

Special District Association of Colorado

SDA NEWS

APRIL 2024

Supporting Community-Based Government



2024 SDA Annual
Regional Workshops
**New Format,
New Information!**



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Designed by Emmett Jordan

2024 SDA Annual Regional Workshops

are Preparing to Hit the Road in June with a New Format and New Information!

SDA and the law firm of Collins Cole Flynn Winn & Ulmer, PLLC are pleased to be hitting the road in June to bring you these lively and educational trainings. And this year we are changing the format a bit to accommodate your needs!

These workshops apply to all types of districts and are sure to provide a wealth of valuable information for your district. We will cover a wide variety of important topics such as minutes, meeting formats, open meetings, conflicts of interests, public records, and CSD Pool programs to help your district be safer, just to name a few. On top of all this, we will give you the scoop on this year's legislative changes and how they affect your district. And, there will of course be plenty of time to answer all your questions, big or small.

Whether you are a Board member or district employee, a seasoned professional or brand new to your position, we will have something for everyone (don't forget these workshops are for all district types, not just Title 32 districts). **Did we mention that every attendee will also receive a copy of the 2024 SDA Board Member Manual and the legislative update for 2024?**

Having this many pertinent and timely issues discussed all in one place is an opportunity you can't afford to miss!

Registration will be opening soon so make sure to watch your emails and the SDA website at www.sdaco.org for all the details. The cost is \$40 per person.

We can't wait to see you in June!

Salida

Monday, June 10

8:00 am-12:30 pm

The Riverside Annex
220 West Sackett Avenue,
Salida (81201)

Parker

Tuesday, June 18

8:00 am-12:30 pm

Parker Water and Sanitation District
13939 Ancestry Drive,
Parker (80134)

Clifton

Tuesday, June 11

8:00 am-12:30 pm

Clifton Water District
510 34 Road, Clifton (81520)

Frederick

Thursday, June 20

8:00 am-12:30 pm

Carbon Valley Recreation Center
701 5th Street, Frederick (80530)

Vail

Wednesday, June 12

8:00 am-12:30 pm

Vail Recreation District, Golf and Nordic Clubhouse
1775 Sunburst Drive, Vail (81657)

Durango

Friday, June 21

8:00 am-12:30 pm

Durango Fire Protection District
142 Sheppard Drive,
Durango (81303)

Granby

Thursday, June 13

8:00 am-12:30 pm

Grand Fire Protection District
60500 US Highway 40,
Granby (80446)

Evergreen

Monday, June 24

8:00 am-12:30 pm

Evergreen Fire Protection District
1802 Bergen Parkway,
Evergreen (80439)

Eaton

Friday, June 14

8:00 am-12:30 pm

Eaton Area Park and Recreation District
1675 3rd Street, Eaton (80615)

Fountain

Monday, June 17

8:00 am-12:30 pm

Fountain Sanitation District
11545 Link Road,
Fountain (80817)





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"Local government is the closest form of governance to the people, allowing for more direct representation and responsiveness to the unique needs of our communities. As a DEO, you have the chance to contribute to this system by overseeing an election process that reflects the diverse voices and opinions within your district."
—Ann Terry, SDA CEO

Join Us on May 22 for Our Newly-Created DEO Introduction Workshop!

Calling first-time DEOs! Have you thought about being a DEO? Or will you be a DEO for the first time in 2025? If you answered "yes," then plan to join us on Wednesday, May 22 for a DEO Introduction Workshop designed especially for you!

As we look ahead to the upcoming special district election in 2025, you have an extraordinary opportunity to serve our local communities by becoming a Designated Election Official (DEO). The role of a DEO is not just a civic duty; it's a chance to actively contribute to the democratic process, ensuring that our communities thrive through well-managed and fair elections.

To help prepare you for this crucial position, we have a very special training event scheduled for Wednesday, May 22 at Parker Water and Sanitation District.

Together with a panel of election experts, we are hosting a full day session focused exclusively on DEOs. Covering everything from local election protocols to DEO legal obligations to strategies for maintaining confidence in decision making, we will

offer a full day's worth of crucial information you need to become a first-time DEO. We will even take a deep dive into a glossary of election-related terms specific to Colorado as well as a comprehensive review of Colorado's election laws applicable to DEOs. In addition, our panel of experts includes experienced DEOs who will share their insights and answer all your questions with their first-hand knowledge of this vital position.

Ann Terry, SDA's CEO, is very excited about this new training option and the tremendous resource it will be for people looking to become involved in the electoral process. "Local government is the closest form of governance to the people, allowing for more direct representation and responsiveness to the unique needs of our communities. As a DEO, you have the chance to contribute to this system by overseeing an election process that reflects the diverse voices and opinions within your district."

Registration will be opening soon so watch your emails and the SDA website at www.sdaco.org for more to come! 🍌



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Communications is an Operational Imperative for Special Districts



Guest article by John (Chip) Taylor, Novitas Communications

Special districts in Colorado have many unique responsibilities serving their residents, as well as the ability to access taxes and fees for operations and powerful public financing tools to meet capital maintenance and infrastructure improvement needs. In an established district where development is largely complete and the voting base includes many district residents who are unfamiliar with district operations, a comprehensive, ongoing communications and messaging strategy helps ensure that residents feel informed and reinforces that their dollars are being used responsibly. Moreover, it mitigates resident frustration about feeling out of the loop and ultimately helps gain their support for large infrastructure projects.

These communications concerns are not top-of-mind for a typical special district director or manager, who may be serving on a part-time basis and have job demands more directly related to the operation of the special district itself. The rapid evolution of the tools used for public communications and media relations and the shift in how the public gets news and information from traditional media and advertisers simply are not the special district leadership's first priorities. However, the nature of special district communications with residents will directly impact the effort required to keep residents informed and obtain needed support when a large infrastructure issue emerges.

My firm recently worked with a special district, in this case, a metropolitan district in the Denver area, that was formed in the 70s with service plan requirements that include providing water; wastewater collection, operation, and maintenance of street improvements; and storm drainage services to the community. Over the years, a growing population in the District and surrounding areas increased their demands on the water supply and the District's aging infrastructure.

Water is a critical and increasingly scarce resource for anyone living West of the Mississippi River. Water in this District is no different. With more and more development placing demands upon the same water resources, the District recognized that it was critical to come up with an effective plan to address the District's needs now and for decades to come. The District's resident water committee, experts in water conservation and irrigation, and engineers needed to create a water plan so they would have enough water to serve residents well into the future and, equally important, to convince the District's residents that the time to act was now.

The District had convened a small focus group to present issues to residents to inform them of the water issues and gauge support for solutions. Nine out of the ten members of the focus group were adamantly against a rate increase and a new water efficiency plan

that included improving water infrastructure. Because taking no action was not a viable option, the District's challenge was to effectively increase community awareness; drive community support and participation; and develop solutions the community would support.

Faced with the strong initial opposition to funding new infrastructure, District officials started with a communications plan to help District residents understand how their behavior affected the District's resources. In this case, the District sought to create and publicize effective water conservation practices. Neighboring communities had effective water conservation plans that had been in effect for decades and the District realized it was behind. Compared to these communities, District residents were overusing water resources, causing the District's already-aging infrastructure to need replacement even more rapidly. Although the district-wide need for infrastructure was already apparent, the District created and deployed a survey of residents that shared facts regarding the District's water supply and infrastructure and then gauged awareness of and support for potential solutions the District was considering.

Concurrently, the District also implemented an irrigation analysis program that helped it and residents understand the uses that were driving the consumption and educate District residents

Continued on page 9



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about the impact of their water use. The District created a strategic campaign that began by creating buzz around the District's Irrigation Analysis program, which assessed individual residents' irrigation systems and provided a report on changes they could make to increase water conservation.

The District created a streamlined sign-up form for residents to get their own irrigation analysis and shared it on its website and through the weekly email newsletter. To further raise awareness of and encourage residents to participate in conservation efforts, the District used these channels to provide regular communications to residents on the state of water use and supplies in the District, as well as providing easy tips and guidance for residents to make simple changes to decrease water use. Additionally, the District informed residents through these same channels about courses on xeriscaping presented by a local horticulture expert to help residents create more water-efficient landscaping to aid in conservation efforts.

The initial effort resulted in significant participation in the District's Irrigation Analysis program. The survey results showed that the simple awareness campaign was successful, with a substantial majority of residents saying they were aware of the key issues – the need to conserve water and to address the aging infrastructure in the District—and were ready to act.

The survey results were presented at a community-wide Water Forum, where the District's Board of Directors gathered water and engineering experts to discuss the challenges facing the District and introduce the need for an increase in water rates and a water infrastructure investment. The District ensured resident awareness of the Forum by promoting the event through the District's website, weekly email newsletter, mailbox hangers, signs at entrance gates, and even on road signs within the District encouraging residents to attend.

The Water Forum communications brought in over 200 residents (in-person and virtually) who actively participated in the event. Because of the widespread awareness of the issues and the Forum, the District successfully communicated to residents the important information regarding the District's water challenges and the potential solutions to ensure residents would have enough water for years to come. As a result, the District felt it had enough resident support, thanks to the coordinated and successful efforts to engage residents, to move forward with rate increases and a water infrastructure upgrade to address the infrastructure issues and enhance water conservation.

All of these initial communications—the focus group, the survey, the irrigation analyses, tips on water conservation, and the community Forum – were deliberate and critical to driving awareness of the water issues the District faced and essential precursors to the District's pitch to voters for the critical funding needed for infrastructure improvements, including an increase in water rates with a tiered system that penalized over-use, as well as a plan to address the aging infrastructure issues.

Whether it is for water infrastructure, or any other capital facility a district owns, a change in the way special districts do business is never easy. A coordinated communications strategy, ideally developed and implemented well in advance of implementation and with a professional communications team, is critical to successfully getting and keeping resident support for not only approval of your specific special project, but also for effective special district operations throughout the year. 🍌

Editor's Note: John (Chip) Taylor is Vice President of Novitas Communications, a full-service PR and communications firm that has been providing the services described herein to special district clients since 2020.



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2024 SDA Student Video Contest is Underway!

This year's student video contest, Districts Make the Difference, has officially kicked off, and we can't wait to review all the great submissions!

Districts Make the Difference is a national program where high school students are invited to create a fun and informative video (60 seconds max) highlighting the many ways special districts "make the difference" in their local communities. In the Colorado portion of the contest, the top three submissions will each receive a cash prize, and money will be given to the winning students' teachers for their dedication to learning and creativity (please see below for the details)!

The video submission window is now open and will run until April 19. Not only will the top Colorado winners receive a cash award, they will also have their videos submitted to the national program with the possibility of winning additional prize money. Below is the breakdown of the Colorado prizes:

- » \$2,000 for first place
- » \$1,000 for second place
- » \$500 for third place

Plus, for each winning video, an additional \$500 will be awarded to a teacher of the student's choosing!

"The Districts Make the Difference program is a unique way for students to not only gain a better understanding of the role special districts play in their communities, but also to learn how districts positively affect their daily lives. We very much enjoyed watching the student videos last year, and we are excited to see what they come up with this year!" said SDA's CEO Ann Terry.

Video topics may include:

- » Explain how a special district makes a difference in daily life
- » Interview someone from a special district to find out more about their job and how it affects their community
- » Describe what a special district is, how it is formed, and why they are necessary

This is just the beginning of the possibilities! To find out more and to enter the contest, simply go to the Districts Make the Difference section of our website at <https://www.sdaco.org/student-video-contest>.

You can also contact Anthoney Sandoval at anthoney@sdaco.org with any questions. 🍌

It's Almost Time to... **Submit Your Nominations for the 2024 SDA Annual Awards!**

Do you know a District Manager or Board member who has made extraordinary contributions in his or her role? If so, now is your chance to nominate an exceptional person for a 2024 SDA Annual Award!

Each year at the SDA Annual Conference, we have the pleasure of honoring outstanding individuals with awards and recognitions in the following categories:

- » Manager of the Year
- » Board Member of the Year

This year the awards will be presented at the Annual Awards Luncheon on Tuesday, September 10 during the SDA Annual Conference in Keystone.

The nominations will open in early April so please watch your emails and the SDA website at www.sdaco.org for more details and the link to complete the easy online form.

This year's Conference will be here before we know it so the nomination forms will be due towards the middle of May.

If you have any questions about the awards, please contact Anthoney Sandoval at 303-863-1733 or anthoney@sdaco.org.

SDA is pleased for the opportunity to recognize the people who demonstrate remarkable dedication to serving the citizens of our state. We look forward to receiving your nominations! 🍌



The 16 students who are enrolled in the new Pikes Peak Regional Fire Academy will receive 640 hours of classroom and hands-on training over 16 weeks.

New Pikes Peak Regional Fire Academy

Innovative Partnership Among Three Agencies in El Paso County

By Susan M. Thornton, MS

An innovative, new regional fire training academy has been established in El Paso County. The Pikes Peak Regional Fire Academy involves a partnership between Pikes Peak State College, Black Forest Fire Rescue, and Monument Fire District.

The innovative Academy enrolled 16 students in January, most of whom are new hires of the two fire districts. By the time they have completed the program, the trainees will have received 640 hours of classroom and hands-on training over 16 weeks.

Most of the training provided by the Academy has been held at Black Forest's Station 1, which has provided classrooms and such training facilities as a "burn building" made from metal shipping containers.

Five Certificates and College Credits

When the trainees graduate in May, they will receive 25 credit hours at the college toward an associate degree in Fire Science Technology; State Fire Fighter

1 and 2 certificates; a certificate in hazardous materials operations; and a certificate that allows them to drive or operate large fire apparatus.

Each graduate will also receive a national rating for wildland firefighting that's recognized by the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management.

Evolved from Local Needs

Jamie Gutschick, Co-Chair of the Fire Science Technology program at Pikes Peak State College, explains that the two fire districts used to train their new hires at West Metro Fire Protection District or the Colorado Springs Fire Department.

But last year, West Metro and Colorado Springs hired so many new firefighters that all their training spots were taken, and Black Forest and Monument were forced to look elsewhere for training – to a partnership with Pikes Peak State College in this case.

Monument Fire Department's Chief Andy Kovacs came from a

very large fire district in Southern California four years ago. He says, "We are a smaller district, so we relied on others for training. It was September when we were told that the two training academies had run out of space for us so we decided to do something different. That's where the vision and energy came in."

The districts covered the tuition for each trainee, Gutschick says, and each of the trainees was enrolled as a student at the college.

Support from All Three Organizations

Gutschick says that setting up the firefighting academy was a "whirlwind," as the partners began working in September to provide top-notch trainers and education for the Academy, which began on January 15.

The Academy would not have been possible, he states, without the full support of Pikes Peak State College's President and Deans, plus the Chiefs of the two fire departments.

PJ Langmaid has been Black Forest’s Chief for the past five years. He says relationships are paramount for Black Forest in all its operations, so the opportunity to partner with Pikes Peak State College and Monument Fire District was exciting. “We began building partnerships from Day One,” he says of the Academy.

Similarly, Chief Kovacs says that he is “all about” partnerships and relationships. Being a small department, he states, “means we have to lean on others.” In this case, all partners saw the need for a joint training academy.



When the trainees graduate in May, they will receive 25 credit hours toward an associate degree in Fire Science Technology as well as five different certificates.

An Expanded Future

Gutschick expects that the Academy will not only continue, but that it will expand as other fire departments in the region sign up to participate.

Chief Kovacs believes that the Academy will grow. “A number of fire departments in El Paso County have already expressed interest in joining the Academy,” he says.

Chief Langmaid agrees, saying that he has heard positive energy and feedback from its initial trainees, and he anticipates that other, smaller departments may well want to join the Academy or recreate its mode in the future. He asks,

“We don’t have the resources to provide training ourselves, so why not work together?”

A new, larger training facility may be built in the future, according to Chief Kovacs. He notes that the Monument Fire District owns 14 acres of land 12 miles from the Black Forest facility that could be developed as a new training facility, and the college also has land near its North Campus that could be utilized.

Praise for SDA

Both fire departments have high praise for SDA. “It brings in

education, especially for elected representatives, and helps improve their communications,” Chief Langmaid states. He also appreciates the lobbying that SDA does on behalf of special districts and notes that SDA represents another important partnership for Black Forest Fire Rescue.

Chief Kovacs also appreciates what SDA does in “looking out for special districts,” whether through legislation, information, or benefits like the Colorado Special Districts Property and Liability Pool. “SDA makes sure our voices are heard,” he states. 🍷

Two Fire Districts by the Numbers

	Black Forest Fire Rescue	Monument Fire District
Founded as an all-volunteer department	1945	Late 1930s
Became a full-service district	1967	1970s
Annual operating budget	\$6.7 million	\$22 million
Mill levy	15.2	18.4
Number of employees	34	70
Area covered	50 square miles	62 square miles
Number of residents served	40,000	43,000
Number of stations	2	5
Number of calls per year	4,000	3,816
Majority of calls	Traffic accidents	Traffic accidents



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Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) Home Energy Rebates

The Colorado Energy Office currently has three different programs involving Inflation Reduction Act Home Energy Rebates.

CODE Grant

The State's Energy Code Adoption & Enforcement Grant Program provides direct financial support to local and Tribal governments to adopt and enforce a building energy code that meets or exceeds the 2021 International Energy Conservation Code and the Colorado model electric ready and solar ready code or to enforce a building energy code that has already been adopted that meets or exceeds those codes. The Colorado Energy Office (CEO) also funds ongoing and request-based training and technical assistance for local governments to assist with adoption and enforcement of the latest building energy codes and stretch codes. Anyone interested in training or technical assistance can fill out a request directly on the CEO website. The website also includes an Energy Code Adoption Toolkit that can be utilized alongside these other resources. Please visit <https://energyoffice.colorado.gov/> for more information (then click on the "Buildings" tab at the top).

IRA Home Energy Rebates

The CEO is developing the IRA Home Energy Rebate Program to bring residential energy efficiency and electrification rebates to income-qualified renters, homeowners, and multifamily buildings. This shall include energy efficiency materials of insulation; air sealing and mechanical ventilation; rebates for electric Energy Star Certified appliances of heat pumps

for heating and cooling; heat pump water heaters; heat pump clothes dryers; and electric stoves, cooktops, ranges, and ovens as well as funding for enabling upgrades of electric panels and electric wiring. With support from engaged municipalities; utilities; contractor and workforce initiatives; community-based organizations; affordable housing entities; and climate and health equity initiatives, the CEO anticipates these rebates being available in late 2024. Local governments are invited to reach out to ceo_buildingdecarb@state.co.us to plan rebate readiness through workforce development, coordination with disproportionately impacted communities, and to develop messaging with constituents and community partners.

Solar App

The CEO's Automated Permit Processing for Solar (APPS) program provides grant funding to local and Tribal governments to reimburse expenses incurred while adopting an automated, online solar permitting platform. These platforms verify that solar systems are code compliant and can instantly issue permits, freeing up staff time to focus on more complex projects. Reimbursable costs include staff time or training; IT or consultant time; training of installers; and maintenance or subscription costs for up to three years. Grants will be awarded on a first-come, first-serve basis, and award maximums will range from \$40,000 - \$100,000. **Applications open April 2.** For information about the APPS grant program or to be added to the mailing list, visit the webpage energyoffice.colorado.gov/apps. Email questions to gov_ceo_apps@state.co.us. 🌞

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Making the Most of Your CSD Pool Membership With...

HELIXintel Equipment Breakdown Management

Guest article by the Colorado Special Districts Property and Liability Pool

The Colorado Special Districts Property and Liability Pool remains committed to our more than 2,500 public entities as *Your Risk Management Partner*. Each month, we are focusing on a different program or service we offer our membership, either at no-cost or at a discounted rate. This month's highlight is on our expanded relationship with our current equipment breakdown coverage provider, Hartford Steam Boiler (HSB).

Through our partnership, members have complimentary access to the HELIXintel platform to track and maintain an unlimited amount of equipment, supplies, and inventory across multiple locations. You will also have access to extensive data, such as the useful years and estimated replacement date of your boiler.

This platform is designed to help you better predict and prevent

the risk of your equipment breakdown. Managers can use their platform to track and maintain an unlimited amount of equipment, supplies, and inventory across multiple locations, from the palm of your hands.

Platform benefits include:

- » Preventative maintenance tracking to increase equipment uptime and lifespan
- » Reduce unexpected capital equipment breakdown expenses and plan for the future
- » Easily identify equipment life expectancy, replacement date, and cost of replacement
- » Access to extensive data, such as the useful years and estimated replacement date of your boiler

» Assistance with Utility Rebate Programs

To get you started, select equipment is already preloaded and additional equipment can be uploaded depending on your needs. If you would like to gain access to this free resource, visit csdpool.org/safety/eb or email us at info@csdpool.org.

As *Your Risk Management Partner*, we remain committed to providing specialized coverages tailored for public entities, exemplary claims support, and safety and loss prevention services to ensure everyone within the organization—from Board members to supervisors and staff—has the tools they need to succeed. If you have any questions about the resources mentioned here, please visit csdpool.org or email us at info@csdpool.com. 🍷





2024 Leadership Academy Kicks Off with Special Guest Speaker

The 2024 SDA Leadership Academy has officially commenced and is pleased to welcome 54 new Leadership Fellows into its ranks!

The Academy held its inaugural session on February 28 and featured special guest speaker, Kelly Brough, who has a long history of serving Colorado in a variety of ways. From 2012 to 2022, Kelly served as Chair, Vice Chair, and as a member of the Board of Directors for Delta Dental of Colorado. She was also the President and CEO of the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce for many years and the Chief of Staff to then

Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper. In addition, she has been a member of numerous community Boards, including The Denver Zoo and Colorado Mesa University. In her keynote presentation, Kelly shared insights on cultivating organizational culture and genuine leadership.

Anthoney Sandoval, the Leadership Academy Program Director, remarked, "The year has begun with an exceptional cohort of leaders. I eagerly anticipate observing their development as we advance through the year."

Ann Terry, SDA's CEO, is also thrilled to welcome a new class of

Leadership Fellows. "Every year we look forward to offering this unique training program to a new group of strong and diverse leaders from our district and associate members. We are always excited to provide new tools and resources to these leaders that can then be applied at their districts and organizations."

The Leadership Academy will continue to meet throughout the year. The next class is scheduled for April 24 and will feature the ever-popular adaptive leadership presentation based on the famous 1914 Shackleton expedition in Antarctica. 🍌

Don't Miss Our Website Accessibility Workshop on April 10!

Make your district's website accessible and compliant in just one day!

Join SDA and Streamline's action-packed workshop in Denver on Wednesday, April 10 and gain the knowledge and tools you need. Demystify the legal landscape surrounding accessibility, learn techniques for creating accessible content across formats, and gain hands-

on experience tackling common issues. Districts will leave the workshop confident that your website is accessible to everyone and meets compliance guidelines.

Please visit <https://www.adaweb-workshop.com/> for more information and to register.

Seats are limited so make sure you sign up today!





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Reduce unexpected capital equipment breakdown expenses and plan for the future.



Easily identify equipment life expectancy, replacement date, and cost of replacement.

Take advantage of the innovative partnership between HSB and HELIXintel to better predict and prevent the risk of equipment breakdown.



**Whatever your equipment challenge,
HELIXintel is here.**

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