

is *this*

Marshall Fire sweeps Louisville, Superior

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IT?

It was five days after Christmas. Our gifts were barely opened, and our trees were still adorned with the ornaments we so lovingly hung. Some of us were on vacation, in exotic destinations or simply visiting family stateside just like every other holiday. Most of us were at home. Texting with friends, shopping, making lunch, sleeping in.

Because it was a normal day.
Until the smoke came.

Then our little bubble of winter vacation burst. Our Netflix binges were interrupted by evacuation alerts and frantic text messages from family and friends. We were forced to choose with a clouded

mind which of our many possessions was most precious.

Some of us didn't even get that opportunity. Whether we were able to save something or had nothing but the clothes on our backs, we had to leave our homes behind.

Dec. 30 was a sleepless night as we checked in with our friends and watched the news, hoping beyond hope that the next clip they showed wasn't our home being turned to ash. We wished the snow would come faster, as we watched our community go up in smoke and flame with one question on our minds:

"Is this it?"

JUST THE BEGINNING Houses begin to burn in a neighborhood in Superior in the Marshall Fire on Dec. 30. The fire destroyed thousands of structures in the most devastating wildfire in Colorado history.

photo courtesy of The Denver Post

12.30.2021

7:00 AM
High wind warning issued for Boulder County

11:00 AM
First 911 call reporting fire

11:50 AM
Video of barn on fire taken and posted on Twitter

12:58 PM Superior sends evacuation order
 "WE DIDN'T GET THE EVACUATION NOTICE until after my house was in flames. Having that notice would've given me more time to prepare. I was angry when I saw the evacuation order because it felt like they didn't take it seriously until after houses were already burning." — Anna Ruprecht (12)



1:15 PM
Fire jumps US Highway 36

2:17 PM
Louisville goes under mandatory evacuation

3:20 PM
Governor Jared Polis declares state of emergency



DEC 31
35,000 people evacuated and estimated 990 homes burned

JAN 1
Some residents return home
 "MY DAD AND OUR NEIGHBOR actually snuck back into our neighborhood and back into my house to grab something really special that he and my mom had forgotten. He was able to go around and look at our friends' houses, which was really helpful for everyone."
 — Alisha Herremans (12)

FEB 5
Broncos player Dalton Risner donates \$5,000 to Monarch



Joseph Epperson (11) and Dalton Risner pose during halftime of the boys basketball game on Feb. 5

JAN 7 President Joe Biden visits with fire victims

"IT WAS COOL TO HAVE THE PRESIDENT and the first lady come down and sit with us. He was very kind and funny. We sat down with him, and my mom loves dogs so she asked him about his puppy. He was super sympathetic. It was really cool we got to have that experience. He was a sweet person, and it was a genuine conversation."
 — Lilah Cotton (12)



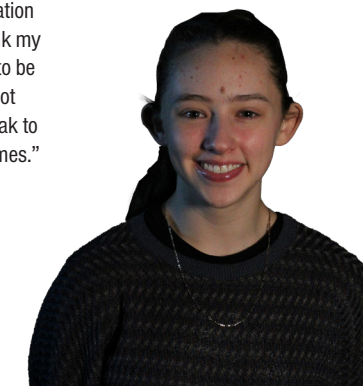
JAN 5
Some students return to school to reconnect with peers



JAN 2 BVSD announces return to school, Ryleigh Selby writes viral editorial

"I SAW THE POST ON MOHI MIX INSTAGRAM that school would resume, so I wrote a strongly worded comment on there that gained some attention. Miscommunication was the biggest issue. I wrote an editorial, and I think my article was impactful by allowing the student voice to be heard, letting the district know normal school was not what we wanted. I hope in the end I was able to speak to the needs and wants of those who had lost their homes."
 — Ryleigh Selby (12)

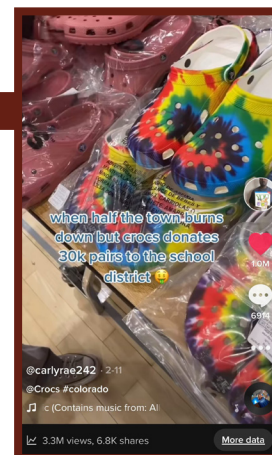
FEB 28 Musicians Dave Matthew, Lake Street Dive, Lyle Lovett and other artists perform a virtual Marshall Fire Benefit Concert



THE FUTURE

FEB 11 Crocs donates shoes to every student and faculty member

"I THOUGHT IT WAS REALLY FUN. It was just kind of a light-hearted thing that we all just got to bond over. And I just thought it'd be funny to record everyone wearing their crocs because it was just such a big sense of community. Everyone was posting photos on their stories. And I was like, 'I'm going to make a TikTok. I think it's so funny. I think it'll go viral.' My friends and I predicted it. The TikTok I made got one million likes."
 — Carly Persinger (10)



when half the town burns down but crocs donates 20k pairs to the school district
 @carlyrae242 · 2-11
 @Crocs #colorado
 3.3M views, 6.8K shares

FEB 27
Louisville residents rally at City Hall seeking to suspend 2021 building codes for fire victims

MAR 1
Louisville City Council gives Marshall fire victims flexibility on building codes

"THE YOUTH CLIMATE ACTION COALITION IS DOING 'TREE-PLENISH.' Our goal is to plant a minimum of 1,200 trees by Earth Day throughout Superior and Louisville and any areas that were near the fire. We are doing that through selling bags to raise money, through selling saplings for \$5 each, through people signing up to volunteer to plant saplings, and through people volunteering to have their yards planted on. We are also asking local businesses if they'd like to have a tree. The town of Superior has even offered up a five acre parcel of land for us to plant trees on."
 — Alina Miranda (11)

IT HAPPENED.

Colby. Saga. Nate. Annika. Julia. Dr. Anderson. Jake. Ava.
Eight stories of the Marshall Fire. In their own words.

what we **lost.** 6,219 acres. 1,084 homes. 5 days after Christmas. 1,381 burned cars. 7 commercial buildings lost. \$513,212,589 in damages. **ONE** monarch. **EVERYONE** impacted. **80027** strong.



the VIDEO

Reality sets in for Colby Crean (9) after receiving video of destroyed neighborhood

10:50 p.m. I got the video. The video that broke my heart. A video of someone driving by my neighborhood in daylight with my whole neighborhood gone.

At first I couldn't move, but then I ran outside and sat against my car in the street and cried until I couldn't breathe with my dad next to me trying his best to calm me down.

Looking at that video over and over again, I felt like someone kept slapping me across my face.

When I was little, my parents always told me, "Our house is the safest place ever. It's surrounded by the fire station and the police station." Little me, thinking nothing could ever happen to my house, was wrong.

Later that night, I had more notifications than ever before. The "I'm so sorry" and "I'm here for you" felt like words that were supposed to be something, but all I felt was numbness.

My sister and dad fell asleep at 2 a.m., but I stayed up the whole night. I was trying to wrap my head around how I started the day racing down a mountain laughing and ended it by crying in a friend's basement.

The second day was harder. After getting one hour of sleep I was tired mentally and physically.

We packed up our stuff and went to our house, looking around for an hour but not being able to get close. My sister and I both cried every time we looked up.

I looked at the backyard where I had thrown my dog's toys around a thousand times—it was gone. All those memories burnt down in less than 24 hours.

Walking back to the car, I couldn't believe that the houses where I had walked passed with my dogs or the path I took all summer to get to my friend's house were all gone.

The whole neighborhood was gone.

Once I was finally settled into my temporary house, a new problem began—school.

At first, I thought that was what I needed, but only a week in, I realized this was bad. Trying to balance everything—homework and tests—was destroying me. I felt unbalanced and every little thing started getting on my nerves.

The second week I started getting the worst migraines I've

ever had. I knew I needed help but didn't know how to ask.

Everything around me started getting worse—my mood, stress, anger, and sadness. It was all going wrong, and I didn't feel like I could do anything but watch as everything went by me.

As I felt the world go back to normal, I felt frozen.

How could people go back to normal after everything that happened? I felt like everyone was moving too fast. Two weeks to feel better about it when I had lived in that house for 14 years?!

It didn't feel fair. I needed more time. I still need more time.



LOST signal

Saga Osterman (11) watches her house burn on the news

We only had two minutes to pack.

We knew to leave because of what we saw on TV, and by the time we left, there were 80 mile per hour winds on my street.

I was dog-sitting my neighbors' dogs, so I immediately ran over there to grab their dogs. My mom and my sister grabbed our animals, and then we just tried to get out. It took two to three hours just to get out of Louisville. We had to take a back road to try to get out.

When we left, we left my dad's Tesla behind in the garage. All night we kept checking it, to see if its

temperature had gone up. We were good until around 6 p.m. Then we saw the temperature had jumped from about 48 degrees to 70.

Five minutes later, it was at 130 degrees before it lost signal. That's when we knew.

A little while later, we saw our house on TV. Our house, because of the Tesla battery and propane tanks, kept exploding. All the other houses had gray smoke, but ours was pure black. So that was the one they were filming.

It was all surreal. The next couple of days were just people reaching out. It was all so overwhelming.



unimaginable EXIT

Nate DeBarros (12) separated from family during evacuation

I woke up to a look of worry on my mother's face that I had not seen in a long time.

I ran to her room and saw a billowing cloud of smoke rising from Superior. Initially, I actually found it beautiful and climbed out onto the roof to get a video.

A warning went out to have bags packed, but of course, we didn't. Why would we? It was so far away.

But the skies got darker, and the outlook got grimmer. It wasn't until we couldn't see the house across from us, we really started to panic.

It was harder to breathe, and the wind was tipping over our chairs outside. We finally accepted we might have to leave and began to pack the essentials.

At that point my dad came home from work screaming. Louisville was engulfed in smoke.

We stuffed what we could into backpacks, put on masks, and hoped it was a dream.

It wasn't.

Two fire engines came flying up our street with every single light or siren they had blaring.

At the last minute, I had the thought to take my car and drive separately.

Nothing was going to happen to the house, but

better safe than sorry, right?

Driving anywhere was a nightmare. Gridlock and panic on every turn, inhaling more smoke than any person should in a lifetime. It was surreal.

An officer directing traffic sent me in the opposite direction of my family. I had to guess my way back to them for two hours.

Eventually, we made it to a meeting point and were informed that it wouldn't be safe to stay in our house for the night.

The mood got worse as news rolled in. Our city was burning, and our house was right on the edge of fire maps.

We fell asleep around midnight, questioning everything we had.

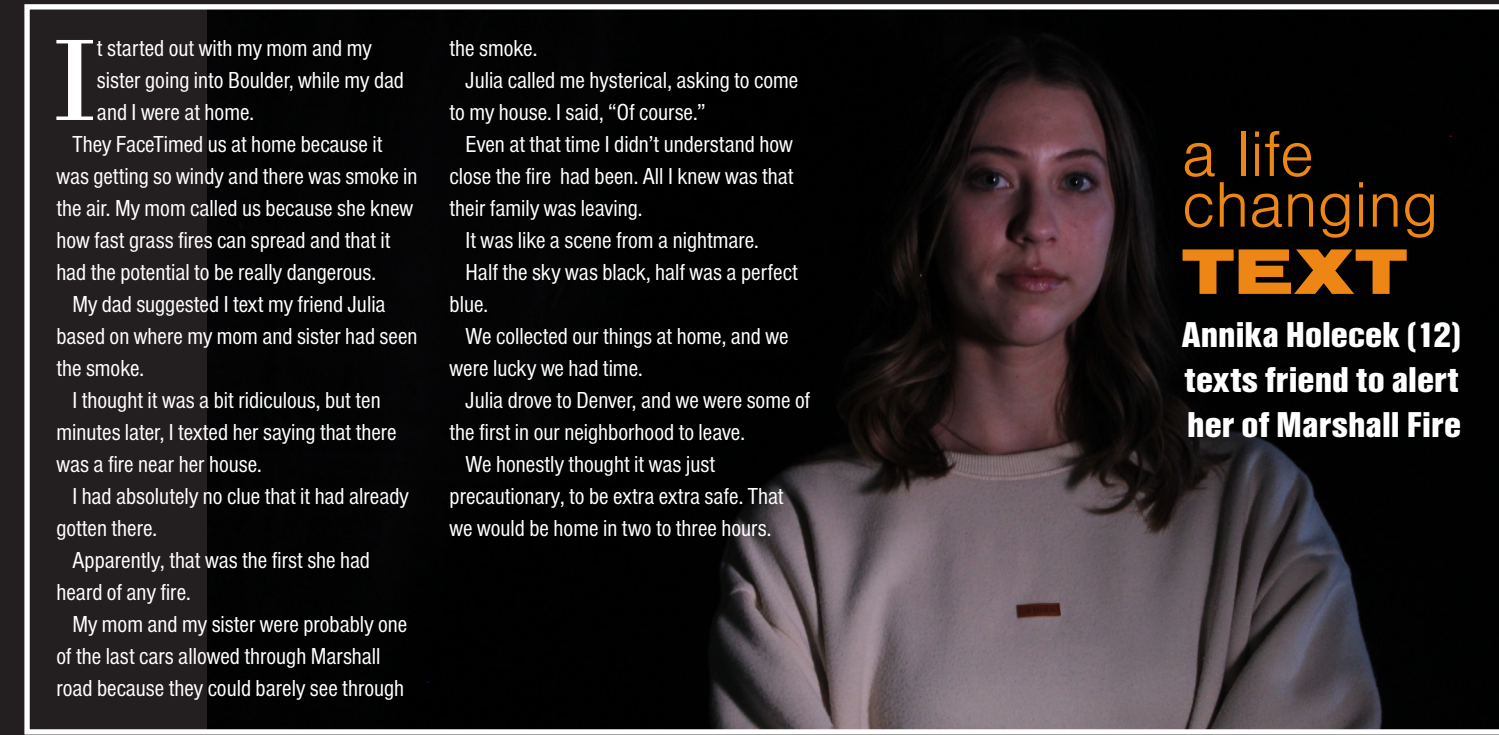
It had to be there. Right?

I woke up to tears from my mom. We all knew why, but no one could believe it. I really can't describe how this felt. Or how it still feels.

All I had. Gone in an instant.

I can't emphasize how it feels to lose that much. It puts in perspective how much we take for granted these days.

We have a house now, but it's not a home. It's not the same, and it never will be.



I started out with my mom and my sister going into Boulder, while my dad and I were at home.

They FaceTimed us at home because it was getting so windy and there was smoke in the air. My mom called us because she knew how fast grass fires can spread and that it had the potential to be really dangerous.

My dad suggested I text my friend Julia based on where my mom and sister had seen the smoke.

I thought it was a bit ridiculous, but ten minutes later, I texted her saying that there was a fire near her house.

I had absolutely no clue that it had already gotten there.

Apparently, that was the first she had heard of any fire.

My mom and my sister were probably one of the last cars allowed through Marshall road because they could barely see through

the smoke.

Julia called me hysterical, asking to come to my house. I said, "Of course."

Even at that time I didn't understand how close the fire had been. All I knew was that their family was leaving.

It was like a scene from a nightmare.

Half the sky was black, half was a perfect blue.

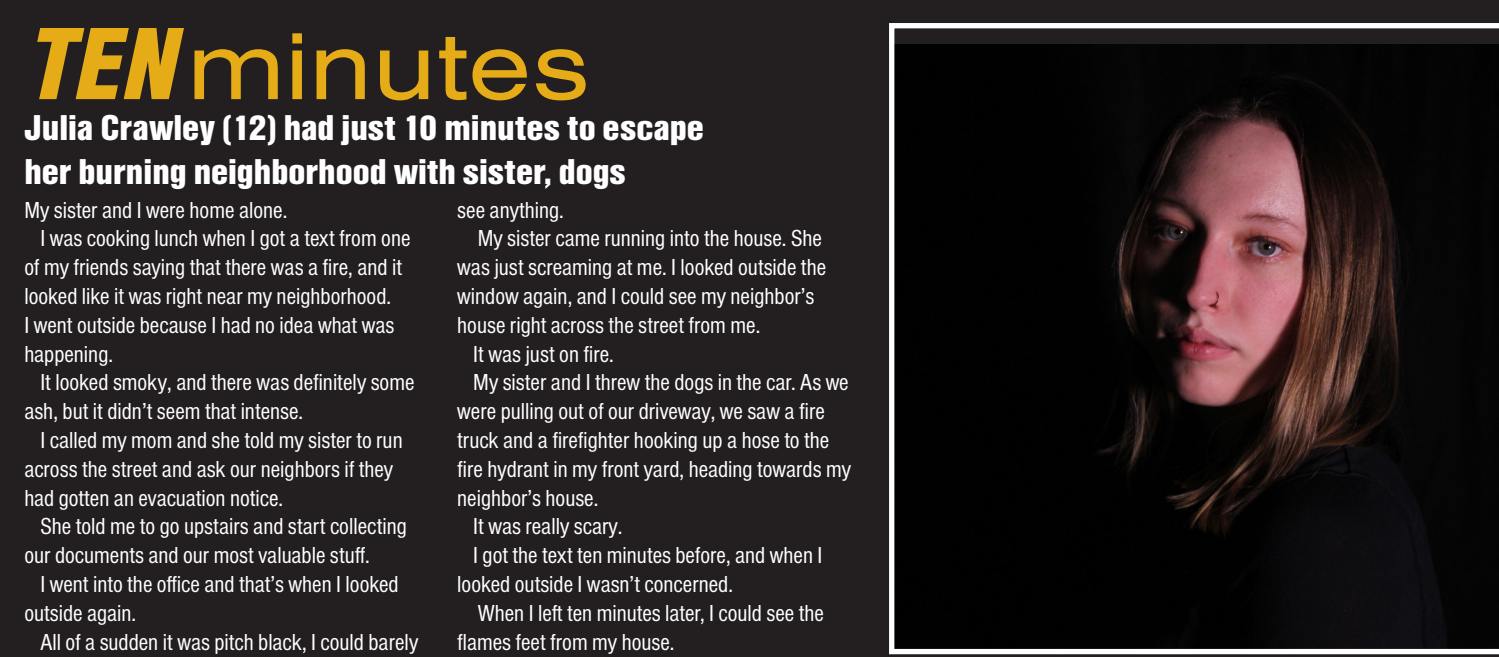
We collected our things at home, and we were lucky we had time.

Julia drove to Denver, and we were some of the first in our neighborhood to leave.

We honestly thought it was just precautionary, to be extra extra safe. That we would be home in two to three hours.

a life changing TEXT

Annika Holeccek (12) texts friend to alert her of Marshall Fire



TEN minutes

Julia Crawley (12) had just 10 minutes to escape her burning neighborhood with sister, dogs

My sister and I were home alone.

I was cooking lunch when I got a text from one of my friends saying that there was a fire, and it looked like it was right near my neighborhood.

I went outside because I had no idea what was happening.

It looked smoky, and there was definitely some ash, but it didn't seem that intense.

I called my mom and she told my sister to run across the street and ask our neighbors if they had gotten an evacuation notice.

She told me to go upstairs and start collecting our documents and our most valuable stuff.

I went into the office and that's when I looked outside again.

All of a sudden it was pitch black, I could barely see anything.

My sister came running into the house. She was just screaming at me. I looked outside the window again, and I could see my neighbor's house right across the street from me.

It was just on fire.

My sister and I threw the dogs in the car. As we were pulling out of our driveway, we saw a fire truck and a firefighter hooking up a hose to the fire hydrant in my front yard, heading towards my neighbor's house.

It was really scary.

I got the text ten minutes before, and when I looked outside I wasn't concerned.

When I left ten minutes later, I could see the flames feet from my house.

history, REPEATED



TELLING OF TRAUMA Hannah Rowton (12) interviews Superintendent Dr. Rob Anderson about the Marshall Fire on Feb. 18.

Superintendent Rob Anderson recalls losing parents' home to fire, relates to Marshall Fire

My home was in the evacuation zone, and I had gone up to Winter Park to ski with my family. I was actually in the gondola when my phone started to ring. At first, I was concerned, but didn't understand at the time what a serious event this was going to turn out to be.

You know on the one hand, I'm a superintendent. On the other hand I'm a dad. I'm a friend. I'm a community member. I think that when you see people you care about have to go through such a tragedy, it's painful. I don't know any other way to describe that. We know families who lost everything.

When I was 20 years old, my parents' house burned down. So, unfortunately, I have lived through the trauma that a fire can bring to a family. It's incredibly painful to watch people we care about go through this, and remembering my own experience and having to deal

with that is really, really hard.

I have healed from my personal experience, but it's hard because I know what it's like.

These weren't your typical fires. These were "melt through your fireproof safe" kind of fires. In my home, there were things they salvaged and cleaned, though that was painful. I remember that pain and that gave me some perspective.

There's still lots of unknowns. I know that lots of families are in different places. Some folks had to move out of town. Some were lucky enough they found a place here. Our hope is to continue to prioritize this and not forget about what our families and kids have gone through and provide them the support they need until they don't need it anymore. This doesn't end on the last day of school.

don't shoot the MESSENGER

Jake Elverson (12) gives Superior students updates on their homes



That's when I took the first picture and sent it to the senior group chat. I texted the group to see if anyone else wanted to know if their house was there.

A week later, I still had messages because so many people sent their addresses.

We got stopped by two police cars because they needed proof of ID that we live there.

I asked one cop about some of the addresses in Old Town Superior, and she said, "Don't even try to go to Old Town. There's nothing there to see."

It was so all very surreal, looking at all of these homes. Telling people, "Yeah, here's a picture. I guess it's not there anymore."

In the end, we walked about six and a half miles that day.

But it only felt like ten minutes.

SIBLINGS separated

Ava Schuler (12) describes being away from home and apart from family



In Winter Park, I checked any information on the fire. It was right next to Target. It was a little too close to my home for comfort. My dad told me the fire isn't close enough to our house to worry.

Then, the fire jumped Highway 36, right behind my house. After 30 minutes of sitting in the lodge crying, we headed back to our mountain house.

I got a video from one of my neighbors. I opened it dreadfully. It was a video of their fence on fire. On the news, I could see my home in the background of a broadcast from Avista Hospital. I watched my house catch on fire and become engulfed in the flames.

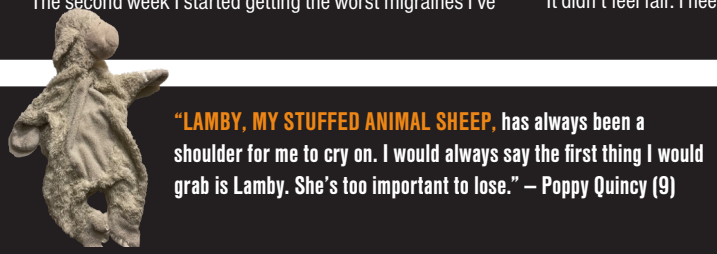
My dad got a call from a friend who works for the Boulder Police Department, who confirmed what we had just witnessed on the news. My childhood home was gone.

I couldn't comprehend what just happened. I could only sit and watch the news, wondering how this twist of fate

happened. I attempted to go to bed, only to lie there for hours until the sun rose.

My brother went to our house alone to look at the damage. He turned the camera and showed us the war zone that our neighborhood had become.

I was in absolute disbelief that the only home I had known was now gone with absolutely nothing left behind.



"LAMBY, MY STUFFED ANIMAL SHEEP, has always been a shoulder for me to cry on. I would always say the first thing I would grab is Lamby. She's too important to lose." — Poppy Quincy (9)



"I GOT MY POLAROID CAMERA as a Christmas present. It and my backpack were the only things I could grab. Even if I could go back I don't think it would've been any different." — Bella Schnepf (10)



"I ALWAYS WEAR THIS NECKLACE that my brother used to wear. It is one of my most important possessions. It was at the front of my mind when thinking about things to bring with me." — TJ Rowan (10)



"MY FOUR CATS because I love them very much. I hated the possibility of what would happen if we had evacuated without them." — Medora Peltier (11)



"MY DOG IS MY BEST FRIEND, and I can't imagine my life without him, so I'm grateful we were home to make sure we could get him out safely." — Anna Ruprecht (12)

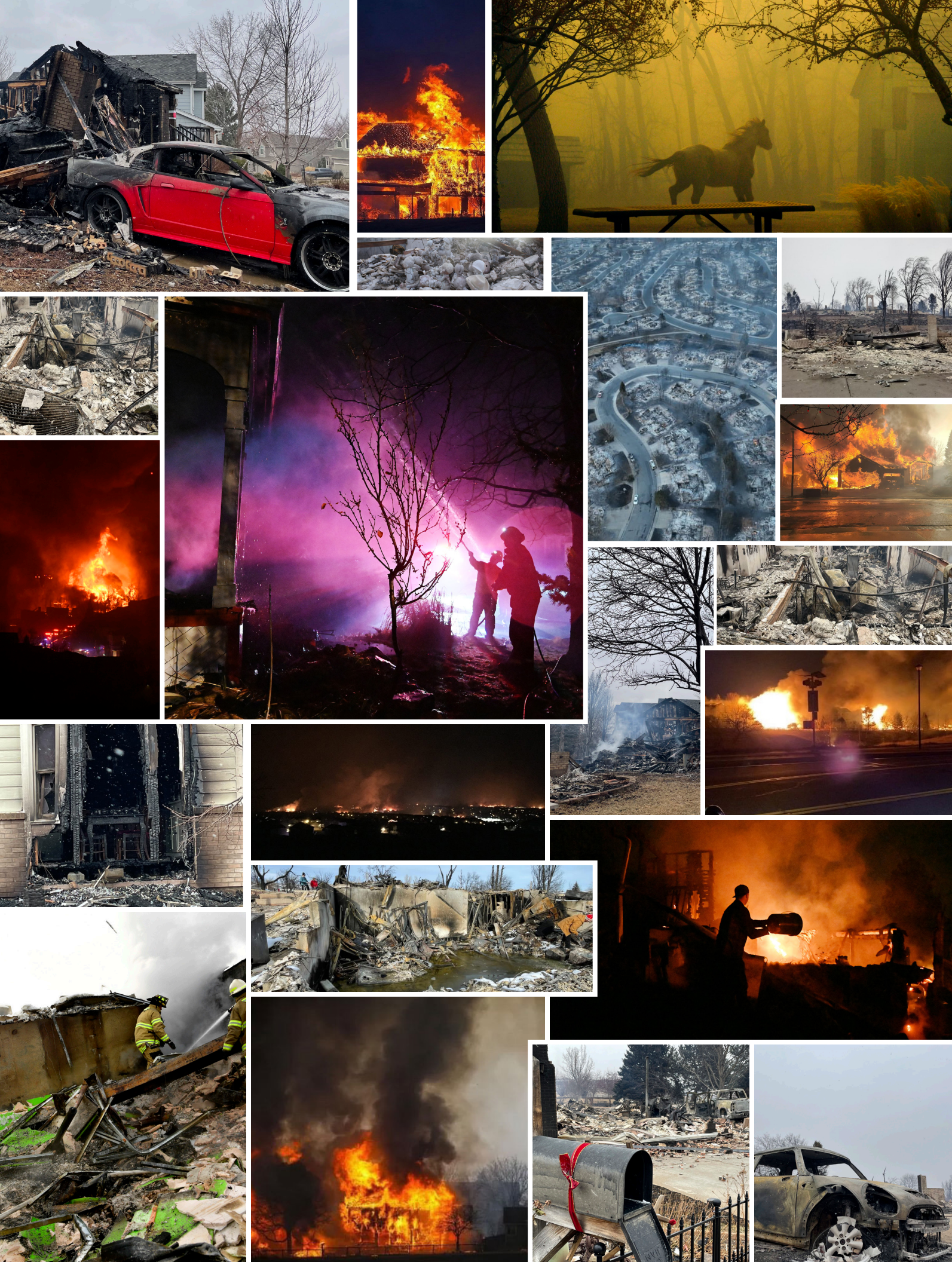


"I SAVED MY CAMERA because it's really important to me. I got it for my birthday from my stepdad who's in Alaska." — Alexandra Randle (11)



"MY RABBIT DAISY was the first thing I grabbed when I went out the door. She means a lot to me. We share a special bond." — Mateo Dunham (9)

saved. what we



what NOW?

How do we learn to live with the aftermath?

Finally, the morning came, and the snow began to fall. Some of us were excited to go home. Some of us couldn't. Either way, over the next few weeks, we slowly trickled back to life. But as we drove our normal routes, they were blocked off by armored military vehicles, and the once fresh mountain air gave us headaches because it was filled with ash. Everything felt like a reminder, and now there will forever be a time before and after "the fire."

We desperately wished for normal, even the "new normal" we developed during the pandemic. How do we move on?

"Rebuild" seems to come up in every conversation, but how do we pick up the burned memories and see something more than just that? How do you find a silver lining when everything is black?

What now? Maybe these are questions you can answer as you read this at the end of the school year.

Maybe you can finally answer them as you look back on high school thirty years from now.

Either way, it is moments, events, and tragedies like this that remind you that life is full of unknowns.

So live in the moment. Live in the now.



photos by yearbook staff and courtesy of The Denver Post, Ethan Hendricks, and Maebly Aleo