

The saying goes "you don't know what you've got until it's gone." Personally, when the receivership was announced, I was acutely aware of what a blessing it is to be a part of this community, which made the prospect of leaving it devastating. I understood how special this place is from the day I moved in (ten years ago this week!). I came here $\approx 3\frac{1}{2}$ years after a spinal cord injury had turned my world upside down and left me quadriplegic. I came here for the prospect of a new beginning, and Casey's Pond delivered!

The staff, the facility, Steamboat Springs and the Yampa Valley community as a whole have been instrumental in enabling me to build a fulfilling post-injury life that far exceeds what I had ever imagined was possible. Upon receiving the 90-day notice to vacate, I, along with many fellow members of the Casey's Pond family, was crushed. With the reassuring support of the Casey's Pond team, I searched for a new living arrangement, but the whole situation just felt "off". The world had shifted so drastically and so quickly, many of us were knocked off balance. I fought to ward off creeping feelings of despair while struggling to accept the inexorable changes I was facing, but the only choice any of us have is to keep moving forward.

When the tentative agreement was announced two weeks ago, an infusion of hope spread through the halls of Casey's Pond (evident in all the smiles and wet eyes in the lobby that afternoon). The irresistible buzz of elation was tempered by wariness toward that sticky word - "tentative." Then, with last week's announcement of the signing of the purchase agreement, one could feel if not hear the collective sigh of relief permeate throughout the community.

What I feel most now is gratitude. I'm grateful for all of the people in the community who stepped up to save Casey's Pond. To the staff, organizers, advocates, public officials and donors and EVERYONE who collaborated to make this rescue happen, I hope you know how powerful your actions have been in bringing hope and deliverance to those of us who felt powerless. The rallying of support among people, organizations and government truly exemplifies the BEST angels of our human nature.

I'm just one of so many people to whom this place is important, and I believe Casey's Pond will continue to be important to so many more in the future. Casey's Pond is a truly special and unique place, and it will continue to be here for NW Colorado thanks to NW Colorado coming together and being here for Casey's Pond.

Thank you for everything!
Eric Berkey