



**Colorado Agricultural
Leadership Program**

CLASS 16 PERSONAL PROJECT SUMMARY

CALP CLASS 16

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COMMUNITY FIRE TRUCK



Our fire departments in our communities do a great job when people are in need; however due to the distance many of us are from a fire department the response time can take a while.

My project was to get a firetruck that was available for the community during times of need (especially harvest).

I was able to buy a water truck that was not operational at an auction, and was able to get it running and make it into something would help with our needs.

In the first year we were able to show up and help with one fire!

The purpose of this project is not to replace the fire department but to help prevent things from getting out of hand before they get there.

WHAT HAS THE CALP EXPERIENCE MEANT TO ME?

Being from NE Colorado CALP has provided me with a view of Colorado agriculture and an appreciation that I never would have seen. Most importantly, I have made friendships I never would have made!

ANDREW HOLSTEN, STERLING, CO



WHAT HAS THE CALP EXPERIENCE MEANT TO ME?

CALP has been the best decision I've made for myself in a long time. This program has pushed me out of my comfort zone, and has given me new friends, new experiences and a newfound confidence to go out and advocate for agriculture and myself!

Why I chose this project?

I am passionate about education and have noticed a large need for nutritional and agricultural education in both the urban and rural areas of Larimer County. Through conversations with community members, I discovered just how many people utilize SNAP and food banks. It made me curious to see if these users knew about local food resources, culinary skills or how to make culturally relevant, nutritional food for themselves with limited ingredients. I wanted to create bi-lingual cooking classes that used food from the food bank and am happy that my team and I were able to provide a fun experience for folks that left them with new skills and new kitchen supplies, for free!

SARAH EHRLICH, FORT COLLINS, CO

How much money was raised for my project?

Reaching out to the Northern Colorado Foodshed Project, they had received \$3,000 from the USDA's Food Systems Partnership Grant. My cooking class idea aligned well with the goals of the grant, and the NoCo Foodshed Partnership decided to invest the grant into my project. The Larimer County Food Bank donated food and kitchen space, the Boys and Girls Club of Larimer County donated their kitchen space, and the USDA Regional Food Business Center paid the rental fee (\$400) for our 3rd class at the CSU Culinary Lab.

How my Project improved quality of life for my community:

By taking time to teach proper kitchen safety, guide participants through a recipe, and then provide them with informational flyers and supplies such as crockpots and veggie choppers, we hope they left with more confidence in the kitchen, and more knowledge of local food distribution resources. We wanted to provide as much information and resources as possible, to encourage these individuals to take advantage.

How did volunteers help my project?

A special thanks to my team of volunteers: Audrey Welsh and Carly Donoghue with the Northern Colorado Foodshed Project, Patrick Gaebler, bi-lingual chef who led each class, Patricia Alvarez and Adriana Guerra with La Familia Hispanic Resource Center, Zac Hummel and Augustina Niebyski with Food Bank for Larimer County, Nicole Uthmann, Mountain View Meats: donated meat and participated in our 2nd class.

All together, these volunteers put in well over 30 hours of planning and execution work to make my project a reality.

How will this project carry-on past my CALP experience?

We have leftover grant money, and plan to apply to more grants, we hope to make this an ongoing class series. We have interest from local food providers and stakeholders and hope to gather them as sponsors so that we can spotlight what they are doing for food access in Larimer County.

WATER AT A GLANCE



As an Ag producer, we all know the importance of water, within our own operations, as well as our communities. As an irrigated producer, water is of particular interest to me, specifically the Republican River Basin in Northeastern Colorado. To ensure compact compliance the Republican River Water Conservation District(RRWCD) was created. Currently the RRWCD is focused on compact compliance between Colorado, Kansas and Nebraska; focusing on getting 25,000 irrigated acres voluntarily retired in the South Fork Republican by 2029, utilizing incentive programs.

As a producer directly impacted by this issue, I wanted to collaborate with the RRWCD to create a booklet that provides a concise, informative and producer friendly overview of the RRWCD efforts addressing the current water situation. This resource can be used to update producers on the current happenings regarding retired acres and provide information about program incentives for those looking to retire acres, all in one document. Working with the RRWCD on this project allowed me to gain a better understanding of the water situation, the difficulties working with producers on this sensitive issue and what their work means for the future of Ag in our area.

The CALP experience has provided the opportunity to gain a depth of knowledge on the diversity of issues facing Ag in Colorado, which will prove to be invaluable as I develop as a leader in my operation and community.

JESSICA BROHPY, ECKLEY, CO

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BEHIND THE WOOL: STORIES FROM THE RANCH

In 2021, I began sharing snippets of ranch life on social media, particularly Instagram. This journey expanded beyond ranch life to include my family's story and advocacy for agriculture. Many have asked about our operation: When did our family start the ranch? What do we do? Who works here?

This project aims to create a series of videos for our website and social media channels, reaching a larger audience. The feedback has been tremendous; people enjoy hearing different family members share their accounts of ranch life. I will continue this project to promote agriculture and capture memories for my family.

As I've shared more on social media, I've gained opportunities to tell our story on a broader scale. In January 2024, I spoke at the American Farm Bureau's National Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah, and in 2025 at the Western CO Soil Health, Food and Farm Forum. Along the way, I've been featured in blog posts and podcasts, for which I am profoundly grateful.

The only funds raised were used to purchase Adobe Premiere for video editing

MY CALP EXPERIENCE...

I'm incredibly thankful for CALP and the amazing individuals I've had the privilege of meeting over the past two years. This experience has not only boosted my confidence as a leader beyond what I imagined but also deepened my knowledge of Colorado agriculture and the legislative process. CALP has already opened so many unexpected doors for me, and I'm excited to see what opportunities it will unlock in the future.



WOMEN IN CATTLE FEEDING

I chose to pursue a project of creating a conference for the females in my company, Five Rivers Cattle Feeding, as a way to provide additional leadership skills and networking support. A challenge we have found in Five Rivers Cattle Feeding is that the percentage of females in production roles and their longevity in those roles is minimal. After a survey company-wide we found many women felt they needed more leadership/soft skills to be able to move forward in a career in cattle feeding.

This project brought together the females across 11 locations from Idaho to Colorado and Texas. During this seminar we had leadership and development specialist speak to us about the innate strengths that a female has to leverage in the setting of a feedyard. We learned leadership skills, understanding how to coach up, how to handle difficult conversations as a female in a lead role, and had open conversations with company executives and outside female leaders in the cattle industry.

This conference impacted not only the attendees but also gave our CEO and VP that joined the insights into exactly what happens in every day production settings, as well as shined a light on any challenges that are faced. The networking connections that were made between individuals will be valuable relationships as each person faces their own struggles in different aspects.

Moving forward the company believes this was very valuable in addition to our normal leadership development that is held annually. With that our next conference is pending to be held in 2026; this leadership training will be an every other year event.

My personal experience from initiating conversions, planning, and executing have been very beneficial. Learning what and why higher up executives are looking from when it comes to content and impact of leadership training was insightful, being able to coordinate and plan different scenarios and training exercises gave me new skills, and being able to facilitate improved my public speaking and leading.



WHAT CALP HAS MEANT TO ME:

CALP helped me to understand how someone from any level in a company and various experience levels are able to make a lasting impact. If it wasn't for me speaking up and asking to be a part of this experience I would have missed out on lasting skills and networking.

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MONICA BETTENCOURT,
GREELEY, CO

SHARING SOILOPTIX TECHNOLOGY WITH MORGAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

My CALP personal project involves a partnership with Morgan Community College (MCC) in Fort Morgan. The goal of the partnership is to bring SoilOptix technology to their precision agriculture program of study. SoilOptix is revolutionizing how farmers think about soil sampling their fields. The technology uses a sensor mounted on a utility vehicle that is driven across the field to create a map of the soil types present in the entire field.

I first met with two of MCC's precision agriculture classes in September of 2023. I have returned once each semester since then to spend a couple days working with students and the precision ag program instructor, teaching them about SoilOptix. My employer, Godsey Ag, is providing access to the necessary equipment. We have even been able to find a local farmer willing to let us soil sample one of his fields each semester, and this provides the students with hands-on experience using the technology. After the sampling is complete, I provide soil sample results back to the classes and they practice analyzing them and making fertilizer recommendations.

With technology in agriculture advancing as rapidly as it is today, I believe it is important that our college students can learn about the latest cutting-edge solutions being offered. The high price of these technologies often makes their purchase for education purposes simply not feasible. That is why I plan to carry on this partnership with MCC as long as I have access to SoilOptix equipment.

WHAT HAS CALP MEANT TO ME?

"Personal growth isn't supposed to be easy." The decision to apply for CALP was not an easy one for me to make, nor one that I took lightly. I came to know of the program through acquaintances who had been involved in past CALP classes. They spoke highly of the program in terms of the leadership workshops and various ideas they were exposed to while visiting all corners of the agriculture industry. I knew getting involved in a program where I would be forced to interact with individuals whom I didn't know and share my opinions and ideas with them would be challenging for a reserved person such as myself. However, I am a believer that personal growth is all about challenging yourself and learning how to adapt to uncomfortable situations. Since joining CALP, I am amazed at how many of the individuals whom I look up to as leaders within my community or interact with in the ag industry are alumni of the program. I take pride in knowing that by giving my best efforts to support the CALP program and focus on my own personal development, I am setting myself up to be in the same class as these elite leaders whom I admire.

SHARING SOILOPTIX TECHNOLOGY WITH MORGAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

BRANDON SCHENK, STERLING, CO



Soil samples are taken throughout the field – one sample for every 8 acres. Sample locations are determined by computer software. These samples are used to verify the soil fertility information collected by the SoilOptix Sensor

Ad that was published by Morgan Community College in the Colorado Farm Show program. Shown are two of the fall semester 2023 students I worked with, one driving the utility vehicle and the other holding the laptop collecting the SoilOptix sensor data. A map of the field can be seen on the computer screen.



Working with one of the students to install and set up the SoilOptix equipment in the utility vehicle.

Students Alan Ferguson and Tyler Dilka with Brandon Schenk from Godsey Precision Ag conducting a soil sample with a GPS system and soil optix unit.

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COOKING CLASSES FOR UNPOPULAR BEEF CUTS

In our fourth year of direct beef sales, Mountain View Meats frequently hears the question, “How do I cook this?” Many customers are unfamiliar with less popular cuts of beef and hesitate to buy them, unsure of how to prepare them. This lack of knowledge highlights a gap between consumers and both the agricultural origins and culinary possibilities of their food. To bridge this gap, we launched cooking classes focused on teaching preparation techniques for these unique cuts while providing insights into sustainable beef production. Each class included live demonstrations led by a culinary instructor, tastings, and discussions about our beef production practices. Sessions covered 1-2 cuts per class, such as Brisket, Tri-Tip, London Broil, Skirt Steak, Flank Steak, Cross-Cut Shanks, Korean-Cut Ribs, and Short Ribs. We also hosted a special class on rendering tallow from beef fat.

Classes were offered at \$25 per person or free for customers who purchased a ½ beef from our business. The classes have proven invaluable, strengthening community connections, enhancing consumer confidence in cooking, and boosting sales of lesser-known beef cuts. Building on this success, I plan to expand the program in the coming year, recognizing its significant impact on both our business and the community we serve.



CALP has been an invaluable experience, providing me with the opportunity to connect with fellow agricultural leaders and gain deeper insights into the challenges and opportunities facing our industry. It has expanded my leadership skills, enabling me to better serve my community and strengthen my business. Through CALP, I've learned the importance of collaboration and innovation, and I feel more equipped to make a lasting impact on both agriculture and local food systems.

**NICOLE UTHMANN,
FORT COLLINS, CO**

Proso millet, an ancient grain, is widely produced in Northeastern Colorado. This region is one of the largest producers. It is an income source for local farmers, a sustainable crop for the land, and provides several nutritional benefits. However, it is a struggling market due to the fluctuations in market prices and demand volatility. A large majority of consumers across Colorado have little knowledge of millet as a consumable product and how it can be beneficial to local cropping systems.

My goal for this project was to increase awareness for proso millet, and other millet varieties, by showcasing informational flyers and baked goods at local markets and craft shows. By informing local consumers of what millet is and how to utilize it in an everyday diet, it could increase future demand. Additionally, I wanted to support local producers by sharing more information about sustainable farming practices.

Through raising money for my CALP tuition, I was fortunate enough to raise extra funds that helped fund this project. With help from my mom and her grain mill, I utilized fresh milled millet for all my baking recipes. She dedicated a couple of hours to milling and packaging the millet.

I set up shop at the Logan County Farmer's Market in Sterling and craft shows in Yuma. At each event I shared the story of millet with over 20 local consumers. Most people were familiar with the name "millet", but were interested to learn how prominent it was in the area, as well as the many health benefits. The millet cookies were a hit among those who stopped by and were excited to take their own for the road, along with an informational flier about millet production.

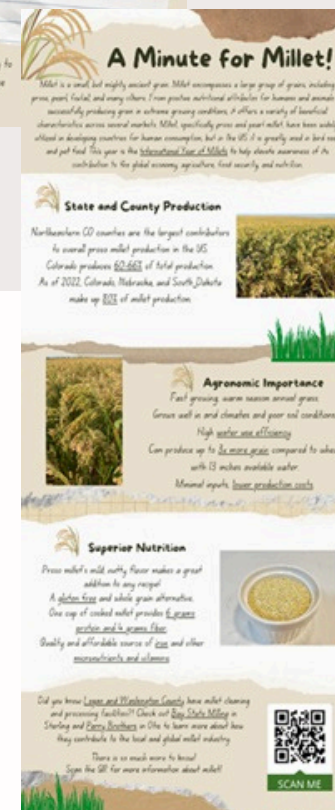
Through the project I realized the challenge of increasing interest in utilizing and understanding millet's possibilities. Moving forward, I would like to continue experimenting with millet recipes and participate in future markets around Northeastern Colorado.

WHAT HAS CALP MEANT TO ME?

The last two years as part of Class 16 have been full of making new friendships, professional connections, and personal growth. The ability to experience agriculture in its full diversity is not something everyone gets to do in their lifetime. I am very grateful for the opportunities CALP has brought to me and the supportive classmates I got to experience them with.

RACHEL SEEDORF, FORT
MORGAN, CO

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THE REVIVAL OF “THE SPACE”

INTRODUCTION

As my project within the Colorado Agricultural Leadership Program (CALP) Class 16 has evolved, I am thrilled to share the remarkable transformation and expansion it has undergone. Initially aimed at developing a civic education curriculum for high school students, the project has grown into a broader community initiative with the revival of The Space, a non-profit community arts and events center in Wray, Colorado.

REVISED PROBLEM STATEMENT

The initial focus on addressing the lack of civic engagement knowledge among high school students revealed a broader community need for creative and civic spaces, especially in rural areas. The closure of The Space in 2020 left a significant void in our community, highlighting the need for a multifunctional venue that supports education, arts, and civic engagement.

REVISED COMMUNITY NEEDS

The revitalized Space now serves as a hub for enhancing civic knowledge and artistic expression, bridging the gap between education and community enrichment. It offers a variety of programs that cater to all ages, fostering not only civic engagement but also mental health and personal growth through the arts.

UPDATED DESIRED RESULTS

With the reopening of The Space, the project's objectives have expanded:

- Provide a versatile venue that offers programs ranging from ceramics and dance to STEM and professional development.
- Empower local artists by facilitating affordable teaching opportunities, thereby enriching the community's cultural landscape.
- Enhance civic understanding through targeted educational programs, making civic participation accessible to all community members.

INFLUENTIAL FACTORS

The project's success has been bolstered by strategic partnerships with local organizations, businesses, and government by adapting to the emergent needs of our community. These collaborations have been instrumental in developing programming that is both necessary and impactful.

PROGRESS AND NEXT STEPS

Since acquiring and reopening The Space in October 2024, I have already served over 800 individuals of all ages with art and educational programming. Moving forward, we will:

- Continue to expand our programming to include more diverse educational and artistic opportunities.
- Strengthen our financial sustainability through grants and community support to maintain low overhead costs for artists and affordable prices for participants.
- Explore further partnerships with educational and civic organizations to broaden our reach and impact.

CONCLUSION

The journey from a civic education initiative to a comprehensive community arts program has been deeply rewarding. The Space has become a cornerstone of community engagement in Northeastern Colorado, offering a place where education, arts, and civic responsibility converge to create a vibrant and empowered community.

To learn more about The Space and how you can support our mission, visit www.thespaceinwray.com or visit our Facebook, Instagram, and Tik Tok @TheSpaceinWray.



SHELBY ROCKWELL, WRAY, CO

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ALUMNI & FRIENDS OF THE WELD CENTRAL FFA

Background: In our local community as the group Young Farmers “retired” in 2019 we have seen purpose for a group to support the growing community in a smaller town to embrace the thriving agriculture industry. Narrowing my scope, one area that has seen large growth in the last three years with urban sprawl in the local FFA program, and with larger numbers of students that have no agriculture experience. The action was to merge what the Young Farmers had built to support the community and the outreach that the local FFA had so came the idea of building the Alumni and Friends of the Weld Central FFA.

Purpose: The organization is formed and operated for the charitable and educational purposes that strengthen and promote the Weld Central FFA Chapter & Agricultural Education Department of Weld RE-3J School District, as it continues to make a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success through agricultural education. Alumni & Friends of Weld Central FFA strives to grow agriculture and friendships through connections, education and community outreach.

Mission Statement: Growing Agriculture and friendship through connections, education, and community outreach.

- Currently we have 5 members including three officers- President, Vice President, Secretary/Treasure
- We have established bylaws, registered with the national FFA Association, state of Colorado yearly filings, successful bank account set up, and annual taxes filled.
- Volunteer at events that support the local FFA Chapter like the Taste of Rebel Country, CDE Judging competitions, and other events.
- Presented our first \$1,000 dollar scholarship in May 2024 to a graduating senior of the Weld Central FFA to continue their education.
- Events: Plant your roots with the Alumni and Friend of WC FFA (Social), Pizza Party (Fundraiser/Social), Spring Banquet, Taste of Reble Country



WHAT HAS CALP MEANT TO ME?

Through my CALP experience I have been enabled with additional resources to be a strong leader, proper networking engagements, a broader perspective of the Colorado Ag industry, and so much more that will allow me to better support the Alumni and Friends of the Weld Central FFA. As I look forward, I see the opportunity to continue to grow the organization to support the local FFA, the growing community as well as highlight our local ag industry. I hope to push the Alumni and Friends of the WC FFA to find additional members and have a strong impact where agriculture and community connect.

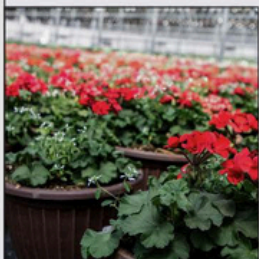
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TABOR KALCEVIC-ERKER,
BENNETT, CO

CULTIVATING COLORADO

The People Behind Our Food, Fiber & Natural Resources

Tawni Combs
PHOTOGRAPHY



TAWNICOMBSPHOTOGRAPHY@GMAIL.COM

My CALP project started as a way for me to get back to advocating for our rural way of life and my Ag Communication background. It quickly turned into much more. I have always wanted to publish a book, and I have a deep love for capturing candid moments that tell stories. When CALP presented the opportunity for me to challenge myself, I figured, what a better way than to combine all of those things.

I am now traveling and have traveled all over the state of Colorado, to interview and take pictures of the every-day lives of agriculturists, from every facet of

the industry. From open-range sheep ranchers on the western slope, to seed stock production on the eastern plains, greenhouses and restaurateurs up and down the I-25 corridor. I want all of Colorado's diverse agriculture to be showcased.

The goal with this project, is to publish a coffee-table style book that sums up each agriculturist's story through words and gripping photographs. The end result would be to provide a meaningful and expressive tool that can help humanize our industry and explain why we do what we do at the core.

Throughout the year, I worked with local organizations to raise funds for publishing, which allowed them to either secure a logo in the book, or a feature story. I also attended the Women Writing the West Conference in order to gain more insight to the publishing and writing world, where I networked with amazing authors and attended pitch sessions with publishing houses from across the country.

This project was much more extensive than I expected it to be, but it has expanded my mind so much, and has reignited my passion for agricultural advocacy in a creative and challenging way. I am so excited to continue to pursue this project moving forward and become a published author. The best part is that by taking my time, I know that I will produce a quality product that showcases my love of agricultural education and art which will serve as a reminder of what an amazing place Colorado is.

TALKING ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH IN AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITIES

Mental Health – A social stigma in agricultural communities.

The goal of my project was to reduce the stigma related to mental health in rural areas. I have always been open about my own struggles and CALP provided me an opportunity to share with a greater audience. There are literally thousands of resources that address mental health and wading through all of that can be overwhelming for someone with great mental health. I chose to focus on those that fit my personality and life circumstances.

I was raised in a no stoplight town in Central Montana. Small community where nothing happened without somebody noticing and often the report of your actions would make it home before you did. The only allowable subject to discuss in many situations was the weather. I lived the taboo of mental health in rural America, and I have seen the consequences. People need to feel okay about not feeling okay and they need to know it's okay to admit it out loud.

One conversation could save a life. Let's talk.

My favorite resources:

·Michigan State University Extension's Farm Stress Project ([Th](#)) The website is full of practical advice and they offer a free online self-paced course called Rural Resilience. ([Th](#))

Colorado Department of Agriculture, Ag Behavioral Work Group ([Th](#))The group is made up of mental health professionals, farmers, ranchers and members of rural Colorado. The meetings are held virtually on the 4th Tuesday of every month.

Triple T Haven, Ault, CO ([Th](#))Sheila Ash and her team have created an Intensive Equine Assisted Therapeutic Program for Adult and Children Trauma Survivors.The program uses a psychotherapy model called Eagala. ([Th](#))



BRIDGING THE RURAL-URBAN DIVIDE WITH COMMUNITY SERVICE

Call it boredom or call it something else, but an idea came to me out of nowhere. The idea was simple: find one-time events to volunteer my time. The impetus for the project was to learn about issues and ideas that were new to me. Originally, this was meant to be just a personal project to expand my horizons and learn, but something happened along the way that made it worth sharing.

I started volunteering at fundraising events for various causes. The first event was the American Diabetes Association's Rocky Mountain Tour de Cure in the South Denver Metro area. I was placed with a team to assist at one of the stops along the ride. During the slower periods of the day, I spent time conversing with the team members. I found that they were most interested in hearing about my hometown, Montrose, and, funny enough, the agriculture we produced. At the time, I thought they were just being polite and that it was a one-off conversation. Little did I know that most of my conversations at volunteer events in the metro area would revolve around rural living and agriculture.

I participated in several events across the metro area, totaling about 70 hours of volunteering. During the same period, I also spent time volunteering in rural parts of Colorado, contributing over 50 hours in both the Western Slope and the Eastern Plains. Interestingly, I found that most of my conversations while volunteering in rural areas were about the urban corridor. In every conversation I had, I felt that common ground was closer than it originally seemed. I discovered that bridging interests was easier when you started as friends.



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MARCUS CATLIN, MONTROSE, CO

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