

THE VILLAGER

❖ WINTER 2021

COMMUNITY PROVIDES COVID-19 EMERGENCY RELIEF CONTRIBUTIONS

An emergency Resident Relief Fund—established in March through the incredible generosity of donors—provided additional resources to residents that were needed due to COVID-19, including but not limited to:

250 bags of food delivered and \$5,000 spent on household and hygiene items



\$3,678 in rent refunds to those receiving TANF assistance but did not receive their full cash assistance during April, May, and June 2020



Free access to physical and behavioral health services supports provided through a one-year enrollment in HealthiestYou



44 laptops and \$24,000 spent on a WiFi upgrade offering free internet/broadband access so residents could participate in remote learning, one-on-one counseling, and Life Skills Classes

Our organization continues to monitor the health and financial impacts of COVID-19 on our resident and alumni families. The economic impacts are particularly devastating on lower income and single-parent families of color in our community. Another phase of our supportive actions includes providing aid and financial grants in the areas of food relief, rent and utility, transportation, child care, and college access supports. We are able to provide these additional, critical, and essential supports thanks to the extreme generosity of our donors. **Now, more than ever, YOUR DONATIONS are making the difference.**

OUR PATHWAY TO ACHIEVE RACIAL EQUITY AND INCLUSION

This past year has provided a series of wakeup calls for our community, our nation, and the world we all share. Warren Village was not immune to those hard truths: the vital importance of working together towards a common goal, the fragility of our health, the inequalities and injustices that exist within our institutions and society that can oppress people of color in this country. While we recognize that racism and inequality are not new, the fervor and calls to action have prompted Warren Village to look inward and recognize that race and inequality are “root cause” issues for the work we do with low-income, single-parent families.

Our staff and board have been participating in an intensive phase of equity workshops, identity caucusing, individualized coaching, personal readings, and discussions designed to help develop an equity analysis and interpersonal skills. In addition to our work with our consultants, Praxis LLC, our staff-led Diversity, Equity, Inclusivity, and Culture Committee has been meeting monthly since August to discuss and apply the lessons we are learning along this journey. Our Board adopted a fourth strategic goal to codify and guide our work in this area.

**WE STAND UNITED
AGAINST THE INJUSTICES AND
CRUELTY OF SYSTEMIC RACISM.**

WARREN VILLAGE

In addition, our consultant team conducted an Environmental Scan of the organization with guidance and takeaways based on the observations and data they have collected about our organization. This guidance includes four components: foundational analysis, organizational assessment and equity audit, learning, and implementation.

One of the big takeaways from the Praxis work is the advice that “achieving racial equity and inclusion requires a set of informed policies and practices intentionally designed to promote opportunity equitably and to rectify disparities.”

As we move forward, Warren Village remains committed to prioritizing racial equity and inclusion through educating ourselves and one another, normalizing discussions about race, listening first, examining power structures, making policy changes, establishing a shared vernacular, and so much more. This intensive phase is just the beginning; the work of learning is ongoing at Warren Village, and always will be.

GROWING THROUGH - REBA'S JOURNEY CONTINUES

As I prepare my heart to move out of Warren Village I am reminded, daily, of how far I've come, and how much further I have to go. The closest comparison to how I am feeling can be summed into how high-schoolers feel when graduating into independence and how college students feel when realizing that their potential has been revealed and refined, but it is the next few steps after this chapter that will determine the actualization of what they become with the skills, tools, and resources they've been gifted. After three and half years of being supported beyond my goals and believed in for my dreams, it has become apparent to me why my story has unfolded in the way that it has and my responsibility in it all; to become the type of woman who believes that life is here to give when I am bold enough to ask and to teach others how to believe the same.

Only five months after the shut-down was declared, I walked across the stage of Regis University to receive a bachelor's degree signifying the sacrifices, dedication, and belief in a life that is more than what I saw. A month later I was offered the facilitator position to teach leadership and transformational life skills to a cohort of Warren Village residents in a class that I was once a student in. A few short days after 2021 began, I was asked to write my own story for a Warren Village newsletter to show the impact that their 2Gen, holistic approach can have on all of those who raise their hand to declare, "I am ready." Looking back on it all, I can say with confidence that had it not been for the village of advocates, volunteers, teachers, counselors, and neighbors; my story, and that of my two kids would look vastly different than what it does today.



You can read more about Reba, Rayana, Ryden, and other children and single-parent families empowered by Warren Village on our website: WarrenVillage.org/rebas-story/

NEW PARTNERSHIP WILL EXPAND SERVICES

As Warren Village relentlessly pursues expanded services to meet the growing needs of families in our community, we are excited to announce our new partnership with BLDG, Inc. BLDG manages 1,000s of apartments in the Denver metro area and has a commitment to supporting its most at-risk residents.



Through this partnership, Warren Village will provide on-site and remote supportive services to residents seeking support in the areas financial coaching, life skills, mental health and resource referrals.

"It's great to have a progressive partner like BLDG Management who is truly interested in improving the lives of their residents. This is a real win-win for residents, BLDG, and Warren Village."

— Kyle Craig, WV Board Vice Chair

Using the foundation of our Two-Generation (2Gen) approach, staff will ensure that residents who might be on the cusp of losing stable housing have access to stabilizing and empowering resources. Working hand in hand with BLDG staff, we believe this can be a sustainable model for housing continuity and stability.



For the third year in a row, the Wisconsin-based clothing and home décor retailer, Lands' End, donated more than 300 NEW winter coats and boots for Warren Village resident and alumni families.

Lands' End is synonymous with legendary quality and honest value. We are honored to be recipients of this incredible donation. Each year after we distribute the coats and boots, it's not uncommon to find Warren Village families playing around in their new snowsuits across the street at Cheesman Park.

NOW MORE THAN EVER

From our President & CEO

Dear Friends and Supporters,

"What a year it was!" How many times have we heard or uttered that phrase? Coming out of the gates into 2021 it is tempting to put 2020 far in the rear view mirror. As we do that, it is important to honor those who have suffered and died in this pandemic and recognize that its impacts are far from over. As you are aware, the clients we serve are predominantly people of color and all are very low income when they come to us. That same demographic group has suffered the worst so far in the pandemic, both in terms of health and economic impacts. For example, our survey data indicate that our program alumni are being particularly hard hit - over 60% reporting job losses or a reduction in work hours. Further, 42%, report their pursuit of college and workforce certificates being interrupted.



We know the struggle is real and the impact is intense. We also know that our program (both for residents and alumni) is effective and is needed now more than ever. The power that you—our family of donors, supporters, volunteers, foundations, and corporate investors—bring to our work has been affirmed again this last year. Our service model is community-based and it marries the strength and capacities of the families we serve with your investments of time and resources. Simply put, YOU are the essential ingredient in a model rooted in the concept of opportunity and hard work. Together, we are creating lasting and impactful solutions that serve the most vulnerable among us.

As we look forward to 2021, our immediate focus is, of course, on service continuity and preservation of health in our facilities as this pandemic evolves. We will deepen our mission focus and commit to our families and to you, our supporters, that our pursuit of broader service and higher quality will be relentless. In the year ahead, our staff and board will continue on our pursuit of training on diversity, equity and inclusivity to strengthen our model's ability to understand and address root causes of inequity (see cover story). As well, we will reignite our growth engine and seek concrete opportunities to serve more with our model in Denver (see BLDG story on page 1).

Unity will be our guiding principle in 2021 and beyond. I feel fortunate to be unified with you, our stakeholders and partners, as we continue to create lasting and impactful solutions and opportunity for those working so hard to change their lives.

Gratefully yours,

Ethan Hemming, President & CEO

LEARNING CENTER RETAINS LEVEL 4 RATING

In 2020, our Learning Center earned a Colorado Shines Level 4 program quality rating. This demonstrates a dedication to continuous quality improvement in all areas of service delivery, including workforce qualifications, family partnerships, administrative practices, learning environment, and child health. This achievement is a reflection of the tireless work our teachers put into providing high quality programming and education. It is also a reflection of the commitment of our many supporters that YOUR contributions are making a difference!



FAMILIES WHO ARE RESIDENTS OF WARREN VILLAGE HAVE PRIORITY FOR ENROLLMENT, BUT OTHER CHILDREN IN THE COMMUNITY ARE WELCOME TO ENROLL. WE CURRENTLY HAVE OPENINGS IN OUR INFANT CLASSROOM FOR CHILDREN AGE 6-12 WEEKS. IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE, PLEASE CONTACT LISHANNA LANGLEY AT 303.320.5035.

TEACHING MOMENTS: EARLY DEMOCRACY

By Kacy Grady, M.A., Mentor Teacher Leader/Head Start Teacher, Warren Village Learning Center

We want to share with you the lesson Ms. Nora and I prepared for the children in respect to Election Day. It's important to start introducing these topics of justice and democracy to children at a young age, as they are capable and more than interested in learning about the ways our society functions.

"Voting is when we find out who is the President!"

"It's fair for everyone to get a chance"

"Being kind is important!"

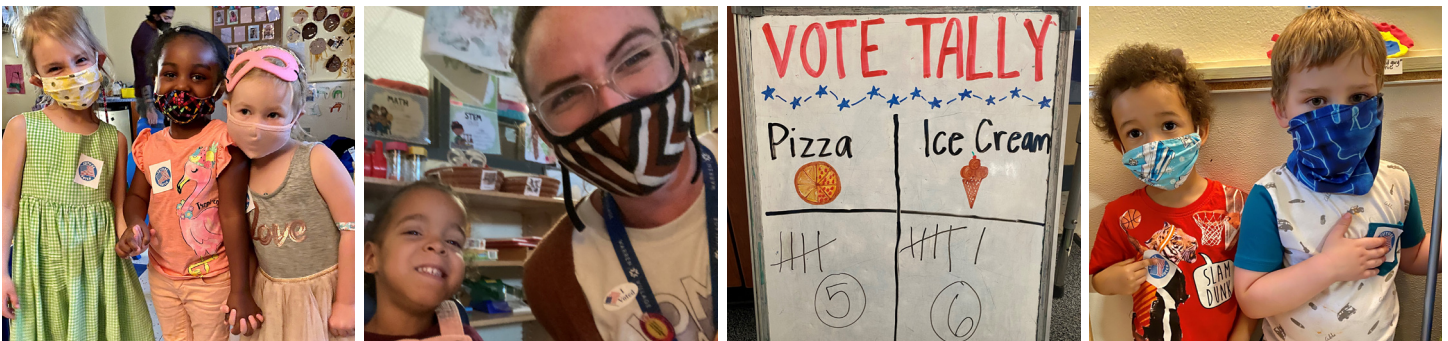
"My mommy and daddy voted already!"

We began by asking the children if they were familiar with the word 'vote' and what they knew about voting. We read a few books relating to early democracy; *Grace for President*, *Vote for Our Future!* and *I Am America*. We explained how the voting process works and introduced vocabulary words such as "ballot" "election" and "voting booth" and discussed what they mean.

We talked about how voting happens all over the country on lots of different levels. We discussed how LOTS of Americans vote every four years for the President and that is a BIG vote. We decided to have a small vote in our classroom to demonstrate and bring to life the concepts we explored in our democracy discussion. Today's vote was deciding on what kind of democracy celebration party we will have: pizza or ice cream? The children took turns at the "voting booth" and carefully thought about their decision and then circled either the pizza or the ice cream icon. They then cast their vote into the "ballot box" and received their "future voter" sticker.

After voting, the children noticed that Ms. Nora was not present in class yet and that it would only be fair for her to also get to vote for our party. I believe this observation and recognition of fairness, inclusiveness, and equality at such an early age is a testament to the kind-hearted and intelligent children that we have at Warren Village. We decided that when Ms. Nora returned she would cast a vote and then after nap we would count the votes and reveal the winner!

Reading the votes and revealing whether we will be having a pizza or ice cream party presented the class with a great opportunity to dive into conversations surrounding empathy, acceptance, and kindness. The entire Pre-K 2 class is so hopeful for the future of our country, especially after such a quality and truly inspirational lesson. **And the vote goes to...ICE CREAM!**



NEW SOFTWARE IS GAME-CHANGER FOR SERVICE DELIVERY

After several rounds of configuration and testing, our new case management system, Penelope by Athena Software, will go-live in February. This exciting new software investment will be a game-changer in the Family Services Department. Penelope will empower our teams and enable us to standardize program delivery, streamline program processes, and measure and evaluate longitudinal trends.

Additionally, we are excited to offer our residents access to a new service called ClientConnect. Through this web-based portal, residents can more fully participate and engage with the supportive services they receive at Warren Village. They will be able to communicate directly with their Family Advocate, schedule themselves for appointments and events, and fill out paperwork, all from the convenience of a mobile device or computer. Given the prevalence of remote work, we hope ClientConnect will be an asset to residents and Family Advocates alike.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES NEWS

Warren Village is tremendously grateful to our Board of Trustees for their tireless work to advance the mission of the organization. Over the past year we have had several new members join our board, as well as a passing of the torch from Kyle Craig to Katie M. Goodwin, who assumed the role of Board Chair effective April 1, 2020. Katie has served on Warren Village's board for five years, including several years as gala co-chair and head of the Development Committee. She is an attorney with Goodwin Advanced Legal Advising.

One of our key strategic goals is to build the capacity, breadth, and diversity of our Board. We are thrilled to welcome the following new Board members, each of whom bring passion, expertise, and a willingness to help take Warren Village to the next level: Craig Brown, Investment Professional; Marsha Brown, Warren Village Alumna and Program Administrator, City and County of Denver, Department of Human Services; William Browning, Senior Vice President, United Way Worldwide; Tasha L. Jones, Chief Marketing Officer, Mile High United Way; Nicole Marquez, VP, Community Relations Officer, Colorado & New Mexico, BBVA; and Jessica Perrill, First Assistant Attorney General, Colorado Attorney General's Office.

Tremendous thanks to those members who termed off our board over the past year including several long-time trustees: Tammy Abramovitz, who served 13 years; Annette Davis, who served 6 years; Caroline Turner, who served 22 years; and Mark Waddell, who served 13 years. Their 54 years of combined service has significantly impacted Warren Village. We are grateful their service.

For a complete listing of our board members, please visit WarrenVillage.org/board-of-trustees.



Katie M. Goodwin



Craig Brown



Marsha Brown



William Browning



Tasha Jones



Nicole Marquez



Jessica Perrill

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS ARE KEY TO OUR SUCCESS

In October 2019, Warren Village was fortunate to be introduced to the innovative education benefits company, Guild Education through the Mile High United Way and Denver Broncos Denver Day of Service. Guild's mission is to unlock opportunity for America's workforce through education, with a double-bottom line business model that does well by doing good.

Since our fortuitous pairing in 2019, we have seen the good that Guild Education can do. This group has repainted our Kids' Club, donated furniture for resident families, donated food for our pantry, and conducted two employee match donation campaigns resulting in more than \$25,000 of monetary donations from Guild Education employees and the company itself. Guild Education's mission-alignment and philanthropic values make them truly feel like a part of the Warren Village family.

"It brings me great joy to know that our donations touch so many lives and make a lasting impact. We value Warren Village and your contributions to the community." – Monica Lang,
Guild Education Chief of Staff



Guild Education employees painting the Warren Village Kids Club, October 2019.

Guild Education has also been exploring opportunities to work alongside our Family Services Department to provide job training classes, resources, and support to our residents. Guild Education is inherently skilled in professional development coaching through the nature of their work and we are looking forward to utilizing their expertise. This partnership could also lead to an internship to hire pathway for Warren Village residents at this fantastic B Corps Certified company.

YOUNG LEADERS FOOT FORWARD FOR FAMILIES 5K FUNDRAISER

Fifty two volunteers and supporters put a foot forward for Warren Village resident families. Participants went the distance by completing a 5k run, walk, hike, scooter ride, or climb. Organized by the Warren Village Young Leaders, this fundraiser, held the last two weeks of January, raised \$2,472 for Warren Village residents.

The Warren Village Young Leaders is an eager group of young professionals ages 21-39, that are dedicated to giving back to the children and families of Warren Village through energetically building community awareness, providing superior volunteer support, and creatively raising funds. In the past this group has hosted events such as the Winter Warmer Event, At Ease with Wine and Cheese, Public Speaking Training, and the Leap Year Luau.



Best 5k photo goes to, Angie Ruddell, who hiked her Foot Forward for Families 5k in Rock Mountain National Park!



Joey Cleveland, another member of our Young Leaders group, kicked off 2021 by running the Foot Forward for Families 5k today! Joey attributes his impressive pace to a "a little power boost" from his dog Hoss!



Our Young Leader, Phoebe Chidley, headed up to Evergreen to hike her 5k at the beautiful Alderfer/Three Sisters Park. She had so much fun that she continued on for another 2 hours after she hiked her 5k!

Check out more photos from the Foot Forward for Families 5k on our Facebook and Instagram feeds using #WVFootForward. If you are interested in getting involved with the Young Leaders group, please contact Molly Barfuss at 303.320.5032 or mbarfuss@warrenvillage.org.

LEARNING CENTER DIVES INTO PROJECT BASED LEARNING

By Kari Bell, Education Coach & Assistant Director, Warren Village Learning Center

Project Based Learning is a teaching method in which children gain knowledge and skills by working for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to an authentic, engaging and complex question, problem, or challenge by collaborating with peers.

During a project study, the topic is determined by observing what children are interested in. It is the children's questions and what they find out that determines the outcome of the project.

The simplest way for teachers to assess child growth is to look at the role the child's questions play in the project study, for instance:

Did the topic come from the children's lives, was it selected because of their interests and questions?

Were there meaningful and complex questions generated by the children?

What happened as a result?

How did the children's investigations of a unit of study shape their actions and learning?



For our youngest learners, we look at provocations: questions and follow up answers are given by the teacher to increase the youngest learner investigation around objects and their environment.

Some of the many varied benefits of a project study include:

- Focuses on science and social studies topics while promoting skills in language, literacy, math, and the arts
- Enables children to apply their acquired skills in meaningful, real-life contexts
- Engages and challenges **ALL** children
- Encourages higher-level thinking, development of intellectual interests and positive approaches to learning
- Supports the development of social-emotional skills such as resolving conflict, sharing responsibilities, and working collaboratively

A quality learning environment is built on children learning and playing together, building on their social skills, language skills, and self-control. It allows for deeper thinking/cognitive skills to develop as children learn to think in more complex ways. They make decisions and problem solve, they ask more questions through exploration, and develop an ability to create and improve their thinking skills.

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION SUPPORT

Thanks to a recently-awarded \$50,000 grant from the Caring for Colorado Foundation, our resident families will be able to access the vital services they need to thrive in a remote learning and working environment and make a smooth transition back to in-person activities. The past year has been undeniably challenging and unprecedented in many ways. The generous and flexible support provided by the foundation allows us to respond quickly and effectively as new needs arise.



"Caring for Colorado (CFC) is excited to partner with Warren Village this year, an organization that has compassionately reached families with limited access to resources with holistic supports, centering children, family, and equity. We are eager to learn alongside Warren Village as work toward their mission to provide quality, strengths-based services to single parent caregivers and their children." — Colleen Church, Chief Strategy Officer and Vice President of Programs



FAMILY NIGHTS - A WARREN VILLAGE TRADITION GOES VIRTUAL

Family Nights are one of the most treasured community events that volunteer groups host at Warren Village. Before the pandemic, these events provided an opportunity for our resident and alumni families to gather, eat, laugh, play, and interact one-on-one with volunteers. In 2020, these events were put on hiatus, while we navigated the new and ever-changing landscape of socially-distanced volunteer events. During that time, our resident families craved the sense of community and the comfort of having a night off from cooking.

In December, we were finally able to bring back this event both socially-distanced and virtual in nature. Two groups joined forces to host "Burritos and Bingo" Family Night. The team from Moment of Levity Food Truck prepared and delivered 100 burritos to our resident's doorsteps. The evening also included several rounds of virtual bingo courtesy of Jacob Powell, and our longtime supporters at Saunders Construction.

If you or your organization is interested in hosting a virtual Family Night in 2021, please contact Molly Barfuss at 303.320.5032 or mbarfuss@warrenvillage.org.

HOLIDAY SHOP



On Saturday, December 12th, Warren Village hosted its 33rd annual Holiday Shop virtually via Zoom. The event included volunteers, staff, donors, sponsors, residents, and alumni families, with special performances by Snow White, Cinderella, and Sleeping Beauty from Wands and Wishes Occasions, as well as an inspirational virtual reading by volunteer, Jeremy Callan, from our friends at BNP Paribas.



The event concluded with a surprise visit from Santa, Mrs. Claus, and the United Airlines Elves who paraded—despite frigid temperatures—around the housing complex and delivered gifts for all of our residents.

Additional gift wish lists for each family were fulfilled online by more than 190 donors.

**434 individuals received gifts
868 gifts donated with a value of \$31,733**

Return Address Requested

INNOVATIVE CHANGES ENSURE CONTINUITY OF SERVICE DELIVERY

2020 brought unique service delivery challenges to Warren Village. In these unprecedented times, we found ourselves challenged on how we could best support our families and, at the same time, proactively build a supportive community. Warren Village resident families suffered greatly in the early days of the pandemic with the sudden, unexpected isolation and the rapid transition to remote learning for themselves and their children. Our Family Services team had to be innovative to ensure a continuation of services for all. Here are some of the changes we saw in 2020:

- The advent of technology-infused services saw all groups and meetings move online. Since the spring, over 200 Life Skills Classes have been held virtually. Family Advocates continue to work with residents to complete individual coaching sessions and personalized assessments. Sessions are held over the phone or via computer on a monthly basis, or more often if requested. During the pandemic, many residents elected to work on goals centering on family stability and health; and career goals have been tailored to accommodate health and family situations.
- Through the generous support of the Bohland Family Charitable Fund, all resident families now have their own laptop computer.

"My goal was to give the women at Warren Village the same opportunity to work and be connected as we have. I think it's something we often take for granted, but understanding technology and having the tools to properly use it is crucial." – *Kathleen Bohland, Donor, Holiday Shop Committee Member, and Kids' Club Volunteer*

- An emphasis was placed on mental health supports and personal wellness plans to mitigate stress and encourage self-care for parents and children alike. We provided free access to 24-7 telehealth and counseling services for families.
- After postponing our on-site College to Career classes with the Community College of Denver for summer and fall semesters, we are now offering two classes. One class is offered completely online while the other course is a hybrid class incorporating a flexible and socially-distanced in-person learning option.

**14 of 17 families that moved out since April
moved into permanent housing**
29 new families moved into Warren Village
Current Occupancy rate is 96%