



Gatherings

The quarterly agency newsletter of The Gathering Place Winter 2013

Finding a place to belong: Nataliya's story

Nataliya started coming to The Gathering Place in late 2011. She, her husband, and her son, Timothy, had recently moved to Denver from Los Angeles and she was looking for a place where Timothy could play with other children and she could get help finding resources in the community. She was also pregnant with Divine, her now seven-month-old daughter.

"My husband is diabetic and has trouble with his feet. He has worked a lot of different jobs, but isn't working right now," Nataliya says. "We can't afford to do many things in the community. Without The Gathering Place, we'd just be at home in our apartment all day.

"Timothy can play with other children here and The Card Project gives me something to do. I can see other people and learn about American culture."

A native of the Ukraine, Nataliya moved to the United States seven years ago. And though she misses her family, Nataliya says she is able to keep in touch with them by using Skype and she hopes to someday go back to visit.

"I remember when Nataliya first came to The Card Project," says Denise Lines, The Card Project coordinator. "She was very shy, timid, and reserved. Over time, she started to make friends—especially with our volunteers—and has moved from sitting right near the door to sitting further inside the room."



Her cards and triptychs, made with pressed flowers, are extremely popular, says Lines.

"In my country, we dry flowers in old books," Nataliya says. "So, I use this technique on my cards and art. In the Ukraine, we have a lot of flowers. Here, right now, not so much."

As Kathy Poirier, director of family services, began to get to know Nataliya and Timothy, she noticed that Timothy seemed to be delayed in his language development.

She suggested having him evaluated at Child Find, a program of the Denver Public School system, and Nataliya agreed.

"We learned that he is somewhat delayed, but it is probably because I am teaching him two languages at once," Nataliya says, noting that he is learning Russian along with English. "When he can't think of a word in English, sometimes he will just use baby talk."

Timothy was placed in an early childhood learning program at Whittier Elementary, which he attends every day for two and a half hours. He also has a speech therapist visit him at home once a week.

"Timothy's language skills and his social skills have improved so much since his family started coming to The Gathering Place," says Poirier.

"At first, he was just a nervous ball of energy, but now he loves to come and play with the staff, volunteers, and other children. One day he walked in, threw his arms up in the air, and announced 'I'm here!'"

"Timothy calls The Gathering Place 'Choo Choo Place', because of the trains," says Nataliya. "They are his favorite toy. He is always asking if we can go to Choo Choo Place."

Westword articles follow and profile women at The Gathering Place



The cover story of *Westword's* December 6, 2012 issue, “Bed Check,” examined the shortage of shelter beds available for women in the Denver metro area. According to the article, only 252 beds—less than 20% of the shelter spaces in the city—were available for single women at the time of publication, but the 2012 Metro Denver Homeless Initiative Point-in-Time Study estimated that 34% of the city’s homeless population were women. Denver’s Road Home has since opened a cold weather emergency drop-in shelter on West Colfax with 50 mats available for single women. This new shelter will be open through April 2013.

While working on the article, writer Sam Levin shadowed a number of women as they participated in the lottery process for both the Women’s Homeless Initiative at St. Francis Center and The Delores Project at The Gathering Place. In addition, Levin interviewed our CEO **Leslie Foster** and Resource Advocate **Ashley Biekarck**, who are both quoted in the article.

Links to the original article, along with the online supplements, a photo gallery, and follow up article are available on the Press Room page of our website at www.tgpdenver.org/pressroom.

2012 year in review: By the numbers

- 60,902 visits from adults
- 6,591 visits from children
- 1,262 new families served
- 92,462 pounds of food distributed
- 4,260 toiletry bags given away
- 68,232 meals provided
- 20,950 diapers distributed
- 3,904 visits to Bridget’s Boutique
- 134 GED tutoring sessions held
- 9,520 computer lab visits
- 607 counseling sessions held by MHAC counselors
- 238 hair cuts given
- 150 visits with lawyers
- 3,375 visits with Denver Department of Human Services
- 24,155 Card Project cards sold
- 76 Card Project triptychs sold

New mission and vision statements adopted

2012 was a transformational year for The Gathering Place. As an organization, we undertook the task of reworking both our mission and vision statements. Our previous mission statement did a great job of explaining what it is that we do, but wasn’t really clear about who we are or what is important to us as an organization.

To develop our new mission statement, we solicited input from a variety of constituencies and even used a special online software—courtesy of **Codigital**—to collaborate with each other and build the perfect statement. The result provides an overview of who we are, what we do, and what we believe to be the essence of The Gathering Place community:

We are a community of safety and hope where positive relationships, choice, and essential resources transform lives.

After the mission statement was developed and adopted, a committee was formed to create a new vision statement. This committee felt it was important to have a succinct vision statement that encompassed our desire as an organization to spread our values and philosophies beyond the walls of The Gathering Place. The result of that process is a six word statement that urges us to be present and actively engage in daily life, believing that what affects one person or organization, affects many, and understand that we have the opportunity to both inspire others and to be inspired by others on a daily basis:

Fight indifference. Insist on connectedness. Inspire.

Join us for the 2013 Gathering Place Gala: Global Getaway



You won't want to miss **Global Getaway**, our fun, globally-themed gala on Friday, April 12, 2013 from 6:00-10:00 p.m. at **The Wildlife Experience** in Parker, Colo. The event will include a delicious dinner and drinks, must-have silent and live auction items, and a terrific community with whom you'll share the experience.

As part of the evening, we will present our annual "Above and Beyond" awards to individuals or groups who have made extraordinary contributions to the success of The Gathering Place.

Tickets for the gala are \$125 each. Young professionals and seniors are eligible to receive a special price of \$75 per ticket. You can purchase tickets on our website at www.tgpdenver.org/gala.

Current sponsors include: the **Randall A. Carter Foundation** and **Benefactor/Boettcher & Co.** (Presenting Sponsor), **Alexandra Theriault, MD** and **Ron Guillot** (Benefactor Sponsor), **Becky and Eric Jacobson** (Benefactor Sponsor), **Sandy and Gary Autrey** (Associate Sponsor), **Janice and Jim Campbell** (Associate Sponsor), **Leslie Foster and Jane Berryman** (Honorary Sponsor), **Pam and Joe Ignat** (Honorary Sponsor), **The Nord Family Foundation** (Honorary Sponsor), **Renee Ripol and Brenda Roush** (Honorary Sponsor), **Sopra Communities** (Honorary Sponsor), **Elevation Media Group** (Media Sponsor), and **Frederick Wildman and Sons, Ltd.** (Wine Sponsor). Additional sponsorship opportunities are still available.

For more information about sponsorship or questions about tickets, please contact Laura Meixell at 303-996-9048 or laura@tgpdenver.org.

Winter event for NextGen coming on February 21

NextGen is The Gathering Place's young professional group, which offers five opportunities throughout the year for young professionals to gather, network, and learn more about the issues that are affecting our community. Our fall NextGen event, *Know Before You Serve, Nonprofit Board Leadership 101*, was a huge success! Thank you to **Wheeler Trigg O'Donnell** for hosting the panel discussion

nextGen

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS GROUP
supporting the work of The Gathering Place

will be held on February 21 from 5-7 p.m. at **Punch Bowl Social**. Visit our website, www.tgpdenver.org/nextgen, for detailed information.

and providing beverages and appetizers.

The winter NextGen event

save the date

Hangar 41 to display art from The Gathering Place in May

We are excited to announce that art from members of The Gathering Place will be on display at **Hangar 41**, an architecture and design firm with art gallery space, from April 29 through May 26, 2013. Hangar 41 is located at 825 Santa Fe Drive.

The show will include triptychs and cards from The Card Project, as well as pieces from our knitting and crochet groups, Writers Group, and Talking Circle. So, mark your calendars and plan to visit Hangar 41 either on First Friday (May 3) or another time that month (Hangar 41 is open 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. daily) to both admire and purchase the terrific art produced by members of our community!

Donation list for Betsy's Cupboard

Through Betsy's Cupboard, our emergency food and supply pantry, The Gathering Place provides an average of 7,700 pounds of food and 355 toiletry bags each month for women, children, and transgender individuals who otherwise might not have these resources.

If you are interested in sponsoring or organizing a food or supply drive, or just want to learn more about Betsy's Cupboard, please contact Lydia Rodriguez at 303-996-9046 or lydiafaye@tgpdnver.org.

A quick note about food donations:

In an effort to support the health of those we serve at The Gathering Place, we prefer organic, low-sodium, and low-fat food item donations whenever possible. According to the Colorado Health Foundation, two out of three Coloradans will be obese by 2017 and will suffer from obesity related diseases. The likelihood that an individual will experience obesity triples when their family income is less than \$25,000 a year.

NON-PERISHABLE, UNEXPIRED FOOD

- Beans (dry or canned) • Beans and rice combos
- Bottled water • Bread • Brown rice • Canned fruits in 100% juice • Canned tuna, chicken breast, or salmon • Canned vegetables • Cereal/oatmeal (whole grain preferred) • Cheese • Coffee, tea, cider packets, or cocoa packets • Condiments-mayonnaise, mustard, etc. • Fresh meats • Frozen entrées • Frozen and/or fresh veggies and fruits that do not have to be refrigerated (e.g. apples, oranges, potatoes, squash, tomatoes, onions, carrots, green beans) • Gatorade • Granola/cereal bars
- Make-a-meal items: Tuna or Hamburger Helper
- Microwavable items • Milk (powdered or canned)
- Peanut butter • Snack items (e.g. tuna and cracker packs, crackers, nuts) • Soups and stews • Spaghetti sauce • Whole wheat pasta • Vegetarian products
- 100% bottled juice

NEW PERSONAL SUPPLIES

- Combs/brushes • Cosmetics for all skin colors
- Denture care - Polygrip/Efferdent • Deodorant
- Hair care products • Lip balm • Lotion • Razors
- Shampoo and conditioner • Tampons/pads
- Toothbrushes, toothpaste, and floss

NEW BABY ITEMS

- Baby powder, lotion, shampoo, and bath wash
- Baby wipes • Children's vitamins • Pedialyte • Sippy cups • Unexpired baby food • Unopened packages of diapers (sizes 4, 5, 6 and Pull-Ups)

OTHER

- Can openers • Computer disks/flash drives • Dish soap • Dryer sheets • Fabric softener • Gift cards: King Soopers, Safeway, craft stores • Laundry detergent (preferably powder) • Reusable shopping bags • Tissues/Kleenex • Toilet paper

volunteers

Thank you to our 2012 holiday season meal and celebration hosts and sponsors

We want to say thank you to everyone who sponsored or contributed to the meals and celebrations at The Gathering Place during this holiday season: Allstate Insurance, Birthday Smiles, Cherry Hills Christian Middle School, Colorado Celtic Harp Society, Colorado Symphony Orchestra Chorale, Congregation Emanuel, The Denver Zoo,

Engebretson-Horton family, Girl Scout Troop 2227, God's Grace Community Church, Govinda's Food for Life, Groskopf family, Growing Colorado Kids, Harms family and friends, His Helping Hands, Junior League of Denver, Kaiser Permanente, King of Glory Lutheran Church, McKinstry Construction, National Council of Jewish Women, PepsiCo Women of Denver, Ponderosa High School Peace Jam, Randi Robertson and friends, Rodef Shalom Sisterhood, Rona Linneburger and family, Seff family, staff of The Gathering Place, Top Ladies of Distinction, Wheeler Trigg O'Donnell, Jeff Wittig, Wolfe family and friends, and Zion Temple Church.

More than 570 individuals participated in 21 different feasts and festivities this year, and we had 16 additional meal sponsors during the holidays. We enjoyed a number of activities from gift making and caroling to playing games and dancing. And the food provided for the meals was simply delicious. The holidays are a season when we can come together as a community to celebrate and enjoy making memories. Thank you to everyone for making this possible!



Staff from Kaiser Permanente facilitated a scarf making activity during the holiday season.

Marketing volunteers needed to help The Card Project

For the second year in a row, The Card Project has seen an increase in both the number of artists participating in the program and in sales of cards produced. The holidays in particular are a busy time of year as volunteers are processing and packaging cards, filling orders, distributing cards to stores, and attending craft fairs. All of this would not be possible—or manageable—without a great team of volunteers and we want to say thank you to all of the volunteers who support The Card Project.

As The Card Project ramps up for another year, the card sales support team is looking for more individuals to help visit stores and table at events. If you are interested in joining the card sales support team, please contact Trisha at trisha@tgpdnver.org or 303-996-9044.

holiday fair 2012



The Gathering Place's annual Holiday Fair celebrates the season

The Holiday Fair at The Gathering Place is a celebration of community that includes a delicious sit-down meal and a variety of activities ranging from cookie decorating and craft making to singing, dancing, and, of course, a visit from Santa and Mrs. Claus. This year, 202 members attended the event. This celebration is made possible by the hard work and generous support of a number of individuals, groups, and businesses. **Liz and Megan Toohey** served as chairs of the Holiday Fair Committee, helping to plan the event, round up volunteers, and ensure that everyone had a good time. And a number of groups and businesses supported the event by donating goods, time, and services. Those were **CenturyLink**, the **Denver Broncos**, **The Original Dickens Carolers**, **Dinger** and the **Colorado Rockies**, **Pioneer Telecom**, **Retson Retirement Group**, and the **Yo Yo Guy**.

Our Holiday Fair simply couldn't happen without the work of a large number of volunteers who set up and decorated, cooked, facilitated craft and activity stations, and much, much more. We want to say a special thank you to: Angela Astle, DeDe Baldwin, Anna Bernard, Ashley Biekarck, Jacqueline Camack, Patches Caskey, Arica Crootof, Brendan Cummins, Jessica Cummins, Margie Dobis, Nancy Eckert, Desi Embury, Raquel Fuentes, Barb Gardner, Chad Gardner, Kelsey Gardner, Rich Gardner, Megan Gibas, Betsy Gielissen, Jim Goodwin, Joe Goodwin, Kelli Goodwin, Marybeth Goodwin, Connie Gutierrez, Meghan Haag, Carolyn Hanes, Michelle Huston, Joe Ignat, Pam Ignat, Bridget Johnson, Ana Kemp, Krista Keogh, Jack Kinzer, Sarah Kinzer, Lucy Kissinger, Christine Kuznia, Leslie Lane, Laurie Larson, Debbie McCarty, Mike McCarty, Laura Meixell, Mark Meyer, Olga Mezentseva, Joe Michie, Rhonda Morroni, Lauren Naylor, Molly Osadjan, Dee Dee Parker, James Parker, Sarah Parker, Emily Parker, Daniel Parker, Dave Pilgrim, Kathy Poirier, Sandy Reavey, Isaac Redriguez, Molly Reynolds, Logan Ripley, Renee Ripol, Brenda Roush, Josue Ruiz, Paty Ruiz, Madeline Schissel, Shannon Schmit, Marc Scremin, Ashlee Sleet, Kylie Sprague, Erin Srofe, Travis Srofe, John Straubinger, Audri Talmidge, Allyson Therien, Donna Ulrey, Tanya Wheeler-Berliner, Dottie Wilson, and Lisa Zavoda. If there is anyone we have may have missed, we sincerely apologize. Thank you all for creating such a terrific holiday event for our community!

supporters

Capitol Hill Whole Foods contributes 7.5 tons of food

Once again, we are so grateful for the hard work and extraordinary generosity of the **Capitol Hill Whole Foods** staff and customers. The Gathering Place was chosen to be the recipient of their November 2012 Grab and Give campaign. At check out, staff members asked customers if they'd like to add an extra \$5 or \$10 to their grocery bill to provide a meal for a family at The Gathering Place.

Those donations—\$25,260.85 in total—were translated into food—over 7.5 tons—that is already being distributed through Betsy's Cupboard. Thank you so much to everyone who participated and made this food drive such a success!



LoDoNA Women's Series holiday event benefits The Gathering Place

Six years ago Denver's **Lower Downtown Neighborhood Association** (LoDoNA) started a Women's Series. One of the annual events in that series is a holiday celebration, where, since its inception, members have collected toiletry items—shampoo, deodorant, toothpaste, body wash, lotion, and perfume—and created gift bags that are distributed through Betsy's Cupboard at The Gathering Place.

"The LoDoNA Women's Series holiday celebration is a great way for us to start the holiday season," says Laura Meixell, events coordinator. "The gift bags they create replenish our toiletry supply with much needed items and even take that extra step by including some 'luxury' items like perfume." Thank you to the LoDoNA Women's Series for your continual support of The Gathering Place!

Colorado Gives Day 2012 a success!

Thank you to everyone for believing in what we do and showing your support for us during **Colorado Gives Day** this year. Your extraordinary generosity was overwhelming. Four hundred individuals contributed \$73,198.80 to us on December 4 through the **GivingFirst.org** website. When

we include the funds from a few private matches for that day and the \$1,435.84 we received from the Colorado Gives Day Incentive Fund, which was set aside to be a proportional boost for all donations made through GivingFirst.org, our total will exceed \$78,000. Thank you all for your participation and support!



Daniels Fund renews support to The Gathering Place

The Gathering Place received a \$100,000 grant from the **Daniels Fund** in December to support our general operation budget. Bill Daniels, a pioneer in cable television known for his kindness and generosity to those in need, established the Daniels Fund to provide grants and scholarships in Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming.

"Our members and their children need a safe space and access to essential resources," says Mendy Evans, director of foundation giving. "Last year we helped more than 9,000 individuals. Support from community organizations and foundations like the Daniels Fund demonstrates the importance of the services we provide and inspires us to continue."

Sock-it-to-'em donates 2,000 socks to Bridget's Boutique

December 12, 2012 was the launch of a citywide "**No Socks to Work Day**" campaign, which encouraged workers to forego socks for the day and donate a new pair of socks to those in need. The campaign collected thousands of socks this year and in early

January, **Sue Lee** (pictured center) and **Phillis Shimamoto** (right) stopped by The Gathering Place to drop off more than 2,000 socks for Bridget's Boutique. Thank you for the contribution of much needed new socks!



The hub of activity at The Gathering Place: The Resource Desk

A primary tenet of The Gathering Place's service model is to engage staff and volunteers as advocates working with, not simply for, our members. One of the best places to see this philosophy in action is at our Resource Desk. Located on the west side of the first floor at The Gathering Place, the Resource Desk is our organization's busy hub of information and scheduling.

Throughout the course of a typical day, individuals at The Gathering Place will seek support from one of our five resource advocates or our trained volunteers, the result of which is an interaction with a highly specialized, patient individual who can offer information on a wide variety of resources within the Denver social services community.

In the morning, activity at the Resource Desk is typically focused on overnight shelter lottery sign-ups and making appointments to use our private showers, laundry facilities, and nap room. As the day progresses, members come to the Resource Desk to check their mail and messages, make appointments for Betsy's Cupboard, request over the counter medications, like aspirin and Benedryl, and pick up resource lists for additional food pantries in the metro area, clothing resources, job training programs, and more.

If a member needs more than just a resource list, the advocates are equipped to provide further assistance. For example, if a member approaches the Resource Desk requesting information about rental assistance, an advocate can provide the prepared list, but also begin a discussion with the member about whether or not they are in imminent danger of losing existing housing, or if they are trying to find a new place to live. The outcome of that conversation can then guide the advocate to share information about additional resources available either at The Gathering Place or in the community. Each of these conversations between an advocate and a member are unique, tailored to address the specific needs and situations of each individual.

During these interactions, our advocates begin to lay the groundwork for self-advocacy and self-sufficiency. They do this by providing information, offering suggestions, and making referrals, all while building strong, positive relationships with the members. These relationships allow the advocates to continue to support members as they seek to access additional information or resources.



Photos: (Top) Resource Advocate Laurie Larson checks a member's mail. (Middle) The "Good Things Happen" board, located near the Resource Desk, contains a compilation of good news and celebrations shared by our members. (Bottom, far left to right) Resource Advocates Anna Bernard, Isaac Redriguez, and Samantha Bates, an intern from the University of Denver, staff the Resource Desk.

The Gathering Place

a refuge for rebuilding lives

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Our mission



The Gathering Place is a community of safety and hope where positive relationships, choice, and essential resources transform lives.

Our Guiding Principles

We serve women, children, and transgender individuals who are experiencing homelessness or poverty.

We believe in hope as an important change agent and hold that hope for everyone.

We believe deeply in the power of community and continue working to develop it.

Our key values include recognizing individual strengths, building respect and trust, and offering acceptance unconditionally.

The Gathering Place

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