

# THE VILLAGER

✦ WINTER 2024

## Warren Village Resident Kayce Receives Community Advocate Award



Kayce celebrated his award with his Warren Village Family Advocate Allison Miller and Mental Health Clinician Catherine Barnes

Kayce is a resident at Warren Village, a parent of two, a full-time student working toward his Master's in Social Work at Metro State University, and an intern at the Colorado Health Network. Last year, he also became a community advocate for people with medical debt. At the age of 19, Kayce underwent surgery for an undiagnosed congenital condition, which left him deeply in debt, devastating his credit score. During the 2023 Regular Session of the Colorado General Assembly, Kayce passionately and courageously testified three times in support of HB23-1126, a bill that prohibits consumer reporting agencies in Colorado from including medical debt in credit reports.

Kayce was one of three recipients of the Colorado Center on Law and Policy 2023 Community Advocates of the Year award. In November, he and his community celebrated at the Communities Against Poverty event, where Kayce accepted his award, and shared the following words.

"As we speak, thousands of Colorado citizens are unhoused due to predatory medical debt and its affects on credit scores. This devastating cycle can feel like trying to build a house out of feathers. You get sick; you are out of work; you can't afford necessities; and then you get a bill, many like mine, in the 10s of thousands of dollars.

In the wake of devastating illness, people are left in anguish over debt they couldn't possibly afford, so it goes to collections. Your credit score takes a nosedive. Now you can't get a car, or an apartment, or a loan for an illness or injury that was completely outside of your control.

"For lucky people like me, you rely on family while you desperately attempt to climb out of the hole that medical debt has put you in. Luckily for me, I am not unhoused or living with family today. For the first time in my life, I have my own apartment. It's all mine. I live in subsidized housing for single parents at risk of becoming unhoused called Warren Village. They teach me skills to effectively live independently, and I am finally in a place to work on building my credit that was devastated due to medical debt.

"I want to thank the Colorado Center on Law and Policy for their tireless work fighting for Coloradans like me. It is an honor to receive this award. I treasured the opportunity to have an impact on the passing of HB23-1126, and it has inspired me to pursue macro social work. So I'll see you at the Capitol in three years.

"As Martin Luther King Jr. said, 'Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.'"

## TIAA Volunteers Host Family Night

Warren Village volunteers are a big part of why we are able to offer community-based programs like Family Nights for resident families. Whether they are individuals or corporate groups, volunteers bring enthusiasm, support, connection, and people power.



Volunteers from the Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association of America (TIAA) gathered last summer to host a Family Night, a highlight of summer and fall programming, for parents and children at Warren Village. Family Night is a resident and volunteer favorite, as it provides an opportunity for residents to build community with their neighbors and gives corporate volunteers the opportunity to get to know the families they are supporting. "It's the best TIAA Service experience I've had in my 10+ years," said Peggy Jones, TIAA employee. "Warren Village is a special place."



Family Night takes place over a shared meal and activities at Cheesman Park. TIAA provided a buffet of sandwiches and sides, and rented a summer favorite - a Kona Shaved Ice truck. A summer rainstorm had TIAA volunteers thinking on their feet to revise and move indoors. Despite the last minute change in location, they created a fun space for families. Kids played with chalk and bubbles on the porch of the Warren Village admin office, and created wild flavor combinations of shaved ice with the help of volunteers. Parents listened to music and relaxed as they enjoyed full bellies and the sound of their children's laughter. TIAA employee and Family Night volunteer, Mercedes Casados, was enthusiastic about the experience. "I have to say this is definitely one of my favorite volunteer events, and despite the rain, it turned out great. I hope we are able to do another one with Warren Village in the future," she said. This community time impacts families in a positive way and gives them space to thrive.



Partners like TIAA and events like Family Night play a crucial role in creating community for Warren Village residents. For corporate and community engagement opportunities, contact Shardai Perry-Miller at 303.320.5032 or [sperry-miller@warrenvillage.org](mailto:sperry-miller@warrenvillage.org).



# ∴ The Power of Generosity, Gratitude, and Community

From Our President & CEO

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As we embrace the new year, I am proud to share with you the remarkable achievements and transformative work taking place within Warren Village. We are excited to showcase a few shining examples of our community coming together to support our residents. At Warren Village, our commitment to our families and their children remains unwavering, and we know that the impact of our mission extends beyond our organization to the very heart of our community. It is through this community of support and dedication that we are able to provide life-changing programs and resources to our residents.



In this issue, we take a moment to focus on the importance of our community partners, including the generous and dedicated support we receive from individuals, corporations, and foundations each and every day. Partnerships like the one between our Early Learning Center and the Colorado Ballet give young residents a creative outlet. Community connections with organizations like the Colorado Center on Law and Policy give residents like Kayce the chance to find their voices and passions while advocating for change. Corporate partners like TIAA and United Airlines help us expand programming for residents.

Thanks to the tremendous support from over 350 individuals attending the Aspire Gala and corporations who served as table sponsors, we raised approximately \$440,000 to help enhance programming that grows economic independence, early childhood education, and alumni outreach for families. A special highlight of the evening was alumna Jada's inspiring story that showcased the power residents possess to make big life changes when they have access to the programs, resources, and support at Warren Village. Jada's journey is a testament to the strength, resilience, and transformative power of the human spirit. We are committed to making sure that every resident has the opportunity to write their own story of growth and change.

During the holiday season, community events ensured that Warren Village families were supported and celebrated. Read about community member Sarah and her daughters, who organized a heartwarming shoe distribution event, ensuring that every child at Warren Village has the chance to step confidently into their future. The annual Winter Coat Drive and Holiday Shop, sponsored by our corporate partners and dedicated volunteers, provided residents with warm coats and holiday gifts.

Warren Village families are writing stories of hope, strength, and unity for themselves, and your support and commitment are a part of what shapes their futures. Together, we are creating a more compassionate and stronger community. Thank you for being an essential part of the Warren Village family, and I look forward to sharing more inspiring stories and achievements with you in the pages of this edition.

In partnership,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Ethan Hemming".

Ethan Hemming, President and CEO

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## ∴ Board of Trustees News



Sharon Butler



Kate Sansing

Warren Village is tremendously grateful to our Board of Trustees for their tireless work to advance the mission of the organization. One of our key strategic goals is to build the capacity, breadth, and diversity of our Board. We have been thrilled to recently welcome the following Trustees, each of whom, brings passion, expertise, and a willingness to help take Warren Village to the next level: Sharon Butler, Retired, Former Director of Quality Services, Oracle; Kate Sansing, Director of Marketing, AAA - The Auto Club Group. For a complete listing of our Board members, please visit [WarrenVillage.org/#board-of-trustees](https://WarrenVillage.org/#board-of-trustees).

## Pre-K Penguins and the Colorado Ballet Partner for Winter Performance

After much hard work and many classes, the children in the Early Learning Center Pre-K class danced, swirled, and shone as adorable penguins in a special December performance created by the Colorado Ballet Education & Community Engagement staff. This year's performance was an artistic acknowledgment of the continued success of the annual dance program designed for the children in the Warren Village Early Learning Center.



Warren Village's 15-year partnership with Colorado Ballet enables us to incorporate the arts into our holistic approach to inspire families. The Colorado Ballet shared their commitment to making dance accessible and fostering an appreciation for ballet. "Our enduring collaboration with Warren Village reflects our dedication to encouraging creativity and expression through dance. We are honored to contribute to the creative and personal growth of these students," said Colorado Ballet.



Colorado Ballet leads free dance lessons for our young residents. The kids learn creative movement dance concepts, and cultivate social and emotional skills. We are grateful for enduring community partnerships with organizations like Colorado Ballet. For more information on the Colorado Ballet, visit [www.coloradoballet.org](http://www.coloradoballet.org).

## Staff Profile: Lyncy Yang, Equity and Inclusion Program Manager



Lyncy Yang, she/her

Meet Lyncy Yang, Warren Village's Equity and Inclusion Manager. She will be working with our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee, executive leadership team, and staff to create a workplace where every team member feels valued, heard, and seen.

### Why is equity and inclusion such an important part of the workplace?

From a workforce perspective, diversity of people and perspectives in inclusive workplaces fosters more creativity and innovation—leading to effective solutions and ideas. It helps attract and retain talent and foster a positive work culture, which allows folks to be more satisfied with their jobs and life outside of work. From a customer/client perspective, inclusivity leads to higher client satisfaction. It also opens opportunities to reduce the chances of bias and discrimination, allowing us to meet our mission alongside our community members.

### Why did you choose to work in nonprofit and/or equity and inclusion?

I've always gravitated towards community-based work. I decided to work in the nonprofit sector with a focus on equity and inclusion due to the transformative power of authenticity in my own life. As a Hmong American woman, I've navigated the "in-between" spaces within various areas of my life and community. This has afforded me the opportunity to practice self-reflection, and better understand myself and others' lived experiences and the ways systems and organizations impact them.

### What changes do you hope to see within Warren Village because of your work/role?

At Warren Village, we aspire to make equity and inclusion intrinsic to our work, culture, and practices. Our commitment is not just in words; it's also in deliberate action. We are a learning organization, and acknowledge that we are all still learning on this journey. I hope that as we continue DEI work, our staff and community will continue to grow together. The initial step we're taking is to spend time learning more deeply about intercultural difference and how this plays a role in how we resolve conflict, engage in groupwork and meetings, communicate with one another, and fulfill our work together. I hope through coaching, training, sharing resources, and strategizing an effective learning and development plan, everyone at Warren Village will be able to apply a DEI lens in their work with one another, our residents, and the community.

### How do you hope to connect with staff members?

My ambitious goal is to meet with everyone before my first quarter is over, getting to know their backgrounds, hopes, and goals for our work together. I think breaking bread is so important for forming authentic connection, so I hope to be able to share more meals and drinks with folks here at the organization to connect with staff members, and play alongside them!



## Corporate Spotlight: United Airlines

In 2017, United Airlines learned about Warren Village's 2Gen model – an approach that provides families with resources and opportunities to change their life trajectory. For United, it was an easy decision to support Warren Village and they became our partners in empowering families as they make positive life changes. For over five years, United's support of Warren Village and our 2Gen approach has become a key component of the company's philanthropic DNA in Denver.

Like many of us, United has recognized that the rising costs of food, housing, childcare and healthcare in Denver have overwhelmed many families in our city. This pressing challenge drove United to support Warren Village as we address these challenges head on.



*This past September, United Airlines sponsored Family Night. Residents and volunteers came together for a night of food, fun, and community at Cheesman Park.*



*Warren Village families and staff take an exciting flight to the "North Pole", where gifts, Santa, and elves await in a magical winter wonderland!*

United invests in organizations focused on building inclusion, inspiring the next generation of leaders, and responding to ongoing crises, like affordable housing. The opportunity for United employees to connect with families through holiday celebrations, family night events, and by taking children and parents to the North Pole on their annual Fantasy Flight (a special flight that takes off from the airport and lands at United's hangar, which is decorated like the North Pole) are ways United employees give back to their community.

Intentional and impactful partnerships are needed now more than ever. Together, we can ensure that resources and relationships are present so that community members have access to support and opportunities to succeed. United encourages others to invest in this critical and inspiring work. Members of the United team have experienced first-hand the immense benefits of partnership for their company, employees, and the broader community. We are grateful to our philanthropic partners like United who share their resources to create meaningful change in the community.



*Over the years, United Airlines has been a tremendous partner. United has provided countless volunteers and over \$1 million in funding. Their continued generosity has empowered residents to soar to new heights on their journeys to economic and personal independence.*



## Donor Profile: Sarah Bracken



*Sarah and her daughters, Lila and Gracie, packed shoes in gift bags and distributed them to kids in the ELC.*

Meet Sarah Bracken, who led this year's Early Learning Center (ELC) shoe drive. Sarah and her daughters, Lila and Gracie, collected over 100 pairs of shoes for kids in the ELC with support from their community.

### **Tell us a little about yourself and your family.**

I am originally from Boulder and have lived in Denver for 13 years. Supporting community organizations has always been a core value of mine, and I strive to instill that value in my children, as well. I have two daughters, Lila (13) and Gracie (11), and a son, Bracken (8). I am an active member in the community and have served on a variety of cultural boards in Denver.

### **How did you first become involved with Warren Village?**

I became involved at the encouragement of my neighbor and friend, Joel Rosenstein, who serves on the Board of Trustees. After attending an information night, I was inspired by the reach of Warren Village and the significant impact that the organization has on the lives of single-parent families. I have a passion for helping kids, and wanted to lead a project that would support kids in the Early Learning Center.

### **What inspired you to support the shoe drive? What was this experience like for you and your family?**

I was excited to have an opportunity to help that would achieve several things: 1) Give me an opportunity to tell my community and network about an organization that I feel is worth supporting 2) Give my kids an opportunity to directly help with the collection of shoes, and then distribute them alongside me to kids at Warren Village 3) Demonstrate to my kids and others the impact of something simple such as a new pair of shoes on the confidence and optimism of the kids they are going to.

### **How did your community support you in making this year's shoe drive a success?**

I have wonderfully supportive friends and family who are eager to give back and are often looking for ways to do so. Nearly one hundred people stepped up and bought shoes for kids, or they supported the effort by purchasing Walmart gift cards for older kids to pick out their own shoes.

### **Why do you think it's important for the community to give back?**

Giving back gives me as much as I feel it gives others. It always feels better to give than receive, particularly when you can see your effort impacting lives in a positive way. This was a great experience for my kids and served as a reminder that anyone can make an impact - even kids! It is important to have empathy and awareness for others in our community. Doing something small like purchasing a new pair of shoes can potentially make a person's day. As my daughter, Gracie, said, "I'm happy we could make a difference. It felt really good to do."

*The kids we met were all so excited to get new shoes. It was fun helping them try them on and then test them out while running around the playground. I loved it.*

*- Lila*





# Aspire Gala 2023: Building Community



On October 6, 2023, the Warren Village community came together at the Denver Art Museum for the Aspire Gala, presented by United Airlines, to celebrate, dance, and hear about the impact of safe and supportive housing. This year's theme, "Building Community," exemplified the collaborative support and partnership that makes our work possible. Together, we recognized the hard work of our residents and alumni who are creating the blueprints for their future.



As a community, we tapped into our collective power to affect change and invest in the families that we serve. With your tremendous support, we raised over \$440,000, including setting a new record of over \$230,000 from the paddle raise that evening. Thank you for your trust in us and for believing in the hard work of our families. Your support now and throughout the year makes all the difference in serving more families.



Keynote speaker and alumna, Jada Galassini, shared her story of building a new life at Warren Village, and where she and her daughter, Gabby, are today. Jada had the community and resources to focus on herself and begin the process of healing from co-dependent and unhealthy relationships. "During my time at Warren Village, I took advantage of the services offered. The Holiday Shop provided by donors gave us a full Christmas tree every year. We never went without heat, water, or air conditioning. I had food if needed. The advice I received was invaluable. The subsidized rent and scholarship opportunities I received led to a nice savings account when I was ready to move out. My wonderful Family Advocate at Warren Village referred me to the therapist Pam, who helped me set boundaries between my family, my ex, and my old life to aid my mental health improvements."



Jada was empowered to finish school and buy her first home. During her time at Warren Village, she accomplished financial, educational, emotional, and relationship goals. Read Jada's full remarks at [warrenvillage.org/jadas-story](http://warrenvillage.org/jadas-story).

**Save the date for the Aspire Gala 2024! We will be celebrating Warren Village's 50th anniversary on September 14, 2024 at the Denver Center for Performing Arts Seawell Ballroom.**



Photos taken by Nikki A. Rae. View the full gallery at [gallery.nikkiarae.com/-warrenvillagegala2023/gallery](http://gallery.nikkiarae.com/-warrenvillagegala2023/gallery).

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*Save the Date*

WARREN  VILLAGE

*Aspire Gala 2024*

**Saturday, September 14**  
**at the Denver Center for Performing Arts Seawell Ballroom**

Warren Village is celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. You will not want to miss this milestone celebration! Contact Michele Kilen, Development Director, at [mkilen@warrenvillage.org](mailto:mkilen@warrenvillage.org) or 303.320.5057 for sponsorship opportunities.