

# OVER THE PASS



"I'd take it to Indian Market and buy something. If I do really well, I'll get two-for-one, a twofer, but I'll spend it all there."

— Judy E. White, real estate broker, Metro Brokers, Westminster, Colorado



"Charity. I'd probably give it to the soup kitchen because so many homeless people need help while they're trying to find their way into a normal home."

— Blayze Torres, eighth grade, Trinidad Middle School



"I'd probably go to Blackhawk for the weekend. It's a gambling town north of Denver. I'd be gambling, and probably losing, but it's a gift so I might as well go."

— Shawn Serazio, electrician, Trinidad

## TIM KELLER'S CONNECTIONS

### "What would you do with a \$500 cash prize?"

Photos by Tim Keller / The Chronicle-News



"I'd try to get caught up on bills and I'd take my grandkids to the store, Walmart."

— Sonia Saucedo, McDonald's crew member, Trinidad

## AGRICULTURE

### Crop mob descends on Vermont farm to harvest, weed crops

LISA RATHKE  
Associated Press

BOLTON, Vt. (AP) — Want to help local farms, get your hands dirty in the field and learn about how food is grown? Join a crop mob.

Teams of volunteers — from would-be farmers to local food lovers and those who want to support local agriculture — descend on fields helping with everything from weeding and harvesting crops to putting up or cleaning up greenhouses.

The extra hands can be a boon to small



Associated Press / Lisa Rathke

In this Thursday, Aug. 18, 2016, photo, jalapeno peppers that were picked by volunteers called a crop mob, lie in containers at Maple Wind Farm in Vermont.

farms during the busy seasons.

At Maple Wind Farm in Bolton, Vermont, late last week, a crop mob of eight picked mounds of jalapeno peppers and weeded rows of celeriac in nearly half the time the small farm crew could have.

"It's just shocking how much work you can do with so many people," said Margaret Kane, the farm's vegetable manager.

Crop mobs have descended on farms in California, Colorado, Massachusetts, North

Carolina, Oregon and Pennsylvania in recent years.

There's a strong tradition in agricultural areas of neighbors helping one another, from barn raisings in Amish country to chipping in during the harvest, said Roland McReynolds, executive director of the Carolina Farm Stewardship Program, in Pittsboro, North Carolina, where crop mobs were reported to have originated in 2008.

But as rural communities became less populated and agriculture more mechanized, that type of help may have declined for a while, he said. As people have become interested in restoring vitality to rural areas, crop mobbing is a way to build community and build "mutual assistance networks that help keep everyone prosperous," he said.

And the work is not just out in the country. The Denver Crop Mob attracts between seven and 30 volunteers for help at mostly urban farms during the spring and fall.

"The underlying idea is to actually generate a genuine community who steps up and helps each other because we recognize our interdependencies," said coordinator Oz Osborn.

City Market Onion River Co-op, a food cooperative in Burlington, Vermont, organizes about four crop mob events a year at area farms as part of its mission to strengthen the local food system.

Heather Gibbons of Burlington helped out last week at Maple Wind Farm in part to be an example for her 4-year-old son. She's teaching him about community giving and what it takes to grow food. The work also gives her a discount on groceries at City Market.

"To be able to come home and say, 'I worked on a farm, we grew food, this is what we did,' and that helps him connect better," Gibbons said of her son.

Her boyfriend, Tim Ruel, said the work gives him a respect for food.

"Believe it or not, these people are the unsung heroes," he said of farmers. "These are not the ... corporations. These are the little guys that grow real food that tastes better, that's more expensive to grow. And I would rather have the slightly more expensive stuff that tastes better and I know I can pronounce everything in the ingredients list."

For Hallie Schwab of Burlington, joining the crop mob was a way to learn more about farms in the area and how food is grown, connect with the community and meet new people. "It sort of satisfied all those things," she said.

## NOVEMBER ELECTION

### 2016 Ballot issue: Shall we triple the cigarette tax or not?

JAMES ANDERSON  
Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — Colorado voters will decide in November whether to triple cigarette taxes after tobacco sales rose for the first time since the last state tax increase in 2004.

An initiative certified Monday for the November ballot would raise the state tax from 84 cents to \$2.59 per pack starting Jan. 1. That's nearly a dollar more than the \$1.63 national average, according to the state health department.

The Campaign for a Healthy Colorado, a coalition of health groups and professionals, says its initiative would generate \$315 million next year for existing tobacco prevention and cessation programs. Colorado collected \$165 million in cigarette taxes in 2013, according to the independent Colorado Fiscal Institute.

Funds also would be spent on cancer, heart and lung disease research and treatment, Alzheimer's research, youth mental health services, veterans medical care and student debt repayment for medical professionals serving rural areas.

Taxes on cigars and chewing tobacco would rise 22 percent.

Annual tobacco use in Colorado declined from 300 million cigarettes in 1990 to 193 million in 2014, according to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. The percentage of adult tobacco users declined from 20 percent in 2004 to nearly 16 percent in 2014.

But sales rose last year by more than 1 million cigarettes to 194 million, the health department reported. Per-person sales are stable, but Colorado's growing population and research suggesting cigarette tax hikes lose their effectiveness after 7 or 8 years are behind the rise, said David Brendsel, a department spokesman.

Experts say making smoking more expensive deters youth from taking up the habit and encourages smokers to quit. The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, which is backing the initiative, says each 10 percent hike in cigarette prices reduces overall cigarette

use by up to 5 percent and up to 7 percent among youth.

"Colorado ranks 38th in the nation in cigarette tax. We know that significantly increasing taxes are a proven way to reduce smoking and stop tobacco companies from getting more kids addicted," campaign spokeswoman Myung Kim said.

The average cost of a pack of cigarettes in



Colorado is about \$5.26. The increase would bump that to about \$7.01 — an increase of about \$640 a year for people who smoke a pack a day — if cigarette makers pass along the full amount to consumers.

In 2015, Colorado collected \$88 million under the 1998 Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement, in which states released cigarette manufacturers from health-related claims in exchange for annual payments.

State budget writers warn that those settlement payments, which are pegged in part to tobacco use, will continue to decline. Colorado's estimated share will drop to \$72 million in 2018, according to legislative economists.

The same can be expected if voters approve a tax hike, said Sen. Pat Steadman of Denver, who sits on the Legislature's Joint Budget Committee.

"This new tax would be hefty enough to have some readily detectable impact on youth smoking," Steadman said. "It's a policy I support. The problem is that as you raise taxes you have to plan ahead on a diminishing revenue stream."