

A PUBLICATION FOR MEMBERS OF THE COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

SPRING 2020

# Around<sup>THE</sup>Oval



## 2020 VISIONARIES

Tuned to what's next



ALUMNI ASSOCIATION  
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY



04



08

14



18



22



24

INSIDE

- 04** **Leslie Buttorff**  
The Entourage Effect

**08** **Jon Wolfe**  
This is Ram Country

**14** **Mike Bartolo**  
Homegrown Hero

**18** **Emily White Hat**  
An Ideal Advocate
- 22** **Nick Johnson**  
New Frontiers

**24** **Randy Blach**  
Honoring the Past, Envisioning the Future

**28** **Career Services**  
We're here for you.

**32** **Life Members**  
Welcome, new life members.

## Hello, Rams!

I hope you and your family are healthy and doing as well as possible during these challenging times. I've heard so many stories about alumni serving on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic and others who give their time, talents, and treasure to assist those in need under difficult circumstances. I'm heartened by the work CSU researchers are doing to develop a vaccine, test personal protective equipment, and evaluate existing drugs, compounds, and chemicals to see if they might provide options to fight the virus. And I'm humbled by the fact that Rams like you are supporting students in need by donating to emergency relief funds. I can't tell you how proud it makes me to witness how Rams really do take care of Rams when the road gets rough.

We also welcomed the Class of 2020 into the alumni family without in-person commencement ceremonies but with unlimited admiration for their accomplishments and the highest hopes for their futures. Watching these outstanding grads start new chapters at a time when nothing is certain is the very definition of stalwart. I'm sure we'll see some of their stories in these pages soon.

Sharing those stories is more important than ever as we strive to keep alumni connected to the University and each other during our new normal. The visionary alumni featured in this issue, alumni who have demonstrated a knack for adapting to change and anticipating what's next, make me optimistic that, together, we can overcome any obstacle.

Stay well, Rams!



Ram proud,

*Kristi Bohlender*

Kristi Bohlender, B.S., '93; M.B.A., '95, and Life Member

## Membership makes an IMPACT

Your Alumni Association membership is an investment in the past, present, and future of Colorado State University. You make it possible for us to connect more than 232,000 alumni to CSU in meaningful ways. Thank you!

CSU ALUMNI ASSOCIATION MEMBERS LIKE YOU MAKE THIS PUBLICATION POSSIBLE

# Around <sup>THE</sup> Oval

SPRING 2020

### EDITOR

Ben Fogelberg (B.A., '94; M.A., '98)

### CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Jerick Flores (B.A., '10)

Ann Gill (M.A., '76)

Becky Jensen (B.A., '93)

Tony Phifer

Mark Schapker

### GRAPHIC DESIGN

Erin Foster

Christy Schuster ('18)

### COPY EDITOR

Betty Grace Mickey

### PHOTOGRAPHY

CSU Photography

Mason Dixon

Colorado Country Life magazine,

Dave Neligh Photography

### STAFF CONTRIBUTORS

Kristi Bohlender

Assistant Vice President (B.S., '93; M.B.A., '95)

Haley Katz

Associate Director of Membership and Giving

Around the Oval is published twice a year by the CSU Alumni Association as a benefit of membership.

Colorado State University

7114 Campus Delivery

Fort Collins, CO 80523-7114

(800) 286-2586

(970) 491-6533

Member@colostate.edu

alumni.colostate.edu

© 2020 by Colorado State University.

All rights reserved

An equal-access and equal-opportunity University

### ON THE COVER:

Country singer/songwriter Jon Wolfe (B.S., '01)



Join us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.



Search "CSU Alumni Association" to download today!

STATE YOUR PURPOSE

• THE CAMPAIGN FOR COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY •



# 2020

## VISIONARIES

Visionaries have the rare ability to see the road ahead and make critical decisions to reach their goals faster, more efficiently, and with more poise and grace. But foresight isn't their only gift. The visionary alumni featured here are naturally able to pivot during difficult times in their own lives and careers. They're able to invent and sometimes reinvent business practices, tailor their talents to meet a pressing need

or fit a fast-changing world, and ramp up their efforts to support the most vulnerable populations.

Their successes exemplify the best in us and their life stories serve as a timely reminder that our community of Rams is well equipped to meet the challenges presented by the current global crisis, as well as any trials waiting, unseen for now, beyond the horizon.

LESLIE BUTTORFF (B.S., '79) – The Entourage Effect .....	4
JON WOLFE (B.S., '01) – This is Ram Country .....	8
MIKE BARTOLO (B.S., '84; M.S., '86) – Homegrown Hero.....	14
EMILY WHITE HAT (B.S., '04) – An Ideal Advocate .....	18
NICK JOHNSON (M.A., '14) – New Frontiers .....	22
RANDY BLACH (B.S., '80) – Honoring the Past, Envisioning the Future .....	24



*Read about more  
visionaries online at  
[alumni.colostate.edu](http://alumni.colostate.edu)*



# THE ENTOURAGE EFFECT

Forward-Thinking Alumna Makes the Case  
for Cannabinoids and Collaboration

*By Becky Jensen ('93)*

**It started as a normal, sunny day** on the ski slopes for Leslie Buttorff ('79) and her family. As a Colorado native, she didn't think twice about riding the chairlift with her 78-year-old mother, an avid skier herself. But as they got off the lift, a child slid across their skis and the women fell like dominoes. Buttorff's mother broke her pelvis in several places, leading to a long recovery and desperate search for pain relief. Her mother tried steroids and over-the-counter products. She tried opioids and medical marijuana, but didn't like the risk of addiction and the feeling of being high.

At the time of the accident, Buttorff had already started to invest in the newly legal

marijuana industry. As CEO of Quintel Management Consulting, she was beta testing her ERPCannabis software – an enterprise resource planning tool for marijuana companies that were struggling to run back-office operations and track seed-to-sale transactions.

"I knew nothing about marijuana," she says. "I just figured these companies would need ERP systems, and I would learn about the cannabis industry along the way." As Buttorff's industry knowledge grew, she sharpened her focus on hemp and cannabidiol, or CBD. Unlike THC in marijuana, Buttorff learned that the CBD compound extracted from hemp is nonpsychoactive, and the potential for





CBD's therapeutic applications was staggering. In addition to effective pain management, clinical trials showed CBD's promise to reduce anxiety, improve sleep, shrink inflammation, prevent seizures, control appetite, slow dementia, and treat cancer. Hemp and CBD were now legal at the federal level, consumer demand was growing exponentially, and the U.S. CBD market was on pace to become a \$24 billion industry by 2025. Buttorff decided to make a bigger investment in the CBD arena.

In 2017, she founded and became the CEO of Panacea Life Sciences, a company named for the Greek goddess of remedies and healing. Panacea was more than just a business venture to Buttorff; it was something she could do to help her mother, and others like her mom, live pain-free. Buttorff hired biochemist, pharmacologist, and industry veteran James Baumgartner, Ph.D. Baumgartner not only formulated the company's first CBD product, "He drove the first dose over to my mom," Buttorff says. The THC-free "undrug," as Buttorff calls CBD, relieved her mother's chronic pain without fear of addiction and without dulling her mind. Today, at age 82, Buttorff's mother takes Zumba classes and still works for Quintel. "I can lead a normal life again," she says, thanks to CBD.

"Panacea's mission is to help people and pets feel better each day by delivering the highest-quality CBD products on the market," Buttorff says. Located in the former mining town of Golden, near Denver, Panacea's 51,000-square-foot lab is a leader in this modern-day gold rush. Unlike most other CBD companies, the scientists at Panacea do everything from farming to

## Cannabis Defined

Confused about the difference between THC and CBD? Marijuana and hemp? You're not alone. Here's a list of common cannabis terms, loosely defined:

### CANNABIS

A genus of flowering plants in the family Cannabaceae.

### CANNABINOIDS

A class of 115 relatively unexplored chemical compounds found in the cannabis plant.

### HEMP

A cannabis plant variety grown for fiber, seed, and oil. Contains minimal THC, more CBD. Legal at the federal level.

### MARIJUANA

A cannabis plant variety grown for medicinal and recreational drug use. Contains more THC, less CBD. Illegal at the federal level.

### CBD

Cannabidiol, a non-psychoactive cannabinoid primarily found in hemp. Nonintoxicating. Legal at the federal level.

### THC

Tetrahydrocannabinol, a psychoactive cannabinoid primarily found in marijuana. Intoxicating. Illegal at the federal level.

*Author Nick Johnson (M.A., '14) explains cannabis terminology, as well as the plant's agricultural past, in his book Grass Roots: A History of Cannabis in the American West (see related story on Page 22).*

product fulfillment to ensure strict quality control. Beyond the walls of Panacea, the CBD industry often feels like the Wild West to Buttorff, in need of standardized analysis practices, consistent labeling, and quality assurance measures to best serve the consumer. The industry would also benefit from more research into cannabinoids, a class of compounds found in the cannabis plant that includes CBD.

Over the years, Buttorff had maintained strong ties with Colorado State University. She endowed a full-ride statistics scholarship in 2012, received the College of Natural Sciences Distinguished Alumna award in 2014, and would periodically meet with three leaders from the College of Natural Sciences: Jan Nerger, dean of the college; Melissa Reynolds, professor of chemistry and associate dean for research; and Simone Clasen, associate vice president of philanthropic operations. The four women in STEM had mutual respect for one another and enjoyed meeting for lunch to bounce ideas around.

"Leslie was dismayed at the lack of solid research in the cannabis arena and CBD in particular," Nerger remembers from one lunch meeting in particular. By the time the meal was over, the group had brainstormed a solution. "We came up with the idea of creating an analytical chemistry lab with state-of-the-art instrumentation to research cannabinoids," Nerger says. The lab would both refine research best practices for industry and further investigate the wellness attributes of cannabinoids for consumers.

Buttorff loved the idea and made a \$1.5 million gift to establish a cannabinoid research center on the CSU campus. Located in the

Chemistry Building, the lab is slated to open this spring.

A wide variety of colleges have expressed interest in cross-disciplinary research at the new facility. "CSU offers expertise in the complete cannabinoid value chain from seed to sale, including botany, chemistry, biology, psychology, agricultural sciences, statistics, business, veterinary research, and more," Buttorff says.

Nerger also anticipates research collaborations with CSU Pueblo, which plans to offer a new cannabis-science degree program this fall. "I really see all of this as synergistic,"

Nerger says. "We're building on the strengths of each other."

The new research center will allow faculty and students to investigate untapped cannabinoid potential, such as "the entourage effect" – the theory that while a single cannabinoid produces a unique benefit, certain cannabinoids in combination work better together for an even greater effect.

"This research is absolutely exciting," says Reynolds, who will serve as director of the new lab. "Cannabinoids have already proven effective in a number of clinical applications, and there are more

than 100 other compounds that have been identified in hemp that could have an impact in other areas. Honestly, the possibilities are limitless. We are incredibly grateful to Leslie for this gift."

The new cannabinoid research center will foster collaboration between industry and academia and across multiple CSU colleges and campuses. By working together, CSU and Panacea are poised to create their own entourage effect, with the promise of unlocking new scientific discoveries for the greater good. ☼

 Member



“CSU offers expertise in the complete cannabinoid value chain from seed to sale, including botany, chemistry, biology, psychology, agricultural sciences, statistics, business, veterinary research, and more.”

– LESLIE BUTTORFF





20  
20

VISIONARIES

# THIS IS RAM COUNTRY

Country music artist leans on  
entrepreneurial skills

*By Jerick Flores (B.A., '10)*

*Photos courtesy of Mason Dixon*

**Cue up any record** by singer and songwriter Jon Wolfe (B.S., '01), and you will know instantly it's a country song. A steel guitar, fiddle, or Wolfe's deep voice telling you a great story, or maybe all three, will greet your ears. With more than 43 million streams on Spotify and eight consecutive No. 1 singles on the Texas Regional Radio Report, Wolfe's passion and entrepreneurial spirit shine through with every note.

In fact, if one word were chosen to describe Wolfe, it would be "passionate." In a changing music industry, this self-described die-hard Rammie is no stranger to walking off the beaten path; in fact, that is how he got to Colorado State University.

Wolfe grew up in a musical family near Tulsa, Oklahoma, and fell in love with country music. He was passionate about



“Colorado State was the perfect place; I could be a free-thinker, go fly-fishing on the weekends, and pursue my goals in business.”

— JON WOLFE

other things in life as well: “What took me to Colorado was my passion for the outdoors.” He moved to Fort Collins and took time to get to know Colorado before jumping into school; it was then he set his sights on the College of Business.

“It’s amazing to see how much CSU has grown and how the College of Business has flourished. I had a great experience of getting my finance degree; professors were one-on-one and took the time to meet with me, face to face, to help me achieve my goals.

“Colorado State was the perfect place; I could be a free-thinker, go fly-fishing on the weekends, and pursue my goals in business.” It was here that his passion for music continued to flourish, and he could be heard playing songs of his heroes – such as George Strait and Dwight Yokam – at parties. Wolfe remembers “Pancho and Lefty” by Willie Nelson and Merle Haggard as the quintessential country



When it's safe to tour again, Wolfe hopes to thrill crowds with his new single, "Feels Like Country Music."





music song. “That was part of my soundtrack in school, driving around, going to Lucky Joe’s.”

Wolfe secured his first job with British Petroleum before graduation. It was when BP transferred him to Houston around 2004 that he began to play open mics and left BP to pursue music. “I went from having a great salary to years of struggling before I put my first record out in 2010.”

It was only up from there. Wolfe spent some time in Nashville, known for being the epicenter of the country music industry, but he found a home in Texas’s booming country music scene, on his own terms.

“What Texas has afforded me is the ability to have creative control of my music; it’s allowed me to build an independent fan base and touring career. I’m not signed to a record label – I’m an independent country artist and business. My overall goal in my career was to be a great traditional country artist.”

As country music and the music industry have seen a huge change, especially with the introduction of streaming and the way music is consumed, Wolfe is constantly thinking about how to share his passion: “I use my finance degree every day. I’m a country singer, but

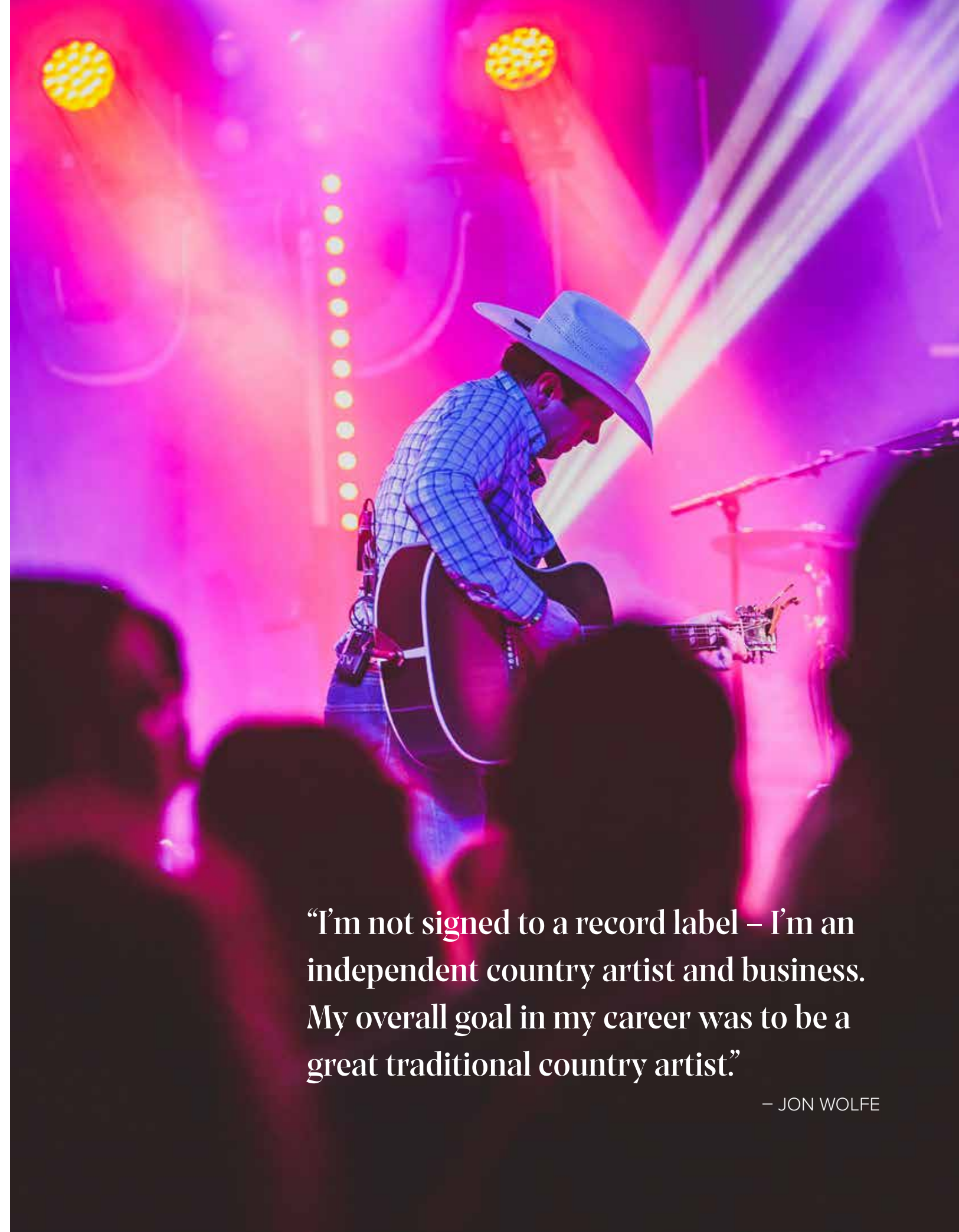
they call it ‘the music business’ for a reason. You can be great creatively, but you have to understand how it works and apply business methods to be successful. I stay tied to traditional country music themes. My fan base knows what to expect. Part of what I do every day is try to understand social media and consumer trends, ensure what I give to my fans is current, and try to reach new listeners.” According to Wolfe, country music should always have boots planted in the tradition with an eye focused on taking it into the future. His fans, lovingly referred to as “the Wolfe Pack,” know these are words by which he lives.

So what’s next for Jon Wolfe? “Continued growth in country music, putting out music my fans love, finding the best way to reach new fans, and engaging with them.” Passion also led him to launch his own tequila line, Juan Lobo Tequila. It’s shipping now across the United States and continues to expand its physical footprint. Wolfe finds ways to connect this passion with music, including playlists for suggested cocktails and the launch of the Juan Lobo Tequila Fest, Wolfe’s official music festival.

If you haven’t heard Jon Wolfe before, he suggests checking out his latest LP, *Any Night in Texas*, that features “Boots on a Dance Floor,” which has more than 10 million streams on Spotify alone.

A parting word of wisdom from Wolfe? Things will always work out when they are meant to happen.

“Don’t force anything in life. Sometimes you’re ready for certain things, and sometimes you are not.” Wolfe’s second live album and latest release, *Live at the Legendary Gruene Hall*, is available now wherever you enjoy music. Visit [jonwolfecountry.com](http://jonwolfecountry.com) to see if he is coming to a city near you. ☀



**“I’m not signed to a record label – I’m an independent country artist and business. My overall goal in my career was to be a great traditional country artist.”**

– JON WOLFE



# HOMEGROWN HERO

Double Alumnus is a Man on a Land-Grant Mission

*By Becky Jensen ('93)*

*Photos courtesy of Colorado Country Life magazine, Dave Neligh Photography*

**Mike Bartolo ('84, '86)** made a single choice 30 years ago that forever changed the landscape and economy of southeastern Colorado.

He decided to come back home.

It had been 10 years since Bartolo left the family farm east of Pueblo to attend college and see more of the world. "Fort Collins seemed so far away," Bartolo says. "But I loved science and I loved agriculture, so CSU was a natural place to land."

He found his calling in crop science, thanks to Colorado State University Professors Ken Barbarick and Jack Fenwick in the College of Agricultural Sciences. "They were absolutely wonderful instructors and approachable people," Bartolo says. After earning a B.S.

in bioagricultural sciences and an M.S. in horticulture from CSU, Bartolo left Colorado to pursue a doctoral degree in plant physiology from the University of Minnesota. In 1990, with his Ph.D. in hand, Dr. Bartolo could have become a professor teaching in a classroom anywhere in the country.

But he chose to pursue a job at what was then called Cooperative Extension at CSU's Arkansas Valley Research Center located 40 miles from where he was born. With his young bride by his side, Bartolo traded tenure and traffic for test plots and tractors, and it suited him fine.

Bartolo had grown up on a small farm next door to his aunt and uncle who grew traditional Mirasol chiles. Mirasol means "looking at the







“Certain foods conjure up a special family recipe or memory. Chile is one of those foods for many people.”

– MIKE BARTOLO

sun” in Spanish and, as a kid, Bartolo had looked up to his uncle, Harry Mosco, a quiet gentleman, gifted farmer, and veteran of World War II. The deep admiration Bartolo felt for his uncle extends to the rest of his elders. “They were smart, and they worked hard, and they were so devoted to the land and their family,” Bartolo says of his parents, aunts and uncles, and grandparents. And because the family lived off the land, favorite memories often center on food. Bartolo remembers multiple generations gathered around the table

Grow & Give

CSU Extension is encouraging people to take advantage of their time at home during the COVID-19 pandemic to plant modern victory gardens, and then share the harvest with those in need. Learn more at [growandgivecolorado.org](http://growandgivecolorado.org).

to make sausage, his grandmother mixing new-world chiles into old-world Italian recipes. “When we made sausage, it brought the whole family together,” Bartolo says. “Certain foods

conjure up a special family recipe or memory. Chile is one of those foods for many people. It’s such a part of our melting-pot culture. It has such an emotional tie.” When his Uncle Harry died, Bartolo’s dad found a bag of seeds in his brother-in-law’s garage and gave them to his son. Bartolo planted four rows of his uncle’s Mirasol chile seeds in the test plots at the research center. And within that first crop, he noticed something. “It was just one plant out of the population, an oddball, but

different in a positive way,” he says. “I looked at it and thought, ‘That’s interesting,’ so I saved the seed.” After nearly eight years of careful cultivation, Bartolo transformed his uncle’s Mirasol chile into a bigger and meatier variety, superior for roasting. Bartolo named it the Mosco chile to honor his Uncle Harry. He shared the seeds with local farmers and patiently waited for their feedback. “The next thing I know, everyone is growing it,” Bartolo says. The Mosco pepper is now the most popular variety of Pueblo chile on the market today. It put Pueblo chile on the map and, in 2015, Whole Foods dropped the famed Hatch chile in favor of carrying Pueblo chiles in its Colorado, Kansas, Utah, and Idaho stores. Bartolo’s Mosco variety is also the heart and soul of the Pueblo Chile and Frijoles Festival, now in its 26th year. The festival brings 150,000 people and \$3 million to the Pueblo economy in one weekend. Locals make and sell tea, salsa, jams, and jellies from Pueblo chiles, and signs in local restaurant windows proclaim: Proudly Serving Pueblo Chile. “Mike alone has enhanced the whole chile market in Pueblo County, and we’re forever grateful for that,” says Rod Slyhoff, president and CEO of the Greater Pueblo Chamber of Commerce and co-founder of the festival. But Bartolo’s job is more than just the Pueblo chile. “CSU’s land-grant mission is so important to me,” he says. “Interactions with the growers and the farm families make my job wonderful. They provide input and direction that guide the work I do. If they have a particular problem, then we develop a program to solve it.” Over the years, Bartolo has addressed the issues of plant disease,

pest control, food safety, and water quality, and has created educational programs that promote horticulture and irrigation best practices. Bartolo founded the Colorado Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association and helped to create the Pueblo Chile Growers Association. In 2018, he received the F.A. Anderson Award for outstanding performance by an Extension employee from CSU, and the Charles W. Crews Business Leader of the Year award from the Greater Pueblo Chamber. “He has just made a tremendous impact on the ag industry in this region and caused it to be the second-largest engine in our economy down here,” Slyhoff says.

Bartolo has made a career of cultivating healthy plants and relationships. “People are craving that connection to their food sources,” he says. “That’s why I’m so excited by our ongoing work at the research center. It’s about the re-valuation of food and the land and helping farmers adapt to future challenges.” Retiring as the director of the Arkansas Valley Research Center after 29 years, he’s optimistic about the next generation of growers. “There are young people out there who want to farm. They’re smart. They have so many different views of things. When I see a young person getting excited about farming,” says Bartolo, “that’s what gives me hope.” ☀

Good Things Come in Threes

Alumnus Dr. Michael Bartolo has cultivated three popular varieties of Pueblo chiles during his 29-year career with CSU at the Arkansas Valley Research Center.

MOSCO

When you think of Pueblo chiles, this is it. Named for Bartolo’s uncle, Harry Mosco, this variety is bigger and meatier than the competition and is superior for roasting. The Mosco is the flavor-packed pepper fueling the heated Hatch vs. Pueblo chile interstate rivalry.

GIADONE

Hot, hot, hot. Named for local farmer and founding father of the Pueblo Chile and Frijoles Festival, Pete Giadone, this variety has twice the spice of a Mosco. The Giadone boasts a consistent heat and flavor profile making it ideal for restaurants.

PUEBLO POPPER

The perfect chile for making mini stuffed peppers with a kick. This heirloom variety’s round shape makes it easy to add filling and sit upright in the baking dish. These little beauties are crowd pleasers and sell out every year at the chile festival.



# AN IDEAL ADVOCATE

Alumna provides holistic support  
for Native students

*By Tony Phifer*

Emily White Hat is just 43 years old but she's already had a variety of careers.

She's been a firefighter, an EMT, a wildland fire researcher, a prosecutor, a teacher, and a government employee in Washington, D.C., working on public health and veterans advocacy.

And all of that while raising a son as a single mom.

Throughout those twists and turns, White Hat (B.S., forestry, '04) always had a singular purpose: Working to improve the lives of her Lakota tribe members and all Native Americans. So, it's no surprise that her current job – vice president of programs for the American Indian College Fund – gives her the opportunity to impact the lives of Native people, both now and in the future.

"I've always believed that we have the responsibility to socialize and educate our children," White Hat said. "The college fund serves Native students with scholarships, but we also provide support to them holistically to help them succeed."



Emily White Hat rides in the 139th annual Rosebud Sioux Tribal Fair Parade held in Rosebud, South Dakota, in 2015.





“Going to CSU was a phenomenal experience. It was a long way from home, and I had no idea what I was walking into, but the friendships I made there are the friendships I have today.”

— EMILY WHITE HAT

White Hat, who grew up in a small South Dakota town on the Rosebud Reservation, travels from her Denver office around the country, working with tribal colleges to help them develop and implement programs and projects. Her experience as a lawyer and government policy writer, along with years of active participation in tribal government, make her an ideal advocate for Native students and the 32 tribal colleges spread across 13 states.

White Hat earned her associate degree at Sinte Gleska University, a tribal college on the Rosebud Reservation where both of her parents worked. Her late father, Albert White Hat, was a renowned

scholar of the Lakota language and tribal traditions. He translated Lakota for several Hollywood movies, including the Academy Award-winning *Dances With Wolves*.

Her mother, Marlies White Hat, works for the Tiwahe Glu Kini Pi Program, providing Lakota-based equine-assisted mental health therapy, individual therapy, and family therapy.

“Education was very important in my family, and the scope of the tribal colleges has always interested me,” White Hat said.

Her interest in tribal life was further piqued when, at age 19, she was elected to the board of the Rosebud Tribal Land Enterprise, which oversees land management

and tribal economic interests on the reservation. That experience, plus a lifelong love of the outdoors, led her to CSU in 2001.

“My son and I went to college together,” she said with a laugh, recalling bringing Mark with her to campus when he was just 4. “Going to CSU was a phenomenal experience. It was a long way from home, and I had no idea what I was walking into, but the friendships I made there are the friendships I have today. It was a great experience – one of the highlights of my education.”

While at CSU, White Hat worked with Phil Omi, now a professor emeritus of forestry and respected expert on wildfires. She took advantage of undergraduate



research opportunities with Omi to learn more about her pre-college work as a firefighter on the reservation. She also minored in business, graduating in 2004 before heading to law school at the University of New Mexico.

Her journey to her current position was anything but straight as White Hat returned to Rosebud after earning her law degree. She was a prosecutor for a time, then worked for a law firm before heading to Washington, D.C., to advocate for Native public health and veterans.

Eventually, she landed at the Denver-based American Indian College Fund, which provides scholarships to students at tribal colleges and mainstream colleges and universities like CSU. The AICF also helps tribal colleges establish and support educational programming, including the transfer of intergenerational tribal knowledge – particularly for vulnerable populations.

Interestingly, her job led her back to her alma mater in 2018 to help CSU respond to an incident that saw

two prospective Native American students detained by police on a campus tour. Cheryl Crazy Bull, president and CEO of AICF, reached out to CSU to offer suggestions on how to improve campus tours and other functions for Native students and brought a team that included White Hat to campus for discussions.

“We had not been directly involved with the college fund in a while, so the incident helped us reconnect,” said Leslie Taylor, a Cherokee and CSU’s vice president of enrollment and access. “Emily was part of that group, and she was awesome. I really appreciate her dedication to creating healthy learning environments and pathways to college for Native students. Her commitment to the education of Indigenous peoples is really commendable.”

For White Hat, many challenges remain. She’s hoping her job will help improve the lives of all Native people, particularly women.

“There’s still a huge double-standard about how Native women are treated in the workplace and elsewhere, and we’re hoping to help change those behaviors,” she said. “We need to do a good job now so future generations can benefit.” ☀

## Helping Those in Need

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the American Indian College Fund worked with Native students and tribal colleges to learn about their needs and then created the College Fund Emergency Relief Fund to help students with food, technology, rent, utilities, medicine, and more to help them stay in school. More than 50 percent of Native students work and provide the primary source of income for their families, and surveys indicate more than 62 percent suffer from food insecurity. Learn more at [collegefund.org](https://collegefund.org).







# NEW FRONTIERS

Bringing History to Life in Colorado

By Mark Schapker

When you talk about history with writer, published author, and Colorado State alum Nick Johnson (M.A., '14), you feel a certain change come over the room. Not only does he become noticeably more animated, but the space itself seems to transform into a classroom atmosphere. You sit and listen and take in valuable lessons that may have been just footnotes in your mind.

Johnson earned his master's in history at Colorado State in 2014, and at 30 years old, he has the in-depth knowledge and confidence of a tenured professor. Listen to him talk, and you appreciate how his words paint vivid pictures of historical figures and entire movements – often in the same sentence. He is a vital part of the Colorado Encyclopedia,

an online resource and reference center that is changing how history is accessed and used for education in the state of Colorado.

Johnson started with the Colorado Encyclopedia about a year after he graduated and has worked as a writer, jack-of-all-trades, and now senior associate editor for the organization. The Encyclopedia has been used by teachers, journalists, and history buffs since it began in 2013 with funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

As of 2020, CSU is administering the latest grant for the Encyclopedia, a connection that keeps Johnson close to his alma mater. He is also close in other ways – his office is in the old alumni center, now the Tiley House off College Avenue, and he works with

staff at CSU Libraries who built the Encyclopedia website, which has seen a 100 percent increase in engagement in just one year.

Johnson sees the Encyclopedia as just the beginning of its mission. With 750 articles on its website now, the goal is to have 1,000 by 2022. It also has tailored its articles for various K-12 levels to make the widest impact possible for students. One of its primary goals is to eventually be used in statewide curriculum.

With this far-reaching impact comes responsibility, and Johnson is proud of the Encyclopedia's diverse collaborations that ensure that all sides of history are represented.

"Our focus at the Colorado Encyclopedia is inclusivity. We have met with various communities

throughout Colorado including Indigenous groups and under-represented populations who historically have not had a say in how the history books were written. We want all perspectives and experiences included to make sure that we are as accurate as possible."

## An Eye to the West

Born and raised in the high-energy, bustling environment of suburban Chicago, Johnson had a knack for journalism and writing from an early age. When he was 13, he took a road trip to the Rockies with his grandparents and fell in love with the mountains and wide-open spaces of the West. Maybe one day, he thought, he could live there.

Johnson developed his talent further at his high school newspaper, and after he graduated, he progressed to editor in chief of the school paper at a local community college. He was naturally curious, outgoing, and thrived in his surroundings. His path, however, was destined to take him away from Chicago soon.

He went south – not west – at first, when he enrolled at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale and dove into its journalism school. He learned all about the "intense daily grind" of the profession, as he described it, which was shaping up to be his future.

He had a clear path ahead – if he would take it. But his minor in history provided subjects more compelling to Johnson than the dose of local updates and human-interest pieces that dominated the journalism world. He also faced slim job prospects in the industry, and his heart just wasn't in it. Eventually, he knew what he had to do.

"My minor in history was a big turning point," Johnson explained. "I pivoted from the idea of being a

journalist and wanted to focus on history and possibly teaching. And I wanted to go west."

Johnson graduated from SIU in 2011 and applied for history graduate programs throughout the West, including at Colorado State University. After a year of odd jobs to make ends meet – including door-to-door sales, retail, and occasional sports reporting – Johnson was finally accepted into CSU in 2012.

"I got the news while driving home in a big snowstorm. I was ecstatic. It's probably the happiest I've ever been in such bad weather."

He was happy that year in other ways too. Johnson married his longtime girlfriend and love of his life, Nancy Gonzalez. Together, they rode off toward the West and new beginnings.

## Finding Purpose at Colorado State

As Johnson took root in Fort Collins, his education in CSU's history graduate program blossomed beyond expectations. With a focus on environmental history, he enjoyed meaningful partnerships with his professors, who guided him toward his talents and interests.

"The CSU experience is about so much more than just sitting in a classroom. My teachers focused on my strengths and gave me the confidence and encouragement to succeed. My adviser, Jared Orsi, had strong faith in my ability and persuaded me to publish my thesis."

Johnson expanded his thesis – an environmental history of cannabis – into the book *Grass Roots: A History of Cannabis in the American West* five years later. Published by Oregon University Press in 2017, the book is filled with eye-opening and previously little-known facts about the cannabis industry and its development through the centuries, including the modern eras of



"Our focus at the Colorado Encyclopedia is inclusivity. We want all perspectives and experiences included to make sure that we are as accurate as possible."

– NICK JOHNSON

prohibition and legalization. Johnson calls it the greatest achievement of his life.

The greatest professional achievement, that is. As Johnson and his wife raise their 3-year-old daughter, Natalie, in Fort Collins, they look forward to creating a private history full of cherished family stories and memories yet to come. ☀



# HONORING THE PAST, ENVISIONING THE FUTURE

Growing the cattle industry by providing what it needs most: information

*By Ann Gill (M.A., '76)*

PHOTO: KONPLUTSKA VIA SHUTTERSTOCK



As CEO of CattleFax, Randy Blach (B.S., '80) has plenty of opportunities to speak with the media, ranching associations, and occasionally, his alma mater. Listeners will hear the comforting cadence and slight drawl reminiscent of Colorado's High Plains. Discerning listeners who also attended Colorado State University might detect something more.

Professionally, Blach helps beef producers deal with current challenges by mixing deep knowledge of past-performance indicators with forward-looking research and analytics to create accurate industry forecasts. When Blach says the word "tradition," you get the impression that he's channeling generations of family lore and experience. And when he says the word "future," you understand it as a challenge – a challenge to CattleFax clients and the entire cattle industry to shape what's next, just as he has done.

As we celebrate the first 150 years of this outstanding institution this year and celebrate the impact of its alumni, we're also casting our gaze ahead to a new era of innovation and discoveries. Blach exemplifies CSU's foundational heritage as well as the vision required to build upon those foundations.

Blach is part of an extraordinary CSU legacy family. His forebears homesteaded in the Yuma area of northeast Colorado in 1887. His immediate family boasts 30 CSU alumni, including all eight of his siblings. When his father's cousins and their families are added, there are more than 70 CSU alumni.

Blach enrolled at CSU not only because it was a family tradition but also due to its excellent programs in his areas of interest – agriculture, business, and finance. While at CSU, he was heavily involved with the livestock judging team, which enabled him to "meet a lot of great

people" and develop his public-speaking skills as well as learn more about livestock. He celebrates "great mentors, including Dr. John Matsushima and Dr. Robert Taylor."

His Parmelee Hall suitemate introduced Blach and his wife, Karen (B.S., '80), their first year at CSU. Her degree is in child development; she later earned a master's in early childhood education and taught first and second grade for more than 30 years before retiring. The Blachs have two children. Haylee attended Creighton, where she played on the soccer team. Ty is an MLB pitcher, currently with the Baltimore Orioles organization.

The Blachs remain heavily involved in the family cow/calf and growing operation in Yuma. Each spring, they enjoy "a great day or two" when they work the cattle before turning them out to pasture.

During his senior year, Blach received a phone call from CattleFax, asking him to interview for a position with them. He did and was offered the job, which he started Jan. 2, 1980. He had intended to work at CattleFax long enough to develop market knowledge and skills, then go back home to his family's cattle operation. Instead, he discovered work he was passionate about and

has been with CattleFax for 40 years, currently serving as CEO.

CattleFax is "an industry self-help organization," according to Blach. It provides market information, research, and risk-management analysis to those in the cattle industry. It also provides analysis of long-range weather forecasts and global information on cattle, pork, poultry, hay, and related topics. This alumnus, along with his legacy family, represents the proud past of CSU; he also develops and

communicates a vision for the future of agriculture.

In its early days, CattleFax had offices all around the United States. Now there is one office, located in Denver, with some employees working remotely. CattleFax hires individuals with strong backgrounds in agriculture and business who have outstanding speaking and writing skills. About half its employees are CSU alumni.

Blach also is a CSU community builder. He is an active alumnus of Farmhouse Fraternity. He and a few

others started the CSU Beef Club at a bowl game more than 20 years ago; the club has donated more than \$1 million to CSU. Blach is a "big believer in being involved" and urges other alumni to do the same. He became a Life Member of the Alumni Association because "CSU is our University. It is our responsibility to give back. If we want a voice, we need to be involved. Being involved is the best way to help the University grow." ☀

 Member

**"CSU is *our* University. It is our responsibility to give back. If we want a voice, we need to be involved. Being involved is the best way to help the University grow."** – RANDY BLACH



Ty, wife Nikki, Haylee, Randy, and Karen with herd at the ranch.



Randy and Karen on campus with family and friends.



## WE'RE HERE FOR YOU

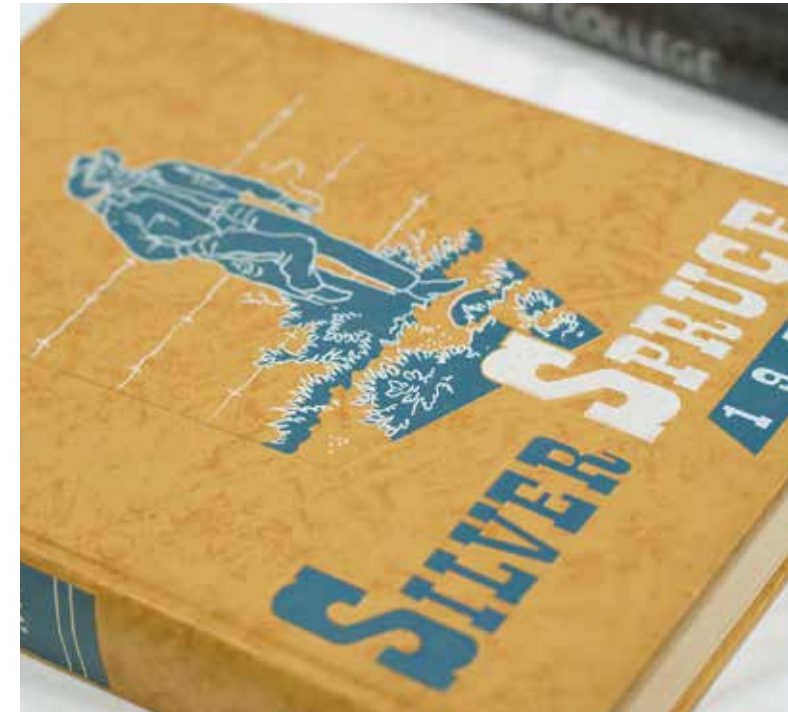


If you've been affected by economic changes resulting from the global pandemic, we're here for you. As an Alumni Association member, you have access to valuable professional development tools and career services, including three free one-on-one consultations with a career coach via Skype, a library of webinars, and a calendar of virtual career fairs.

We've even dedicated a staff member to your professional journey. Angela Hayes has a B.S. in psychology, an M.S. in

industrial/organizational psychology, and a Ph.D. in professional coaching and human development. She's a nationally board-certified coach and a nationally certified health and wellness coach with a passion for helping others. She views changes/transitions (both planned and unplanned) as opportunities for individuals to discover and plan what they really want from their careers and lives.

*Learn more at [alumni.colostate.edu/career-services](https://alumni.colostate.edu/career-services).*



The 1953 edition of *Silver Spruce*.

## CONGRATULATIONS

to our 2019 50 Year Club award recipients

The following were awarded at the 2019 50 Year Club luncheon during Homecoming and Family Weekend:

**CAREER ACHIEVEMENT AWARD:**  
Dr. Charlie Vail, D.V.M. ('58, '60)



**PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD:**  
Lt. Col. Robert W. Johnson, USAF  
(Retired) ('68)



*To learn more about the 50 Year Club and last year's recipients, please visit the CSU Alumni Association's website at [alumni.colostate.edu/50-year-club](https://alumni.colostate.edu/50-year-club).*



## Serving Rams through life's proudest moments.

Call **1-800-922-1245** today or visit **[www.TheAIP.com/rams](https://www.TheAIP.com/rams)**

Life • Health • Dental • Vision • Auto • Home • Disability • ID Theft • Pet Health



0P6

## YOUR LEGACY, CSU'S FUTURE

Have you considered putting CSU in your will or trust?



### WITH A BEQUEST TO THE CSU ALUMNI ASSOCIATION, YOU:

- keep control of your assets throughout your lifetime
- meet your philanthropic goals while supporting your passion
- reduce (or possibly eliminate) estate taxes
- become a member of the Frontier Legacy Society

Learn more at [giftplanning.colostate.edu](https://giftplanning.colostate.edu)

The legacy you create today empowers future generations and allows CSU to remain a world-class institution. For more information about charitable estate planning, please call us at (970) 491-4254 or email us at [giftplanning@colostate.edu](mailto:giftplanning@colostate.edu).

*Have you already included CSU in your estate plans? Let us know. We'd love to thank you with a small token of our appreciation.*



North American Van Lines offers a **60% discount** for interstate moves and free replacement cost insurance.

Contact Gordon Taylor at **(800) 987-3608** and mention CSU.



# CONNECTED ACROSS DISTANCE

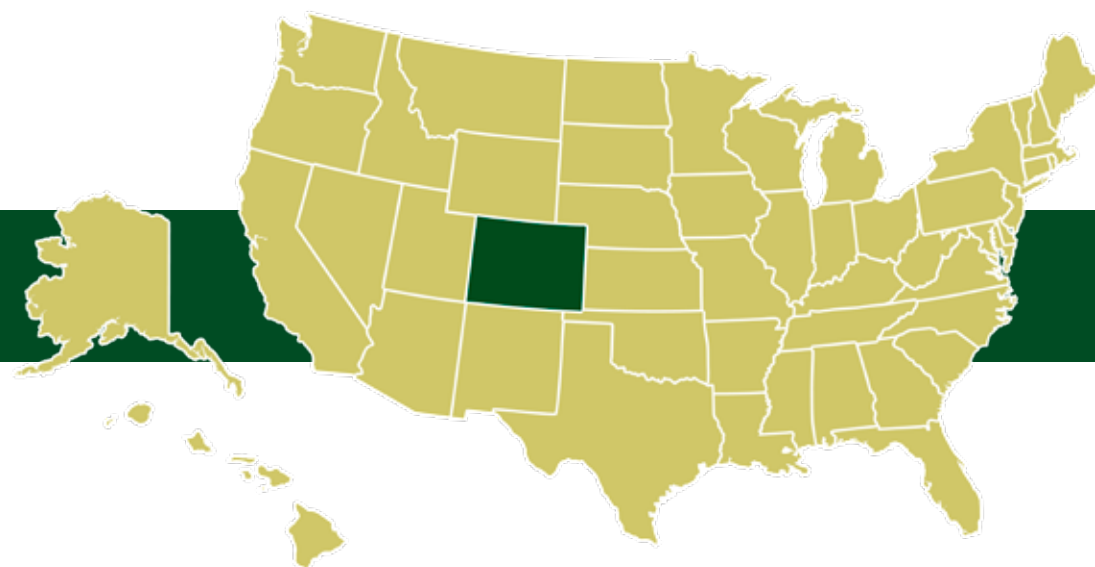
What is it that binds us all to Colorado State University? It could be the Oval in spring. It could be the Oval in any season. It could be the crisp fall days at football games. It could be the sound of the marching band playing the Fight Song. It could be the memory of walking across the stage during commencement, bringing one journey to an end while starting another.

We welcomed a new class into

our alumni family without those ceremonies in May. Our current crisis forced them to defer in-person graduation ceremonies until December, but their accomplishments and experiences connect them to the CSU community in the same way as every other class. And now they can count on a network of 232,000 alumni like you all around the world.

The CSU Alumni Association supports a system of volunteer-led

Ram Networks around the nation that's keeping alumni connected during these challenging times – and when we return to normalcy. From virtual happy hours and game-watch parties to community service projects, Ram Networks can be a little piece of CSU in your own community. To learn more about an existing Ram Network or to learn how to create one in your area, please contact Matt Flick at [RamNetworks@colostate.edu](mailto:RamNetworks@colostate.edu).



## COLORADO

Boulder County  
Colorado Springs  
Denver  
Durango  
Fort Collins  
Grand Junction  
Montrose/Delta  
Pueblo  
Summit County

## NATIONAL

Albuquerque, NM  
Anchorage, AK  
Atlanta, GA  
Austin, TX  
Bay Area, CA  
Boise, ID  
Boston, MA  
Chicago, IL  
Dallas, TX

Honolulu, HI  
Houston, TX  
Jacksonville, FL  
Kansas City, MO  
L.A./Orange County, CA  
Memphis, TN  
Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN  
Missoula, MT  
Nashville, TN

New York City, NY  
Omaha, NE  
Orlando, FL  
Phoenix, AZ  
Portland, OR  
Salt Lake City, UT  
San Antonio, TX  
San Diego, CA  
San Francisco, CA

Seattle, WA  
Southern Florida  
St. Louis, MO  
Tacoma, WA  
Tampa, FL  
Washington, D.C.

*Ramblin' Rams*

**TRAVEL PROGRAM**  
Learn more at [alumni.colostate.edu](http://alumni.colostate.edu)

 **ALUMNI ASSOCIATION**  
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

**RAMblin' Rams is here to help with your travel needs when you are once again ready to explore the world.**

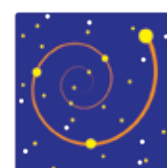


## CLASSIC CHRISTMAS MARKETS DEC. 12-20, 2020

Sip mulled wine and collect unique handicrafts, hand-made ornaments, and toys at some of the largest and most famous Christmas markets in Europe, including those in Strasbourg, Wurzburg, Nuremberg, Innsbruck, and Munich.

## AMSTERDAM TO BASEL JULY 2021

Explore the canals of Amsterdam, get up close to the filigree twin towers of Cologne's famous cathedral, and visit local vineyards in Cochem. Take a tour of Heidelberg Castle, see the Roman baths in Baden-Baden, and stroll La Petite France in Strasbourg.



**The MindShare Network**

The Global Network for  
Dreams, Hope and Life Activation

[mindsharenetwork.com/CSUAlumni](http://mindsharenetwork.com/CSUAlumni)  
Access your free toolkit today!



**SUPPORT CAM FOREVER**  
[alumni.colostate.edu](http://alumni.colostate.edu)

Proud sponsors of CAM the Ram:

**BIG O TIRES**

**Ford**  
PROUD SPONSOR

**Coca-Cola**

OFFICIAL STORE OF CSU RAMS  
**BOOKSTORE**  
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

**fnbo** The Bank of CSU





# WELCOME, NEW LIFE MEMBERS!

Oct. 1, 2019-March 31, 2020

Richard G. Adamich, '02  
Patrick D., '81 and Donna D., '81 Albert  
John D. Alt, '63  
Richard A. Basiliere Jr., '76, '09  
Leah A. Bellacome  
Roberta L. Boitano, '70, '73  
Timothy D. Brogdon, '12  
Mary E. Carlson, '74, '87  
Paul T. Carringer, '13  
Robert L. Caton, '71  
Larry J. Christensen, '62  
John M. Clarkson III, '83  
Jeffrey C., '86 and Tracey H. Cook  
William A. Cotton  
Michele D. Craig, '97  
Douglas A., '91 and Amy E., '92 Dale  
Floris M. Delee and Christine N., '91 Perich  
Kathleen M. Delehoy, '84  
Eleanor M. Deuter, '72  
Eric A. Dinnel, '95  
Gino A. and Susan M., '90 DiSalle  
Isabel Drews, '19  
Kyle D. Dunbar, '19  
Robert P. Ellingson III, '70  
Kyle A. Ester, '13 and Ann Marie Bliley-Ester  
Jeffrey S., '87 and Kimberly J., '86 Finnin  
Eric C. Frieauf, '90  
Richard L. Gardner, '83  
William C. Hammerich III, '69  
Ronald G., '78 and Colleen S., '78 Hightower  
Alec R. Hoffman  
Geraldine A. Hogsett, '61  
Nancy K. Hurt, '92  
Fred W. Jacobs, '90 and Jennifer, '91, '18, '19 Clary  
Wallace R., '76 and Pamela K. Jacobson  
Martha K. Johnson, '78  
Amy N. Kagey, '08  
Lawrence J. King, '66, '67  
Sumiko Kochi, '51

Thomas M., '94 and Danna Krause  
Tanara N. Landor  
Frank W. Lavac Jr., '74, '77, '80  
Steven H. Lee, '96  
Bryan R. Lubeck, '73  
Daniel R. III, '74 and Cheryl J., '75 Lynn  
David Macy, '61  
Mark M. Madic, '18  
Robert E. III, '94 and Wanda W. Marker  
James A., '75 and Pauline B. McDonald



We welcome new Life Member Josh Johnson, who graduated in May and currently is serving with a Colorado National Guard unit called up to help respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. He is in Cortez, Colorado, assisting the emergency manager with planning and logistics for distribution of masks and hand sanitizer as well as FEMA reimbursements to counties.

Blaine H. McKee, '87  
Ruth S. McMorrان, '72  
Steven G., '84 and Teresa M., '85 Meier  
Zachariah J., '06 and Allison R., '06 Meier  
David L., '82 and Colleen Miller  
Jason A. and Mindy J., '00 Mills  
James R., '74 and Stephanie A. Mokler  
Deborah A. Morgan, '71  
Madeline R. Morris, '17

Russel D., '65, '66 and Sandra L. Mowrer  
Martin C. Murdock, '92  
Nicole L. Norgren-Reeves, '99  
Steven J. Norris, '18  
Timothy L. O'Byrne, '86  
William R., '93 and Jacqueline N. Peterson  
Steven L. Peterson, '73, '75, '80  
Arnold E., '13 and Shannon Price  
Suanne E. Pyle-Woo, '91  
Thomas M. Robinson, '03  
Daniel Roby  
Todd B. Rubright, '77  
Susan J. Saewert, '74  
Deborah A. Sakurai-Horita, '74  
Cynthia I. Sauer, '84  
John K. and Leann M., '92, '94 Saunders  
Kathryn L. Schwartz, '92  
Karthik A. Seshadri  
John J. Shaw, '82  
Lauren Sims, '90  
Steven M., '82 and Susan J. Skold  
Jim I. Smithburg, '75  
Thomas Spencer  
Kellie A. Sponberg, '92  
Harry and Danyel J., '09 Stafford  
John F., '68, '70 and Bonnie L., '69 Stegner  
Daniel Tyler, '67  
Lisa M. Varilek, '15  
James L. Vidakovich, '69  
Joshua D. and Anna M., '98 Wallace  
Alexander A., '99 and Katherine N., '00 Welch  
Erick J. Whittier, '90, '97  
Debra M. Wilcox, '99  
Bradley D., '90, '91, '05 and Michelle M., '90 Wind  
Flori Witenstein, '19  
Craig A., '85 and Julee A., '87 Wolverton  
Richard E., '96 and Caroline M., '78, '81 Yonker  
Jeffrey E., '86 and Maria A., '86 Zeeb  
Xue Zhu, '96

Good things happen  
when **we work together.**



## STALWART LIFE MEMBERSHIP

A Stalwart Life Member is someone who gives annually beyond their Life Membership to support Alumni Association programs. It is the highest level of pride a member of the Colorado State University Alumni Association can show.

Learn more at  
[alumni.colostate.edu/Stalwart-Life-Membership](https://alumni.colostate.edu/Stalwart-Life-Membership)



ALUMNI ASSOCIATION  
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY



Liberty Mutual  
INSURANCE



ALUMNI ASSOCIATION  
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY





COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

**ALUMNI ASSOCIATION**

7114 Campus Delivery  
Fort Collins, Colorado 80523-7114

PRESORTED STANDARD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
FORT COLLINS CO 80523  
PERMIT NUMBER 19

# HOMECOMING & FAMILY WEEKEND

SEPT. 30-OCT. 4

Join us this fall as we gather, in one fashion or another, to celebrate what unites us as Rams. In these times, it's more important than ever to remind ourselves of our traditions, our common experiences, and our shared pride.

**STAY HEALTHY.  
STAY STALWART.  
GO RAMS.**



ALUMNI ASSOCIATION  
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

