



SUMMIT COUNTY STEWARDS STRIVE FOR FOREST SUSTAINABILITY

The White River National Forest, all 2.3 million acres of it, is the most visited national forest in the nation with its 11 ski resorts, 10 peaks over 14,000 feet, and eight wilderness areas that cover more than a third of its acreage. And the Dillon Ranger District is a big part of it, located in Summit County and home to four ski resorts and thousands of acres of hiking and biking trails, rafting and kayaking opportunities and camping.

It's a busy place, and it needs helpers and stewards now more than ever. That's where the Friends of the Dillon Ranger District (FDRD) comes in, a nonprofit established in 2005 to partner with the U.S. Forest Service, in order to provide opportunities for the community to play a more active role in the sustainable management of the local forest and to enhance the experiences of all who recreate there.

"Our passionate community of volunteers and supporters are the best crew of individuals and local businesses on the planet," says FDRD marketing and events manager Jennifer Vogler. "They motivate us to jump out of bed each day and get to work."

This volunteer-driven and donation-supported organization has created a sense of community around the stewardship of this special place, and the shared love of the land. They bring together groups and individuals for trail and cleanup projects, educational events and social activities: from wildflower hikes to

fence construction, geology tours to raptor demonstrations. One wildly successful annual fundraising event, Casino Night, is a historical sellout.



Friends of the Dillon Ranger District's annual Casino Night fundraiser

Jennifer adds that the organization's superpower is transforming heavily damaged trails to beautifully constructed, sustainable trails that will last for generations to come. She urges everyone who lives in, or visits Summit County, to regularly consult the online calendar of events to get involved with the Friends of the Dillon Ranger District's volunteer and educational series.

PULLING BACK THE CURTAIN ON THE VALLEY SYMPHONY ASSOCIATION ORCHESTRA & CHORUS

When audiences hear the beautiful classical music of the Valley Symphony Association (VSA) Orchestra & Chorus, they likely aren't thinking about how much work goes on behind the scenes to make the sounds come to life.

It's a true labor of love for the 100-plus volunteer musicians who are also teachers, parents, neighbors and students. They have jobs. They have children. They have homes and schedules and commitments. They teach at local colleges, high schools, middle schools, and elementary schools. They work in business, the arts, government, agriculture, law enforcement, the nonprofit sector, and health care. Some are retired. Some are entrepreneurs. Some are military veterans. They represent communities from all over the Uncompahgre, Grand, and North Fork Valleys. And they are all VSA musicians.



Valley Symphony Association

The synergy of these people and all the training, practice and rehearsals they engage in is greater than the sum of its parts. Their magnificent concerts are the tangible result of all this effort, and now the VSA has been thrilling regional audiences for a half century. In 2022 and 2023 they showcase their 51st season. Pops in the Park, Young Composers, Christmas by Candlelight and Pop Stars & Superheroes are upcoming concerts, taking place in Montrose.

"As a nonprofit, the VSA is entirely reliant on donations, advertisers, volunteers, sponsors, and ticket holders, so a great deal of time is spent on fundraising and outreach. And then there's the Herculean task of advertising our organization and offerings," says Stacey Ryan, a volunteer musician who doubles as the marketing and public relations director for the organization.



Valley Symphony Association's Season 50 trailer

In celebration of 50 years, the organization acquired a new, branded equipment trailer. "Alpine Bank has generously partnered with the VSA to transform our new wheels into an ingenious mobile billboard," says Stacey. "Thank you, Alpine Bank, for helping us reach more people, grow our audiences, and bring classical music to life!"

[Learn more at Valleysymphony.net](https://www.valleysymphony.net)

