# Rebuilding through relationships: Pam's story

According to Taoist philosopher Lao-tzu, "The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." Pam's journey—one that involved leaving behind a life filled with substance abuse and self-doubt—began on October 10, 2008 when she was arrested for identity theft.

"I came to a place in my life where I had to surrender,"

Pam says. "I had smoked cocaine for almost 30 years and had been somewhat of a functioning addict, but things had started to unravel. I had become homeless, lost my family's support, and nobody believed in me because I didn't believe in myself.

"I got in trouble for identity theft, but I did it on purpose," she says. "I just couldn't stop what I was doing any other way."

Pam received a two year misdemeanor deferred sentence for her offence. She was assigned a probation officer and was required to take regular urine

analysis tests to ensure she stayed clean. Perhaps the biggest change though, was that instead of distancing herself from others like she had done for so many years, Pam started reaching out and building relationships—and those relationships eventually helped her to rebuild her own life.

Pam found her way to The Gathering Place via The Empowerment Program, an organization that works with women who have been involved in the criminal justice system. "I had never been to a facility like this before," she says about The Gathering Place. "It was my safe place. I still didn't socialize with a lot of people, but I met another client named Rose." Their friendship soon became very important in Pam's journey.

One evening at her shelter, a woman tried to attack Pam, angry about a relationship she had been involved in during her former life. Distraught and discouraged, Pam left the shelter the next day and moved in with friends even though they were still actively engaged in substance abuse.

Rose managed a small apartment complex and invited Pam to move into her own apartment with her. While living with Rose, Pam started the culinary program at Work Options for Women. Then, when an apartment in the complex became available, Rose offered it to Pam for just \$300 a month plus utilities.

"I had three days to come up with that money," she says. So she came to The Gathering Place to get rent assistance and was introduced to Debra MacKillop, our

Housing Stabilization Advocate. Debra helped Pam with the rent payment, but also enrolled her in our Housing Stabilization Program to provide her with more support and resources as she continued to rebuild her life.

"Deb never looked at me as a failure," Pam says. "She counseled me, listened to me, and always went above and beyond for me. She showered me with furniture and culinary things. I didn't even have a bowl when I started."

When she finished her program at Work Options for Women, Pam looked for work, but ran into

numerous barriers due to her criminal record. At the same time, she started becoming more involved in her church and reached out to family members to repair her relationships with them.

"While all of that was going on, I was learning that I wasn't a failure," she says. "I learned to love myself."

Pam now lives with one of her sisters and cared for her last year as she battled cancer. "I'm now the cook at our family gatherings," she says proudly. With four sisters, two brothers, and 29 nieces and nephews, her culinary training certainly comes in handy. She has a baby granddaughter, too, and is still working on her relationships with her three sons.

And last year, Pam started her own business, A Gentle Touch, through which she cleans houses, does small repair and remodel jobs, and stages homes for sale. She also volunteers regularly at her church's food pantry, visits The Gathering Place often to share information about resources, and is planning to sponsor someone in a local addiction recovery support group.

"Now I get to spend my time giving back for what was given to me," she says with a smile.



"People saw things in me that I didn't see in myself." —Pam Debra MacKillop (left) and Pam (right)



## Changes in 2012 for the Enterprise Zone Tax Credit

The State of Colorado made changes to the process of requesting an Enterprise Zone Tax Credit for 2012. These will not affect your 2011 tax return. For more information about these changes, visit our website at www.tgpdenver.org/taxcreditchanges.

# Thank you for Sharing the Joy!

In our last newsletter, we asked you to "Share the Joy" during the holidays by donating gift cards to be distributed them to those we serve. This year 552 individuals and 206 families signed up for our gift card lottery, hoping to receive a little extra help to purchase gifts, food, clothing, and other necessities in December.

Due to your overwhelming generosity, everyone who signed up for our gift card lottery this year was a winner! Thank you for helping us make the holidays brighter for so many individuals and families at The Gathering Place.

# Panelists explore current status of lowincome women and children in Colorado

Inspiration and education were central to a day long, all staff retreat in early January at The Gathering Place. The morning included a panel discussion about women and children experiencing homelessness



and poverty in our state. Panelists included **BJ Iacino**, Director of Education and Advocacy at Colorado Coalition for the Homeless; **Chaer Robert**, Director of the Denver Women's Commission; **Dana Scott**, State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children & Youth with the Colorado Department of Education; and **Tracey Stewart**, Family Economic Security Program Manager for the Colorado Center on Law and Policy. **Louise Ninneman** facilitated.

"In every statistic that you look at about where people are falling through the cracks, you will see women and children," Stewart said. "We are also dealing with a culture of open and hostile disregard for people who are not doing well."

After spending the morning learning about the current state of and barriers facing the population we serve, our staff spent the afternoon celebrating our past successes, examining the current realities that affect our work, and envisioning what we hope to achieve as an organization in the future. The retreat was a refreshing, energizing, start for the new year, so thank you to our terrific presenters and facilitator!

# The Gathering Place 2011: By the numbers

21,450 diapers given away

10,616 visits to the computer lab

516 o the

computer lab

4,558 toiletry bags given away

24,34 I cards sold from The Card Project

visits with pro bono attorneys

5,697
visits to
Bridget's Boutique

104,436

Ibs. of food
distributed

160 haircuts given

1,377
new families

3,700
visits with our
Dept. of Human

Services liaison

visits to the
Stout Street Medical Van

65,392 meals provided

608
visits with
MHAC counselors

# events

### Join us Feb. 9 for Cuts for a Cause

Thursday, Feb. 9, 2012 will be our second **Cuts for a Cause** event to benefit The Gathering Place. We invite everyone to participate in Cuts for a Cause by choosing to get your hair cut at a participating salon on that day. We will receive 25% of the cost of your haircut from



the salon and you'll have the opportunity to support the women and children we serve by doing something you'd likely be doing anyway—we all need a haircut every once in awhile, right?

Participating salons (as of press time) are **Hair People**, **Miri V's Studio**, **Stranz Beauty Supply/Salon**, and **Zen Salon**. All participating salons will be listed on the Cuts for a Cause website, www.cutsforacauseCO.com, so check there to see the new salons that have been added.

If you are a stylist or salon owner and want to participate in Cuts for a Cause, please contact Laura Meixell at laura@tgpdenver.org or 303-996-9048.

# The Gathering Place 2012 Gala is April 13



Join us this year for a fun, New Orleans themed evening on Friday, April 13, 2012 from 5:30-9:30 p.m. at Sports Authority Field at Mile High. Our annual gala 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. We will also present three "Above and Beyond" awards to indivduals 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 receive a special price of \$75 per ticket. You can reserve your tickets on our website at www.tgpdenver.org/gala.

Sponsorship opportunities are also available at the following levels: Presenting Sponsor, \$15,000; Benefactor Sponsor, \$7,500; Associate Sponsor, \$5,000; Honorary Sponsor, \$2,500.

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

# Avs Better Halves to collect diapers and money on Feb. 4

Prior to the Avalanche game versus the Vancouver Canucks on Feb. 4, the **Avs Better Halves** will be stationed at all Pepsi Center entrances to collect diapers, baby wipes, and cash donations to benefit The Gathering Place.



This is the third year the Avs Better Halves have partnered with us for this effort. In 2011, the diaper drive collected 5,758 diapers, 6,140 wipes and over \$2,500 in cash.

The 2012 Diaper Drive partners include physicians and employees of **HealthONE**, as well as **Edge Restaurant & Bar** at **Four Seasons** and **Kroenke Sports Enterprises**.

### Come run with us!

Start your Presidents' Day weekend off right! Join us at **The Community Gathering 5K/10K and Children's Hope 1K** on Feb. 18, 2012 in City Park, organized by **Feet on the Street**. Runners and walkers of all ages and abilities are invited to this event benefiting The Gathering Place. The race begins at 10 a.m., is a flat, fast Bolder Boulder qualifying course, and strollers and pets are welcome.

Even if your New Year's resolutions don't include a 5K race, we still hope you'll join us. Registration is open at **www.runningguru.com** or at **Mind Body Sole** in the Cherry Creek Mall. See you at the race!

# **Betsy's Cupboard**

Through Betsy's Cupboard, our emergency food and supply pantry, The Gathering Place provides an average of over 8,000 pounds of food and 400 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@tgpdenver.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 Coloradoans 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 FOOD**

- Peanut butter Soups and stews Coffee, tea, cider packets, or cocoa packets Brown rice\* Beans, canned or dry\* Whole wheat pasta Spaghetti sauce Milk, powdered or canned Canned albacore tuna, chicken breast, or salmon Canned fruits in 100% juice or its own juice\* Canned vegetables
- Make-a-meal items (Hamburger or Tuna Helper)\*
- Frozen entrée's, beans and rice combos\* Snack items (e.g. tuna and cracker packs, crackers, nuts)
- Granola bars
   Oatmeal or other whole grain hot cereals
   Whole grain cold cereal
   Mayonnaise
- Mustard 100% Bottled juice Bottled water
- Vegetarian products Microwavable items Fresh veggies and fruits that do not have to be refrigerated (e.g. apples, oranges, potatoes, squash, tomatoes, onions, carrots, green beans)

### **PERSONAL SUPPLIES**

- Deodorant\* Lotion Toothbrushes and toothpaste • Tampons/pads\* • Shampoo and conditioner • Razors\* • Hair care products
- Denture-Polygrip/Efferdent Cosmetics for all skin colors New socks and underwear for women and children Laundry detergent Fabric softener
- Dryer sheets Dish soap

#### **BABY ITEMS**

- Baby powder, lotion, shampoo, and bath wash
- Unexpired baby food
  Diapers (Pull-Ups sizes 4, 5,
  Baby wipes
  Sippy cups
  Strollers
  Children's vitamins
  Pedialyte

#### **OTHER**

• Tissues • Toilet paper • King Soopers/Safeway gift cards • Small can openers • Computer disks/ flash drives • Craft store gift cards • Gift cards for children's birthday gifts • RTD BusTicket Books

\*These are high demand items.

# volunteers

# Thank you to our 2011 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 this holiday season: Allstate, Astle family and friends, Birthday Smiles, Cherry Hills Christian Middle School, Cintas, Colorado Funders Association, women from the Colorado Symphony Orchestra Chorus, CorePower Yoga,



The United Airlines Pilots 4 Kids spent some time in the Family Area before hosting a bingo game festivity.

Creekside Girl Scouts, Crosby family and friends, Jeff Brooks and the Funyuns Band, University of Colorado Denver's Office of Media Relations, Colorado Women's Forum in Health Administration, Denver Zoo, Dolls for Daughters, Frome family and friends, The Gathering Place's Talking Circle participants, Germany family and friends, God's Grace Community Church, His Helping Hands, IBM, ISKON-Food for Life, Junior League of Denver, Kaiser Permanente, King of Glory Lutheran Church, Kuhlmann family, La Patisserie Francaise, Linnenberger family, Latta family, Nelson family, Mariachi Vasquez, Montessori of Evergreen, Northrop Grumman ECHO, Oracle, Ponderosa High School Peace Jam, Porter family and friends, Praski family, McKinstry, Kayla Rael, Raytheon, Steve Salazar, Seipel family, Steckel family, Subway, United Airlines Pilots 4 Kids, staff and governing board members of The Gathering Place, Western Union, Wheeler Trigg O'Donnell, Jeff Wittig, Barbara Wright, and Zion Temple Church.

Almost 500 individuals participated in 14 different feasts and festivities this year. We enjoyed a number of activities from craft making and caroling to playing games and dancing. And the food provided for the feasts was fabulous.

The holidays are a season when we can come together as a community to celebrate and enjoy making memories. Thank you to everyone for sharing your contributions and making our holidays brighter this year!

### **New Volunteer Welcome Tours**

The first step toward becoming a volunteer at The Gathering Place is to attend one of our monthly Volunteer Welcome Tours. These occur on the third Thursday of each month at 4 p.m. and will give prospective volunteers a chance to see our organization in action, learn about current, available opportunities, pick up a volunteer application, and ask any questions you might have about getting involved. You can sign up for these tours on our website at www.tgpdenver.org/volunteer, or by contacting Lydia Rodriguez at lydiafaye@tgpdenver.org or 303-996-9046.

# 2011 holiday fair



## 2011 Holiday Fair comes home to The Gathering Place

1535 High Street was transformed into a holiday haven on Dec. 11, 2011 for The Gathering Place's annual Holiday Fair. On that evening, 178 clients of The Gathering Place were treated to a festive party that included a delicious sit-down meal, cookie decorating, craft making, face painting, singing, dancing, and visits from the Broncos cheerleaders, Dinger the Colorado Rockies mascot, and, of course, Santa and Mrs. Claus.

Such a fabulous celebration is only possible through the hard work and generous support of a number of individuals, groups, and businesses. This year, **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 during the festivity. In addition, a number of groups and businesses supported our Holiday Fair this year by donating goods, time, and services. Those were the **Damsels Dance Company**, the **Denver Broncos**, **The Original Dickens Carolers**, **Dinger** and the **Colorado Rockies**, **Rob Eschen**, **Mime Time**, **Tagawa Gardens**, and the **Yo Yo Guy**.

And the event 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. Thank you to the following volunteers for making this year's Holiday Fair such a terrific experience: Yvonne Bogard, Justin Caskey, Patches Caskey, Ahluranda Crook, Allison Disbrow, Diane Draper, Chad Gardner, Betsy Gielissen, Jim Goodwin, Joe Goodwin, Kelli Goodwin, Tim Heacox, Margie Hunter, Kaye Hurtt, Joe Ignat, Pam Ignat, Krista Keogh, Lucy Kissinger, Leslie Lane, Amy Lemon, James Lemon, Debbie McCarty, Mike McCarty, Scott Monsma, Jonathan Moran, Lauren Naylor, Katie Nooning, Dee Dee Parker, Emily Parker, James Parker, Sarah Parker, the Pergola family, Dave Pilgrim, Emily Pilgrim, Colleen Rohrer, the Roling family, Marc Scremin, Julie Terrill, Erika Torvik, Brett Waxler, and Marybeth Welsh. If there is anyone we have may have missed, we sincerely apologize. Thank you all for creating a truly special holiday event for our community!

# supporters

# Whole Foods gives to The Gathering Place in many ways

Over the past several years, the **Capitol Hill Whole Foods** store has partnered with The Gathering Place in a number of important ways. We have received donations from their "Grab and Give" food drive during the holiday season



and on the fourth Monday of every month, the store hosts a "Buy an

Extra Day" to help us keep Betsy's Cupboard stocked with delicious, nutritious food. We also received \$250 in food from a Whole Foods Facebook contest (half of the \$500 prize, which we split with Denver Urban Ministries).

We want to say thank you to Whole Foods for being such strong, consistent supporters of The Gathering Place and thank you to everyone who shops at this location and helps us through these initiatives!

# **Huge success on Colorado Gives Day 2012**



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. During a 36 hour period on December 6 and 7, more than 300 individuals made

donations to The Gathering Place totaling over \$60,000.

Donations made by new donors and increased donations from existing donors were matched 100% by a grant from the **Gay & Lesbian Fund for Colorado**, meaning we added an extra \$5,000 to our total. And, soon we will hear about the amount we will receive from the **Colorado Gives Day Incentive Fund**, which was set aside to be a porportional boost for all donations received on Colorado Gives Day through the GivingFirst website. That means our Colorado Gives Day earnings will exceed \$65,000! Thank you all for your participation and support!

# **Vodafone Americas Foundation contributes to The Gathering Place**

Vodafone Americas Foundation—affiliated with Verizon Wireless—awarded a generous, \$10,000 grant to The Gathering Place during the fourth quarter of 2011. Their grantmaking process, which included a site visit by the foundation's director, was initiated when a Denver-based employee recommended our services as a fit for their priority to support the communities where their employees live and work. The Gathering Place is a great match for their desire to fund programs that "help families discover ways of being together in healthy relationships and prepare them to deal with adversity, help overcome poverty and become active participants in our community." Thank you, Vodafone, for your support!

# Honorable Order of the Blue Goose supports The Gathering Place with a holiday donation drive

For the last 12 years, the Honorable Order of the Blue Goose, International in Colorado has held their annual holiday party at the Homestead Golf Course and asked members to bring food, clothing, and toiletry items to donate to The Gathering Place. This year the group focused on items needed specifically for Betsy's Cupboard and came to us in mid-December bearing a generous amount of food and toiletry items.

The Order, which is comprised of individuals who work or have worked in the property and casualty insurance related industry, encourages its members to pursue opportunities for fellowship, education, leadership, and charity. "The Colorado Pond was inspired to donate to The Gathering Place by Ken Warner," says Most Loyal Gander John Lacy (the group's current president). Prior to his death in 2010, Warner was an active member of the Honorable Order of the Blue Goose and a regular volunteer at The Gathering Place with members of his church, Wellshire Presbyterian.



"Through the Order, we have an opportunity to come together to do these types of things—to give back—and make an impact in our community," Lacy says. "It's something we enjoy."



## Health and wellness opportunities at The Gathering Place

The physical and mental health programs and collaborations at The Gathering Place grew and strengthened tremendously in 2011, after Sarah Kinzer joined our staff as the director of physical and mental health. Over the past year, we facilitated 466 counseling sessions, 285 visits to the Stout Street Clinic Health Outreach Program Van, 32 pap smears, 47 mammograms, 58 tuberculosis tests, 206 visits with nurses from the Loretto Heights School of Nursing at Regis University, and the enrollment of 121 individuals in the Colorado Indigent Care Program. We also have ongoing partnerships with a number of health and mental health organizations, which include: Charg Resource Center, Colorado Pharmacy, Denver Health Community Voices, Denver Health Mobile Crisis, Denver Metro Tuberculosis Clinic, Empowerment, HIKE Program, Lions Club of Denver, Mental Health America of Colorado, Mental Health Center of Denver, Mile High Council, Maria Droste Counseling Center, Pets for the Homeless, Regis University, Stout Street HOP Van, and Total Oral Prevention Strategies.

Though the services provided and partnerships are impressive, they merely scratch the surface in explaining the true advances that have been made. "It's important to have someone on staff who can have an actual dialogue with a client to determine what their issues are and what is needed," Kinzer says. "Then you can give them a good referral versus a random one, which eliminates the feeling that they're getting the run around."

Kinzer's work to build strong relationships with organizations and individuals in the community has been important, as well. "Now I can make a referral and the



person on the other end knows why that referral is being made and is waiting on our client to arrive.

"The relationships help me to close the loop on our end, too," she says. "Often the service provider will follow up to let me know if they did or didn't see our client. And I like to get feedback from our clients to know what did and didn't work or if they felt it was a valuable resource, so I have that information in the future."

Among the past year's successes, Kinzer notes her work to form new partnerships to help clients obtain eyeglasses, low-cost pharmacy perscriptions, and low-cost dental care. She also organized a successful health fair in the summer that featured 18 different service providers and was attended by 153 clients. "I got great feedback on the health fair," Kinzer says. "The organizations gave specific, targeted information to our clients, which made them feel like they were getting answers to questions that they hadn't been able to before."

# Get your Valentine's Day cards from us this year!











You can come by The Gathering Place during our regular business hours to purchase cards, visit one of the many vendors in the Denver Metro area who carries cards from The Card Project (list available online at www.tgpdenver.org/cpvendors), or contact Denise Lines at denise@tgpdenver.org or 303-996-9068 to place a large order. Thanks for your support!

### The Gathering Place

a refuge for rebuilding lives 1535 High Street Denver, CO 80218

Non-Profit Organization Denver, CO Permit No. 2858

U.S. Postage PAID



The Gathering Place exists to support women and their children experiencing homelessness and poverty by providing a safe daytime refuge and resources for self-sufficiency.

### Every day we offer... **Shelter from Harm**

Women, children, and transgender individuals who visit The Gathering Place experience a safe refuge where they have access to emergency survival services such as meals, bathing facilities, telephones, and on-site child care.

### **Community of Acceptance**

It is our philosophy that all people, no matter what their circumstances, are valuable human beings just as they are.

### **Opportunity for Hope**

The Gathering Place offers resources for self-sufficiency such as adult education, The Card Project, and Writers Group. Programs are designed to foster the talent and potential within each individual.

### The Gathering Place

1535 High Street Denver, CO 80218 303-321-4198 303-321-0679 fax www.tgpdenver.org

### A MEMBER OF COMMUNITY **SHARES OF COLORADO**

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