch, and send. The time dedicated to training and solving each and every move, to taking time after work to train, to perfecting a ritual and ultimately having the drive to stick with it for as long as it takes to send; climbing at a high level takes much more than meets the eye; it is the ultimate test of dedication.



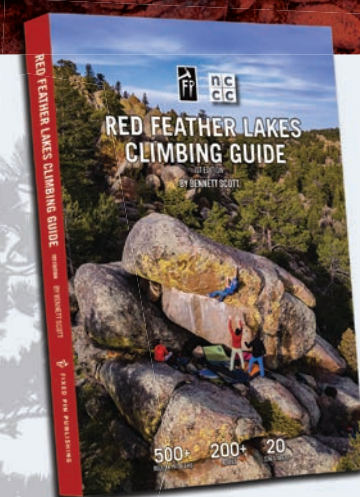
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Red Feather Lakes rock climbing has been shrouded in mystery for over 50 years. Located in Northern Colorado, this stunning granite wonderland is a playground for rock climbers of all styles. Join author Ben Scott as he opens the door to this largely undocumented climbing area that is perfect for bouldering, trad climbing and sport climbing.



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Illustration by Rachael Stark



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Outdoor Volunteering

Wildlands Restoration Volunteers Offer a New Take On Outdoor Adventure

By Fiona Mckenna

Colorado provides a playground for just about every outdoor activity. A goldmine of hiking, climbing, skiing, and more awaits the eager outdoorsmen in Colorado. However, among these unending options, one remains overlooked. Outdoor volunteering is oftentimes forgotten, but by fusing outdoor adventure with environmental restoration, it provides a unique experience and necessary aid. Wildlands Restoration Volunteers, a non-profit abbreviated to WRV, is committed to making this difference by offering a variety of opportunities in which Coloradans can engage. These opportunities are particularly beneficial for Colorado State University students, both to interact with the outdoors and to build critical skills and workforce experience.

Founded in 1999 by Ed Self, WRV was created to assess growing land damage that, thanks to public land budget cuts, would otherwise continue to degrade. What originally started as a concerned group of friends operating out of a basement

transformed into a flourishing nonprofit, according to Annemarie Fussell, the community relations coordinator.

“We have a dual mission,” Fussell says. “That is to heal the land and build community.”

Ironically, Colorado’s love of nature makes volunteering more necessary than ever.

“In recent years we have seen an explosion in the number of people recreating outdoors in Colorado, which resulted in the increased use of outdoor spaces and their degradation,” Cameron Taylor, project coordinator, says.

The influx of outdoor use combined with residual damages from wildfires, restoration work is critical. The Cameron Peak Fire, infamous for being the largest fire in Colorado history, created a dire need for change according to the Incident Information System. Its lasting damages pose a danger to local communities, including Fort Collins. According to Fussell, the fires burnt down Northern Colorado’s natural

water storage systems: its mountain slopes, vegetation, and roots. This impacts the level of water entering rivers, which directly affects Northern Colorado agriculture, as well as the quality of water available to Front Range homes. These impacts combined with climate change, Larimer County currently ranges from abnormally dry to moderate drought-stunting rangeland growth and dryland crops, as noted by the National Integrated Drought Information System.

Wildfires impact sediment in river levels which “also cause damage to homes, roads, and in extreme cases has resulted in the loss of lives,” Taylor explains. The dryness increases the risk of wildfires, which, without restoration, increases the risk of further land damage and even more drought.

WRV hosts a multitude of volunteer opportunities to help restore Fort Collins and the surrounding areas. Since the creation of its Cameron Peak Restoration series, WRV has worked with Coloradans to mitigate ecological damage. Although the fires became fully contained in January 2021, they burned more than 200,000 acres and echoes of the damage are felt in the dry landscape today, as reported by Incident Information System. Recently, volunteers took to the Cameron Pass area, where participants enjoyed nature while engaging in a unique service by creating artificial beaver dams.

Fussell notes that the dams catch the river water and sediment, creating little pools which allow the water to soak into the landscape. This allows for vegetation regrowth, the spread of vital nutrients, and help to create a wetter landscape.

“My experience was great,” Kate Flynn says, a CSU student who attended the restoration event. “I had so much fun splashing around in the rivers and lifting logs.”



“At the end of the day, you’ll be dirty and tired and have earned every minute of it.”



Beyond risk reduction, WRV provides other diverse, outdoor-based opportunities for volunteers to enjoy. From tree removal to planting shrubs in an effort to restore pollinator habitats, WRV offers activities that are necessary while catering to nature-lovers' needs.

"Projects can be laid-back half-day affairs, (such as) collecting seeds, or multi-day backpacking trips through the wilderness, and everything in between," Taylor says.

WRV invites all Coloradans to join, but it partners closely with CSU. "Many volunteers are current or former CSU students from various disciplines who simply enjoy the experience of getting outdoors, giving back, and learning, all at the same time," Taylor says.

Beyond simply being fun, these endeavors can provide invaluable knowledge and expertise for students' futures. WRV works with CSU graduate students, allowing them to collect research data from WRV's rehabilitation sites. They share observations with CSU research facilities, uniting to further educate and advance conservation sciences. WRV has even collaborated with the U.S. Forest Service to approve some student research projects. Without help, approving projects can be challenging for a researcher to do on their own.

For undergraduates, WRV offers a skill-building experience that can be critical to career development. According to Fussell, interns have designed high school curriculums on seed collection, become seasonal staffers,

and become certified in trail building. For students outside the natural resources field, WRV offers a volunteer leadership training program for those pursuing future leadership roles, training in non-profit management, social services outreach, and the skills necessary to bring together a community to make a change.

"(There are) opportunities to be trained in skilled roles such as chainsaw use, crosscut saw use, wilderness first responder, crew leading, (and) project management," Taylor says. "CSU students bring a different energy and enthusiasm to our volunteer groups that we can never get enough of."

Outdoor volunteering offers a new perspective on outdoor activity—it celebrates giving back and admiring the nature treasured by so many. Although overlooked, those who partake in it get to interact with nature in a dynamic way that presents opportunities only found in restoration.

"You're actually doing something that has a need in the community," Fussell says. "At the end of the day, you'll be dirty and tired and have earned every minute of it."

WRV is a collective of passionate individuals ready to make a difference. They bring together those with common values, creating both community and change. According to Kate Flynn, volunteers "are introduced to a new experience and living life to the fullest, and that is what, in my beliefs, is truly important."

(Previous Top Right)
Photo courtesy of
Wildland Restoration
Volunteers.

Illustration by Charly
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Trail Building

How Fort Collins Gets it Done

By Samantha Nordstrom

Photos by Skyler Pradhan

Sunlight filters through the trees, creating patterns of light across the ground. A light breeze causes the plants to sway and cools the trail underneath the hot sun. The sky is a deep shade of blue, occasionally dotted with a small, fluffy cloud. It's a picture-perfect day for a hike.

As one treks along a trail, they can't help but notice how well maintained it is. The trail is obvious; some areas have stairs and retaining walls, also known as crib walls, further maintaining the trail and making it walkable for casual and experienced hikers alike. As one may see the structures, they may begin to wonder.... Who is taking care of these trails? How are they so well maintained?

Fort Collins has over 285 miles of trails for hiking, biking, and trail running; all of these trails are built and maintained by federal programs, volunteer organizations, and private corporations. These entities often collaborate with one another to connect the Fort Collins community to the outdoors through trails and natural areas.

The city of Fort Collins houses the natural areas trails department, whose staff maintain trail conditions throughout the year, according to the city of Fort Collins website. Bridgette Windell, a public engagement

specialist for the city of Fort Collins, says the natural areas department evaluates sites for trail placement by considering soil structures and rare species' habitats. Then, they get community feedback.

"Typically, we'll give the community a few different options for where they want the trail to go within that area, and they can vote or provide feedback," Windell says. "Or the community can suggest a completely different trail alignment."

According to Windell, the department communicates with the public through sending postcards, tabling events at trailheads, connecting at natural areas, and visiting around Fort Collins. They also collaborate with community partners to promote diverse voices. They encourage people to navigate online to a survey, where they can give their input about what kind of trails and natural areas they want. She said the department is trying to communicate with the public more frequently ever since the Covid-19 pandemic.

"As we saw with the pandemic, things can change almost overnight," Windell says. "We want to make sure that we're meeting the community's needs since we are using their tax dollars. We're public servants."

The city of Fort Collins collaborates with a variety of other organizations to maintain trails. According to Windell, the natural area department trail builders often work with volunteer trail builders to maintain trails.

(Above) Ben Walter (center), a CATS volunteer, works on leveling the ground for rock placement at River's Edge Natural Area in Loveland, CO Oct. 20.

(Next page top left) CATS volunteers Scott James (right) and Mark Nagle (left) talk about planning the shore building at River's Edge Natural Area on Thursday, Oct 20.

(Next page top right) Mark Nagle, a CATS volunteer, places rocks at River's Edge Natural Area in Loveland, CO Oct. 20.

(Next page middle) CATS volunteers Mark Nagle (right), Scott James (front left), and Ben Walter (back left) work on a shore building project at River's Edge Natural Area on Oct. 20.

(Pg 31) CATS volunteers Mark Nagle (right), Scott James (front left), and Ben Walter (back left) work on a shore building project at River's Edge Natural Area on Oct. 20.

Illustration by Andrea Donlucas



“Most recently, I’ve been working in Old Saint Louis Natural Areas, which happen to be on weekdays,” Walter says. “That’s another thing I like about CATS – they have Thursday workdays, which are a fantastic way to kickstart your weekend.”

Windell says that the city of Fort Collins is doing trail work all the time. Walter agrees that there is always work to be done and says that there is no such thing as a perfect trail. He also says he finds satisfaction in trail building.

“The long-term gratification is getting a sense of the before and after or revisiting the site where you worked and seeing how your structure held up,” Walter says. “Particularly so you can take lessons or feel a sense of pride in telling whoever is in the vicinity, ‘I moved that big rock over there.’”

Walter isn’t the only trail builder who feels this way. Stewart Simon, a student at Colorado State University, spent the summer building trails for the Southwest Conservation Corps. He also has volunteer trail building experience with the Colorado Fourteeners Initiative.

“Being super outdoorsy, trail building felt kind of natural,” Simon says. “I wasn’t

really doing any technical work (with the Fourteeners Initiative). It was still super rewarding to be out there and see the progress being made.”

Simon says his trail building experience over the summer is memorable because he reaped many benefits from it.

“I got to explore different parts of Colorado that I had never been to,” he says. “I got to meet some really cool people that I’m still in touch with. Even the hard days, when it was raining and we didn’t want to work, and we’re huddled under a tree trying not to get struck by lightning.... Even those days are such great memories.”

Ultimately, Simon says that trails don’t exist by accident. They require a lot of work to build and then maintain once they’re there. However, Walter says having access to high quality trails improves quality of life.

“It enriches all our lives,” Walter says. “It provides opportunities to access nature to people who might not have it. (Trail building) offers a means for people to get out into nature more quickly and continuously.”



“We want the community to have ownership over trails and natural areas,” Windell says. “I think it’s nice to go behind the scenes and figure out what goes into building the trail. Having volunteers bridges the gap between the community and the natural areas department.”

Among the volunteer organizations is the Colorado Addicted Trailbuilders Society, or CATS. The nonprofit organization strives to provide quality trails in Northern Colorado and to support local government and environmental agencies, according to their website. Ben Walter, a CATS volunteer and occasional crew leader, says the organization focuses exclusively on trail construction, maintenance, and remediation.

Walter says that trail building consists of both labor-intensive and technical tasks. Labor includes running wheelbarrows of material, moving rocks, and pulverizing rocks to lock things into place. Technical tasks involve building rock structures and drainages to combat trail erosion, most commonly due to water.

“I actually really enjoy doing the labor-intensive tasks because I work a desk job that involves a certain amount of mental energy,” Walter says. “(My favorite part) is putting in that sweat equity and feeling sore and tired after a hard day’s work.”

A CATS trail crew consists of laborers and crew leaders. Walter says crew leaders instruct people on the best trail building practices, ensure that everyone is working safely and enjoying themselves, and maximizing the efficiency of the crew. There are also technical advisors on site who oversee the process and interact with the land agency. Walter says a lot of the work done relates to the CATS community.

“I’ve made a lot of friends through volunteering with CATS,” he says. “I think we are a relatively small organization. There’s a fairly tight crew of a dozen or two individuals who are regulars (working on) five or more projects during the year.”

According to Walter, one of CATS’s most recent local projects consists of laying the foundation for fishing access at River’s Edge in Loveland, CO. The crews, led by Walter and another CATS volunteer, Scott James, cleared vegetation and spread gravel and small particles of crushed rock, termed as crusher fine. They used pavers at the point of contact between land and bodies of water to secure the materials and create a rock culvert, or a tunnel carrying water streams under roads and walkways, between beach sections. They also spread crusher fine on access trails. Walter also highlighted weekend projects in Soapstone Prairie Natural Area for the city of Loveland and Forest State Park for Colorado Parks and Wildlife.



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THE CSU FLY FISHING CLUB

Catching Friendships and Creating Fishermen

By: Annie Weiler

Photos by: Gregory James

The water laps across the banks, swirling and foaming against the rocks. Trees of various sizes and colors, ranging from emerald to russet to marigold, shield the river from faraway distractions. Students gather in the water, standing silently with water up to their knees, peering into the river to find their next catch.

To describe the Colorado State University Fly Fishing Club as just a fishing club would be an understatement. Rather, it's a group of fishermen, ranging in skill and experience, who host weekend-long trips, fly-tying get-togethers, conservation projects, general meetings, and fishing outings. Under the leadership of Jack Allen, the club's determined president, the club is involving more students than ever before.

But some aren't sure what fly fishing even is. Joshua O'Bannon, a long-time fisherman who joined the club five years ago, says fishermen use a weighted cord, known as a line, to cast a fly onto the water. The sport is often done in moving water, like a river. O'Bannon notes that the skill lies in how the individual reads the water. Understanding the differences in the water, such as its speed, depth, and temperature, is how someone finds the fish. This additional level of complexity, which differentiates fly fishing from the dock fishing to which many are accustomed, is what tenured fishermen like O'Bannon love about fly fishing.

"It's like a puzzle," O'Bannon says. "It's one of the most fun parts about the sport."

When O'Bannon joined the CSU Fly Fishing Club as an out-of-state freshman in 2018, the club allowed him to meet new people, explore new fishing sites, and cultivate his passion for fishing. Quickly, his perception of the club transformed from a fly fishing club to an enthusiastic group of friends who happen to fish.

"My first trip with the club...was the first time since coming (to Colorado) that I thought, 'okay, maybe college is going to be a lot of fun,'" O'Bannon says.

But for those who haven't fished extensively like O'Bannon, joining the club can be intimidating. Fly fishing has historically boasted an expensive, competitive connotation, especially for those unsure how

to start. Allen sees this stigma not as an obstacle, but as an opportunity to dismantle it. The club has recently adopted measures to make fly fishing more accessible to beginners.

"We've put a lot of money into buying gear for (members to use) so that people don't have to make that financial leap," Allen says. "We (also) have 'Fly Fishing 101' classes for people who maybe don't even have a rod, like, four or five times each semester."

These efforts have proven successful. Tomás Dardis, who joined the club this semester, had never tried fly fishing. However, his lack of experience was irrelevant to the club's existing members; they were happy to have a new fishing partner.

"I know nothing about fly fishing," Dardis says. "But everyone here is so welcoming and ready to show me some new tricks."

The club's efforts at integrating new members are not limited to equipment accessibility. Rather, they also seek to share their love for fly fishing. Despite only joining recently, Dardis has found a new passion in the sport.

"When you're sitting out there and feel a bite... that's honestly one of the coolest feelings out there," Dardis says. "The first time I caught a trout, I was coming down with a cold, but when I was bringing in that fish, I (forgot) that I wasn't feeling good."

Allen has also sought to expand the club's conservation and sustainability involvement. He joined forces with Emma Fortson, the club's conservation chair, to further emphasize their ecosystem preservation efforts. Recently, Fortson adopted a section of Gateway Natural Area, a nature preserve about 15 miles from Fort Collins, on behalf of the club. The club is responsible for maintaining its section for the next year.

"Every month, we're going to Gateway to do some cleanup," Fortson says. "We went a couple of weekends ago, and we cleaned up trash and went fishing afterwards. You do a little good, then hang out and fish."

These efforts, Fortson noted, are representative of the club's conservation emphasis. Allen and Fortson seek to promote good fishing habits, such as disinfecting gear



after fishing or throwing away trash at a site. To them, fishing comes second to protecting and preserving Colorado's ecosystems. This emphasis ensures that their members preserve and respect an area's resources.

O'Bannon sums up the club's conservation and sustainability efforts: "We use the resource to sustain the resource."

In addition to conservation, Allen says that "community is the most important" tenant of the club. He wants a club that functions both as a group of fishermen and a group of friends. This philosophy has allowed Allen to build lifelong friendships predicated on kindness, encouragement, and fishing.

"I will never tell someone, 'no, you can't come fishing with me,'" Allen says. "I want people to come, to hang out, to feel welcome.... Fly fishing saved my life, and if a sport can be that impactful on me, then it can save somebody else."

O'Bannon agrees with Allen. "Fly fishing isn't the goal," O'Bannon says. "It's how we get to the actual goal, which is to have fun... and make some good friends."

Dardis says that the club's community philosophy is contagious. For him, the club is just as much about supporting his friends as it is about fishing. At a recent fishing excursion deemed "Party on the Poudre," Dardis didn't catch any fish. However, he still had a great time.

"Even though I didn't catch anything, it's so great hanging out with everyone," Dardis says. "Even seeing other people catch fish is awesome. Like, Michael caught this awesome cutthroat trout. It was cool seeing him land that guy."

But these new changes, Allen says, cannot be attributed to him alone. He describes himself as someone who "just ha(s) some ideas." Instead, he credits his officers and members with bringing the ideas to life. Members are welcome to pitch ideas, whether to promote conservation, inclusivity, or education, and to pursue those ideas.

"It's not about me, and it's not about fishing," Allen says. "The people here are the ones who make this club special."

Allen hopes his members find passion, purpose, and joy in fly fishing. Creating an avenue for people to find friends and purpose regardless of their fishing acumen, he says, is "something (he's) the proudest of."

"That's what this club is about," Allen says. "It's not about competition or who has fished the longest. It's about conservation, community, friends, and fish. No matter who you are, or what you are, you have a place here."

Anyone interested in the CSU Fly Fishing Club is encouraged to visit their website, CSUFlyFishing.com, or message them on Instagram, @csuflyfishing.

(Front page) A rainbow trout caught on the Cache Le Poudre River Oct 20.

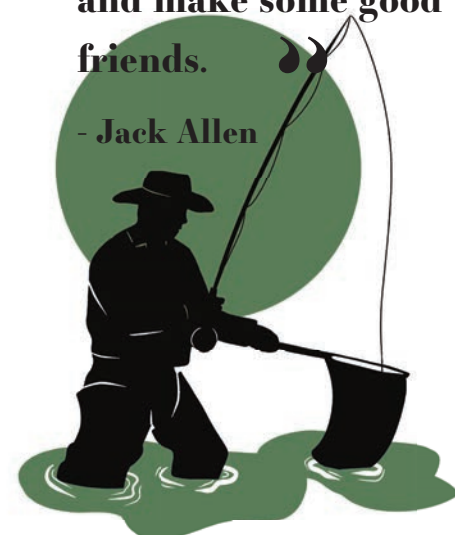
(Left top) Kate Moseley, CSU junior, fly fishes the Cache Le Poudre River Oct 20.

(Left middle) Colorado State University Fly Fishing Club members Kate Moseley, Gavin Jones, and Jack Allen head down to fish at the Cache Le Poudre River Oct. 20.

(Left bottom) Gavin Jones, CSU sophomore, fly fishes in the Cache Le Poudre River Oct. 20.

“
Fly fishing isn't the
goal. It's how we get
to the actual goal,
which is to have fun...
and make some good
friends.”

- Jack Allen



Illustrations by Tessa Glowacki



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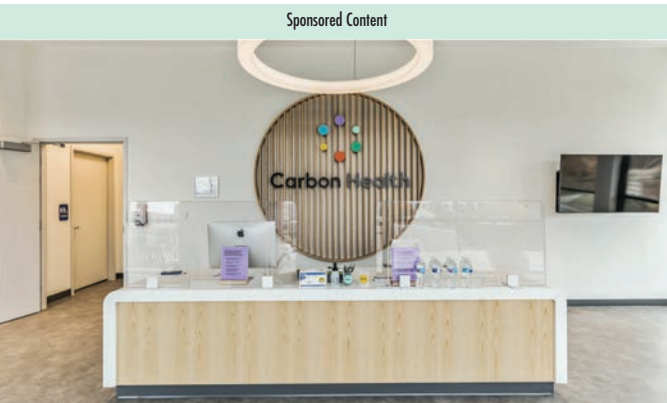
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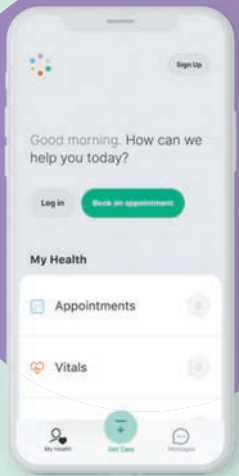
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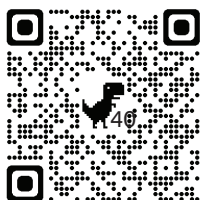
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