

## Assistant Director named Chair of CARO



Laura Lewis Marchino

Laura Lewis Marchino, the Assistant Director of the Region 9 Economic Development District of Southwest Colorado, was elected Chair of the Colorado Association of Regional Organizations (CARO). Marchino has worked with Region 9 since 2005, and has participated in CARO for three years. This will be her second year as Chair.

“Working for a regional organization, I see the value in collaborating across geographic boundaries to increase organization efficiency and sharing information on priority issues and opportunities,” said Marchino.

CARO is a young statewide association that assists regional organizations in strengthening their capabilities to serve government members and provides a forum for the exchange of information and ideas. It also represents the organizations before state and federal legislative bodies. Marchino also serves on the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) Board of Directors along with several other local boards and committees.

Marchino represents the Southwest Colorado Council of Governments (SWCCOG) along with Ryan Mahoney, Administrator for the Town of Dolores.

### Region 9 Board of Directors

- Dan Fernandez, Chair, private sector
- Anthony Edwards, private sector, San Juan
- Bobby Lieb, Commissioner, La Plata
- Bruce Johnson, Treasurer, private sector, Montezuma
- Bryce Capron, Town of Dove Creek
- Chris LaMay, Vice Chair, Town of Bayfield
- David Mitchem, Town of Pagosa Springs
- Dewayne Findley, private sector, Montezuma
- Don McCandless private sector, La Plata
- Erin Johnson, Town of Rico
- Ernest Williams, Commissioner, Dolores
- Jason Wells, Town of Silverton
- Laurel Rematore, private sector, Montezuma
- Laurie Sigillito, private sector, La Plata
- Mark Prouty, private sector, La Plata
- Miriam Gillow-Wiles, Town of Ignacio
- Robert Kunkel, Secretary, City of Durango
- Rodney Class-Erickson, Southern Ute Tribe
- Ryan Mahoney, Town of Dolores
- Shane Hale, City of Cortez
- Steve Chappell, Commissioner, Montezuma
- Todd Starr, Archuleta
- Tom Yennerell, Town of Mancos
- William Tookey, San Juan

# Music in Harmony with Business

Freenotes Harmony Park is defying economic odds with their outdoor musical instruments designed for park, garden and playground. A La Plata County home-based business that initially relied on word of mouth for customers, is now a full-fledged manufacturer, with sales around the globe.

Richard Cooke, the owner and designer believes everyone can make music and wanted to share the experience of playing instruments to those without musical training. His wife, Christy agreed.

“Most people have to learn an instrument over time, so maybe, they can eventually jam with their friends and create. Freenotes’ instruments are the only system that allows a novice to step right into ensemble play.”

The yard outside the Cooke’s home is full of instrumental lawn art. Christy, who is also the Freenotes CEO, said it is a laboratory of sorts to test their product’s durability in extreme elements.

All instruments are designed by Richard, who was a Grammy Award recipient in 2007 for the Crestone Album with Paul Winter. Four years ago, he licensed his instrument designs in England to be put in playgrounds. This was a turning point for the business as sales have doubled each year since 2008.

“taking the risk to commercialize our operation, we learned to trust that other people will care and maintain the quality,” Christy said.

“We tried to do it ourselves, but we were getting crushed under the weight of our own success,” she said. “We were so busy, that we thought if we advertised we would

be in over our heads. It seemed if we took on employees and debt that it would demand even more of our time and energy, when we were already maxed.” However, the Cooke’s were surprised when the expected didn’t happen.

Freenotes Harmony Park worked with the Southwest Colorado Small Business Development Center to strategize their growth plan, and received a loan from the Region 9 Economic Development District to implement it.

“Region 9’s loan allowed us to get a business/general manager that understands budgets, and helped us grow to 6 employees, and into a new facility in addition to our home.”

In July of this year, the company will be again expanding offices and tripling their manufacturing space.

Less than 1% of their business is local and the typical customer is a municipality or school. Moab, Utah has the largest collection of Cooke’s instruments and eight were recently installed in Parker, Colorado as part of a public arts exhibit at the new Performing Arts and Events Center. The Durango Public Library is planning to install three instruments along the River Trail this summer.

The fact that the phone keeps ringing has Richard acknowledging that music has its own agenda. Freenotes Harmony Park’s future plans include expanding into music curriculum in order to combine an outdoor play environment into an educational classroom. You can see their entire line of products at [www.freenotesharmonypark.com](http://www.freenotesharmonypark.com).



Cito Nuhn, 8th grade teacher at Miller Middle School, tries out a Freenotes instrument

## Bryce Capron named 2011 Economic Development Leader of the Year



From left: Ed Morlan, Region 9 Executive Director, Bryce Capron, and daughter Amber Capron

Bryce Capron, Dove Creek business owner and Chair of the Dolores County Development Corporation (DCDC), was named the Economic Development Leader of the Year by the Region 9 Economic Development District Board of Directors.

Capron serves on several regional boards including the Southwest Colorado Council of Governments, SW Regional Transportation Planning Commission, Region 9 Board and the Region 9 Loan Committee.

Laura Lewis Marchino, assistant director of Region 9 EDD said, "Bryce is a quiet leader. He is soft spoken but extremely dedicated and reliable. He is always willing to drive 90 miles one-way to make sure Dove Creek and Dolores County are represented."

A long-time Dove Creek resident, Capron is also the driving force behind the current revitalization of the Dove Creek Chamber by going door-to-door making a personal plea to businesses on the value of the chamber. In a town of 735 people, the chamber now has over 70 members. As Chair of the DCDC, Capron worked hard to bring in the San Juan Bio Energy plant to the community and continues to work on the Weber Business Park.

Capron grew up in Arvada and moved to Dove Creek to teach, a job he held until he retired. Capron currently owns BC Signs.

The Economic Development Leader of the Year award honors individuals for their achievement and commitment as leaders in economic and community development efforts. The award was first given in 2001. Previous winners include: Former Fort Lewis College School of Business Dean, Tom Harrington Ph.D.; Neal Stephens, Montezuma County resident and Empire Electric General Manager; Emily Meisner, Ignacio Chamber; and the late Leonard Burch, Southern Ute Tribal Chairman.

## Fort Lewis College Student Interning at Region 9



Caitlin Riggs

Fort Lewis College student, Caitlin Riggs, joined the Region 9 team in August, 2011 as a student intern. Born and raised on the Navajo reservation near Chinle, AZ, she came to southwest Colorado to attend Fort Lewis College. Riggs is full of energy, gregarious and has plenty of hobbies including quilting, fashion, and photography, but it was the idea of starting her own business one day, that brought her to Region 9.

"I had no idea that these sorts of organizations existed before working here," said Riggs. "The very second I walked into Region 9, it was a welcoming and uplifting environment with all this success surrounding it. Everyone has been very helpful and knowledgeable."

Riggs is a senior majoring in both Accounting and Native American Indigenous Studies. She is working primarily on the Southwest Colorado Council of Government's telecommunications project.

"Career wise, I know that this job will help me succeed just through all the experience I will have here, because I hope to go back to the Navajo Nation, and help our economy the same way Region 9 helps out Southwest Colorado," said Riggs.

## New Addition to the Region 9 BLF Loan Committee

Terryl Peterson, a long-time La Plata County resident, has joined the Region 9 Economic Development District's Business Loan Fund (BLF) Committee. A graduate of Fort Lewis and the University of Colorado, Peterson served 15 years as the chief financial officer for Durango-based Lore International (now called Korn/Ferry), has been a Certified Public Accountant since 1987, and currently owns CFO Services LLC. Peterson also serves as a Business Advisor with the Small Business Development Center at Fort Lewis College where she works with small and mid-sized businesses on financials and operations.

Peterson will serve as an at-large member. Ed Morlan, Executive Director of Region 9, said, "Terryl has a lot of experience working with start-up businesses and entrepreneurs. I think her expertise will be a great addition to our Committee."

The Loan Committee is composed of two representatives from each of the five counties in southwest Colorado, plus two at-large positions. At least one person is required to have loan making experience, one person an accounting background, one person with a real estate background and two with a business background. The term on the Loan Committee is two years, but there are no term limits.

For more information on the Loan program and Committee, please contact Region 9 at 970-247-9621 or visit our web page at [www.scan.org](http://www.scan.org).



Terryl Peterson

## John Ehmann-Fitting In and Digging In



John Ehmann

Since his move in November 2011, John Ehmann is keeping busy as Special Projects Coordinator providing administrative support for the Southwest Colorado Council of Governments and the Regional Transit Coordinating Council.

"I appreciate the opportunity to work closely with Laura Lewis Marchino on these projects. She is an excellent supervisor and has made it easy for me to fit into the Region 9 office and dig into the important work of these regional initiatives." Ehmann also works with Ed Morlan on certain aspects of the SCAN telecommunications project as time permits. "Ed Morlan and the entire Region 9 staff have been very welcoming."

John relocated from the state of Washington because he wants to set down roots in Durango. "I like the diversity of the land, and the diversity and energy of the community".

Ehmann has extensive educational background in public policy and economics, and experience in state government as a budget and legislative analyst. Before moving out west for graduate school (and the mountains) he was involved with a broad range of issues thru community organizations and public boards in North Carolina.

"I am impressed with the leadership of Region 9 and the Council of Governments. Both Boards are filled with thoughtful, experienced individuals. I have enjoyed meeting them and hope to help with their efforts to make positive contributions to the community however possible," said Ehmann.

Ehmann is also working on regional transit and hopes to help maintain and enhance transit services within communities and across the region as feasible. He welcomes your ideas and concerns related to transit services (or know others interested in the topic). Ehmann works out of the Region 9 offices in Durango. He can be reached at 970-247-9621 or by email at [john@scan.org](mailto:john@scan.org)



Kelly Kirkpatrick and John Bond working at their downtown location.

## 24/7 Cortez Travel is Open for Business

The travel industry may have undergone significant changes with the deregulation of the airline industry and decommissioning of travel agents, but Cortez Travel has evolved with the times. Founded in 1971, Cortez Travel is now owned by Kelly Kirkpatrick. She purchased the business in 2010, and nontraditionally, employs her previous boss.

"Many people think an owner sells a business and retires, but John (Bond) wasn't ready to retire and I needed an experienced agent," said Kirkpatrick. "You don't learn the business overnight because making travel arrangements is a service based entirely on experience and knowledge."

For example, Kirkpatrick can cite that only 18 percent of people have gone on a cruise, and that number is even less if the location is landlocked. She is enthusiastic, full of ideas and energy.

Both Bond and Kirkpatrick want the business to succeed. Kirkpatrick worked under Bond in the 1990's and after a stint as Director of the Cortez Retail Enhancement Association, transitioned back to her first love, travel.

Cortez Travel is the only travel agency in Montezuma County and Kirkpatrick's biggest challenge is showing the relevancy of a travel agency to consumers who can now book travel on-line. For employers, Kirkpatrick says time is money and working with a travel agent saves hours of frustration.

"People think it is more expensive to use a travel agent, but we are usually more aware of deals that we can pass along to our customers," she said. "Plus, if something goes wrong, people want a personal contact."

Since Cortez Travel offers 24/7 emergency service, they can fix errors and reschedule flights while a customer is finding the airline desk. Kirkpatrick attributes her past and future business success to the Region 9 Economic Development District of Southwest Colorado and the Southwest Colorado Small Business Development Center at Fort Lewis College.

"I couldn't have made the leap without my loan from Region 9 and the technical assistance from the SBDC. They gave me the confidence that I did know what I was doing, and filled in the gaps where I didn't have the background," she said.

Kirkpatrick plans to hire another travel agent in 2012 to increase service response.

"We are at capacity of our human 'man' hours," she said.

Kirkpatrick hopes to use any extra time to increase sales, improve the business' technology, and promote more group trips matching solo travelers who want to visit the same place.

"I think people are getting back to wanting a personal contact when making travel plans, and we are here to help," she said.

You can reach Cortez Travel at 970-565-9295 or [www.corteztravelonline.com](http://www.corteztravelonline.com). They are located at 9 W. Main St., Cortez.

## Southwest Colorado County and Regional Data Updated

Region 9 has recently updated their Region 9 Report and Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs). The CEDs provides information data about the overall health of our communities and whether the region is headed forward or backward, improving or deteriorating. For each county, and the region as a whole, there is data relating to population, infrastructure, county government, county revenues, land use, transportation issues, services, labor force, employment and income by sector, employment and income trends from 1980 to 2009 (latest year available). New to the report is information on economic drivers (also called economic clusters), livable wages and the county plans approved for the Colorado Blueprint.

The full CEDs is updated every five years, and each County's profile and Community Development Action Plan (CDAPs) is updated on a two-year cycle. The Region 9 Report is a 20 page snapshot from the CEDs data including population, employment and income numbers, livable wages and other labor force statistics for Southwest Colorado. Copies are available at the Region 9 office or on-line at [www.scan.org](http://www.scan.org). For more information, please call Region 9 at 970-247-9621

## STEM Internship Program and Workforce Development Network Receive NADO 2011 Innovation Awards

Region 9 received two, 2011 Innovation Awards from the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) Research Foundation for the STEM Internship Program and Workforce Development Network.

The STEM Internship program provides jobs for high school juniors and seniors where they can learn and apply STEM skills, establish working relationships with local employers, and learn what it takes to succeed in the 21st Century workplace. The Program is a joint effort between Region 9 and Alpine Bank in Durango, Colorado. The Program placed 6 students in its first six months.

Student applicants are vetted by the STEM Internship Committee, which then connects students with businesses that would be an appropriate fit. Businesses are reimbursed up to \$1,000 for payroll expenses when they hire a student.

The Workforce Development Network is an information exchange between employers and business leaders, governmental entities, and educational facilities.

While the Southwest Colorado Workforce Board has been in place for many years, the Network is a way for the Board to involve more private sector participants through an informal listening and sharing of workforce issues and challenges important to the community. Speakers such as representatives of workforce sectors, education or economic development present at lunch meetings held immediately following the bi-monthly Board meetings.

NADO is a Washington, DC-based association that provides advocacy, education, networking and research for the national network of 540 regional development organizations. The association's Innovation Awards program recognizes regional development organizations and partnering organizations for improving the economic and community competitiveness of our nation's regions and local communities.



Laura Lewis Marchino is presented with an Innovation award by NADO President Tim Ware, executive director of the Mid-East Commission in Washington, North Carolina

## 2012 Brings Changes to Enterprise Zone Tax Credits

Background: In 1996, the Colorado State Legislature implemented the Enterprise Zone (EZ) Tax credit program to assist economically distressed areas of the state. All of Dolores, Montezuma, Archuleta and San Juan counties, and most of La Plata County, currently lie within the Southwest Enterprise Zone.

A business (which includes a farm or ranch) located within these boundaries can be eligible for EZ tax credits, including capital investment purchases, job tax credits, research and development, health insurance, and other credits and incentives.

### Pre-Certification is now Required

State Legislation requires businesses seeking tax credits to obtain pre-certification prior to engaging in any eligible activity, beginning January 1, 2012.

Pre-certification shall be obtained in 2012 and EVERY year thereafter in which a business anticipates earning an EZ tax credit. Therefore, before creating a job or making an investment, a business MUST receive pre-certification in order to claim that credit. Information on pre-certification is available at [www.advancecolorado.com/ez](http://www.advancecolorado.com/ez). It is suggested that any business that may be planning on claiming one or more of the credits complete the pre-certification in early 2012. (Submitting information for pre-certification does not obligate the business to actually earn or use the credit(s)).

### Electronic EZ Submission

In 2012, businesses must begin filing Southwest Enterprise Zone Business Certification requests electronically. All certifications (with the exception of the Contribution Credit) MUST be filed electronically.

Detailed information about each of the EZ tax credits is available at: [www.advancecolorado.com/ez](http://www.advancecolorado.com/ez).

Specific tax questions should be directed to the Department of Revenue or to your CPA, but information about whether a business is located within the Enterprise Zone boundaries can be obtained from Region 9 Southwest Enterprise Zone Administrator, Laura Lewis Marchino.

Supported by Enterprise Zone Marketing Funds.