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Cover photo: A section
of the *Living Legacy
Tapestry* that hangs in
the Foundation's lobby

Rose Community Legacy Circle reaches 101 members

Recently, Rose Community Legacy Circle passed a significant milestone, growing to more than 100 members. The Legacy Circle is made up of individuals and couples who are relying on Rose Community Foundation to steward their charitable bequests (gifts specified in a will) and other types of future or planned gifts.

"We are certainly honored and humbled that more than 100 people have entrusted us with this part of their charitable legacy," remarks Vicki Dansky, senior gift planning officer. "We take that responsibility very seriously, and feel responsible not only to understand the donors' intentions for how to direct the gift but to honor the history and values that have informed their decision to make the gift. That is why the *Living Legacy Tapestry*, which is hanging in our lobby, is such an important visual reminder of those values."

The *Living Legacy Tapestry*, composed by artists Leah Sobsey and Lynn Bregman Blass of visualhistorycollaborative.com, is

an artistic archive of donors' values. "These are amazingly generous people who are supporting their community even beyond their lifetime," Dansky says. The artists were in Denver in mid-July and met with the new members of Rose Community Legacy Circle to include their representations on the *Tapestry* panels.

The original intent of the *Tapestry* project was to memorialize the bequests of the first 100 members of the Legacy Circle. Going forward, the Foundation will continue to capture and memorialize donors' intent and values. "Legacy Circle members talk about what a valuable experience it is to find concrete ways to take an 'inventory' of their family's history, values and philanthropic intentions," says Dansky. "We think it will be important to continue to find ways to do that."

You can find the list of members of Rose Community Legacy Circle on the website at rcfdenver.org/livinglegacy.

Our Mission

Rose Community Foundation works to enhance the quality of life of the Greater Denver community through its leadership, resources, traditions and values.

Our Vision

The Foundation uses leadership, grantmaking and donor engagement to invest in strategic and innovative solutions to enduring problems and emerging issues.

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A message from our CEO

Community foundations like Rose Community Foundation are similar to private and family foundations, but there are many important traits and priorities that distinguish us from our peer funders. The stories in this issue of *Connections* will highlight some of the unique **ways we work** that illustrate the *community* in our name.

While all kinds of entities are concerned with the welfare of the community, and many private and family foundations in our area are committed to serving their local area, *community foundations* by their nature are grounded in, responsible to and exist for the benefit of the community in which they work. They are also empowered and entrusted to steward a particular community's philanthropic values and intentions.

In these pages, you will learn how, through our grantmaking process, we are working to empower parts of the community to have a voice in how their schools will be structured and run. We also fund the school district to make those changes. You will also see how we can use grantmaking as a tool to bring a whole sector of nonprofit organizations together to expand and enhance the overall impact on an important issue like workforce development.

Finally, we are always looking to make the Greater Denver community an even better place in the future. We work to fund systemic change that ensures the systems that support our community will be more effective in five or ten years, and that they are prepared for the ways our community will evolve and change. We are grateful that many individuals and families are also looking for ways to continue to have a positive impact in years to come through donor-advised funds, family foundations, bequests and other gifts. We are humbled that more than 100 people have trusted Rose Community Foundation with legacy gifts. On the cover, you read about this significant milestone, and how we are working with these individuals and families to honor their values for their legacies.

There is much about leading a community foundation that is gratifying and humbling. I am privileged to work with intelligent, creative people who are our trustees, our staff, our committee members and our donors. They are all interested in making our community more equitable, more healthy and more vibrant for everyone. I am also honored that so many people and families have entrusted us to ensure their resources to impact the places, causes and communities they care about during their lives and beyond their lifetimes.

And, I am thrilled to be working every day to make this community that has always been my home a better place for everyone.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sheila Bugdanowitz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the letter 'y'.

Sheila Bugdanowitz
President and CEO
Rose Community Foundation

Education Committee grants approach Aurora school innovation from different angles

In the community room of Mango House which is a community center located just off of East Colfax in Aurora, a panel gathered to speak to Aurora Public Schools leaders about innovation plans affecting several Aurora schools. The members of this panel — comprised of parents and grandparents — spoke through interpreters, because their English is limited. They were all native speakers of Nepalese and Karen, one of the 100 languages spoken in Burma. Many of them have been in the United States and in Denver for three to five years, and they have children and grandchildren in elementary, K–8 and high schools in the Aurora Public Schools.

RISE Colorado convened this panel as part of its effort to ensure that the voices and needs of these immigrant families are incorporated into the new innovation plans for schools that serve them and their children. The panel is also an example of the results Rose Community Foundation hopes to see from its funding of advocacy and engagement work in education.

“We want the people who are most affected by these innovation plans to have a voice in their development and to continue to be part of their implementation,” says Janet Lopez, senior program officer for Education. “They want to be a partner in these innovation plans; they want to be part of the solution.”

One of the 2016 priorities for the Foundation’s Education Committee is to *bolster the role of parents and communities to support new school design and address challenges around new school models*. While it is supporting the Aurora Public Schools in gaining approval for an innovation zone, the Education Committee is also funding RISE Colorado for work it is doing to ensure that families whom the district has traditionally had difficulty reaching out to have a voice in the process.

Education Committee member John Barry, who formerly served as the superintendent for the Aurora school district remarks that “For Aurora Public Schools, one of its great strengths is its



Refugee parents speak to Aurora Public Schools officials about their reaction to innovation plans at a forum in June

diversity — in the form of a student population that comes from 120 different countries and that speaks 130 different languages. This strength is also one of its greatest challenges as it works to accelerate academic achievement and close the achievement gap.” Facing this challenge, he says, requires partnerships among many different groups, including parents, universities, teachers and teachers unions, among others. “It is apparent that school districts cannot meet these challenges alone,” he says.

Lopez and her committee believe it is healthy to support outside advocacy organizations who are working with particular groups of families during the innovation process, while also financially supporting the district. These outside organizations like RISE Colorado have capacities that the district does not have for training parents to be engaged.

RISE Colorado believes that one of the keys to closing the opportunity gap for low-income children and children of color is to ensure that their parents and caretakers are advocating for quality schools. Veronica Palmer, the organization’s co-founder and co-CEO, says that their program begins with in-school workshops for parents about the opportunity gap itself. “They

Innovation Schools
State education policy allows districts to approve innovation status for schools, which permits them to remain in the district while giving the school and school community flexibility in terms of structure, programming and governance to meet a particular community’s needs. In the Aurora Public Schools, many of the schools that have gained approval from the state and the district for innovation status are underperforming. The district hopes innovative redesigns will result in turning around school performance and student achievement.

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Grouping grants to expand understanding, impact

Earlier this year, the Child and Family Development Committee reviewed a group of grants totaling just over \$200,000, all directed at organizations that help parents of young children become and remain able to support themselves and their families. The organizations do work ranging from job skills training, to family case management, to basic financial training and services. They also work with parents who are in various stages of the employment cycle — those needing skills and training to get a job as well as those in jobs who need support to keep a job.

Rather than just reviewing individual proposals, the Committee instead reviewed the whole “cluster,” or group of proposals with the ultimate goal of helping parents of young children become able to support themselves financially. As the year goes on, the committee will evaluate similar groupings of grants to organizations in other areas, including early childhood development, family resource centers, early learning councils and home visitation programs. The Committee will also consider the grant requests after spending half of each meeting learning about and evaluating each of these areas in greater depth than they have in the past. (Other program committees at the Foundation are implementing a similar approach.)



A member of one of CWEE’s education programs learning new skills

Senior Program Officer Elsa Holguín hopes that the ultimate result of this shift in how the committee evaluates requests will be that the Foundation plays an active role in raising whole sectors of work. These improvements may come from bringing grantee organizations together, or being able to access more resources and funding

Traditional grantmaking versus new “cluster” approach

Grantmaking Before



Grantmaking Now



locally and nationally, or providing more proactive support beyond simple funding to grantees as they improve how they serve individuals and families.

“Moving a field of work to another level feels like such an appropriate role for a community foundation,” says Holguín.

Committee Chair Lisa Reckler Cohn said the Committee also hopes that this new way of looking at grants will help the group be “much more knowledgeable, thoughtful and organized.” She also hopes that as committee members see a whole area of work in depth, they will be able to “see where the possibilities are for working together, for sharing best practices.” She goes on to wonder, “Who knows what kinds of innovations might come from that?”

As the Committee reviewed the workforce development cluster, its members learned how focusing on two generations of families in poverty — the children and the parents — can result in greater, longer-lasting change. Liddy Romero, the CEO of WorkLife Partnership, one of the grantees in this group explains, “If an adult in the household can keep a job, that stability benefits the children.” WorkLife Partnership partners with employers to ensure that their employees have skills and support to stay in their jobs.

The Committee also learned that even as Denver’s economy is booming, many families are struggling to provide for basic needs including housing, child care and food. “Even in good economies, people get left behind,” says Romero. Laurie Harvey, the CEO of the Center for Work Education and Employment, CWEE, another grantee in the group, says that even as companies move high-tech jobs to Denver and to Colorado, overall it has become more difficult to find good entry-level work that provides a living wage and adequate benefits.

Moreover, Harvey says that in our more mobile economy, now clients who face significant economic challenges are missing many of the supports that clients in similar situations had ten years ago. “They are less likely to have family nearby,” she says. “They have no support structure to fall back on.”

Both CWEE and WorkLife Partnership work with single parents of young families. They also work actively with employers. Harvey says that their relationships with a number of employers grew out of the Child and Family Development’s

last evolution in their grantmaking process, when they asked grantees to focus more on outcomes. That caused CWEE to work on locating and nurturing relationships with what both Harvey and Romero refer to as “quality employers,” employers who offer jobs with living wages and benefits so that their workers can support their families.

“That focus on employers has begun to have a really positive impact,” says Harvey. “We added 15 employers to our network last year and placed more people in full-time positions with benefits than ever before.”

Romero also talks about the critical role Rose Community Foundation has played in her young organization’s growth and evolution. WorkLife Partnership is the only organization in the Rocky Mountain region that focuses on keeping employees in jobs rather than getting them into jobs. “I am proud to say that Rose Community Foundation was one of the first local foundations to support us three years ago,” she remarks. Now, she says, “Workforce is finally making its way into the limelight,” and many players are beginning to focus resources on this issue. But, says Romero, “We need philanthropy, alongside the federal and state funding.”

Both organizations are looking forward to collaborating with their peer organizations which they hope will happen more as a result of clustering grants. “We have to get together as a workforce industry,” says Romero.

“We are really looking forward to gathering with colleagues to share best practices, track new and existing policies at the federal, state and county levels,” says Harvey.

Committee chair Cohn says she can already see a marked difference in the understanding the Committee brings to its evaluation of grant proposals. “This approach has made us much more focused, intentional and educated,” she says. She goes on to remark, “It is like the difference between reading *Anna Karenina*, or taking a full survey class about Russian literature.”



A tutor helps to prepare a young mother to take the GED

Continued from page 3

Aurora school innovation



Refugee parents and one of their students at Crawford Elementary, one of Aurora's innovation schools

know something is going on, but they do not quite know what, or have a name for it," she says. The workshops then point to the critical role parents and families can play by being engaged with schools and being advocates for students beyond the classrooms by supplementing and supporting their learning at home.

"Unlike some other advocacy organizations, we have no particular issue agenda," says Palmer. "Our only mission is to make sure that families are educated about how they can make a difference, become

engaged with their school and feel empowered to surface issues within their own school, and ultimately to be part of decision-making bodies in the school system."

Back at the community meeting, the parents and grandparents thanked officials for involving them in the process and in the development of the innovation plans. They emphasized requests for things that would help them continue to be engaged in their children's education: home visits from teachers and school staff, interpretation and translation services at school meetings and events, and translation of standard school

voicemail messages into their languages. They also asked for the availability of summer school and an increased number of paraprofessionals in classrooms throughout the school year to help students who are academically behind catch up and be ready for the school year.

While the district is working on meeting some of these requests like more interpretation services and home visits, others require additional funding or drawing on scarce resources. For example it is increasingly difficult to find and hire paraprofessionals with the second-language skills needed.

But the work that RISE Colorado has done to help this group of parents be involved for the first time with their children's schools has helped school and district leaders understand their needs more clearly. The organization hopes that as parents see that their voices and involvement make a difference, they will become involved at other levels within innovation zones and in the district itself on policy issues. Their voices can help school and district officials change how they view priorities, teacher training, and parent and family outreach. "It will take time and patience, but we can work together to be creative and innovative," says Palmer.

For more information, visit risecolorado.org and aps2020.aurorak12.org/action-zone.

Read and share the new Rose Community Foundation blog

As a way of sharing stories about the work we do with the broader community, the Foundation has launched Stories of Impact: A blog by Rose Community Foundation. A recent entry tells the story of Opportunity Youth, an initiative incubated at Rose Community Foundation that now operates out of the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce. Every other Thursday, we will post a new entry sharing brief stories of our work and the work of our grantee and partner organizations. We will be sharing this new content through our Facebook page, Twitter feed and other social and digital venues. Please share the blog with people you know by using the email or social media icon links on the tool bar to the left side of the page.

Latino Community Foundation of Colorado Staff Grows

The Latino Community Foundation of Colorado (LCFC) has added staff. In June and July, the initiative of Rose Community Foundation hired two project managers and a project director to help manage their expanding work supporting the Latino community in Colorado.

Nicole M. Melaku joins LCFC as a project director. She worked for the past four years as the director of programs at the Colorado Immigrant Resource Center. In her new role, she will be working on the Colorado Immigrant Funders Collaborative, the LatinasRepresent Colorado initiative, and managing a W.K. Kellogg Foundation grant to develop more Latino philanthropy.

Daniela V. Young comes to LCFC as a project manager. Young previously served The Bridge Project as the Denver site director. In her new role, she will

be helping to implement a new family-centered approach to aging, which grows out of LCFC's previous work with Latino elders.

Priscilla Montoya Vitello, who has served LCFC as a consultant for nearly two years has transitioned to a staff position as project manager. In her new role she will continue to oversee evaluation and data gathering along with LCFC's communications and events.

New Staff at Rose Community Foundation
Samantha Hea joined the Rose Community Foundation staff for the summer as a temporary collaborative giving coordinator, supporting Rose Youth Foundation and Roots and Branches.

In July, **Emily Kornhauser** joined the staff as the full-time initiatives assistant. She will be supporting Rose Youth



New staff at Latino Community Foundation of Colorado and Rose Community Foundation, top row, from left: Nicole Melaku, Samantha Hea, Daniela Young; bottom row, from left: Emily Kornhauser, Priscilla Montoya Vitello, Vanessa Ward

Foundation and Roots and Branches. Her previous experience includes program management work with the Small Business Development Center of the Sierra Business Council, and work as a community engagement coordinator with the Murie Center in Wyoming.

Vanessa Ward is the new program assistant for Jewish Life. She previously worked in synagogue operations in New York and New Jersey, where she produced events that connected community members with each other.

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Innovate for Good reviewing proposals to empower youth

In May, Rose Community Foundation asked the question, *“What idea could you bring to life to empower youth to make the community better?”* Believing youth are an untapped resource, the second year of Innovate for Good brought with it a theme: to empower youth to be agents of change in the community.

More than 200 community reviewers ranked 65 entries, nine of which were from youth, ages 13 to 18, who submitted an idea for a project they feel will make a difference in Denver. With criteria of being innovative, empowering, poised for impact and new in the Denver area, youth-adult partnership entries comprised the remaining 56 entries.

The program will award up to \$250,000 in grants and support to implement the winning ideas. Rose Community Foundation looks forward to announcing our winners at an event in September where attendees will have a chance to vote live for the winning projects.

