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The Green River Observer

Vol. 2, Nos. 10-11

"The Other Local Newspaper: News, Notes, and Nothings from the Middle of Everywhere"

December 12, 2025



Ren Hatt (1985-2025) enjoying a meal at Hell's Backbone Grill in Boulder, Utah on a very special day in 2021 with life partner Maria Sykes.

by Maria Sykes

Community mourns Mayor Ren Hatt

by KENNY FALLON JR.

People across the Green River area and far beyond are grieving the death of beloved and wide-

ly-respected Green River Mayor Ren Hatt, who also helped manage his family's gamebird ranch, taught myriad subjects at Green

River High School, and stepped in when needed in several other roles, such as umpire, coach, game announcer, local board member,

and meat smoker for community events. Hatt, who turned 40 this past April, was killed in a car crash

CONT' AT "REN"

REN (CON'T)

on Friday, December 5, when an eighteen-wheeler truck drifted over the centerline and collided head-on into the car Hatt was driving. The crash reportedly occurred just before 9:45 PM near mile marker 296 on U.S. highway 6, just north of the interchange with I-70, a little over eight miles west of the home he shared with his fiancé and life partner Maria Sykes in central Green River. The truck driver is reported to be unharmed and is not suspected to have been impaired, and the Utah Department of Public Safety continues to investigate.

Hatt's funeral will be held Saturday, December 13, 2025 at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints' Green River Ward Building at 11 AM, with visitation at 9:45 AM. The interment will be at Elgin Cemetery and a luncheon will follow at the Green River Ward Cultural Hall.

The day following the crash, the City released a statement that in part reads, "Mayor Hatt loved this community deeply, and he served it with honesty, kindness, and unwavering commitment. We are grieving alongside his family, friends, and all who knew him." City Councilor Bo Harrison is serving as Acting Mayor. Later in the day Green River High School invited everyone in town to the basketball games, waiving ticket fees and encouraging all in attendance to "wear a beanie to honor Mr. Hatt". The school gym filled with hundreds of people wearing beanies and posters memorializing him. Afterwards, students joined with the Follow the Flag organization and planted dozens of American flags along Main Street in Hatt's honor.

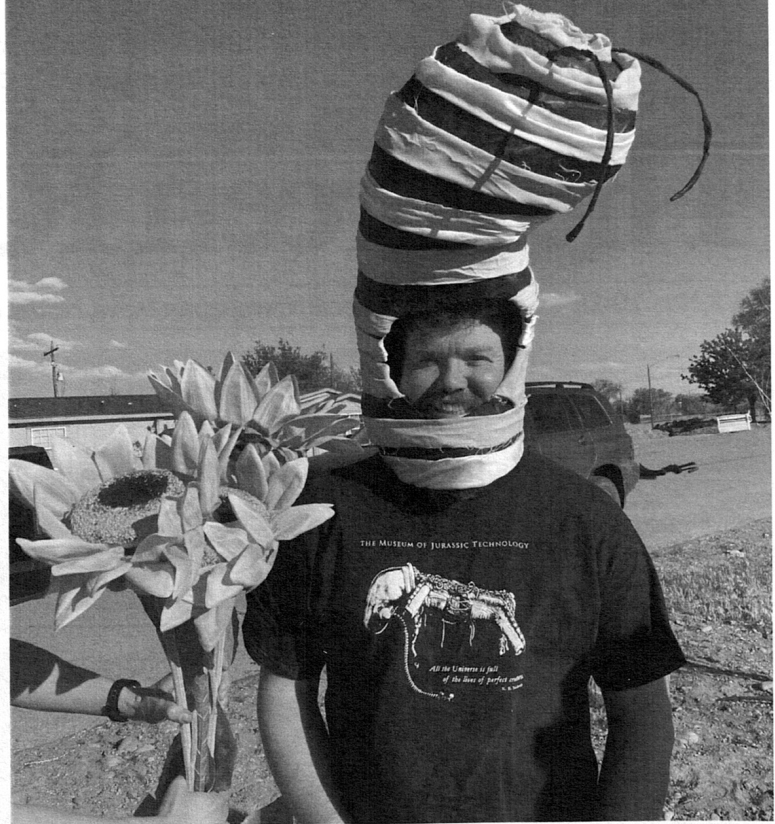
Hatt was born and raised in Green River, and counted himself lucky for all the opportunities he had growing up. In Epicenter's *Sounds of Green River* project (narrated by Hatt and other locals, referred to hereafter as SGR, and found at: RuralAndProud.Org/Green-River-Soundscape/) he said "It's difficult for me to think of home without thinking about

the ranch. It's where I learned how to work, it's where I learned how to use a shovel, it's where my grandpa caught a hawk with his bare hands out of the air once".

As a kid, he frequently starred in plays and musicals, including playing Joseph in *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* and won accolades for his acting and singing talent all throughout his schooling. In addition to his artistic pursuits, he excelled as an athlete and leader, making the all-state baseball team, winning several debate competitions, writing a student column with verve for the Emery County *Progress* newspaper, and serving as student president in high school. In 2003, a student was quoted in the *Progress* saying, "Ren has worked tirelessly to improve the quality of our school through the office of student body president."

He seemed to carry this same spirit and discipline for the rest of his life, making a lasting impression throughout college at Utah Valley University in Orem, law school at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, and during his time in Knoxville and Nashville, Tennessee, in Utah, and elsewhere. Shortly after moving back to his hometown as an adult, he decided he would do anything he could to make Green River as nice as place as he was raised in. Over the years, he taught Language Arts, Journalism, Theater, Criminal Justice, Debate, and much more at the high school, and in 2021 ran for mayor (in part taking up the family mantle of public service: his grandfather Rey Lloyd Hatt served as Green River mayor for 18 years and his father Royd Hatt has served on the Emery County School Board for 36 years so far). In each area of life, Ren Hatt seemed committed to what he saw as the typical Green River ethic, where "we work really hard at doing something right" (SGR).

His first term as mayor saw many successes, big and small, that have prepared the town for growth and energized many locals to revive a community spirit and sustainable economy. He met



Ren Hatt in 2025 after performing as a Monarch caterpillar in the Milkweed Parade and play.

photo by Zoe Gardner

with all kinds of people during his bimonthly Mayor's office hours, saying "I'm amazed at how many different opinions can fit in a town so small" (SGR). This past November, he won re-election by a wide margin (see page 5 for more details) and was eager to see through the momentum gathering in town.

In SGR he talked about how much he liked living in Green River: "If I had my druthers, the perfect day for me in Green River is in summer: I want to get out to [Swasey's] beach early, I want to sit at the beach in a nice portable chair, I want to read a book until it gets a little bit too hot, and then I want to come back and eat something in town, and then I want to sit in the air conditioning or go down to [Green River] state park and put my legs in the river and wait until dinner rolls around".

This perfect day would be a large contrast to his near-constant busy-ness helping others. He wanted to do his best so that people growing up in Green River today have a similar chance to stay and thrive in such a special place. In an essay for Epicenter's book

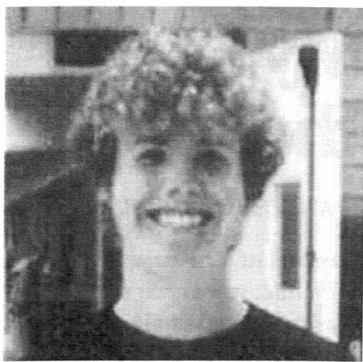
Why This Place, Hatt reminisced about what he felt was an idyllic childhood here. The following reflection from that essay could also describe the community he recently left: "I was everyone's friend and they were mine--I recognized every face in every filled seat at every event. Green River was a town that may not have been rich, but we were wealthy because we supported one another". 🍄

[Ed: In the course of making this newspaper, I was able to see Ren in two different professional roles: as a politician and as a teacher. I think he was both most of the time. He was direct and honest, looked for the potential in everyone, pushed for open and transparent governance, and always had the interests of Green River in the back of his mind. He would explain dry, complicated issues clearly and without condescension and took people seriously. He was also a silly guy who loved to riff and shoot the shit. Outside of this newspaper, I'm lucky to be one of many to have considered him a friend and I miss him.]



Ren Hatt preparing to campaign for re-election in a Hatt Ranch kei truck packed with twinkies during the 2025 Melon Days parade.

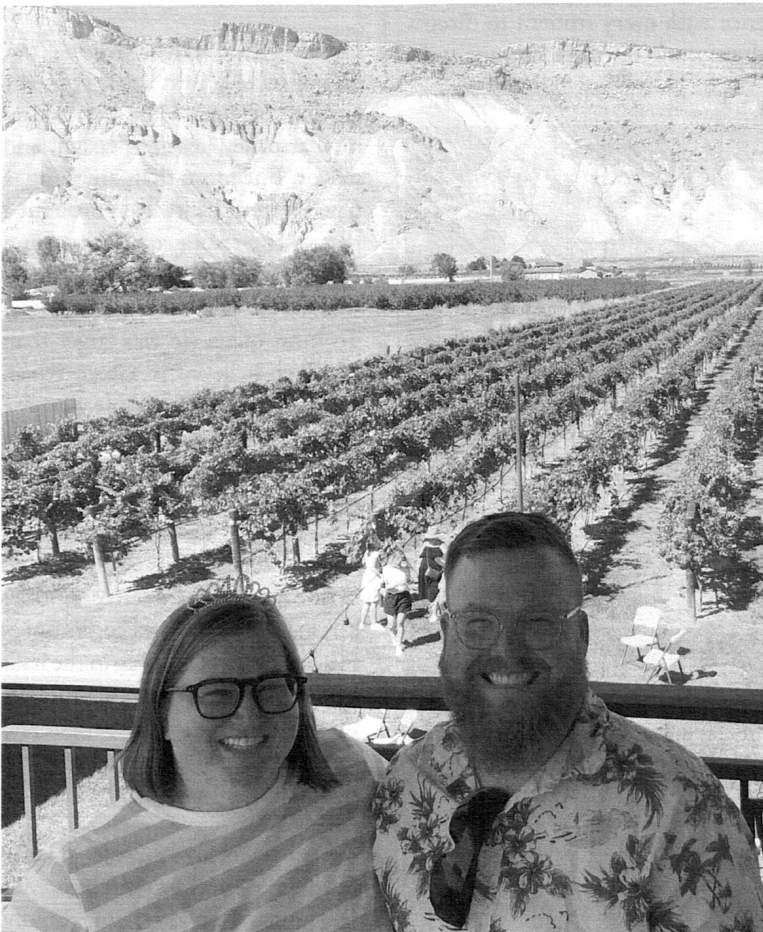
photo by Maria Sykes



Ren Hatt in 2002 after being awarded Academic All State in Baseball. (Emery County Progress archive photo)



Ren Hatt getting sworn in as mayor of Green River City in 2022. (photo by Maria Sykes)



Ren Hatt in 2024 celebrating life partner and fiancée Maria Sykes' fortieth birthday at Carboy Winery in Palisade, Colorado.

photo by Kenny Fallon Jr.



Ren Hatt in 2025 performing his go-to karaoke song, "Dancing in the Dark" by Bruce Springsteen at Epicenter's most recent Summit.

photo by Sandra Salvas

My Friend the Mayor

by ANTONIO J. HERRERA

Mayor Hatt, or Ren as many of us knew him, was a great many things to a great many people. He was our Mayor. He was a Language Arts teacher at GRHS. He was a loving partner to his fiancé Maria. He was a son, a brother and so much more. To me and many others he was a friend and mentor.

The first thing I noticed about Ren was how smart he was. He would always give thoughtful, in depth answers to any question you asked him. I would always ask him questions about The Law, teaching or a myriad of other subjects and he would always explain things to me no matter how weird or unnecessary the question was. He was that way with everyone from students, to colleagues at the high school and the city, and he answered questions without making you feel dumb for not already

knowing the answer. The next thing I noticed was how funny he was. He would use his intelligence to make quick-witted jokes. We would be in meetings and I would have to keep from laughing because he was so funny. He also knew how to tease people without making them feel bad. When I first got my home darkroom set up, he and Maria would say things like "That's something a serial killer would have. Are the bodies hidden under your lawn Tony?"

He was an amazing cook and bartender. The Saturday after Thanksgiving we all got together to watch the Iron Bowl (Auburn vs. Alabama). When I arrived at their house, Ren and Maria had prepared an amazing spread of what can only be described as high-brow sports watching food. There were deviled eggs (Ren's deviled eggs were always the best), cheese dip, meats, cheeses, pimento cheese and more. He could also make cocktails like no one else I know. He could make standard cocktails, Gin and Tonics, Negronis, margaritas and more if there was a recipe for it he

could make it, and make it well. Then there were times where he would make his own custom cocktails, which were always delicious. This ability to host and entertain people is a skill I envy.

As mayor Ren was entirely dedicated to Green River. He was not serving as mayor to advance any sort of political career. He ridiculed the thought of ever running for county commissioner or any higher office when I brought it up jokingly on election night. He was completely disinterested in participating in politics above the local level. Ren's commitment to the city was evident to anyone who spent more than an hour with him. I would frequently peek out into the hallway during school to see Ren fielding phone calls as the mayor, handling city business. As a teacher Ren held his students to high standards. This is evident in how much they each improved as writers over the course of their schooling. Ren would regularly make time to conference with every student to discuss their work on their current writ-

ing assignment. He didn't have to do this; he could've just left them feedback online via Canvas. He did this because he wanted to help the students as much as possible. Both personally and professionally he exemplified integrity, honesty, dedication and more of these ideals we seek to achieve. He inspired everyone around him to strive for these ideals as well.

I know that I am not alone in being able to say that Ren was my friend. Everyone who spoke to him immediately felt like he was their friend. Even those he disagreed with, still knew he cared about them. He was a friend to everyone lucky enough to meet him. Farewell Ren, you were a good friend to all. I am glad I am able to call myself your friend, even if it was for an all too brief period of time. Thank you, for everything you taught me and everyone else around you. We are all better people for having known you, and we are all poorer for having lost you. 🍷

We were so blessed to have Ren Hatt in our school

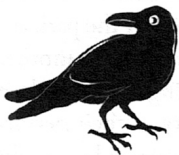
by GREEN RIVER HIGH SCHOOL



Green River High School lost one of its brightest lights with the passing of Ren Hatt --an alumnus, attorney, teacher, coach, and mayor, but more than anything, a true Pirate at heart. Ren brought a perspective to our small school and tight-knit community that was as wide as the world he had explored. To most of us, he was larger than life. Ren believed in Green River. He believed in the people who live here, and he believed especially in our kids. He showed them what it looks like to come from a small place and still live a big, meaningful life. He reminded us that greatness is not measured in status or titles but in service, joy, and community. His legacy will continue in the halls of GRHS, in the stories told by those he taught and coached, and in the many ways he helped shape the future of this town he loved so deeply.

We are forever grateful for the time we had with him. May we honor Ren by living boldly, serving others, and giving back to the place we call home --just as he did. 🍷

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To send tips, feedback, buy ads, submit events, or just say hey email us at TheGreenRiverObserver@gmail.com, call us at (435) 261-3084, or send physical mail to:

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Wanted: New publisher for Observer

Help keep the **only** independent newspaper focused on Green River going

by KENNY FALLON JR.

I am looking for someone or a group interested in eventually taking over *The Green River Observer*. If you believe this is something that should continue, and you or someone you know might be interested, please let me know by email, phone, snail mail, or find me around town.

No journalism or publishing experience necessary; I didn't have any! I'm willing to help during a transition period and potentially longer if needed. A good person for this doesn't need to be a good writer, editor, or designer. It may not even require much writing; there are a few local groups interested in producing ongoing columns or features. I think the main qualification is care for and interest in what's going on in Green River, and what kind of place the town becomes.

While this is not a decision I take lightly, from the start I have tried to bring in more people and eventually step away. So far, I have not been successful in finding another person to help run it,

but I hope that you, reader, might be open to trying. My fiancée and I are planning on moving back South to be closer to our families in June 2026. The whole newspaper cannot be done remotely, but during a transition, or maybe longer, there are several things I could continue to help with if needed: editing, design, and reporting on City Council meetings (which are recorded).

I think there is enough community and out-of-town support to keep the *Observer* going. While I have not made any money from this, someone or a group that has more time to pursue advertisements, sponsors, grants, and donations could likely make this a financially self-supporting operation. I've been making this as cheaply as I can: printing costs about \$300 per month and mailing costs about \$100 per month. During a recent, long conversation about future plans for the newspaper (which I'm happy to share), I got a lead for a way to print this in town, which I'm eager to explore. The newspaper is its own LLC (annual registra-

tion is easy and costs are negligible) and has its own account at Desert Rivers Credit Union. I'm willing to share anything I can and help in almost anyway I can to transfer this to a new publisher.

I never claimed to be objective, and I don't believe anyone who says they are, but I've always aimed to write fairly. I'm proud to have provided a platform to a few people writing about their passions -- movies, fitness, astronomy, history, photography, and Green River. I believe the newspaper has created change in other ways that I'd love to talk to you about in person.

I'll continue publishing in the short-term future, but ultimately the logistics and connection to what's happening here can only be done with at least one person who lives in the Green River area. Please let me know if you or someone you know is interested. 🤝



Green River election 2025 results are final

Mayor Hatt wins again and two new faces, Bigelow and Crabtree, join Council

The election turnout was surprisingly the exact same as that for the primary election earlier this year (the main election usually has a much higher turnout). Green River did have the highest voter turnout of any election in Emery County this year. About 75% of voters approved renewing the RAP tax, in addition to voting in two new city councilors and re-electing Ren Hatt as mayor. An official recount was requested and completed, and it confirmed the original results. Now that Bigelow and Crabtree are joining City Council, there are two open seats on the City's Planning Commission (application are open). Members of the Planning Commission do not need to live within City limits, as they are appointed by City Council. 🤝

Your newly elected City officials

Mayor:

✓ **Ren Lloyd Hatt (Incumb.)***
153 votes / approx. 65%
Michael B. Silliman
80 votes / approx. 34%

* Since Hatt's death, City Councilor Bo Harrison is serving as Acting Mayor until a new mayor is chosen.

City Council (2 open seats)

✓ **Tonya Bigelow**
174 votes / approx. 74%
✓ **Stephanie Crabtree**
94 votes / approx. 40%
Conra Weber
93 votes / approx. 40%
Larry G. Packer (Incumb.)
83 votes / approx. 35%

Registered voters in GR: 394
Ballots received: 235
Voter turnout: approx. 59%

Film Review

by TADD MECHAM

The Ugly Stepsister

★★★★★ (out of five stars)

Rating: Not Rated - Graphic nudity, sexual content, violence, blood and gore

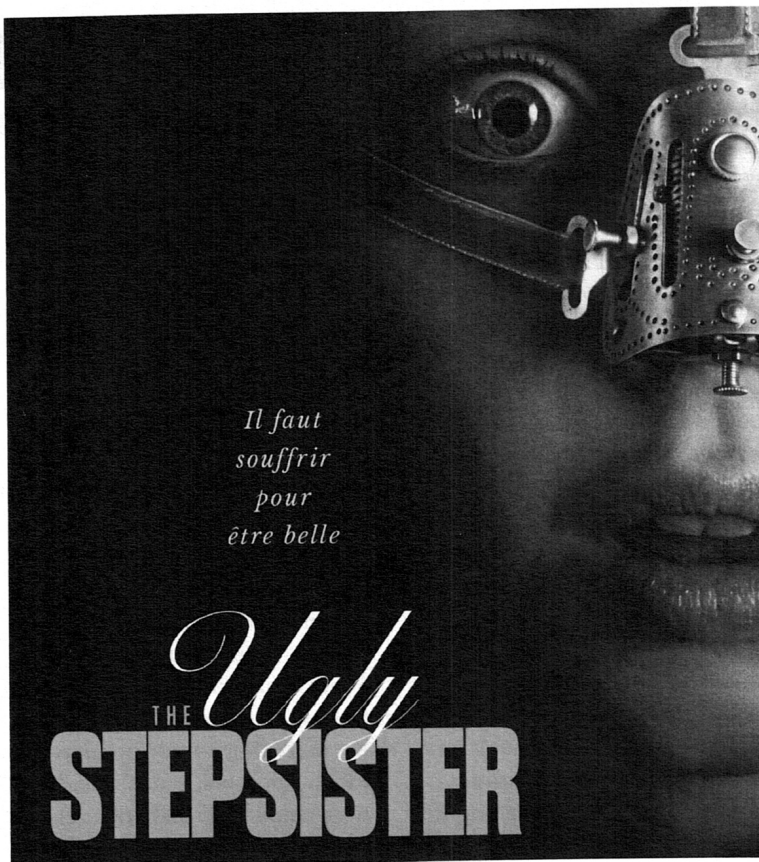
Run time: 105 minutes

Directors: Emilie Blichfeldt

Released: 2025

The story of Cinderella is something that has been done to death. But other than the rude descriptor, what do we truly know about her stepsisters? Emilie Blichfeldt explores this question in horrific fashion in *The Ugly Stepsister*.

In a gorgeous fairytale landscape, Elvira (Lea Myren) finds herself compared constantly to her incredibly beautiful stepsister. As they compete in finishing school to find a rich husband, Elvira soon discovers that she will go to any length, and alter anything about her appearance, to catch the prince's eye. Blichfeldt has ef-



fectively taken a well-known children's story and pushed it back to its grimmer roots. In focusing on the more disturbing angle of the original fairytale, and then building on that concept, the result is

both gorgeous and hard to watch. Elvira is self-conscious, polite, and endearing. And watching her put her body through hell just to feel beautiful becomes a sort of endurance test. It is hilarious,

Arts &

morbid and gut churning. The performance of Lea Myren in the lead role is star-making. She is silly, scary and heartbreaking. Another standout is Ane Dahl Torp, who knocks it out of the park as Elvira's cold and terrifying mother. Each actor is living in their role, and the authenticity of their performances lends a harder edge to the gruesome events in the story.

This also features striking set and costume design. The snow-swept woods and the gloomy castle offer a fairytale setting that is both gorgeous and eerie. It makes it effortless for the film to shift from dreamy romance sequences to stark body horror without it feeling like whiplash. Regardless of the grim content, it is a beautifully made film.

It is probably my favorite film I have seen this year and I cannot recommend it enough. 🍷

Word Search

Can you find all the words from this edition hidden below?

prince
pirate
beanie

myriad
dreamcoat
progress

dancing
twinkie
bear

I S Y C P V M E J J Y R F B C
P E S D M Y M K P M N K B D U
A I F E R N E W L U W L X R S
G Y R I R S J Q C W D O U Z B
N V A A M G R W P R I N C E B
I D R Z T A O C M A E R D B E
C N V U Y E B R E P A D T V A
N R H L W R W I P B M X J S N
A C C R B T K A F Y Z S N I I
D I G B J N Z B L X X G R C E
P R D G I A J C Q B E A R T J
L P Q W E O E P Y L V L A M I
H B T I X M F A L P Q P U T B

Sudoku

Each row, column and square needs to be filled out with the numbers 1-9, without repeating any numbers within the row, column or square.

		3	1	5	7			6
				9	6			
7		6				2		
4						3		
1			7	3	9	4	6	
		7	4	8	5		2	
	7		8			5		
		9	5		1	7		4
	8		9			6	1	2



GR branch wins contest!

photo by Kenny Fallon Jr.

The Green River branch of Desert Rivers Credit Union won this year's Halloween costume contest as "Goldilocks and the Three Bears", defeating the other three branches in Moab, Monticello, and Blanding again! (bears from left to right: Mistie Bastian, Michelle Farnsworth, Cindy Powell, and Diane Smith is Goldilocks.

Donations to the

Ren Lloyd Hatt Scholarship Fund

can be sent to: Desert Rivers Credit Union
(PO Box 336, Green River UT 84525)

2026 OPEN ENROLLMENT
**HEALTH
INSURANCE
MARKETPLACE**
**NOVEMBER 1st -
JANUARY 15th**

VISIT GREEN RIVER MEDICAL CENTER FOR MORE
DETAILS OR FOR ASSISTANCE WITH ENROLLMENT

Would you like to submit an event to the calendar?

Community Calendar

Send us the event name, start and end time, and location.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
7 (December)	8 📖 Storytime/4H 3-5 PM / GR Library 🌙 Light the Night 6:30 PM / Main Street and O.K. Anderson Park	9 👤 Seniors Craft 10 AM / GRMC 👤 Women's Golf 5 PM / State Park *Clases de Inglés (ESL) 6:30-8 / GRMC 🏛️ City Council 7 PM / City Hall	10 👤 Men's Golf 5 PM / State Park 👤 Dance Fitness 7 PM / GRMC	11 🐕 Therapy with a dog & Lexis (by appt) 🏌️ Disc Golf 5 PM / State Park *Clases de Inglés (ESL) 6:30-8 / GRMC	12 🏀 Boys' Basketball vs Carbon 5:30 PM / GRHS	13 ★ Ren Hatt Visitation Begins 9:45 AM / LDS Church ★ Ren Hatt's Funeral Services 11 AM / LDS Church ★ Ren Hatt's Interment After Funeral / Elgin Cemetery ★ Luncheon After Interment / LDS Church Cultural Hall
14	15 📖 Storytime/4H 3-5 PM / GR Library *Barre/Pilates Fusion 5:30 PM / GRMC ● Recovery Group 7 PM / GRMC 🎄 Christmas Breakfast Apps Due Epicenter office	16 👤 Seniors Craft 10 AM / GRMC 👤 Women's Golf 5 PM / State Park 🎷 GRHS Winter Concert and Ag Skits 6 PM / GRHS *Clases de Inglés (ESL) 6:30-8 / GRMC 🏛️ Planning Com. 7 PM / City Hall	17 🏠 GR Food Bank 10-12 / 140 N Broadway 👤 Men's Golf 5 PM / State Park 👤 Dance Fitness 7 PM / GRMC	18 🐕 Therapy with a dog & Lexis (by appt) 🏌️ Disc Golf 5 PM / State Park *Clases de Inglés (ESL) 6:30-8 / GRMC	19 🏀 Boys' Basketball vs Millard 3:30 PM / GRHS	20 🏀 Boys' Basketball vs Valley 1 PM / GRHS
21	22 📖 Storytime/4H 3-5 PM / GR Library *Barre/Pilates Fusion 5:30 PM / GRMC ● Recovery Group 7 PM / GRMC	23 👤 Seniors Craft 10 AM / GRMC 👤 Women's Golf 5 PM / State Park *Clases de Inglés (ESL) 6:30-8 / GRMC	24 📖 Book Club 2 PM / GR Library 👤 Men's Golf 5 PM / State Park	25 🎄 Christmas	26	27
28	29 📖 Storytime/4H 3-5 PM / GR Library *Barre/Pilates Fusion 5:30 PM / GRMC ● Recovery Group 7 PM / GRMC	30 👤 Seniors Craft 10 AM / GRMC 👤 Women's Golf 5 PM / State Park *Clases de Inglés (ESL) 6:30-8 / GRMC	31 👤 Men's Golf 5 PM / State Park	1 (January) 📅 New Year's Day	2	3 🏀 Girls' and Boys' Basketball vs Wendover 12 PM / GRHS