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# Where We've Been...

## Ristras are a Hot Craft

The chile is a celebrated crop in the Pueblo area and one of large economic importance to the county. Annually a fall festival is held in Pueblo celebrating the chile harvest and the farmers who grow it. The chile has many uses with the most important being as a food and spice used in southwestern style cooking. When eaten fresh the chile is considered a vegetable, but when dried and ground it becomes a spice. The drying process can be done in many ways. For the at home cook, the most popular method is to hang them in the form of a ristra. The ristra came about out of a necessity to find a way to dry chiles in a way that did not allow for mice and birds to eat and contaminate the food source. Traditionally chiles were harvested and placed on the ground or rooftops in order to dry. This allowed animals to access them and was not the cleanest of conditions. People began tying and hanging chiles in order to prevent this from happening. The chile ristra is visually appealing to many people and has since become a very popular fall decoration for many homes.

Following the Chile Festival, CSU Extension Agent, Tom Laca, was approached by several people about hosting a ristra making class. Tom took on the challenge as it afforded him the opportunity to not only teach a craft that involved local foods but also to educate the general public about the farming community and their use of resources that are vital to the local economy. The class discussed production techniques, water use, economic impact and other interesting facts in regards to the chile pepper. Many of the 56 participants left the class stating that it was very informative and that they had a whole new appreciation for the chile growers in the community.



Top— Participant, Pat Whitaker admires her creation.  
Bottom— participants learn the best knots for ristra making.



Participant Orla O'Callaghan made a multi-color ristra.

CSUE Agent Tom Laca promoted growers that donated chiles for the Ristras.

The Chile growers from the area were also very supportive of this educational opportunity. Tom received donations of chiles to use for the class from 10 different growers in the area. He was able to promote the donors through this class as well as the newly formed Pueblo Chile Growers Association. As Pueblo Chile Growers continue to market the finest quality Chile available, we will continue to educate the local residents about the importance of this crop to the county as well as its many uses. Tom is looking forward to hosting this class again next fall.

# Where We've Been...

## IFYE Delegate Returns from Six Month Adventure

This year Pueblo County is very fortunate to have our very own Jennifer Johnston be one of two IFYE (International 4-H Youth Exchange delegates) to travel to the United Kingdom and Switzerland. Jennifer has been involved with 4-H in Pueblo County since she was 8 years old. After graduating from CSU-Pueblo with a bachelor's degree in English and a minor in professional writing and leadership, Jennifer was encouraged by 4-H Agent Devin Engle and 4-H Coordinator Carol Kuhns to apply to be an IFYE. Jennifer was chosen as one of two delegates to represent the State of Colorado. Her first three months were spent in the United Kingdom, where she visited historically rich as well as urban sites in Northern Ireland, Wales and England. Her remaining three months were spent in Switzerland.



“The (program) motto is ‘Peace Through Understanding,’ which I think really encompasses what the program is about.” Johnston said. “I was placed with host families, often in rural areas which allowed me to engage with those families on a very personal level.” This included work on sheep, cattle and even a pheasant farm.

“I made some incredible relationships,” she added. “My host families took me to visit places that were important to them, including national monuments, local villages and out-of-the-way locations no ordinary tourist would get to see.”

Jennifer found Europeans to be very friendly. When she was lost or looked lost, strangers would come to her aide.

This six month trip was not without its challenges. She missed her friends and family. “There were times I felt tired and frustrated, but I reminded myself that this opportunity was once in a lifetime and saying ‘no’ would be such a regrettable decision.”

Even though Jennifer returned back home in December, her job as IFYE is not over. She is required by the program to share her experiences with 4-H clubs, community organizations and schools throughout Colorado. A community presentation will be held at the Colorado State Fairgrounds in the 4-H Auditorium on February 18<sup>th</sup> starting at 7:00 PM. All are invited to share her experience.

“I’m glad to have had the opportunity to open my eyes and see other pieces of the world,” Jennifer said. “And in the process become a global citizen and a way to see a bit of the world while flying the 4-H banner.” We are proud to say that Jennifer grew up in the Pueblo County 4-H Program and now her travels across the world have given her the opportunity to share a little bit of Colorado and Pueblo County to people ‘across the pond’. If you would like a more in-depth look at Jennifer’s travels, you are encouraged to visit her blog at:

<http://alittlebitifye.wix.com/alittlebitifye>

Carol Kuhns, 4-H Coordinator



# Where We've Been...

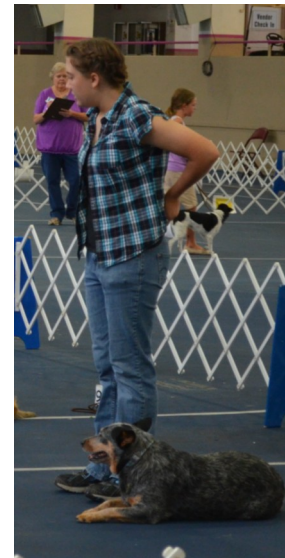
## State Dog Committee Training

In October of 2015, the State Dog Committee met in Pueblo for their annual fall meeting. At this meeting, it was requested that the State 4-H Dog Training Group visit Grand County, Colorado in Kremmling to share ideas and provide guidance to their 4-H dog program. A team that consisted of Donna Darnell, Kelsey Darnell, Tina Wickizer, Brandie Jackson, Carol Kuhns, and Bailey Bezona traveled to Kremmling on the weekend of November 14 & 15<sup>th</sup>. The group shared their expertise with 19 4-H youth, parents, and leaders on subjects such as dog obedience, showmanship, rally, record books, state rules and dog behavior.



“When we walked into the gymnasium, the youth, parents, and dogs were very chaotic and the dogs were out of control”. After behavior specialist Brandie Jackson was done with several dogs, parents and youth the place was very quiet and training began. “It was the most incredible change in behavior that I have ever seen” stated long time 4-H Coordinator Carol Kuhns. “I could not believe my eyes that these were the same dogs and kids at the end of the day.”

This was a great weekend for all involved. It proves that 4-H programs are available to all – three counties as well as the Colorado State 4-H Office made this training possible. The main training members are from Pueblo County, Dog Behaviorist Brandie Jackson is from Otero County and her daughter Bailey came from college to share her expertise. Grand County provided a motel room and the State 4-H Office provided meals and travel expenses. The 4-H program in Colorado truly reaches out to each and every one of its citizens through training and commitment.



# Where We're Going...

## Slate Set for 10th Annual Western Landscape Symposium

The Western Landscape Symposium is an educational forum to promote the creation of appealing and sustainable landscapes in southeastern Colorado, incorporating water wise garden practices and plants adapted to local climate and soil conditions.



The Tenth Annual Western Landscape Symposium will be held Saturday, March 19, 2016. The Symposium will be held at Pueblo Community College in the Fortino Ballroom and is an all day event beginning at 9:00 a.m. the keynote speaker is Benjamin Vogt. He is the author of a book of botanical essays entitled *Sleep, Creep, Leap— The First Three Years of a*



*Keynote speaker Benjamin Vogt is the author of Sleep, Creep, Leap- a book of botanical short essays,*

*Nebraska Garden.* He will speak on “The Ethics of 21st Century Gardening”. Other session topics presented by local and area authors and speakers include shade gardening, herbs in the landscape, native plants for native pollinators, food in the landscape, Japanese gardening principles, and small space gardening. A sell-out crowd of 250 is expected for the event with participants from Pueblo and surrounding counties. Tickets are \$18 or 2 for \$30 and are available at CSUE-Pueblo. A full description of the sessions and speakers can be found at [www.westernlandscape.org](http://www.westernlandscape.org).

The Western Landscape Symposium is made possible through a collaborative effort of city and county agencies, area businesses, and the green industry. CSU Extension-Pueblo County staff members, Sherie Caffey, Horticulture Coordinator, Valerie Billings, office manager, and Christine Pauletich, program assistant, serve on the planning committee and are critical to the success of the event. This year's sponsors include CSU Extension -Pueblo County, the City of Pueblo, HARP Foundation, the Southeastern Colorado Water Conservancy District, The Lower Arkansas Valley Conservancy District, Black Hills Energy, Xcel Energy and Keep Pueblo Beautiful.



*Participants learn about apples in a break-out session at a past symposium.*



## Upcoming Events

Call 583-6566 or visit <http://pueblo.colostate.edu> for details.

### Family and Consumer Programs

- Programming on hold until new FCS Agent is hired.

### Horticulture Programs

- All Pueblo Grows Seed Library, collecting and packaging seeds, call 719-583-6566 for details
- Vegetable Crops and Soil Fertility class– Feb. 22, 5:30-7:30 p.m., \$10.00 per person.
- Western Landscape Symposium, March 19, 9:00 a.m.-3:30 p.m. \$18 each or 2/\$30
- Growing Vegetables class– March 24, 6:00-9:00 p.m., \$15 each or 2/\$30

### 4-H/Youth Development

Ongoing Club and County Programs:

- Deadline for new members is March 1. For club information, call 719-583-6566.
- 4-H Carnival, March 5, 4:00-7:00p.m. Free admission, open to the public.
- 4-H Dance, March 5, 8:00-10:00 p.m. \$3.00 admission, open to the public.

### EFNEP– Expanded Food and Nutrition Program

- Nutrition classes– Ongoing-call for schedule

### Ag/Range/Natural Resources

- Site visits and consultations– Ongoing, upon request
- A to Z of Bees class– Feb. 17 and 24, 6:00-9:00 p.m., \$20 each or 2/\$30.
- Backyard Poultry Workshop- March 22, 6:00-8:00 p.m. \$10 each or 2/\$15.00

### Pueblo Youth Naturally

Program under review.

Colorado State University Extension– Pueblo County  
701 Court Street, Suite C  
Pueblo, CO 81003  
719-583-6566  
<http://pueblo.colostate.edu>  
<https://www.facebook.com/CSUExtensionPueblo>

## Staff Changes



*Sherie Caffey joins the CSUE Pueblo staff*

On December 10<sup>th</sup> the Pueblo County Extension Office welcomed Sherie Caffey into our work family. Sherie will be the Horticulture Coordinator for CSU Extension in Pueblo County. She graduated from CSU-Pueblo in May of 2015 with a bachelor's degree in environmental biosciences, and she is currently finishing up her master's degree from CSU-Pueblo in biology. A native of Pueblo, Sherie looks forward to working

with the community in her position. She has a personal love of the outdoors and gardening, as well as an extensive background in public education. In addition to past programs, Sherie hopes to incorporate more community outreach and youth gardening events into the horticulture program. Providing opportunities to learn to be self sustainable to those who do not currently have such opportunities is an important goal for the new Horticulture Coordinator. Please do not hesitate to stop in and meet Sherie at the office or by email at [caffey@co.pueblo.co.us](mailto:caffey@co.pueblo.co.us).

The close of 2015 brought another retirement to the Pueblo County Extension office. Lois Illick, Pueblo County's Family & Consumer Science Agent for twelve years chose to retire. Lois is recognized for her programming in food preservation, food safety, & cottage foods classes both in Pueblo County and neighboring counties. She also has helped many locals with financial education, child development & rearing classes and tenant/landlord issues, to list just a few examples. Lois was always open to new ideas and was willing to step outside of the box in thinking about programming. She took on roles in cleaning up the local environment and developed a year-long "World Cultures Through Foods" curriculum. We will truly miss Lois in the Extension office and we wish her a very happy retirement.

A search committee is currently reviewing applications for the 4-H Youth Development & School Enrichment/After-School Extension Agent position. A second search committee has been formed to initiate the search process to fill the Family & Consumer Science Extension Agent position.



*Lois Illick (left) on her last day with Program Assistant Christine Pauletich.*