

2026 FALL NEWSLETTER



FIVE HORIZONS FOR OUR NEW ERA

Executive Director- Missie Bonser
missie@skyranchcolorado.org

On September 1st I was blessed to be able to erase "Interim" from my title and begin my full time call as Deacon, serving as Executive Director for Sky Ranch. At my second Camp Sunday this fall, I realized my nametag and business cards still bear the "interim" title- clearly the erasing still needs some work! It's been a beautiful, challenging journey since April 2025 being INTERIM Program Director, then taking on the INTERIM Executive Director title while straddling both roles through the summer and then slowly moving toward the fullness of this call, even as we reimagine staffing for the Program side of the ministry.

I am indebted to the Board (former and current) that has stood alongside me, believed in me and cheered me into this new call. I am indebted to my partners, Jeff and Angie, as they embody teamwork and resiliency as we keep reshaping for the things we hear God calling us to next. As a final piece of the call process, the Board invited me to create and share my 5 year vision for the ministry. What a gift that ask was, as I was completing my own discernment around this call at this point in my life. The opportunity to take on a good renovation project, restore and build some new bridges and nurture new fruit from the soil rich with history, legacy and God's steadfast presence is answered prayer! Truly, it seems as though God shaped every piece of my journey—the highs, the lows, and everything in between—for such a time as this.

In this new chapter for Sky Ranch we are looking to these 5 HORIZONS to shape our next 5 years:

- BEING A CAMP WHERE EVERYONE BELONGS
- BEING A CAMP THAT DEVELOPS LEADERS-FROM CAMPERS TO STAFF TO ADULTS
- BEING A CAMP THAT JOINS HANDS WITH THE CHURCH
- ONE MOUNTAIN, MANY PATHWAYS
- BEING RESILIENT AND AGILE

I could talk about each of these horizons, what they're rooted in and ways I see them manifesting for pages and pages, but I'll invite you to reach out and connect if you'd like to dig deeper. Keep an eye on our socials throughout the winter as I'll share more about each one, or connect with me at an upcoming Camp Sunday (I weave pieces of the vision into my messages.) Thank you for welcoming and blessing me into this precious community.

Together with you all!



HIGHLIGHTS FROM A SUMMER OF "HARMONIZE"



About this time last year the Spirit put the word "Harmonize" on my heart and within hours our summer theme had a skeleton holding it up. We shared the vision at congregations throughout the winter and spring. With the partnership of local pastors. It got flesh and breath and became the ground beneath our feet, the covenant that surrounded our summer staff family, the song we woke up to, the voice of Jesus every day, and the breath that guided us to sleep at night. Each person who came in contact with Sky Ranch this summer, whether up or down the mountain, learned about celebrating their unique sound and self, learned to listen to God and others around us, learned to exist in discord and find peace and learned to take God's song for the world into their at home communities and keep the song going! Every piece of this theme came to life in every facet of our camp community this summer- staff, campers, Board, congregational partners, and generous supporters. It continues to be our heartbeat as we close the fall season, and look ahead to next summer.



To our amazing summer staff- THANK YOU for the way you lived out the theme and loved our campers, celebrating them, cheering them on in leadership and bold adventure and showing them the Jesus who sings over them and loves them abundantly.

To our Denver Immersion and Foco Immersion partners- THANK YOU for welcoming us and our campers and teaching us about loving our neighbor, existing in discord and serving the world.

To our Traveling Day Camp partner communities- THANK YOU for expanding your reach, looking outside your walls, welcoming our staff like they're your family and giving them a safe place to grow into their counselor muscles fresh out of staff training.



To the pastors and deacons and youth ministers who spent time on the mountain bringing kiddos from their communities, supporting our staff, cheering us on through the transitions of this last year AND alumni staff who keep circling back sharing your stories, sending your grown up kids to serve on staff and keeping the legacy alive- THANK YOU!

To our generous partners who give and serve and pray for us- none of this would be possible without you. Thank you for loving this ministry and writing the new chapter and singing the new song with us.

We pray blessing over Tyler Stewardson and are grateful for his 3 years of service as he moves on to new opportunities. We covet your prayers as we seek those God has in mind for the new chapter we are entering.
I'm stepping out of my Program Director shoes officially and eager for my new role.
THANK YOU for walking with me! -Missie



A MESSAGE FROM JEFF FAIRFAX

Operations and Property Director
Jeff@SkyRanchColorado.org

Frosty the Snowman played an elite game of hide and seek this last winter and spring at Sky Ranch. With the first snow on site arriving on September 23, 2025, we were optimistic for a wet off season and promising 2026. The initial optimism started to melt in mid February when I was able to drive into camp on mostly clear dry roads. Frosty made a few appearances later in the spring, but not enough. We spent the entire summer and fall under some level of fire restrictions issued by Larimer County and the USFS. Camp opening and start up was on par for a typical year, a few minor leaks and repairs needed but overall the property fared very well over the winter. Our shutdown processes are well honed to set camp up to be in a great position for opening; it could not be done without the help of many volunteers and staff.

We didn't have to look hard to find the joy and possibilities that came from the disappointing snow season. Due to the lack of moisture and favorable overall weather we were able to jump into a couple of weather dependent projects early in the season. Sky Ranch always has upcoming projects on a running list and some of those are hard to do while also hosting camp programming or other groups. The first weekend of May brought a talented group of individuals to camp to focus on three specific projects. First, to install a metal roof on the camp store in preparation for future work; read more below on the camp store. Second, was hospitality and accessibility upgrades to cabins. Interior lights were replaced and standardized, security updates were made, and all door hardware was changed to handles instead of knobs for accessibility. Lastly, the Backpack Center (BPC) fireplace project was finally begun. Demolition of the old fireplace and stabilization of the exterior wall and floor was completed. Additionally, the wall was sheathed and wrapped with a waterproof membrane.

Memorial Day Work Weekend welcomed 35+ guests up the mountain to ready camp and program spaces for the summer camp season. Projects included deep cleaning of spaces, setting up platform tents, stocking the camp store, replacing doors on Tutu cabin, recreation area and high ropes course area sprucing up, picnic table refinishing, and more. One of the biggest projects of the weekend was replacing the benches at the outdoor chapel which required trees to be sourced, milled at the sawmill, and finally installed. It was quite the undertaking. The weekend was a great success as always and we are thankful to everyone who came and volunteered.



Operations and Property Director

Jeff@SkyRanchColorado.org



Summer came quickly with the arrival of our summer team. There were lots of new faces serving on staff this summer but they quickly became part of the Sky Ranch family. I was excited to hear their stories of being former campers, returning staff, meeting a random staff during a recruiting trip, having cross country connections that brought them to Sky Ranch, or just wanting a change of pace for the summer.

This team was exceptionally faithful, relational, caring, and a pure joy to work with as we Facilitated Encounters with Christ on the Mountaintops. We had some unexpected staff changes throughout the season, most notably in kitchen leadership, and this team didn't blink. Everyone stepped up, covered, and adapted to ensure that every camper and guest who visited this summer had the iconic Sky Ranch experience. Thank you to our 2026 Sky Ranch Summer Staff!



OFF SEASON WORK

Fall has been very busy and awesome! With year-round staff changes and reorganization, our team has been stretched thin but pouring ourselves into hosting groups and building upon the foundations of Sky Ranch. Throughout the fall we have been planning and working on three major projects. The BPC got part two of its work; interior and exterior framing for the new fireplace was completed as well as drywall work on the interior. A new wood burning fireplace insert is on order and should be installed in the coming weeks along with final framing and siding. Moose Yards, our maintenance building, received additional interior electric and overhead lights. Lastly, our friends from Falun Salemsborg Lutheran Parish in Kansas joined us again for another round of mission and service work. The group kicked off a two-year project renovating the Camp Store. This year the focus was on the exterior: stripping old siding, removing windows, replacing the door, sheathing and waterproof membrane, before siding and trim work. Next year the crew will work on the interior updating flooring, layout, electrical, and lighting. We are blessed to have this group with us each year and thankful to their commitment and passion for Sky Ranch!

One of my dreams for a few years now has been to host a Senior's Day Out at Sky Ranch in the fall. A time for those who haven't been to camp in a while, have never been, or haven't had the ability to drive up the mountain to reconnect and experience the place we all love. With the help of my wife Madeline, alumni staff and current board treasurer, Ally Williams and new Executive Director, Missie Bonser, we made it happen! 35 guests loaded on a charter bus with Missie and came up the mountain. We hosted lunch, Q/A time, camp tours via tractor drawn hayless hayrides, and time for community and fellowship. It was a wonderful day and we look forward to hosting more fall treks in the years to come.



As we finish wrapping up this fall I will be celebrating my 10 year anniversary of serving at Sky Ranch in a year-round role. Having spent two summers on summer staff prior to joining the year-round team I have spent the last 13 years involved with Sky Ranch. This place is very special to my family and I. I am grateful for the Sky Ranch Board of Directors as they have blessed me with a sabbatical beginning in early December. During my time on sabbatical I will rest, visit family and friends, and take two camp road trips meeting with leaders at other outdoor ministry sites to see their approaches to camp, hospitality, food service, site maintenance and development, and more. I look forward to reconnecting with the Sky Ranch community when I return in March.

Thank you for the continued love and support of Sky Ranch!

AUTUMN AT 9200 FT: COMMUNITY AT IT'S FINEST







SEPT. 18-20 -MANY PATHS ONE PURPOSE RETREAT

Our first ANNUAL MPOP retreat, undergirded by the community of St Peter Lutheran in Greenwood Village, was a dream come to life for a multi-generational offering during the most beautiful time of year on the mountain. 36 friends of all ages were served by the leadership team of Bryan Jaster, Pastors Brian Bergum and Joel Pancoast, Nicole Hanneman, Cole Hemmah, Maggie Young, Emily Wenning, Maggie Nieberger, Jeff and Missie. Fly Fishing and Yoga "pathways" were surrounded by fellowship, small group time, worship, awesome meals, low ropes, night hikes, movie night in the Pav and quality time together. Plan now to bring YOUR family or your SELF next year:
SEPT 17-19, 2027

SENIOR'S DAY OUT BUS TRIP- SEPT. 22ND

See Jeff's page for all the details about ths fabulous DREAM of a day...and look for adidtional pick up sites and dates along the front range in **SEPT 2027**.

COYOTE HOWL CONFIRMATION RETREAT- OCT 2-4

COYOTE HOWL, our epic Middle School youth retreat, featured engaging content on embracing your true self and developing "reformer" muscles to be a voice and force for transformation and change in our world. PLUS, all the things we love about camp- crafts, hiking, great food, worship, awesome leaders and new friends. 33 youth and adults spent the weekend together. We are already looking forward to next year: **OCT 8-10, 2027.** Save the Date Now!





HOSTED FALL EVENTS 2026:

FLAGSTAFF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION – SEPT 16-18
LUMIN RETREAT - SEPT 25-27
GILCREST ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION – OCT 7-9
OVERLAND COLLEGE RETREAT- OCT 9-11
RIDGEVIEW CLASSICAL WFA - OCT 14-16

TO OUR STAFF TRAINING PARTNERS/SUMMER VOLUNTEERS
-we couldn't have done it without you!

Nurses: Elaine Beckman, Ann Burkett, Heidi Gamber, Erin Sprain, Becky Houle, Sarah Bailey, Vicky Johnson
Study and Theme: Pastors Will Johnson, Katie Emery, Veronica Gould and Leta Behrens.
Commissioning: Pastor Chris Davis
Volunteer Staff/Staff Banquet Team: Howard Bonser, Eric and Julie Schranck, Nicole Hanneman, Cara Chafetz
SIT: Ellie Maki, Gordon Kuhns





BBQ & BLUEGRASS!

A huge THANK YOU to everyone who joined us at Trinity Lutheran Church, Fort Collins for our community engagement FUNdraiser night, on **July 17, 2026.**

We fed about **125** people and with ticket sales and donations we ended up around **$3500** net for the night, thanks to a sponsorship grant from Our Saviors in Greeley that covered our food cost.
We also brought in **$1025** from our charcuterie board sales-lovingly crafted by our FOCO mission week staff and Tad McDonald.

Super grateful to Jerusalem Road for their donation of fabulous entertainment, to Pastor Kaari Nieuwlandt, Lisa Dunworth, Limdsay Reiten, Steph Dugger, Katie Barron and all of the Trinity community for providing the venue and hospitality support.

All said and done, this event was an amazing opportunity to celebrate being the Sky Ranch community AND raised the equivalent of one co-ordinator's summer salary in one night. That's awesome partnership, friends!

DATE for NEXT SUMMER: FRI JUNE 4! If you'd like to be part of the visioning and planning team for next year, contact MIssie directly. We'll start meeting after the holidays.

SKY RANCH'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS

A huge thank you to our amazing Board of Directors for all the time, energy, and heart you pour into Sky Ranch. Your partnership helps make this camp a place where lives are changed, faith is deepened, and community is built and we're so grateful to have you on the journey with us!



Pr. Will Johnson
Nativity Lutheran:
Commerce City, CO
President



Matt Christenson
Second Presbyterian:
Little Rock, AR
Vice President



Ally Williams
Christ Lutheran:
Highlands Ranch, CO
Treasurer



Pr. Kaari Nieuwlandt
Trinity Lutheran:
Ft. Collins, CO
Secretary



Eric Schranck
Joy Lutheran:
Parker, CO



Nicole Hanneman
Denver, CO



Cara Chafetz
First Lutheran:
Co. Springs, CO

Thank you to our members who concluded their time on the Board this year.
Grateful for their love and service to the ministry.

Liz Huffman, Bryan Jaster
Marthann Dahlen, Ben Claypool
Joshua Williams

We're still looking to round out our Board with folks who love Sky Ranch, Jesus, are forward thinking and excited to serve in this new chapter of our ministry.

Please reach out to Exec. Director,
Missie Bonser if you are interested
missie@skyranchcolorado.org



Joe Kiel
Madison, WI

A message from our BOARD PRESIDENT - Pr. Will Johnson

My name is Will Johnson. I love evening walks with my family – my wife, daughter, and dog…and I also love Sky Ranch!

Earlier this year I was elected President of the Board. Thank you to the Board for their trust in me, as together with staff and volunteers and donors we work to steward the ministry of this beloved community. This past year we have experienced a lot of transition. God has been faithful through it all, living and working and breathing in and through so many people who call this place one of their spiritual homes.

And…I am excited about the future (incredibly super pumped, actually…) Because I think as a Board, and as a Camp, we realize we have not yet "arrived"…we are still on the road with Jesus, trying and experimenting and struggling…and in that sometimes succeeding, and sometimes learning a whole lot. And I'm excited because I've talked with staff over the past few months, and seen glimmers of joy as they share about their areas of focus, and what can be in the future. And I'm excited because I've talked with clergy colleagues who keep asking about renewed engagement in Sky Ranch. And I'm excited because I truly believe God is not done with us yet. There is ministry to be done, hope to hold and share, grace to give, and love to live out through our Sky Ranch community.

Oh…and I also serve as pastor at Nativity Lutheran Church in Commerce City, Colorado. A community that has also been blessed by Sky Ranch, and the witness that camp uniquely offers to the world.Whether you are up or down the mountain, I hope you are able to feel the community of Sky Ranch and rest in that togetherness…today, and tomorrow, and always.

BIG NEWS ABOUT SUMMER 2027



NEW
NEW
NEW
NEW

2027 Sky Ranch payment schedule

Nov 15, 2026- May 15, 2027
50% of total registration fee is due to register.
Payment in full is by 5/16/27

Signing up on May 16, 2027 or after- 100% of total registration fee due.

Prefer to pay in full? Do so at any time!

- Because of where Memorial Day falls this year, your "typical week number" (say Week 8- historically our biggest sold out week) now falls 1 week later on the calendar.
- As you reference the summer program schedule (pg 9) note that our onsite program weeks are consolidated to Weeks 4-8.
- Weeks 1-3 will be dedicated to Hosted Ministry groups, Day Camp partnerships (It's our goal to have 3-4 TDC's each week. Reservations for new congregations open on October 16!) and contracted highschool programs.
- The office will be able to assist congregations paying scholarship deposits or full payments for their campers by creating a transfer code for all your students- call the office soon to set things in motion.
- Congregations wanting to book highschool contracts (Denver Urban Immersion, High Wilderness, Ropes Rafts Rockies, Leave-a-Trace) contact the office directly to reserve your week before slots fill up.
- Congregations wanting to book Family Camp summer weekends - contact the office directly to reserve based on your maximum number. We had great success doing partnership weekends to maximize site use and get to meal minimums.

Registration Opens November 15, 2026

New deposit schedule: 50% to register Nov. 15 to May 15, 2027

2027 SUMMER PROGRAMS SCHEDULE

Dates	Elementary	Middle School	High School
June 13- 19	Hosting "Sky High Hope" Camp		
June 20 - 25			Ropes, Rafts & Rockies & Denver Urban Immersion
June 27 - July 2			Ropes, Rafts & Rockies & Denver Urban Immersion
July 4 - July 9	Alumni/ Family Camp		
July 11 - 16		Mountain Movers Week: Middle and High School Youth Week High Wilderness Backpacking & Denver Urban Immersion (9-12 grade)	
July 18 - 23	Upper Elementary (3rd-5th grade)	Middle School (6th-8th grade)	Rendezvous, Denver Urban Immersion & High Wilderness (9th-12th grade)
July 25 - 30	Lower Elementary (1st-2nd grade) Upper Elementary (3rd-5th grade)	Middle School (6th-8th grade)	Rendezvous, Denver Urban Immersion & High Wilderness (9th-12th grade)
August 1 - 6	Lower Elementary (1st-2nd grade) Upper Elementary (3rd-5th grade)	Middle School (6th-8th grade)	Rendezvous, Denver Urban Immersion & High Wilderness (9th-12th grade)

High School Programs open for group registrations throughout the summer include High Wilderness Backpacking Trips, Denver Urban Immersion, Mountain Movers and Rendezvous programs.

NEW NEWS!!

REGISTER FOR THE GRADE YOU ARE ENTERING IN THE FALL OF 2027!!

Are you interested in bringing a high school group to camp this summer?
Contact our Sky Ranch at *office@skyranchcolorado.org*

QUICK PEEK AT PROGRAM OFFERINGS - 2027
CHECK OUT THE WEBSITE FOR MORE DETAILS!

Lower Elementary entering grades 1-2

Join us for the LE Half-Week Program, **perfect for first-time campers** and a great introduction to being away from home! Experience **3 nights** of mountain adventure filled with games, crafts, team-building challenges, and Living Word time. Campers will also lead a worship service for their families and staff on Wednesday before pickup!

Upper Elementary entering grades 3-5

UE combines fun, friendship, and growth in discipleship through Living Word, worship, devotions, and our elective format. Campers gain confidence, learn to live out their faith, and form strong friendships while supported by dedicated counselors in our cozy cabins. **New for 2027**, **Crate Stacking, an exciting introduction to our High Ropes Course!**

Middle School entering grades 6-8

Get ready for an unforgettable week of adventure, friendship, and faith! Our MS programs give campers all the fun and daily opportunities of onsite, with even more ways to challenge themselves and grow. Campers can take on the **High Ropes Course, star gaze, night hike, or hit the river rafting in the MT Movers Program**—all while growing in their faith, building confidence, discovering who God created them to be.

High School entering grades 9-12

HS is where it all culminates! Campers take their summer adventure to the next level with options that build faith, confidence, leadership, and lifelong memories. Choose a week-long **backpacking** trek or **Rendezvous with rafting** and wilderness experiences, **Mountain Movers** at Sky Ranch for more classic camp fun, or a **service trip in Denver**. Whatever they choose, HS campers get to go further, grow deeper, and live out their faith through unforgettable adventure.

Registration Opens November 15, 2026

Grab your week EARLY for the best deals!

- BLACK FRIDAY/CYBER MONDAY pre-sale of $25 off Nov 15-30
- Early Bird discount of $15 per camper from Dec 1-Jan 15
- Sibling discount of $10 for each additional family member



GENEROSITY IN ACTION

Our beloved ministry will THRIVE in this new chapter with partners who join hands with us through gifts of time, talent and treasure. Keep an eye out in NOVEMBER for ways to join one of our ministry teams in the new year (Events, Program, On-site Work Crews, Marketing and Engagement.)

We have spent much of this year, getting things in order to be the best stewards possible of the generoosity entrusted to us. We seek to close out the year in a strong financial position, so we can turn our attention to doing the ministry work God is calling us to in this next chapter-shaping our full time team, seeking community and Synodical partners for outreach, recruiting and developing the next season of summer and fall staff, nexpanding our scope for on the mountain camper experiences and looking for ways to take our ministry influence down the mountain.

None of that can happen without a robust community of generous partners.
And so as we close in on the last 8 weeks of the year,
we ask you to prayerfully consider supporting Sky Ranch through:

- Our **"Friend of the Mountain"** giving club which sustains this ministry through one-time or recurring gifts. Or inviting Missie to come speak to your congregation's leadership about becoming a congregational partner. (Tithely link is on our website.)
- **Giving Tuesday – December 1:** Partner with us for a $10,000, 2-to-1 match through Thrivent.
- **Colorado Gives Day – December 8:** Join our Circle of Renewal 100!

(Watch your mail, email and our socails for much more on these last 2 opportunties)

Online Giving:
www.skyranchcolorado.org/donate

Leave-A-Legacy Gift:
Include Sky Ranch in your will or trust pr estate plan

Mail a check:
805 S. Shields, Ft. Collins, CO 80521

Gifts of Stock Appreciated Assets

Thrivent Choice:
Designate your Choice Dollars to Sky Ranch

IRA Charitable Roll-over

Thanks for giving the gift of camp!

Your generosity makes a lasting difference in the lives of campers, families, and communities.

Thank you for being part of the Sky Ranch family!



Attend Events:
BBQ & BLUEGRASS!

QUESTIONS?

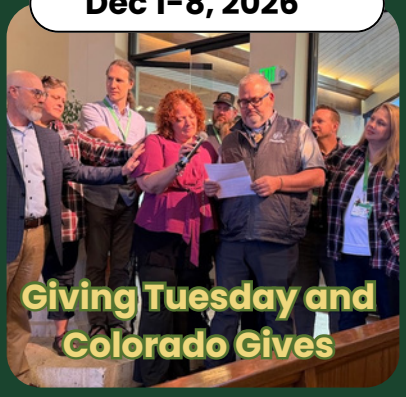
Contact Missie Bonser if you would like more information.
(970)493-5258
missie@skyranchcolorado.org

EXCITING EVENTS AHEAD

MARK YOUR CALENDAR! SAVE THE DATE

WE WOULD LOVE FOR YOU TO JOIN US!

Dec 1-8, 2026



CAMP SUNDAYS:

Want one at your church?!
Call the office to get on
the schedule TODAY!

Oct 25-Spirit of Joy, FOCO
Nov 8- Bethel, Windsor
Jan 31- 1st Lutheran, Longmont
Mar 7- FS Parish. KS
April 10/11- Trinity, FOCO
April 16-18- Synod Assembly

Feb 28, 2027 @ 2pm



May 28 - 31, 2027



June 4, 2027



July 4-9, 2027



WE'RE HIRING!



- **Counselors**
- **Resource Team**
- **Leadership Staff**
- **Summer Cooks**
- **Maintenance Staff**
- **Weekend Hosts**

As you're settling into your fall routine, please consider the young adults in your life who might benefit from spending a summer in this beautiful community. There are plenty of opportunities for summer jobs, but a summer at camp is so much more than that—it's truly an experience that will shape lives for many years to come!