



The Community Foundation

BOULDER COUNTY

Donor e-News

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READYSETLEARN

Richard Garcia, Guest Columnist
Colorado Statewide Parent Coalition and Trustee, The Community Foundation

My passion for early childhood education began in 1970, when my children were enrolled in the Boulder County Head Start program. I saw firsthand how my children were engaged in their learning through play. I would copy many of the classroom activities that I saw their teachers use. I was a student so I had the advantage of being able to be in their classroom frequently. Fast forward my experience to the lives of my two younger daughters. They had the opportunity to enroll in the wonderful For Love of Children (FLOC) program, where they experienced the same level of learning as my older children did in Head Start. The one major difference between the two experiences is that I had to pay for the latter. Fortunately for my younger children, we had the means to do so.

In 1990 I had the opportunity to become one of two Family Resource School Coordinators for the city of Boulder. I was assigned to University Hill Elementary School. Uni Hill, as many parents fondly call the school, was an experiential bilingual school and, I must say, a fine one. The school was very diverse, as it is today, with children from many backgrounds. We had children whose parents came from Mexico, Russia, Serbia, Croatia, and other Latino countries. There were a significant number of Native American children, Chicanitos, and African American children. Uni Hill was and is rich in diversity.

One of my activities was informal Friday home visits. I would make appointments to visit families and have conversations about their children. During visits I saw that parents were intense about their desire to help their children but didn't know how. This is when I got the idea of developing our Los Padres program that would provide information and skills to the parents about how to enhance what they did as a family.

Part of my responsibility was to provide interventions and assistance to meet families' needs. One of the major needs was to get young children enrolled in the Kindergarten Enrichment program. This program was designed to provide early education services to the families who had children in half-day kindergarten. The children could be enrolled in the morning class and the afternoon enrichment program, if they could afford it. Yes, there was some assistance, but it was limited.

The lucky ones would have a full day of learning. The children that couldn't participate would be put on the bus and taken home. If a parent was home, some of those kids might get further learning support. Others ended up watching television all afternoon until their parent came home.

Let's go back to 1990. The schools did not have full-day kindergarten services. Early childhood education was limited to those who could afford it, and 95% of those who could not afford it were Latino families. There was an achievement gap, but we were not calling it that. We knew what kids needed was full-day early education services, and we knew that we had a drop-out problem, but we were not reporting it.

Today, we still know about the problems, and we know what the answers are. Early childhood education opportunities are critical for children from low-income families. These opportunities give children the same chance that kids from higher-income families have and can prevent gaps in learning right from the beginning.

Join us at The Community Foundation in addressing Boulder County's achievement gap issue. Let's help all Boulder County kids be ready and set to learn from the start. **For more information about the Foundation's ReadySetLearn: The Starting Point Matters awareness campaign, please contact, Chris Barge at 303-442-0436 x110 or Chris@commfound.org.**

Early Childhood Education: Community Trust Initiative Update

We're off to an impactful start so far in 2010, thanks to the generous vision and courage of more than 1,000 donors who have contributed to our Community Trust Initiative to date.

You may recall that in September 2008 The Community Foundation challenged Boulder County residents to help us raise \$4 million over 4 years so we could permanently double our unrestricted grant-making impact, while also making a targeted impact in one area of emphasis. I'm pleased to report that, 18 months in, this initiative is on track. In January we granted more money than ever from the Community Trust to Boulder County nonprofits.

We are also well on our way to making an impact on our chosen area of emphasis: the educational achievement gap between our county's well-off kids and those whose parents struggle to make ends meet. The reality is sobering: The Boulder Valley School District has the widest achievement gap in the state among mid-sized and large school districts.

Time and again, experts tell us the way to close the gap is to provide equal access to quality early childhood education, so that our vulnerable kids show up to school ready to learn.

We brought attention to the case for investing in early childhood education recently at our **READYSETLEARN** kick-off event featuring keynote speaker, Bill Millett. We had an amazing turnout, with 500 business and community leaders in attendance between our Longmont luncheon and our Boulder breakfast.

We've heard from lots of attendees, fired up about Mr. Millett's central message: Preschool is a matter of economic and national security for the nation. School readiness is directly linked to workforce readiness and our ability to compete globally in the future. An investment in early childhood education is an investment in tax generators over tax consumers.

In other words, the starting point matters.

The Daily Camera had a great front-page Sunday story on The Community Foundation's push to close the educational achievement gap between those who struggle and those who succeed in our schools. [See story](#). In the story, Community Foundation Trustee, Richard Garcia, sums it up this way: "The Community Foundation initiative is probably the most courageous attempt that I've seen in Boulder County to close the achievement gap. I hope people pay attention."

The Times-Call also had a great story covering Bill Millett's talk in Longmont. [Read it here](#)

The Times-Call story summarizes well Mr. Millett's recommendations to the greater Longmont community:

- Â· Invest in early childhood education, which provides the best return on investment.
- Â· Compare our schools not to others in the state, but to the best in the world.
- Â· Recruit and train the best students to become teachers. "I don't want a football coach teaching math; and I don't want a math teacher coaching football, either."
- Â· Quit accepting lame excuses from politicians. "Unless we get riled up, I don't think (change) is going to happen."

St. Vrain Valley School Board President, John Creighton, opened the Longmont event with some inspired and pointed words. We couldn't agree more with his point that advances the local district already has made - such as preschool offerings and all-day kindergarten - are at risk. "If we don't get these (budget problems) fixed at the state level, all of these things are at risk. ... It is going to require us to raise our taxes," he said.

Please email Chris Barge, Chris@commfound.org, if you'd like to get more involved with **READYSETLEARN: The Starting Point Matters**.

We look forward to the unfolding conversation. Stay tuned, and watch for **READYSETLEARN!**

With warm regards,
Chris Barge, Director of Philanthropic Services

CFO Corner Debbie Gaffney

Here is a quick snapshot of changes for 2009:

| | 2009 | 2008 |
|------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Total Assets | \$33.7M | \$30.4M |
| Contributions | \$5.6M | \$4.7M |
| Grants | \$4.8M | \$5.1M |
| Investment Performance | \$4M | -\$7.2M |

I'm pleased to report that The Community Foundation's financial state is strong, thanks to the great generosity of you, our donors, as well as a strong 2009 for the markets. We were able to grow our total assets by more than \$3.5 million while also granting \$5 million to local, state, national and international nonprofits. Investment earnings for the year exceeded 15%.

The good news on the grants administration front is that we have greatly increased the turn-around time in grants processing. This is mainly thanks to our tech-savvy donors who now mostly use our online grant-making portal, DonorCentral, for routine transactions. This online efficiency has also greatly reduced printing and staff time. Thank you, fund holders!

In addition to the great strides our individual and family donors are making, we are also making progress in our efforts to instill a local corporate ethic of philanthropy. Entrepreneurs Foundation of Colorado was formed three years ago to help all entrepreneurs contribute early in the creation of their companies to the long-term health and sustainability of Colorado. To date, 28 companies have joined EFCO, with many more in the process of signing up. Each company has pledged approximately 1% of its equity to charity in the event that it is sold. Many of these companies have the potential to be an incredible source of funding for The Community Trust in the future. For more information, visit www.efcolorado.org.

Announcements & Events

Social Venture Partners Boulder County

Evaluation, Impact, Outcomes: How Donors Can Understand & Utilize Non-profit Evaluation

Wednesday, April 7, 2010

12:00 to 1:30pm

The Community Foundation
1123 Spruce Street, Boulder

[RSVP to jennie@svpbouldercounty.org](mailto:jennie@svpbouldercounty.org)

This session is open to SVP Partners, Community Foundation donors, and individuals interested in learning more about SVP. Lunch will be provided.

Have you ever wondered how you can use evaluation and outcomes to make giving decisions? Or, what evaluation you can expect non-profits to perform? And, how did evaluation become part of the social sector?

You'll leave this educational session understanding:

• Trends in evaluation

• How to use evaluation as a learning tool

• What realistic expectations you can have for small to medium-sized local non-profits

Presented by Christine Soto.

Open Door Dinner

The annual **Open Door Dinner** will be **May 8, 2010**. [Check here to learn more and purchase tickets.](#)

Thank you Highlighted Community Partner:



DonorCentral Tip

Did you know that our fund holders have logged onto [DonorCentral](#) a total of **1,382 times**?

Indeed, they have made **886 recommendations, totaling \$3.4 million?** If you are one of those donors, we appreciate it! It makes our process smoother and easier. If you have feedback, please share it with us.

If logging on is still somewhere on your To Do List, and you'd like to join the DonorCentral "movement," please call or email if you need some help or a reminder about your login information. Call Margaret Katz at 303-442-0436 ext. 103, or email Margaret@commfound.org.

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The Community Foundation is on Facebook. Get plugged in to Boulder County news and events you care about by searching for "Community Foundation of Boulder County" from your Facebook page. You can also stay informed by reading or subscribing to our [COG Blog](http://www.cultureofgiving.org) on www.cultureofgiving.org.