

Looking@Lakewood

VOTER'S GUIDE

Learn about your council candidates and more on **PAGES 5-11**.

A "camp-ier" Camp Christmas

By Suzanne Yoe, director of communications and content marketing with Denver Center for the Performing Arts

If ever there were a conductor of Christmas, it might be Lakewood's Lonnie Hanzon. But instead of waving a baton, Hanzon takes on the role of camp director when Denver Center for the Performing Arts Off-Center's *Camp Christmas* opens at Heritage Lakewood Belmar Park.

What started in Aurora's Stanley Marketplace can no longer be contained within four walls. Instead, Hanzon will transform Heritage Lakewood's historic structures and six acres to create a whimsical wonderland.

An internationally noted visual installation artist, Lonnie has his Lakewood studio in a traditional house that belies the bubbling creativity inside. From designing animated Christmas windows to spectacular Houston Zoo Lights, Lonnie is no stranger to creating Christmas fantasies, and Lakewood gives him ample space to pull out all the bells, whistles and ... glitter.

"We are preparing hundreds of thousands of lights, a mile of garland, hundreds of bows and countless baubles and attractions," said Hanzon. "I hope campers will come to reunite with loved ones, remember Christmas pasts, rekindle their love for the season and renew their holiday spirit."


Infused with a "Forget your troubles. Come on, get *Camp-y*" attitude, *Camp Christmas* will fill visitors with the frivolity of the season. In addition to fantastical light displays, décor and installations with photo ops aplenty, *Camp Christmas* provides an interactive, immersive experience. Campers will take a journey through five buildings to see indoor displays, use a digital

field guide to collect Merry Badges, listen to a bilingual audio tour and test their wit and wisdom solving 23 "pun trees."

Finally, no outdoor holiday experience would be complete without two full bars and a specialty hot chocolate stand offering a variety of seasonal drinks.

Those who just want a glimpse can visit the free Camp History Museum in the Visitor Center.

"We are excited to partner with the City of Lakewood to bring *Camp Christmas* to its new home," said Charlie Miller, curator of DCPA Off-Center. "The Lakewood location is the perfect foundation to build upon, and I can't wait for his over-the-top vision to come to life."

Produced by Hanzon Studios and Off-Center, *Camp Christmas* is made possible with support from the City of Lakewood and SCFD. 

Camp Christmas
Nov. 18 – Jan. 2
Heritage Lakewood Belmar Park
801 S. Yarrow St.
denvercenter.org/campchristmas
303-893-4100



Coming soon to Heritage Lakewood Belmar Park, *Camp Christmas* is a wonderland of lights, dazzling decorations, music and yuletide scenes spread across a six-acre landscape. Photo by Adams VisCom, 2019.

Inspiration Award winners key to support, caring during pandemic

Tough times can produce tough, resilient people. Since the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic began in March 2020, Lakewood residents and organizations have come together to help one another, often without expectation of a reward. That work deserves to be recognized, and the city is proud to announce a record-breaking 16 winners of the Mayor's Inspiration Award.



Because the awards were suspended last year due to the pandemic, these winners represent the efforts of 18 months of neighborly kindness. A committee of city staff, residents and Mayor Adam Paul selected the recipients based on contributions in community engagement, collaboration, inclusiveness, diversity, innovation and community impact. Below is just a sample of all the work these winners have done.

YOUTH

Koral Castelan, a reflection of stewardship

Koral is a student at Lakewood High School who has demonstrated an intense and caring interest in the plight of teens experiencing homelessness in the city. Helping educate teens facing drug and alcohol issues, she has volunteered at shelters, with the Salvation Army

and for the Jeffco Communities That Care coalition. Koral plans to continue her advocacy for the homeless and marginalized when she attends college.

Rosie Gavin, a reflection of initiative

Rosie doesn't let being hard-of-hearing stop her from being a force in the community. Even with the challenges that masks have created for her lip-reading skills, Rosie mentors fellow teens in her 4-H club, serves as a youth leader at her church and has helped build a home with Habitat for Humanity.

ORGANIZATIONS

The Action Center, a reflection of hope

The Action Center is one of the backbones of service in Lakewood, and its much-needed services were even more important during the

See **INSPIRATION AWARDS** page 4

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Adam Paul

Lots of things going on in Lakewood, lots to look forward to and plenty of opportunity for you to engage in the process!

This is budget season, and City Council will hold conversations for the next few weeks in October that will set the table for the next year and beyond! This is your chance to weigh in -- there will be two public

hearings, on Oct. 11 and Oct. 25, and our amazing online tool Lakewood Speaks (LakewoodSpeaks.org) is available to take your comments 24/7. This year's budget aims to backfill lost revenues and reinvest federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars into the community. It's an exciting time with many meaningful projects that will better our community for years to come.

I continue to be impressed with the leadership of our police department and their efforts to address community needs through innovation and thoughtfulness. One such effort is a co-responder program where our police team up with Jefferson Center for Mental Health specialists to help those in need during a mental health crisis. They have responded to thousands of calls helping residents in need,

trying to bring meaningful resources that will better help people. This is just one program that works in conjunction with others, such as our homeless navigator program and a new team focused on drug and alcohol addiction.

I am thrilled to see important projects in Lakewood have new investment, such as Belmar. A forward-thinking, new, energetic group has purchased this community asset and has plans to do amazing things. West Colfax continues to gain momentum and the vision laid out years ago is bearing fruit though new investment and projects that will continue to transform the corridor. This is just the start; stay tuned for more!

What a couple of years it's been! While we are not in the clear, our great city continues to come

together and push towards a brighter future. While not perfect and still facing many challenges, I am proud of you Lakewood! Please continue to work and care for one another, get out and vote, and let's make the old saying from Woodsy the Owl, "give a hoot don't pollute," relevant again!

Adam Paul
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We are building an inclusive community!

WARD 1



Ramey Johnson

Remembering Lincoln's words

As we all head into this special season of autumn's beautiful colors and going back to school, along with holidays around the corner and a New Year on the horizon, it is a time to regroup and rethink this past year. The ups and downs of COVID-19, a change in political direction and all of us regrouping inside tell a part of the picture. We have all learned to



Charley Able

adjust and live in a new "normal."

However, some things don't change: the need for honest, open communication and always working together to make Lakewood even better. Ward 1 has its share of challenges, which include the future of the Westland Shopping Center and looking at the Union Boulevard corridor.

Growth has brought increased

traffic issues and concerns for infrastructure and especially water availability. No ward lives in isolation because we all affect one another. We should remember Lincoln's words, "With malice toward none; with charity for all!"

Lakewood will have five new council members after the November election. Basically, it will be a brand new team learning to work together and supporting one another. Because half of the City Council will be new, there will be a steep learning curve for the members to understand the long-term consequences of their votes.

Please research why you are casting your vote. Although council members represent their wards, their votes affect the entire city. Seek people who best understand the issues, have been involved and aren't running because "I always wanted

to run for office," but rather want to serve. We are all in this together.

This is Ramey's final time to be in Looking@Lakewood. After reflecting back on serving 10 years on City Council, I want you to know that your kindness, grace, trust in me to do the right thing and your sincere and genuine spirit to make Lakewood an even better place have defined this last decade of my life and sustained my soul.

*In gratitude,
Ramey*

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WARD 2



Jacob LaBure

I want to thank you for allowing me to serve. This will be my last column as one of your elected leaders. When I first ran, my goal was to encourage economic growth, safety, prosperity and beautification for all in our corner of Lakewood. After a year of running for office and four years serving as your city council member, I can attest that we have been very successful



Sharon Vincent

in charting a brighter future for Lakewood. I leave knowing there is still a lot of work to do. However, I am encouraged that good people are standing up, who I know will do good work for all of us.

Together, in the last four years, we were able to create economic incentives for businesses to grow and invest in our part of town. That investment is leading to the revitalization of former industrial areas, bringing with it new art

amenities, new sidewalks, more green spaces, trees, jobs and housing.

Together, we voted to invest in our parks, police and infrastructure by an additional \$20 million dollars. That was more money for sidewalks, parks and tools for our first responders. We made big changes to our zoning code to ensure that we were protecting the character of our neighborhoods while being mindful of our citizens' property rights. We regulated hotels and motels and made tough choices to reduce crime and protect people from exploitation. We expanded the city's outreach to our homeless and elderly by connecting them with regional and county resources. We led the fight to create affordable housing in all parts of our city. We did all of this and much more.

I encourage all of you to ask for more from our City Council. While we

had many victories, I know we could have done much more. We must stay vigilant and not accept that things just are the way they are. We can and must do more. We can and should have the best city in Colorado. We just have to work together!

Council member LaBure

I would like to thank Councilor LaBure for his work on making Lakewood a great place to live and work. I wish him well on his future endeavors and know that he will continue working on those issues that affect Lakewood as a citizen advocate.

Council member Vincent

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WARD 3



Mike Bieda

Recently, I had the pleasure of volunteering for nonprofit Brothers Redevelopment's Paint-A-Thon program — a service that utilizes volunteers to paint the exterior of homes for low-income and disabled homeowners here in Lakewood. Together, we significantly improved the home of one of my constituents in Ward 3 with a fresh coat of paint and by doing yardwork at the

property. Painting the exterior of a home can cost homeowners up to \$5,000. That's money our residents can use to purchase necessities like groceries or medication. This program also plays an important role in helping our residents age well in their homes.

I want all of our community to know that this service is available to them. I also want to encourage those of my constituents who are able to consider volunteering for this great program.

The City of Lakewood sponsors the Paint-A-Thon. More information can be found at <https://brothersredevelopment.org/volunteer-apply-paint-a-thon/what-is-a-paint-a-thon/> or by dialing 720-339-5864.

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Anita Springsteen

The Denver STAR (Support Team Assisted Response) program began dispatching mental health professionals instead of police to applicable calls in June 2020. They have completed more than 1,600 calls without incident for those experiencing mental health crises, substance misuse and homelessness. This policing alternative is a national model, saves money, reduces

incarceration, frees police resources and gets people the services they need. Nearly 50% of victims of police brutality have a mental health disability and need treatment - not prison.

Recently, I attended a meeting of activists hoping to extend this program across Colorado (Aurora and Colorado Springs signed on). They said their efforts to expand to Lakewood have been met with apathy and resistance by leadership. We can do better! Please encourage your Lakewood police and city leadership to embrace this program. We need to protect those suffering from mental illness and substance abuse. De-escalate rather than arrest or injure!

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WARD 4



David Skilling

Looking back ... and forward.

Your representatives are continuing to work on important policy goals, including reforms to special service and taxing districts, concerns about short-term rentals, road safety and passing a responsible budget that addresses our community needs. With Lakewood's response to the pandemic rightfully prioritized



Barb Franks

by Council and staff over the past year and a half, it's easy to forget the myriad non-COVID legislative accomplishments from the past few years. Here's a look back at some of the legislative highlights from the past four years that have improved the quality of life in Green Mountain and the city as a whole:

- Millions of dollars (including \$12.5 million in the first year alone) to a dedicated fund for open space

acquisition and maintenance, police and infrastructure;

- Reformed the zoning code to require more open space, dedicated mixed-use and sustainable building practices;
- Secured the prohibition of high-rise apartments and storage units on a 169-acre parcel adjacent to Solterra;
- Transitioned the City Attorney's Office from a contracted position to a full-time, in-house model, with a focus on cost savings, proactive communication with Council and better integration with city staff;
- Established the Development Dialogue Committee as a way to tackle a wide range of land-use and zoning issues; and
- Revised Council's policies and procedures to guarantee the ability for Council meeting attendees to pool up to 10 minutes of time during

public comment.

These are just a few of the many successes we as a community can look back upon proudly. Now turning towards the future, there's undoubtedly more work beyond that which is noted above to be done. While challenges certainly await, we can take solace in the way our community has overcome adversities and the bright future that lies ahead.

Personal Note: Council member and Mayor Pro Tem Skilling's term is coming to an end. He thanks all of Green Mountain for its support and for the honor to serve.

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WARD 5



Karen Harrison

After eight years of serving on City Council, I will be term-limited in November. We have a very important election to elect a person to serve a new four-year term and a second person to complete the balance of former Council member Gutwein's term. It is important to vote for two people in Ward 5 when you receive your ballot. The person with the most votes will serve a four-year term, the second will serve two years.

I want to walk down memory lane for a moment. Ward 5 has seen many changes during my tenure. The old service station that had become an eyesore is now a very successful Starbucks at Jewell and Wadsworth. Following that build came two more stores in the same area that breathed life into the area.

Carmody Park has been completely remodeled with a playground serving all abilities, an outside workout facility and new shelters. Phase two will be coming soon that will update the north part of Carmody Park.

Taylor Ranch (named Peak View Park) was purchased across the street from Ward 5. This will be such a great addition of more than 59 acres that will remain undeveloped, with paths for walking and enjoying the beautiful views. The new parking lot and traffic light will be coming soon.

The police department formed the CAT team that works with the homeless people found in parks and other locations in the city. The CAT team has been very successful in getting some of the camps moved and helping campers to find resources.

The Strategic Growth Initiative passed with guardrails on development. This has helped breathe new life into blighted areas. The Development Dialogue Committee will continue monitoring this process.

A special thank you to all the city staff who have answered resident questions, directed me to the right place for information and jumped at a chance to speak at our Ward 5 meetings. Staff has been wonderful to work with - always diligent, timely and professional. Lakewood is very lucky to have the great team working for us.

I have loved every minute of working with the residents of Ward 5. Your attendance at Ward 5 meetings with questions, concerns and input has helped me be a better Council member. Thank you for your support these eight years. You made it all worth it!!

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Lakewood
Full of Possibilities.

City Manager Kathy Hodgson
Looking@Lakewood is a newsletter published by the City of Lakewood, 480 S. Allison Parkway, Lakewood, CO 80226.

It is distributed to all households and businesses in the city. Alternative formats of this publication are available upon request.

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Lakewood.org

Camp Christmas worthy of support

Here comes Santa Claus, here comes Santa Claus, right to Heritage Lakewood Belmar Park. *Camp Christmas* is a wonderful, immersive holiday experience, and Lakewood has a unique opportunity to attract, facilitate and benefit from bringing this unique event to the city for the 2021 season. Hanzon Studios and the Denver Center for the Performing Arts Off-Center will create this 42-day celebration, which in 2019 garnered 69,285 visitors and provided a remarkable economic impact in its previous location at Stanley Marketplace in Aurora.

In 2019, *Camp Christmas* sold the equivalent of 7.3 sold-out concerts at Red Rocks Amphitheater. In addition, *Camp Christmas* had an estimated \$3.5 million impact on the local economy. Visitors across the metro area flocked to *Camp Christmas*, with 91% coming from the seven-county region of the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District. In 2019, this was the breakdown of visitors: Denver 37.2%; Arapahoe 19.3%; Jefferson 13.1%; Douglas 8.5%; Adams, Boulder and Broomfield 13.1%. And many of those visitors bought a meal and did holiday shopping with nearby Aurora businesses.

It is estimated that Lakewood will benefit from a \$6 million positive economic impact through the attraction and from visitors patronizing Lakewood's nearby shops and restaurants. *Camp Christmas* will attract



Camp Christmas 2019.
Photo by Adams VisCom.

cultural tourists from throughout the region, and they will likely visit businesses along Wadsworth Boulevard from Sixth to Hampden avenues. This means visitors will be traveling through the heart of one of Lakewood's strongest commercial corridors that includes Belmar, Lakewood City Commons, Mission Trace, 3333 South Wadsworth, Bear Creek Plaza, Westgate and Fairfield Commons.

We're calling *Camp Christmas* an attraction because it is much more than just an event. Events like the Super Bowl or a street fair last only for a day, or perhaps a weekend. With the 42 days of this immersive attraction, it will heighten the critical fourth quarter sales period for businesses. This kind of impact is a much-needed boost after last year's troubled 2020 holiday season and the enduring pandemic.

Every dollar directly spent by a cultural patron, or by an organization such as Hanzon Studios for operations or a capital project, creates an indirect ripple effect in our local economy. *Camp Christmas* will directly employ more than 50 artists, installers, set builders and support personnel to work at the Heritage Lakewood location. Much of this work will occur in the weeks ahead of opening day, with *Camp Christmas* spending \$1.2 million in 2019. These dollars will support jobs and be spent on sets, supplies and a companion mobile-friendly digital field guide for an enhanced visitor experience. Those employed by the attraction in Aurora also spent a significant portion of their wages within the local economy, and this is expected to occur in Lakewood. *Camp Christmas* will strive to source needed labor and materials locally, which will directly support Lakewood's local economy.

Hanzon Studios, led by Lakewood artist Lonnie Hanzon, has produced unique and successful holiday attractions for more than 40 years, including for the Houston Zoo, Museum of Outdoor Art, Hudson Gardens, Neiman Marcus and a reboot of the Denver Parade of Lights. This kind of experience means we can't wait to see this year's attraction and to see you there! But make sure you leave enough time to grab dinner and complete your holiday shopping! 📍

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Inspiration Awards from page 1

pandemic's early and uncertain days. The center provides food, clothing, household goods and other items for those unable to afford them. Basic services like internet, phone and mail are also provided, and all clients are treated with respect and dignity.

Ballmer Peak Distillery, a reflection of service

When the pandemic hit, Ballmer Peak and its founders, Austin Adamson and Eric Strom, pivoted quickly to producing and distributing hand sanitizer, giving out large quantities for free or at-cost to local businesses and organizations at a time when sanitizer was hard to find. This act of service radiated throughout Lakewood, and Ballmer Peak has continued to be good neighbors in partnership with fellow local businesses to navigate difficult times.

Jefferson County Library Foundation, a reflection of resourcefulness

This organization's volunteers have directly contributed to the Lakewood community in the past 18 months in three major ways: its support for Belmar and Lakewood libraries, including STEM Girls and summer reading programs; the new volunteer-staffed, reduced-cost Whale's Tale Books and Gifts shop at Colorado Mills; and its annual book sale, which helps fund the above programs to make Lakewood a more vibrant, literate city.

Conectando, a reflection of vision

Conectando immediately sprang

into action when it became apparent that the pandemic would hit Lakewood's Latino community extremely hard. It has created a Spanish-language hotline to guide people to resources, set up food distribution sites and helped create bilingual COVID-19 testing and vaccination sites. Overall, Conectando raised and distributed over \$1.4 million to residents in need in Jefferson County, a truly staggering achievement.

Eaton Senior Communities, a reflection of diligence

Senior living facilities were on the front lines for much of the pandemic. Eaton's efforts to serve no-contact meals, sanitize its facility and give staff hazard pay helped avoid community spread of COVID-19. Residents also pitched in when they could, including sewing masks for others.

INDIVIDUALS

Jane Barnes, a reflection of collaboration

Jane is the inspiration behind the nonprofit Benefits in Action, which works to connect people with the services and benefits they are entitled to by working through red tape and regulations. During the pandemic, Jane and her organization launched a contactless food delivery program for those who couldn't get out, and for decades she has been a force for good in countless other ways in Lakewood.

Paul Miller, a reflection of benevolence

Paul is always ready to help and to say "yes" when asked by those in need. Kind and soft-spoken, Paul has volunteered at the

Action Center and with his faith community at Concordia Lutheran, and he is willing at all times to mentor new volunteers and strengthen his community.

Lauren Evans, a reflection of innovation

Lauren, the owner of a Lakewood-based engineering company, is dedicated to making Lakewood a better and greener place. Whether she is supporting Court Appointed Special Advocates for children, mentoring interns or serving as chair of the Colorado Hazardous Waste Commission, Lauren is the first to offer to volunteer for a cause.

Nancy Hardesty, a reflection of exuberance

Nancy, a volunteer with the Action Center, leaves those around her with a smile on their faces and feeling better about themselves. Her contagious exuberance made a big impact on those in need and those assisting them during tough times.

Berrick Abramson, a reflection of perseverance

Berrick overcame a severe bout with Crohn's disease to build a front-yard garden that has transformed into a gathering place for neighbors to sit and talk – necessary during the pandemic – and a source of extra produce like zucchini for bread and other goodies. On top of this, Berrick also has continued his work in public policy, helping to guide leaders through difficult times.

Linda Behrens, a reflection of dedication

Linda, another volunteer with the Action Center and an (almost) octogenarian, is a true dynamo who dedicates six hours a day, five days a week to her volunteer efforts.

Her passion is ensuring that those who use the center have the clothing they need to feel more human.

Anthony Mansfield, a reflection of resilience

Tony has been a volunteer with his faith organization for seven years, driving a food-bank truck around Lakewood that supports hundreds of families each month. He knows hardship, having experienced homelessness himself, and has not wanted others to experience that.

IN MEMORIAM

Ron Burns, a reflection of integrity

Ron led the Lakewood Police Department as chief for six years, reinforcing the department's high standards and leading by example. He emphasized community policing and was a visible, active leader who never hesitated to cook holiday meals for on-duty agents or pump gas to raise funds for crime victims. He passed away in January 2021.

Charles Johnston, a reflection of transformation

Charles, another former chief of the Lakewood Police Department and Vietnam veteran who earned four Bronze Stars, had a 30-year career with the city and helped bring the department into a new era by changing its name from the Department of Public Safety. He was a proud booster of the Special Olympics and was inducted into its Colorado Hall of Fame for his contributions. He passed away in April 2021.

City Council recognized the winners during its Sept. 27 meeting. Learn more about the winners and their work at [Lakewood.org/MayorsAwards](https://www.lakewood.org/MayorsAwards). 📍