

## Emergency Manager Nate Whittington bids farewell to Gilpin

**Mindy Leary**  
Gilpin County

After five years of unwavering dedication, Nate Whittington, the first full-time Emergency Manager of Gilpin County, bids farewell as he embarks on a new chapter with Jefferson County Emergency Management. Whittington leaves behind a legacy of resilience, coordination, and innovation.

Whittington has a diverse background and years of experience, making his transfer a loss to the County. Whittington has a background as a wildland firefighter and ran a dive recovery team in Pueblo.

Up until this year, he was in federal service and was in every major national disaster since 9/11. He was field-deployed to 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, Ebola outbreaks in Africa, and the earthquakes in Haiti.

Ideally, his team would be in the area before an incident so as to stabilize health and medical resources after a disaster. He was on St. Thomas before Hurricane Maria made landfall, stayed at the hospital, and waited out a category 5 hurricane to ensure the hospital was back up and running. He said the one thing those disasters showed him is the strength of the human spirit, which truly reveals itself the day AFTER a calamity. He said the joy of the job has been seeing people coming together to help one another after a disaster strikes.

When Whittington arrived in Gilpin County, there was no established Emergency Operations Center (EOC). However, under his leadership, the EOC became a reality, constructed with funds awarded by the Congress. This center stands as a testament to his vision, designed specifically to coordinate emergency response efforts, bringing together fire, law enforcement, and EMS services.

One of Whittington's notable achievements was the implementation of wildfire detection sensors strategically placed throughout the county. These sensors, in collaboration with United Power, are capable

Continued on page 33

## An Eagles victory: How sweet it is



PHOTO BY DAVE GIBSON

### Saving their best for last

Eagles Dacio Pina (#26) and Connor Holloway forcing a Justice player out of bounds. See story page 15.

## Gilpin volleyball pays tribute to their seniors



PHOTO BY DAVE GIBSON

**Dave Gibson**  
Gilpin County

The varsity home volleyball match on October 24 against Lyons was the Gilpin Eagles' twenty-third and final match of a long and fruitful season that began with a 3-0 victory over Kiowa on August 18. The girls would register a 12-11 record that included a 7-4 mark in league play. An outstanding showing for a team that lost several starting players from last year's squad to graduation. They pulled together as a team. Improving each week, one of the key components to their success came from the girls' unwavering support for one another. A tight-knit operation from top to bottom as you'll ever see, the C Team, Junior Varsity, and Varsity all rooted for each other. Although they needed no coaxing, Head Coach Topher Rouse called it "a requirement."

Gilpin would lose their match against

### All for one and one for all

The Gilpin volleyball teams know how to pull for each other.

Continued on page 11

Music of the Mountains - page 2, 3  
Peak Perspectives - page 4, 5  
Puzzles & Letters - page 6, 7  
School Zone - page 8 to 15  
Art News - page 20, 21  
Food Pantry News - page 22, 23  
Home Maintenance - page 24

Forest Service News - page 25  
Nederland Night Skies - page 26  
Mountain Critters - page 27  
In Memory of Barbara Lawlor - page 32  
Allenspark News - page 28  
Government - page 33 to 39  
Classifieds - page 33 to 39

### - QUOTE OF THE WEEK -

*"Let us always meet each other with smile, for the smile is the beginning of love."* Mother Teresa

# Gilpin volleyball pays tribute to their seniors



PHOTOS BY DAVE GIBSON

**Playing in the final match of their high school careers**

Clockwise from top left: Kailee Starkey. Sterling O'Sullivan with JV Coach Sunny Vincent. Jordanna Gagnon. Aaliyah Amaya-Beard. Alexa Brandon. Sophia Giuliano.

**Continued from page 1**

the favored Lyons Lions that was stacked with hitters. Yet the Gilpin team showed tremendous effort and fortitude and made the third game exciting and closer than the first two. The entire season, there was never any "quit" in these girls.

Victory is always the ultimate goal, but this evening was more about honoring their seniors who were participating in their last high school volleyball game. A poignant moment for both players and parents, more than one tear was shed. Their little girls were all grown up now. What was left was a sense of accomplishment and memories that will last a lifetime.

Before the match began, in a touching ceremony dedicated to the volleyball team's seniors, all six of them were presented with yellow and white roses as a token of our appreciation.

Those seniors are: Kailee Starkey, a starter all of this year and most of last year, a strong passer who found a home as an outside hitter. Sterling O'Sullivan, probably the fastest player on the squad, who covered a lot of ground in a short amount of time. Jordanna Gagnon, the most consistent server on the team, who was also the Speaking Captain (the only player allowed to talk to the

referees) because of her knowledge of the rules, her levelheadedness, and her communication skills. Aaliyah Amaya-Beard, playing the middle position, bringing a positive attitude to practices and matches, and showing great improvement over her four years. Sophia Giuliano, who always had a smile on her face and was a reliable hitter who knew how to keep the ball in play. And Alexa Brandon, positioned at the middle and right side, an aggressive, gritty, and determined player.

Coach Rouse summarized after their final match, "The 2023 Gilpin County Varsity Volleyball season was in many ways very successful. For the second year in a row, the team finished with a winning record. There were some amazing wins over the course of the season including wins over West Grand and Highland when the girls dropped the first two sets but came back to win the match. The four-set win over Denver Christian was important because it was the first time for a volleyball victory over them. The entire program had a successful year as the Junior Varsity team finished 14-9 and the C Team finished 10-5. Even though we are losing six seniors, they contributed to building the volleyball program that we hope will continue to grow in the future."

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