

Merry Christmas to the entire Gunnison Valley. As we bring one year to an end and look forward to 2012 it is a good exercise to slow down and take a minute to reflect on the many things we can be thankful for. It was quite the busy year in Gunnison. The face of city council changed with the addition of two new members Bob Drexel and Ed Seymour and we bid a farewell and a thank you to Stu Ferguson and Rick Miller for their years of service. It seemed that events took a front seat this year and we were more than entertained with a great Fourth of July, a classic Cattleman's Days and two days of the USA Pro Cycling Challenge that landed Gunnison right in the middle of world wide exposure as a host city in the largest sporting event in the history of Colorado. What all of these events highlighted was that Gunnison is a genuine and welcoming western town. With such diverse events our flexibility and hospitality was once again demonstrated.

Despite the great turnout of visitors and events our sales tax revenues have only begun to increase slightly. Hopefully we will see a better year in 2012. The City staff continues to keep us financially responsible and secure in times that are uncertain for so many. The level of service to our customers has remained incredibly high despite budget cuts and more responsibilities being asked of city employees. The city staff is the greatest asset of the City of Gunnison.

The yearlong Celebration of Western State College's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary is a great achievement to recognize. WSC is such an integral part of the fabric of this community and as we look forward to the next 100 years we must continue to strengthen the bonds between college and community. For those of you who have not been up on the campus in while, make it a New Year's resolution to re-engage with WSC and help be part of their continued success in this community.

When I look back at the year, perhaps the one thing that I am most impressed by is the determination, grit and strength of those people who call Gunnison and this valley home. We all can tough out some extreme winter weather but for so many, these hard economic times have been the toughest ever. Jobs have been harder to come by and the cost of living seems to continue to rise. Sadly, this has caused some to leave this valley in search of other opportunities. As the economy starts to show a glimpse of change, we need to call on ourselves to do the best we can to persevere and support economic growth here at home. Now, more than ever it is critical we spend our dollars in our community. Easier said than done, this is one aspect of the economy we do have complete control over, that being how we spend our money. Support our small businesses because they are the backbone of our community. Encourage friends and family to visit for a ski vacation. CBMR needs our support as they compete for a share of the highly competitive ski market. Their success is our success. Encourage friends and family who are looking at colleges to come check out Western and our community. In the age of social media we can post and tweet the wonderful year round opportunities that we have here. How many small western towns boast a regional airport, a cutting edge hospital, a destination ski resort, a four year college, a diverse and active non-profit network, nationally recognized hunting and fishing opportunities, a viable ranching community and vast public lands that help keep our water and air clean? We can celebrate and share the place we call home without taking away the qualities we all love.

So what is in store for 2012? I look forward to a year of pleasant surprises. The snow is coming; I just wish it would show up sooner than later. The USA Pro Cycling Challenge will be returning in August. We

can look forward to great events all year. I see up and down valley cooperation growing as the mayors and commissioners reach out to each other more. CBMR and WSC have been reaching out as well and I look forward to strengthening those relationships. Ultimately, we get to make this community what we want it to be. I challenge us to look at the commonality we share and put our focus there. We have way more in common with each other than we think. That is something to celebrate. Happy New Year, it is going to be a great one.