



# Gatherings

*The agency newsletter of The Gathering Place* Holiday 2015

## An opportunity to give back: Debra's story

When Debra walks through the doors of The Gathering Place these days, her mind is preoccupied with a different set of issues than during visits in the past. Now her primary focus is the weekly kitchen volunteer shift to which she has committed herself. What is on the menu for lunch today? How many members will want to eat a fresh cooked meal mid-day? Get a chance to talk with Debra, however, and you soon realize that she is not one to worry unnecessarily. She projects the quiet and knowing strength of someone who understands that they can handle whatever life throws at them. In fact, she has done just that multiple times.

Debra was born and raised in San Diego, California and moved to Denver in 2003 to look after her father after her mother passed away. Over the years she worked a variety of jobs as she familiarized herself with the city. While walking to her job one day in 2008, Debra was hit by a car when crossing the street near Denver East High School. The accident left her suffering from neck and lower back injuries and unable to work.

"Sometimes my legs get numb and sometimes it's my arms," says Debra. "Since I couldn't work, I lost my job. On top of that a living arrangement with an acquaintance of mine ended and in the summer of 2010 I became homeless."

Not knowing where to turn, she heard about The Gathering Place and decided to pay us a visit.

Once at TGP, Debra was able to obtain hotel vouchers for immediate short-term shelter. Meals in our dining room and food from Betsy's Cupboard sustained her during the early days of this new and difficult situation. After a few months of staying at a shelter for single women, Debra found housing with a roommate she had met there. For several years Debra was housed, until she once again turned to The Gathering Place after finding herself without a

place to live in the winter of 2014. With the help of Stacey Galvin, an employee of Denver Human Services who works out of a satellite office at TGP, Debra was put on a waiting list for subsidized housing. Today, she has her own private room in a low-income property in Capitol Hill and feels content to have a quiet place to talk on the phone with her children and grandkids.

Stably housed once again, Debra decided to give back to the organization that helped her when she was in need.



She chose to volunteer in the kitchen once a week for four hours prepping ingredients, serving meals, and handing out sack lunches to members who cannot stay for a hot meal.

"I enjoy working in the kitchen and helping to feed people so that they forget their problems for even a short while," she says. "I like being a part of that."

Debra also finds herself informally helping others who are new to The Gathering Place and struggling with the barriers they face. She still visits Betsy's Cupboard from time to time to supplement her food budget and visits the dining room to enjoy a meal when she is not busy volunteering. She plans to keep her place in Denver, but is thinking about visiting California to take care of a sister who is dealing with health issues, too.

Having navigated through some tribulations of her own, Debra understands with pragmatic objectiveness the reality that many are just one financial or health-related emergency away from poverty or homelessness. She offers the following advice to others who may find themselves in similar overwhelming situations:

"Things become clearer and come more in step when you sit down and take a breath. You can cry, let it out. And then breathe. If your anger is up, you are not open to listening. Search out those who can help you make a plan and advocate for yourself. But first just breathe."

## You've got mail! Our P.O. Box

You might notice that the envelope in this newsletter has a post office box address.

We made this change to ensure that Share the Joy gift cards, and your donations of support get to us as quickly as possible.

Over the past year, we have experienced several delays in mail delivery and a post office box will end those delays. If you have any questions or concerns, please let us know. You can contact Brenda Roush at 303-996-9027 or [brenda@tgpdenver.org](mailto:brenda@tgpdenver.org). Thank you for all of your support this holiday season!

**You can now send  
mail to us at:**

**The Gathering Place  
P.O. Box 181325  
Denver, CO 80218**

## The Gathering Place wins Kaiser Permanente community stories contest

Earlier this year, The Gathering Place was chosen by Kaiser Permanente Colorado as one of 11 community partners selected to participate in their second annual *Our Community Stories* challenge. Each nonprofit partner was given a camera, a tripod, and a microphone to document an aspect of the work they do throughout the Front Range. We decided to focus our short video on The Card Project as experienced by TGP member artist Fredericka Banks. Fredericka, also known as "Fred," is legally blind and creates her art through a well-honed process of imagination and tactile strategy.

"When I came here I liked the fact that it was a place for women and I was able to blossom and grow and work through my traumatic experience," says Fred in the video. "It was a way for me to sit with my pencils and cards and draw and color. That soothed my soul in a lot of ways."

The Card Project is a personal growth program at The Gathering Place that offers members a chance to experiment with creative self expression as well as make a bit of income. Greeting cards sell for \$2.00 wholesale and individual artists receive \$1.50 of that amount for each of their cards that are sold. Cards are available at both The Gathering Place and 25 vendors around the Denver area. You can find a list of current vendors on our website at [www.tgpdenver.org/cpvendors](http://www.tgpdenver.org/cpvendors).

In September, the video about Fredericka and The Card Project was named a finalist winner in the storytelling contest, resulting in a \$4,000 Kaiser communications grant awarded to TGP. Congratulations to Fred, Arts Program Manager Steve Hartbauer, and our Community Engagement Department on the success of the video!

"From the people we serve, we hear and see their struggles and triumphs every day," says Leslie Foster, president of The Gathering Place. "We're so excited about this grant from Kaiser Permanente because it'll help us amplify their voices so their journeys as individuals may be experienced compassionately by the community as a whole."

The winning video can be viewed at <https://goo.gl/WF32hG>.

## TGP chosen as beneficiary for final performances of BALLS! A Holiday Spectacular

Are you a fan of variety shows, irreverent sock puppets, and audience participation? Assuming the answer is YES, you're in luck because The Gathering Place is the nonprofit beneficiary for this year's performances of BALLS! A Holiday Spectacular.

Now in its 7th and FINAL year as a non-traditional holiday tradition in Denver, BALLS! has been described in the past as "a rollicking show with flashy guest stars, audience sock puppet sing-alongs, spontaneous haikus, and a white elephant."

Join us for an enjoyable evening while at the same time supporting the work of The Gathering Place.

- Mondays, December 7 and 14, 2015 at 7pm  
(Doors open at 6pm. Full bar and food available)
- Lannie's Clocktower Cabaret, 16th & Arapahoe in Denver
- Tickets: \$22/advance or \$25/door at [lannies.com](http://lannies.com) OR 303-293-0075
- Read more about the show at <https://lannies.com/events/balls-a-holiday-spectacular/>

Don't miss your very last chance to experience this one-of-a-kind holiday celebration. It will likely sell out.



## A festive evening of community fun and celebration at the 2015 Annual Gala



Repainting the Future Mural Project.



Julie and Margaret pause for a photo.



A lively auction.

More than 400 friends of The Gathering Place came together on September 25 to support our work at the 2015 Annual Gala. Held at **Wings Over the Rockies Air & Space Museum**, the event raised \$135,000 to help fund the programs and services we offer.

The theme of the gala was “Inspired!” and this year’s special honoree was **Leslie Foster**, who celebrated 25 years of visionary leadership as president of The Gathering Place. The evening’s emcee was incoming TGP Board Chair **Geoffrey Bateman** and over 25 TGP members were on hand to recognize the many contributions Leslie has brought to The Gathering Place and their lives over the many years.

In addition to a silent and live auction, the evening’s festivities included the display of a large mural project by TGP member artist **Leticia Tanguma** and other artists of the **Repainting the Future Mural Project**, the performance of an original slam poetry piece by Colorado-based group **Minor Disturbance**, TGP member speeches and the occasional ‘roasting’ of Leslie Foster, and the unveiling of a new agency video about The Gathering Place.

Some of the exciting auction items were a cooking class with **Chef Amelia Mouton** to be held in The Gathering Place kitchen, a trip for six to Mexico, and a chance to experience first hand how Leslie Foster stays in such amazing shape. This Presidential Packet, won by **Phillip Infelise and B.J. Iacino**, included a training session with Leslie’s strengths trainer, **Gregg Hoffman**, and a paleo lunch with Leslie, Gregg, **Sharon Hoffman**, and **Jane Berryman**.

Wings Over the Rockies Air & Space Museum offered a fun and unique location for this year’s gala as planes and other aviation memorabilia were on view throughout the building. Located on the grounds of the former Lowry Air Force Base, the museum and venue space is housed in a 40,000 square foot historic hangar built in 1939.

Thank you to our 2015 gala sponsors: Presenting Sponsor – **Randall A. Carter Foundation**; Gold Sponsors – **Kaye & Mike Hurtt**, **Eric & Becky Jacobson**, **Michael & Jorgina Rumley**, **Sybil Praski**, and **Bank of the West**; Silver Sponsors – **Intrepid Benefits**, **Cresa Denver**, **Pam Ray & Dale Cantwell**, **Heidi & Randy Keogh**, **Deborah Radman**, **Gary & Judy Powell**; Bronze Sponsors – **Bob & Diane Alder**, **Pam & Joe Ignat**, **Britta Evans Miles & Marc Miles**, **Elizabeth Gundlach Neufeld & Daniel Neufeld**, **Feldhake & Associates, P.C.**, **Geoffrey Bateman & Mark Thrun**, **Leslie Foster & Jane Berryman**, **Renee Ripol & Brenda Roush**, **Vickers Ltd Edition Bronze Sculpture**, **Colorado Housing and Finance Authority**, **CenturyLink**, **Wheeler Trigg O’Donnell Foundation**, **EKS&H**, **National Renewable Energy Laboratory**, **Sopra Communities**, **Sparkman + Foote**, and **Vectra Bank**.

We would also like to thank all the Table Captains, Community Event Sponsors, ticket holders, volunteers, members, and staff who made the night a success. All funds raised by the gala will allow us to continue to be an organization where positive relationships, choice, and essential resources transform the lives of those in the Denver area who are experiencing poverty or homelessness. We hope to see you next year!



## Donation list for Betsy's Cupboard

Through Betsy's Cupboard, our emergency food and supply pantry, The Gathering Place provides an average of 4,000 pounds of food and 175 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](mailto: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 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

# volunteers

## Jeff Wittig: Music to our ears



On most afternoons our Dining Room isn't a surprising scene. There are mothers coaxing their children to eat their vegetables while sopping up spilled milk from highchair trays. There are members chatting with each other and with staff through mouthfuls of herb roasted chicken or Southwestern chili, while others fill their plates at the salad bar. Volunteers and kitchen staff hustle to efficiently

serve an average of 125 lunches daily. The atmosphere is bustling and can become quite hectic.

Fridays are different. Fridays we have Jeff.

Jeff Wittig has been volunteering his time and talent to TGP for five years. A true renaissance man, Jeff defies convention and categorization but we'll give it a shot: a singer/songwriter from Lansing, Michigan, Jeff heard about TGP from a fellow Alcoholics Anonymous member and shortly thereafter began performing during Friday lunch free of charge. Successfully sober for decades, Jeff takes the AA traditions of Service and Fellowship very seriously.

Like clockwork we see him – *each Friday at 11:00* – lugging his acoustic guitar and amp through the Welcome Area on his way to the second floor, greeting everyone he meets with a calm and wide-open smile. He likes to start with a number for the children. His signature, staccato version of “The ABCs” often devolves into laughter – from the children and Jeff.

Influenced by Blues greats and Rock/Folk legends, Jeff's repertoire is vast and crowd pleasing. Often, when Jeff performs a favorite: “Amazing Grace,” an inspired member will join him behind the microphone to harmonize. When Steve Hartbauer, TGP Arts Program Manager, takes a seat for a duet of “Sweet Home Alabama” or “Country Road” the effect can be transformative.

Days at TGP can be difficult and unpredictable. The personal lives of our members, even more so. Many feel marginalized and some barely cling to TGP's ideal of Hope. That is the beauty of what Jeff brings to TGP. For two hours on Friday, everyone in the TGP dining room feels the equality, comradery, and transcendence that only music can bring.

There are many other things we could tell you about our friend, Jeff. He is 70 years old; he has appeared on *Prairie Home Companion* on at least 10 occasions; he doesn't accept money for his music and will donate it to charity if he does get paid; he believes that music has saved his life many times. But his personality is summed up best by his own answer to the question of why he loves playing at TGP. He smiled, shook his head, and said, “I just dig it, man.”

*Jeff can be reached at [jeffwittig@aol.com](mailto:jeffwittig@aol.com) and welcomes the opportunity to perform for other nonprofits or events.*

## Send the perfect holiday greeting card from Art Restart

You may have read or heard something from us about Art Restart and feel you already know the basics. That it is a social enterprise of The Gathering Place and a business launched in 2014 to raise revenue for both our programs and services and our artists. That [www.artrestart.org](http://www.artrestart.org) has over 100 examples of card art to choose from, packages start at quantities of 50 cards, and ordering online is a snap. That customized messaging and co-branding are available and your purchase will make a real difference in the lives of those we serve. These are all true statements and great reasons to place your order for Art Restart cards right now. If you need another reason to purchase this year, read below to find out what Art Restart personally means to one of our artists in the program.



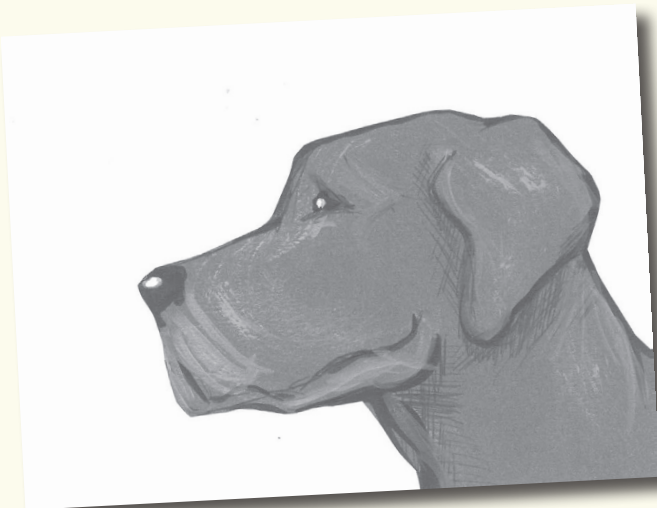
*The Arts Program at The Gathering Place has given me numerous opportunities to feel safe in a supportive space and experience a therapeutic level of self-expression. The financial residuals I receive for my work are the only consistent means of income I have right now.*

*Art Restart staff & volunteers invest huge amounts of time to connect our work to the community at large.*

*The exposure of my art through non-profit agencies has led me to a scholarship for a BEA at a local art college. The structure of the Art Restart program, using reproductions of my originals, allows me to continue to be a part of the program and still focus on my studies.*

*Through Art Restart I can earn for myself while giving back to an agency that has helped so many women and children in hard times. Programs like this nourish the wounded soul and give us the hope to push forward to rebuild lives affected by abuse and other forms of family crisis.*

*-Caroline Pooler, TGP member artist*



One of Caroline's pieces of card art.

Caroline Pooler has been with The Card Project since April of 2011. She is among a select group of artists who helped to pioneer the Art Restart program and model. As an activist against the poverty and the abuse she has personally suffered from, Caroline partners with nonprofits to not only be a catalyst for change for herself, but for the community at large. Deeply philosophical, she gravitates toward images of nostalgia, innocence, and the unconditional love of dogs. Caroline's work has been exhibited at the Colorado State Capital, Denver Central Library, RedLine gallery, and many other venues. She works in various mediums and loves to collaborate with others for change. Currently she studies Fine Art Photography + Video at the Rocky Mountain College of Art and Design.

PLEASE VISIT THE ART RESTART WEBSITE TO PLACE YOUR CARD ORDER **TODAY**  
OR CONTACT L.A. JENNINGS AT [LAJENNINGS@TGPDENVER.ORG](mailto:LAJENNINGS@TGPDENVER.ORG) TO LEARN MORE.

# supporters

## Become a Sustainer of Hope today!

When someone comes to The Gathering Place seeking help, it is usually tangible help. A safe place to rest. A warm, healthy meal. A GED class. Diapers and formula. Information on obtaining housing. Access to a computer. A warm coat for the winter.

With your support, our staff and volunteers are able to provide all of these things. But along with these concrete items and services, we provide one more valuable resource that's often the hardest to see: Hope.

Without hope, all of our other services dim. Our resources just don't go as far. Obstacles seem insurmountable. Change feels impossible.

Hope is often the key ingredient for our members. With hope, the world opens up. Imagining a future is no longer quite as daunting. Rebuilding a life seems possible. So we make certain to hold onto hope for all those we serve, and to help them find it when they're ready to look for themselves.

Today we're asking YOU to continue your support of that hope, and all it entails, by joining our monthly giving program, Sustainers of Hope. Your monthly gift of \$10 or more will sustain the hope that we offer to our members, reminding them that people care and offering them the support they need as they face the next challenge.

Thanks to our monthly givers, we at The Gathering Place know for certain that we will be able to provide essential services when they are needed. We know we will continue to see the excitement in the smile of a woman who just completed a resume class, looking to improve her job opportunities. We know that we will be able to serve a healthy, warm meal to a mom and her son tomorrow. And we know that we will be able to offer safe daytime refuge for a transgender individual who has finally found an accepting community.

Hope echoes each time someone says, "Welcome to The Gathering Place. How can we help you today?"

To learn more about our Sustainers of Hope program, visit our website at [www.tgpdenver.org/hope](http://www.tgpdenver.org/hope). For questions, or to sign up over the phone, contact Melanie Durham at [melanie@tgpdenver.org](mailto:melanie@tgpdenver.org) or 303-996-9067.

## Remember to "Give where you live" on Colorado Gives Day

Presented by **Community First Foundation** and **FirstBank**, Colorado Gives Day will take place during a 24-hour period starting at 12 a.m. on **Tuesday, December 8, 2015** and running until midnight that night.

Last year, more than 400 individuals made donations to The Gathering Place on Colorado Gives Day, and the total amount we received—which included funds from private matches and a proportional boost from the Colorado Gives Day Incentive Fund—totaled over \$116,000. These donations are critical to supporting the programs and services offered at The Gathering Place throughout the year.

So, mark your calendar now to do your end of year giving on December 8th! If you prefer to plan ahead, you can visit [ColoradoGives.org](http://ColoradoGives.org) to schedule donations for December 8th.



## Receive a tax credit for your gift to The Gathering Place

The Gathering Place is a qualifying organization for the Colorado state Enterprise Zone tax credit. Enterprise Zones exist to encourage private involvement in economically distressed areas. The Gathering Place operates in a Denver County Enterprise Zone and contributions equal to or greater than \$250 are eligible to receive a 25% state tax credit. Stock and substantiated in-kind contributions also qualify for a 12.5% credit.

For more information on this tax credit and how to receive it, please contact Melanie Durham at [melanie@tgpdenver.org](mailto:melanie@tgpdenver.org) or 303-996-9067.







## Share the joy of giving

What brings you joy during the holidays? Aren't the little things – like giving the perfect present – highly rewarding and heartwarming?

“Share the Joy” is The Gathering Place’s holiday giving campaign. By donating a gift card to our “Share the Joy” campaign, you provide mothers, grandmothers, aunts, and friends with the opportunity to feel the joy of shopping for and choosing that perfect gift for their loved ones.

Though it may seem small, one \$25 gift card will allow an individual receiving services at The Gathering Place to shop for presents or other much needed items for their family and loved ones without worrying about how to pay for those purchases. And the \$25 gift cards help ensure that the children who come to The Gathering Place receive holiday gifts chosen specifically for them this year. Please note that The Gathering Place does not accept toy donations.

You can “Share the Joy” this holiday season by donating a gift card, or cards, in \$25 denominations from Walmart,

Target, King Soopers, or Safeway to The Gathering Place. If you are hosting a holiday party or participating in an office celebration, encourage attendees to bring gift cards in lieu of gifts.

Gift cards can be mailed to The Gathering Place’s post office box in the envelope included with this newsletter or dropped off in person. Please plan to have your gift cards or monetary donation designated for “Share the Joy” to The Gathering Place by December 12th (the same day as our December Saturday donation drop-off day) so we can distribute them and the recipients then have time to do their shopping before the holidays. Donations that are not used during our “Share the Joy” distribution will be used at the discretion of The Gathering Place’s executive team to serve our greatest needs.

If you have any questions about the “Share the Joy” campaign, contact Melanie Durham at 303-996-9067 or [melanie@tgpdenver.org](mailto:melanie@tgpdenver.org).

# SHARE THE JOY



## The Gathering Place

*a refuge for rebuilding lives*

1535 High Street  
Denver, CO 80218

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### Photography Credits

The Gathering Place Staff  
Steve Moore

## 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  
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[www.tgpdenver.org](http://www.tgpdenver.org)

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