# By earning her GED, Berda achieves a lifelong goal

It's a warm Thursday evening in August and St. Cajetans Cathedral on Denver's Auraria Campus is filled with a celebratory crowd.

Everyone rises as the first strains of "Pomp and Circumstance" are played and the graduates, in their black caps and gowns, begin the commencement procession. Each one proudly marches forward—five of the graduates completed The Gathering Place's program—but perhaps the largest smile in the room is the one on Berda's face.

Berda is originally from southwest Texas and moved to Denver in 1976 with the youngest of her two sons. She had finished the ninth grade, but dropped out of school to get married and start a family. "When I look back, I know how I would have done things differently. But life just happened," she says.

Soon after she arrived in Denver, Berda started looking for opportunities to obtain her GED. "I tried to go to different GED classes, but I couldn't make it work," she says. "I was working and taking care of my son." So Berda waited until her son was grown before she returned to pursue her dream of obtaining her GED.

As she stands in front of the cathedral crowd, Berda, like all of the other graduates this evening, is asked to answer a few questions before she receives her diploma. When did she finish her GED testing? In

May, she says, but is quick to add that it took her five years in total to complete the process. What was her greatest obstacle in completing the GED? Fear, she responds. Fear that she couldn't do it. And what is she planning to do now? Give her mind a chance to rest, Berda says, as those in the room laugh with her. Then, she says, she is thinking about taking some business classes at the Community College of Denver.

Five years. "It was a long journey," Berda admits. She started working on her GED certification in 2008 at The Gathering Place. She passed her reading test that year, but "it was all too much information," she says. So, she stopped coming to classes and tutoring sessions. The next year, she

started again; this time at the Empowerment Program, a nearby organization that assists women with a variety of support services. While there, she passed her social studies

exam in 2009 and her science exam in 2010. But once again, the information and stress were overwhelming and Berda decided it would be best for her to take a break from studying and testing for the entire year of 2011.

In 2012, Berda returned to The Gathering Place to study for her final two tests: writing and math. "I was coming to The Gathering Place on Mondays and Wednesdays and going to Learning Source [a GED program offered in the building where she lived] on Tuesdays and Thursdays," she says. A tutor advised her to focus on one test at a time, so Berda chose writing first. She was

met with disappointment when she failed her first attempt, but collected herself, worked to clear her head, and was successful on her subsequent effort. Then, on May 1, 2013, Berda passed her final test—math—allowing her to achieve her ultimate goal just four months shy of her 60th birthday.

"I knew I needed to finish up my GED. The next one will be harder and you have to take it on the computer," Berda says, referring to the statewide changes that will be implemented in January 2014.

"A lot of people along the way encouraged me and my tutors just wouldn't let me go," she continues. And her advice to others in the process of earning their GED? "Don't give up!" she says with a smile.

As the ceremony ends, Berda is invited back to the stage to read an inspirational poem by Joanna Fuchs. "Graduation is a time for wishes," she begins, reading each line carefully. A few moments later, the poem concludes: "Whatever you do or don't do, you'll still have the love of family and friends. We wish you the best. We hope you fulfill all your dreams. We know you will do well."

We do, indeed. Congratulations, Berda!



# Did you know?

# IN THE FIRST SIX MONTHS OF 2013, THE GATHERING PLACE:

- Received a total of 32,906 visits
- Provided 33,154 meals and sack lunches to members
- Gave out over 46,500 pounds of food and 2,395 toiletry bags from Betsy's Cupboard
- Saw an average of 390 individuals each month in Bridget's Boutique
- Distributed 528 bras through our partnership with SoL Lingerie
- Gave out more than 9,900 diapers to mothers and their babies
- Provided 106 haircuts
- Arranged 1,745 meetings with our on-site Denver Department of Human Services employee, Stacey Galvan
- Facilitated 15 visits with pro bono lawyers
- Saw an average of 40 artists each month in The Card Project and sold over 6,900 cards
- Received 4,269 visits to our computer lab
- Held 65 GED tutoring sessions
- Celebrated with 4 women who received their GED certification and many more who passed 24 individual GED tests



# NextGen hosts a panel discussion about hunger in Colorado

On Wednesday, July 31, 2013, members of NextGen, The Gathering Place's young professionals group, met at the **Denver Press Club** for a guest bartender happy hour followed by a panel exploring the issue of hunger in the Denver metro area and state of Colorado.

Rachel Paez, secretary of The Gathering Place's board of directors and a founding member of



From left to right: Panelists Christopher Smith, Carolyne Atteberry Schultz, Dinah Frey, and Tanya Wheeler-Berliner.

NextGen, served as the guest bartender for the evening, mixing up a variety of beverages for attendees.

The panelists, Christopher Smith from **The Colorado Health Foundation**, Carolyne Atteberry Schultz from **Denver Urban Ministries**, Tanya Wheeler-Berliner from **The Gathering Place**, and Dinah Frey from **Hunger Free Colorado**, discussed the current landscape of hunger issues in the state and the challenges and successes in addressing identified needs.

"We're doing a better job of finding and defining the gaps," said Christopher Smith, program officer for healthy living at The Colorado Health Foundation, talking about food deserts and access issues in both urban and rural areas. "But how can we continue to improve access in those areas? We still have a lot of work to do."

# Summer health fair at The Gathering Place serves 92 individuals

On Friday, July 12, a number of local organizations came to The Gathering Place to provide health and wellness screenings, referrals, and information to our members. Groups attending were Arapahoe House, the Brain Injury Alliance of Colorado, The Center, The Center for African American Health, Cooking Matters Colorado, Denver Health Community Voices Enrollment Van, Denver Health Family Planning Clinic, Denver Health STI Clinic, Denver Health TB Clinic, Denver Health Women's Mobile Clinic, Inner City Health Dental Clinic, Mental Health America of Colorado, National American University nurses, Stout Street Eye Clinic, Stout Street COPD Clinic, Susan G. Komen Foundation, and Walgreens.

We are extremely grateful to these community partners. A total of 92 individuals attended the fair and many of them said that they had received information that was new or directly related to a health concern they have. Thank you all for coming and for providing such a great service!

# 3rd annual Vickers Memorial Golf Tournament coming on September 23

The Gathering Place is honored to host the 3rd annual **Tommy Vickers Memorial Golf Tournament** this year. For the third year in a row, **Jewell Insurance** will be the event's title sponsor.

Tommy, a dear friend and supporter of The Gathering Place, began playing golf at age three on a nine-hole sand course his father built. He and his brothers carried single-digit handicaps and competed nationwide. Tommy played in two U.S. Amateur Championships and made nine appearances in the Bing Crosby National Pro-Am.

The Tommy Vickers Memorial Golf Tournament is an exclusive tournament that gives golfers a chance to enjoy a day of golf on one of Denver's premier courses, as well as opportunities to win a new vehicle, try their luck in a putting contest, and go home with fantastic prizes.

This year's event will be held on Monday, September 23, 2013 at The Club at Pradera in Parker, Colo. The cost is \$1,600 per foursome. Sponsorships are also still available. A special deal of a foursome and a hole sponsorship is available for just \$2,000. Contact Laura Meixell for more information at laura@tgpdenver.org or 303-996-9048.



# Save the date—April 11—for our 2014 gala

It's never too early to start planning a fabulous event, so it should be no surprise to you that The 2014 Gathering Place Gala is in the works! We are grateful to have the continued support of the Randall A. Carter Foundation and Benefactor/Boettcher & Co. as our returning presenting sponsor.

And, while the theme is still a secret (we plan to reveal it in our next newsletter), we are already looking for volunteers to help us with the upcoming gala. The volunteer time commitment and opportunities vary based on your availability and desired role with the event. If you are interested in helping out in some way, please contact Laura Meixell at laura@tgpdenver.org or 303-996-9048.

## Third-party events benefit The Gathering Place

We are grateful to the numerous community members and business owners who have chosen to show their support for The Gathering Place by creating and/or hosting a special event or fundraiser for us. Recent events have been hosted by the Colorado Women's Bar Association, Church Women United, Denver Press Club, Denver Woman's Press Club, Fascination St. Fine Art Gallery, Friday Night Yoga Club, Greenwood Village Community of Christ, Mile High Society, QEP Resources, and Rocky Mountain Paralegal Association.

There are numerous types of events and activities that can be done to benefit us. View a list of upcoming events on our website at www.tgpdenver.org/events.

If you are interested in hosting an event or fundraiser for The Gathering Place, please contact Laura Meixell at laura@tgpdenver.org or 303-996-9048.

## Join us for Barlympics 2013 at The Ginn Mill on September 28

Our NextGen group is excited to announce that this year's Barlympics competition will be held at The Ginn Mill on September 28, 2013. Barlympics, which began in 2010 as part of Samfest, the week long birthday celebration of Sam Sokol, has evolved into its own stand alone event featuring a double elimination tournament of flip cup, barrel pong, and corn hole.

Barlympics teams are composed of five individuals and the top three teams will be awarded prizes. Registration information and more is available at www.barlympics.us. We hope to see you there!



# **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 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, 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 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

### And the answer is... Yes

The question: Did you feel like you were a part of The Gathering Place community during your volunteer experience? This is just one of 10 questions on a new post-service questionnaire we send to all of our group volunteers at The Gathering Place.

Group volunteers serve monthly, quarterly, and sometimes just once a year, but every visit is an opportunity to connect members with volunteers, heart with purpose, and hands with heart. The survey results we've received have shown us that our volunteer groups value that connection above all else:



"Our experience was, far and above, more wonderful than we expected. I felt like I was a part of something big and wonderful."

"I really enjoyed having a chance to eat with the members. I spoke with one woman who was such an advocate for herself and others. She gave me such a real view of homelessness."

Group volunteering is a great way for family, friends, and co-workers to share the experience of working side by side in an effort to make a difference and build community. In fact, 98% of the volunteers we surveyed said they would volunteer with us again.

If you think you might be interested in a group volunteer opportunity, it's not too early to think about sponsoring a meal and activity or celebration (known as a Feast and Festivity here) for the upcoming holiday season. If you want more information or would like to schedule a date, please contact Trisha Koizumi at trisha@tgpdenver.org or 303-996-9044.

### New survey for individual volunteers

The volunteer department has put together a short survey for individual, weekly volunteers. Whether you are new to The Gathering Place or a veteran volunteer, we'd like to hear stories about your best days, get your opinion about what we can do to make your experience better, and find out if there is additional training that might be helpful for you. As a volunteer, you are an integral part of our community and your personal volunteer experience truly matters to us.

By this time, all individual onsite volunteers should have received the volunteer survey online and we ask that you take a few moments to complete it. If you prefer responding on paper, you can find hard copies of the survey next to the volunteer sign-in binder behind the Welcome Desk. There is also a box there where you can return your completed surveys. If you have any questions about the survey or want to offer in-person feedback, please contact Trisha Koizumi at trisha@tgpdenver.org or 303-996-9044. Thank you for helping us to build a strong community at The Gathering Place!

# programs

# Housing Stabilization Program works to help individuals rediscover themselves while rebuilding their lives

The Housing Stabilization Program at The Gathering Place exists to transform the lives of unaccompanied women who are either literally homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless. Each year, about 40 individuals participate in the program, which is run by Debra MacKillop, our Housing Stabilization Advocate.

Funding for the Housing Stabilization Program, which covers staff time, supportive services, and financial resources to meet the various of needs of those in the program, is currently provided by **Denver's Road Home**; **Denver Post Charities/Season To Share**, a McCormick **Foundation Fund**; and **Elaine and Max Appel**.

"Although there is a lot of excitement around someone obtaining housing, one of my favorite parts of this program is helping people to step back from the process for a little bit just to dream, to think about what they want their lives to look like, and then to move forward toward creating an authentic life for themselves," MacKillop says.

As she talks about the program, MacKillop is quick to stress its collaborative nature and the importance of a member-directed process.

Those in the Housing Stabilization Program work closely with MacKillop, who provides support and a connection to resources and information to assist them in obtaining and sustaining permanent housing. Financial support from The Gathering Place provided through the program includes items such as assistance with the first month's rent and/ or deposit upon moving into a new apartment, vouchers for furniture and household items, payment assistance for the first six months of a basic home phone service or other utility subsidies, addressing health and mental health issues, and help with budgeting, banking, past credit issues, transportation, and more.

Collaborations with a number of transitional housing programs, job training, pro bono attorneys, physical and mental health programming, and more are essential to the program's success.

"For those in the program, I offer clinical expertise, and practical, concrete information about housing and many other services," MacKillop says. "But beyond that, I enjoy the deep connection at the heart of my relationship with those in this program. I learn and receive more than I give in my work.

"Much more is lost in the experience of homelessness beyond just a home and material possessions," she continues. "My goal is to ensure the member is the director of this housing process, making decisions and developing a support system that can be relied upon long after their time in the Housing Stabilization Program."



# supporters

# Wheeler Trigg O'Donnell supports The Gathering Place in many ways

"Are we having a hot breakfast today?"

For those working at the Welcome Desk at The Gathering Place, this is a common morning question. The reason? Hot breakfasts are a special meal that everyone looks



forward to—especially the hot breakfasts prepared and served by the attorneys and staff that come with the **Wheeler Trigg O'Donnell** crew.

Approximately every six weeks, a volunteer team from Wheeler Trigg O'Donnell arrives early in the morning at The Gathering Place and our dining room is transformed into a small restaurant. The delicious aromas of scrambled eggs, bacon, sausage, and biscuits and gravy float down the halls. Fruit, yogurt, and granola bowls are assembled. Juice and milk are poured. Then, as our members start to arrive, they are seated and their individual orders taken and filled. "Hot breakfast day" is always a treat.

In addition to sponsoring and providing hot breakfasts at The Gathering Place on a regular basis, Wheeler Trigg O'Donnell supports us in a variety of other ways. The Wheeler Trigg O'Donnell Foundation has been a sponsor of our annual galas for the past four years. The firm has done donation drives for us over the years, hosted a NextGen event at their offices in the spring, and, this summer, they put together snack packs for children in our Family Area. We want to say a huge thank you to Wheeler Trigg O'Donnell for everything that they do to support us!

If your company is looking for ways to get involved with The Gathering Place, please contact Tanya Wheeler-Berliner at tanya@tgpdenver.org or 303-996-9028.



From volunteer opportunities to donation drives to event sponsorships, we have a number of ways you can engage. We'd love to have you join our community!

# Gratitude abounds for recent grant gifts

Each year, foundations provide approximately 30% of the revenue supporting the services and programs at The Gathering Place. The following funders have provided substantial awards—totaling \$240,000—during the last few months: The Denver Foundation; Denver Post Charities/ Season To Share, a McCormick Foundation fund; Edward L. Johnstone Memorial; Franciscan Friars of Holy Name Province May Bonfils Stanton Memorial Fund; Helen K. and Arthur E. Johnson Foundation; The Jay and Rose Phillips Family Foundation of Colorado; Mile High United Way; and The Nord Family Foundation.

We are grateful to partner with these and so many other wonderful family and community foundations. Thank you!

## Yoga For A Cause unites yogis in support for The Gathering Place

Yoga For A Cause, a group formed to host donation-based, locally supportive yoga events, has supported The Gathering Place through two events this summer and is planning one final event in September. 70% of the proceeds from these events have benefitted The Gathering Place.

The first yoga event was held in July at The River and the second event was held in early August at Samadhi.

We invite you to join us for the final event, an evening of yoga and music, on September 14 at the Kindness studio at 7:00 p.m. Tickets are \$12 each and more information is available at www.facebook. com/YogaForACause. Thank you, Yoga For A Cause, for providing this unique way to raise awareness about and support for The Gathering Place!





# Workplace contributions make a huge 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, encourage your co-workers to support us, too!

# Make an impact through planned giving, matching gifts, or recurring donations

Planned giving, matching gifts, and recurring donations are all high-impact ways to give to The Gathering Place. Planned giving allows donors to incorporate their philanthropic wishes into their financial and/or estate planning. You can leave a legacy and help sustain the mission of The Gathering Place by naming us as a beneficiary in your will, life insurance policy, 401(k), IRA, or other estate plans. For more information about naming The Gathering Place as a beneficiary, please ask your estate planner or attorney to contact Lisa Zavoda at 303-996-9061.

Many companies have matching gift programs that will double or even triple your donation to The Gathering Place. You can find out about the availability of these types of programs by contacting your human resources department.

And, recurring donations are a great way 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. You can set up an automatic recurring donation to The Gathering Place through ColoradoGives.org.

# Sign up for our email list to receive important information

We promise not to spam you! Joining our email list is a terrific way to keep up with what is happening at The Gathering Place. We send out a monthly e-newsletter with information about programs, urgent needs, and upcoming events and promotions that will benefit our organization. You can sign up for our email list on our website, www.tgpdenver.org. Once you're there, click on "Join our email list" at the top of the homepage.

### 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 \$500 are eligible for a 25% state tax credit. In addition, stock and substantiated in-kind contributions qualify for a 12.5% credit. When making a donation for which you would like to receive the Enterprise Zone Tax Credit, please specify DUEDC (Enterprise Zone) in the memo section of your check. If using a credit card, simply attach a note. If you are calling in your donation, please tell The Gathering Place representative you would like to receive the credit. According to state regulations, the credit must be requested at the time of the donation.

Since January 1, 2012, the state of Colorado requires that all taxpayers claiming Enterprise Zone tax credits from any eligible organization file their state tax returns electronically. Additionally, in order to qualify for the Enterprise Zone tax credit, all donors must provide The Gathering Place with their taxpayer identification number (FEIN, Social Security Number, or Colorado Account Number). Without record of the taxpayer identification number, we are unable to submit your donation as an Enterprise Zone contribution.

5 submit your donation as an Enterprise Zone contribution.

### The Gathering Place

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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

1535 High Street
Denver, CO 80218
303-321-4198
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# A MEMBER OF COMMUNITY SHARES OF COLORADO

Campaign Codes: Community Shares of Colorado: 5026 State of Colorado (CCC): 5050 Federal Campaign (CFC): 41763

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