

A Conversation with Local Nonprofit Leaders

This is the first of three annual Give 10 Focus on Giving newsletters. Themes are based on Give 10 Emerging Leader's and Partner's most commonly shared interest areas. This issue of Focus on Giving shares insight and perspectives from local leaders of human service agencies supporting children and families. We asked leaders to share answers to a series of questions, and the following organizations generously shared their time and expertise: Boys & Girls Clubs of Larimer County, Catholic Charities, Crossroads Safehouse, the Family Center / La Familia, Homeless Gear, The Matthews House, Neighbor to Neighbor, and Voices Carry Child Advocacy Center.

We selected three key questions from our outreach to share with you in this Focus on Giving newsletter:

1) what are the most pressing concerns for the children and families you serve; 2) what could our community do differently to support these families better; and 3) what information or learning resources do you find valuable or inspirational? The leaders also shared great volunteer opportunity ideas. These will be included in an upcoming Give 10 Give Where You Live newsletter.



What are the most pressing concerns for children and families you serve?

Leaders identified two key issues as top challenges: childcare and housing.

CHILDCARE. It's very difficult to find childcare, let alone high quality, affordable childcare. The average annual cost for infant childcare in a licensed setting exceeds \$12,000 and waitlists are often long, particularly in high-quality settings. Changes to the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) make support for lower-income families even harder to secure.

HOUSING. As for housing, everyone knows housing prices continue to rise. Recent average, two-bedroom monthly rental rates exceed \$1,300. Low-income residents are struggling. Extremely limited affordable housing, along with overall low vacancy rates, makes it nearly impossible for families to find suitable and affordable housing. It is not uncommon for families to be told they'll need to wait for years to access subsidized housing options.

While trying to navigate childcare and housing stress, families are often juggling multiple other demands including finding stable employment, securing reliable transportation, navigating food insecurity, accessing medical care, and maintaining a sense of "normalcy." Achieving education stability is a challenge that is particularly relevant to families experiencing homelessness. Often students change schools and these transitions can be very difficult for children facing the stress and trauma of living in poverty.

Leaders also pointed out that system-level gaps negatively impact children and families. Systems that support the most vulnerable are often perceived as the most resource-strained, including schools serving children with the most needs and medical clinics serving the poorest families. The absence of a mental health and detox facility in Larimer County creates a void in services for adults and children facing significant mental health and substance abuse issues. For children in the foster care system, there is an unmet demand for caring, nurturing foster care homes.



What could our community do differently to better support children and families?

- Intentionally learn about the challenges families are facing. Build knowledge and get involved.
- Build broad awareness of the need for affordable housing. Many in our community don't understand why it's needed, who needs it, or how hard families are working to make ends meet.
- Implement inclusionary housing policies. Require a percentage of new housing development to be affordable.
- Increase access to high-quality, affordable childcare.
- Understand that low wages impact every aspect of a family's life.
- Design transportation near employment opportunities. Extend public transportation hours and build regional services.
- Ensure that children living in shelters experience school continuity and attend the same school, even if their family transitions to other shelters or housing.
- Increase access to mental health services for youth and families.
- Recognize and support programs and organizations that foster connection at all levels. Connections are vital in supporting families facing challenges.
- Advocate for families who need and depend on community services and organizations.



Informative or inspirational learning resources (books, podcasts, websites).

"A Hand to Guide Me," Denzel Washington

Annie E. Casey Foundation's **KIDS COUNT** annual report

"Amazing Grace," Jonathan Kozol

"Busted: America's Poverty Myths," WNYC's On the Media podcast

"Evicted," Matthew Desmond

Health District of Northern Larimer County

National Alliance to End Homelessness

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence

National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty

National Low Income Housing Coalition, **Out of Reach Study 2016**

"The Batterer as Parent," Lundy Bancroft

"The Body Keeps the Score," Bessel Van Der Kolk, M.D.

"Tribe," Sebastian Junger

FEEDBACK? We hope you found this issue of Focus on Giving informative. As always, we'd love your feedback. Don't hesitate to reach out to Sara Maranowicz, Community Programs Director, at sara@bohemianfoundation.org to share your thoughts or recommendations for future newsletters.