

BUSINESS CONNECTION

Marie Luna • Luna Communications

written by Sara Lynn (Kuntz) Valentine

Marie Luna grew up in Quebec, Canada. While in college, she spent a year in Durango as an exchange student at Fort Lewis. One of the highlights of that year in Durango was getting to know a fellow student, Alastair, after they were introduced by their French professor. Marie returned to Canada to finish college, earning a B A in Business and Marketing. While working her first marketing job, she began saving as much of her salary as possible in order to be able to go back to school. She felt she could tap into more of her creative and artistic abilities with the addition of a degree program in graphic arts.

Marie returned to Durango in 2006 to spend time with Alistair. "We got married a year later," Marie says. "I went to work for the Chamber as Communications Coordinator in 2007 and stayed there until 2015. More and more opportunities for freelance work came my way and it was a lot to keep up with. Plus I gave birth to my third child in 2014. Although I enjoyed working for the Chamber, I decided it was time to focus on my own business - knowing that would provide me with more flexibility. It grew fast to just the right level I can comfortably handle.

I work with all kinds of printed material as well as online graphics. I produce advertising content, social media, help design logos and slogans, do artwork for posters, copywriting, and website maintenance and updates, I just wrapped up the Chamber Directory. I help clients

with marketing strategies. Some of my clients are new business owners and also new to Durango and they don't necessarily know where to find their target customers. With my Chamber background I can offer lots of insights and ideas on marketing locally."

Marie's mission is 'tangible returns on advertising.' "A lot of money is spent on advertising to a general market. I have strategies for determining the effectiveness of an ad campaign. If we brainstorm, come up with what we think is a great idea, but it doesn't deliver - we try something else."

Marie praises the Chamber as an indispensable asset to business owners. "I tell all my clients, old and new, the many benefits of membership. They eventually all join the Chamber and remain Chamber members. One of the benefits I appreciate a lot is the Office Depot benefit. I have one client who saved something like \$870 on a single project because of his Chamber discount. I think every business should join to support the Chamber for all they do to support the community."

You can contact Marie at 970.769.6424 or marie@lunacoms.com



Christi Zeller • La Plata County Energy Council

written by Sara Lynn (Kuntz) Valentine

La Plata County Energy Council is a non-profit trade organization promoting safe and responsible natural gas development in La Plata County. "We have close to forty members," Executive Director Christi Zeller says. "There are 3300 active natural gas wells in our county. Members include gas well operators, and transporters, and a variety of supportive services - like environmental or construction companies that install roads and well pads or monitor environmental compliance and permitting. Service providers can also include attorneys and land-men that perform title and mineral right ownership reports. La Plata County produces 77% of the state's total coal-bed methane natural gas. County, cities, school districts, and special districts - water, fire, mosquito, all receive substantial revenue as a result of natural gas operations.

Christi connects Energy Council members with the community. She provides members with media or governmental updates concerning local government regulations and changing codes. She fosters good community relations. "We raise money to donate to community non-profits, typically for scholarships and grants that benefit kids. We put on a golf tournament fundraiser every September and our members support 4-H in a big way."

Gas production in La Plata County began in the 1940s and although an informal good neighbor pledge has always been in effect,

the Council initiated a proactive good neighbor training program seven years ago. "When a road to a well site is also used by residents in a subdivision, our operators take responsibility for maintaining the road for common use. If I get a call that there's a lot of dust on a common use road from operator or service provider traffic - we work to correct the situation."

Christi has worked for the Energy Council for fifteen years - but her roots in La Plata County go much deeper - her great grandfather homesteaded near Bayfield. She's served on a number of local non-profit boards, including the 9-R School Board. She received the Leadership La Plata Barbara Conrad award, and is pleased to be heading into her third year on the Durango Chamber Board. "The Chamber does great work. We are adopting policies so Jack can quickly respond if something comes up that would help or hurt local businesses."

You can see a complete list of Energy Council members at www.energycouncil.org. You can connect with Christi at 970.382.6688 or czeller@energycouncil.org

