

# TOGETHER WE ARE BUILDING A BETTER WELD COUNTY



## Next Steps for United Way: Moving Forward with a Community-inspired Vision

I hope that this finds you healthy and well. As we look forward to spring, we are reminded that each season is connected to others. Every time of change relies and builds on the period that came before.

The same is true for me as the new president & CEO. I intend to honor the past United Way of Weld County; the eight years that I've been on staff, and the robust history that came before. I wholeheartedly believe in the vision that the board of directors has set, which they forged because of you, our community, and what you feel United Way could and should be doing. We persist in this vision for a better Weld County through our five initiative areas: Reading Great by 8, Thrive by 25, Weld's Way Home, Aging Well and Connecting Weld.

As with any change, things will look a bit different over time. An upcoming United Way strategic planning process will inform us. It will be a robust experience that solidifies the path for moving forward with our collective impact model – I'm really looking forward to it. This will offer a clear understanding of what will stay the same, what will be different, and what we plan to achieve as a United Way and, I hope, as a whole community.

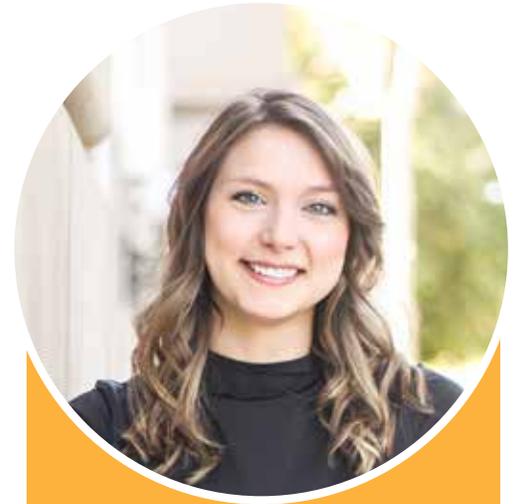
In this newsletter, you will find out about others who are moving forward, too. In it you will read about Envision, a local nonprofit helping children with disabilities at the trailhead of their lives, how Youth Employment and Training at Weld County Employment Services is guiding foster youth in their transitions to a sustainable adulthood, and the vision that NextFifty Initiative has for reimagining aging. And more.

We all need a helping hand during times of transition; for United Way, we ask for patience as we adjust not only as a staff and board but as a nonprofit community. I believe that a patient and thoughtful transition will also be a smoother one, with nothing rushed.

In the meantime, please keep reading our newsletters and watch our videos and online spaces for updates as we go. And please reach out to us if you have any questions, feedback, or if you just want to meet for a coffee. Your involvement will help shape how United Way moves forward. You can call the main office at 970-353-4300 or email Barb Lessman at [blesman@unitedway-weld.org](mailto:blesman@unitedway-weld.org) to set up a time with me or any of our lead staff.

Finally, I leave you with an important thought that I have every day: an influx of federal pandemic funding will soon be ending. For two years these resources supported the households that we traditionally serve as well as nonprofits generally. This funding reduction is occurring when inflation is at a generational high. We, along with our partners, will likely have higher client demand, and fewer resources to meet these needs. It will impact what United Way can accomplish moving forward.

We will not be able to continue serving people as we have these last two years without your generosity. If you can't be generous with money, would you be so with your time? Whatever you give makes a difference in the life of our vibrant community. Thank you for it.



## Melanie Woolman President & CEO

**“I intend to honor the past United Way of Weld County; the eight years that I've been on staff, and the robust history that came before. I wholeheartedly believe in the vision that the board of directors has set, which they forged because of you, our community, and what you feel United Way could and should be doing.”**

## Reimagining Aging Foundation Spotlight: NextFifty Initiative

As a community, we are living longer and want to lead healthier, happier lives. For NextFifty Initiative, this heralds great possibilities. On the NextFifty website they ask, “How would you conduct your life if you knew you would live to be 85? To be 100? What would you do differently?” These are questions the foundation is helping us to answer, by reducing ageism and reimagining the experience of aging.

NextFifty Initiative promotes independence and dignity for people in the “second 50 years” of their lives by encouraging and supporting innovative, affordable and coordinated solutions. Through the foundation, NextFifty supports programs that improve the lives of older adults and their caregivers, including the particular needs of people who live on lower incomes and those who face physical or other disabilities.

Thanks to NextFifty and their funding of the Aging Well Volunteer Recruitment Initiative, United Way was able to generate nearly 900 volunteer leads that resulted in 135 volunteers for 11 partner organizations to serve Weld County older adults, even during the pandemic years.

How might you rethink aging? Look to NextFifty Initiative for ideas and innovation as they pave the way for later-life’s greatest possibilities. Learn more at [www.Next50Initiative.org](http://www.Next50Initiative.org).



### Local Leadership for Your United Way Board Member Spotlight: Clint Dudley

**United Way:** Why do you support United Way of Weld County?

**Clint Dudley:** For 20 years I have worked in Weld County parks and recreation organizations that have used United Way’s Weld County Recreation Scholarships program funds to provide impactful experiences for underserved youth. Seeing how vital that support is led me to volunteer with United Way, given its ability to directly link the work that it does with desired results and the passion that its staff and board members show in their work.

I think the best thing about United Way is its ability to connect so many people in our community. The amazing staff, knowledgeable and diverse volunteers, passionate stakeholder organizations as well as those in need of services are all brought together to make our community a better place for everyone who calls it home.

**UW:** Why is it important for you to volunteer your time?

**CD:** The work we do at United Way impacts lives in a way that lifts up the entire community; that’s a pretty special thing to be a part of. Meeting the needs of our community continue to be challenging. I truly believe in United Way’s ability to help the community meet these challenges. Every dollar donated and every minute volunteered has a direct and measurable impact on those in need.

**UW:** What is your goal as a board member?

**CD:** My most important goal is to listen to the lived experiences of our community members and to manage and advocate for resources to allow everyone to live a productive life. Also I am leading the Thrive by 25 collective impact work, which includes the shared effort of more than 20 youth-serving organizations. You can find out more about this at [www.UnitedWay-Weld.org/initiatives/Thrive-by-25](http://www.UnitedWay-Weld.org/initiatives/Thrive-by-25).

*Clint Dudley has been helping build happy, healthy communities through parks, programs and partnerships for over 20 years, with the last 10 as executive director of Thompson Rivers Parks & Recreation District. Clint grew up in Lyons but has called Weld County home since 1998, and is a graduate of the University of Northern Colorado. He is a lucky husband and proud father of six.*



## Community Care is Fundamental Cornerstone Partner Spotlight: Monfort Family Foundation

In the 1930's, Warren and Edith Monfort, two teachers from Sterling, Colo., moved to Greeley and started a farm with a few head of cattle. By the time their son, Ken, took leadership of the business in 1970, it was one of the world's largest cattle-feeding operations. By then, the Monfort family was also known for another kind of contribution: their support of our more vulnerable Weld County neighbors.

For the Monforts, it is in the family DNA to care about the community you live in. The Monfort Family Foundation, now helmed by Ken's wife Myra and their four children, still supports Weld County today in health, education, arts and culture, and meeting the basic needs of children, youth and families. For over 40 years, the foundation has also been a key United Way of Weld County Cornerstone Partner.

"I believe the Monfort Family Foundation keeps investing in Weld County because they want to see it thrive," shared Sara

Seely, chair of the United Way board of directors. "We are so grateful that the Monforts keep making Weld County a primary focus of their generosity. They truly help our more vulnerable neighbors to reach their full potential."

In addition to being a Cornerstone Partner and making other generous investments, after the 2013 Northern Colorado floods, knowing that so many of United Way's donations were going towards disaster recovery, the foundation stepped in and offered more support. Another year, when there was a temporary gap in funding for PASO Institute, a program that trains and supports Spanish-only speaking child care providers, it was the Monfort Family Foundation that stepped in to bridge the funding gap.

For these reasons and many, many more, thank you to Monfort Family Foundation for their commitment to Weld County.

"We are so grateful that the Monforts keep making Weld County a primary focus of their generosity. They truly help our more vulnerable neighbors to reach their full potential."

Sara Seely, Chair of the  
United Way of Weld County  
Board of Directors

## United Way Welcomes New Executive Staff

"I am excited to share that United Way recently hired two new executive level staff," offered Melanie Woolman, United Way's president and CEO. "As of February 6, Ernest Cienfuegos-Baca began serving as the lead staff for our direct service programs and community investments, while Travis Hitt is overseeing United Way community fundraising efforts."

With a BA in business administration and organizational management from Adams State College and a graduate degree in nonprofit management and leadership from Regis University, Ernest was most recently the Greeley-based Jobs of Hope executive director, providing housing and employment support to those recently released from incarceration. He has also worked with the developmentally disabled, older adults, migrant farmworkers, families on public assistance, at-risk youth, and households

experiencing homelessness during his 25 years with nonprofit organizations.

Travis's passion for youth and giving back to the community began over a decade ago. After earning an undergraduate degree in psychology from the University of Northern Colorado, Travis worked as a youth hockey coach at the Greeley Ice Haus and served as a psychology intern. Most recently he was the vice president of marketing and engagement with Boys & Girls Clubs of Weld County, leading fundraising events such as Elegant Night and Dancing with the Weld County Stars, while increasing overall revenue.

You can contact Ernest at [ecienfuegosbaca@unitedway-weld.org](mailto:ecienfuegosbaca@unitedway-weld.org) and Travis at [thitt@unitedway-weld.org](mailto:thitt@unitedway-weld.org).



Ernest Cienfuegos-Baca



Travis Hitt

# Commitment to Community Through United Way

## Donor Spotlight: Lori and Mike Shoop

This August, Lori and Mike Shoop will celebrate their 45th anniversary. “In a long partnership,” Lori says with a smile, “you know who’s better at some things, and who’s better at other things.”

“But all the things we’ve done, we’ve done together,” adds Mike.

That included buying Lori’s father’s company, PFC USA, in 1993. The pair give personally, and the company has long been a United Way of Weld County Cornerstone Partner. “Cornerstone was one of the greatest developments in United Way, because it involves businesses to support and pay the overhead of the organization. That way, all of the individual donors’ money goes directly to helping people.” The Shoops encourage all of their employees to give to their own local United Way.

Supporting locally is in the Shoop’s blood. Growing up in Greeley, they learned philanthropy from their parents, and hope it gets passed onto the next generations. “Almost all of our giving is local and that’s very important,” Lori says. “Because our history is here in Greeley, we get to hear and see true results and we know the people managing United Way are good people.”



Lori and Mike Shoop

Though they are not sure what retirement looks like just yet – maybe more pickleball for Lori and fly fishing for Mike – they do know one of the best parts of being here is community: “It’s being a part of a community of givers.”

Thank you Mike and Lori for your consistent commitment to our more vulnerable Weld County neighbors.



## Just One Step Makes All The Difference Become a Leadership Giver

Did you know that the word leader comes from the Old English meaning, “one who goes first?”

Because Leadership Givers “go first” in financially supporting and raising funds for United Way of Weld County programs and partners, they also save United Way the high cost of organizing big fundraising events – which means more money is invested in Weld County communities and in the lives of our more vulnerable Weld County neighbors.

As a Leadership Giver, you can choose the level of giving that fits your budget and giving goals. And, Leadership Givers become part of a groundswell of local supporters who make Weld County a better place for us all.

**Would you join United Way as a Leadership Giver with an annual investment of \$500 or more?** Learn more and make a commitment at [www.UnitedWay-Weld.org/Leadership-Giving](http://www.UnitedWay-Weld.org/Leadership-Giving).





## City of Greeley Invests \$1 Million Towards Ending Homelessness in Weld County

In December 2022, Greeley City Council approved a more than \$1 million investment in short- and long-term initiatives to address and end homelessness for some of our most vulnerable Weld County neighbors.

For immediate support, United Way's cold weather shelter, a service of the Housing Navigation Center, has been able to extend its hours and will be open 24/7 through April 15. This will help in more ways than providing shelter. "Increasing hours of operation has created opportunities to engage with vulnerable households in preparing for, responding to, and preventing the spread of COVID-19," said United Way president and CEO Melanie Woolman. Plus, having a safe place to stay during the day and night connects guests to the support networks they need to live healthy, stable lives, and, most importantly, to get back into housing more quickly.

The long-term approach will focus on people who experience chronic homelessness, as well as its causes. Under the leadership of Juliana Kitten, City of Greeley assistant city manager, the Homelessness to Housing Intensive Case Management Team will take a Housing First approach in helping those who are chronically homeless regain a home. The team will eventually serve 60 people.

Housing First doesn't only offer housing. "The major misconception around Housing First is that it's housing only," Kitten said. As the causes of homelessness are often complex and overlapping, Juliana's team will provide permanent housing and then bring other support services to people's homes on a weekly basis, so that they are more likely to stay housed. Throughout the United States and Canada, 80% of those provided with housing through the Housing First method have kept their homes long-term. Learn more at [www.UnitedWay-Weld.org/initiatives/Welds-Way-Home](http://www.UnitedWay-Weld.org/initiatives/Welds-Way-Home).

## Give Back Events. Donate in a Fun Way!

Businesses are proud to be part of our community and believe in giving back. Here's your chance to join in.

**OLD CHICAGO**  
PIZZA + TAPROOM

Grab your family and friends and have dinner on the 3rd Tuesday of every month at Old Chicago in Greeley from 5-8 p.m. Write United Way Giveback on your receipt and 15% of the proceeds will benefit United Way of Weld County.



Pick up an exclusive United Way flavored popcorn at Mom's Popcorn in downtown Greeley during the month of May and 50% of the proceeds will benefit United Way of Weld County.



## Connecting the Community Through Weld Project Connect

Thanks to sponsors City of Greeley, High Plains Library District, iHeartMedia Big 97.9, IBMC College, JBS, The Weld Trust, Walgreens, and Weld County Government, on October 20, 2022, nearly 80 service providers and over 250 volunteers helped our more at-risk Weld County neighbors to connect with needed resources. 685 guests found much needed help with housing instability, job loss, health problems and other challenges that can interrupt a life. New services for 2022 included DMV2GO offering ID cards, Gracefully Etched Photography taking family photos and Phil's Pro Auto Service providing car and truck checkups.

This was the twelfth annual Weld Project Connect. The 2022 chair was City of Greeley city council member Tommy Butler and the lead staff was United Way's Margie Martinez. Other steering committee members included Perry Buck, Les Cogswell, Christine Cunningham, Dan Dennie, Jeff Harbert, Kaye Holman, Scott James, Rick Jenkins, Kim Joiner, Mike Ketterling, Nicole Quinn, Lyle SmithGraybeal, Justin Watada and Melanie Woolman. 2023 Weld Project Connect will be chaired by Weld County commissioner Perry Buck and is being planned for October 19.

## Aging Well Volunteer Recruitment Initiative Connects Helping Hands to Older Adults

Thanks to a generous grant from NextFifty Initiative, United Way of Weld County offered the Aging Well Volunteer Recruitment Initiative during a turbulent time. Designed before the pandemic began and officially launched in August 2020, United Way recruited volunteers to lend their help to an array of older adult serving organizations and their program participants throughout Weld County.

Despite being impacted by the inconsistent cycle of COVID-19 re-openings and closures, mask and vaccine mandates, and fear within the older adult population, nearly 900 leads and 135 known volunteers served at 11 different agencies throughout Weld County because of the initiative.

Katrina, a stay at home mom, saw it as an opportunity for community connection

and support. She became a volunteer driver for 60+ Ride, a nonprofit that offers older adult transportation assistance in many parts of Weld County. Katrina included her 7-year-old on rides so that her daughter, who has no grandparents, could get to know some older adults and build meaningful relationships. Other agencies that received volunteer help included A Little Help, Alzheimer's Association, Community Grief Center, Greeley Active Adult Center, Habitat for Humanity of the St. Vrain Valley, Hope Lives, Meals on Wheels of Weld County, Volunteers of America, Weld County Area Agency on Aging and Weld Food Bank.

Tremendous thanks to NextFifty Initiative for helping our older neighbors get the care and friendship they needed during these difficult pandemic years!



# Envisioning a Better Future for Children with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Through a range of services, Envision supports more than 2,200 Weld County children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, an effort that starts at the very beginning of their lives.

Studies show that the first three years of life are most formative for development and learning. This is why Envision's early intervention coordinators help families identify the developmental needs of their young children from birth to three years old.

As a Reading Great by 8 partner, Envision equips families with early literacy training and resources to help children become preschool-ready. Data shows that 45% of children who receive the services they need by this age will be caught up with their peers developmentally. And with added support for communications skills,

the stage is set for greater literacy too, which helps children for years to come.

"The partnership we have with other organizations in the community, and with United Way specifically, has allowed us to serve more families, which helps more kids meet developmental milestones, catch up with their peers, and reduce the need for life-long services," says executive director Celeste Ewert. Learn more at [www.EnvisionCO.org](http://www.EnvisionCO.org).



"We appreciate the support from United Way to help ensure our Weld County children have the opportunity to meet their full potential."

Celeste Ewert, Executive Director, Envision

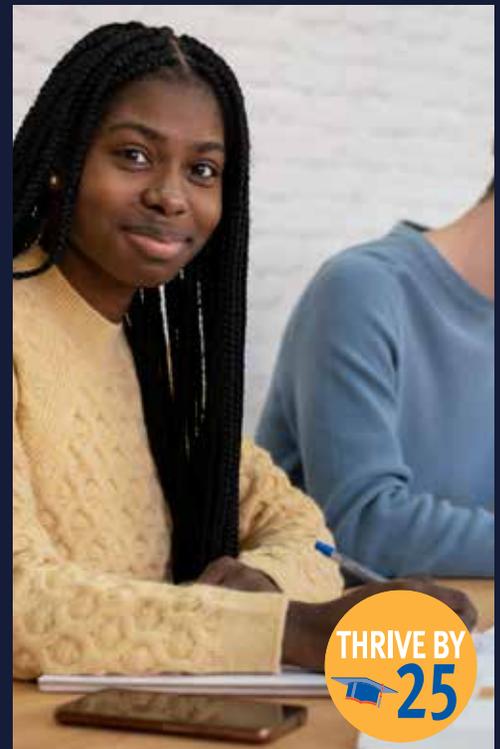
## Weld County Employment Services Helps Foster Youth Become Workforce Ready

When a 17-year-old in foster care wanted to pursue a career in health care, it was the Youth Employment and Training arm of Weld County Employment Services that paved her way.

Learning the young woman's specific needs, a trained youth life skills navigator was able to provide Jasmine with an education voucher to attend Aims Community College, and through a grant arranged an apprenticeship for on-the-job-training. Since the program, called Pillars of Successful Independence, is uniquely located inside the Weld County workforce center, it means youth have a trusted guide to walk them through the entire transition from foster care to adult independence.

"We put a lot of focus on making long-term, meaningful relationships," shared Greg Cordova, youth employment and training supervisor. "We want to make sure that if foster youth in transition need more help, they feel comfortable to call us. There are so many services we can point them to."

Resources like resume writing and job search; funding for books, scrubs, or gas for transport; college campus tours and workshops for learning; even cooking. And in early May each year, everyone involved – from Greg's outstanding team, to parents, friends, and Weld County commissioners – come together at a graduation ceremony to cheer the youth's huge achievements, as they step into their promising next chapter.





United Way of Weld County  
PO Box 1944  
Greeley, CO 80632



**March 2023  
newsletter  
enclosed.**



## CORNERSTONE PARTNERS

ENSURING YOUR DONATION IS GOING DIRECTLY TO THOSE WHO NEED IT

With cash and in-kind donations, Cornerstone Partners generously provide foundational support for United Way's work. This means that your donation is used only for assisting our more vulnerable Weld County neighbors.

\$50,000 +



\$25,000 – \$49,999



\$15,000 – \$24,999

Chick-fil-A Greeley - Flood and Peterson

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365 REAL Property Management - First Interstate Bank - FNBO  
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Want to know more about United Way's  
big picture vision for Weld County?

Read it at

[www.UnitedWay-Weld.org/thefuture](http://www.UnitedWay-Weld.org/thefuture)

### GIVE

Your gift funds the programs and initiatives that make life better for 1 in 6 people in Weld County who need help.

[www.UnitedWay-Weld.org/donatenow](http://www.UnitedWay-Weld.org/donatenow)

### VOLUNTEER

You can help people in your own community. Tell us what you love, and we'll pair you with the perfect volunteer opportunity.

[www.UnitedWay-Weld.org/volunteer](http://www.UnitedWay-Weld.org/volunteer)

### LEAVE A LEGACY

Your legacy gift ensures that the issues and community you care about most will enjoy continued support.

Contact us at  
970-353-4300

Connect with us!



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United Way of Weld County