



Gatherings

The agency newsletter of The Gathering Place Summer 2015

Fighting indifference: Julie's story

Back in April, a handful of women from The Gathering Place walked through the doors of the Regional Transportation District in downtown Denver. They were there for a public forum discussing a proposed 15 percent fare hike on RTD buses and light rails. A representative from 9to5 Colorado, a chapter of the National Association of Working Women, had spoken to members of The Gathering Place at one of their twice-weekly community meetings and encouraged them to participate.

Among those who addressed the twelve assembled Board of Directors at the public forum in April was Julie, who felt a strange combination of emotions as she approached the live microphone that day: nervousness, excitement, anger.

"Speaking in front of such a large crowd is something I'm not used to," says Julie today. "But I knew I wasn't alone. There was a lot of support behind me and those making the decisions needed to hear what I had to say."

Julie spoke calmly, but firmly. She said that as one among many low income individuals who depended on public transportation within the city, she would find accessing RTD services, already difficult to afford, even harder if a fare hike goes into effect. A month later, when the Board of Directors voted on whether or not to raise fares, the proposal passed 11 to 1. Still, something had awoken within Julie. And there was no turning back.

As a Colorado native, Julie grew up in Lakewood back when it was, in her words, a "cow town." After the recession hit in 2008, she noticed that finding work became tougher. Openings for jobs she used to get relatively easily – whether restaurant work, retail positions, or temp service employment – now appeared less frequently and were extremely competitive when they did come about. Without steady work, Julie's expenses started to pile up and she soon found herself homeless.

While staying at the Brandon Center, a local emergency shelter for women and their children experiencing domestic

violence or homelessness - now known as Brandon Safe Haven - Julie tagged along with a friend as she visited The Gathering Place to check her mail. While here, she learned that TGP offers a variety of programs and services for women and children during the day.

Since her first visit six years ago, Julie has come to TGP off and on whenever the need arises. She uses the Computer Lab to check her email and research job opportunities, signs up to do laundry, and eats meals in the Dining Room to

keep focused and energized.

One day, staff member Cesar Gevert approached Julie about being on the organization's Advocacy Committee, a group comprised of board, staff, volunteers, and TGP members whose goal is to affect positive change on issues impacting those in our community who are either low income or experiencing homelessness. Julie's decision to join the Committee led to an opportunity for advocacy training and her ultimate decision to speak up at RTD headquarters.

"Sometimes you can't wait for others to come help you. You have to be proactive and help yourself," says Julie.

The RTD fare hike was a temporary setback for the Advocacy Committee,

but they are now looking ahead. Up next is a focus on the issue of affordable housing. There are also plans to engage RTD in the possible creation of a low income-based transportation pass. The fight for recognition and against indifference continues.

Julie is looking ahead personally as well, and feels hopeful. She has plans to move from her current bed at a local women's shelter into permanent housing. Also, since joining TGP's Advocacy Committee, Julie has begun to consider a new career in nonprofit work. In fact, she is already making strides in that direction. 9to5 Colorado was so impressed with Julie's advocacy efforts that they recently selected her to join their organization as a temporary paid intern. Hers is a future that is certainly worth fighting for.



Julie protesting against an RTD fare increase

The Gathering Place welcomes new Program Managers



Matt Wallington



Melany Deem



Steve Hartbauer

We are excited to introduce you to three staff members of The Gathering Place who started in our Programs and Services Department within the last few months. Given our drop-in model of service, where we can never be certain how many TGP members will attend a given class or workshop, it takes a high level of flexibility to run one of our personal growth and self-sufficiency programs. Thankfully, each new Program Manager featured here brings strong credentials and innovative ideas to their new position. They have also been quick to adapt to the culture of The Gathering Place. Read on and get to know a bit about them:

- **Matt Wallington** started as our Family Program Manager in June. A native of Denver who grew up not too far from The Gathering Place, Matt comes to TGP with a decade of experience offering support services to families struggling with homelessness. He joined the Family Program in the midst of its new summer programming and, as a result, has hit the ground running! (More about this on Page 5.)

- **Melany Deem** became Education & Job Readiness Program Manager in May and has quickly settled into running the day-to-day operations of our GED Classroom space. With an extensive background in creating training and education programs, Melany hopes to expand GED enrollment at The Gathering Place and offer additional job skills classes. She has already helped implement a Basic Skills Class and organized an on-site hiring event.

- **Steve Hartbauer** is already a recognized face and name around The Gathering Place, having been a Resource Advocate for a year before moving to his new position as Arts Program Manager in June. It is a position that many saw as a terrific fit. Steve, a sculptor for over 25 years who likes to weld metal and work with mosaic tile, says he is very fortunate to combine his great passion for the arts with his long history of employment in human services. In addition to taking over the duties of The Card Project, Steve recently oversaw a new 5-week Introduction to Pottery workshop for TGP members.

Matt, Melany, and Steve - welcome to your new roles and thank you for your commitment to The Gathering Place!

TGP holds 5th Annual Health Fair

Local healthcare providers and advocacy organizations met with 149 adults and 23 children during our 5th Annual TGP Health Fair in July. Organized by our Physical & Mental Health Program, the Health Fair offers free health screenings and informational resources to all members of The Gathering Place. This year we had representatives from over 20 providers and organizations set up throughout our building, including those from **Colorado Access, Arapahoe House, Center for African American Health, Children's Hospital Colorado, Mental Health America**, and many more.

CHARG Resource Center to consult on client engagement

Starting this summer, The Gathering Place will partner with **CHARG Resource Center** to identify opportunities for greater member involvement within our day-to-day operations and in long-term strategic planning. CHARG Resource Center serves adults with chronic mental illness and has been working in the community for over 25 years. The nonprofit organization operates a clinic and a drop-in center at two different locations in Denver's Capitol Hill neighborhood. This partnership is being facilitated through a grant from **The Denver Foundation** awarded to CHARG Resource Center and the latter will consult with TGP in this area over a number of months. We are excited to learn from them and identify possibilities for additional member engagement that fit within the mission of The Gathering Place.

2015 Gala: get inspired on Sept 25!

Our 2015 Gala is coming up and tickets are now available at www.tgpdenver.org/gala. Mark your calendars to join The Gathering Place on Friday, September 25th at **Wings Over the Rockies** for a night of community, celebration, and support!

The theme of this year's gala is *Inspire!* and the event will acknowledge TGP President **Leslie Foster** and her 25 years of leadership. Don't miss your chance to take part in this special milestone as we salute Leslie for a quarter century of service and dedication.

We would like thank the following 2015 Gala Sponsors and those on the 2015 Honorary Gala Committee:

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Joyce Zeff

Third-party events a great way to support The Gathering Place



TGP Fundraiser by Women@Hyatt Denver Chapter

Third-party events and fundraisers are essential to The Gathering Place's ability to continue serving individuals in our community experiencing poverty or homelessness.

Over the past few months we have received financial support from a variety of such events. These have taken on many forms, from a car show put on by the **Camaro Club of the Rockies** to a fundraiser organized by Denver's **Neurosculpting Institute**. Each unique event is an opportunity for those in the community to raise money for, and learn about, The Gathering Place.

Those interested in organizing a third-party event to support The Gathering Place are encouraged to find more information at www.tgpdenver.org/thirdpartyevents. We ask that an application form be submitted at least four weeks prior to the event and that the concept of all events be approved in advance.

With your help we can continue to provide positive relationships, choice, and essential resources that transform lives!

Remembering Yoko Felter & Richard Steckel

The Gathering Place community is saddened by the recent loss of two long-term volunteers who passed away.

Yoko Felter was a volunteer mental health counselor at The Gathering Place for over 20 years. She offered one-on-one counseling to our members on a weekly basis and touched the lives of countless women. She also witnessed many changes at TGP, including the creation of our Wellness Area following the construction of a new building in 2007. “Yoko brought a loving and compassionate heart to her work, encouraging and blessing the women she met and talked with each week,” remembers **Barbara Jensen**, Physical & Mental Program Manager.

Mrs. Felter had a distinguished career as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) and a State Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselor III (CAC III). She worked in the substance abuse, mental health, and criminal justice fields for over 25 years and was the Founder of the Dry Creek Treatment Center in Denver. She lost her battle to cancer on July 11th and is survived by Ed Felter, her husband of 45 years.



Yoko Felter

Richard Steckel's history with our organization also stretched back over two decades. He consulted with The Gathering Place in the early 1990's and cited TGP in his 1997 book *In Search of America's Best Nonprofits*. For a relatively still-young organization, that validation and recognition was a great honor. A talented photographer, Richard and his wife Michele would visit us twice a year during Mother's Day and Christmas to take photo portraits of our members. Volunteer Coordinator **Lydia Rodriguez** recently recalled the special touch he had while photographing. “I loved that Richard was so open and charismatic in his interactions with the women and children. His photos captured the essence of The Gathering Place. They projected the hope and positivity of this place.” Richard and Michele would bring back prints to give to their subjects as holiday gifts. You can see their photos mounted around TGP today.



Richard Steckel

Mr. Steckel served as Executive Director of the Denver Children's Museum from 1976 to 1984. He developed creative ideas around an earned income strategy of fundraising that helped the faltering museum prosper and expand. More recently, Richard and Michele started The Milestone Project, a traveling photo exhibit and educational series on childhood milestones throughout the world. Richard passed away after succumbing to cancer on June 19th.

Both Yoko Felter & Richard Steckel were special friends of TGP and our thoughts go out to their respective families during this difficult time. Their spirit of service and goodwill lives on in the many individuals they connected with and helped. They will be greatly missed.

TGP volunteers trained in Trauma-Informed Care

At The Gathering Place, we strive to implement a Trauma-Informed Care approach to serving those who visit our organization and use its programs and services. Earlier this summer, 19 volunteers attended a training on Trauma-Informed Care in the GED Classroom led by our Evaluation Manager, **Joann Calabrese**.

According to **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)**, a Trauma-Informed Care approach to service realizes the widespread impact of trauma, recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, and staff, responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices, and seeks to actively resist re-traumatization. The truth is that everyone deals with some degree of trauma in their lives and for our members there is a prevalence of high-level traumatic experiences. Traumatic events often involve interpersonal violence or a betrayal by a trusted person or institution. They can also cause a disruption of core assumptions and beliefs.

We approach Trauma-Informed Care as a Universal Precaution. We assume some level of unhealed trauma with everyone and create programs and policies with that awareness in mind. During the volunteer training, we introduced Six Key Principles of a Trauma-Informed Care approach. You can read about these Key Principles and learn more about Trauma-Informed Care on the SAMHSA website at <http://goo.gl/g6vN08>.

A safe space to learn and play: TGP's Family Program

Our Family Program occupies a long, extended room on the third floor of The Gathering Place with easy access to both the rooftop garden and the second floor dining room. Full of toys, books, and games, the room has an atmosphere as bright as the colored carpeting on the floor. Experienced volunteers join children to participate in structured activities while staff provides resources and support services to mothers and legal guardians.



Storytime with Denver Public Library in the Family Program area

For the adults and youth who enter the family area, the program is a place where moms can have a much-needed break and where kids can just be kids.

“The families that visit us are often going through a lot. It can be very tough for both the women and their children,” says **Matt Wallington**, Family Program Manager. “Staff and volunteers work hard to provide some consistency in times of crisis or when there might not be as much stability in that family’s life.”

The Gathering Place is not a licensed day care and, as a result, mothers and legal guardians must stay within the building at all times whenever their children are in the family area. The objective is for our adult members to have time to access other programs and services throughout TGP while the children are being well taken care of in a safe space. And for our young members, the objective of the Family Program is to offer a chance to socialize, learn, and play. Moms accompany their kids to eat breakfast, lunch, and snack in our dining room and may join them in the family area to interact in a nurturing and enriching environment.

June, July, and August bring a larger number of school-aged children to TGP due to the long summer holiday. For older children who do not wish to play in

the family area, a Teen Computer Lab is available. Also, thanks in part to a grant from the **Colfax Marathon** and **Denver Post Community Foundation**, the Family Program has organized weekly summer activities focused around physical activity and the arts. These efforts include everything from rooftop play time and children’s yoga to acting and drumming classes.

“Our team wanted to make the experience a bit like summer camp,” recalls **Lacy Toline**, a Bilingual Family Resource Advocate. “Despite our drop-in model of service where we never know exactly who will show up on any given day, we thought it would be nice to have the kids explore new experiences together.”

Although the family area was designed and decorated with kids in mind, the program is also a useful resource for parents. Families are able to receive baby food, formula, diapers, and other children’s toiletry and hygiene products. Kids clothing is also available at times and, as we approach the end of the summer, Family Resource Advocates are



Drumming class on the TGP rooftop

working to gather backpacks and school supplies.

The women and children in the Family Program face numerous challenges, but they know there are people and organizations in their community that are there to help in the worst of times. Whether it is working to help a mother secure shelter for the night at a place that accepts families or providing diapers of the right size to fit one’s baby, The Gathering Place and its Family Program knows that together our community is strong enough to meet these challenges and inspire change.

To donate school supplies or diapers (especially sizes 4, 5, and 6) to the Family Program, contact **Melanie Durham** at 303-996-9067 or melanie@tgpdenver.org.

Donation list for Betsy's Cupboard

Through Betsy's Cupboard, our emergency food and supply pantry, The Gathering Place provides an average of 5,500 pounds of food, 220 toiletry bags, and 1,600 diapers each month to women, children, and transgender individuals who otherwise might not have these resources.

If you are interested in organizing a food or supply drive or 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 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 newborn, 4, 5, 6 and Pull-Ups)

OTHER

- Can openers • Computer 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

supporters

Junior League of Denver continues commitment to meal sponsorships

Junior League is a women's training organization that develops civic leaders committed to improving their communities and has been active in Denver since 1918. Twice a month, a group with the **Junior League of Denver** comes to The Gathering Place and completes a meal sponsorship in our Food Program. They



Junior League members work in the kitchen

spend much of the day preparing and serving hot, nutritious meals to the women, children, and transgender individuals who visit TGP daily. The organization also underwrites all of the milk offered in our Dining Room.

Stephanie Richards of the Denver chapter says the organization's partnership with The Gathering Place allows its members to make a real impact and work towards their mission.

"By serving a hot meal with a smile, we can, if even just for a moment, bring positive energy into the life of someone in need and that means everything."

The Junior League of Denver has agreed to continue their meal sponsorships for another year and we are grateful for their help. Thank you!

Philanthropist Joyce Zeff inspired others to give

Visitors to our building at 1535 High Street who look up towards our rooftop garden will see the following silver-gray words sparkling in the Colorado sunlight: 'THE GATHERING PLACE' and 'KAL & JOYCE ZEFF CENTER'.

Together with husband Kal, who passed away in 2005, Joyce Zeff was a consistently generous benefactor of The Gathering Place. The couple's support culminated in a \$1 million donation during the mid-2000's to kick off a capital campaign that helped ensure the completion of our current 28,000 square foot building. They also gave funding to our children and family programming over the years.

Joyce Zeff passed away to lung cancer on August 5th. Her and Kal's commitment to philanthropy is a lasting inspiration to our community.



Joyce Zeff (second from left) helps cut the ribbon to open our new building in 2007



Workplace contributions make a big difference

Does your company have a workplace giving program or participate in one through an organization such as Community Shares of Colorado or Mile High United Way? Workplace giving is an easy way to support The Gathering Place and you probably won't even notice the small amount missing from your paycheck each month. But think about what a \$10/month contribution becomes in just one year!

The following are The Gathering Place's ID numbers for various workplace giving campaigns:

- **Community Shares of Colorado: #5026**
- **Colorado Combined Campaign: #5050**
- **Combined Federal Campaign: #41763**
- **Mile High United Way:** Ask your campaign coordinator for an agency write-in form.

If your company has a workplace giving program, be sure to sign up to support The Gathering Place and encourage your co-workers to support us, too!

Give throughout the year as a Sustainer of Hope

For those who would like to automate their financial giving, but whose employer does not offer the option of workplace giving, becoming a **Sustainer of Hope** and

Sustainers of
HOPE
The Gathering Place's monthly giving society ✨

donating monthly through ColoradoGives.org is an easy way to support The Gathering Place on a continual basis. Recurring donations allow you to give a small amount each month (week, quarter, etc.) to The Gathering Place, which adds up to a significant gift over the course of a year. To learn more about our Sustainers of Hope program, visit www.tgpdenver.org/hope. For questions, or to sign up over the phone, contact **Melanie Durham** at 303-996-9067.

Buy an Extra at Whole Foods

Did you know that the **Whole Foods Market** on Capitol Hill holds a 'Buy an Extra Day' for The Gathering Place on the third Monday of each month? Partnering with us for the past several years, the store at 900 E. 11th Ave. in Denver sets out a table to collect food donations to go to our choice food pantry, Betsy's Cupboard. Volunteers from the **Banana Republic** store in Cherry Creek pass out flyers to shoppers, encouraging them to buy an extra item (or two) while they shop for themselves. This continuing monthly partnership event allows us to keep the shelves of Betsy's Cupboard stocked and introduces us to more individuals in the community. So the next time you are in the neighborhood on Buy an Extra Day, swing by Whole Foods and do a little shopping for the women and children of The Gathering Place.

Tax credit information for gifts made to The Gathering Place

The Gathering Place operates in a Denver County Enterprise Zone and contributions equal to or greater than \$250 are eligible for a 25% state tax credit. In addition, stock and substantiated in-kind contributions qualify for a 12.5% credit. To receive this credit, the state requires you to provide your taxpayer identification number or the last four digits of your Social Security number when you make your donation. You also must file your taxes electronically.

Alternatively, gifts of \$1,000 or more made to support our Family Program are eligible for the Colorado Child Care Contribution Credit. This allows up to 50% of your contribution to be used as a state tax credit. Stock and in-kind contributions are not eligible for this credit. Please contact your tax advisor for up-to-date information about the value of the Colorado Child Care Contribution Credit, as it changes regularly.

According to state regulations, either of these credits must be requested at the time of the donation. If you are making a donation by check, specify the program name in the memo section. If you are using a credit card, attach a note. If you are calling in your donation, please tell The Gathering Place representative you speak to that you would like to receive the credit.

For more information about either tax credits, contact Melanie Durham at 303-996-9067 or melanie@tgpdenver.org.

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 poverty or homelessness.

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

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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