

The Colorado Springs Sustainacenter

By Mariah Wagner

The Sustainacenter, located at 702 E. Boulder St., is home to several amazing organizations that work hard to keep Colorado Springs a healthy, ecofriendly and fun place to be. To get to know more about these great organizations and how to get involved, we interviewed a few of the folks involved.



The City of Colorado Springs Office of Sustainability works toward the improvement of the communities' social, environmental and economic well-being while finding innovative alternatives that keep the future looking bright. They forge partnerships, provide lunch n' learns, and they can't wait for you to get involved to make COS more sustainable! Ryan Trujillo is the city's Sustainability & Contract Compliance Manager.

Mariah Wagner: What's the best part of working out of a house?

Ryan Trujillo: I have two things I like most about working out of the Sustainacenter. First, the location. It is located in the Mid Shooks Run neighborhood, which is very supportive of sustainability, it's close to downtown, located along the Legacy Loop, across the street from Mid Shooks Run Park, there is a great coffee shop and neighborhood market close, and there is a bus stop at our front door. What more could you ask for in a location? Second, is the opportunity to collaborate and engage amount the people located at the Sustainacenter, as well as the broader community. This is why the Sustainacenter exists and now we get to live it every day!

MW: How is COS Sustainability working in partnership with local organizations?

RT: We are "all-in" with local organizations. We've asked regional partner originations to be part of the Sustainability Committee and Focus Teams, such as UCCS, and help shape what the City's sustainability program looks like. With the launch of the Sustainacenter, the partnership among various organizations has, and will continue to grow exponentially.

MW: How can the UCCS community get involved?

RT: There are a number of ways to get involved. Of course, there's social media. Follow us on Facebook at COS Sustainability to learn about the various sustainability events going on throughout our community. In addition, it's a good way to stay engaged on current topics, initiatives and volunteer opportunities. We have also launched the 2017 Sustain-a-series, which is a free lunch & learn that is open to the public. They are hosted on the first Wednesday of each month starting at 12:10p.m. at the City Administration Building located at 30 S. Nevada Ave. But please get involved! The success of this program is highly dependent on the community engagement.

To learn more about the COS Office of Sustainability at <https://coloradosprings.gov/department/746>



The Greenway Fund advocates for innovative alterations of the regional creeks through the development of greenway trails and water access to promote positive interactions, enhanced natural experiences and protect our valuable environmental assets. To find out a bit more, we talked to two Board Members, Allison Plute and Sean Holveck.

Mariah Wagner: What are you looking forward to the most about being located next to Mid Shooks Run?

Allison Plute: We love the quick, easy access to the Legacy Loop and to be even more immersed in the community that we serve

MW: What Greenway Fund plans should the community be most excited about?

AP: Breaking ground on the Legacy Loop Plaza Trailhead, our 2nd annual rain barrel sale (April-May), our 4th annual Forum (May), and Creek Week (Sept-Oct)

MW: How can the UCCS community get involved?

AP & SH: Follow us on Facebook, join us at an event, and volunteer! Help us get the word out about the work we're doing, join us at a community event, help develop marketing materials, and more! Email Sean sean@holveckdesigns.com for more information. To learn more, <http://greenwayfund.org/>



Pikes Peak Urban Gardens is an independent non-profit that was established back in 2007 and since then has been dedicated to growing, and teaching how to grow fresh, organic food locally. Most likely, you've seen some of their projects around town. To get to know PPUG better, we reached out to their Director, Larry Stebbins.

Mariah Wagner: What are your first ideas about changing the Sustainacenter's landscaping?

Larry Stebbins: This project will be a group effort with lots of group input throughout. At this point in time the consensus from the organizations at the Sustainacenter is that the property remove the blue grass and in place have a sensibly planted garden, highlighting perennial edible vegetables (rhubarb, asparagus, horseradish, Egyptian walking onions etc.), small fruits (alpine strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, goji berries, shrub cherries, currants, gooseberries etc.), perennial medicinal plants (valerian root, fewerfew, comfrey, stinging nettle, etc., perennial herbs (lavender, lemon balm, chives, garlic chives, rosemary, sage, thyme etc.), and perennial pollinator attracting flowers (Greek oregano, gaillardia, and many of the above). We also talked about incorporating a few dwarf to semi dwarf fruit trees. The design will be water efficient, highly mulched to conserve water and designed for maximum benefit not only to us humans but also to the indigenous wild life (bugs and birds included).

MW: What kind of gardening can we do in the wintertime?

LS: We like to garden inside under lights. We grow trays of lettuce, kale, Swiss chard and herbs for use in our salads and cooking. With the new slender tubular T 5 HO lights (inexpensive and efficient), we can grow up to 12 trays (20 inches by 10 inches) every 5 weeks for only \$25 cost for the electricity to do that. Growing sprouts in jars for salads is also big with us. For just pennies, a mason jar and seeds we grow a large handful of fresh sprouts weekly. Our favorites are broccoli, alfalfa, clover, and radish.

MW: How can the UCCS community get involved?

LS: UCCS can help us with perhaps handouts on information about the veggie, flowers, herbs we plant, why they were selected, and/or how to use them/eat them, cook with them etc.

To learn more, <http://www.ppugardens.org/>



Trails and Open Space Coalition

Trails and Open Space Coalition's mission is dedication to the preservation of open space and parks, and the creation of a network of trails, bikeways and greenways for the Pikes Peak region and to advocate for the sustainable use of these resources.

If you've hiked it, biked it or ran it in Colorado Springs, you can thank TOSC for advocating for a network of open space. We heard from Executive Director, Susan Davies, to learn more.

Mariah Wagner: Why is it important that the Sustainacenter is collocated next to Mid Shooks Run?

Susan Davies: For our organization, it was one of the reasons we chose to join the Sustainacenter. To be this close to one of our community's primary trail is great for us. You'll see members of our staff using the trail for recreation and transportation in the weeks and months to come. From an advocacy standpoint, it puts us in touch with how the trail is used and what challenges it faces. And we get the chance to connect to the neighbors who care a great deal about this trail.

MW: How will the collaborative aspect of sharing a house benefit TOSC?

SD: We're already talking about Friday afternoon porch gatherings and perhaps sharing a garden. I imagine future collaborations that allow our board and members to learn of the great work being performed by our house partners and vice-versa.

MW: How can the UCCS community get involved?

SD: We are always looking for volunteers that we can connect to our open space volunteers program. Plus with our Ring the Peak Trail project, there will be opportunities for students to help with community hikes and help us market the trail.

To learn more, <http://www.trailsandopenspaces.org/>



Southern Colorado Clean Cities Coalition is dedicated to reducing the use of petroleum in transportation in order to keep the air clean. They are always collaborating with other non-profits and local businesses with clean air in mind. Kyle Lisek, Clean Cities Coordinator, took time to tell us about some cool projects the coalition is doing.

Mariah Wagner: What are the benefits of Clean Cities being located so close to downtown?

Kyle Lisek: The Southern Colorado Clean Cities Coalition (SC4) is very excited to have a new dedicated office at the Sustainacenter near downtown Colorado Springs because we believe it will help expand our local networking opportunities and build awareness of our programs throughout the community. We look forward to partnering with other sustainability organizations also housed at the Sustainacenter for the cross promotion of sustainability events and initiatives.

MW: What are some of the most exciting programs or achievements the organization has accomplished this year?

KL: In early 2016, SC4 worked with Colorado Springs Utilities in opening their 2nd public compressed natural gas (CNG) station here in Colorado Springs. Fueling vehicles with natural gas reduces vehicle tailpipe emissions and advances the nation's energy security by reducing petroleum use in transportation. But, having access to this fueling infrastructure is crucial. Colorado Springs now has 2 public CNG fueling stations and I-25 was recently established as an alternative fuel corridor for CNG travel from Trinidad to the CO/WY border.

MW: How can the UCCS community get involved?

KL: Find us on the web or email us at KLisek@lungs.org for more information on our upcoming events and initiatives! We would love to assist you with information on alternative fuels and fueling infrastructure to help improve the operation of your vehicle or fleet!

To learn more,



COS Food Rescue believes in ensuring that no food goes to waste and is dedicated to finding ways to maximize food. You can see them and their heard of volunteers on bikes and via car collecting donated food from local businesses and paying it forward. We heard from Zac Chapman, Executive Director, on the importance of reducing our food waste and how you can help.

Mariah Wagner: Why are you most excited about being located in the Sustainacenter?

Zac Chapman: In the short time that we've been in the Sustainacenter, there has already been so much cross-pollination between sustainability organizations. Sustainability is intersectional; when CSFR talks about food access, these conversations are inherently linked to PPUG's work in food education; Bike COS' work in transportation; Concrete Couch's work in community-building. The potential for collaboration is boundless.

MW: What's the most popular food that is rescued? And what is the most popular to receive?

ZC: Our highest priority food to rescue are nutritiously dense, perishable foods such as produce, dairy and meat. The "direct redistribution" model of our organization allows us to capture this kind of food. The popularity of food depends on the recipient partner. For example, Urban Peak serves meals to teens, and values prepared goods from Colorado College, whereas a community-driven grocery distribution program such as the one at a Greccio Housing site values produce and meats. According to Hunger Free Colorado's Food Pantry Network, produce and meats are among the most popular items.

MW: How can the UCCS community get involved?

ZC: We're always looking for volunteers! For folks interested in rescuing food or furthering school-based partnerships, please e-mail shane@coloradospringsfoodrescue.org. For folks interested in community-driven grocery programs or with bi-lingual Spanish skill sets, please reach out to patience@coloradospringsfoodrescue.org.

To learn more, <http://www.coloradospringsfoodrescue.org/>



Bike Colorado Springs promotes the benefits of using sustainable modes of transportation and works toward making bike transportation more accessible by the creation of bike friendly trails. Allen Beauchamp, Manager of Bike Colorado Springs, shared his enthusiasm of safely getting more butts on bikes more often.

Mariah Wagner: Why is it important for the Sustainacenter to be located along Mid Shooks Run?

Allen Beauchamp: Bike Colorado Springs mission is: "Transforming the Pikes Peak Region into a vibrant and connected community that is safe and accessible for people on bikes." Our new office location, centrally located along the east side of the Legacy Loop along the Shooks Run Trail allows us the easy, low-stress access to many destinations that we frequent, and highlights how well-built infrastructure can connect up many areas of our city, starting with where we call home. From our day to day operations to the bicycle education classes that we host, it is

an conveniently located office location for people to access via bicycle. Being that it is on the historic Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe railway corridor, which serviced Colorado Springs from 1887 until 1970, it's fitting that this message of transforming our environment in ways that benefits citizens, and enhances connectivity throughout our community is embodied by this very useful and scenic greenway.

MW: What's your favorite part of sharing an office space with other local nonprofits?

AB: Our new office space in the Sustainacenter has truly immersed us deeply into our local community. From interacting with our residential neighbors on a regular basis to being able to share resources with Pikes Peak Urban Gardens, the Colorado Springs Food Rescue and The Greenway Fund, we interact on a daily basis. Collaboration can flourish because of our close proximity, and we are able to assist in each others mission in meaningful ways, that would not occur if we were in separate office locations. The creation of a more sustainable Colorado Springs takes many hands, and the team that calls the Sustainacenter home is up to the task of cooperatively tackling the challenges we all face.

MW: How can the UCCS community get involved?

AB: Bike Colorado Springs is creating a unifying voice for the use of bicycles in our city. Recreation, utility, commuting, pedaling with kids, racing at the velodrome, enjoying our many miles of fantastic mountain biking or just getting to school "up the hill". It matters not how you choose to use a bicycle in your daily life, but it matters that you can easily choose to do so, in any way that adds value to your day. Harnessing the creative energy of our UCCS population in the work needed to overcome the obstacles we face in transforming Colorado Springs into a more cycling-friendly city is key. Become a bicycling advocate by joining our effort. It can be as easy as becoming aware of the issues that pertain to multi-modal transportation, being willing to contact City Council or the Mayor's office when an important opportunity presents itself or encouraging a friend to come along for the ride, showing them your favorite route. Please join us in this pedal revolution: <http://www.bikecoloradosprings.org/advocate/become-a-bicycling-advocate/>

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