TALON

Good Vibes

FEATURE ARTICLE

WHAT'S THE VYBE, DENVER?

BY CHEYENNE CLAY

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Dear Reader

Letter from the Editor

Today's vibe seems to be increasingly and worriedly divided.

There is so much in the news and society that we are troubled by today.

Our neighbor's music goes quiet; a familiar face is forced out of view. Generational loves, cultures and joy have been replaced with silence, bitterness and confusion.

However!

That is not the only vibe out there today that we should focus on.

There are so many cooler vibes available out there that we covered in this issue. Vibing at a Japanese Cultural festival, letting loose at a Comeback Kid concert, or enjoying a coffee vibe at the Lima Coffee shop, these can be moments of levity.

The core idea is to focus on the good vibes, while recognizing the grim dark vibes lay in wait.

The staff at Talon Magazine welcomes you to take a moment, to look outward and learn about what we share with the world around us, uniqueness, and all.

We encourage you to catch a vibe with someone, build a friendship, blossom a community because you never know when you will miss the chance.

Vibe out for a moment, connect with the frequency of each story, the featured talents and backgrounds of the subjects. Their own rhythm, and vibrancy defines the humanity of each one of us.

We are all connected, first by sharing our love and devotions to society, then by the systems and wires we built. Thanks for reading Talon Magazine, please do share!

— Florence Alden, Editor-in-Chief

The Talon Magazine Project

The Talon Magazine Project is an online and print magazine produced through a unique collaboration berween the CCD Journalism Program and the Service Learning Graphic Design course in Fall and Spring semesters.

Each semester, Talon Journalism student-contributors write feature news stories, interview and profile interesting people, report on emerging trend, and take pictures about topics that matter to CCD students on the Auraria Campus. This content is then carefully edited and handed over to the Graphic Design team to layout the storeis, illustrate, and design the graphic vision for the magazine.

All CCD students are encouraged to submit their journalism feature articals, photos, and illustrations for selection. If you're interested in journalism please contact us at journalism@ccd.edu or if you're interested in graphic design contact us at CCD.edu/GraphicDesign

Front cover
Photography:
Cheyenne Clay

Back cover
Photography:
Adrian Luna

Journalism Staff

Dan Schaefer
Associate Professor, Journalism & Communications

Dr. Dan Schaefer is an associate professor of Journalism and Communication at Community College of Denver (CCD) and faculty advisor for the Talon Magazine and the Digital Storytelling Student Club. He is passionate about those genuine true stories that resonate and help us make sense of our world. As a native Michigander, Dan loves two things: fishing and stories of fishing the third coast.

Florence Alden
Editor-in-Chief and Reporter

Florence is a writer and editor of Talon Magazine and contributed poet for the CCD Ourglass. She focuses on the intricacies of society, especially human communication, hoping to inform people about influences, manipulation, and other dark uses of media as well as media's positive use cases. She is completing the journalism associate's program at CCD, and continuing her education at Metropolitan State University.

Cheyenne Clay
Reporter

Cheyenne is a photographer and digital media journalism major, known for her work in event and portraiture photography. With a deep passion for capturing stories through images, she has made her mark in the Denver music scene, frequently working to document live events. Cheyenne blends her love for storytelling through both pictures and words, focusing on creating impactful visuals that connect with her audience.

Gossamer Dean
Reporter

Gossamer is a Journalism major finishing up their degree with a passion for media critique and analysis. They love finding TV shows and movies hardly anyone has ever seen before, especially terrible horror movies. In their free time they enjoy playing fun little indie games.

Jonathan Villalobos Gonzalez
Reporter

Jonathan is an Associates of Arts major with a communications designation. He plans to transfer to Metropolitan State University in Denver to pursue Communications and Journalism. Jonathan enjoys spending quality time with his friends from The Voyagers and loves exploring new ideas that spark his curiosity.

Isabelle Rohlf
Reporterr

Isabelle is a soon-to-be graduate of Front Range Community College. Meaningful conversations, compelling stories and lots of tea bring her incredible joy. She is excited to continue growing and learning as she prepares to transfer to Colorado State University. Talon Magazine has been a wonderful way to wrap up her final semester.

Gray Moffatt
Reporter

Gray Moffatt is a Denver-based painter and art education major at CCD. Their practice focuses on storytelling, remembrance, and emotional resonance, with a dedication to becoming a well-rounded artist. Through color, symbolism, and collaborative work, she seeks to create pieces that honor history, invite reflection, and connect people through shared experience.

Sebastian Finke
Reporter

Design Staff

Gretchen Occhionero
Art Director/Project Manager

Gretchen is a graphic designer with CCD's Creative Services and serves as the project manager for the Multimedia/Graphic Design Service-Learning course. In her spare time, she enjoys watching classic films from the 1930s to the 1960s, traveling, camping, gardening, and discovering new hiking trails with her daughter and golden retriever.

Kasalina Bastian
Graphic Designer

Kasalina is an artist and designer with a versatile range of skills with proficiency in print design and character illustration. She enjoys learning and exploring different styles of design and adding it to her own. She's finishing her degree in Graphic Design this spring.

Jose Garcia Torres
Graphic Designer

Jose is a Designer originally from Jackson Wyoming. He grew up snowboarding and skateboarding. He enjoys making art. He currently is pursuing an associate's degree in graphic design. Jose plans to pursue becoming an art teacher so he can inspire others as previous teachers have inspired him.

Semmy Ko
Graphic Designer

Semmy is a graphic design student based in Denver. She excels at using the power of visual communication to connect people and ideas. She is passionate about creating thoughtful, inclusive designs that consider both the social and emotional impact on audiences. Her approach emphasizes clarity, empathy, and social awareness, reflecting a commitment to responsible and meaningful storytelling through design.

Aiden Matlack
Graphic Designer

Aiden is a graphic design student based in Colorado focused on digital design layout and visual communication. His work emphasizes hierarchy, typography, and clear communication across print and screen. He began learning Adobe programs and Illustration at the young age of 13 and is now pursuing an AAS in Graphic Design at CCD.

Anastasiia Mukhina
Graphic Designer

Anastasiia is a graphic design student based in Denver and is currently in her final semester before graduation. She enjoys working with print design, typography, and layout, and likes figuring out how small design choices can change the way a page feels. After graduating, she plans to continue working in the field of graphic design.

Moses Navaro
Graphic Designer

My name is Moses Navarro and I'm inspired by comic characters from movies, tv shows, comic books, and video games. They motivate me to create my own characters and stories. I love how the stories are made from books and films. The greatest comic and film stories brought to our lives and are amazing to imagine.

Jackson Peake
Graphic Designer

Jackson is an Artist and designer based out of Denver. Currently studying graphic design at CCD, he aims to complete his associates degree in May 2026 and pursue a job in the industry. His creative practice blends bold experimentation with color, typography, and visual storytelling.

Hunt Rael
Graphic Designer

Hunt is a graphic designer and a pretty cool guy based in Denver. He is planning to finish his degree in graphic design this spring and is honored to wrap up his education at CCD as a member of the Talon Magazine team.

Rudy Rodriguez
Graphic Designer

Rudy is a graphic designer, photographer, and storyteller based in Denver. An Army vet turned artist, he approaches design with discipline, intention, and a love for culture-driven visuals. His work blends structure with emotion - mixing bold color, typography, and narrative to capture the character of people & places. He's building a career in branding & creative direction, developing his freelance studio.

Lex Wilkinson
Graphic Designer

Lex is a Denver-based graphic designer guided by awe-inspiring trees, vibrantly blooming flowers, and the magic of imaginative worlds. She enjoys brand identity, typography, editorial and package design, and creates intentional, expresive visual experiences that are rich with wonder. Outside the studio, Lex can be found enjoying live music, fashion, interior design, and time with her animals—Wiz and Kitkat.

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SPACE TO EXPLORE

Discovery Center launches a new era of STEM-minded adventure

INNOVATION / FEATURE

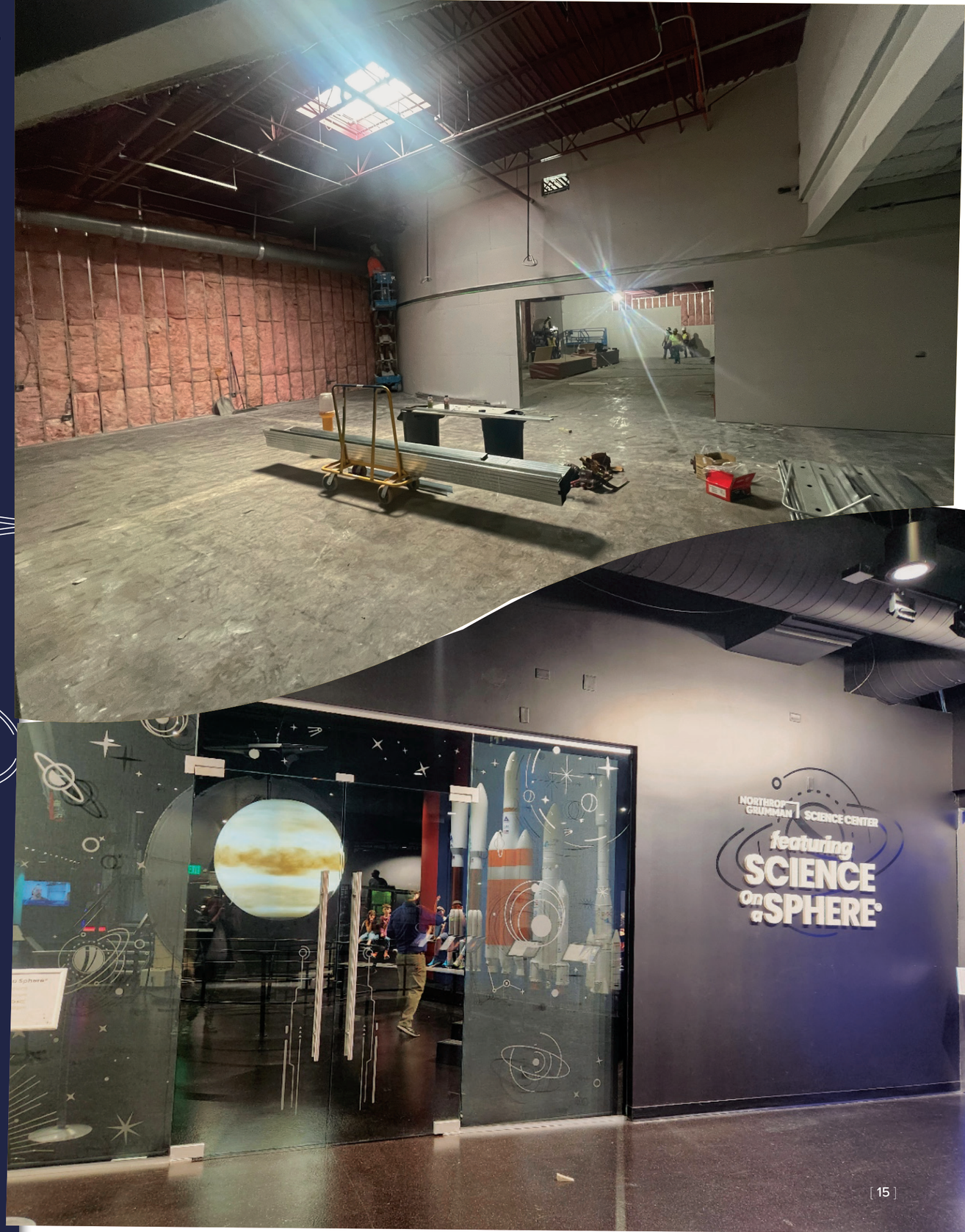
AUTHOR & PHOTOGRAPHY **GOSSAMER DEAN**
LAYOUT **AIDEN MATLACK**

Did you want to be an astronaut as a kid, see the stars in a completely different light than here on Earth? It's human nature to look to the skies with fascination. While not everyone can or wants to become an astronaut, everyone can visit the Space Foundation Discovery Center in Colorado Springs. The Discovery Center is a highly interactive museum geared specifically towards getting children interested in STEM but is engaging for all ages. There's a slew of both visually interesting and physically interactive exhibits about famous scientists, engineers, and astronauts; different ships and shuttles, including prototypes; and much more.

Back in September of 2023, the Space Foundation announced that the Discovery Center in Colorado would be undergoing an estimated $3 million of renovations. The plans for the renovation included upgrades to flooring, electrical systems, and exhibits. Zakary Watson, senior manager of media and public affairs, said that the remodel was much needed, as everything was original to when the Center opened about 10 years previously. She also said the most important parts of the renovation were the accessibility and electrical upgrades. Another employee even commented on how dark the whole of the Discovery Center seemed comparatively before the whole redesign. When the Discovery Center re-opened in June of 2024, visitors were greeted with a slew of new exhibits as well, many of them being super hands-on. Don't worry, though, many of the fan favorite exhibits stayed and even received upgrades, namely 'Science on a Sphere,' the most popular and memorable exhibition among people who wrote reviews online about the Discovery Center.

The Science on a Sphere is similar to a miniature planetarium with a large globe projector screen in the center rather than the ceiling. This was the most popular and mentioned exhibit on reviewing platforms for people that have gone to the Discovery Center. It was updated to have more seating, more locally relevant information, and to have the presenter elicit engagement from the audience differently. The 'Drone Zone' was also added. This is a new area where people can take turns piloting drones through a small obstacle course. There's a gorgeous mural, as well, of important people in the history of flight, created by a local artist.

One of these particularly exciting new exhibits is 'Back to the Moon,' which educates visitors on NASA's new Artemis program. This is the exhibit Watson says is the most impactful, as it connects the past and future of humans' impact on the moon and space. Artemis will be landing the first woman and person of color on the moon over 50 years after 1969's Apollo landing. People have not traveled to the moon at all since 1972. Included with this exhibit temporarily is a Lunar Module (LM), which is a piece of space craft integral to allowing Apollo 11 to land and its astronauts to walk on the moon. From 1969 to 1972, six LMs landed on the moon and hosted a total of 12 different moonwalkers.



The Discoery Center's mural of important people in the history of flight, created by a local artist. *Left to right:* Orville Wright, Amelia Earhart, Neil Armstorng, Sally Ride, Robert Goddard, Bessie Coleman, Yuri Gagarin

"The remodel did a wonderful job of preserving and improving upon the learning experience.."

Another beautiful addition to the Discovery Center is 'You, Me, and ZERO G.' This is an exhibit that's particularly focused on humanizing the astronauts that go up into space and all the hard work they do in the name of science. For this exhibit you get to walk inside, open drawers and cabinets, and experience firsthand just how cramped the working space astronauts work in is. Visitors get to see the Spacelab, which was the lab model astronauts worked in inside shuttles from 1983 to 1998. While the astronauts had a little more space to eat, sleep, and live in, the lab helps exemplify the difficult conditions astronauts endure in space. While this particular lab on display was never launched into space, visitors also get to learn about the history of it and the experiments that it's been used for.

The manufacturing lab is an incredibly impressive part of the expansion to the Center. While there were also many interactive exhibits before the remodel, this is a perfect example of how much of the remodel focused on adding some more interactivity to the museum. The manufacturing lab is a room full of 3D printers, lots of examples of 3D printed items, a button maker, and an adult guide to provide supervision and direction. At different times during the day, which are posted outside the room, people are welcomed in to work on projects. Watson mentioned that they were thinking about even providing 3D printing classes for the local community in the future, but nothing has been solidified yet.

There are so many more exciting exhibits to explore in the Discovery Center. The remodel did a wonderful job of preserving and improving upon the learning experience they started with, as well as creating an all new environment for kids and adults alike to have fun while learning. The remodel was a huge undertaking, and at least to some degree a risk; the Discovery Center wouldn't be generating any money while it was worked on. However, it paid off big. The Discovery Center has even more explorable and interactive exhibits than before, and is boldly marching into the future of introducing children to a passion for STEM. ■

FROM YAKITORI TO CALLIGRAPHY

Exploring Denver's Spirit of Japan Festival

AUTHOR/ PHOTOGRAPHY **PETER TITO**
GRAPHIC DESIGN **HUNT RAEL**

大和魂

Every explorer starts their journey on a full stomach. The Spirit of Japan festival, held at Sakura Square in Downtown Denver from September 12–14, offered Denverites a chance to experience Japanese culture through authentic cuisine, traditional performances, and various drinks. For my family, it was more than a festival, it was a cultural journey.

My family and I set off to explore the festival on September 13th, which was a fine day in Denver.

My first waypoint with fellow food enthusiasts, my mother and brother, was naturally at a conveniently located food stand across from the festival entrance that had a huge grill sizzling with an appetizing array of grilled meat for Yakitori. Yakitori is a traditional Japanese dish that is perfect for walking around a festival. It was essentially meat on a stick, served quickly in a plastic cup. A couple of bites confirmed my suspicion that Yakitori was fantastic.

Next on my journey, I visited other culinary waypoints where vendors offered Japanese foods and drinks at the festival.

I discovered that each vendor used a distinct container for their dish. Yakisoba stir-fry noodles in rectangular trays, cold Inaniwa Udon noodles in round containers, Mazemen ramen in bowls with sauces and toppings, shaved ice in large cones, and Karaage in plastic trays.

Although the shape of their container didn't matter to me, the food's flavor was good. I only tried Karaage after finishing my Yakitori, but it was delicious. Karaage, Japan's version of fried chicken, remains my favorite dish from there.

While I checked out the food vendors, my family tried a selection of Japanese beer, whiskey, gin, sake, and a chilled sake called Kobe, all from the Spirit of Japan drink vendors.

My mother and brother mostly enjoyed Amazake, a sweet and creamy Japanese rice drink with no added sugar or gluten. Amazake had a natural rice flavor and contained only a small amount of alcohol, giving it a sweet taste. My brother also tried Sake, a Japanese rice wine that tastes sour, but he preferred Kobe, a smooth Japanese whiskey.

As we wandered between the different vendors, I noticed the Mayor of Denver was there to support the festival by trying Mitarashi Dango rice dumplings,

SPIRIT OF JAPAN

Another highlight was Embelia Idols, a Colorado dance group with 19 members who specialize in Japanese and Korean pop choreography.

Flash, a Japanese calligrapher from Los Angeles, painted a cherry blossom tree on stage using Shodo—a traditional Japanese art form.

Denver's Mayor Mike Johnston sliced a 200-pound Bluefin tuna with a gleaming, two-foot tuna sword

Katsu Sando (chicken cutlet sandwich with sweet soy sauce), and Matcha India Pale Ale—a Japanese beer brewed with green tea. Accompanying Mike Johnston in a corner were two police officers and a cameraman.

A festival highlight on Saturday was watching Johnston slice a 200-pound Bluefin tuna with a gleaming, two-foot tuna sword, a blade designed to cut smoothly through large fish. The Mayor of Denver joined the Tuna Cutting Show to assist chefs from Hana Matsuri Omakase Restaurant in Glendale as they prepared the tuna for their stand. After sampling a piece, the mayor told the crowd that Bluefin tuna was "the best dish I've ever had... Not because I cut it."

Watching Flash, a Japanese calligrapher from Los Angeles, paint a cherry blossom tree on stage using Shodo—a traditional Japanese art form—was another highlight. As the artwork formed, the audience's anticipation grew with Flash's progress.

As Flash finished the trunk and branches, he invited children and teens onstage to add cherry blossoms onto the branches with stamps. Their joyful collaboration was celebrated with a group photo in front of their creation.

Following the previous performance, anticipation grew for Saturday's third highlight: Embelia Idols, a Colorado dance group founded in October 2023 with 19 members who specialize in Japanese and Korean pop choreography. For this festival, four dancers—Steph, Alia, Kenzie, and Adey—performed. Despite the smaller group, they maintained a strong stage presence and earned enthusiastic cheers.

When my family and I left the Spirit of Japan festival, we felt inspired to explore more cultural fairs around Colorado after seeing how Coloradans were interested in Japanese culture at the festival in Downtown Denver, where we tried authentic Japanese food, traditional drinks, and enjoyed the cultural performances on stage.

The Spirit of Japan reminded us that the best journeys begin with curiosity. Together, we tasted new flavors, shared stories, and made cherished memories. ■

What's the VYBE Denver?

AUTHOR/ PHOTOGRAPHY
CHEYENNE CLAY

GRAPHIC DESIGN
ANASTASIIA MUKHINA

Growth, whether personal, professional, or societal, cannot flourish in isolation—community is the fertile soil in which potential takes root and thrives. The phrase, "It takes a village to raise a child", has always been an ode to the necessity found within community.

A community event organized by the VYBE group, also known as Vibrate Your Best Energy, was held on Saturday, February 15, 2025, at the Yoga Center Denver, located at 770 South Broadway in Denver, CO. The event promised to help Denver's local village through a series of workshops designed to promote creativity, self-expression, and personal growth.

Founded by Adrian Ashdown, VYBE held its first event in 2022—a small yet impactful gathering in a studio with speakers, flow toys, and just nine people. What began as an intimate night of creativity quickly grew into a movement driven by a passion for building community and continuously enhancing the experience for all involved.

The intention behind VYBE is to connect people through movement, music, workshops and interactive art in order to enhance self expression and overall, the love we have for ourselves and others. At the core of VYBE's mission lies the belief that creativity and self-expression are not just about individual fulfillment but also about fostering deeper connections within a community.

In the article "Hidden Gems: Meet Vibrate Your Best Energy" published by Voyage Denver on January 23, 2024, Adrian Ashdown explained: "At the heart of our vision is the recognition that we were all once children on a playground, joyfully creating and connecting. As adults, we often become programmed to neglect our inner child's desire to play, create freely, and be seen, accepted, and loved.

*"VYBE **IS ALL ABOUT** PLAYING AND HAVING **FUN**"*

VYBE holds the space for adults to reconnect with this playful spirit and build deeper relationships around the shared joy of creative expression." (Ashdown, 2024). Adrian wanted to create spaces where our organic uninhibated expression could become more of a frequent occurrence in people's lives. By facilitating safe places for vulnerability, VYBE enables change and healing.

These spaces encourage authenticity without judgment or expectation, fostering an environment of self-expression and personal growth.

VYBE is all about playing and having fun; however, it's also equally as much about being uncomfortable and challenging our inner resistence in order to expand ourselves.

This philosophy is deeply embedded in the structure of their events.

The Realize Light Wellness Festival embraced this myriad of values and became a testament to the strides VYBE has made in just three years.

The festival featured a diverse range of workshops across three rooms that each focused on different aspects of the human mind and body:

The sun room focused on physical embodiment and spiritual connection, the moon room focused on mental momentum, and the last of the three, the lotus room, focused on emotional exploration.

To further explain how the rooms were organized, the Moon Room—created to encourage mental momentum—offered workshops like experience journaling, astrology coaching, and mediplaytion. The journaling session focused on using affirmations to clarify personal needs and approach life with greater intention. Astrology coaching provided insights into celestial influences, helping participants better understand their soul's alignment with cosmic activity.

Lastly, mediplaytion—a playful take on mindfulness—encouraged participants to reconnect with their inner child, bringing lightheartedness and gentleness to the practice of meditation.

Moyces Garcia, a participant at the Realize Light event, expressed that, "After [Realize Light] I felt energized, aligned and connected...to myself and others...VYBE has impacted my life...and I've put some of the things learned at [Realize Light] into my morning routine...they have been utilized to align and feel better daily." (Garcia, 2025)

With such a diverse range of workshops each hour, attendees had the chance to explore multiple forms of self-expression. The festival itself was thoughtfully structured into two distinct experiences, dividing the day into immersively complimentary sessions.

"After Realize LIGHT I felt energized, aligned and connected — to MYSELF and OTHERS."

The first half, known as the Self-Discovery Retreat, ran from 12 PM to 8:30 PM and focused on the immersive workshops, each lasting an hour and taking place across the three different rooms. The second half, the Self-Love Celebration, took place from 9 PM to 2 AM, shifting the focus to music and movement, where participants could fully embrace self-expression through dance and live performances.

Each part of the experience was carefully crafted based on Adrian's experience within creativity and change leadership. She received her Master's of Science in Creativity and Change Leadership at Buffalo State and has continued to innovate upon all she has learned by curating consciously crafted events for people to attend.

The design and philosophy behind the Realize Light Wellness Festival are deeply rooted in the concepts Adrian developed during her academic work, specifically the research that shaped her own creative leadership model, The Infinite Design of Creative Self-Leadership.

This model, created as part of her Master's project, was inspired by the Componential Theory of Creativity, which identifies the psychological and social elements necessary for creative work. Adrian expanded this theory into her own framework, focusing on how these components can be applied to personal life for growth and development.

Similarly, the workshops and events hosted by VYBE, including Realize Light, reflect the principles behind The Infinite Design.

For example, VYBE's focus on holistic experiences—such as the moon room's emphasis on mental momentum—directly aligns with methods like the Creative Problem Solving Process, the principles from Designing Experiences by J. Robert Rossman and Matthew D. Duerden, and the Torrance Incubation Model, all of which emphasize nurturing creativity in a supportive environment.

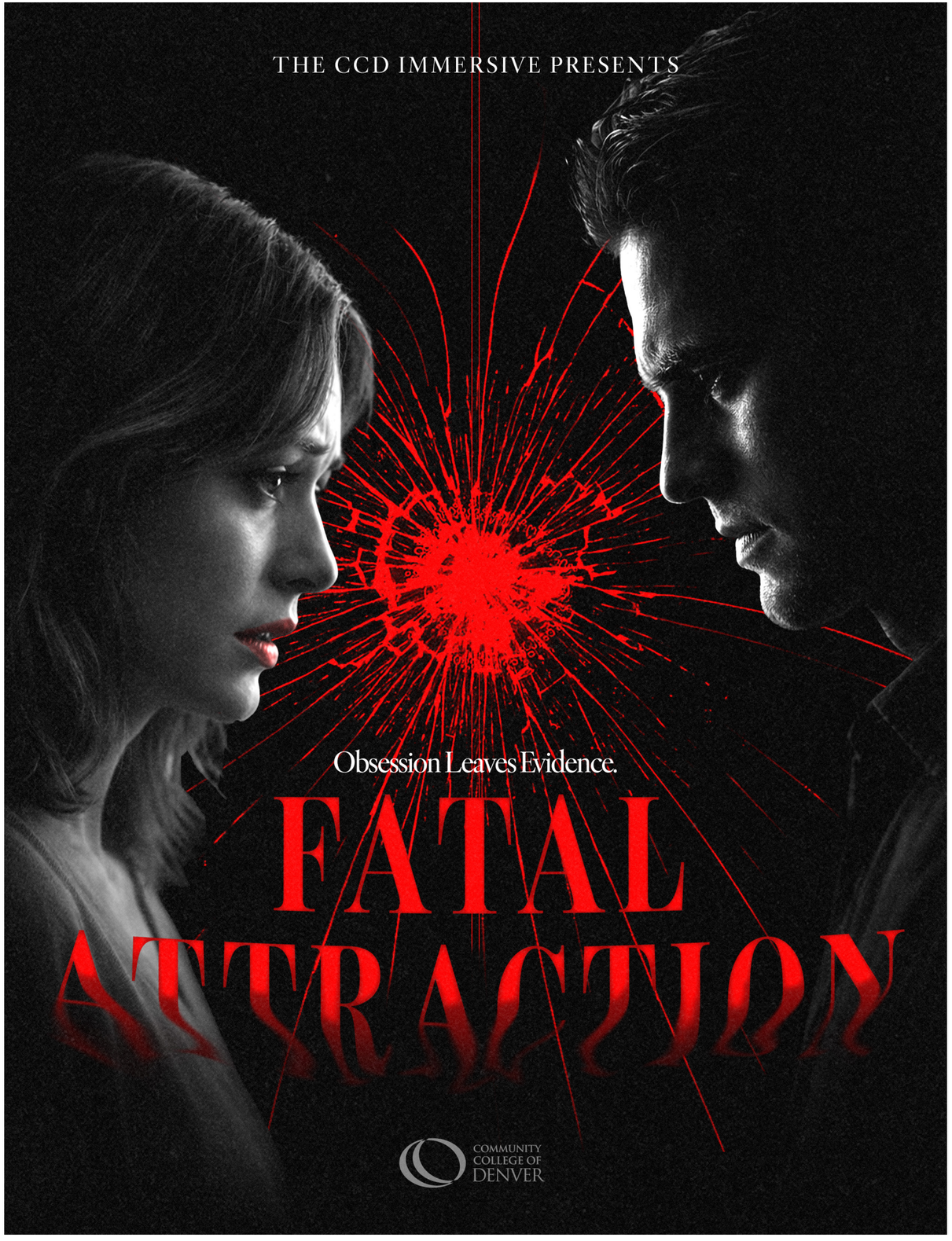
These models helped shape the structure of workshops that guided participants to reconnect with different areas of their lives—whether it was their physical, emotional, or mental well-being—through the lens of creative expression and awareness.

By incorporating these research-based methodologies, VYBE ensures that every event is not only an opportunity for fun and self-expression but also a profound journey of personal discovery. Adrian's commitment to fostering a community that lives intentionally and creatively is evident in every aspect of their events, where participants learn not only through structured activities but also by observing and engaging with the collective energy and behavior of those around them.

This intentional lifestyle, which VYBE promotes, is key to creating a ripple effect in the community—encouraging personal growth and creative living for all involved.

VYBE isn't just a name—it's a philosophy, a community built on fostering connection, creativity, and shared energy. VYBE is a child that has truly flourished, consistently nurtured by the supportive village behind it. ■

"VYBE HOLDS THE SPACE FOR ADULTS TO RECONNECT WITH THEIR PLAYFUL SPIRIT AND BUILD DEEPER RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH CREATIVE EXPRESSION."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VYJAY

SOARS AT THE BLUEBIRD

TRANSFORMING AN INTIMATE ROOM INTO SOMETHING ELECTRIFYING

AUTHOR **FLORENCE ALDEN**
GRAPHIC DESIGN **RUDY RODRIGUEZ**

On October 17th, 2025, Denver hip-hop artist Vyjay Harris, producer of “With You” by LTG, performed his first show and opened for LTG at the historic Bluebird Theater in the City Park neighborhood of Denver.

I met Vyjay October 29 for an interview to discuss how ProdVyjay! the artist had manifested.

We discussed what it was like performing live on stage with fellow hip-hop artists for the first time. The significant role community support had played in discovering his passion for music production. And his first year studying recording arts at CCD.

The show’s promoter Hypnautic hyped him up, and the artist SGauge passed him the mic to confront the energetic crowd. He explained the comradery on stage as a vibe as he went on and performed in front of a more than 300 people.

“It was cool to see them and the vibe that they got, and it made me think how am going to get the crowd involved? How am I going to express myself and my set? And it was a lot of jitters before I came out. So, after that I went on stage and then I just did my thing.

I got, you know into the zone. It’s like a flow state almost.”

The sun was nearly inescapable, and the air was crisp and cool at the patio table. Vyjay shaded his eyes with his hand and discussed his flourishing interest in music theory.

“I listened to a lot of music as I grew up, which I think is important. Cause I get to make a bunch of different music, and I don’t hold myself to one genre honestly.”

He first discovered his main passion on the music sharing app SoundCloud, where he discovered Lil Tecca. The independence and connections he made on SoundCloud eventually led him to producing beats for LTG, DNA Picasso and Othello James.

“I started making music when I was 12. I’ve always had a passion for music. As soon as I got my hands on any type of like DAW. I started on Garage Band on my phone.”

Throughout his teens he upgraded his toolkit at any chance, moving from iPhone to making beats on iPad before being gifted a laptop by his dad one year.

His tech and commitment to learning is how he realized his passions and it became something tangible. With his family, friends and mentorship he started to appear on the music scene’s radar as well.

“We built Qoncert for artists to build real careers, Vyjay is a perfect example.” Hypnautic, the show promoter and Co-founder of Qoncert said about Vyjay in an Instagram message. “Young talent with a big vision and a grind strong enough to meet it.”

Music literacy gave him more avenues to work in, and longevity around his passion. So, he chose his career, a title and invested in education. Vyjay is currently studying recording arts at the Community College of Denver where he is taking up new challenges, he is also learning music theory, and how to play piano and guitar to broaden his musical artistry into the future. ■

WAKE THE DEAD AGAIN!

Comeback Kid marks 20 years of its breakout album with a packed Denver crowd.

AUTHOR **SEBASTIAN FINKE**
GRAPHIC DESIGN **JACKSON PEAKE**
PHOTOGRAPHY **CREATIVE COMMONS**

ON a Monday night in Denver, the crowd at the packed Summit Music Hall erupts into chants of “WAKE THE DEAD,” everyone’s energy reverberating through the room. As fans, most in their 30s and 40s, crowd the mosh pit, frontman Andrew Neufeld of Comeback Kid stirs the crowd into a frenzy. The band’s iconic title track from their 2005 album, Wake The Dead, has never lost its power and appeal. Two decades later, it continues to captivate fans of hardcore punk music.

More than just a fan favorite, Wake The Dead became a defining record in hardcore, blending raw aggression with melody in a way that set it apart. The album’s emotional intensity, anthemic choruses, and high-energy riffs struck a chord with listeners and helped push the band to new heights. Even today, it remains a staple of the scene, inspiring both longtime fans and a new generation of hardcore bands. But what exactly makes Wake The Dead so enduring? And why does it continue to hold such a powerful place in hardcore history?

Comeback Kid was formed in 2001 by Andrew Neufeld, who was originally the guitarist, and Jeremy Hibert. However, the band didn’t become a full-time project until 2003, when they released their first full-length album, Turn It Around.

It's like everyone in the crowd becomes one voice. You cant stand still...

COMPLACENCY KILLS CREATIVITY

Neufeld told Indie Vision Music, “We started around 2001 but only decided to fully embrace doing this band full-time in 2003. Before that, it was just playing local shows… once our first record was out we started touring.”

It wasn’t until the release of Wake The Dead in 2005 that the band started making a name for themselves within the hardcore scene, reaching a larger audience. Aaron Gibson, a longtime fan, remembers the first time he heard the record: “I’ll never forget the first time I heard ‘Wake the Dead.’ I was in a friend’s car and they put on the title track. From the very beginning, I was hooked. The chorus is just so catchy, and I still find myself randomly singing it.”

The title track resonates with fans the most. “No matter how many times I’ve seen Comeback Kid, when they play ‘Wake the Dead,’ including tonight, the entire room explodes! It’s like everyone in the crowd suddenly becomes one voice. You can’t stand still when that song comes on,” said fan Lisa Hernandez.

The band agrees that the song is a major part of their set and career, along with the album as a whole. “It was no doubt an important album for us. ‘Wake The Dead’ is the most recognizable song we have ever released,” Neufeld told Kill the Music. “We finish our set with it 99% of the time, and we still play a good chunk of the song from the album.”

Beyond its sheer energy, the album stood out because it pushed the boundaries of hardcore’s sound. While melody wasn’t unheard of in the genre, Wake The Dead refined the balance between raw intensity and catchy, anthemic hooks. This made it more accessible without losing its edge. It allowed Comeback Kid to reach listeners who might not have connected with more traditional hardcore.

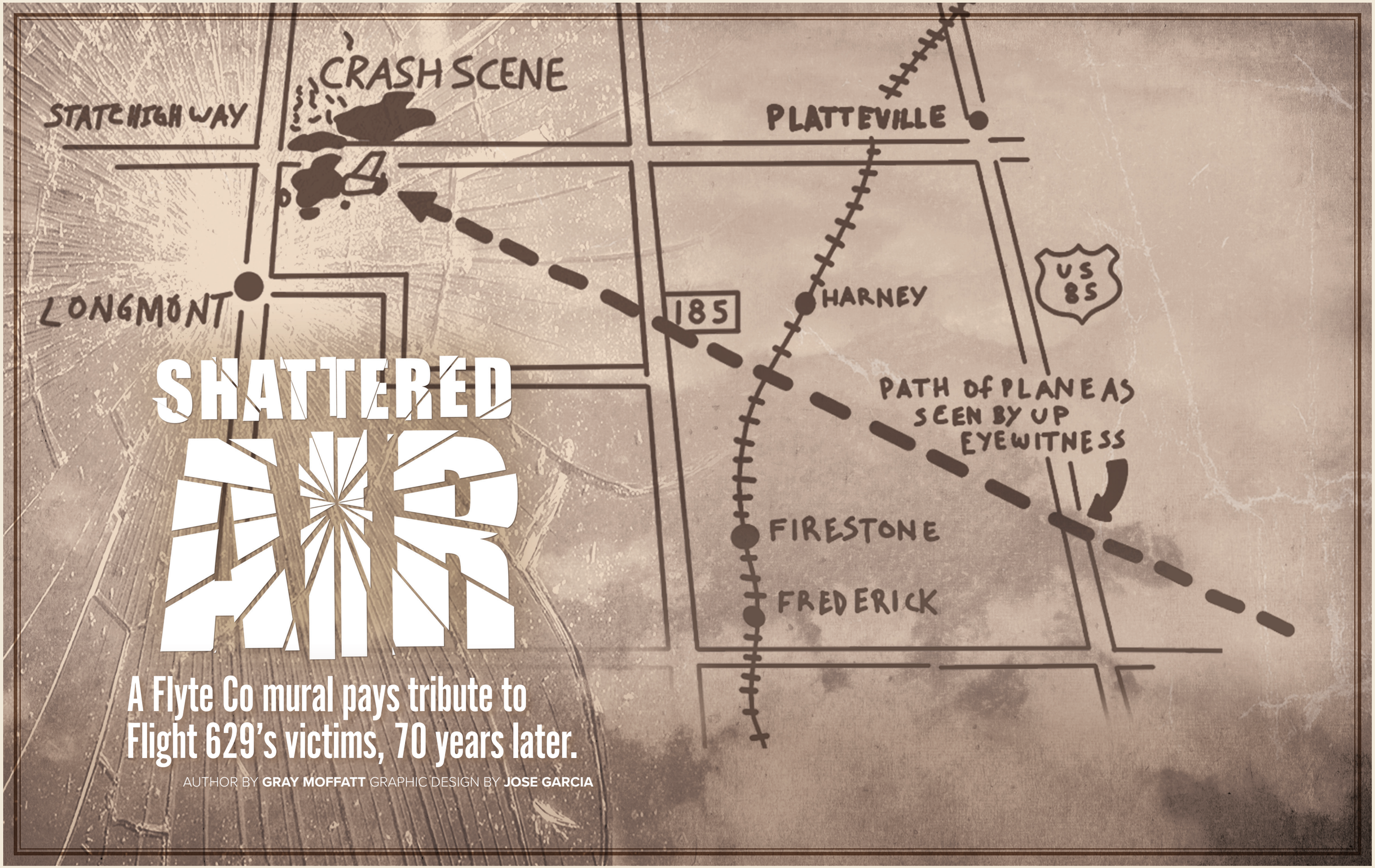
“It was one of those records that just hit the right balance,” Neufeld told Kill The Music. “We were pulling from bands we loved—Gorilla Biscuits, Sick of It All—but also adding our own twist. We didn’t realize at the time how much it would stick with people.” The influence was unintentional, but the result was lasting.

The emotional intensity of the lyrics also contributes to the album’s longevity. Themes of perseverance, struggle, and unity resonate with fans and have helped many of them through difficult times. “Hardcore is about expressing emotions in their rawest form,” said longtime fan Darrell Lee. “This album captures that so well. It’s aggressive but also uplifting. It makes you feel like you’re a part of something bigger.”

Wake The Dead’s impact extends beyond just its fans. It has influenced a new generation of hardcore bands who consider it a pivotal record in shaping their sound. “It’s wild to think about younger bands saying we had an influence on them,” Neufeld told Indie Vision Music. “We were just making music that felt real to us, but when people say that it helped shape their journey in hardcore, that’s really humbling.”

Despite the ever-evolving sound of hardcore music, Comeback Kid’s ability to remain relevant speaks to their work ethic and the timeless quality of Wake The Dead. The band continues to tour relentlessly, proving that the energy behind the record is still alive after two decades. It’s a testament to the bond between band and audience—something that’s been built on sweat, sound, and sincerity.

Reflecting on the journey, Neufeld expressed gratitude when speaking to HM Magazine. “I just love music. I grew up with music. It’s pretty simple for me. I enjoy playing, and I’m just stoked that I surround myself with super cool musicians and that everyone is on the same page.” ■



SHATTERED AIR

A Flyte Co mural pays tribute to Flight 629's victims, 70 years later.

AUTHOR BY **GRAY MOFFATT** GRAPHIC DESIGN BY **JOSE GARCIA**

Seventy years ago, on November 1, 1955, sabotaged United Airlines Flight 629 exploded over farm fields in Longmount shortly after leaving former Denver's Stapleton airport killing all forty-four souls on board.

Colorado has grown so quickly in the following decades. Many people don't know about this tragedy that marked the first confirmed commercial airliner sabotage in U.S. history and dramatically changed aviation flight security screening.

A team of local artists, including me, honored the victims and their families with a mural installed in the Flyte Co Tower Museum. Stapleton International Airport shut down in 1995 and the old traffic control tower and base building is now the Flyte Co brewery and bar for the Central Park neighborhood.

It was a team effort from the start. Sean Henson who conducts the Flyte Co Tours reached out wanting a mural to honor the forty-four lives lost for the 70th anniversary event. Brook Francis, who works at Flyte Co, stepped up to work on this project. She reached out to me and we began working on a plan to make this mural a memorable tribute to those who were affected by this tragedy.

From the beginning, the intention was to honor the passengers and ensure their story was not forgotten. Working at a scale of roughly eight feet tall and five and a half feet wide, we chose to paint on canvas with acrylic because it allowed us to create the level of detail, layering, and tonal depth the piece deserved. Every decision from palette to composition was guided by a sense of responsibility to those who died, to their families, and to the history held within the tower's walls.

This tragedy dramatically changed aviation security screening.

The process began with conversations about tone and symbolism. We wanted the mural to embody remembrance rather than spectacle, and to carry a quiet reverence. Once sketches and visual references were finalized, we prepared the canvas and began transferring our design.

Working side by side, Brook and I worked on bringing the vision to life.

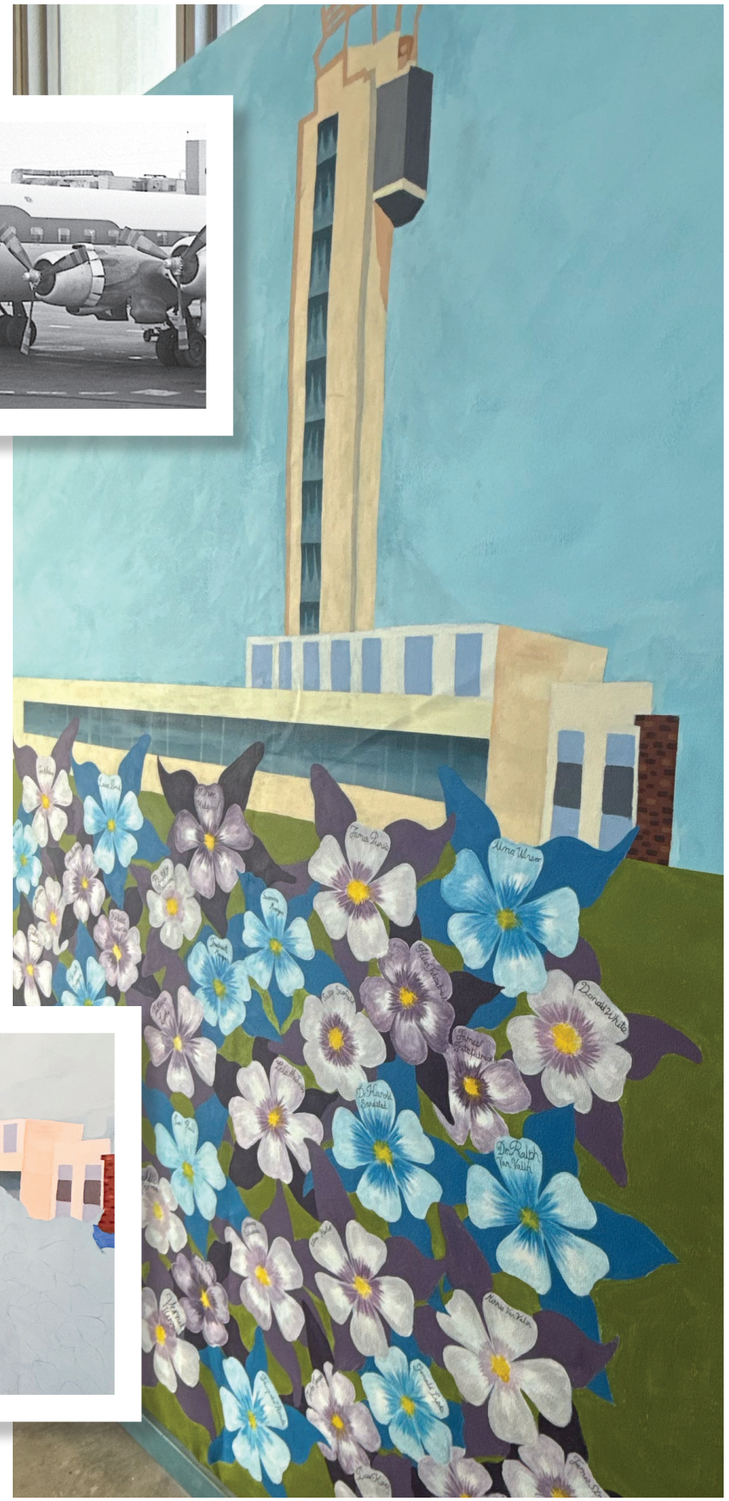
Time was our biggest obstacle. We were given a strict deadline, and the physical demands of painting at that scale were real. There were nights when we were exhausted, balancing precision with speed, but we stayed motivated by the purpose of the piece. We wanted the mural to clearly reflect care not only in its craft, but in its intent.

Along the way, our friend Cooper Crist played a crucial role in bringing the installation together. He built the entire frame by hand, measuring and cutting each piece with precision, and ensuring the structure would support the weight and scale of the canvas. Once the painting was complete, Cooper also handled the installation process. His craftsmanship and care gave the mural a permanent, respectful presence, one that mirrored the intention behind the artwork itself. Standing before the finished mural, all of those long hours felt worthwhile.

Our hope is that visitors feel the weight of the history held in this space, and that the mural offers a point of reflection for the families and communities connected to the event. Above all, it serves as a reminder that their story will be remembered. ■

United Air Lines Flight 629. The wreckage of the plane was carefully laid out in a Denver warehouse, helping investigators solve the case.

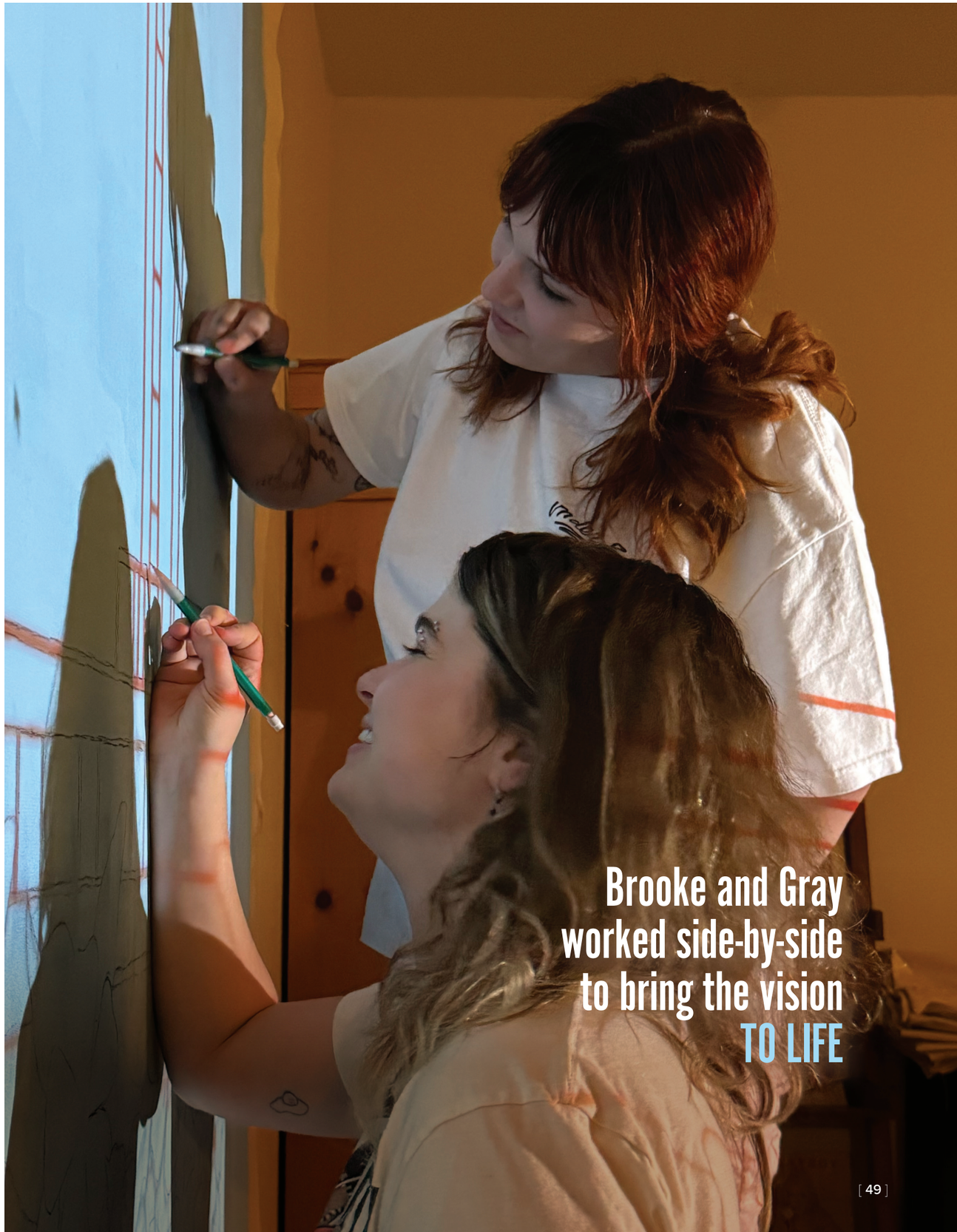
The intention of the murals was to honor the passengers to ensure their story was not forgotten.

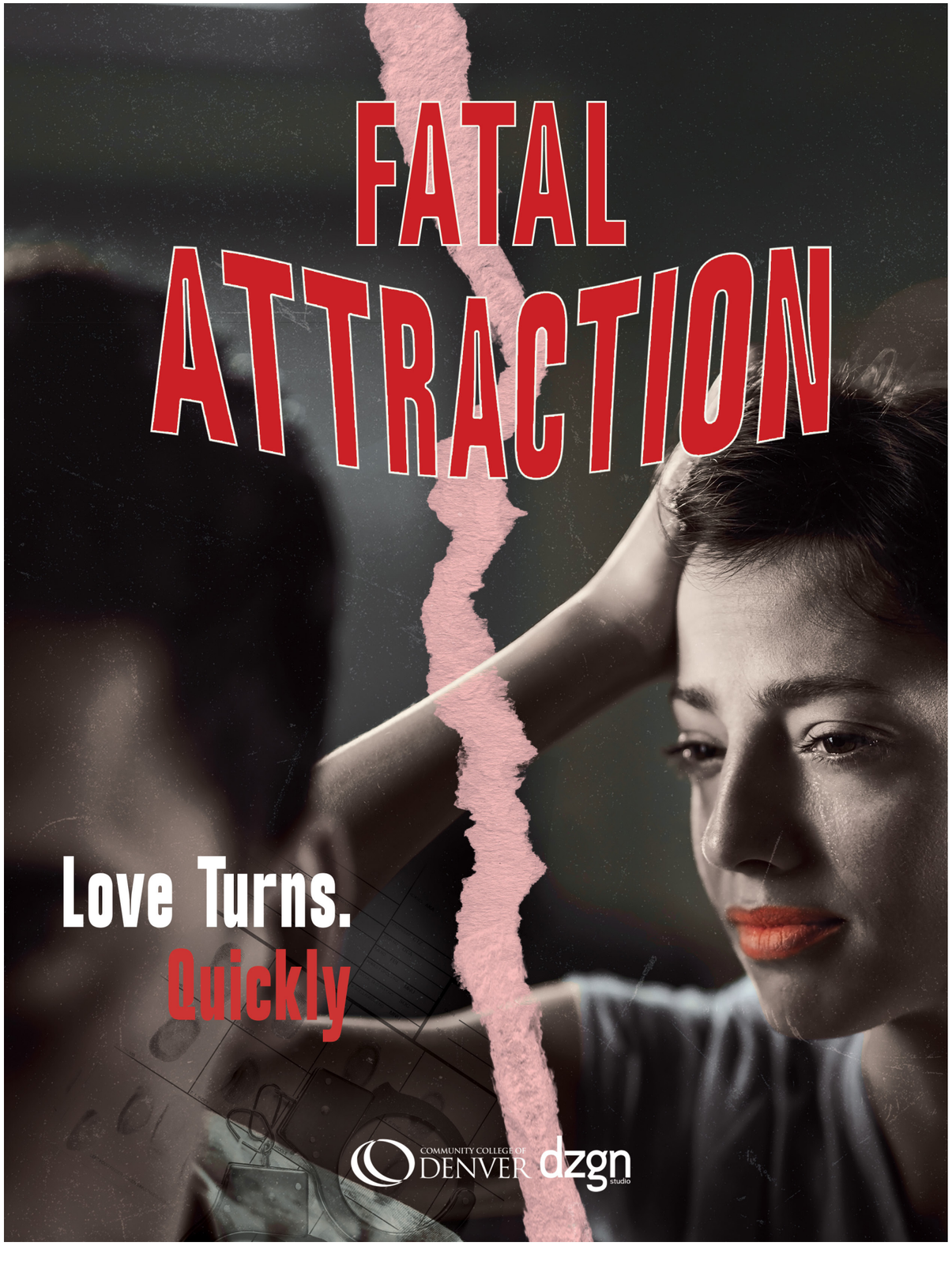


ARTIST'S BIOS

Brook Francis is a Denver-based painter and multidisciplinary creator whose work blends symbolism, narrative elements, and emotional depth. She approaches each piece with intention and curiosity, driven by a desire to grow as an artist and storyteller. Through collaborative projects and personal practice, she seeks to honor lived experiences, preserve memory, and foster human connection through art.

Gray Moffatt is a Denver-based painter and art education major at the Community College of Denver. Their practice focuses on storytelling, remembrance, and emotional resonance, with a dedication to becoming a well-rounded artist. Through color, symbolism, and collaborative work, she seeks to createpieces that honor history, invite reflection, and connect people through shared experience.

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DESIGNED BY AIDEN MATLACK
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Flight of the VOYAGERS

Local Drone Soccer Team Takes Off

AUTHOR/PHOTOGRAPHY
JONATHAN VILLALOBOS GONZALEZ

GRAPHIC DESIGN
HUNT RAEL

Drones and soccer at first sound like an odd couple. Drones are all about the air. While soccer is all about the ground. But mix them together, and they seem to work as an innovative game based on the fictional sport of Quidditch, from the popular Harry Potter series. The buzzing whirling blades of propellers, the tense communication between drone pilots strategizing the grid, the excited crowd roaring at each goal, in a word, drone soccer is about fusion. The fusion of furious fast paced action.

Drone Soccer is a 5v5 competitive e-sport that recently exploded in growth at local high schools and colleges as a club activity. One local team, The Voyagers, recently competed for the Rocky Mountain Invitational in Summer of 2025 and won! Full disclosure, I am one of the pilots.

The sport is called an e-sport because it uses electronics, like drones and Remote controls to compete. The setup is fairly straightforward. Two teams face off for three minutes, and the goal is to score as many goals as possible within that time limit. The team with the most points wins. There are three goalies, 1 chaser, 1 striker. It's up to the striker to put points on the board. It is often compared to the fictional sport of quidditch from the Harry Potter series. But instead of flying brooms, pilots fly drones that have a cage. These drones are lightweight 20cm (about the size of your hand). They have four propellers and weigh under 300 grams (slightly heavier than an iPhone). The drones are built for speed over endurance with a battery charge of 3 minutes.

Some schools in Colorado have been bringing drone soccer programs into their curriculum, with the goal of creating a fun, competitive pathway into the aerospace industry.

"It's an amazing opportunity for students. Because they learn how to build drones, code drones, and customize them not just fly them." said Robert Ferguson, CTE teacher at Ranum High School in Westminster.

Drone Soccer can be a way for any student to find their passion or simply find something that can be fun and more hands on. Drone Soccer provides many skills that can be used in the future when students decide to pursue a career in aerospace.

Robert Ferguson said, "Drone Soccer is an easy way for students to get involved in aviation." Drone Soccer can provide students with coding, soldering, and design skillsets that are valuable at young ages and in the future.

This provides a great opportunity for students who do not know what to do after high school. Mainly because they don't know what to pursue after graduation. One student from Metropolitan State University in Denver was in a similar predicament.

Xavier Culp is a Drone pilot who is pursuing aerospace engineering. He was unsure about what

he wanted to do after graduation. It was not until he found out about a class that taught drone technology at Westminster High School. That he found what he wanted to pursue.

When asked if he was interested in drone technology and if he ever thought it would lead to pursuing aviation. He stated “I did not. My first interest in aviation and drones started in that class. But before that, my pursuit was electrical engineering.”

CTE teacher Robert Ferguson recommended an afterschool club to Xavier that was called Drone Soccer. “I kind of just looked at it as an after-school club and didn’t think too much about it.” Ever since 2022, Xavier has been hooked on Drone Soccer.

Xavier Culp, who started on the Westminster High School Drone Soccer team, is now a part of a team named The Voyagers. Which looks like it will be his team for the future. “We’re amazing. From team bonding and just the overall experience, even outside of the team. We are a friend group.” Said Xavier Culp.

His favorite moment of the team was when they all went to Sun n’ Fun 2025 in Tampa Bay, Florida. To coach at the Academic Drone Soccer World Cup 2025. “I could see in everybody’s eyes that they were enjoying and having fun being able to teach the next generation of students.”

His passion for the sport of Drone soccer continues to grow. What took off as an after-school club grew into something much more serious. As an intern for the Non-profit organization CrewConcept Drone Lab. Xavier now goes out and does training programs for schools with drone soccer programs. Recently he went to Michigan to coach schools that are building drone soccer programs.

The Voyagers go to practice every Wednesday at Ranum High School where they build, code, solder, and fly their drones. Some of them are going to college for engineering degrees except for one.

Another pilot on the Voyagers team is Helen Tran. Helen is pursuing a nursing degree from Regis University. However, she still makes a constant effort to make practices and events despite pursuing a different career path. When she was asked why she chose to do drone soccer, she said. “Drone Soccer introduced me to the aerospace career pathway. But ultimately, I chose nursing as my pathway. But drone soccer is still a passion of mine.”

For Helen, she enjoys the technical aspect of drone soccer. Working with teammates to solve problems and create strategies. Working on getting better every single practice. But also, when it is time to compete in a tournament. She loves getting adrenaline from playing against other teams and winning.

The preparation of drones is a big factor in big tournaments; it’s the difference between winning medals and falling short. The Voyagers have their own tech wizard, and his name is Luis Lechuga. “It’s cool, I get to work with many kinds of materials like carbon fiber. To make repairs on drones that have been damaged,” said Luis after he was asked what it was like to repair drones.

Luis is responsible for making technical changes and fixes to the Voyagers’ drones. He changes things like the frame material or makes minor adjustments to the code. Fitting to a pilot’s preference. A goalie might want a drone that is more stable, while a striker might want a drone that is faster and snappy.

Luis is great at adjusting his teammate’s drones; he plays a major role in the team’s success. Without him, the team would be at a severe disadvantage during a competition day.

Drone Soccer is not just for people who want to further their knowledge of aerospace. It is also for people who want to find a fun activity that involves problem solving and teamwork. ■

It's is an easy way for students to get involved in aviation.

Grounds for Celebration

Lima Coffee Roasters brews up a New Campus West Location

AUTHOR/PHOTOGRAPHY **ISABELLE ROHLF** GRAPHIC DESIGN **LEX WILKINSON**

Students rely on coffee to cope with the stress of college life. But it's not just a source of fuel. Lima Coffee Roasters provides good coffee for students who care about the taste and the vibe. In February 2025, Lima Coffee Roasters opened their fourth location less than a block from Colorado State University (CSU) campus in Fort Collins.

LOCATION

When asked if he is excited about the new location, Ezekiel Henry, a Computer Science student at CSU says, "Oh heck yes. Heck yes! The vibes will be immaculate. I expect. I hope. If they're not, I'm gonna cry about it."

He appreciates that, while Lima Coffee Roasters is close to campus, it is different than the coffee shops on campus. He says, "it's distinct from the campus coffee shops because it is independent of CSU and [is] a coffee shop that's a sit-down place and not a 'grab this thing on the go' which is what the other shops are for."

BACKGROUND

As a family-owned business, Lima Coffee Roasters started with just coffee roasting in 2018, before opening their first location in 2020. In the past 5 years, what started as a coffee kiosk in a local mall has noww grown to include downtown, midtown and campus locations.

From the beginning, Lima has focused on people and excellence. Co-owner Amanda Lima says, "'Our motto is "love people, love coffee' in that specific order.... I love being able to create a space that is aesthetically pleasing but also has an excellence of really good coffee."

The Limas have been connected to Fort Collins and to CSU from the beginning. As Lima says, "I'm the 5th generation to live in Fort Collins. And so, it's always been very special to me. I went to Colorado State University for a little while and just ended up loving it here and never left."

From the time she was little, Lima enjoyed coffee. "My Dad had an espresso machine growing up and I

Amanda Lima's love of interior design and visual merchandising fused with her husband's [Diego Lima] coffee roasting skills to create Lima Coffee Roasters.

“He takes special care to craft authentic roasts...”

used to sneak espresso beans every once in a while.”

CSU had a special role to play in Lima and her husband, Diego’s relationship. As Lima says, “If CSU wasn’t here, Diego and I would’ve never met.”

Lima’s love of interior design and visual merchandising fused with her husband’s coffee roasting skills to create Lima Coffee Roasters.

All the coffee is roasted by Diego Lima, Lima’s husband and fellow co-owner. Lima says, “once he got into roasting coffee, he really fell in love with the natural tasting notes of coffee and how those are prominent with different variables.” He takes special care to craft authentic roasts that preserve and enhance the taste that the farmers and producers intended.

As a self-proclaimed coffee connoisseur, Henry likes Lima Coffee Roasters because, “of the coffee shops in town, Lima stands out in quality... They know what they’re doing with coffee; they don’t play around.

Lillian Schreiber is a freshman studying Early Childhood Education at CSU. However, as a commuter student and a fellow coffee connoisseur, she tends to avoid campus coffee shops.

She says, “I’m kind of particular about my coffee so I’m not a big fan of any of the [campus] coffee shops. Last time I got one it had grounds in it, and it was gross so I’m a little scared off by coffee shops inside of CSU. I don’t want to waste my money on that, so I wait to go somewhere better.”

Lime Coffee Roasters, however, meets Schreiber’s standards. The taste only compliments the vibe that the Limas have crafted over time.

Besides the good coffee, Schreiber appreciates the coffee shop’s atmosphere. She says, “I feel like every time I go there, I see someone I know, and the employees are always really excited to talk to you and just interested in your life.”

Henry says, “I like Lima’s aesthetic; it’s very catered towards young people and it’s very set up to do things like meet a friend for coffee; it’s very relational.”

Although the Limas have dreamt of connecting with students, the opportunity appeared more recently. When foot traffic and profits at Lima’s mall location started to drop, the Limas started to look for a new location. At the same time, the owners of the former coffee shop, Momo Lolo’s, reached out looking for a new coffee roaster. The Limas discovered that Momo Lolo’s was planning to close, and their space would be available.

Lima says, “Out of all the spaces around campus, that’s the ideal one. There’s not as much seating as our other two shops, but when that came, I was like, ‘this is too perfect and meant to be.’”

When asked about the aesthetic, Lima says that she wanted to create a space where CSU employees, alumni and current students alike could easily feel at home.

With camel-colored walls, warm lighting, plaid wallpaper and leather chairs, the Campus West location has a warm and cozy feel. Lima says that she wants the space to feel like a library.

The space is clearly catered toward CSU students, as it has a retro CSU logo on the wall and CSU Aggie colors (green and orange) in the overall theme. It even has larger two-person tables, which are convenient for studying.

When asked if she plans to go to the Campus West location regularly, Schreiber says, “Yeah. Maybe not the one on campus though because I just really like the Midtown one!” She laughs.

Whether you are a student, coffee lover or just someone who loves vibrant community, stop by Lima Coffee Roasters to find people and drinks to brighten your day. ■

ROOTED IN THE GAME

Youth Standout, JADEN THOMPSON, Thrives in Local Basketball

AUTHOR / PHOTOGRAPHY **KIJUAN THOMPSON**
GRAPHIC DESIGN **SEMMY KO**

IF I GET THE BALL, I'M TAKING THE SHOT

The squeak of sneakers is the first sign he's coming. Before he even steps onto the court, before the ball touches his hands, you can hear the sound—quick, sharp, and impatient, like he's already playing a game only he can see. My little cousin has always moved like that, as if basketball isn't just something he does, but something woven into him.

At just 11 years old, he has become a familiar name in local youth leagues. Coaches talk about his speed. Teammates talk about his work ethic. The family talks about how the sport changed him. Watching him now, it's easy to forget he didn't start out confident at all.

He used to be the quiet one. The kid who sat at the end of the bench in school cafeterias, who only spoke when someone else started the conversation. Basketball didn't just give him a team—it gave him a voice.

"I feel like basketball made me braver," he told me during a late-night shooting session at the neighborhood court. "It's like when I play, I don't feel scared of anything."

That sense of identity didn't come easy. It was built over years—early practices, long weekends, drills he repeated until his arms were tired and his fingers were sore. His first coach, Coach Aj , noticed that determination early.

"He might be small, but he's got a big heart," Coach Aj said. "He listens, he works, and he never quits. That's what sets him apart."

That hunger follows him everywhere. Ask anyone in the family, and they'll say the same thing: he practices in the driveway until it's too dark to see. He dribbles a basketball inside the house, even though everyone tells him not to. He watches NBA highlights like they're homework. And when he loses, whether it's a schoolyard game or a league matchup, he doesn't complain—he studies it.

His mother Lauren Brown remembers the moment she realized basketball was becoming more than a

hobby. “He started waking himself up early,” she said. “I didn’t have to remind him anymore. He’d already be outside with the ball before I even opened my eyes.”

But basketball changed more than his routine. It changed how he saw himself.

Before, he struggled with confidence. Speaking in class made him nervous. Meeting new people made him anxious. But step by step, game by game, he built a version of himself that stands a little taller—literally and figuratively.

“When he made his first big shot in a game, everything clicked,” his older brother said. “After that, he believed in himself more, like he knew he belonged out there.”

From that moment, the work intensified. He joined a travel ball. He trained with older kids. He learned how to handle pressure, how to move without the ball, how to read a defense before it formed. And although the wins meant a lot, the setbacks shaped him more.

One tournament last year still sticks with him. His team was down by two with seconds left. The play was drawn up for him, but he hesitated—just long enough to miss the chance. Afterward, he sat alone on the bleachers, silent. But instead of breaking him, the loss became fuel.

“I told myself I’m never hesitating again,” he said. “If I get the ball, I’m taking the shot.”

That summer, he transformed. His shot improved. His confidence sharpened. His leadership grew. He went from the kid who waited to be told what to do to the one calling out screens, lifting up teammates, running the floor like he owned it.

And now? He’s beginning to dream bigger.

“You think I can make varsity early?” he asked me recently, half nervous, half excited.

I told him the truth: if he keeps going the way he is, nothing is out of reach.

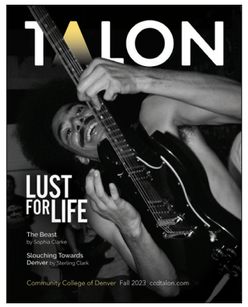
His goals stretch far—a scholarship, maybe even playing professionally. But he never lets the future overshadow the present. For him, every practice matters. Every rep matters. Every game teaches something.

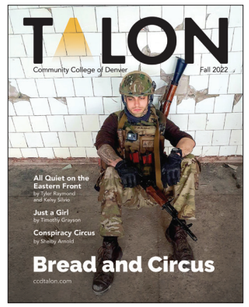
In a world full of distractions and uncertainty, the court has become his anchor. It’s where he learned discipline, confidence, teamwork, resilience. It’s where he found himself.

Watching him now, cutting across the court with the speed that once made him look like he was chasing lightning, one thing is clear: this isn’t the end of his story. It’s only the opening chapter.

And he’s just getting started. ■

CHASING LIGHTNING





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