

Extra!

BOOK VALUE

The Englewood Public Library has kicked off a "Cool Cafe" blog for the library's teen services. It's the doorway to book reviews, recommended reading lists and more — including the ability to become a book reviewer yourself. You also can check out how to join the Englewood Teen Council. You can get volunteer hours for school, have a say in what is purchased for the library's teen collection and meet people and enjoy snacks. Go to englewoodgov.org and click on "Library" for the links. Source: englewoodgov.org



HE SAID IT

"I saw it with my own eyes, in my hometown of Boulder, two bumper stickers, one on each side of the same bumper — 'Save the rain forest' and 'Split wood not atoms.' And people wonder why I live there."



Jon Caldara, conservative jester and president of the Independence Institute

ROCKY FLASHBACK

10 years ago this week

Dinosaur fossils found at golf course

The remains of four huge, plant-eating triceratops dinosaurs were uncovered during construction of Westminster's Westmor golf course at West 108th Avenue and Oak Street. "When our crews were grading the golf course, they uncovered some very large sandstone blocks," said Bill Walenczak, city director of parks, recreation and libraries. "The Denver Museum of Natural History called us and said they had found dinosaur bones south of the golf course and suspected there may be bones on our site." Westminster allowed the museum to inspect the rocks, and Bruce Young, a volunteer paleontologist, discovered the triceratops remains.

# Colleges see rush to retrain

## Workers returning to school to brush up, learn new skills

By Myung Oak Kim  
ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS

James Cox, of Littleton, has a business degree and has worked at a variety of corporate jobs over the years. These days, Cox wears purple scrubs, taking nursing classes during the day at Arapahoe Community College in Littleton. At night, he manages a restaurant to pay the bills until he finishes school.

Nursing jobs, said the 36-year-old, are "recession-proof" because of a longstanding shortage. "Stability is a big thing," Cox said.

It's a big thing for a lot of people, particularly during the recession. Since the economy began to tank last year, scores of adults — including many who have been laid-off — are going back to college to brush up on their skills or learn new ones.

Their goal: a steady paycheck. Some are applying to graduate school to ride out the recession. But many can't afford that option, in either time or money. So they're enrolling in college programs that can quickly get them back into the work force.

### Career-oriented courses

That's one reason why community colleges, especially, are seeing a spike in enrollment. About 11 percent more students enrolled last month at the 13 schools that make up the Colorado Community College System compared with the same time a year ago. Many community college courses are career-oriented and aimed at professions that are hiring instead of firing — health care, education and certain financial industries among them. Another area of growth is the newly coined green-collar indus-

try — with jobs such as solar energy panel installation, consulting on ways to make buildings more energy efficient and others that haven't been invented yet.

"There are some industries that are expanding and we can very quickly get people ... the skills they need to turn around and make a decent standard of living," said Nancy McCallin, president of the community college system.

McCallin foresees enrollment growth continuing for at least another year, and possibly two.

"When the economy starts going south, we end up having a lot of students coming to us," she said.

Metropolitan State College of Denver has seen a 6.9 percent increase in enrollment compared with this time a year ago, with heavier interest in business and health care programs, as well as sports science, officials said.

Other four-year colleges also are seeing enrollment spikes tied to job demand.

At the University of Northern Colorado, for example, the special education department has grown almost 13 percent in the last two years.

Special ed teachers are in high demand — so high that at the yearly career fair in March, school districts "come with contracts in hand and signing bonuses," said Harvey Rude, director of the university's school of special education.

Nursing programs at Metro State and elsewhere are also in high demand, with some students waiting three years just to get in.

### Accounting's hot

And number crunching is a popular major. Rick Crosser, chairman of the accounting department at Metro State, said enrollment grew 21 percent in upper-level classes last year. Crosser said there aren't many accounting jobs at the moment, but he expects positions to open up when the economy rebounds. In Crosser's accounting ethics



Michael MacNeil, 18, who is a student at Warren Tech, learns how to wire a light fixture Thursday at Red Rocks Community College in Lakewood. LINDA MCCONNELL/SPECIAL TO THE ROCKY

class, seven of the 12 students have returned to school after being in the work force.

One of them, Komil Ganiyev, was laid off in early January as a financial adviser in Denver.

The 27-year-old is aiming for his Certified Public Accountant license.

That's also the plan of his classmates, who hope the license will boost their chances of getting jobs down the line.

Anna Gonce, of Littleton, chose her college major after studying help wanted ads in the newspaper.

"I want to be able to work," said the 24-year-old Metro accounting student.

But some students, shell shocked by layoffs, aren't sure what to do. The recession has caused a stampede for career advice, including on college campuses.

"My phone was ringing off the hook in January," said Jan McLees, the only full-time career counselor at Arapahoe Community College in Littleton.

"The panic factor started to rise last fall," said Raneey Boyd Tomlin, a part-time career coun-

selor at Arapahoe Community College. "We had a lot of folks who were coming in nearing emotional crisis because they had lost jobs or were about to lose a job."

Sometimes she sees people who were laid off only hours earlier.

### Sense of urgency

Tomlin and McLees now keep handouts on how to cope emotionally with a job loss.

The school offers a monthly six-hour class on careers, open to the public for a fee.

The one held in January drew 17 people — more than double the normal attendance.

Bert Glandon, president of Arapahoe Community College, said he's never seen such a severe recession in his 40-plus years in higher education.

He said the economic troubles create a greater sense of urgency to tailor classes to the needs of the work force.

"We can't sit in committee and plan this out for the next four months," Glandon said.

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## For many, it's back to school — with an eye on a steady job

A growing number of Coloradans are picking college courses with good job prospects.

### Dane Ellingson

■ Age: 37  
■ Home: Boulder  
■ Area of study: Paralegal  
Ellingson worked as a carpenter for a dozen years and developed a passion for environmentally friendly home building. But there wasn't much work, so he got a job last year making sushi at a Japanese restaurant in Boulder.



"The stock market tanked, and three weeks later I got laid off," he said. Ellingson thought about becoming a lawyer, but law school would keep him out of the job market for too long. "I've got a family, and I need to be making money," he said. So he enrolled in paralegal classes at Arapahoe Community College. That way, he can get his paralegal certificate in about a year, get a job and then apply to law school. Ellingson is keeping his fingers crossed that paralegal work will remain in demand and that he's on a

more stable career track. "It's a plan. I don't know if it'll work."

### Jason Lomas

■ Age: 40  
■ Home: Aurora  
■ Area of study: Pharmacy technician  
Lomas panicked after getting laid off from his computer operator job last October.



"I went online and I put my résumé out with everything and everybody," he said. The response: nothing. Lomas has a high school diploma and had worked in warehousing and trouble-shooting computers. His wife, who is going to college to become a teacher, learned about job opportunities in the health care industry from a friend who works as a recruiter. Lomas found out about Arapahoe Community College's six-month program for pharmacy technicians. He's confident he'll find a job after

finishing. "I said, 'Wow. I can complete this and I've got a job — a job for life.'"

### Sophia Morton

■ Age: 21  
■ Home: Evans  
■ Area of study: Special education  
Morton got a job offer in early December, two days before she graduated from the University of Northern Colorado with a bachelor's degree in special education.



She decided to become a special education teacher at age 7 after spending time with her cousin, who has autism and severe mental disabilities. She chose to attend UNC because its program is known around the country and can be completed in less time than those at other universities. Morton is working at Kinard Junior High School in Fort Collins, a sought-after school district among teachers. The pay is modest, but the benefits are great and Morton feels fortunate that special education teachers are

in high demand. "Right now, I couldn't have been more grateful that I chose this field."

### Dwight Lenox

■ Age: 37  
■ Home: Littleton  
■ Area of study: Nursing  
Many of Lenox's classmates in the nursing program at Arapahoe Community College had to wait three years to start classes, in part because there's not enough teachers.



But he enrolled in a few months through a program with his employer, Sky Ridge Medical Center in Lone Tree. Lenox prepares rooms and patients for operations. He decided to go into nursing so that he could work more with patients. And the job security is a huge draw. "Have you ever seen a nurse get laid off?" he asked. Lenox is confident he'll find a job as soon as he finishes school. "I've gone on Web sites, and there are lists upon lists of RN jobs."

# Alternative energy draws attention as second career

By Myung Oak Kim  
ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS

Noel Sicard sat in the back row of the trailer-turned-classroom at Red Rocks Community College in Lakewood last Thursday evening. The 40-year-old from Aurora was among seven working adults learning about solar power.

Their goal: gain skills for employment in the alternative energy field.

They and the 200-plus other students in Red Rocks' energy technology program are betting that green-collar jobs will provide job security in a deep recession — and long after it ends.

Economic experts agree. "The new energy economy will offer tremendous opportunities to Coloradans," said Martin Shields, a regional economist at Colorado State University.

"When those technologies develop they will offer opportunities for workers across the spectrum, in areas such as product development, marketing, installation and customer satisfaction," he said.

This isn't the first time such courses have been in vogue. Thousands of students took solar energy classes in the 1980s after the energy crisis of the '70s. But interest died out by the late '90s.

Red Rocks started experimental classes in the field in 2006, and offers nine classes related to solar thermal and solar photovoltaic systems that convert energy from sunlight to electricity.

Today, the school is scrambling to expand to keep up with demand. Coming up: classes that teach maintenance of wind turbines.

Sicard said he wants to take advantage of the growth in alternative energy.

"I want to catch this alternative energy wave," he said. "I want to stay ahead of the curve and stay ahead of my competitors."

Other students are more interested in protecting the environment.

Brian Allison, 50, of Arvada, worked as a computer programmer for almost 20 years. He's installing solar thermal systems in homes.

"I wanted to get into something that meant more," he said. "The potential is there" to make good money, he said. "But it's not about the money. It's more about the passion."

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