

instead of all at once.

The first few days of the month saw temperatures hover right around average, with 30s to low 40s for highs and single digits to teens for lows. Temperatures then warmed steadily over the next several days, peaking with record highs in the low 60s on the 9th. No accumulating precipitation fell during the period, making it feel even more unusual. This warm period was finally interrupted by a storm system on the 10th and 11th. A very rare occurrence of rainfall accompanied this storm on the afternoon of the 10th when the precipitation first started. Rainfall almost never occurs above 7,000 feet around the Palmer Divide in January, so this demonstrated how unusual the weather pattern was. The rain quickly turned over to wet snow that afternoon, producing around an inch across much of the area by later that evening.

Average to slightly cooler than average conditions stuck around from the 11th through the 16th. Some light snow also managed to develop on the 15th, producing about a half-inch of snow. We also managed to dip below zero with this push of cold air as temperatures stayed below the freezing mark from the 15th to the mid-morning of the 17th.

Once again, this cold air retreated quickly and was replaced with well above normal temperatures for the next few days. Highs again reached well into the 50s on the 18th, touched the low 60s on the 19th and hit the upper 50s on the 20th. This time the warmth was ahead of a stronger storm system that was organizing

over the Four Corners region and was pulling down colder air from the north. This storm wound up just east of the Front Range, a perfect position to produce strong north winds and blowing snow for us. This is just what happened on the 21st, with snow starting in the morning and continuing all day.

The strong north winds enhanced the snow over the Palmer Divide, but subsequently depleted it going south into the Colorado Springs/Pueblo areas. This terrain-induced enhancement/depletion is referred to as orographic effects. It is always amazing to see the results of this in our region during these types of winter storms as a significant gradient in snowfall accumulation occurs. For this storm, accumulations of 10-12 inches were common along the Palmer Divide crest, with amounts quickly falling off to less than 2 inches around downtown Colorado Springs. Once this storm departed, we again saw a gradual rise in temperatures and a return to dry conditions through the end of the month.

The warm and generally dry pattern is associated with a La Nina pattern that is occurring in the Pacific Ocean. This pattern disrupts the normal circulations by allowing a stronger than normal ridge of high pressure to develop over the western U.S. This effectively blocks significant storms from moving in the region and keeps the cold air to our east. Storms are forced to move up and over the ridge, then down the back side of the ridge to our east. This produces all the cold and snow from the Midwest through the eastern U.S., but

generally leaves us high and dry.

A look ahead

February is often a dry and cold month for the region as we move toward the snowy and unsettled conditions of March and April. Precipitation averages less than an inch, with average high temperatures in the 30s. It can get very cold in February with Arctic air making strong pushes into the region. But days begin to get a little longer, which leads to some nice, sunny days, and snow melts faster.

January 2018 Weather Statistics

Average High	45.7° (+5.6°)
100-year return frequency value max	48.4° min 30.8°
Average Low	17.5° (+4.9°)
100-year return frequency value max	26.6° min 6.6°
Highest Temperature	62° on the 9th, 19th
Lowest Temperature	-2° on the 16th
Monthly Precipitation	0.65"
	(-0.06" 8% below normal)
100-year return frequency value max	1.56" min 0.01"
Monthly Snowfall	11.9"
	(-1.4", 12% below normal)
Season to Date Snow	22.5"
	(-30.1", 43% below normal)
Season to Date Precip.	3.71"
	(-1.52", 30% below normal)
Heating Degree Days	1035 (-62)
Cooling Degree Days	0

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Letters to Our Community

Guidelines for letters to the editor are on page 31.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in Letters to Our Community should not be interpreted as the views of OCN even if the letter writer is an OCN volunteer.

Kudos to my unknown neighbors

I wanted to tell everyone about something that happened to me recently that is heartwarming in a world that seems consumed with bad news.

Following the snowstorm over the weekend of Jan. 20, I was leaving to go to work and found out firsthand that side streets do not get immediate attention by snow plows. But hey ... I've got four-wheel drive; what could happen? I found out as I got stuck in a high drift and thought I'd be there most of the day.

Two gentlemen who live in the area (but whom I didn't know) stopped to help get me out of the drift and be able to proceed on my way to work.

I don't know who they are, but I want to say thank you so much to both gentlemen for stopping to help someone they didn't know. Another of many great reasons to live in Monument and the Tri-Lakes region.

Ken Sanders

Come to D38 meeting on school construction

Even after losing their board majority in last November's election, D38's insider club is still at it, insisting that taxpayers need to give them \$190 million to solve a crowding crisis that they have both exacerbated and exaggerated. Under the old board, D38 administrators were given free rein to stage a stacked deliberation process that concluded that Grace Best should not be reopened as an actual school. They want \$190 million instead (to build new school buildings and maintain the others), from a community that already owes \$69 million. The new amount would almost quadruple your current school building taxes.

Their excuses for discarding Grace Best have ranged from the believable to the absurd. As with many schools across America, Grace Best has asbestos. The asbestos, however, can be taken care of through a full renovation, and the district can even get federal grant money to help cover removal costs.

Commercial contractors have advised that Grace Best could be fully renovated for around \$7 million. Because renovation would be a fraction of the cost of building a new building, D38 administrators have had to pepper skeptics with a collection of silly excuses. Some of their silliest: It's outdated. Its location isn't central enough. Kids will have to cross I-25 every day. And, its "best" use would be as a pre-K "center" to provide preschool classes that taxpayers aren't obligated to provide!

Thankfully, the new board majority seems to be seeing through this charade and is asking the community for input. Come to the Administration Building at 146 Jefferson St. on Feb. 5 at 6 p.m. to show the new board that the community supports sound, fiscally-responsible management of our district.

Bruce Clark

A D38 mom and taxpayer questions building plan

As a D38 parent, and a taxpayer, I do not support the expensive consultant's (RTA) three new building, large tax increase plan for our school district. According to D38's own Oct. 1 headcount numbers, we are not in a crisis situation. A few of our buildings are reaching capacity, but there are other ways to resolve our crowding issues that are economical and responsible.

I recently toured Grace Best with district representatives, other parents and building and asbestos abatement contractors. There are portions of this building that are quite viable, and we should consider bids to improve this facility before any new building projects are considered. I would be open to completely bulldozing the older portions of Grace Best, settling the asbestos issue, and then rebuilding exactly what we need while still utilizing the newer part of the structure. I believe this is exactly what BEST grants were created for.

Additionally, we should deny enrollment to choice-in students for those buildings that are reaching capacity. This is common sense. Taxpayers in D38 do not need to shoulder the cost for out-of-district students. There is also no point in spending district money to advertise in other school districts in an effort to draw choice-in students, crowd our buildings, and overwork our teachers when we are reaching building capacity.

Only after we have explored every option to fully utilize our existing assets like remodeling and modernizing Grace Best and clarifying our enrollment numbers after choice-in students have returned to their home districts, would I support possible new district buildings. We have not been presented with the most efficient stewardship of our tax dollars at this point. I believe more information, discussion, bids on Grace Best, and ideas are needed before an expensive MLO, or bond issue, is placed on the ballot.

Elizabeth Turner

Supporting long-range planning by school board

I want to commend the Lewis-Palmer School District for their hard work the past two years to pull together all the essential information and present so many different scenarios to the school board, administration, and the community. The district formed a committee of many different community members to sift through all of the detailed information and public comments presented and the committee has made an educated, well informed, recommendation to the school board and now we await their decision at the February school board meeting.

It is time for the board to decide. We can see the explosive growth in our district, with more developments being brought before planning commissions and boards weekly. The longer we wait to address it, the more it will cost and the less we will get for our money. Construction costs are increasing, and inter-

est rates are rising. Meanwhile, our middle school and some elementary schools are at capacity.

This decision will impact families in the Jackson Creek area positively by alleviating the crowding at Bear Creek Elementary School. Building a new elementary in that area and a second on available land in Forest Lakes will bring smaller class sizes and accommodate the growth. Teachers will have actual classrooms instead of working out of converted conference rooms. Our teachers and students need more room.

As a community, we need to support and encourage the school board to move forward with a decision to properly accommodate the current and projected growth in our district over the next five years and beyond. I am proud to see our district working together towards providing the best schools for all of our current and future students. Again, the community needs to support our teachers, administration, and most importantly our students and families.

Chris Thomas

The elephant in the room

More jobs and better pay is the mantra of both political parties. But no politician talks about robotics and artificial intelligence (AI) and what it will mean for our future. Will it be good or bad for us?

First, let's see where we are at. We already have multiple companies developing self-driving cars and trucks. Millions of truck, cab, and even Uber drivers will lose their jobs. This is definitely the future in transportation. Restaurants, hotels and retail—they all are testing robots to do their unskilled work.

Factories have used robots for years, especially in car manufacturing. Since 1980, robots have replaced millions of workers in manufacturing. Adidas recently moved a plant from China to Germany—to save money! In China, the company used inexpensive labor to put their shoes together. In Germany, it will just be robots. Remember, robots work 24/7/365. No breaks, no sleep, no vacations, no sick days, and no benefits. And to the surprise of coal miners championed by President Trump, they are being replaced by robotic trucks and mining equipment for both safety reasons and cost.

Now, you might be thinking that skilled labor is safe. Well, not so much. Think about going to a medical robot that knows everything that has ever been recorded about all human disease, illness, or injury. Medical robots know how to do every surgery. They never make a mistake and learn from their continuing collective knowledge. Engineering? Accounting? Lawyers? They will all eventually be replaced by AI for less cost and with better results.

When can this happen? Multiple reports say this will occur as soon as 10 and no more than 20 years. Well paying jobs? How about any job. This is a real social issue. It's not science fiction. It is our immediate future.

Kent Jarnig

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