



OUR Center News

Outreach United Resource Center, Inc.

OUR Mission: We help people move toward self-sufficiency by unifying community resources.

Support When It's Needed Most



"Carolyn" was a hard-working single mom, doing customer service jobs to take care of her three children. Then hardship struck – she became very ill in 2022 due to kidney failure. They were renting a two-bedroom apartment, which is what she could afford for the four of them, and until that time had been able to make ends meet. Now bills started to be an issue at a time when she needed to focus on her health. Their situation got to the point that her daughter dropped out of school so she could work to support the family. They first came to OUR Center just to get groceries from our Community Market to help stretch their budget. But as housing became uncertain, they asked for rental assistance from one of the OUR Center's Resource Specialists.

Our team member realized that one-time assistance would not suffice for this family. She referred Carolyn to Ivy, our Housing Stabilization Program (HSP) Specialist. As part of the casework process, Ivy helped them with budgeting and looked at other resources we could help with by using the Colorado Family Support Assessment tool.

By enrolling them in HSP, Ivy could work with them longer-term and more in depth, providing financial assistance for rent and utilities but also referrals to other resources and advocacy. Ivy worked with this family for a year in the program. Even after they were technically no longer in HSP, she continued helping the family with things like the application for Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) and other government benefits, plus child-care.

An important aspect of her advocacy work was helping them apply for subsidized housing. They worked together on applying for other housing options that would be more affordable

or subsidized. She connected them with mediation services to help navigate their housing lease, so they would not be committed to an annual lease should they be approved for subsidized housing. Ivy helped them apply for utility rebate programs such as Longmont Cares. They have been able to get clothing for the children from our Community Closet. And finally, Ivy helped with language translation, as English is not their primary language.

The family was finally approved for a subsidized unit after months of waiting for any updates from all the applications submitted, and recently moved into their new home. The family is excited about this new step! Carolyn's daughter, who left school to help pay the bills, now wants to take the time to obtain her GED to further her education. Carolyn continues to focus on her health and wait for a kidney.

Carolyn says she is "very thankful for the extra time and care that Ivy has taken, even after they were not officially in her program. We cannot find the words to thank you!"

Holiday 2023 Newsletter

ONE-OF-A-KIND VOLUNTEER

On September 29, we were excited to surprise and honor Judy Cavcey with a special award and custom-made T-shirt in recognition and appreciation for her dedicated service since March 1987—our longest-serving volunteer!

Thank you, Judy, for giving so much of your time and your efforts to OUR Center over these many years!



"I grew up in Longmont and have seen you transform many lives!"

-a recent donor conversation



Matt Zavala, President
Board of Directors

Board of Directors:

Matthew Zavala, President
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The OUR Center Board of Directors is looking for new members! If you have a passion to serve the community in a high-level and committed role, this may be a good fit. We often ask our board members to serve on a committee first to familiarize themselves with our organization.

We are especially looking for people with a finance or accounting background.

If you are interested in exploring a board or committee role, contact Marc Cowell, Executive Director, at 303-772-5529 ext. 256 or marc@ourcenter.org.

President's Letter

Since the OUR Center was founded in 1986, it has served as a place for individuals and families to seek assistance when they need it most. The mission of the OUR Center is just as important today.

The past several years have been a challenge for people all over—including right here in our own community. As the costs of food, rent, utilities, and other necessities continues to rise, the number of people OUR Center assists has also increased. Hearing about the challenges faced by our community members and how the OUR Center has helped continues to be inspiring.

The staff and volunteers of OUR Center and Aspen Center are what make the organization successful—working day in and day out

to provide high-quality childcare and help local families get back on their feet.

And, because of the generous support of our donors from the St. Vrain community and beyond, we've been able to help a growing number of individuals and families as they've faced challenges. I am constantly in awe of the dedication of our staff, volunteers and donors and our impact on the Longmont community.

On behalf of the OUR Center Board of Directors, thank you for your support. I hope this holiday season brings each of you a sense of peace for the work we have done together to make the OUR Center what it is!

All the best,
Matthew Zavala

By the Numbers...

From January through September 2023, OUR Center:

- ♦ Served 43,207 meals
- ♦ Distributed 653,860 pounds of groceries in 12,943 visits
- ♦ Provided utility shut-off prevention to 616 households*
- ♦ Provided rent help to 574 households*
- ♦ Cared for 38 children at Aspen Center

**Our Homelessness Prevention Program provided \$705,600 in financial assistance in 9 months!*

"I would like to thank the OUR Center for all of their help they have provided me and my family, from the front desk, to resource specialists, to housing coordinators. They were all friendly and very kind and made me feel comfortable through this process. Thank you."

Did You Know? Our Community Closet gives out free housewares in addition to clothing! We are especially trying to fill our housewares section for families moving into new housing units, or who have had an emergency or crisis and have to start over with restocking their home.

We need household items such as dishes, silverware, pots & pans, utensils, towels, bedding, and small appliances (no large appliances or furniture).

Donations are accepted 8-5 weekdays or 11-1 weekends & major holidays at 220 Collyer St., Longmont at the south side "Donation Zone" door. Gift receipts are available.



More People Using Community Market for Good Nutrition and to Stretch Budgets



As grocery prices continue to rise, along with other basic costs such as housing, utilities, and transportation, many people rely on our Community Market to help fill their own shelves with

consistent, nutritious food. However, we are seeing fewer donations come through our doors and can no longer rely just on donations to stock our shelves and keep up with demand.

Would you please consider a little extra purchase on your next trip to the grocery store? **Our Market serves up to 120 households per day!**

Items most needed are:

- ◆ Refried beans
- ◆ Cereal (hot and cold)
- ◆ Soup
- ◆ Canned corn
- ◆ Canned carrots

Donations are accepted 8-5 weekdays and 11-1 weekends & major holidays. Visit www.ourcenter.org/donate-items for a full list of items accepted, or call 303-772-5529 for info.



Thanks to our hundreds of volunteer groups (including thousands of volunteers!) for helping us stretch our budget and services through your dedication and big hearts!

(Spavia business volunteers pictured above)

Help Residents C.O.P.E. with Utility Bills through the City of Longmont "Citizens' Option to Provide Energy" Program

If you are a City of Longmont utility customer, C.O.P.E. is a program that allows you to provide financial assistance to families in need in Longmont by rounding up or adding to your City of Longmont utility bill. All such funds are distributed by OUR Center to those citizens that qualify by setting a case plan with one of our

Resource Specialists.

Many OUR Center participants are the working poor whose income barely covers necessities such as rent and food. The ability to pay utilities often makes the difference in preventing homelessness. Since the pandemic hit and economic challenges continue, many families that have

never had to ask for help before have come to us with critical needs - and we are doing our best to meet the demand, but the need is greater than ever.

Please complete and return the coupon below to the City of Longmont to help with this vital service. Gifts are tax-deductible.

"This past weekend, I lost a glass case that contained my driver license, multiple credit cards, and gift card. A day later, it was found and turned into the store with everything intact.

I am writing a check for the amount that was on the gift card in celebration of the beauty of the unknown human being that turned the case in."

- donor note

COPE Contribution

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Check one: _____ Round up my monthly bill to the nearest dollar*

Add \$_____ to my utility bill monthly*

Enclosed is my check made payable to COPE for \$_____.

*Monthly deduction unless you cancel through Utility Billing.

Return this coupon to:

City of Longmont Utility Billing, 350 Kimbark St., Longmont, CO 80501



You can help OUR Center or Aspen Center for Child Development simply by using a King Soopers Loyalty (Rewards) Card!

After a quick, one-time enrollment online, every time you use your Sooper Card or an alternate ID tied to your account for food or gas, you are helping to make a donation to us at no added cost to you! To sign up, simply go to

www.kingsoopers.com. Sign in or enroll to create account. Go to My Account, then to "Community Rewards". Look for OUR Center (or organization CW019) or Aspen Center for Child Development (organization CP425) and Enroll. So easy!

King Soopers shoppers have raised over \$11,000 for OUR Center & Aspen Center in 2023!

Thank you!

"We know you carry the weight of MANY hard stories. Thanks for all you do. We are grateful for the many unseen ways you bless our community. With gratitude!"

-note from one of our faith community partners

Empty Bowls Returns to Longmont High!



Save the Date for Empty Bowls 2024—Saturday, March 9!

We are excited to announce that Empty Bowls will be returning to Longmont High School for our next fundraiser! Featuring our usual fabulous bowls and delicious soups, plus awesome auction items,

this is THE event you don't want to miss next year!

Sponsorships range from \$500 to \$5,000 and include tickets and recognition. Sponsorship and ticket purchases can be made online now at www.ourcenter.org/emptybowls, or in person at OUR Center and Crackpots starting in early January.

Our ticket prices will remain the same this year—\$25 pre-event or \$30 at the door if available.

You can also explore your creative side by painting bowls at Crackpots in downtown Longmont in January & February.

We are also soliciting items for our silent auction. Please contact Elaine at 303-772-5529 or elaine@ourcenter.org for info.

OUR Center provides **250 free, healthy meals per day** to those who rely on us for good nutrition and to stretch their budgets, with the added bonus of fellowship in our inviting Café!



Colorado Gives Day—December 5, 2023!



Be part of Colorado's largest one day of philanthropy! Announcing this year's Colorado Gives Day—Tuesday, December 5. Mark your calendar!

You may designate your gift for our Basic Needs Program, Child Care, or General Fund. (Please note you must indicate Child Care for the Colorado Child Care Contribution Tax Credit).

Funds will be used to help stabilize families in the St. Vrain region. Up to 40% of the families we see are on the verge of homelessness.

You may donate any time of year, but special incentives from Colorado Gives Foundation are available for gifts given on Dec. 5. Give your secure online gift at www.coloradogives.org/donate/ourcenter.

Contact our Development office at 303-772-5529 or email info@ourcenter.org with any questions.

Aspen Center—The Reggio Approach, Tax Benefit for Supporting Children’s Learning

In 2020, the staff at Aspen Center for Child Development, guided by director Elizabeth and her experience in Reggio-inspired context, began studying and learning about this educational philosophy. The Reggio Approach was developed by parents, teachers and Loris Malaguzzi after WWII. Here’s why it is one of our favorite principles. The Reggio Approach:

1. Was recognized as the best Early Childhood Education in the world in 1992 and gained recognition in North America.
2. Has become widely known and appreciated for its innovation and high regard for young children
3. Embraces social constructivism—humans learn by doing and in relation to others
4. Believes high quality education is a right

5. Believes social justice, equity, and inclusion is a responsibility of the school system

6. Focuses on a strong image of the child:

- Children are competent, capable and contribute meaningful ideas.
- Children have the right to study what is interesting to them.
- Children are insightful and offer unique perspectives about the world.
- Children have the right to beautiful environments and innovative materials.

Aspen Center for Child Development is conveniently located near downtown Longmont at 5th & Kimbark.

For more information, contact Elizabeth Fannon, Aspen Center Director, at 303-772-4320 or Elizabeth@ourcenter.org.



Teacher as Partner, Nurturer, & Guide

- Teachers provoke children’s thinking by using their observations of children to offer back their ideas and theories.
- Teachers facilitate thinking by asking open ended, inquiry-based questions.
- Teachers foster close relationships with children as they guide them through the day.
- Teachers are well versed in developmentally appropriate practice and early learning milestones.

Aspen Center is hiring!

We are seeking highly-qualified, dedicated early childhood professionals to join our fabulous team of teachers! We are licensed to serve children ages 6 weeks to 6 years and are a Colorado Shines 4-star-rated school and offer competitive pay and benefits.

To apply, send your resume and cover letter to humanresources@ourcenter.org (no phone calls, please).

Special Tax Incentive for Childcare Gifts Received Through December 31, 2024 -

Gifts to our Aspen Center for Child Development can get you a 50% credit on your Colorado state taxes! Simply indicate “Aspen Center” or “child care” on your gift, (must be a financial gift, some limits apply) and we will send you the appropriate tax form in January for your previous year’s gifts. It’s like getting half your money back! Better yet, you are supporting high-quality early childhood education. For more information, contact Elaine Klotz, Development Director, at 303-772-5529 or elaine@ourcenter.org or visit www.tax.colorado.gov/sites/tax/files/Income35.pdf.





Marc Cowell
Executive Director

Our “Coffee for a Cause” presentations, complete with full breakfast and facility tour, will resume on Wednesday, February 7, 2024, 7:30-9:00am. Learn about our history, programs & services, needs, ways to help, and more! For more information or to register, contact Elaine at 303-772-5529 ext. 224 or elaine@ourcenter.org.



“I appreciate how OUR Center is clear about its mission and goals, but also a faithful steward of funds entrusted to OUR Center.”

- from a recent guest of Coffee for a Cause event

SAVE THE DATE!

The 38th Annual Interfaith Quilters Sale to benefit OUR Center and Safe Shelter of the St. Vrain Valley is March 1 & 2, 2024!



Gratitude and Celebrations

I can still picture February 2023...our leadership team had just concluded another weekly meeting focused on challenging discussions and difficult decisions facing us... facing the hard reality that we would soon have to temporarily close our infant classroom at our Aspen Center due to staffing shortages... community needs were growing and becoming more complex, and it was painfully evident that the needs would eventually outpace our resources... and finally, weighing critical collaborations and partnerships against the safety of all families coming to our doors.

The weight and stress of our agenda clearly showed in the demeanor of everyone in the room. Multiple meetings since 2020 “sucked all the oxygen out of the room”, as we continually tackled a multitude of ongoing and ever-changing challenges.

As we ended the meeting, a team member reflected that we should not forget all the wonderful accomplishments we had achieved here at OUR Center. She was right! We agreed then and there that all future team and leadership meetings

would start with “Gratitude and Celebrations”!

In that spirit, I want to take a few moments to celebrate just a few of the many accomplishments at the OUR Center and Aspen Center for Child Development:

- ◆ At the Aspen Center, we have assembled a fantastic team that is talented, passionate, and committed to providing the best early childhood experience for the children we serve. Elizabeth, our Preschool Director, can’t help but beam with joy and pride when she talks about her ‘dream team’. As the program continues to stabilize and recover from the pandemic, we look forward to reopening all of our classrooms in 2024.
- ◆ Through September, we have served more than 6,300 households in the Community Market and over 43,000 meals in our Community Cafe.
- ◆ We continue to work very hard to meet the elevated and increasingly more complex community needs.

We are on pace to provide support to well over 1,000 households with over \$1,000,000 in rent and utility assistance.

- ◆ In July, we hosted a free community conversation for parents, “A Recipe for Resilience”. This event was a kickoff to our Circle of Parents support groups. Our first group has been successfully launched and we are excited to explore new opportunities to support parents and help break the cycle of poverty.
- ◆ We have hosted multiple gatherings to inform the community about our services and needs, including our bi-monthly “Coffee for a Cause”, Chamber networking events, multiple tours and presentations, and in October, our first-ever “Participant Experience” in conjunction with a Donor Appreciation event.

Community is at the heart of everything we do at the OUR Center and Aspen Center. This concept centered us as we navigated the unknowns of the pandemic and the

(continued on page 7)

From the Executive Director

Gratitude and Celebrations, cont.

increasing and more complex economic challenges in our community, as well as the uncertainty of what the future might hold. I am grateful for the community that surrounds us every day.

I am thankful for our passionate and amazing staff that executes our mission daily. I am thankful for our wonderful volunteers

that show up every day with such dedicated and open hearts to serving others. I am thankful for our tremendous board that is unwavering in its support of our mission.

And I want to express my tremendous gratitude to our donors - without your generous support, we could not meet our community's critical needs.

Though the future is always uncertain, OUR Cen-

ter will continue to be a beacon of hope. With your ongoing support, we can be clear and resolved in our mission: to help people move towards self-sufficiency by unifying community resources.

Wishing you and yours a wonderful and peaceful holiday season!

Marc Cowell
Executive Director



DOING THE MOST GOOD

Our partners at The Salvation Army—Longmont Service Extension Unit are looking for **volunteer bell ringers!** This is a fun, easy 1 or 2-hour commitment at a local store this holiday season. ***Great for families, service groups, & more! No training required.*** Funds are used locally to help families with rent, utilities, and car repairs, in partnership with OUR Center. Call Ann at #303-748-6156 or email ambrand1@aol.com if you can help!

Volunteer Needs

Did You Know...

It takes up to 250 volunteers every week just to keep OUR Center programs and services going! Do you have a heart for helping your neighbor? Perhaps we are a fit!

OUR Volunteers serve in the following areas:

- Café (meals)
- Market (groceries & toiletries)
- Closet (clothing & housewares)
- Garden (seasonal)
- Board & committees

- Landscaping & maintenance
- Fundraising & special projects

Regular or "on call" shifts are available.

To join our team, please start by filling out the volunteer application at www.ourcenter.org/volunteer.

Contact Julie Lupien, Director of Volunteer Services, at 303-772-5529 ext. 235 or julie@ourcenter.org for additional information.

"I just want to give thanks to all of the staff at OUR Center for helping me through on my path to independence. It has been a journey to say it best. I couldn't have done it without many of the people here. So again, thank you, thank you, thank you."

Community Closet Wish List

We are preparing for winter weather in the Community Closet (clothing bank). We are especially in need of the following in ALL sizes:

- New underwear
- Sweaters
- Winter clothes
- Shoes
- Snow boots

As noted elsewhere, donations are accepted 8-5 weekdays and 11-1 weekends & major holidays. Go to our south entrance "Donation Zone" door and ring the bell if there is not an attendant present. You will receive a receipt for your taxes.

Questions? Call 303-772-5529 or email info@ourcenter.org.



"I was going through a rough time several years ago when I lived in Longmont, and my husband and I struggled financially. We received food and financial assistance. I gave back by volunteering in the kitchen serving meals.

You were the only way we ate many days."

-from past participant



Outreach United Resource Center, Inc.
220 Collyer St.
Longmont, CO 80501
Phone 303-772-5529
www.ourcenter.org

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Your support makes a difference!

Did You Know?

As a Family Resource Center, OUR Center seeks to provide not only basic needs for our participants' movement to self-reliance but also many opportunities for life skills training and personal betterment. Our services include:

Employment Support:

WorkForce job fair referrals
CNA (Certified Nursing Assistant)
training referrals
TRIO Education and Employment
referrals

Medical Services:

Dental Aid referrals
St. Benedict's Health & Healing
Ministry (in house on Thursdays)

Public Benefits:

Boulder Co. benefits registration

Mental Health Support:

Mental Health Partners outreach
& referrals (in English & Spanish)

Classes & Support Programs (in English & Spanish)

Circle of Parents support group
Computer Literacy classes
Family Leadership Training Insti-
tute program for adults & teens
Financial Skills classes
Getting Ahead classes

Other Referrals

Bridge to Justice legal services
Recovery Café
HiSet (High School Equivalency
Test) and GED
A Way Forward (substance use
recovery, outreach)

For more information, contact
Joni Lynch, Family Development
Services Director, at 303-772-
5529 x246 or joni@ourcenter.org.

Sign up for monthly E-News!

Send an email to info@ourcenter.org with "OUR E-News" as the subject or sign up via www.ourcenter.org.