I am the 21st century representation of the strength, determination, and greatness of my people.”

– Emily Sánchez
BOULDER COUNTY AT-A-GLANCE

POPULATION*: 322,698
Total ACREAGE in Boulder County: 474,347
PUBLIC or PROTECTED ACREAGE in Boulder County**: About 315,000
Number of HOUSEHOLDS: 128,497
FAMILY Households: 76,113
NON-FAMILY Households: 52,384
MEDIAN AGE: 36.5

RACIAL/ETHNIC Makeup:
- 78% Anglo (Non-Hispanic White)
- 14% Latino (any race)
- 5% Asian
- 0.8% Black or African American
- 0.3% American Indian and Alaska Native
- 0.3% Some other race
- 2.4% Two or more races

Percent of People Who SPEAK A LANGUAGE Other than English at Home: 16%

EDUCATIONAL Attainment:
- 95% High school graduates
- 63% Bachelor’s degree or higher
- 28% Graduate or professional degree

2017 MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME: $108,380
2017 POVERTY LEVEL for a family of four: $24,600

INDIVIDUALS BELOW poverty: 13%
Families with KIDS BELOW poverty: 9%
CHILDREN BELOW poverty: 12%

*2017 population data from Colorado State Demography Office
**Compiled from federal, state, county and municipal public land management agencies
All other data from the 2017 American Community Survey, 1-year data

ON THE COVER: Emily Sánchez’s parents endured violence, poverty, and homelessness before building a family together in Longmont. “Regardless of the challenges I face, I know my veins are filled with the blood of resilient people,” Emily wrote in a college essay. The standout Longmont High graduate is attending Harvard University, determined to help find equity for her people. Read her story on page 24.

Photo by Julia Vandenoever

CONTENTS
3 Executive Summary
   Our chief findings and recommendations
10 Who Are We?
   Housing prices influence who lives here
20 Our Education
   Equity efforts, full-day kindergarten bring hope
34 Our Health & Human Services
   Vaping, mental health loom large
48 Our Economy & Housing
   County’s economy booming, but not for all
60 Our Environment
   Preservation efforts challenged by growth and climate change
70 Our Arts & Culture
   Working toward a more inclusive future
80 Civic Participation & Giving
   Goal of connected, inclusive communities still elusive
94 Community Foundation
   Boulder County
   We’re a community catalyst, helping you make an impact

ON THE COVER: Emily Sánchez’s parents endured violence, poverty, and homelessness before building a family together in Longmont. “Regardless of the challenges I face, I know my veins are filled with the blood of resilient people,” Emily wrote in a college essay. The standout Longmont High graduate is attending Harvard University, determined to help find equity for her people. Read her story on page 24.

Photo by Julia Vandenoever
Welcome to your Community Foundation

Since 1991, Community Foundation Boulder County has been a community catalyst, responding to immediate needs and anticipating future challenges. We’re here to help you make a difference in the community you love.

INFORMED DECISIONS

Through informed decision-making, we inspire ideas, ignite action, and mobilize resources to improve the quality of life for all.

Key to informed decision-making, we listen. We listen to our nonprofit partners, community leaders, business leaders, philanthropists, professional advisors, and residents countywide. And we always welcome your insights and contributions toward a shared knowledgebase and a stronger community.

Additionally, our biennial TRENDS Report shines a light on our community’s most challenging concerns and most promising potentials – as well as the unique strengths that make this community a great place to live, work, and play. TRENDS drives smart grantmaking for maximum impact, informs smart leadership on key community issues, inspires smart philanthropy that solves community challenges, and ignites smart action among community members who want to make a difference.

We compile TRENDS as a community resource for you, and for everyone who calls Boulder County home. We invite you to plug into local data, share what you’ve learned, and get engaged for a better Boulder County.

Learn more about the work of your Community Foundation on page 94, and visit us online at commfound.org/TRENDS.
Building equity with connection and purpose

How would you rate your community? We asked that question in nearly sixty conversations and invariably folks answered with a question: “What do you mean by community?”

One group of faith leaders sat silent with the question for a while then voiced a different question to themselves: “Is anyone experiencing a deep loneliness in the people you serve?”

Just as we published the last edition of TRENDS, Boulder was named the happiest city in the United States. More questions: “Who is happy?” and “What do they mean by happy?” Apparently, the study was talking about people who had the means and agency to live healthy, fun, and secure lives. But even the happy people weren’t as satisfied with the purpose of their lives.

On the way to answering the question of what we mean by community, many people said the same thing. It is good to be in a setting where we can truly connect about what is most important to us without beating each other up. Connection and purpose. A religious institution is a place for such things. So is a community foundation.

Your Community Foundation Boulder County presents TRENDS – a resource by and about our community. TRENDS reports not only the “What” in our community, but asks “What Next” and “To What End?” Your foundation’s “To What End” is a place of equity — a community where all can thrive, especially those of us who must overcome tremendous odds just to get to a level playing field.

TRENDS is also now expanding from a biennial community indicators resource to a year-round initiative reporting on issues of inequity. You’ll be able to listen to the TRENDS podcast, on KGNU and elsewhere, and help identify and tell the stories of the most important issues in our community.

Please support the work of your Community Foundation. Most important, please be part of the ongoing striving to build an equitable Boulder County.

Yours in community,

Jeff Hirota
CEO, Community Foundation Boulder County
Executive Summary

The success of a community turns on its residents’ connectedness with one another. For Emily Sánchez, the Longmont High School graduate featured on our cover, it comes down to representation and access.

Emily describes herself as “a warrior for social justice” in the story about her on page 24. Her future is beyond bright, and her focus is on others. She is determined to help find equity for her people and for the community that raised her.

In this edition of TRENDS, we invite you to discover neighbors such as Emily, who you may have not yet met. We connected with them after carefully analyzing more than 150 indicators of our community’s social, economic and environmental health, interviewing experts, and then seeking out the people in the middle of these new and persistent trends. You can find all of their stories, plus far more charts tracking and discussing these community indicators, at www.commfound.org/TRENDS.

Following is a summary of our findings and recommendations.

Who Are We?

Who lives in Boulder County depends somewhat on who can afford to live here. The county is aging rapidly, in part because families struggle to find adequate housing. More and more wealthy people are moving in.

Those with stable, affordable housing are able to enjoy all the advantages of staying in place. Those without move more frequently. More than half of Boulder County renters spent more than a third of their income on rent in 2017, according to census data.

Boulder’s Arts and Human Relations commissions, the Boulder Chamber of Commerce, disability advocates and other groups not traditionally involved in housing are calling for solutions. How a community approaches housing is really the question of who it wants to live there.

Our Education

Full-day, free kindergarten will be available consistently across the state for the first time in 2019, providing a stronger start for students and economic relief for parents.

St. Vrain Valley Schools has partnered with community colleges and more than 100 companies to ensure more students graduate with the hard skills necessary to compete in rapidly changing, technology-driven industries. Boulder Valley Schools’ new superintendent says the community is ready to implement plans to narrow the wide disparities that persist between minority and low-income students and their peers.

High school graduation rates are improving, especially for our county’s Latino and low-income students. Front Range Community College, the University of Colorado Boulder and Naropa University are diversifying their student populations. This is welcome news. However, students from diverse backgrounds still struggle to find teachers and mentors who understand where they’re coming from.

The quality of an education depends as much on the connections forged between students and their teachers, parents and other mentors, as it does on other factors. We must continue to seek culturally and linguistically responsive connections to ensure all students thrive.

Our Health & Human Services

Boulder County’s uninsured rate remains low, thanks to the Affordable Care Act and local efforts to enroll low-income residents in publicly funded health programs. However, at this writing, enrollment in Medicaid and Colorado’s Child Health Plan Plus was off about 10% from its highest point in 2017. This
Rosemary Martinak (left) and Hannah Behrens of Scaled Agile, Inc. plant seeds while volunteering at Growing Gardens. Their company belongs to Pledge 1%, a network of 252 local entrepreneurs — and counting — who share a common commitment to make a difference in Boulder County and beyond.

Photo by Kira Vos

is likely the combined result of a slight increase in residents receiving insurance through employers alongside the impacts of national rhetoric and policy proposals discouraging participation.

Marijuana use among teenagers has not increased since legalization. However, vaping has accelerated. Teen opioid use remains a concern. More than twice as many students are hospitalized for self-harm or attempted suicide as with injuries from auto accidents. LGBQ students remain much more likely to abuse substances, harm themselves or attempt suicide than heterosexual teens.

Local jails continue to house prisoners who need mental health treatment. Boulder County voters approved a ballot issue recently to help address these needs. Across the county, awareness seems to be increasing — and stigma decreasing — about the importance of mental health care. We must continue to connect with each other about our needs, both visible and harder to see.

Our Environment

Boulder County is an environmental leader on Open Space and an innovator on mass transit incentives and bike paths. Yet, challenges persist related to population growth and a rapidly changing climate.

Auto and fracking emissions have kept air quality less than optimal and ozone high. Denver Water and Boulder County are quarreling over the expansion of Gross Reservoir. The Emerald Ash Borer threatens our urban forest. Neonic pesticides, declining water quality and loss of habitat have reduced the population of pollinating insects. And soil quality on Open Space agricultural land has suffered from overgrazing and an exploding prairie dog population.

The city of Boulder is responding by establishing baselines for pollinators, aquatic insects and soil quality with an eye to improvement, and working to keep tree cover constant. Statewide, Gov. Jared Polis has prioritized improving air quality, allowing more local control over oil and gas operations, enhancing transit and encouraging an increase in electric vehicles.

We must think globally but act locally to conserve our vital resources in balance with our region’s water, energy and transportation needs.

Our Arts & Culture

Boulder County arts organizations are working to diversify our vibrant arts community. Public arts festivals have grown in recent years in Boulder, Longmont, Louisville and Lafayette. The county has also encouraged public art.

The Scientific and Cultural Facilities District has enacted changes in its own operations to increase diversity, inclusiveness and equity, and to serve as a model for the arts organizations it funds.

Boulder County is fortunate to have one of the most thriving arts scenes anywhere in the United States. We must all work to ensure it’s accessible and relevant to all audiences.
Our Civic Participation & Giving

We are least open to minorities, immigrants and refugees, and we are not very accepting of senior citizens, either, according to The Community Foundation’s civic participation and giving survey. It’s one of many data points leading institutions across our county, including this Community Foundation, to prioritize equity in their work.

Is this intention leading to a more inclusive community with more equitable outcomes for the most vulnerable and marginalized among us? On one measure, the answer is no. Our charitable giving rates are well below the national average. This is driven, in part, by residents not seeing the needs around them, and not knowing enough about what local nonprofits are doing to address those needs, our survey finds.

More and more, the Community Foundation is hearing a common theme emerge as it listens to members of our community. People feel disconnected. Lonely. They are yearning for the sorts of relationships with one another that might increase awareness of our community’s needs.

The 2020 Census offers us an opportunity to get to know each other a little better. So much depends on a complete and accurate count, including this report, which relies on the Census for a majority of its data.

We live in a community that prides itself on being inclusive and welcoming to all. We must do more to help our community’s actions match its words.

Our Call to Action

Who deserves to live here? What’s holding some of our students back, while others succeed? How can we best steward a healthy environment? Who’s not participating in our vibrant arts scene? How can we ensure that everyone feels seen, feels safe and feels valued?

We can all take steps to help answer these wicked questions. At another level, however, our community’s most pressing needs are far too big for anyone to meet alone. The Community Foundation invites you to join in this larger conversation by reading this report and listening to our new TRENDS podcast on KGNU and elsewhere.

When your imagination is stirred to action, join the march toward a more equitable Boulder County. Stand with your vulnerable and marginalized neighbors. Engage with them and others to build a more connected and inclusive community.

Discover. Connect. Engage. Together, we can find our way.
Conexión y propósito.
Una institución religiosa
es un lugar para este tipo de cosas.
Igual que lo es una fundación
para la comunidad.

Creando equidad con conexiones y propósito

¿Cómo clasificaría a su comunidad? Hicimos esta pregunta durante casi sesenta conversaciones e invariablemente la gente respondió con una pregunta: “¿Qué quieren decir con la palabra comunidad?”

Un grupo de líderes religiosos consideró la pregunta en silencio por un tiempo y luego se hicieron una pregunta diferente: “¿Hay alguna persona entre aquellos que servimos que esté experimentando una soledad profunda?”

Al tiempo que publicamos la última edición de Trends, Boulder fue nombrada la ciudad más feliz de los Estados Unidos. Más preguntas: “¿Quién es feliz?” y “¿A qué se refieren con la felicidad?” Aparentemente, el estudio hablaba de personas que tenían los recursos y la voluntad para vivir vidas saludables, divertidas, y seguras. Pero hasta las personas felices no estaban tan satisfechas con el propósito de sus vidas.

Al responder la pregunta ¿Qué es lo que queremos decir con la palabra comunidad?, varios dijeron lo mismo. Es bueno estar en un ambiente donde podemos verdaderamente forjar conexiones que tienen que ver con las cosas que son más importantes para nosotros, sin pelearnos. Conexión y propósito. Una institución religiosa es un lugar para este tipo de cosas. Igual que lo es una fundación para la comunidad.

Su Fundación para la Comunidad del Condado de Boulder les presenta TRENDS – un recurso hecho por nuestra comunidad y acerca de ésta. TRENDS reporta no solamente sobre el “Qué” con respecto a nuestra comunidad, sino también pregunta “¿Qué sigue?” y “¿Con cuál propósito?” Como respuesta a la pregunta “¿Con cuál propósito?” su fundación se refiere a un lugar equitativo – una comunidad donde todos pueden prosperar, especialmente los que tenemos que superar obstáculos tremendous simplemente para llegar a una igualdad de condiciones.

Además, TRENDS se está expandiendo más allá de ser únicamente un recurso bienal de indicadores comunitarios. Se está convirtiendo en una iniciativa que a lo largo del año produce reportajes sobre problemas de desigualdad. Podrá escuchar el podcast de TRENDS, en KGNU y en otros medios, y ayudar a identificar y contar las historias relacionadas con los asuntos más importantes de nuestra comunidad.

Por favor apoye el trabajo de la Fundación para la Comunidad. Lo más importante es que por favor sea parte de la lucha para crear un Condado de Boulder equitativo.

Atentamente en comunidad con ustedes,

Jeff Hirota
Director Ejecutivo (CEO) de la Fundación para la Comunidad del Condado de Boulder
Resumen Ejecutivo

El éxito de una comunidad depende del nivel de conexión entre sus residentes. Según Emily Sánchez, una reciente graduada de Longmont High School, que asistirá a Harvard, y que aparece en nuestra portada, la representación y accesibilidad son lo esencial.

Emily se describe a sí misma como “una luchadora por la justicia social” en la historia acerca de ella en la página 24. Su futuro es más que brillante, y su enfoque es en las demás personas. Está empeñada en ayudar a obtener equidad para su gente y para la comunidad que la vio crecer.

En esta edición de TRENDS, lo invitamos descubrir vecinos como Emily, a quienes quizás aún no ha conocido. Nos conectamos con ellos después de cuidadosamente analizar más de 150 indicadores sociales, económicos y de salud ambiental de nuestra comunidad, entrevistar a expertos, y buscar a personas que forman parte de estas tendencias nuevas y persistentes. Puede encontrar todas las historias de estas personas, además de muchas gráficas más que discuten y exponen el seguimiento de estos indicadores comunitarios, en www.commfound.org/TRENDS.

A continuación, el resumen de nuestras conclusiones y recomendaciones.

¿Quiénes Somos?

La demografía del Condado de Boulder depende en parte de tener suficiente dinero para vivir aquí. El condado se está envejeciendo rápidamente, en parte porque para las familias es difícil encontrar viviendas adecuadas. Más y más personas ricas se están mudando aquí.

Los que tienen viviendas estables y económicas pueden disfrutar de todas las ventajas de quedarse donde están. Los que no disponen de éstas se mudan con más frecuencia. Según datos del censo, en el 2017 más de la mitad de los arrendatarios en el Condado de Boulder gastaron más de un tercio de sus ingresos en arriendo.

Las comisiones de las Artes y las Relaciones Humanas de Boulder, la Cámara de Comercio de Boulder, los defensores de personas discapacitadas y otros grupos que no están tradicionalmente involucrados en asuntos de vivienda están pidiendo soluciones. Cómo una comunidad aborda la vivienda tiene que ver en realidad con qué tipo de población se desea en aquella comunidad.

Nuestra Educación

Kindergarten gratis y de día completo estará disponible de forma consistente en todo el estado en el 2019 por primera vez, proporcionando un comienzo más sólido para estudiantes, y un alivio económico para padres de familia.

Las escuelas de St. Vrain Valley se han asociado con universidades comunitarias y más de 100 empresas para asegurar que más estudiantes se gradúen con las habilidades técnicas necesarias para competir en industrias que están cambiando rápidamente y que están basadas en la tecnología. El nuevo superintendente de las Escuelas de Boulder Valley dice que la comunidad está lista para implementar planes para reducir las grandes disparidades que persisten entre minorías y estudiantes de bajos recursos, y sus compañeros.

Se están mejorando las cifras de graduación de secundaria, especialmente con respecto a los estudiantes latinxs y económicamente menos favorecidos de nuestro condado. La Front Range Community College, la Universidad de Colorado Boulder, y la Universidad de Naropa están diversificando sus poblaciones estudiantiles. Éstas son noticias bien recibidas. Sin embargo, todavía es difícil para los estudiantes de procedencia diversa encontrar profesores y mentores que los comprendan.

La calidad de una educación depende tanto de las conexiones creadas entre los estudiantes y sus profesores, padres y otros mentores, como de otros factores. Debemos continuar buscando conexiones que son cultural y lingüísticamente receptivas para asegurar el éxito de todos los estudiantes.
Nuestra Salud y Nuestros Servicios Humanos

Las cifras de personas sin seguro de salud en el Condado de Boulder siguen siendo bajas, gracias a la Ley de Cuidados de Salud Asequibles y esfuerzos locales para registrar a residentes de bajos recursos en programas de salud públicamente financiados. Sin embargo, mientras se escribe este resumen, la inscripción en Medicaid y en el Plan Plus de Salud para Niños de Colorado fue 10% menor a la cifra más alta en 2017. Este resultado es probablemente producto de un incremento pequeño en el número de residentes que reciben seguro a través de sus empleadores además de los impactos de la narrativa nacional y propuestas de políticas que desincentivan la participación.

El uso de marihuana por parte de los adolescentes no ha incrementado a partir de la legalización. Sin embargo, sí ha aumentado el uso de cigarrillos electrónicos (vaping). El uso de opioides por parte de los adolescentes sigue siendo un problema. Hay más del doble de estudiantes hospitalizados por autolesiones e intentos de suicidio que por lesiones padecidas en accidentes de tránsito. Los estudiantes LGBQ siguen siendo más propensos al abuso de sustancias, a herirse a sí mismos o a intentar suicidio que los adolescentes heterosexuales.

Las prisiones locales continúan alojando prisioneros que necesitan tratamiento mental. Los votantes del Condado de Boulder recientemente aprobaron un propuesta electoral para ayudar a abordar estas necesidades. Al parecer, en todo el Condado se está aumentado la concientización, a la vez que se están reduciendo los estigmas con respecto a la importancia de asistencia para la salud mental. Debemos continuar conectándonos entre nosotros y comunicar nuestras necesidades; tanto las visibles como las que son más difíciles de ver.

Nuestra Economía y Vivienda

En años recientes el Condado de Boulder ha gozado de uno de los niveles de desempleo más bajos de la nación. La Media de Ingresos del Área está entre las más altas de Colorado. Se han aumentado casi 40,000 nuevos trabajos a nivel local en la última década.

Aun así, la décima parte de los residentes está por debajo de la línea de pobreza, y más de un cuarto de la población no gana suficiente para cubrir necesidades básicas. Los que compraron casas temprano disfrutan de millones de dólares de valorización. Pero más de un 60% de residentes no ganan lo suficiente para comprar una casa aquí. Estas preocupaciones financieras son más graves para familias que tienen niños y necesitan cuidado infantil.

Debemos trabajar para asegurar que todos los que viven aquí sean capaces de prosperar. El poder ver y empezar a comprender las dificultades de los demás es un primer paso importante, hasta en condados pequeños.

Nuestro Medioambiente

El Condado de Boulder es un líder ambiental en cuanto al Espacio Abierto e innovador con respecto a incentivos de transporte masivo y vías de bicicleta. Sin embargo, persisten desafíos relacionados al crecimiento de la población y al rápido cambio climático.

Emisiones de autos y fracking han perjudicado la calidad del aire y causado niveles altos de ozono. Denver Water y el Condado de Boulder mantienen una disputa sobre la expansión del Reservorio Gross. El Taladro de Emerald Ash amenaza a nuestro bosque urbano. Los pesticidas neónicos, reducciones en la calidad de agua, y la pérdida de hábitat han reducido la población de insectos polinizadores. Y la calidad de la tierra destinada a la agricultura en Espacio Abierto ha sufrido por pastoreo excesivo y un extraordinario aumento en la población de perros de las praderas (prairie dogs).

La respuesta de la ciudad de Boulder ha sido establecer estándares de cantidades básicas de insectos polinizadores y acuáticos, calidad de tierra con potencial de mejoramiento, y esfuerzos para mantener un constante nivel de cubierta...
arbórea. A nivel estatal, el gobernador Jared Polis ha priorizado el mejoramiento de la calidad del aire, posibilitando más control local sobre las operaciones de petróleo y gas, mejorando el transporte, e incentivando aumentos en vehículos eléctricos.

Debemos pensar a nivel global pero actuar a nivel local para conservar nuestros recursos vitales en atención a las necesidades de agua, energía, y transporte de nuestra región.

Nuestro Arte y Cultura

Las organizaciones de las artes del Condado de Boulder están intentando diversificar nuestra vibrante comunidad artística. En años recientes, los festivales públicos de las artes han crecido en Boulder, Longmont, Louisville, y Laffayette. Además, el condado ha incentivado el arte público.

El Distrito de Instalaciones Científicas y Culturales ha establecido cambios en sus propias operaciones para aumentar diversidad, inclusión y equidad, y servir como modelo para las organizaciones de arte que financía.

El Condado de Boulder tiene la suerte de tener una de las escenas artísticas más prósperas de los Estados Unidos. Todos debemos trabajar para asegurar que sea accesible y vigente para todo tipo de audiencias.

Nuestra Participación y Aporte Cívico

Según la encuesta de participación cívica y aporte de la Fundación para la Comunidad no estamos muy abiertos a las minorías, inmigrantes y refugiados, y tampoco somos muy tolerantes de los ciudadanos mayores. El priorizar la equidad en su trabajo es uno de varios puntos de referencia que guían a todo tipo de instituciones, incluyendo a la Fundación para la Comunidad.

¿Esta intención realmente nos está guiando hacia una comunidad más inclusiva con resultados más equitativos para los más vulnerables y marginalizados? Según una medida, la respuesta es: no. Nuestros aportes caritativos son mucho más bajos que el promedio nacional. Según nuestra encuesta, esto está determinado, parcialmente, por el hecho de que residentes no están conscientes de las necesidades que los rodean, y tampoco sobre los esfuerzos que hacen las organizaciones sin fines de lucro para abordar estas necesidades.

Más y más, la Fundación para la Comunidad está identificando un tema común emergente cuando escucha a miembros de nuestra comunidad. La gente se siente desconectada, aislada. Con el deseo de tener relaciones que posiblemente aumenten la concientización de las necesidades de nuestra comunidad.

El Censo del 2020 nos ofrece una oportunidad para conocernos un poco mejor. Mucho depende de una suma completa y precisa, incluyendo este reportaje, el cual depende del Censo para la mayoría de sus datos.

Vivimos en una comunidad que se enorgullece de ser inclusiva y acogedora. Debemos hacer más para que las acciones de nuestra comunidad correspondan a sus palabras.

Nuestro Llamado a la Acción

¿Quién merece vivir aquí? ¿Qué es lo que está limitando a nuestros estudiantes, mientras otros son exitosos? ¿Cuál es la mejor manera de establecer un medioambiente saludable? ¿Quién no participa en nuestro escenario artístico dinámico? ¿Cómo podemos asegurar que todos se sientan comprendidos, seguros y apreciados?

Todos podemos tomar pasos que ayudan a resolver estas complejas preguntas. Sin embargo, las necesidades más urgentes de nuestra comunidad son demasiado grandes para una sola persona. La Fundación para la Comunidad le invita a ser parte de esta gran conversación y leer este reportaje y escuchar nuestro nuevo podcast TRENDS en KGNU y en otros medios.

Cuando su imaginación haya sido movida para tomar acción, júntese a la manifestación dirigida hacia un Condado de Boulder más equitativo. Únase a sus vecinos vulnerables y marginalizados. Invólucrese con ellos y otros para crear una comunidad más conectada e inclusiva.

Who Are We?

Housing prices drive demographics

Nikki Larsen made a good life for herself during the decade she lived in Boulder. She and her husband were active and engaged citizens. They stumped for city council candidates, served on boards and commissions, donated time and money to local nonprofits and helped with the cleanup efforts after the 2013 floods.

The pair are the type of involved residents who make a community a better place. Boulder’s loss: They had to move because of housing costs. Thanks to a stable long-term rental, Larsen and her husband had been able to stay in Boulder even as friend after friend moved to the L towns in search of more affordable living situations. The two-salary couple considered buying in Boulder. With two salaries and modest needs, it didn’t seem impossible.

“All we wanted was, like, 1,000 square feet and a one-car garage” for outdoor gear, Larsen said.

They put in a couple of offers on homes, to no avail. Then came the news that many Boulder renters fear: Their landlords were selling the house the couple was renting, drawn to the promise of massive returns in a superheated housing market. They had to move.

Their story illustrates how much housing prices determine who lives in Boulder County.

Stories by Shay Castle

Nikki and Noah Larsen play with their dog, Lola, at their home in Wheat Ridge. The couple loved living in Boulder, but had to move because of housing costs.
Who Are We?

Boulder and Louisville, home of Boulder County’s highest housing costs, actually lost residents in 2018, while the rest of the Front Range continued to boom.

Yet the story of housing and demographics can’t be reduced to a narrative of the rich moving in and the poor moving out. Most income groups haven’t changed their share of the population in recent years, according to census data, except for the very wealthy. Those earning $150,000 or more have gained ground since 2013, while the proportion of lower income groups have remained more or less the same.

“It takes capital to move,” said Julie Van Domelen, executive director of Emergency Family Assistance Association.

Those of more means are more likely to remain in the same house year-over-year, while lower-income residents move about more frequently within the county and state. (The presence of highly transient university students skews the data somewhat.)

The county’s housing crisis creates a system of haves and have-nots, in which the have is housing, more than income. Those with stable, affordable housing, especially those who bought homes before the astronomical rise in prices, are able to enjoy all the advantages that staying in place entails. Those without, struggle. More than half of Boulder County renters spent more than a third of their income on housing in 2017, according to census data.

Groups not traditionally involved in housing are calling for solutions. Boulder’s Arts Commission has prioritized affordable housing for artists. Business owners say the crisis keeps them from being able to hire and retain employees. Disability advocates are fighting for their share of the limited available, affordable units. The city’s Human Relations Commission warns that housing pressures affect diversity and inclusivity.

How a community approaches housing is really the question of “who it wants to live there,” Larsen said. In the end, it came down to a question of wealth rather than what she could contribute. “I feel like we were model citizens.”

She and her husband moved to Denver. A 20-year-old from Brooklyn bought the house they had been renting.

---

### BOULDER COUNTY CITIES AT-A-GLANCE, 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Boulder</th>
<th>Longmont</th>
<th>Lafayette</th>
<th>Colorado</th>
<th>U.S.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>107,128</td>
<td>94,145</td>
<td>27,440</td>
<td>5,607,154</td>
<td>325,719,178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Age</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaks a language other than English at home</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median home value, owner-occupied homes</td>
<td>$919,525</td>
<td>$440,000</td>
<td>$598,500</td>
<td>$286,100</td>
<td>$193,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lived in the same house one year ago</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lived in another county one year ago</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Born</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Births per 1,000 women aged 15-50 past 12 mo.</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population with a disability</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population under 18 with a disability</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population 65 and over with a disability</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population over the age of 3 enrolled in school</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Graduate (25+)</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree or Higher (25+)</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Living Below Poverty

- **Families**: 7% 9% 5% 7% 10%
- **Families with related kids under 18**: 7% 17% 9% 10% 15%
- **Individuals***: 23% 13% 8% 10% 13%
- **Children**: 9% 22% 12% 12% 18%
- **65 +**: 7% 10% 5% 8% 9%

*Includes students

Source: American Community Survey 2017 1-year data, with 5-year data for Lafayette; Median home value is for all owner-occupied homes based on data from the Boulder Area Realtors Association.
Malik Salsberry works in the garden at the Ingram Co-Op in Boulder. Renting a space for $800 a month allows him to stay in Boulder — for now.

**If you’re from another state, you might be a Coloradan**

Despite the frequency with which “Native” T-shirts and bumper stickers can be spotted around town — and passing over the fact that the real natives of this land are indigenous peoples — fewer than half of Boulder County residents are from anywhere near here.

A full 55% of the population in 2017 was born in another state. Less than a third were born in Colorado — numbers not much changed from a decade ago.

The truth is, transplants make up much of our fair towns, transplants like Malik Salsberry, who moved here in November 2018 as part of the Americorps program. Salsberry works at Boulder Food Rescue, helping to tackle the area’s food insecurity.

As with many recent arrivals, how long Salsberry plans to remain in Boulder will be determined by his housing situation. Right now, he’s a resident of Ingram Co-Op, which affords him rent, food and other common household items (bought in bulk) for $800 a month, roughly two-thirds of his monthly salary through Americorps.

It’s not a sustainable solution, long-term, if Salsberry wants to have a family or pursue his dream of a small farm. He plans to “stay for a few years” and then return to his native Iowa.

**PLACE OF BIRTH, BOULDER COUNTY, 2017**

- Other U.S., State: 175,814 | 55%
- Colorado: 101,850 | 32%
- Latin America: 12,837 | 4%
- Asia: 10,933 | 3%
- Native, Outside U.S.: 9,942 | 3%
- Europe: 7,281 | 2%
- Northern America: 1,538 | 0.5%
- Oceania: 787 | 0.2%
- Africa: 771 | 0.2%

*Source: American Community Survey, 2017 5-year data*

Such turnover is common. In any given year over the past decade, 11-13% of Boulder County’s population moved from another county, state or country. The same proportion move within Boulder County, according to Census data.

“Co-housing is one of the few reasons I can live here,” Salsberry said. “If you want people who really want to do good, you have to recognize that the good work goes unpaid or underpaid.”
Ray Meyers holds a thank you letter from a Casey Middle School student who heard him speak about his time in Vietnam. The talk motivated her to talk to her grandfather about his experiences in the Korean War, which the student said brought them closer. “... Thank you Mr. Meyers for coming to our classroom and changing my life,” she wrote.

Community makes a big difference for county’s veterans

It took Ray Meyers 35 years to talk about it.

The Vietnam War veteran narrowly survived the Battle of Khe Sanh while serving as a radio operator with Delta Company, 1st Battalion, 26th Marines.

Decorated twice for heroism, Meyers came home to suffer through problems with the law, alcoholism and drugs. When ordered into treatment by Boulder County Judge David Archuleta in 2001, he went to the Veterans Center where he learned about PTSD.

A few years later, he spoke to a group of 8th graders at Casey Middle School. One of the students was so inspired by his story that it moved her to speak more openly and directly with her grandfather, who had served in Korea.

That meant a lot to Meyers.

“Allowing vets to tell their stories is restorative for both vets and the communities we live in,” Meyers said. “Community makes a big difference, and communalizing trauma helps everyone get out of their safety zones toward better understanding and healing.”

Meyers is one of nearly 14,000 veterans living in Boulder County. Put another way, about one in 23 of our neighbors served in the military.

Karen Townsend has spent her entire career supporting many of them as a Veterans Service Officer. After 37 years — and counting — working with veterans, she has formed a deep bond, working to serve them as they served their country. Often, in the middle of the night, she wakes, wondering if she’s asked them the right questions to connect them with the benefits they deserve.

“I just want to do them justice,” she said. “They are a unique population and deserve everything they can get, so I don’t want to miss anything.”
Many of them, like Meyers, served in Vietnam. Some are in need of home care and assisted living. Others are moving out of the county due to high housing prices. The younger vets have always been difficult to reach. They tend not to seek help until they get old enough to feel the things that affect them, Townsend said.

In 2007, Meyers and others started Veterans Helping Veterans Now. Today, the work continues through Community Foundation Boulder County’s Veterans Fund.

“Once you’ve been through the combat experience, you think that nothing can hurt you,” Meyers said. “But you’ve been hurt badly. It’s OK to admit that.”

13,734
Number of veterans living in Boulder County

$34 million
Amount paid in compensation and pensions to Boulder County veterans

$22 million
amount spent on medical care for Boulder County veterans

2,509
unique Boulder County patients receiving treatment at a VA health care facility.

YOUR COMMUNITY FOUNDATION – MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Leadership Fellows keep an eye on equity

Anticipating and responding to shifting demographics and increasing cultural diversity in our community, Leadership Fellows Boulder County – a joint leadership development and networking program of the Community Foundation and the Boulder Chamber — offers emerging leaders a broad-based overview of Boulder County’s economic, civic, and cultural drivers.

“I really appreciate how Leadership Fellows pushes us to consider issues around inclusion, diversity and equity when we talk about leadership in Boulder County,” said Magnolia Landa-Posas, among the program’s most recent alumni.

Added alumna Lisa White, “One of the topics we explored was the idea of privilege, and how we can better use our privilege to make a positive impact. In part, that means closing the gap between the business and nonprofit communities, and helping lift people out of poverty by connecting them to job opportunities.”

Monthly curriculum topics include, among others, Boulder County economics, Local Government 101, inclusive leadership, planning and development, critical human needs, health, education, the arts and culture, and selling your vision. Roundtable discussions explore a range of timely issues, from affordable housing to immigration and criminal justice.

Representing the foundation’s long-standing commitment to leadership development right here at home, the program brings together some 35 participants from across sectors every year, building networks and advancing inclusivity countywide. To date, within six months of graduation, 81 percent of Leadership Fellows alumni reported joining a nonprofit board; 26 percent reported joining a government board or commission; and 13 percent reported working on a local campaign for a candidate or issue. Another 32 percent of participants reported career promotions within a year of completing the program.

Learn more at commfound.org/our-impact/programs-initiatives/leadershipfellows

— Sabine Kortals Stein

Magnolia Landa-Posas, Leadership Fellows Class of 2019
Who Are We?

Mary Doyle, right, and Carleigh Bernard hit it off immediately when they met in an intergenerational writing class at the University of Colorado. They talked for seven hours then and are now good friends.

Fostering connection for those who feel alone

When it was time for Mary Doyle to downsize, she had to leave the Boulder neighborhood she’d called home for 30 years, friends she’d known for decades, stores she’d shopped at.

The move to Longmont left her lonelier than she expected, so back to Boulder she went: Not to live, but to participate in an intergenerational writing course at the University of Colorado. The class pairs college students with older community members (62 and up) to explore a variety of topics; the most recent being a rumination on the American Dream.

The class is designed for two groups who are at risk for social isolation: older people who have lost loved ones or moved from their homes, and college students who sometimes have trouble connecting with other students.

When Doyle met her writing partner, Carleigh Bernard, for the first time, the two women talked for seven hours. Today, they consider themselves good friends.

“This is so much more than a class,” Bernard said. “This relationship has been so powerful for me.”

The friendship between Bernard and Doyle is not unusual. Rather, close connections are a common outcome of the class, said Jack Williamson, who created the course.

“I have story after story of wonderful things that have happened” between community members and college students, Williamson said. “We get twice as many applicants as we can accept.”

As Boulder County’s population ages, social isolation is a growing concern, said Deb Skovron, an advocate for seniors. In the 2018 survey by the Boulder County Area Agency on Aging, 31% of older adults reported feeling lonely or isolated.

“Just because we put older people in congregate settings, it doesn’t mean people are connecting and really feeling fulfilled socially,” Skovron said. “We make an assumption that people find other people, but that doesn’t necessarily happen.”

Skovron is founder of Circle Talk, a program that fosters meaningful conversations among seniors to combat loneliness. The groups focus on thought-provoking and personal questions (Who are you most grateful for in your life? Who would be grateful to you, and for what?) that, like the CU writing course, bring people closer.

“What we’re about is getting people to engage with themselves and with each other in a deeper way,” Skovron said. “Our sole goal is connection.”

CU’s intergenerational writing class is one of many efforts the university is making to help students adjust to college. Sixty-four percent of college students reported feeling very lonely in the past year, according to a 2017 survey by the American College Health Association. The scope of the problem at CU isn’t clear; in a campus survey, 84 percent of students reported making friends. Still, the university maintains a webpage directing lonely students to services. And the college has dedicated more resources to mental health, doubling fees dedicated to providing care as demand rose 40% between 2013 and 2018.

“College can be such an isolating place, such an isolating time,” said Bernard, who works with underclassmen to help them stay connected.

Being able to give Bernard advice on dating, relationships and other life experiences helped Doyle transition to living in Longmont. It eased the fear she and other seniors report: being a burden on society.

“I just totally adore this young lady,” Doyle said. “Right now, I feel about 30 years old.”
Disabled seniors may feel overlooked in fitness-obsessed Boulder County

Boulder County has a reputation as a great place to age well, with people in their 70s, even 80s, crossing the finish line at the BolderBoulder, cycling local trails or walking the track at rec centers across the county.

Less visible are the 60% of the 65-plus population with a mental or physical disability, according to U.S. Census figures. That compares with 7.8% in the county’s population as a whole.

“They lose their vision or hearing, they lose their mobility,” said Chris O’Brien, director of development and communications for the Center for People With Disabilities in Boulder.

Yet, they may be slow to claim their disability, he said.

“In our ever-young culture, they don’t necessarily want to identify as people with disabilities. Part of our job and mission is to dispel the stigma.”

That’s particularly important, said Chris Dirosa, a program manager with CPWD, because embarrassment keeps people from seeking support and services that they are entitled to.

“There’s sometimes this mentality that not all disabilities are viewed equally,” Dirosa said. “Obviously there are varying needs, but disabilities are disabilities. We work hard to make sure people receive the same amount of support.”

Source: Colorado State Demographer’s Office Population Forecast
The lowrider car show is a perennial hit at Cinco de Mayo in Longmont.

County’s diversity increasing

“Boulder County’s so white.” It’s a common narrative, often uttered in criticizing the lack of diversity in the area. It has a ring of truth to it: 78% of Boulder County residents are non-Hispanic white, more than Colorado (69%) and the U.S. (62%).

But diversity has been increasing over time in Boulder County. The Latinx population has doubled as a percentage of total population since 1990, from 7% then to 14% in 2017, while the Anglo majority shrunk from 90% to 78% over that time. The Asian population has grown, too, from 2% to 5% in those 17 years.

Boulder County is home to many pockets of diversity, from its well-known Nepalese community, to thriving contingents of Brazilians, West Africans, and Hmong people.

While it’s fair to criticize Boulder County for being a less diverse place overall, clinging to the refrain of “Boulder County’s so white” renders the people of color invisible, said Guillermo Estrada-Rivera, Cultural Brokers Resilience Program Coordinator for the Boulder County Office of Resilience and Recovery.

“We need to break that narrative,” he said.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BOULDER COUNTY POPULATION BY RACE/ETHNICITY</th>
<th>Boulder County</th>
<th>Colorado</th>
<th>U.S.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Non-Hispanic</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino — Any race</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or more races</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some other race</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian and Alaska Native</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: American Community Survey, 2017 1-year data
JL Mares stands on the railroad tracks dividing west and east Longmont. His family has lived in Longmont for five generations. Originally, they lived on the east side of town, “where Latinos were allowed,” said his mother, Josie Mares.

Latinx roots reach back centuries in Colorado

Josie Mares’ family has lived in Longmont for five generations. Her father, Cayetano Martinez, was run out of town — twice — by the Ku Klux Klan, which in the early 1900s had a stronghold in Boulder County. But he came back both times, and today his family is still going strong in Longmont.

They lived on the east side of town “where the Latinos were allowed,” said Mares, a third generation Longmont resident. The homes of her grandmother and uncle still stand.

Such stories are typical for Latinx residents, whose Colorado and Boulder County roots go deep. Eighty percent of Latinx Coloradans were born in the state, according to the Latino Leadership Institute, versus 55% for the population as a whole.

Though the role of Hispanic, Chicano, Mestizo and Latinx people in the area’s history has become more acknowledged in recent years, a great deal of hate continues to be directed at people of non-Anglo heritage.

“You hear a lot of, ‘Go back where you came from,’” Mares’ son, J.L. Mares, said.

As the population booms, some residents express a longing for the “good old days,” J.L. Mares said. Latinx people are often left out of the narrative of what such a place would look like, he feels.

“Despite the fact that my family has been here for multiple generations, it seemingly has little significance to those who control the narrative. We have a voice and are capable of representing and communicating our own narrative.”

WHAT CAN I DO?

Educate yourself about the history of native and Hispanic peoples in the Boulder County area. The Boulder County Latino History Project is a great place to start, as is the interactive exhibit on native peoples at the Boulder Museum.

Get to know your neighbors by hosting or participating in community events or simply knocking on their door and introducing yourself. Residents, young and old, are feeling the effects of social isolation. A little friendly interaction can go a long way toward reminding them they are not alone.

If you’ve got extra room in your house or own multiple properties, consider renting the space out at an affordable rate. You can partner with organizations such as Bridge House or the Center for People With Disabilities to provide housing to the formerly homeless or young adults with developmental disabilities. Nonprofits and small businesses are similarly in need of affordable housing for their workforces.

Consider donating to Emergency Family Assistance Association. Their programs help keep families with kids in their homes, and helps connect families with resources and parents with training programs and better jobs.
Boulder County residents are highly educated overall. But the pursuit of strong education outcomes for all students has for decades been met with mixed results, with students from white, non-Hispanic and more educated households consistently faring better than their peers.

Much of the struggle comes from forces outside the schoolyard. Not every child gets the same start in life. About one in four children in Boulder County come from low-income families. And Latino and single, female-headed families with children are about four times more likely to live in poverty than white, non-Hispanic families with children.

Lately, however, there seems reason for hope as public education leans into its role as society’s best shot at leveling the playing field. A raft of systems-level efforts in St. Vrain Valley Schools over the past decade has started to translate into better outcomes. A renewed focus on educational equity by a new superintendent in Boulder Valley has some advocates expressing cautious optimism. And a new commitment by the state to fund full-day kindergarten has early learning advocates cheering and hoping it leads to improved quality and access to preschool.
The move to full-day, free kindergarten ushered in big changes in Boulder Valley School District, where only eight of the district’s 35 elementary schools had offered full-day kindergarten. In St. Vrain Valley, which for a decade has funded full-day kindergarten on a sliding scale, kindergarten became free for all families.

The extra kindergarten support will have a positive cascading effect on state and district budgets, making more funding available for preschool. And Gov. Jared Polis has stated that with kindergarten fully funded, his sights are now focused on improving the quality of preschool opportunities for the state’s youngest residents.

Higher grade levels are also seeing changes that include minority outreach.

St. Vrain Valley Schools has partnered with community colleges and more than 100 companies to ensure more students graduate with the hard skills necessary to compete in our rapidly changing, technology-driven industries. The efforts are starting to result in higher graduation rates, higher college completion rates after high school, higher enrollment in Advanced Placement classes and more concurrent enrollment of students in college coursework while in high school.

In Boulder Valley Schools, high school graduation rates and college completion rates have also increased significantly in recent years, especially for Latino students. Still, much work remains.

Boulder Valley Schools’ new superintendent says the community is ready to narrow the wide disparities that still exist between minority and low-income students and their peers. The district has restructured to support schools in three geographic regions — a structure adopted a decade ago by St. Vrain and an approach that Boulder Valley Superintendent Rob Anderson has been a part of in other districts where he’s worked.

Despite the improvements, concerns persist. Hundreds of Latino St. Vrain Valley students have left the district in recent years, many of them moving with their families back to Mexico. And a recent dip in third-grade reading scores has caused the district to add new summer programming targeting struggling second- and third-graders.

In higher education, community college leaders are developing a plan to reduce equity gaps. Front Range Community College in Longmont is making facility improvements, pursuing a new “guided pathways” initiative and is working closely with St. Vrain Valley Schools to offer more and more concurrent enrollment opportunities for high school students. Student diversity at The University of Colorado Boulder has increased significantly over the past decade thanks to multiple efforts to personalize and customize the learning experience for students from under-represented backgrounds.

The county’s local teachers continue to be mostly white females, making it harder for students with different backgrounds to find mentors who understand their struggles and experiences. The quality of an education depends as much on the connections forged between students and their teachers, parents and other mentors, as it does on other factors.
Gov. Jared Polis is congratulated by Gina Nocera, former Executive Director of the Jared Polis Foundation, at an event celebrating passage of full-day kindergarten funding, at the St. Julien Hotel in Boulder.

Polis funds full-day kindergarten, aims for improved outcomes

Colorado’s governor, Jared Polis, made free, full-day kindergarten for all a top priority when he was elected in 2018. It was funded by the end of his first legislative session.

“Colorado’s governor, Jared Polis, made free, full-day kindergarten for all a top priority when he was elected in 2018. “We built it into our budget from the start. To me, kindergarten is not an optional item.”

Starting in the 2019-2020 school year, Colorado school districts had the funding should they choose to provide full-day kindergarten. The Boulder Valley and St. Vrain school districts did so, along with just about every other school district in the state.

St. Vrain Valley schools have been stretching their budget to fund full-day kindergarten, on a sliding scale, at each of their elementary schools for more than a decade. The state support provides the district with approximately $1.7 million in funding the district would not otherwise see. St. Vrain is using the funding to hire more paraprofessionals, keep class sizes small and increase preschool slots, in addition to making kindergarten free for all families, said Superintendent Don Haddad.

Boulder Valley parents and students saw the most visible changes in the county, since full-day kindergarten previously was available only at the district’s eight Title 1 schools. Now the full-day program is found at all 35 elementaries.

“It’s good for every kid — not just kids in the gap,” said Robbyn Fernandez, BVSD Assistant Superintendent of School Leadership. “But it’s a social justice thing for kids in the gap, because there are kids at every school who are below grade level.”

The move brings Colorado in line with 30 other states that offer full-day kindergarten. Educators believe the extra time in the classroom will help students, especially those who currently enter first grade already behind. The free tuition will save parents who had paid up to $400 a month for schools to care for their kids beyond the half-day.

The extra kindergarten support will have a positive cascading effect on state and district budgets, making more funding available for preschool. Next on Gov. Polis’ agenda is helping to ensure universal, high-quality preschool across the state.

“All roads to quality early childhood education start with full-day kindergarten,” Polis said.

| Percentage of Kindergarteners in a Full-Day Program |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                 | 2010 | 2012 | 2014 | 2016 | 2018 |
| BVSD            | 16%  | 23%  | 28%  | 28%  | 34%  |
| SWVSD           | 62%  | 62%  | 67%  | 72%  | 74%  |
| Colorado        | 64%  | 70%  | 74%  | 77%  | 79%  |

Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count Data Center

To me, kindergarten is not an optional item.”

– Gov. Jared Polis
Every summer growing up, Emily Sánchez crammed into a car with her parents and three siblings to visit their beloved Southwest desert. On their long road trips from Longmont, her dad vividly described living with his Native Apache great-grandparents while his mother was in jail or when he was homeless.

Her mother spoke of walking across the hot desert sand, escaping violence and poverty in her rural Mexican hometown after her father was brutally murdered.

“But besides the disenfranchisement, poverty and premature deaths in my family, my parents always share the history of resilience and bravery,” Emily wrote in an essay for a college scholarship. “The experiences of those that have walked before me propels me forward. Regardless of the challenges I face, I know my veins are filled with the blood of resilient people that have withstood throughout time.”

Emily graduated from Longmont High School in 2019 at age 17 and was headed to Harvard in the fall on multiple prestigious scholarships. Her future is beyond bright, and her focus is on others. She is determined to help find equity for her people and for the community that raised her.

“I came to understand there’s systematic faults and inequities that exist in the education system that don’t support students as much as they could,” she said.

Emily’s insight into the needs of her community began when, as a 12-year-old eighth-grader, she was enrolled in an 11th-grade math class. Suddenly, everyone was white, in contrast to the very diverse, working-class neighborhood elementary and middle schools she attended. The whole school felt segregated.

She sees a need for more family engagement nights with interpreters, so schools can reach out to Latino families.

“It’s basically representation and access,” she said.

Emily allows that she’s more assimilated than other Latino students. Her parents exposed her to wonderful, enriching experiences. Even though they didn’t have much money, they took their kids to the free family days at the museum and the zoo. They toured Hindu and Buddhist temples in Houston. They took a road trip to a Jazz Festival in Atlanta. They tried the food in East St. Louis and New Orleans.
“I always try to have my kids be proud of their cultural identity,” said her father, Israel Sánchez. “So they can embrace other people, so they can understand the personal value in that self-discovery. Because it’s all about differences. It’s about us accepting and understanding our differences.”

Emily has participated in prestigious summer programs at Stanford, the University of Chicago and the University of Colorado Boulder. She has met children of the rich and famous, who walk around with four bodyguards. She’s met students from China. She had a roommate from Brazil. Another roommate was Muslim.

She wrote a poem during a summer program at CU that reflected her unfolding understanding of her cultural identity and her observations as “the only brown kid in a sea of white.” It ended this way:

I yearn for Chipe Totec Transformation.  
To hire more teachers that look like me  
Because you can’t teach what you don’t know  
And white man, now I want you to see  
It’s the system that’s broken not the people

One of her undocumented friends was frustrated that her Anglo high school counselor had no experience with immigration issues. She needed more specialized help than her counselor could give her. The political climate scared her. She went to one of very few teachers with a Latino background. He understood her and was able to give helpful advice.

We need teachers with more cultural awareness, Emily said. One of her mentors, Marjorie McIntosh, has developed a curriculum that helps teachers incorporate Latino history into their lessons. “It helps with empathy and understanding all the way around,” said Emily, who added she’d also love to see Chicano studies, ethnic studies and sociology offered in high school.

She was a little scared but mostly excited to enroll at Harvard, where she planned to pursue a pre-med course of study and also a major in government and policy with a focus on education, global health care and immigration.

“As the product of a mix of Mexico, the United States and pre-Columbian America, I am proud to say that I am Emily Sánchez, an inquisitive intellectual, a passionate activist, a warrior for social justice, a revolutionary storyteller,” she wrote in her essay’s conclusion. “I am the 21st Century representation of the strength, determination, and greatness of my people.”
Marta Loachamin greets Boulder Community Health Foundation President Grant Besser (left) and Intercambio Executive Director Lee Shainis at an event reporting the findings of a Community Foundation project she helped lead on the importance of Latino bilingual cultural brokers.

**Leadership struggling to match county’s growing diversity**

Marta Loachamin’s curiosity was sparked by her own experience as a mother from Ecuador raising kids to speak Spanish at home. When they entered school, she experienced a system that wasn’t well equipped to teach them English or offer them a bilingual education.

Though she is fully fluent in English, her experience gave her compassion for families who speak only Spanish and whose language and culture are not well-represented in Boulder County’s schools or other government institutions.

The teaching populations in the county and across Colorado are far more white than student populations. This ethnic and racial mismatch between a general population that is growing more diverse by the day and our leaders extends through just about all our halls of power. Nine of 106 elected officials — or 8% — were people of color in 2019. Meanwhile, about 25% of the county’s population identifies as a person of color.

“When we see people that look like us in positions of authority, who are part of systems, who are part of leadership, there’s a higher possibility that we are going to see ourselves there,” said Loachamin, who was running for Boulder County Commissioner at the time of this writing, in part to address this need.

Being able to culturally identify with the people you’re serving is also important.

After 2017, national cries grew stronger for banning Muslims, for dismantling the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, for stepping up raids on families by Immigration and Customs Enforcement and for cracking down on families seeking sanctuary.

*Teachers didn’t know how to support kids who were in tears*
about whether they’d be separated from their families,” Loachamin said.

The language matters too.

Loachamin worked with families at an elementary school in Longmont that was attended predominantly by Latino students, many of whose parents spoke only Spanish. She brought teachers and parents together to talk, through a translator.

Teachers were crying afterwards. Some said it was the first time they’d ever been able to communicate with their students’ parents.

“It was an eye-opening experience,” she said.

Before he retired from working in the Boulder County commissioners’ office in 2018, Pete Salas for many years tracked the racial diversity of elected officials and more than 800 volunteer members of the boards and commissions those officials appoint in the county and in 10 Boulder County cities and towns. It was a painstaking project that relied on his relationships with his counterparts in municipal governments across the county.

Aside from Boulder County, no other local government formally tracks whether its appointed officials are people of color.

“For me it’s about accountability,” Salas said. “Here’s a group of people that pays taxes, that needs to have a voice at the table. There needs to be accountability for how services are delivered to this community.”

While the school districts are required to report to the Colorado Department of Education the percentage of teachers and students who are people of color, those teacher numbers in St. Vrain Valley School District are the human resources department’s best guess, because the district doesn’t require its employees to divulge their race or ethnicity.

At the administrative level, St. Vrain has hired significantly higher numbers of people from diverse populations of late, said Superintendent Don Haddad. “I do think it’s important to have strong representation from diverse populations,” he said, adding that such hiring provides role models for students and demonstrates an inclusive system.

St. Vrain is expanding its recruitment efforts to diversify its workforce, and has created a new Pathways to Teaching program designed in part to grow their own next generation of diverse teachers. In the 2018-2019 school year, the district also created a new position called Equity and Community Engagement Coordinator. That coordinator and the coordinator of the PTeach program are bilingual Latinas.

The superintendents of Boulder County’s two school districts acknowledged that, regardless of what the actual ratios are, they are no doubt too low. They said their systems are working to increase diversity as well as cultural competency for all staff.

“All kids deserve to have teachers in the building that can relate with their culture,” Boulder Valley School District Superintendent Rob Anderson said. “Kids who succeed oftentimes have someone who really helps them, who serves as that guide.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diversity of Municipal Elected Officials</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>Number of People of Color</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boulder</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erie</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamestown</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lafayette</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longmont</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisville</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyons</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nederland</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superior</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Community Foundation Boulder County analysis, in consultation with local officials, summer 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diversity of Boulder County Elected Officials</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>Number of People of Color</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commissioners</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerk &amp; Recorder</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dist. Attorney</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coroner</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveyor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheriff</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Community Foundation Boulder County analysis, in consultation with local officials, summer 2019
Student outcomes improve as St. Vrain reimagines public education

Leaders in St. Vrain Valley Schools have reimagined public education during the past 12 years, leading to promising student outcomes, prominent awards and national attention.

Today, in some ways, the district is almost unrecognizable compared with St. Vrain in 2008, when Don Haddad became superintendent, and he and others set out to create, scale and sustain a system to meet all children’s needs. A basic premise drove the improvements: All children can learn and succeed, and will demonstrate that in a variety of ways.

The hard work is paying off in the form of student outcomes:

**Graduation rates** are up across the board, including large gains for Latino students.

**Advanced Placement enrollment**, especially among Latino students, has increased dramatically.

**Expulsion rates** are near zero.

What accounts for the progress of the past 12 years? Haddad points to about a dozen key factors. Among them: hiring great teachers, making high-quality preschool and full-day kindergarten available and financially accessible for all, creating feeder systems and aligning all curriculum, instructional practices and assessments to common standards. He highlights efforts to restructure the curriculum, moving students into higher-level coursework.

The district beefed up its co-curricular programming and increased concurrent enrollment for high schoolers interested in college level coursework at Front Range Community College. Recently, the district developed a new Pathways to Teaching (P-TEACH) program, which helps students explore careers in the teaching profession.

District leaders also took time to reflect on the “supernova” happening in technology. Twitter, Facebook, smart phones, artificial intelligence, e-readers, and “the cloud” — all of these technologies and the new companies they enabled were taking off as the power and speed of microchips exploded.

“Everything was changing exponentially,” Haddad said.

The district seized the opportunity to focus on technology, wiring every building with high-speed internet and supplying each classroom with iPads and Chromebooks.

The district in 2015 launched the first PTECH program west of the Mississippi. Short for Pathways in Technology Early College High School, the program challenges students to simultaneously pursue a two-year associate’s degree in addition to their high school diploma. Although enrollment was open to all students at Skyline High School, the program targeted Latinos, females and low-income students. Its focus remains computer information systems. A second PTECH program will open at Frederick High School in fall 2019, focused on biomedicine.

“To break the cycle of poverty, we’re really focused on career development and how to get those kids ready for a middle-income career,” said Patty Quinones, Assistant Superintendent of Innovation.

High school students in St. Vrain Valley’s PTECH program are exposed to on-the-job training during their internship at IBM.
“This is a great way to allow kids to get two years of college education, free to them.”

Quinones helped launch the “Falcon Tech” program as principal of Skyline High School. Today she oversees programming at the St. Vrain Innovation Center — a gleaming building of glass and steel that opened in fall 2018 and quickly became the envy of public education.

“This is just an amazing building. It’s so useful as an educator to have these resources here,” said Chris Schmitz, a computer science teacher at Soaring Heights PK-8 in Erie who teaches a class helping students become certified Apple technicians.

Today, more than 100 students are employed by St. Vrain as student designers, specializing in robotics, creating presentations, building drones for aerial photography and data collection; and building apps and websites for companies. At the Innovation Center, students host a KGNU radio program called “Tech Talk,” run blogs, study business model development and take four-hour workshops to learn how to pitch their business ideas to investors.

“It’s really great real-world skills that look amazing on a college application and also tell companies, ‘Hey, I’ve done this before,’ and that makes them much stronger candidates in our work force,” Schmitz said.

Schmitz’s daughter, Lex Schmitz, was helping her dad teach his class as one of the district’s 26 certified Apple technicians. “I’m pretty excited,” she said, adding that before her experiences at the Innovation Center, she didn’t really want to go into technology. Now she does.

“St. Vrain and Apple and the Innovation Center are really inclusive,” she said. “Providing this as a district will help get more women in the tech field, which will create more diversity.”

Salvador “Sal” Quiroz graduated from Skyline High School in the spring of 2019 with a job already lined up as a technician at the Apple Store in Boulder. His technology-oriented education “showed me the design process of thinking. It really changed the way I thought about school in a way. I really started seeing most school assignments as just problem solving.”

Sal plans to take classes for two years at Front Range Community College and then transfer to the University of Colorado Boulder. “I definitely grew as a person here and found out what I wanted to do with the rest of my life,” he said.

Plenty of work lies ahead as the district continues to scale its innovative practices. And while the overall trajectory for student outcomes has been very good, the district has identified various potential areas they could address. One such area is third-grade reading proficiency, which slipped in 2019 after many years of consistent, strong growth. In response, the district implemented “Project Launch,” a summer learning program targeting first- and second-graders who are below grade-level.

### 2017-2018 ADVANCED PLACEMENT COURSE ENROLLMENT*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Courses</th>
<th>% by Latinos</th>
<th>% by Anglos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BVSD</td>
<td>6925</td>
<td>9% (628 courses)</td>
<td>74% (5156 courses)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SVVSD</td>
<td>3690</td>
<td>16% (600 courses)</td>
<td>77% (2826 courses)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: SVVSD via Colorado Department of Education; BVSD
*Use added caution in making comparisons as district provided data and state provided data use different inclusion criteria
In addition to AP classes, SVVSD students are enrolled in approximately 1,500 other classes for college credit, according to Supt. Don Haddad.
Enihs Medrano speaks, with her parents looking on, at her high school graduation party. Enihs credits her success to support she received from outside the school system. Supt. Rob Anderson wants BVSD to more effectively engage and support all students to succeed.

The Boulder Valley School District, largely attended by white, non-Hispanic students from middle- and upper-class families, has long struggled to support low-income and minority students.

A new superintendent hired in 2018 intends to disrupt this status quo, and has already taken steps to restructure the school system to provide more equitable opportunities.

“We just have to have the will to do this,” said Superintendent Rob Anderson. “We have to have that collective will as a community to push forward and do this.”

Enihs Medrano is a good example of the kind of student Anderson wants the system to more effectively engage and support. Enihs graduated from Centaurus High School in the spring of 2019 and was heading to the University of Colorado Boulder in the fall. She’s on a great trajectory now, thanks to support she received from outside the system.

Enihs was smart, but had acted up and skipped class to get attention, she said. She felt peer pressure not to do well in school or take advanced classes with the white students.

Her turning point came during her sophomore year in high school on a trip to meet her extended family in Mexico. Her older cousins were mostly well-educated professionals. Their family was proud of who they were becoming and of how dedicated they were to their work.

That experience, along with the positive influence of a mentor outside the classroom, helped her push through the weight she felt all around her. Enihs started expecting more of herself and began pulling some of her Latino friends up with her.

She credits McKensie Heald, a leader with Young Life, for affirming her talents and her strengths. Heald made her feel known and cared for. She helped her understand what she was capable of.

“In Enihs, I have observed astounding hope,” Heald said.
Enihs holds fast to hope for personal growth, for her family’s well being, for increased opportunities for her classmates, for systemic change and for justice, Heald said.

Once she decided to focus intently on her own academic success, Enihs started working to ensure more of her Latino friends enrolled in advanced placement courses with her.

“I think changing the system is an outcome of building relationships with people,” she said.

Supt. Anderson agreed. He said that growing up poor himself has helped him understand some of the issues students face. He looks for teachers who know how to connect with their students.

“We could go to any building today, and I could tell you by talking to a few kids, who has that gift of relatability,” Anderson said. “You could tell. They’re the ones the kids love. And they’re the ones that can be tougher on the kids and hold them to a higher standard than anyone else.”

Anderson spent much of his first year on the job visiting schools and listening to the community, keeping a close ear out to the Latino community. “I hear issues. We have failed in many ways in earning their trust,” he said. “Not intentionally. It’s just the fact. And because of that, when outcomes occur — something bad happens — it comes to me in a way where it’s just obvious to me we have work to do. More work to do. And it’s important to me, to have our parents trust us with our kids, and trust we’re doing the right things.”

The right things include adopting a strategic plan, with metrics, that holds the system accountable for outcomes, Anderson said. He wants to increase minority and low-income enrollment in AP and other advanced classes, and in concurrent enrollment, so more high schoolers receive college credits. He wants to hire more teachers of color.

Already, he has restructured the administration by carving the district into three regions so that resources can be better tailored to the unique needs of individual schools. He says a series of equity summits hosted by the district in recent years “weren’t just for show,” and will inform the strategic plan.

This isn’t the first time BVSD has talked about improving equitable outcomes for students. Anderson said the difference is that he’s an action-oriented person.

“I’ve said it once, I’ll say it a thousand times: I’m students first,” Anderson said. “This school district will be students first and it will be all students. And if there’s a subpopulation we’re not serving, then we’re not doing our job. Simple as that.”

### 2018 PERCENTAGE OF THIRD GRADERS MEETING OR EXCEEDING READING EXPECTATIONS*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School District</th>
<th>Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL)</th>
<th>Non-FRL</th>
<th>Latino</th>
<th>Anglo</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St. Vrain Valley School District</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boulder Valley School District</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*SVVSD conducts all assessments in English. BVSD assesses some native Spanish speakers in Spanish.
When Giovani Hernandez first saw Skyline High School shortly after moving to Longmont from Chihuahua, Mexico, he thought he’d arrived at a university.

The middle school where he’d come from had broken windows and no air conditioning. Skyline was gleaming by comparison.

But it was also tricky to navigate for Hernandez, whose only English vocabulary when he arrived there was asking for directions to the bathroom or the cafeteria.

Hernandez learned English quickly and soon was doing well in school, as he had in Mexico. He graduated high school with nine college credits, then went on to earn associate degrees from Front Range Community College in science and science with mathematics designation, before transferring to the University of Colorado Boulder to study civil engineering, with minors in construction management and applied mathematics.

He wants to make good on his parents’ dreams for him.

“My Dad said, ‘I don’t want you to work like me — shoveling and moving bricks around,’” he said.

**Front Range Community College works to close gaps**

Elena Sandoval-Lucero, president of the FRCC Boulder County campus in Longmont, admires the example set by Hernandez, and said her school is working hard to ensure more students find success as Hernandez has. School leaders want to increase graduation rates, transfer rates, developmental education completion rates and retention rates. They want to close gaps between white students and students of color across the board.

A newly assembled Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Council will work to develop a plan across the state’s community college system to reduce equity gaps between white, non-Hispanic students and students of color. The campus in Longmont is making facility improvements that leaders say will make it feel more inviting, increasing chances students hang around before and after class. Studies show increased involvement on campus leads to improved student success.

The college is pursuing a new “guided pathways” initiative focused on improving the student orientation program, making college advising more effective and offering supplemental instruction. The college will also soon offer a new student success course.

Front Range was recently approved to offer its first four-year bachelor’s degree in applied science, focusing on geospatial science. Students with the degree could enter a range of careers in industries such as health care, criminal justice, forestry or climate science.

The college is also working closely with St. Vrain Valley Schools to offer more concurrent enrollment opportunities for high school students. In 2019, the partners planned to open an advanced manufacturing academy, providing students an overview of the jobs they could pursue in manufacturing.

The academy will dovetail with the new Center for Integrated Manufacturing, opening at the same time, that features classes in optics, electronics and automation engineering.
CU Boulder diversifies with more personalized, customized approaches

David Aragon, Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Student Success at the University of Colorado Boulder, met Hernandez as a guest instructor at Front Range Community College. “It’s amazing how enterprising some of our first generation students are,” he said. He went on to become a mentor to Hernandez when Hernandez enrolled in CU’s Latinx Leadership, Achievement and Development Scholars program. The two have stayed in touch.

Establishing personal connections with students before they enroll is one way the Boulder campus has diversi/ed its student body. Students with diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds made up 27% of the Boulder Campus in the 2018-19 school year, compared with 15% ten years earlier.

The campus now boasts 14 academic learning communities that ensure more personal and customized connections to campus for diverse students. The university increased its financial aid commitment so that students from low-income families can have their tuition, fees and supplies covered by a combination of Pell grants and supplemental assistance.

A pre-collegiate program brings about 35 diverse local high school students to campus to live for two weeks each summer, to expose them to the college experience. And the Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative allows the university to award financial aid to students whose families earn up to 250% of the poverty threshold defined by the Pell grant program.

The progress is necessary to keep pace with the rapid diversification of not just Boulder County, but the United States as a whole. It also comes at a time when a high school diploma is no longer sufficient to ensure middle class wages.

Resources exist for enterprising students

Hernandez said the final challenge is convincing students they have the ability to take advantage of the new opportunities. He understands their lack of confidence. It took a lot of courage for him to join the robotics club and move into higher level courses in high school, in which fewer Latinos were enrolled. At Front Range he also learned a valuable lesson outside his coursework. He could receive free academic support if he tapped into the resources available to him.

His advice for other students: First, take the next step, then break through the barriers, as he has.

“Don’t be afraid to start your college career, because resources are available for you. You just need to find them,” he said.
Our Health & Human Services

Insurance coverage tapers down as mental health issues, vaping loom large

Boulder County’s uninsured rate remains low, thanks to the Affordable Care Act and local efforts to enroll low-income residents in publicly funded health programs.

Enrollment in Medicaid and Colorado’s Child Health Plan Plus was off about 10% at this writing from its highest point in 2017. Still, a large net gain of enrollees over the past decade gives officials hope our county has basically reached a saturation point in terms of people who are eligible.

Boulder County remains a magnet for cyclists and a good home for runners, hikers, walkers and others who love the ready access to the outdoors and hiking trails.

Yet there are worrying trends, as well.

Vaping among Boulder Valley high school students has accelerated quickly with many students apparently believing vaping is less hazardous than smoking. The fact that e-cigarettes are easy to conceal and aggressively advertised has contributed to increased use. Nearly half of high school students reported having vaped at least once, according to the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey.

Stories by Cindy Sutter

Boulder County’s many advantages in health continue. Yet there are worrying trends.
Opioid use remains a worry, with more than 5 percent of high school students having taken an opioid pill that was not prescribed to them. On the positive side, marijuana use among teenagers has not increased among teenagers since legalization.

Colorado has the seventh highest suicide rate in the nation, a figure that has more or less remained unchanged. Access to mental health care in Boulder County is better than in many parts of the states, but it still falls short of the need in the community.

The percentage of students hospitalized for self-harm or attempted suicide was twice those who were hospitalized with injuries from auto accidents. LGBTQ students made little or no progress with mental health, remaining much more likely to abuse substances, harm themselves or attempt suicide than heterosexual teens.

Decades after the de-institution of many mental health facilities, local jails continue to house prisoners who need mental health treatment. In response, Boulder County voters approved a ballot issue to expand the jail to allow for the diversion of non-violent offenders to a part of the jail that will allow them to participate in work release or other programs that better serve their needs.

**WHAT CAN I DO?**

**Get prenatal care** if you're pregnant and encourage others to do so.

**Vaccinate** your children.

**Pay attention** to your family's mental health. Watch for signs of self-harm, mood swings and sadness. Seek help, if necessary.

**Teach your children** about diversity and re-examine your own views about race, sexuality and economic class. Be an ally and teach your children to stand up for others.

**Talk to your kids** about vaping and ask if their friends are vaping. Watch for vaping devices.

**Discard unused prescriptions** at a sanctioned drop-off place. Do not flush down the toilet. Talk to your children about opioid addiction and watch for changes in behavioral changes.

**Get plenty of exercise** and eat nutritionally dense food.
**Teen vaping rises at alarming rate**

**BVSD, county collaborate to fight trend**

Call it stealth nicotine. Like the U.S. Air Force’s Stealth bomber, a vaping device can hit its target without being detected.

Vaping’s target with the highest profit potential: young people’s brains, where it creates dependence.

The stealth aspect? Vaping devices, also known as electronic cigarettes or e-cigarettes, are easily concealed. The e-cigarette from Juul, the largest e-cigarette company, is the size of a computer flash drive and similar in appearance, for example. Unlike cigarettes, vaping can evade the keen nose of a parent or teacher and is easy to use in a school restroom or hallways. The frequency at which teens can vape likely makes dependence happen more quickly.

Colorado has the highest vaping rate of any state in the nation, and Boulder County has one of the highest rates in the state.

In the Boulder Valley School District, 33% of high school students said they had vaped in the past 30 days, while 46% of students said they had vaped at least once, according to the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey. (The St. Vrain Valley School district does not participate in the survey.)

And vaping’s popularity is growing and spreading to pre-teens.

“We have actually heard about instances in elementary school,” said Brittany Carpenter, program coordinator for the Tobacco Education and Prevention Partnership at Boulder County Public Health. “It’s trending younger and younger, which is of great concern.”

“Part of the problem may be perception of risk,” Carpenter said.

While 88% of youth perceive cigarettes to be risky, only 51% of young people say the same about vaping, she said, citing the Colorado Healthy Kids Survey.

That perception is not a matter of happenstance, said Avani Dilger, founder and executive director of Natural Highs, a substance abuse prevention peer mentor program housed in New Vista High School in Boulder.

Dilger said surveys show young people say they have seen lots of vaping ads, whereas adults report they have not. A weekly report for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention published in March 2018 found that 4 in 5 middle and high school students had seen e-cigarette advertisements in 2016. The report added that exposure to ads was associated with higher use among youth.

Nicotine is highly addictive, as any current or former smoker can tell you.

“Nicotine is a stimulant and sedative at the same time,” Dilger said. “That’s the most addictive combination you can give a brain.”

According to the CDC report, e-cigarettes are not subject to marketing regulations that limit cigarette advertising such as bans on television ads, promotions for music and sporting events, in-store displays and outside store displays eye-level with children.

Many ads offer vaping as a harm-reducing alternative to cigarettes. Vaping opponents compare the campaign to Big Tobacco’s introduction of low tar and nicotine cigarettes, which, they say, made some consumers believe they were safer than traditional cigarettes. In late 2018, Altria Group, the parent company of cigarette maker Philip Morris USA, acquired a 35% stake in Juul.

Anyone 18 or over can buy e-cigarettes. Critics say enforcement is spotty. As of this writing, the City of Boulder had raised the age to 21 alongside a handful of Colorado municipalities. States such as California are considering regulating the sale of fruit-flavored liquids in e-cigarettes; Boulder and Aspen have banned flavored e-cigarette liquids, and Boulder voters in 2019 were set to consider a new 40% sales tax on vaping products that remained legal. Dilger, of Natural Highs, said some students start with fruit flavored e-cigarettes in the belief that they don’t contain nicotine.

As lawmakers and regulators play catch up, Carpenter said it’s up to teachers and educators to sound the alarm.

Dilger has found that teens respond to information about the motivations of vaping companies.

“We tell them, ‘It’s all about an industry creating a product so highly addictive to make a profit. You are basically the target.’”

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have ever vaped</th>
<th>46%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have vaped in last 30 days</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely or probably will vape within next year</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Health Kids Colorado Survey 2017 – BVSD High Schools
Itzel Batrez holds her daughter, Rosaleen, as she receives a shot at Boulder County Public Health’s Immunization Clinic in Longmont.

Photo by Julia Vandenoever

Low vaccination rates increase risk of measles, pertussis

Measles, a disease that in 2000 was declared eradicated in the United States, has made a frightening, if still limited, comeback.

The reasons are complex, with one of the most common relating to a fraudulent study in Britain that appeared to show a correlation between the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine and the rising incidence of autism in children. Such unfounded doubts about the safety of the MMR vaccine helped to fuel the so-called anti-vaxx movement, people who question the necessity and safety of vaccines in general.

Boulder County has not seen any cases of measles, but because the county has a lower, although improving, school vaccination rate than many places and pockets of very low vaccination rates, it is at greater danger for a measles cluster, as health professionals call an outbreak.

For the 2018-2019 school year, the vaccination rate for the MMR in Boulder Valley schools was 92%, on the low end of what’s called herd immunity, the percentage of the population that needs to be vaccinated to prevent a disease from becoming endemic. The St. Vrain schools average of 89% was below herd immunity.

For public health officials, the U.S. measles outbreaks are frustrating.

“I just think there’s so much misinformation,” said Teresa Luker, immunization coordinator for Boulder County Public Health. “People don’t want to infringe on parents’ rights, but (their decisions) impact others in the population.”

Some private schools and preschools have immunization rates at about 50%, meaning that half of students could be vulnerable to a measles exposure. Measles, which are extremely contagious, also have a relatively high rate of complications, said Kaylan Stimson, epidemiologist for Boulder County Public Health.

About 1 in 10 are at risk for ear infections, some of which can cause permanent hearing loss. Much rarer and much more dangerous at 1 in 1,000 is swelling in the brain, which can cause neurological complications, even death.

The effectiveness rate of the current MMR vaccine is 97%. Those who were born before 1989 should check their vaccination records, because they may have received a vaccine that provides lower immunity at about 93% effectiveness. If a person is exposed to measles, they can get an MMR shot within up to 72 hours to prevent the disease. Those unable to be vaccinated, such as infants, have a six-day window to receive immunoglobulin, Stimson said.

While measles is the largest worry currently, Boulder County’s comparatively low vaccination rates also mean that some children may get pertussis, also known as whooping cough. The disease, which is still endemic in the population, typically peaks in cycles of three to five years, Stimson said.

KINDERGARTEN STUDENT VACCINATION RATES, BVSD AND SVVSD, 2017/2018 SCHOOL YEAR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vaccination</th>
<th>BVSD</th>
<th>SVVSD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DTaP</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MMR</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varicella</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Status of Children in Boulder County, 2018
Medicaid enrollment off slightly after sharp run-up

Enrollment in Medicaid and Colorado’s Childrens Health Program Plus has tapered down after a sharp run-up as the Affordable Care Act was implemented.

Enrollment in these two key public health supports was off about 10% from its highest point in 2017. This is likely the combined result of a slight increase in residents receiving insurance through employers alongside the impacts of national rhetoric and policy proposals discouraging participation, according to county health officials.

“We’re seeing our very low uninsured rate level off,” said Mackenzie Sehlke, public affairs specialist for Boulder County Health and Human Services. “We think we are reaching a saturation point in terms of people who are eligible.”

Although informational advertising about Medicaid expansion has declined at the federal level, Sehlke said the county, in partnership with the state, has made special efforts to communicate with the public about the benefits for which they are eligible.

“It has been a priority to do our best to make sure people know about it,” Sehlke said, including those who worry that the immigration status of some family members may make others in the family ineligible.

Only U.S. citizens are eligible to receive Medicaid benefits, meaning that there may be confusion in so-called mixed status families. For example, in some families, the children who were born in the United States are eligible, but a parent or other family member may not be. In addition, she said, some people who are here legally on a work visa in hopes of becoming permanent citizens worry that accessing health care for their children might jeopardize their status.

Sehlke added that it’s important for everyone who is eligible to receive care.

“Families who have young children (should be able) to access well baby appointments and primary care opportunities for their children,” she said. “Research shows (health care) builds healthy families in the long term.”

Despite these exceptions, Sehlke said the county has made great progress implementing the Affordable Care Act.

“Tens of thousands more can have access to care,” she said. “We’re proud to have such a low uninsurance rate in Boulder County.”

BOULDER COUNTY ENROLLMENT IN MEDICAID AND CHP+

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>'11</th>
<th>'12</th>
<th>'13</th>
<th>'14</th>
<th>'15</th>
<th>'16</th>
<th>'17*</th>
<th>'18</th>
<th>'19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 2017</td>
<td>60,446 covered</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2019</td>
<td>54,799 covered</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Boulder County Housing and Human Services
Boulder County, state work to improve prenatal care for Latinas

When Boulder County Public Health looks at health outcomes it wants to change for the better, it casts a wide net to understand the causes and remedy the barriers it finds.

When it comes to improving the number of Latina women who get prenatal care, that means partnering with state agencies and local nonprofits. In 2016, 71.5 percent of Hispanic women accessed prenatal care during the first trimester of pregnancy, compared to 84.3% of their white peers, and 81% of all pregnant women in Boulder County.

Early prenatal care helps prevent pregnancy complications and improve birth outcomes. Public Health is one of many agencies in the county and across the state working to improve utilization of prenatal care for all pregnant individuals, with an emphasis on improving access for populations experiencing inequities.

Public Health recently participated in the BUILD Health Challenge, a national grant awarded to Sister Carmen Community Center, Clinica Family Health, Centura Health, and ELPASO (Engaged Latino Parents Advancing Student Outcomes) were key members of the partnership. The grant focused on capacity building with the Latinx community in Lafayette. The stakeholders worked towards shifting existing power structures to positively impact health and education systems to better support families with young children. Activities included engaging local businesses on the importance of paid leave and other family friendly policies like flexible scheduling, infants-at-work, and breastfeeding friendly environments.

“It can be difficult for pregnant women earning hourly wages to request time off, especially if that time off is unpaid,” Pruett said. The current recommended American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology prenatal visit schedule for pregnancies consists of a visit every 4 weeks until 28 weeks, every 2 weeks until 36 weeks, and weekly until delivery. This schedule of care can be difficult for many women to complete given our professional work norms, making it imperative for our policies to support individuals and families during the prenatal period and throughout the child’s early development, Pruett said.

Care after birth for mother and child also are key, Pruett said, and efforts are ongoing to encourage postpartum care for the mother in addition to regular well visits for baby.

Giselle Cardona, 19, received prenatal support services through Boulder County’s GENESIS program, which provides young women who become pregnant before age 19 with home visitation services during the prenatal period through the child’s second birthday. The program also monitors the young women for postpartum depression.

“I heard it was important for my baby,” Cardona said of prenatal care. Her son, Efrain Mosqueda, now 10 months old, weighed a healthy 8 lbs. at birth.

After he was born, Efrain proved to be a baby who cried and needed a lot of loving attention.

“I was alone most of the time. I didn’t get any help except for GENESIS,” Cardona said. “He was a very hands-on baby. I would hold him even for his nap. That comforted him a lot. That’s the only way I knew to help him.”

Cardona, who lives in Longmont, plans to complete her high school education after Efrain is weaned. “He’s a breast-fed baby and only wants the breast. He doesn’t take the bottle,” Cardona said.

GENESIS clients are twice as likely as other teens to breastfeed and also twice as likely to breastfeed for at least six months.
Boulder County Jail: mental health provider of last resort

Boulder County Sheriff Joe Pelle has seen a lot of changes in his 17 years on the job. One of the biggest is the increase in prisoners suffering from mental health issues.

When he started as sheriff, the jail population diagnosed with mental illness was 13 to 15%, he said. “Today, on some days, it’s as high as 50%.”

The sheriff has worked hard with county, state and federal governments to put programs in place to help deal with the problem.

Some have required new staff and facilities. The jail has some additional mental health professionals, who are running ongoing therapy groups and working with individuals. In addition, the jail has become a site for a pilot program to create a diversion program for minor offenders.

“We have a person we call a navigator who does screening in cases that don’t involve victims,” Pelle said, using as an example an offender who steals a sandwich. Rather than using jail space, the navigator connects the offender with a mental health provider in the community.

“The biggest problem is finding a provider to work at Medicaid rates,” he said.

In addition, the county jail has opened an 18-bed unit for competency restoration to make up for a shortage of options at the state mental hospital in Pueblo. Competency restoration deals with inmates who have been declared incompetent to stand trial, but are capable, with medication and other treatment, of being able to understand and assist in their defense.

Pelle has also changed procedures for handling prisoners considered at risk for suicide or self-harm.

“It’s really a difficult proposition,” Pelle said. “We have 20 deputies to handle 500 inmates.”

Studies show that prisoners are at the highest risk in the first 72 hours after they are detained.

“A lot are detoxing. A lot are coming off a very emotional experience — domestic violence, violent arrest,” Pelle said. “They are feeling hopeless, cast aside, with no contact with family.”

The jail gives the inmates a red jumpsuit to wear, so they can be identified immediately as more at risk and houses them in a unit where they can receive more frequent monitoring.

The biggest change is the construction of a 46,000-square-foot facility with 250 beds, approved in a ballot measure by a 75% of Boulder County voters.

A good number of the inmates in diversion will likely be transients, who Pelle said have been in and out of jail over the years.

“We call them ‘frequent fliers.’ The idea is that anyone in jail who... is not a risk to the community can go in this less restrictive environment,” Pelle said. “They can perhaps participate in a work release program or raise vegetables in the jail garden.”
In Boulder County and in Colorado, LGBTQ progress and a long road ahead

The 2018 election of Jared Polis, a gay man, as governor would appear to affirm the belief that Colorado is a friendly place for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people to live.

That impression is strong in Boulder County, where 76% of respondents to a Community Foundation survey said the county is open to lesbian and gay people. However, two surveys of the LGBTQ community, one covering the state of Colorado and the other covering Boulder County, paint a somewhat less rosy picture.

The statewide survey of 1,800 Coloradans, conducted by the Colorado Health Foundation in partnership with the Kaiser Family Foundation, shows that LGBTQ Coloradans experience greater economic hardships than do other state residents. For example, only 42% say the economy is getting better, in contrast with 60% of non-LGBTQ people. More LGBTQ people say it’s harder to afford their rent or mortgage, and they are twice as likely to worry they might lose their homes. In addition, more than a quarter of LGBTQ respondents reported poor mental health, three times as many as their non-LGBTQ counterparts.

The survey found unemployment among most LGBTQ people hovering at 3-4%. However, those who identify as genderqueer or as a trans man reported an 8% unemployment rate — more than twice as high as other LGBTQ Boulder County residents.

“For people breaking out of the boxes we were given, their chances of employment decrease,” said Mardi Moore, executive director of Out Boulder County.

Perhaps most alarmingly, almost a third of respondents said they lacked human connection in the prior month, with a quarter reporting feeling sad or hopeless. Thirteen percent had made a suicide plan, and 4% had attempted suicide.

“That’s why we do a lot of advocacy. Visibility matters,” Moore said. “As people become more visible in their identities, things begin to shift.”
Jenna Howerton remembers almost nothing about her third session of conversion therapy.

“I’m guessing I said ‘OK’ and left,” she said. “At that moment, I felt so vulnerable. I wanted to get out of there. I didn’t have the words to name it as conversion therapy until later in life.”

Howerton, now 26, works as youth program coordinator at Out Boulder. She said the teens she works with are way ahead of where she was at the same point in her life.

“They’re so mature, so smart. They’re activists already,” she said, many of them in gay-straight alliance clubs.

While gay relationships are more out in the open, that doesn’t make bullying less intense, or prevalent.

“I feel extremely lucky that in high school we didn’t have Snapchat, didn’t have Instagram,” Howerton said. “There are so many avenues for bullying.”

Statistics from the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey bear out the pain of not being accepted. Half of gay, lesbian or bisexual students reported feeling sad and hopeless, more than twice the percentage of their non-LGB counterparts. Similarly, 40% reported they had hurt themselves without wanting to die and 34% had considered attempting suicide; that was roughly three times the percentage of non-LGB students.

“The numbers never seem to get better,” said Mardi Moore, executive director of Out Boulder. “The reality is that the LGBT community continues to be stigmatized. We get calls from the schools where kids get kicked out of the house by their parents.”

She added that lack of family support along with harassment by peers can make the world seem bleak indeed.

“It sets the stage (to think) you’re not good enough, that something’s wrong with you,” she said. “What do you do with that when you’re a kid? You try to stay in the closet as long as you can.”

That’s what Howerton did.

“I performed hetero-normative very well,” she said. “Part of me knew it wasn’t safe. I didn’t know anyone who was queer.”

After high school, she was still trying to come to terms with who she was.

“I suppressed it,” she said. “I was lonely.”

At around age 20, Howerton began to accept herself.

She remained involved in her church and planned to go on a mission trip. As part of the process, she filled out an application that asked if she had ever had non-heterosexual relationships. She opted to tell the truth.

“I got a call from the pastor asking to meet with me,” she said.

The first session emphasized that God loves sinners and that being gay was a choice, Howerton said. In the next session, the counselor picked out specific reasons that it was wrong to be gay. In the third, the counselor brought testimonials and brochures from the ex-gay movement, in which people said that through Christ they were able to stop being gay. Howerton was told she could choose.

Then the hammer dropped. If she wanted to go on the mission trip, she would have to break off her relationship.

“The third session was when they gave the ultimatum. That’s when I felt it was not OK, it should not be happening,” Howerton said.

Gov. Jared Polis has signed into law a ban on gay conversion therapy, although it only applies to licensed counselors, which a church counselor may or may not be.

After therapy, Howerton left the church and went on to finish college and get a master’s degree with an aim toward working with youth. She was later hired at Out Boulder.

Howerton said “it made all the difference” when gay marriage was legalized when she was in college. Living in a state with a gay governor also helps mainstream gay relationships. But for gay adolescents who feel isolated and ostracized, support closer to home is crucial.

“It has to come from the top,” she said. “They need to hear the principal, their teachers say, ‘This is a safe place right now.’”

Gov. Jared Polis has signed into law a ban on gay conversion therapy
‘So easy to get into, so difficult to get out of’
How pain meds pointed one young woman toward heroin

If you want to understand heroin addiction, think about this: When addicts seek more heroin to stave off the terrifying symptoms of withdrawal, they say “I need to get well.”

Even in Boulder, where the term wellness is both a quasi-religion and a business opportunity, heroin hijacks the brain so completely that a high school senior who grew up in a loving family can reach a point where the word “well” means sticking a syringe full of heroin into her arm.

The 2017 Healthy Kids Colorado Survey administered to high school students in the Boulder Valley School District found a slight decline in the percentage of BVSD students who have taken prescription opioids without having a doctor’s prescription. In 2017, 5.4% of BVSD teens had taken the drugs in the last 30 days, compared with 7.8% in 2015. Even though the trendline is falling, the data continue to be significant, because opioids are highly addictive. Teens who become addicted to heroin often start with prescription pain medicine.

Mila was one.

If you meet her, you will encounter a poised and attractive young woman, with a straightforward manner accompanied by a watchful intelligence.

Here are some other things to know about her:
She was a good student, a stellar athlete and hung with the popular crowd in high school.
By age 22, she had known 24 people who died.
When not working, Mila spends most of her time with her mom, Trina Faatz, whom she considers her best friend.
When Mila was using, her mother kept Naloxone in the house in case they needed to revive her from an overdose. Trina attended Narcotics Anonymous meetings, partly to learn to accept — to the extent any mother can — that she might not be there to revive her daughter from an overdose.
Mila is making fast progress toward certification as an addiction counselor. “I see people who judge,” she said. “I don’t give up on anyone.”

It began with inadequately treated Lyme Disease at age 9. It flared around the start of middle school, but by then, no one connected Mila’s chronic stomach aches, headaches and other symptoms to the Lyme exposure.

Her doctor prescribed opioid medication for pain. She began high school still in athletics and doing her schoolwork. However, the meds began to take on a greater importance.

“They were prescribed for my pain, and then I realized they could help with my emotions, too,” she said.

She began smoking heroin in her senior year. “I was getting high and feeling good,” she said.

Then she went on a family trip to New York and for the first time experienced withdrawal.

*After that trip, for the next several years (everything) was about...
never having to be sick,” she said. She began injecting heroin.

During a stint in rehab, she found out her best friend had died of an overdose. Her friend’s mother pleaded with Mila to stay in rehab. Grief stricken, Mila sought the remedy she knew best.

“My use really took off at that point,” she said.

She began injecting cocaine along with heroin.

“I couldn’t remember living another way,” she said.

One day, she overdosed, but there was no Naloxone to revive her.

Then a surprising thing happened.

“I came back. All my friends had left me there,” she said. “I don’t know why I woke up.”

Life is not a cliched novel that ties up all the loose ends. But that week, for the first time, Mila told her mother that she wanted to get help.

Now on medication-assisted treatment, Mila works as a peer counselor with others on the same journey.

“I think I felt all those years of life were a total waste,” she said. “There’s no better feeling than working with someone when you’ve been in their shoes, seeing them be successful. Nobody wants to be an addict, nobody.”

### Recognizing and working on teen mental health issues

You might call it the Boulder County paradox — our metrics for income and education are off the charts, our schools are highly rated and we have a culture that embraces fitness.

Yet a subset of teenagers are suffering. According to the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey, teens who attend Boulder Valley schools are twice as likely to be hospitalized for self harm or attempted suicide than for injuries from auto accidents. The rate is double, in some instances triple for lesbian, gay or bisexual youth.

“Boulder has an image of perfection: Everybody’s family is perfect. Kids are high achievers,” said Trina Faatz, a member of the Substance Use Advisory Group, which includes community members and professionals working to stem substance abuse problems among Boulder County teens. Her own daughter, Mila Long, is in recovery from heroin addiction (See story on facing page). But addiction is not the only mental health problem teens in Boulder County deal with.

“There is a huge amount of cutting in BVSD,” she said, “a huge amount of eating disorders. It’s having control over part of your life. How much (your life) hurts is how much you do it.”

Avani Dilger, who has worked with teens for 15 years as a founder of Natural Highs, said many are hurting.

“Anxiety and depression are so much worse,” she said.

Mardi Moore, executive director of Out Boulder, said that protections passed at the state level are heartening for members of the LGBTQ community, but the picture remains dark at the federal level, leading to a climate that is bound to impact young people.

“It sets the stage (for thinking) you’re not good enough, something’s wrong with you,” she said. “What do you do with that when you’re a kid?”

### Recognizing and working on teen mental health issues

You might call it the Boulder County paradox — our metrics for income and education are off the charts, our schools are highly rated and we have a culture that embraces fitness.

Yet a subset of teenagers are suffering. According to the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey, teens who attend Boulder Valley schools are twice as likely to be hospitalized for self harm or attempted suicide than for injuries from auto accidents. The rate is double, in some instances triple for lesbian, gay or bisexual youth.

“Boulder has an image of perfection: Everybody’s family is perfect. Kids are high achievers,” said Trina Faatz, a member of the Substance Use Advisory Group, which includes community members and professionals working to stem substance abuse problems among Boulder County teens. Her own daughter, Mila Long, is in recovery from heroin addiction (See story on facing page). But addiction is not the only mental health problem teens in Boulder County deal with.

“There is a huge amount of cutting in BVSD,” she said, “a huge amount of eating disorders. It’s having control over part of your life. How much (your life) hurts is how much you do it.”

Avani Dilger, who has worked with teens for 15 years as a founder of Natural Highs, said many are hurting.

“Anxiety and depression are so much worse,” she said.

Mardi Moore, executive director of Out Boulder, said that protections passed at the state level are heartening for members of the LGBTQ community, but the picture remains dark at the federal level, leading to a climate that is bound to impact young people.

“It sets the stage (for thinking) you’re not good enough, something’s wrong with you,” she said. “What do you do with that when you’re a kid?”

### Recognizing and working on teen mental health issues

You might call it the Boulder County paradox — our metrics for income and education are off the charts, our schools are highly rated and we have a culture that embraces fitness.

Yet a subset of teenagers are suffering. According to the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey, teens who attend Boulder Valley schools are twice as likely to be hospitalized for self harm or attempted suicide than for injuries from auto accidents. The rate is double, in some instances triple for lesbian, gay or bisexual youth.

“Boulder has an image of perfection: Everybody’s family is perfect. Kids are high achievers,” said Trina Faatz, a member of the Substance Use Advisory Group, which includes community members and professionals working to stem substance abuse problems among Boulder County teens. Her own daughter, Mila Long, is in recovery from heroin addiction (See story on facing page). But addiction is not the only mental health problem teens in Boulder County deal with.

“There is a huge amount of cutting in BVSD,” she said, “a huge amount of eating disorders. It’s having control over part of your life. How much (your life) hurts is how much you do it.”

Avani Dilger, who has worked with teens for 15 years as a founder of Natural Highs, said many are hurting.

“Anxiety and depression are so much worse,” she said.

Mardi Moore, executive director of Out Boulder, said that protections passed at the state level are heartening for members of the LGBTQ community, but the picture remains dark at the federal level, leading to a climate that is bound to impact young people.

“It sets the stage (for thinking) you’re not good enough, something’s wrong with you,” she said. “What do you do with that when you’re a kid?”

### Recognizing and working on teen mental health issues

You might call it the Boulder County paradox — our metrics for income and education are off the charts, our schools are highly rated and we have a culture that embraces fitness.

Yet a subset of teenagers are suffering. According to the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey, teens who attend Boulder Valley schools are twice as likely to be hospitalized for self harm or attempted suicide than for injuries from auto accidents. The rate is double, in some instances triple for lesbian, gay or bisexual youth.

“Boulder has an image of perfection: Everybody’s family is perfect. Kids are high achievers,” said Trina Faatz, a member of the Substance Use Advisory Group, which includes community members and professionals working to stem substance abuse problems among Boulder County teens. Her own daughter, Mila Long, is in recovery from heroin addiction (See story on facing page). But addiction is not the only mental health problem teens in Boulder County deal with.

“There is a huge amount of cutting in BVSD,” she said, “a huge amount of eating disorders. It’s having control over part of your life. How much (your life) hurts is how much you do it.”

Avani Dilger, who has worked with teens for 15 years as a founder of Natural Highs, said many are hurting.

“Anxiety and depression are so much worse,” she said.

Mardi Moore, executive director of Out Boulder, said that protections passed at the state level are heartening for members of the LGBTQ community, but the picture remains dark at the federal level, leading to a climate that is bound to impact young people.

“It sets the stage (for thinking) you’re not good enough, something’s wrong with you,” she said. “What do you do with that when you’re a kid?”
Sam Shew wants to be an activist — crusader might be a more accurate term — for the human rights of mentally ill people.

His passion is not a legal or political battle, but more the promotion of a radical empathy in the care of a person in the grip of an acute mental crisis. Shew came to the realization of his purpose in life during his first manic episode at age 30.

Although he now says matter of factly, “I fundamentally believe every person on the planet is on their own mental wellness journey,” his trip from there to here was considerably more dramatic than most.

It began at a sales conference in San Diego where his mental state became elevated as he worked the crowd of 4,000. He felt an intense connection with every person he talked to — and he talked to many — and they reciprocated, making him feel powerful in a way he had never before experienced.

He imagined creating a company, Humans Connecting Humans, and went to his hotel room, filled with love and resolve, to start registering website domains. A graduate of Georgia Tech with a degree in industrial systems, Shew began drawing complex diagrams of the ways in which love could open the world complete with numerical notations of the order in which he drew the lines that made up the schematic. The drawings, which he later shredded, had dried wrinkled from tears of elation at his vision of hope.

He returned to Boulder and went for a hike with his fiancee near the National Center for Atmospheric Research. As they reached the NCAR parking lot, his mental state became so intense that he began crying uncontrollably. His fiancee called a mutual friend and the two gently convinced him that he needed to go to the hospital.

After a quick assessment, he was given scrubs to wear and, as a precaution, put into a room where he could not hurt himself. Shew began to think about how he was being treated by staff, not at all unkindly or against protocol, but in a way that still...
Boulder Community Health opens state-of-the-art mental health pavilion

Colorado’s suicide rate remains stubbornly high at seventh in the nation. While the causes are not known, lack of access to mental health care is often cited as a possible contributor.

In an effort to show its support for expanded and improved services for those with mental illness, Boulder Community Health in 2019 cut the ribbon on one of the most modern mental health care facilities in Colorado. The $45 million, 70,000 square-foot Della Cava Family Medical Pavilion is part of BCH’s strategic commitment to make Boulder the healthiest community in the country. It includes an 18-bed inpatient behavioral health unit on the top floor, plus a counseling center, an outpatient behavioral health clinic, and a Center for Mind Body Medicine.

made him feel anonymous and powerless.

When medical personnel came in, he would make suggestions about how he should be treated to give him a greater sense of dignity and autonomy.

“Why not let me choose from a rack of clothes, rather than telling me what to wear?”

“Why not take me skiing and get to know me to evaluate me?”

While the specifics of his suggestions may not have been workable, he sees them now as having the right spirit behind them.

He was hospitalized for 11 days, is now on medication and works with the Sutherland Bipolar Center in Boulder, which provides services specifically for those with bipolar disorder.

The center is not an emergency facility, but rather provides outpatient services to help its clients manage bipolar disorder, said R. Rachel Cruz, executive director. Clients sign a six-month contract with the center, which helps them create a routine so they can more easily monitor their moods. Good nutrition and exercise are also emphasized. Sutherland typically has about a six-week wait for new clients.

Cruz agrees with Shew’s assessment of mental crisis care in which emergency rooms serve as a costly waystation to other care. While Boulder County has more mental health options than most places in the state, care is still not sufficient to cover all those who need it when they need it.

Health Collaborative connects vulnerable adults to specialty care

The Boulder County Health Improvement Collaborative (BCHIC), an initiative of your Community Foundation, is working to improve access to specialty care for Medicaid and uninsured patients countywide – from recruiting medical specialists willing to treat Medicaid and uninsured patients, to streamlining a referral system for providers and care coordinators.

“The response we’ve seen from the community of local providers stepping up to provide care has been inspiring,” says Morgan Rogers McMillan, BCHIC Project Manager through June 2019. “We hope to enable 500 community members to access medically necessary care in 2019.” Indeed, the spectrum of specialty care currently offered by BCHIC includes allergy and asthma, dermatology, endocrinology, gastroenterology, oncology, orthopedics, physical therapy, podiatry, and urology.

Orthopedics, endocrinology, and dermatology have been the highest demand specialties by participating primary care providers. BCHIC each month currently offers 16 orthopedic patient slots and 28 dermatology slots.

“A 57-year-old patient of ours needed to be seen by a dermatologist for a lip lesion,” says Jeff Raikes, Clinic Operations Director, Clinica Family Health. “While dermatology specialists are challenging to refer to, we were able to get this patient seen by Boulder Valley Center for Dermatology – a BCHIC participant – within a week of being seen by her primary care physician. Without the BCHIC referral hub, this patient had no other options.”

Additionally, BCHIC’s community-owned, scalable, online platform to expand access to care for adults covered by Medicaid and for those who remain uninsured is “nationally innovative and incredibly simple,” says McMillan.

BCHIC was selected by Kaiser Colorado to participate in a statewide cohort working to expand access to specialty care. Adds McMillan, “Together, we’re exploring the potential of adding eConsults – or remote access to care – to further increase the ability of low-income patients to connect with care.”

Learn more at commfound.org/our-impact/programs-initiatives/health-collaborative

— Sabine Kortals Stein
Our Economy & Housing

County’s rising economic tide not lifting all boats

Business is booming in the tiny town of Nederland, population 1,536.

Sales tax revenue rose nearly 10% between 2016 and 2017, helped along by a popular new pizzeria, coffee shop and bike-ski retailer, and hordes of weekend tourists. Ned even added a shoe repair shop: The owners of Perry’s, one of Boulder’s oldest businesses, migrated up the canyon in search of cheaper rent and a nice live-work situation above the store. They were in good company: Nederland’s population has grown 10% since 2000.

It’s a story being repeated all over Boulder County: the economy growing quickly and the population right along with it. But, in Nederland and elsewhere, the rising tide has not lifted all boats. The influx of high-paying jobs has led to ripple effects that are sinking many residents.

A majority of clients at Nederland’s food pantry are spending 80% of their income on rent, according to Chris Current, executive director. The town is getting its first affordable housing development courtesy of Boulder County, but low-income provider Kristi Venditti worries the 26 units won’t be nearly enough to serve the need.

Stories by Shay Castle

Nederland’s economy and population are growing, but with housing as the top spending priority for most families, everything else gets pinched.
Venditti is the mountain resource liaison for Emergency Family Assistance Association. Her part-time position was created in 2016 but has morphed into a full-time job has her caseload has grown 35% since she started.

Her clients struggle to find affordable rentals, or any rentals at all. The town is now in a fight over vacation rentals; Buyers across the Front Range have snapped up Nederland properties for second and third homes and rent to tourists rather than residents.

With housing as the top spending priority for most families, everything else gets pinched: physical and mental health care, groceries, transportation. “The need is so great,” Venditti said.

On paper, things don’t look so dire. Boulder County has enjoyed some of the lowest unemployment in the nation in recent years, dipping below 2% at times. The area median income is among the highest in Colorado, which is higher than the national median. Nearly 40,000 new jobs have been added to the local economy in the past decade.

But a tenth of residents are still below the poverty line, including 12% of children. More than a quarter of the population doesn’t earn enough to cover their basic needs.

For most, the struggle can be traced to one thing: “In Boulder County, it’s housing,” said Claire Levy, executive director of the Colorado Center on Law and Policy.

The price of a single-family home has more than doubled in the past 15 years. There’s not a community left in Boulder County with a median home price below $400,000.

Costs have risen so high that, in 2017, experts declared a complete end to affordable housing. “There are no entry level housing options,” wrote the authors of the Longmont Housing Affordability Review, real estate industry insiders Kyle Snyder and Amy Aschenbrenner. “The lines we drew in the sand as reasonably priced” — $150,000 for a condo or townhome, $250,000 for a single-family dwelling — “will soon be obsolete.”

Those who bought early are doing well, enjoying millions of dollars in appreciation. But the vast majority of residents, more than 60%, don’t earn enough to buy a house here.

It’s the kind of inequality that is plaguing the nation. Income inequality in Boulder County is about on par with the U.S. as a whole. According to the Economic Policy Institute, the top 1% of Boulder County earners make 26.5 times more than the remaining 99% combined. Nationally, the ratio is 26.3.

But Boulder County is in the bottom 4% for equality among the nation’s metro areas (No. 44 of 916) and counties (132 of 3,061). It’s more unequal than Colorado as a whole, which has a ratio of 20.6 and ranks twentieth of 50 states.

Venditti sees the split clearly in Nederland’s elementary schools, where she works part-time. “There are the families with a lot of needs who can’t really afford to be here,” she said, “and then families who can buy the million-dollar houses.”

### POVERTY RATES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Boulder County</th>
<th>United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individuals</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Families with children</strong></td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children</strong></td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Latino children</strong></td>
<td>23%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children under 5</strong></td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: American Community Survey, 1-year data

### 2018 SINGLE FAMILY HOME SALES*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number Sold for Under $360K</th>
<th>Total Units Sold</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boulder</td>
<td>3*</td>
<td>628</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superior</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisville</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lafayette</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erie</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longmont</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>1129</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All in the affordable program

*Source: 2018 Longmont Housing Affordability Review

Food staples at the Nederland Food Pantry help relieve hunger.

Photo by Julia Vandenoever
Child care costs rival housing

If families can find a home big and affordable enough, they still may be facing an expense that can rival rent or, in many cases, exceed it: Someone to watch their kids during the workday or after school.

Child care costs have risen 76% in Colorado since the start of the millennium, according to Claire Levy, executive director of the Colorado Center for Law and Policy.

It costs Cherlyn Seruto $975 a month to send her 3-year-old daughter to the “cheapest day care in Boulder,” she said, and another $1,650 for her son to attend a preschool where he can expend a bit more energy. The $2,625 per month total is steep, but it’s worth it so that she and her husband can both keep their full-time jobs.

Colorado’s newly passed law that funds full-day kindergarten should help out when her son starts school next year. But even three hours of after care at the YMCA, Seruto’s current plan, will run $600 a month. And she’s not sure if her rambunctious son will do well in a classroom all day and then an after-school program; she is considering cutting back her hours to give him some flexibility.

Whatever she does, it will only get cheaper from here on out. When both kids were at their youngest and in need of day care, Seruto was shelling out $2,900 a month.

There are cheaper alternatives that some families choose or are forced into, beyond staying at home with the kids. Seruto knows families who employ live-in au pairs they pay $600-$900 a month. “But that only works if you have a house with extra room,” she said.

Family, friends and neighbors remain the go-to for parents of more modest means, said Julie Van Domelen, executive director of Emergency Family Assistance Association. But beyond relying on loved ones, resources remain scarce.

“You talk to all our case managers,” said Van Domelen, “the one thing (their clients) can’t find a solution for is child care.”

Costs have risen so high that, in 2017, experts declared a complete end to affordable housing in Boulder County.

**The Cost of Childcare:**

$26,796

The annual cost of childcare for two adults with one child in school and one preschooler in Boulder County

$15,060

Annual childcare cost for the same family in Pueblo County

Source: Colorado Center on Law and Policy, 2018 Report
Plenty of jobs, few places to live

With the University of Colorado and its many federal labs, Boulder County has long been an employment hub.

The local economy has been on a tear for several years, growing at a fast clip. Between 2007 and 2017, employment grew by 39,719 positions — a 17% increase.

Housing, however, has not kept pace. For every 3.5 new jobs that came to Boulder County in the last decade, just one housing unit was added: 11,262 in all.

This extreme imbalance in supply and demand forces tens of thousands of people (and their cars) into the county each day just to work. The imbalance also has contributed to a rise in homelessness, according to experts, and pushed up housing prices.

The median cost of a single-family home more than doubled from 2003 to 2019 in Boulder, Louisville, Lafayette and Superior. In Longmont and Erie, both cities that straddle Weld County and have built (slightly) more homes, prices rose 72% and 75%, respectively.

Rents are harder to track, with multiple sources and most datasets skewing toward higher-end units. But where the pricing data might be indistinct, certain numbers are clear. More than half (58%) of renters in Boulder County spend more than a third of their income on housing costs, according to Census data, compared to 46% of renters nationally.

### Total jobs added in Boulder County, 2007-2017:

39,719

### Total new housing units authorized in Boulder County, 2007-2017:

11,262

### Average number of jobs added for every new housing unit authorized in Boulder County, 2007-2017:

3.5

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Census Bureau
Tech boom raises incomes, but not for everyone

Boulder County in the past few years has undergone another tech renaissance, adding thousands of local jobs. Google, Amazon, Apple and Twitter all have a major presence, with hundreds of smaller firms in nearly every community in the county.

The influx of high-paying positions helped boost the Housing and Urban Development-decreed area median income for an individual from $68,800 in 2017 to $76,100 in 2018—a 10.6% increase.

But not everyone has cashed in on the wealth tech has brought to town. More than a quarter of Boulder County residents (27%) don’t earn enough to cover their basic needs, according to the Colorado Center for Law and Policy, which every few years puts out a report on self-sufficiency.

A self-sufficiency wage is what a person would need to earn to cover the bare minimum: housing, transportation, food, health care, taxes, child care if applicable, and miscellaneous costs such as toiletries, clothing, etc. In Boulder County in 2018, the self-sufficiency wage for a single person was $30,639.

“You can, in theory, survive in Boulder County for $30,000 a year if you’re single, have no children, no responsibilities and can find a place to rent for $1,100,” said Claire Levy, CCLP executive director.

But, as Levy points out, that’s getting harder to do. The basic costs of living used to compute the self-sufficiency standard have increased 78% between 2000 and 2017. Earnings have grown only 43%.

“Folks are working,” Levy said. “They’re working hard. But they’re not earning enough money.”

---

**SELF-SUFFICIENCY STANDARD:**

$85,836

The per year self-sufficiency standard household income for two adults with one child in school and one preschooler in Boulder County

$53,571

Household income amount the same family would need in Pueblo County

Source: Colorado Center on Law and Policy, 2018 Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BOULDER COUNTY TOP FULL- AND PART-TIME JOBS BY SECTOR</th>
<th>Employment by place of work (number of jobs)</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services</td>
<td>35,043</td>
<td>42,623</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government**</td>
<td>29,805</td>
<td>35,674</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care and Social Assistance</td>
<td>20,977</td>
<td>27,246</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Trade</td>
<td>20,455</td>
<td>21,354</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>17,858</td>
<td>20,532</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation and Food Services</td>
<td>15,467</td>
<td>19,242</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real Estate and Leasing</td>
<td>13,043</td>
<td>16,583</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Services, Except Public Administration</td>
<td>11,921</td>
<td>13,015</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance and Insurance</td>
<td>9,699</td>
<td>11,770</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>10,750</td>
<td>9,789</td>
<td>-9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>9,635</td>
<td>9,478</td>
<td>-2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative and Waste Management Services</td>
<td>9,663</td>
<td>9,119</td>
<td>-6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation</td>
<td>6,829</td>
<td>8,514</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale Trade</td>
<td>6,562</td>
<td>7,424</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Services*</td>
<td>4,514</td>
<td>6,810</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total employment***</td>
<td>228,952</td>
<td>268,671</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Private education services
** Includes federal, state, local and military
*** Total includes all sectors, including smaller ones not listed here.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis
HollyAnne Giffin’s dream was always to build her own house. But when Giffin, a transplant from the Deep South, ended up in Boulder County, reality hit her hard. Boulder is the sixth most expensive metro for home prices in the United States, according to the National Association of Realtors. Building here would take deeper pockets than Giffin’s career in social work provided.

So she set her sights a little lower: buying a house. But even that was out of her reach in Boulder, where the average home price has more than doubled during the past 15 years, settling just south of $1 million.

Enter Fiona Pigott, with a tech job and healthy salary. She and Giffin met on Craigslist and became roommates. After living together for two years, they’ve decided to buy a house together.

“Owning a house is a lot of work; work that I have no desire to take on on my own,” Pigott said. “Having two people to share (the upkeep) and the expense” just made sense.

She and Giffin plan to split the home’s equity in proportion to what each is able to contribute. Even with two people buying, the plan is difficult since small homes are in short supply in Boulder.

They debated bringing in another friend to purchase something slightly bigger. But that idea ran up against another Boulder obstacle: the city’s occupancy rules, which prevent more than three or four unrelated persons living together. If, in the future, one of the three owners wants a romantic partner to move in, the two would have to marry to make occupancy legal.

Giffin and Pigott intend to rent out one of the extra rooms to help with costs, and keep things flexible for the future.

The friends also hope to use their home for social good. The extra room could provide cheap, safe housing for an undocumented immigrant or low-income resident. Giffin has always wanted to be a foster parent; the house could help that dream come true, too.

Both acknowledge their arrangement won’t work for every pair of platonic would-be-homeowners. “It really only still feels possible because I work for Twitter, because my parents paid my college tuition,” Pigott said. “That’s what makes it possible. It’s not like we scraped together.”

“If it were me and a co-worker, then we wouldn’t be able to do it,” added Giffin.

In Boulder, said Pigott, the reality is “you need two incomes and you need at least one that’s higher than average.”

To buy a house in Boulder:
Bring money, creativity, tolerance for city regulations

They debated bringing in another friend to purchase something slightly bigger. But that idea ran up against another Boulder obstacle: the city’s occupancy rules, which prevent more than three or four unrelated persons living together. If, in the future, one of the three owners wants a romantic partner to move in, the two would have to marry to make occupancy legal.

Giffin and Pigott intend to rent out one of the extra rooms to help with costs, and keep things flexible for the future.

The friends also hope to use their home for social good. The extra room could provide cheap, safe housing for an undocumented immigrant or low-income resident. Giffin has always wanted to be a foster parent; the house could help that dream come true, too.

Both acknowledge their arrangement won’t work for every pair of platonic would-be-homeowners. “It really only still feels possible because I work for Twitter, because my parents paid my college tuition,” Pigott said. “That’s what makes it possible. It’s not like we scraped together.”

“If it were me and a co-worker, then we wouldn’t be able to do it,” added Giffin.

In Boulder, said Pigott, the reality is “you need two incomes and you need at least one that’s higher than average.”
Boulder County’s gender pay gap worse than state’s and nation’s

It was at the company Christmas party when Sharon Procopio first began to think about the gender pay gap at the engineering firm where she worked. All the workers who had been promoted took the stage, and they all had something in common: Each and every one was a man.

The women of JVA, Inc., banded together and approached the top brass to request an analysis of inequity in hiring, promoting and pay. To Procopio's surprise and delight, management took them seriously. A consultant was hired and the numbers run. Sure enough, there was a pattern of hiring more experienced women for junior roles and of those women staying in those roles for longer, and earning less than their male counterparts.

“It was tough,” Procopio said. It took a lot of “uncomfortable” conversations, but “our management team dove right into it. We did the right thing.”

JVA went to work immediately to correct the imbalance and, today, women at the company are slightly out-earning men for the first time.

The rest of Boulder County has yet to catch up. The county has the largest gender-based wage gap of any of its closest neighbors and lags Colorado and the U.S. as a whole in gender pay equity. Women working full-time earn, on average, 74 cents for every $1 a full-time working man does in Boulder County.

The gap increases with education: The average Boulder County male with a graduate or professional degree earned $96,199 in 2017. A woman with the same education was paid $55,585.

“Women straight out of college are offered lower salaries, so immediately you’re starting with a lower pay scale,” said Darcy Juday with the local chapter of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), a nonprofit advocating for gender equality. “You’re starting with lower wages, so bonuses are lower, accumulated wages are lower, Social Security (payouts) are lower. ‘If you get a smaller raise every year than the guy you started out against, wages diverge quite a lot over the course of a career.”

Other factors may be contributing to Boulder County’s large gap. Because the population has so many residents with advanced degrees, the wage gap may just be more evident. Women, even highly educated ones in high-paying fields, are still more likely to cut back hours or stay at home to raise children, which could explain why the local wage gap persists even though more women are working more hours than in past years in Boulder County.

Where Procopio and Juday agree on a solution is more training and mentorship for female workers. The AAUW conducts two training courses, Start Smart and Work Smart, to teach women how to negotiate salary and promotions.

Boulder County’s extremely low unemployment presents the perfect opportunity to introduce some equity to the economy. Companies are desperate to hang onto workers, Procopio said.

“This is the perfect time for us to narrow the gap.”

| WOMEN’S MEDIAN EARNINGS BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT 2017 |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Less than high school graduate  | $24,063   | $17,391   |
| High school graduate           | $26,548   | $24,159   |
| Some college or associate’s degree | $29,109   | $30,512   |
| Bachelor’s degree               | $42,422   | $45,233   |
| Graduate or professional degree | $55,585   | $60,691   |
| Source: American Community Survey, 1-year data |

| MEN’S MEDIAN EARNINGS BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT 2017 |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Less than high school graduate  | $30,699   | $27,219   |
| High school graduate           | $35,451   | $36,134   |
| Some college or associate’s degree | $41,613   | $43,685   |
| Bachelor’s degree               | $76,407   | $65,700   |
| Graduate or professional degree | $96,199   | $85,708   |
| Source: American Community Survey, 1-year data |
End child poverty in Boulder? Yes, it can be done

What if we could eliminate child poverty? Erase it completely, lifting hundreds of families up to better economic conditions and improving health and wellness outcomes for children in the process? What if all this could be done for only a fraction of the city budget?

It can. At least according to Julie Van Domelen, executive director of the Emergency Family Assistance Association.

There are just under 600 families with children living under the federal poverty line ($20,780 for a family of three) in Boulder, according to 2017 Census data. The average gap in income for these families and the poverty line is $9,000. So for $5.4 million, according to EFFA, which put out a white paper on the topic, Boulder could effectively end child poverty.

Van Domelen has seen the effects of giving families even an extra $1,500 a year to use for whatever they like — rent, groceries, paying back friends and family — through a program that is tied to kids' care (going to the doctor or dentist, or early childhood developmental screenings).

She describes the effects of the program after two years: “Families were far less rent-burdened, they tended to have less debt to other family members. Food security increased tremendously. We saw all kinds of improvements in income and employment. It reduced a lot of stress in the home,” she said.

Boulder’s general fund in 2019 was more than $158 million. To tackle child poverty in the way Van Domelen describes would cost less than 3.5% of the city’s general fund — less than it spends on efforts to fight climate change.

“We forget how much money we have,” Van Domelen said. “Boulder is going to spend (6%) of our budget to meet our climate goals, and nothing that Boulder does is actually going to change the planet. All you’re saying is we’re going to do our part. We could also do our part to end child poverty in this community, because we can afford it, because it’s a good investment, because it’s sympathetic. It’s not a radical proposition. It’s the simplest, most obvious scenario.”

“Almost 600 families with children live in poverty in Boulder. The city could end child poverty for $5.4 million per year, according to Julie Van Domelen, executive director of the Emergency Family Assistance Association.

FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN UNDER THE POVERTY LEVEL, 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Longmont</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lafayette</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boulder</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisville</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erie</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superior</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source, American Community Survey, 5-year data

“It’s not a radical proposition. It’s the simplest, most obvious scenario.” – Julie Van Domelen
Boulder budgeters look to recreational marijuana taxes

Boulder saw an opportunity to stabilize its budget as Colorado became among the first of now 10 states plus Washington, D.C., to permit some form of recreational marijuana use. Medical marijuana has been legal in Colorado since 2001, and recreational since 2014. But because the drug remains illegal at the federal level, the city has been reluctant to count on tax revenue from recreational sales.

Each year in the past, the money non-medical marijuana brings in has been categorized as one-time revenue, explained Kady Doelling, executive budget officer. Because of the way Boulder does its budgets, one-time dollars can only be used for one-time expenses, not ongoing costs such as funding the fire department or police.

City officials decided to maintain the revenue as one-time because of uncertainty at the national level.

“Last year we were pretty close to moving this to ongoing, but during budget time, there was a lot of rhetoric from the federal administration about going after states with legalized marijuana,” Doelling said.

During the 2020 budget discussion, which started in early 2019, Boulder decided to pull the trigger. Moving forward, marijuana revenue would be incorporated as ongoing funding.

MEDICAL MARIJUANA CENTERS AS OF MARCH 1, 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Licensed medical centers</th>
<th>Licensed retail stores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boulder</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longmont</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lafayette</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisville</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyons</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nederland</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Colorado Department of Revenue enforcement division

It’s not a panacea for Boulder’s budget woes: sales tax has been growing at a rate slower than inflation, causing a shortfall — a trend that is expected to continue as the population ages. Marijuana brings in about $3.7 million each year. Much of that goes to enforcement of and education around the industry itself, leaving a small amount for other city needs.

Although the revenue has grown by double-digits in past years — last year brought a 30% increase — the growth is slowing. Doelling is projecting 5% annual increases in the future. That also has to be balanced against the decline in taxes from the shrinking medical marijuana sector; that revenue has been counted among ongoing dollars for several years.

Still, Doelling noted, every dollar helps.

“It doesn’t bring in a whole lot,” Doelling said, “but it does help a little bit.”
The 31 fully-furnished one-bedroom apartments at 1175 Lee Hill Road in Boulder house chronically homeless residents with a “housing-first” approach.

Photo by Julia Vandenoever

To help the homeless, try housing first

In October 2017, with winter fast approaching, Boulder County finally tried a new tactic to battle the area’s worsening homelessness crisis.

Governments, groups and officials from across the county got together behind a coordinated effort with an underlying philosophy: Homeless people have one critical need — housing.

And so that became the priority.

It’s a simple solution, but it took years to get there. That’s partly because of the tradeoffs. With limited dollars, choices sometimes have to be made between sheltering services and investment in housing. Those difficult decisions have led to criticisms of the current approach, but officials are standing firm.

Homelessness as we know it didn’t really emerge until the 1980s, when federal housing dollars dried up, said Jennifer Bless, homeless services system manager for Boulder County. Study after study has revealed that when housing costs go up, so does homelessness.

“Basically what we’re doing is playing a game of musical chairs,” Bless said. “There are too few affordable housing units for too many people who need them, so somebody is going to get left out of that market. Who gets left out is going to be someone who has more challenges” like mental illness or addiction. That’s why those issues often get blamed for homelessness, she said.

But “it really is at the core an affordable housing crisis issue. If there was a chair available for them, they wouldn’t get left out.”

Boulder County’s focus is now on getting those without housing into housing. In the first full year of coordinated entry — so-called because clients are funneled through one screening system and then connected with services — 188 people were placed in permanent supportive housing, 7.7% of those who accessed services. The county hopes to place a large percentage of the estimated 200 long-term local unhoused residents with an extra $1 million in local funds, plus some matching state and federal grants.

Not only does the approach address the issue at the heart of homelessness, but the housing-first focus saves money.

It costs about $43,000 a year to let someone remain unhoused, Bless said. “They’re often using emergency medical response, interacting with police and the justice system, in addition to sheltering services.” Permanently supportive housing, meanwhile, which includes the cost of subsidizing rent plus connections to services, costs $20,000 a year for each person.

At the end of the day, focusing on housing is a cheaper, more effective way to help our neighbors who have fallen on hard times. More than half of those who sought services in the first year of coordinated entry have lived in Boulder County for more than two years. “We’re providing community members with that foundation of a place to call home,” Bless said.

$43,000
Annual cost of homelessness on public services, per resident

$20,000
Annual cost of permanently supportive housing, per resident

Source: Colorado Center on Law and Policy, 2018 Report
Businesses band together to tackle Boulder’s tough problems

Politicians, nonprofits, advocates and activists aren’t the only ones raising the alarm about housing and transportation. Boulder’s business community is getting in on the action, too.

The Boulder Chamber has launched Boulder Together to tackle the root causes of the biggest challenges for companies in the city: hiring. More than 123,000 jobs were available in Boulder County in 2017 and 2018, according to the Chamber. Just 20,000 people applied for them.

“The number one thing businesses say is freaking them out is they can’t hire the employees they need to fill the jobs,” said John Tayer, president and CEO of the Boulder Chamber. “That’s hurting them to keep the doors open or grow the business.”

Boulder’s high cost of housing forces workers into long commutes: 50,000 people travel into the city each day. Boulder Together has set an ambitious goal of doubling the number of rental units and homes for sale for low- and middle-income workers. The initiative will also advocate for increased funding for transportation infrastructure and options, with a specific focus on improvements to the Arapahoe and Diagonal corridors.

“We say these are business issues, but they are entirely community issues,” Tayer said. “Everything we are trying to achieve here is in balance with what our community says its values are: more diversity ethnically and socially and financially, and environmentally. We just can’t wait around for the city government to figure out what the solution is to this issue we have right now.”

The third prong of Boulder Together is workforce development. There are plenty of potential employees in the area, Tayer said — they just need some training, an apprenticeship or a shift in perspective.

“What does a music major have? Great math, great discipline. Skills that would make (them) a perfect candidate for a job,” Tayer said. “Veterans, disabled folks, the whole group of aging class folks: A little upskill, and they’ll be awesome to work in our community. “You can get a job in Boulder.”
Boulder County residents have long viewed their community as an environmental leader on Open Space and an innovator on mass transit incentives and bike paths.

They aren’t wrong. Yet, challenges persist and some problems are getting worse as the county joins the state in dealing with population growth and a rapidly changing climate.

Commuters in and out of Boulder County continue to hop into their cars to get to work. While the county managed to effectively prohibit fracking for oil and natural gas within its borders, emissions from surrounding areas — Weld County in particular — have not respected county boundaries. The one-two punch of auto and fracking emissions has kept air quality less than optimal and ozone levels high and rising.

Even amid gains on water conservation, the growing and thirsty Front Range population has led to a dispute between Denver Water and Boulder County on the expansion of Gross Reservoir.

The arrival of the Emerald Ash Borer poses a serious threat to an urban forest in which ash trees had served as a key species, and the growth of neonic pesticides has had a deleterious impact on pollinating insects. In addition, soil quality on Open Space agricultural land has suffered from overgrazing and an exploding population of prairie dogs.

The hopeful part? Boulder County and the state are responding. The city of Boulder is establishing baselines for pollinators, aquatic insects and soil quality with an eye to improvement, and working to keep tree cover constant. Statewide, Gov. Jared Polis has brought an aggressive approach to improving air quality, allowing more local control over oil and gas operations, enhancing transit and encouraging an increase in electric vehicles.

Stories by Cindy Sutter

So much degraded soil accumulated next to McCauley Farm near Longmont that the sheep were able to walk over the fence.
Steve Clouthier gets in his car for a 30-minute drive home from Boulder to Arvada.

Our Environment

If we build it, will they come? More mass transit, affordable housing, electric vehicles seen as best commuter solutions

Steve Clouthier lives in Arvada and drives to work in downtown Boulder.

“I’ve been commuting into Boulder for about 12 years, (from) Golden the first six and Arvada the last six,” he said.

Clouthier exemplifies one of the toughest problems Boulder County faces in reducing carbon emissions. Many Boulder workers live in nearby towns; many others commute out of the county.

About 65% of commuters from Boulder drive by themselves to work, according to Census figures — a number that has not budged since the early 2000s. Likewise, workers commuting into Boulder make a huge impact. Former Boulder City Council member, County Commissioner and Boulder Mayor Will Toor said the daytime weekday population of Boulder is roughly 150,000, which falls to about 100,000 people at night.

Toor, who now heads the Colorado Energy Office in the administration of Gov. Jared Polis, said the lack of affordable housing in Boulder is a big problem.

Toor said that a survey conducted a few years ago found that about half of workers commuting into Boulder would live in multi-family housing if more were available and affordable. He said the state is also working on transit, improving or adding arterial bus lines on routes such as Highway 119, Arapahoe Road and South Boulder Road.

“That would support a lot of east-west commuting,” he said.

The Polis administration also has extended tax incentives on electric vehicles and is working to bring more EVs to Colorado.

Clouthier and his wife have four children, and she stays at home with them. He said Boulder’s housing costs were a deterrent to living there, although they also weighed distance from family in Highlands Ranch and Littleton.

Clouthier has free parking and an electric vehicle charging station at work. He also gets a free bus pass. When the family lived in Golden, Clouthier commuted by bus frequently on Highway 93.

“I could walk to the bus stop from my house. If I was running late, I could jump in the car to get to the bus,” he said. “I could open my laptop going to and from work and read my emails. It was awesome.”

A need for more space prompted the family’s move to Arvada where housing was cheaper. Now, Clouthier mostly drives to work, a 30-minute commute. The bus stop is a 10-minute drive away from home.

“I’m already a third of the way to Boulder. The bus is usually reliable, but occasionally I stand there waiting. (Then I think) ‘Why am I doing this?’ “

He said his free bus pass offers an incentive. “But there’s a flip side. If I were paying for it, (I might be) a little more motivated to make sure I used it to get my money’s worth.”

As for an electric vehicle, Clouthier said he might look at one in the future.

“It would be easy to go back and forth from Arvada,” he said.
Boulder seeks to restore and preserve trees, bees and soil

Boulder’s commitment to ecological preservation by using local taxes to purchase and set aside public land has frequently been characterized as groundbreaking.

However, climate change, development of formerly vacant land and the use of systemic pesticides by farmers and homeowners have had impacts that require urgent action. That means environmental practices need to move beyond the preservation of land: In some cases, they need to fix the land.

“We need to develop a more integrated approach to monitoring ecosystem change,” said Brett KenCairn, senior policy advisor for Climate, Sustainability & Resilience for the city of Boulder.

To that end, Boulder will measure environmental degradation and simultaneously sustain or restore ecological health in three areas: land cover including the urban tree canopy, soil health and populations of pollinating and aquatic insects. Baseline measures in these areas will be in place when the 2021 TRENDS report is released and will be subsequently tracked by the Community Foundation as indicators.

Urban land cover: Boulder’s Urban Forester Kathleen Alexander calls the discovery of the Emerald Ash Borer in Boulder “a day I’ll never forget.”

“The scale of everything we do is different now,” she said. “We used to plant 300 trees a year. Now, it’s 500. We used to remove 400 trees. Last year, it was 1,300.”

That is only on city-owned land. About 75 percent of trees are on private property. The urban tree canopy currently covers about 16 percent of Boulder. The city’s goal is to maintain that percentage — an ambitious objective, given the high percentage of ash trees, all of which are susceptible to the borer.

Pollinators and aquatic insects: Rella Abernathy, integrated pest management coordinator for the city of Boulder, said the city does not use neonicotinoids, or neonics, a class of insecticides that is taken up through the plant’s root system and continues to expose pollinators through nectar and pollen.

“It kills insects over time. With pollinators, it can affect reproduction, make them more susceptible to disease, impact how they feed and their navigation ability,” Abernathy said.

“They may not die immediately, but they are more likely to be eaten by a predator, because they are not behaving normally. It has cascading impacts throughout the entire food web and ecosystem.”

That includes fish and other aquatic creatures, since many insects spend their larval stage in water.

“Aquatic insects are important as more than food,” she said. “They clean and filter water, feed on sediment and algae ... and get rid of decomposing plants.”

Abernathy added that homeowners often use a higher concentration of pesticides than most farms do. The runoff washes into storm sewers and, eventually, creeks.

The city is establishing pollinator havens on public property and encouraging homeowners to carve out space for pollinator gardens.

Soil health: One of the biggest concerns for the city is the degradation of some parcels of Open Space agricultural land caused by overgrazing and a burgeoning prairie dog population. The situation is so dire that some parcels of Open Space land can no longer be leased, because they are considered fallow.

In addition to working on a way to measure soil health such as looking at microbe populations, the city is working on soil restoration with an eye to finding the best practices for repairing land.
Marcus McCauley is working with the city of Boulder to restore the soil on a neighboring Open Space parcel degraded by overgrazing and an exploding prairie dog population.

Our Environment

Longmont farmer works to revive soil

Marcus McCauley is working on a soil improvement project on Open Space land adjoining his McCauley Family Farm near Longmont.

The work is similar to what he’s done on his own land, improving soil health by using practices such as keyline design to follow contours of the land and using a subsoil plow to cut deep grooves in the land that allow him to “harvest water.” Water from rainfall and irrigation accumulates in the grooves and soaks deeply into the land rather than running off.

He also applies compost, adding nutrients to the soil, while the water helps grass seeds to grow, their roots penetrating the hard ground, trapping carbon and releasing nutrients to microbes in the soil. These methods have greatly improved his own land, on which he also has planted strips of trees with small berries on his pastures to attract birds.

McCauley couldn’t help but become interested in the Open Space parcel next to his farm after an intense windstorm a couple of years ago blew large amounts of its topsoil onto his farm, depositing about ¼ inch over his fields. So much soil accumulated along the fence that his sheep could walk over it. Those acquainted with environmental science or farming understand the loss of topsoil is considered an ecological disaster.

“It took millennia to build (the soil) up,” McCauley said. “The taxpayers have owned that land for a very short period of time, and the topsoil is gone.”

When the person leasing the land left, McCauley inquired about the land, wondering what was going to happen to it. He was told it was unleasable, meaning that it could not support farming or ranching. Over-grazing and a proliferation of prairie dogs, which could not be killed in Boulder as of this writing, were the main causes. The city was re-examining its prairie dog policies after complaints by farmers and a recommendation by its open space board.

McCauley got permission to lease the land from the city under a carbon farming program. The deep-groove plowing helps with the prairie dogs, because the soil stays wetter after rain.

“It discourages them from maintaining a permanent spot,” McCauley said.

A dry fall meant spotty germination after seeding, but subsequent moisture should help the cover crop he planted in late spring. Bindweed remains a problem, as do prairie dogs, but he is hopeful that he will be able to bring the land back to the point where grazing is possible.

“It’s incredibly rewarding to have the opportunity to regenerate land,” he said. “You can’t take a broken system and put it on the shelf and say, ‘We’re going to preserve this,’ unless you really manage the ecology of it.”
This land is your land, this land is my land?

What makes Boulder County special? There are many possible answers to that question. One of the most apparent would be the pioneering actions by the city of Boulder and Boulder County in preserving Open Space for future generations.

Now those future generations are the current generation, and officials are striving to inculcate a love of and respect for nature in today’s children who will eventually assume the mantle of stewardship. To many, the issue would appear solved. Go to any trailhead on most days, and you’ll see parents and children heading off on a hike.

But one thing has changed since Open Space was a new concept. Boulder County is more diverse than it was then, with Latinos the largest minority group at about 14% of the population, according to Census figures.

“In the late 1960s, early 1970s, the Latino population was maybe 2%,” said Richard Garcia, development director for the Latino school readiness nonprofit ELPASO. “I can almost say with a great degree of certainty that (many Latinos) don’t know what Open Space is. They may not know there’s so much out there for kids.”

Even if families are aware, they may not know how to access the space or may not feel welcome.

Rafael Salgado, executive director of Cal-Wood Education Center, said cultural differences can make Latino families uncomfortable. For example, Latinos often have large, extended families who like to get together.

“I have heard that sometimes Latino families will move picnic tables and put them together,” Salgado said. “The park ranger will say (the tables) belong where they belong. If you want to attract Latino families, leave some tables together. It looks welcoming to them.”

Latinos may not know some rules, such as the fact that people over 16 need a fishing license, he added. Bilingual signs would make such rules clear, as well as demonstrate that Latinos belong there as much as others do.

“All Latinos want to be really respectful of everything they do in this country,” he said.

Public parks also have a way to go in encouraging Latinos to access their amenities. Picnic shelters often require reservations months in advance, and many websites are in English only.

There can be a clash of cultures on how to use Open Space.

“Hiking is allowed, mountain biking is allowed, but (some) don’t want people picnicking there,” said Mara Mintzer, program director of Growing Up Boulder. “There’s no one right way of using it.”

Growing Up Boulder works with children to gather their input into government decisions on the design of public spaces, as well as other issues. The organization recently released a bilingual map of things children can do in the city of Boulder.

Mintzer in early 2019 wrote an op-ed for the Daily Camera in which she discussed a clash over public land bordering Wonderland Lake. After surveying hundreds of nearby residents, both English and Spanish speakers, as well as nearly 100 children and teens, ages 3-18, Growing Up Boulder recommended the city of Boulder add a fishing pier, boardwalk and shade structure for the site.

More than 100 neighbors showed up at a public meeting to talk about the planned changes. Most were against the proposal, even angry about it, fearing it would lead to congestion that would change the serene character of the area.

Exposing young people to public land becomes even more important as more land is developed in Boulder County, preventing the kind of natural exploring that many kids engaged in during the 1980s, Mintzer said.

The good thing is that there is agreement on the basic goals, she said. “What’s funny underneath it all, most of us have the same values: caring about Open Space, wildlife, caring about our children.”
Denver Water seeks to raise Gross Reservoir by 131 feet, doubling water capacity and destroying hundreds of thousands of trees. Opponents urge water conservation instead.

Water dispute: Proposed Gross Reservoir expansion pits Boulder County Commissioners, others against Denver Water

It’s hard to imagine a local issue much more contentious than the proposed expansion of Gross Reservoir, one that was not resolved as of this writing.

The largest construction project ever in Boulder County would destroy between 200,000 and 650,000 trees. Opponents urge a greater focus on water conservation instead.

“(The dam expansion) is going to be ... happening in a county that cares deeply about its environmental footprint,” said Jennie Curtis, executive director of the Garfield Foundation, an environmental nonprofit.

That footprint would be substantial. The proposal to raise the dam by 131 feet would more than double reservoir capacity, also more than doubling the amount of concrete in the complete dam to nearly 1.5 million cubic yards.

Curtis also pointed out that the data used in Denver Water’s environmental impact statement dates to 2002, predating concerns about climate change.

Denver Water said it needs to bolster water supplies for its customers north of Denver. With the exception of several thousand acre feet to increase the flow of Boulder Creek when it runs low, very few Boulder County residents would receive water from the project.

Boulder resident Dan Johnson, who has done engineering work for Denver Water, said the impact is lower than if the project were started on a new site. He added that Denver Water plans to mitigate the impact on local residents as much as possible, having workers park offsite, for example.

“The problem is that nature didn’t put water where people want to live,” he said, adding that when the current dam was built in 1954, planning included expansion for future needs.

Municipalities in Boulder County currently use less than half the gallons per capita they used in 2000, and other Boulder County municipalities have also made significant improvements in water conservation.

Among the communities of Boulder County, Pinebrook had

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PER CAPITA DAILY RESIDENTIAL WATER USE, 2018 (INCLUDES SINGLE- AND MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENCES, IN GALLONS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pine Brook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boulder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longmont</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lafayette</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erie</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Municipal water utilities
Xcel crews work on Sixth Street in Boulder. The company and the city have been going through a messy divorce as Boulder seeks to run its own, more environmentally responsible utility.

Photo courtesy Daily Camera

Boulder’s efforts to separate from Xcel make slow progress

It hasn’t been amicable, and the process has been arduous, but as of this writing it looks as though the city of Boulder and Xcel Energy could be inching toward a divorce settlement.

Engineers from both sides have been working on separation, and although the process has been and continues to be contentious, it appears to be moving forward after years of legal battles and public filings. More of the same is likely before the process is complete.

The separation got under way after the city of Boulder set a goal of using 100% clean energy by 2030 and reducing carbon emissions by 80% by 2050. The city did not renew its contract with Xcel in 2010, and voters in 2011 approved funds for an evaluation of the takeover. After the evaluation found that separation and city control was financially and legally feasible, Boulder created a transition plan in 2014.

In mid-2019, Boulder filed in court to condemn Xcel’s assets, the last step in acquiring them, after the two sides could not reach an agreement on the list of facilities to be acquired or a price for them.

Estimates on the number of trees that would need to be removed for the Gross Reservoir expansion range from a high of 650,000 to a low of 200,000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coal</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renewables</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural gas</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Projected | Source: Xcel Energy, Colorado Energy Plan Fall 2018 Update
Although a bike path and express buses have been added along U.S. 36 between Boulder and Denver, an increasing number of residents and cars continue to add to ozone pollution.

Photo by Julia Vandenoever

Polis administration tackles Front Range’s chronic ozone problem

Once again, the American Lung Association has given Boulder County an F on ozone pollution.

Ozone is a big problem along the Front Range, at least partially because of the very qualities that most attract people to Colorado: proximity to the mountains and copious amounts of sunlight. Ozone is created when various pollutants mix with sunlight. Then, ozone-laden air becomes trapped against the mountains.

In another irony, outdoor exercise — another favorite Front Range pastime — can make the health effects of ozone worse, according to the American Lung Association. Young children, people who are older than 65 and those with asthma and other chronic lung conditions are also at greater risk.

Boulder County is not alone in the state in not meeting federal standards for ozone.

“The non-attainment area (for ozone) now expands from Denver to Fort Collins,” said Cindy Copeland, air quality specialist for Boulder County Public Health.

In 2018, Colorado requested and was granted an extension to meet the Environmental Protection Agency’s 2008 standard for ozone. Gov. Jared Polis is taking a more aggressive approach to meeting ozone standards, withdrawing the extension request to spur faster compliance and setting a goal for Colorado to meet federal standards by mid-2021.

Where do ozone-creating pollutants come from?

“The two biggest contributors are oil and gas development, largely in Weld County, that (releases) volatile organic compounds (VOCs) into the atmosphere and motor vehicles all over the metro area, which release nitrogen oxide (NOx),” said Will Toor, who heads the Colorado Energy Office under Polis.

New regulations will look at the whole cycle of oil and gas drilling with the goal of reducing emissions, Toor said. In addition, the administration is working to get more people out of their cars and move the state to 100% renewable energy in the next few decades.

Wildfires also contribute to ozone, said Boulder County’s Copeland, making it even more important for the state to reduce the emissions it can more easily control.

On the positive side, power plant emissions have dropped as less coal is being burned, and autos have also gotten cleaner in the last decades. Those gains have largely been erased by the increase in new residents and more cars along the Front Range, along with the ramping up of oil and gas production. The area was compliant in the late 1990s, Copeland said, but the standard was tightened in both 2008 and 2015, pushing the Front Range back into non-compliance.

The Polis administration believes its more aggressive approach, which will look at all the contributors to ozone, will pay off. Such things as lowering VOCs in paint and adhesives and working to reduce VOCs from various other sources — including from the state’s largest breweries — will make a difference, along with the larger actions, Toor said. “Little pieces add up to something more significant moving forward,” he said.
Environmental Affinity Group provides inspiration, information, and connection among action-oriented donors

For donors of the Community Foundation whose philanthropy is focused on protecting and promoting our shared environment, the Environmental Affinity Group (EAG) is a springboard for action.

The group “convenes and inspires Boulder County environmental donors, building a connected and engaged community around environmental issues, connecting donors with environmental organizations, and providing opportunities for effective grantmaking,” according to its statement of purpose.

With some 65 participants and counting, EAG hosts educational events – including legislative briefings on pending environmental bills, relevant film screenings, discussions with expert ecologists and conservationists, and more.

Additionally, “EAG provides opportunities for donors to connect with various organizations, and learn more about local and global environmental issues and effective solutions,” says Ning Mosberger-Tang, a passionate environmental advocate, activist, and donor. “Building connections and staying informed are prerequisites for making collective impact on urgent issues we face, including the crisis of climate change.

“EAG is not only building a supportive community, it also helps direct resources in a more effective manner ... and helps solve problems that each of us can’t solve on our own.”

Among EAG participants, survey results show 67% are interested in climate change, 61% in energy, and 56% in population growth; other top areas of interest include environmental education, water, and pollination.

Since 2014, local philanthropists have granted more than $5 million through Donor-Advised Funds at the Community Foundation to organizations supporting environmental and animal causes. Additionally, more than $196,000 in grants via the foundation’s Community Trust grant cycle have been directed to Boulder County nonprofits that advance these causes. In 2019, the EAG aims to increase the foundation’s Environmental Trust endowment from $32,000 to $132,000.

To learn more, contact Peggy Driscoll at Peggy@commfound.org or 303.442.0436.

— Sabine Kortals Stein
Our Arts & Culture

Boulder County arts work toward a more inclusive future

Boulder County’s arts scene is vibrant. The local community embraces the arts; artists continue to cluster here; support is strong from city and county governments, schools, audience members and volunteers, as well as the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District.

This embarrassment of riches gives the community room to reflect on who the arts serve now — and who they will serve going forward. As Boulder County becomes more diverse, arts organizations in the community are working to broaden their understanding of the ways in which inclusion can be woven into the fabric of the arts community.

Open Studios, which in 2019 marked its 25th year, was an early player in demystifying art by connecting artists with members of the public through its studio tour. Now, with its Plein Air Festival, members of the public can see professional and amateur artists at work without paying. Open Studios also works with art students and teachers in schools and has a mobile art lab that makes appearances at local festivals.

The number of such festivals has grown in recent years, with Boulder, Longmont, Louisville and Lafayette offering opportunities for appreciating music, dance, art and food from local vendors. The county has also encouraged public art, which puts art into people’s daily lives as they encounter it walking, biking and driving.

Stories by Cindy Sutter

Liliana Ravenzaha, of Fiesta Colorado Dance Company, dances to traditional Mexican music at the 2018 Longmont Museum’s annual Día de los Muertos celebration, which drew about 6,000 people.
“I firmly believe public arts in a city sets the stage,” said Charlotte LaSasso, executive director of the Boulder County Arts Alliance. “Whether you notice or not, you’re taking it in on a subconscious level.”

Boulder County still has a long way to go in including everyone. County demographics have trended toward more ethnic and racial diversity, leading many arts organizations to do some thinking — and acting — on making their groups more responsive to a changing audience. About two years ago, the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District began a big push toward DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) modeling changes in its own operations to serve as a model for the arts organizations it serves and partially funds.

Several Boulder County arts organizations are following suit. The Boulder Phil, for example, is using collaborations with dance groups and others to bring new interpretations to some of its musical programming.

Other arts organizations, such as the Longmont Museum, have long reflected the diversity of the town in which they are located. An event that particularly attracts wide community support is its annual Day of the Dead remembrance and celebration, which will mark its 20th year in 2020. A moving exhibit includes “altars” made by artists and community members to honor the lives of people who have died. The celebratory part, with a planned move to downtown Longmont in 2019, has been embraced by the wider community.

After starting in Longmont in 2016 and moving to Boulder the following year, the Latino Festival has brought thousands of people to learn about and celebrate a wide variety of Latin cultures. In 2019, the event had to be rescheduled due to cold weather, but also because of threatened mass immigration raids by the Trump administration.
Maya Sol Dansie offers her thoughts during a workshop for local artists on the subject of cultural appropriation and appreciation, as participants Elena Aranda, left, and Elicia Goodsoldier listen.

Cultural appreciation or appropriation?  
Arts workshop designed to inspire dialogue

When it comes to dealing with touchy and difficult subjects, Ashmi Desai is the person to call. A postdoctoral associate in the University of Colorado’s School of Education, Desai is certified in dialogue facilitation on divisive issues.

Boulder County Arts Alliance hired her to conduct two workshops for local artists on the subject of cultural appropriation. The workshops were well-attended, said Charlotte LaSasso, executive director.

“It generated a lot of strong emotions,” she said. “People were eager to follow up.”

The issue is tricky, said Desai, who grew up in South India and has been in Boulder since 2011. Some artists admire cultural traditions that are not their own and incorporate them into their art, seeing the practice as showing admiration or respect.

Those whose culture is referenced may see things differently.

“(They think) ‘We have our own culture, which we have expressed. Why don’t you express your culture?’” Desai said. “These are conversations we need to be having.”

A person in a minority culture may feel that a member of the dominant culture is free to try on and discard others’ cultural practices in a way that they are not. It’s important to talk about the differences in perceptions among cultures and between individuals, Desai said.

“It’s very contextual. Our identities are complex. Nobody is necessarily just a black person, an Indian person or a white person these days,” Desai said. “I think Boulder is just ripe for these conversations. When we did these workshops, there was a heightened awareness. Everyone wanted to listen and know. Everyone was open.”
Enhancing the arts by welcoming all

Who are the arts for? Most people in Boulder County would likely say the arts are for everyone. But for people of color, those in lower income brackets, those who do not speak English, and those with disabilities, the arts may not feel particularly welcoming.

“We all approach art from the perspective of, ‘Is there something here for me,’” said Charlotte LaSasso, executive director of the Boulder County Arts Alliance. “I don’t worry walking through the doors of a museum anywhere.”

However, LaSasso added, the experience can be very different for many people.

“If you’re disabled, you might not be able to figure out how to get in,” she said. “If you don’t see people who look like you or speak your language, it becomes pretty daunting.”

Arts organizations in Boulder County — which is 78% white — and the city of Boulder — 88% white — are reflecting and taking action on these issues in response to demographic and other changes, as are many communities nationwide. Locally, the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD), which contributed funds to 70 arts organizations in Boulder County in 2017, is nudging its beneficiaries toward clear commitments to diversity, equity and inclusion.

“I think it is a long process,” LaSasso said. “You don’t just decide to do a program and call it equity work. You can’t just translate a poster into Spanish. It has to be in everything you do.”

Deborah Jordy, executive director of the SCFD, said the district began working in earnest on DEI more than two years ago. In 2017, SCFD diversified its staff, making one-third of its workers people of color. It followed a similar trajectory on its 11-member board by including five members from diverse backgrounds. SCFD also offers a Diversity in the Arts internship.

“How can we model behavior and how can we reflect the community?” Jordy said. “You need to start from within with staff and board.”

She added that SCFD would like to see greater board diversity and more people of color, more people with disabilities and under-represented populations in staff leadership positions.

“We can’t mandate that organizations do this,” Jordy said, “but we believe it is the right thing to do.”

The key is access, Jordy said. Examples she cites are bilingual programs and websites, as well as websites that are more accessible for those with disabilities. More diverse leadership can help bring about these and other changes.

She added that changing demographics mean a change in those who access the arts.

“The audiences are changing,” she said. “It’s not going to be the same in a few years.”

Univision news anchor Jorge Ramos reads Cristian Solano-Córdova’s personal story during a taping of a new podcast series called UndocuAmerica, focused on the experience of undocumented people. The platform pairs DREAMers (young people with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) with national voices to share deeply moving stories from the undocumented community. The podcast is part of a project by Boulder-based MOTUS Theater, which works with undocumented leaders to help them write powerful stories about their lives and then uses media to reach a wider audience. The great cellist Yo-Yo Ma recorded a song just for this podcast episode, available at Shoeboxstories.org.

Photo courtesy MOTUS Theater
Boulder Phil works to balance outreach with tradition

“Diversity” and “symphony orchestra” might not be an obvious pairing, but many symphony orchestras have recognized the need to attract a younger and more diverse audience — including the Boulder Philharmonic.

“We’re in an industry that’s very hidebound and traditional,” said Katie Lehman, executive director of the Boulder Phil. “We always say we love Tchaikovsky and Beethoven; we stand on the shoulders of giants. At the same time, we recognize (their music was created at a time) in the history of culture that excluded so many people.”

Thus, the mission of the Phil and other orchestras is to bring the richness and complexity of master composers of the past to a new audience while building on that tradition in a way that incorporates diversity.

The effort involves both organization and programming. An important step is attracting a more diverse board, an effort currently under way at the Boulder Phil.

Then there’s hiring. About 10 years ago, orchestras began conducting blind auditions for musicians, Lehman said. That means making musicians heard, not seen, when they audition for a job, removing the potential of implicit bias toward white male musicians.

As for programming, creating a dynamic season requires combining traditional pieces, what Lehman calls an orchestra’s “war horses,” with more innovative performances. Some of the latter can be accomplished through collaboration with other arts groups.

Lehman cited a collaboration, fostered by Boulder Phil Conductor Michael Butterman, that featured the Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble from Denver, which choreographed and performed a piece to accompany “The Lark Ascending” by Vaughan Williams. Robinson interpreted the piece by portraying an imprisoned black man being offered hope by his mother, sister and a woman carrying his child.

Audience members had different reactions, Lehman said.

“A lot of people were moved to tears. They said it gave the piece new meaning,” she said. “Others found it jarring. (They said) they never saw the music that way.”

The Phil also pushed the envelope with the last concert in its 2018-19 season. The concert included Dvorak’s “From the New World” symphony, which captures the composer’s vision of America that includes Native American and African American sounds. Peter Boyer’s “Dream of America,” based on the Ellis Island Oral History Project, was part of the performance as well.

The Boulder Phil also worked with local immigration organizations and the Motus Theater to bring to life the stories of newer immigrants with “UndocuMonologues.” The program particularly resonated with many of the orchestra’s musicians, who are immigrants.

“It was a very meaningful experience for us,” Lehman said.

The Phil is reaching out to young people in an innovative way in addition to its concerto competition, which involves classically trained young people.

“We’re talking about having a different kind of concert,” Lehman said, explaining that it would involve asking kids to submit their own musical material. “They can record it on their phones. They can be singing or tapping on the bottom of a gallon bucket.”

Professionals would choose the material and work with the young person who submitted it to make it performance-worthy.

“The hope is to find ways to open as many doors as possible to kids who have passion, talents and interests,” she said.
Longmont Museum’s Day of the Dead events mourn, celebrate loved ones who have died

Longmont Museum’s Day of the Dead events started small 19 years ago. It began as a grassroots effort by members of the community to bring meaningful programming to the museum for Latino residents. A community committee continues to do much of the planning.

“We really try to keep it grounded in the grassroots where it started,” said Kim Manajek, the museum’s director.

Keeping the events true to the heart of a community had some unexpected benefits. The Day of the Dead programming — with its combination of heartfelt commemoration of loved ones and a boisterous celebration of their continued impact on the living — also struck a chord with non-Latinx residents. Longmont Museum’s Day of the Dead events are believed to be the largest such celebration in the state, attracting roughly 6,000 people.

From a relatively modest start, “it has become something a lot bigger,” said Manajek. “It’s about sharing culture and bringing a lot of things for everyone to celebrate.”

Children can participate by making the holiday’s traditional sugar skulls and getting their face painted like skeletons. Family day brings dancing and procession of the Gigantes: traditional giant puppets. Family day was scheduled to move to Main Street in 2019, with food and dancing. Joining the Gigantes will be Catrinas, dancing skeletons whose fancy clothes derive from political satire dating to the Mexican Revolution that began in 1910.

Longmont Museum honors the remembrance part of Day of the Dead with a poignant exhibition of altars, necessary viewing for a full understanding of El Dia de los Muertos, as the holiday is known in Spanish. Profound in their simplicity, many of the altars — created by community members after an application process — convey their loss with pictures and everyday objects that belonged to those who have died.
For most residents of Boulder County, the Latinx Festival 2019 offered a fun day of music, dance and great food from Mexico, Central America, South America and the Caribbean. For local Latinos and those from surrounding areas, the joyful expression of culture promised much the same. But national politics marred the scene.

The threat of nationwide immigration raids by the Trump administration caused festival organizers to push back the event. The raids were retracted just a day before the event was scheduled, but the festival was still pushed back by several weeks.

Tamil Maldonado and her husband, Jose Beteta, started the Latinx Festival on Main Street in Longmont in 2016. The couple, who also founded the theater company Barrio E, chose the location for a particular reason.

“In the city of Longmont, Latinos are there,” Maldonado said. “One-third of the population is Latino. Still, (people) didn’t feel welcome in downtown. (We were saying) ‘This belongs to us, as well.’ We want to share and celebrate who we are in the world.”

Police estimated the 2016 crowd at 5,000, Maldonado said. Since then, it has more than tripled: 2019’s festival drew roughly 15,000-20,000 attendees.

The festival in 2018 moved from Longmont to Boulder — a city that is 88 percent non-Hispanic white, according to the U.S. Census. The move came about in an interesting way: Several entities asked the festival to come, including the Boulder City Council, the Boulder Human Rights Commission and the Boulder County Arts Alliance, Maldonado said. The fact that Boulder chose to designate itself a sanctuary city also influenced the decision.

Latinx 2019 and similar efforts are a way to begin to educate the public on the differences among the cultures and arts that fall under the Latino umbrella, Maldonado said.

“People don’t say ‘I’m Latino.’ They say ‘I’m Mexican, I’m Venezuelan, I’m Colombian, I’m Peruvian,’ ” she said. “Diversity ... it has so many colors and flavors in our culture.”

Yet, as 2019 showed, there is common ground.

“We are all going through the same discrimination,” Maldonado said. “We have values of family, values of friendship, and solidarity is (also) one of the qualities we have.”

Latinx Festival 2019 brings together cultures through music, dance, food

Gian Franco, left, performs with others during the 2018 Colorado Latino Festival at Central Park in Boulder.

Photo courtesy Daily Camera
Reaching out through public art

Leah Brenner Clack was working at a gallery in Boulder when she began to notice what she considered a dearth of public art in the community.

“I felt like the arts weren’t represented in public art,” she said. “There were a lot of sculptures, but not much new in the mural direction.”

Clack, who founded her company, Art Space, in 2015, decided to change that. She started by finding walls appropriate for murals, reaching out to the building owners and connecting them to artists. Now her work also includes looking for grants and working with nonprofits to facilitate the creation of more public art.

Public art serves an important function in a community, Clack believes, making art available to anyone who walks or drives by.

“Everybody gets to encounter art without the pressure to understand it or respond in a certain way,” she said. “It’s very much a freer experience.”

She added that public art also encourages viewers to create their own art: by taking a photograph, for example. Clack once saw someone spontaneously create a dance in front of a mural.

Chris Warren, an artist who lives in North Boulder, created a mural for the NoBo Art District on a building on Broadway and Violet. After that commission, public murals have become a significant part of his work.

The NoBo mural, like many of his murals, is his interpretation of a topographic map of the location of the building and its surrounding area, including a You Are Here point.

“It’s celebrating the land around the mural at the same time as the mural,” he said, although some people unfamiliar with topographic maps may not realize what it is. “It’s kind of an abstraction of the maps they are used to seeing. When they find out, it’s an added layer.”

BOULDER COUNTY ARTS EMPLOYMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Full-time</th>
<th>Part-time</th>
<th>Contract</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>807</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>1201</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SCFD

WHAT CAN I DO?

Visit museums and galleries, support local musicians and go to concerts and plays.

Donate time or money to arts organizations.

Teach your children to appreciate the arts by taking them to cultural events.

Buy art from local artists.

Take a class at a local arts organization.
With plein air painting, the work gets done rain or shine

With 300 days of sunshine, Boulder County can be a perfect place for a plein air painting festival. But not always.

Colorado’s weather is also remarkably unpredictable, as Boulder-based Open Studios has sometimes discovered with its annual Boulder Plein Air Festival.

Even when spring should have sprung, rain and snow don’t show deference to the best-laid plans of arts organizations. Good thing artists are an ingenious lot. That includes Colorado natives, artists who moved to Boulder County — which was named an arts cluster in 2016 — and artists who traveled to the Front Range for the Plein Air Festival.

Painting outdoors, also known as plein air painting, became particularly popular during the 19th century heyday of impressionist artists, who particularly valued natural light. In recent years, it has enjoyed a resurgence as a way to bring the arts to the community.

Local artist Kathleen Reilly used a door in a barn at Blue Cloud Farm to frame her view. The choice also had the obvious advantage of placing her inside as she put oil to canvas.

“That was a miserable day,” she said of the cold, rain, snow and sleet, but not the painting experience. “I saw the barn. It was a really good place to paint.”

Reilly, who worked as a technical illustrator, said plein air painting is valuable for the artist.

“It’s almost like meditation. You’re really focused on it,” she said. “It’s really a challenge to start and finish a picture in a two-hour window before the sun moves or the weather changes.”

In addition, the outdoors magnifies the experience.

“You not only get to see it, you hear it, smell it, feel it. It’s just a lot more intense,” she said.

George Sanderson, who has been painting in oil and other media for 45 years, has devised an all-weather plein air kit of sorts.

“I made it myself from a table-top easel, a heavy duty surveyor’s tripod, a (hanging) bag to put rocks in to weigh it down if it gets windy and a cup holder (for) tea or coffee or beer,” he said. “I prefer to paint outside, and I bring an umbrella.”

But even such Boy-Scout level preparation was not enough when a scheduled painting day in Niwot brought heavy, wet snow. Undaunted, many artists found a way.

“(One artist) titled her piece situationally: ‘From the Back of My Subaru,’” said Mary Horrocks, executive director of Open Studios and organizer of the Plein Air Festival.

Sanderson worked from the cab of his truck. He and several other artists did their work close to home, rather than making the slippery trek to Niwot. Sanderson set up with a view of a playground in North Boulder.

Snow falling on an unused slide made a nice focal point.

“I was unable to set up for oil painting,” he said, “but I did a nice pen and ink and watercolor.”

On other festival days, such as an event at Coot Lake, and a two-hour paintout on Pearl Street, the weather cooperated.

“Everyone ultimately had a great time,” Sanderson said. “We could share horror stories about painting in the snow.”

Amid cold, rain, snow and sleet, Kathleen Reilly arrived early and set up in a barn at Blue Cloud Farm to complete her painting at the Boulder Plein Air Festival.

Photo by Julia Vandenoever
Our Civic Participation & Giving

Much work yet to do in achieving connected, inclusive communities

The date is seared in Naropa President Chuck Lief’s memory: March 1, 2019. The day one of his students, Zayd Atkinson, an African American, was detained on his front doorstep for picking up trash.

“That response, to me, it was completely mindless,” Lief said. “It was almost primal, that eight cops with three weapons was a result of a kid picking up garbage.”

The confrontation ended when a white Naropa employee, well known to the officers, rushed to the scene and waved them off, assuring them Atkinson was a Naropa student who lived there.

How well do we know our neighbors? Does everyone feel safe, seen and valued? Do we identify with or understand the struggles others in our cities and towns experience, but that most of us are fortunate enough not to endure? The data suggests we have a lot of work to do, across Boulder County, in this regard.

Boulder Police are twice as likely to arrest black people than white, non-Hispanic people after stopping them, a recent study shows.

Stories by Chris Barge

Zayd Atkinson speaks before Boulder City Council on March 18, 2019. The incident in which police officers confronted Atkinson while he picked up trash was the catalyst for the creation of a task force to explore forming a community police oversight board.
The Community Foundation’s civic participation and giving survey shows our county’s residents feel we are least open to minorities, immigrants and refugees compared with any other subgroup, and we are not very accepting of senior citizens either.

Institutions across our county, including this Community Foundation, are increasingly prioritizing equity in their work. Is this intention leading to a more inclusive community with more equitable outcomes for the most vulnerable and marginalized among us?

Everywhere we look, there’s work to do. Our charitable giving rates are well below the national average. This is driven, in part, by residents not seeing the needs around them and not knowing enough about what local nonprofits are doing to address those needs, our survey finds.

More and more, the Community Foundation is hearing a theme emerge as it listens to members of our community. People feel disconnected. Lonely. They are yearning for the sorts of relationships with one another that might increase awareness of our community’s needs.

The 2020 Census provides communities across the country with an opportunity to get to know each other a little better. So much depends on a complete and accurate count, including this very report, which relies on the census for a majority of its data.

The good news is that communities are strengthened every day, one new relationship at a time. Atkinson had only lived in Boulder for nine months before his run-in with police. But he says he plans to stay, because of the great relationships he’s already made, and the support he feels by many who are calling for change.

“I just feel grateful to be a part of some sort of possible reform,” he said. “It’s good to be in a situation where we’re able to do some good.”

“…For people of color – or for people who look or act different – going into public places, restaurants, shopping, there is a reality that you might be treated differently.”

– Anonymous Boulder resident

PERCENTAGE OF BOULDER COUNTY RESIDENTS WHO SAY WE’RE VERY OPEN OR OPEN TO THE FOLLOWING GROUPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gay and lesbian people</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families with young children</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young adults without children</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent college grads</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior citizens</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial and ethnic minorities</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrants from other countries</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CFBC Survey 2019
Carmen Ramirez speaks about the importance of Latino bilingual cultural brokers at a Community Foundation gathering of community leaders.

Photo by Julia Vandenoever

Riding the roller coaster of diversity, equity and inclusion

Many people of color report not feeling included in Boulder County, despite the area’s reputation as a progressive stronghold. Several large institutions have recognized this is an issue, to the point where many are prioritizing efforts to become more diverse, inclusive and equitable.

Boulder County government has several initiatives focused on this topic. The Boulder Valley School District is making equity a chief focus area of its next strategic plan, still stumped by the vast disparities in academic outcomes between its students of color and their peers.

Carmen Ramirez has seen this cycle of awareness and focus ramp up across our county before, only to fizzle out.

“It’s kind of like a roller coaster,” said Ramirez, manager of Community and Neighborhood Resources for the City of Longmont. “We go all the way up, we invest, and then it’s lost. If we don’t have a steady commitment to sustain, we won’t build capacity.”

Some minorities in the City of Boulder experience a persistent lack of inclusion, due to the majority population’s overall lack of exposure to diversity, their microaggressions and the city’s unaffordability, according to a 2017 Community Assessment of Boulder as a Safe and Inclusive Community. Leaders therefore struggle to make Boulder the welcoming, inclusive community it wants to be.

One Boulder resident, quoted anonymously in the assessment, put it this way: “The reality for people that are here: it’s not as welcoming a community. For people of color — or for people who look or act different — going into public places, restaurants, shopping, there is a reality that you might be treated differently.”

The City of Boulder has focused on diversity efforts for more than 10 years. They’ve done diversity training for all staff in the past. But it hasn’t seemed to make much difference, said Aimee Kane, the city’s Program and Project Manager.

These days Boulder is trying to be more intentional in how it talks about and engages with the community, Kane said. It’s working with Government Advancing Racial Equity to help city staff understand the impacts of structural racism and implicit bias, in three areas: the procurement process, workforce equity and community engagement.

Ultimately, the city will create a racial equity plan and then ask the community if they think it will work. The city is also working with partner organizations to help them learn what the city is learning.

“The hope is that we’re all rowing in the same direction and we’re not doing separate things,” she said. “There’s a lot of good work going on in this space, but there’s a lot of three steps forward, two steps back.”
The most visible recent step backward for Boulder’s racial equity efforts came in March 2019, when a Boulder Police officer tried to arrest Zayd Atkinson, an African American Naropa student, on suspicion of trespassing while picking up trash outside his apartment. Atkinson disputed the officer’s right to arrest him, and he was eventually confronted by nine officers, with guns drawn. The incident sparked a community firestorm and led to a police oversight task force to look at racial bias. The arresting officer resigned.

“It taught me there are some old patterns of oppression and systemic racism that hadn’t ever been addressed until my incident,” said Atkinson, 27. “For some reason, the incident that happened with me seemed to wake up the city.”

Naropa President Charles Lief rushed to support Atkinson. He also said he sensed a moment and an opportunity for Naropa to show leadership on its core values of mindfulness and compassion.

“The gap between the Boulder we think we are and what showed up in Boulder that morning is immense,” Lief said. “The bigger work is how do things like white privilege show up in a community that doesn’t believe white privilege is an issue?”

With humility, Lief acknowledged Naropa has a lot of work to do in this area. However, Naropa has made great strides in recent years to diversify campus, by recruiting staff and students of color and by offering larger financial aid packages.

Boulder’s mayor and city manager invited Naropa to collaborate in creating anti-bias training.

“One result of the issue with Zayd was that all of a sudden Naropa became relevant to the city,” Lief said. The real work is going to require a lot more commitment, starting with leadership, he said. “Is the city willing to model this in a deep way?”

For the time being, Atkinson plans to stay in Boulder, enrolled at Naropa, majoring in Yoga Studies, and feeling the support of many fellow students and faculty, friends and community members.

“I haven’t been part of the community long, but I definitely plan on staying and becoming more and more involved,” he said.
Paula Stone Williams gave this TEDX Mile High talk on what she’s learned living as a man and a woman in December 2017. It’s been viewed online more than 2 million times.

Photo courtesy Paula Stone Williams

Seeing white male privilege as a transgender woman

Paula Stone Williams was the CEO of a large religious nonprofit. She hosted a national television show. She preached in megachurches.

“I was a successful, well-educated, white American ... male,” she said at the opening of a TEDX Mile High talk she gave that has now been viewed more than 2 million times.

Williams, who was born in 1951, knew she was transgender since the age of 3 or 4. After she came out as transgender in 2012, she lost all her jobs.

Since then the Lyons resident has been speaking across the country and internationally, almost exclusively on the topic of gender equity. She talks about being mistreated by men on airplanes since she transitioned, about being subjected to “mansplaining,” but also about the support she has felt from those willing to honor and empower women.

She was one of the founders of a new church in Longmont called Lefthand Church, which began worship services in 2018. The congregation of 120 members — and growing — is focused on lessening suffering in Boulder County, particularly by ensuring equity around gender and sexual orientation.

“We want to be the best church for the county, not just in the county,” she said.

Jen Jepson, a church founder along with Aaron Bailey, had reached out to Williams after the 2014 shooting of a black man by a white police officer in Ferguson, Mo. The shooting began awakening her to her privilege and to white supremacy, she said. It was a tipping point. Ten years earlier, her youngest brother had come out as gay, and she realized she didn’t have a framework from her evangelical upbringing to process that. She became disillusioned with the megachurch she was attending in Longmont.

“I realized we weren’t talking about anything regarding power differentials, women and leadership,” Jepson said. “It was eye opening. Really, we were navel gazing and looking at our own sinfulness. On a larger systems level, I didn’t see the church doing that work. I realized I maybe needed to start something.”

Williams closed her TED talk with a call to action for men:

“What can you do?” she asked. “You can believe us when we tell you we might have equality, but we do not have equity. It is not a level playing field. It never has been. You can be a part of the solution by elevating us to equal footing. You uniquely have that power.”

Paula Stone Williams’ advice for white men:

Make sure women are in the meeting.

Don’t interrupt women.

Give women credit for their work.

Hire mothers and be aware of your implicit bias against them.

Be aware of implicit racial bias. Studies show that people with stereotypically black or Hispanic names on their resumes are significantly less likely to get a call back from a potential employer, even when their qualifications are the same as those with white, non-Hispanic names.
Donna Lovato is a 7th-generation U.S. citizen with no discernable Spanish accent. Yet, she’s had to put up with people saying they can’t understand her accent, and others who’ve told her, “Go back where you came from.”

Latino residents say racist comments are on the rise in Longmont over the past few years, said Lovato, executive director of El Comité.

“It was all in the closet before,” she said. “Now they’re out about it.”

El Comité advocates for Longmont’s immigrant population. Its case workers in 2018 assisted 2,771 clients from 24 countries, speaking a total of 15 different languages. Most were Spanish speaking, and 73% were from Mexico. It pains Lovato that her clients deal with comments like “Go back to your country,” in addition to trying to scratch a life out for their families on extremely limited incomes.

Hundreds of families have left Longmont since 2017, and officials suspect they are pulling their children out of the local schools to relocate to their countries of origin. Evidence of this trend is showing up as an increased drop-out rate amongst Latino students in St. Vrain Valley Schools. That’s because students who are not re-enrolled in another school district in the US are counted as drop-outs, though they may be re-enrolling in Mexico or another country.

Lovato looked out the window of her small office. “I don’t want to be all Donkey Downer, though,” she said. She pulled out a newspaper ad from nearby High Plains Bank, advertising its citizenship loans.

Two years earlier, Lovato and her colleague, Marta Moreno, had approached the bank’s president, John Creighton, to see if he could offer small loans to clients who wanted to apply for US citizenship but couldn’t afford the $725 fee. The bank worked out a 24-month, unsecured loan where it paid the application fees directly and borrowers paid the bank back over two years, at $32.54 per month.

“One of the conversations we have here on an ongoing basis is, ‘What are things we can do to support people in our community?’” Creighton said, adding that the decision to develop the Citizenship Loan was easy.

High Plains issued about 15 of the loans during the first two years it was offered. Everyone paid as agreed. Only one borrower was late on one payment, and he was extremely apologetic. “There’s lots of small gestures that business owners can make that have a profound impact on peoples’ lives,” Creighton said.
As one of four national participants in the Knight Foundation’s Community Information Lab, your Community Foundation had the unique opportunity to explore what it means to create the conditions for Latino Bilingual Cultural Brokers (LBCBs) to help drive decisions locally.

Specifically, the Knight Community Information Lab (KCIL) – an 18-month program that empowers foundations to better integrate information needs into their work through a human-centered design approach – comprises data compilation, focus groups, listening events, and interviews to identify and develop a design challenge that addresses local information needs.

“The first question we asked was, ‘How can we create the conditions for cultural brokers to support the Community Foundation’s equity vision?’” said Marta Loachamin, consultant and facilitator on the project. “The second piece was understanding the value of authentic storytelling by keeping intact the voices of the owners of the stories we share.”

According to semantic scholar Mary Ann Jezewski, cultural brokering is the act of bridging, linking or mediating among groups or persons of different cultural backgrounds for the purpose of reducing conflict or producing change.

“Following the principle ‘do nothing about us without us’ by working with – not for – our community, the challenge is to nurture transformation from the inside out, both as individuals and as institutions,” explained Chris Barge, Vice President of Strategic Initiatives and team lead.

Taking an experimental approach inspired by cultural brokers working within our school districts, and building on the work of the Boulder County Office of Resilience and Recovery Cultural Brokers Resilience Program, the foundation’s new Equity Reporting Initiative is funding a Latino bilingual journalist to report for KGNU Community Radio, and to anchor a new TRENDS podcast.

“Equity journalism is directly rooted in listening to Spanish speakers and their stories in tandem with collaborative action,” Barge said.

According to Barge, “Consistent with the foundation’s North Star of equity, we’ve opened the door for ongoing experimentation that involves our community in identifying the best ways for stories to be told and widely incorporated in organizations and institutions across Boulder County.”

To learn more, contact Chris Barge at Chris@comfound.org or 303.442.0436.

― Sabine Kortals Stein

A participant takes a turn in the Listening Together sound booth at the Longmont Museum’s Cinco de Mayo festival in 2018. The sound booth was a collaboration between KGNU and the Community Foundation to better understand the area’s Latino culture.

Photo by Chris Barge
Locals mobilize for complete census count

The decennial census of population and housing in the United States is the basis for how federal funds are distributed to such programs as WIC, Head Start, education, transportation and public transit. It’s the starting point for how major public policy decisions are made. It determines how many people a state’s voters can send to Congress. This very TRENDS Report relies on the Census for a majority of its data.

The Census also holds a mirror to our community, showing us how well we know one another.

“An indicator of our changing society is we oftentimes don’t either have or create an opportunity to connect with the people around us,” said Rosemary Rodriguez, Executive Director of Together We Count, a nonprofit she organized to help ensure a fair and accurate 2020 Census. “The Census and this work is providing us an opportunity to know our neighbors a little better.”

Rodriguez, a former Denver City Councilwoman, has worked to promote a complete and accurate Census in Colorado since 1990. “This is my fourth census and every time it’s been an act of trying to get to know people and trying to connect and trying to help them understand how important it is.”

Boulder County’s hardest to count populations have traditionally been minorities and immigrants, seniors, children under 5, rural residents and college students.

The cities of Longmont and Boulder organized Complete Count Committees, and other small towns and interest groups in the county were also organizing to get out the count as of this writing.

“If we don’t know who’s in our community, how can we know all the true needs and all the true assets?” said Carmen Ramirez, Manager of Community and Neighborhood Resources for the City of Longmont. “What does it mean to our community to not count everybody? Are these things that we value? I think so.”
“Perfect storm” gathers over 2020 census

Bill O’Hare calls it a perfect storm.

As the United States prepared for the 2020 decennial count of all its residents, several factors converged to make it the most high-stakes exercise in memory.

“This will be the hardest census of my lifetime,” said O’Hare, a national expert who specializes in demographics.

Here are his top five reasons why:

The census has been underfunded for a decade, thanks to Republican congressional efforts to rein in government spending, especially on hard-to-count populations that tend to vote for Democrats, he said.

Because of budget cuts, the Census Bureau is trying new, untested methodologies to help ensure an accurate and complete count, including moving much of its outreach efforts online. “That’s not a good recipe,” he said.

The Trump administration’s well-publicized push to add a citizenship question, which was stopped by the U.S. Supreme Court, “no doubt will reduce cooperation with Hispanic households and with minorities and immigrants,” O’Hare added.

Americans are less willing than ever to respond to any survey, citing privacy and confidentiality concerns.

In response to increased privacy concerns, the Census Bureau is likely to release less information once it collects the data than ever before.

On the positive side, advocates for a complete count outside the census have mobilized far more than in the past and are much more on top of the issue.

Will the positives outweigh the negatives?

“Hindsight will make it easier to sort out,” O’Hare said.

WHAT’S AT STAKE:

$2,300

average amount of federal funding allocated per Colorado resident, per year.

Trump wakes up County voters

The 2016 election of Donald Trump has apparently shocked Boulder County’s Democratic and unaffiliated voters into action.

About 89% of the county’s active voters cast a ballot in the 2016 election, when Hillary Clinton faced Donald Trump at the top of the ticket. This was a less enthusiastic turnout from the near-universal 96% who voted in 2012, when Barack Obama won re-election.

Local voters made up for their 2016 performance with a stronger turnout in 2018 than in 2014 or 2010 — the previous two non-presidential congressional elections.

Statewide, Colorado voters were also fired up in 2018, turning out at the second-highest rate in the country, according to the Florida-based United States Election Project. As a result, Democrats swept the governor’s seat, both houses of the legislature and every statewide constitutional office.

Will liberal voter enthusiasm here and across the country carry into 2020?

Gina Nocera casts her ballot in 2018, when voters across the state turned out at the second-highest rate in the country.

Photo courtesy Daily Camera
Boulder County residents gave $292 million to charitable causes in 2015, according to the most recent data crunched by The Chronicle of Philanthropy. In sheer dollars, we gave more than 95% of counties across the country.

As a percentage of income, however, we gave less than 80% of counties. If we brought our giving rate up to the national average, an extra $68 million would go to charitable causes.

What could local nonprofits do with their share of that extra cash?

“Fewer people would go hungry if we had more food to give,” said Michelle Orge, Executive Director of Community Food Share.

The Louisville-based food pantry supplies 7 million meals annually to Boulder County’s 35,000 food-insecure residents, both directly and through a vast network of partner agencies.

The organization functions like a big gear, supplying food to other human service agencies that address housing, homelessness, health, childcare, education, families, neighborhoods and our community at large.

“When our gear turns, every other gear in the community turns,” Orge said.

The agency operates on a $3 million budget. Additional funding would allow it to supply more food, build more partnerships, make more connections, distribute more information and raise greater awareness.

So what’s holding us back?

“This community does seem to have a bit of a tougher time recognizing there is a need in their community; or at least recognizing the need in their community is something for which they can be part of the solution,” Orge said.

Most Boulder County residents recognize there’s a need, according to Community Foundation Boulder County's 2019 survey. They say they give to organizations they trust, that they believe in and that provide them a clear understanding of the
WHAT CAN I DO?
If you’re an employer, recruit, hire, promote and retain people of color in your business or organization, and make sure your white employees are culturally competent and receive cultural competency training.

Elect people of color to represent you in government.

Do your own personal work developing your cultural competency and understanding white privilege.

Make sure you’re giving financially at least at the national rate of 3.2% of your income, and tell your friends and family what you’re doing and why.

BOULDER COUNTY’S CHARITABLE GIVING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Giving ratio</th>
<th>Total contributions</th>
<th>Average giving per Itemizer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.56%</td>
<td>$292 million</td>
<td>$1,814 (2.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>$2,235</td>
<td>$2,235 (2.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>$3,247</td>
<td>$3,247 (2.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>$13,931</td>
<td>$13,931 (2.7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Services and programs their money will support. They want to help their community, and they feel giving is morally the right thing to do.

Why don’t Boulder County residents give more? Most respondents say they can’t afford it. And they generally think administrative costs at charities are too high.

However, there’s evidence that greater awareness and accurate information could yield better results: a slight majority admit they just don’t know enough about charities, and they say they’re not sure charities are effective.

YOUR COMMUNITY FOUNDATION – MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Pledge 1% Colorado inspires startup giving

Focused on early-stage corporate philanthropy, Pledge 1% Colorado is a network of 252 local entrepreneurs – and counting – who share a common commitment to make a difference in Boulder County and beyond.

Launched by your Community Foundation more than 11 years ago, the movement connects young companies’ future success to philanthropy by allowing them to easily pledge 1% of equity, 1% of employee time to volunteerism, 1% of product and 1% of profit to local communities. By disrupting traditional models of philanthropy, Pledge 1% Colorado continually catalyzes local entrepreneurs to push the status quo.

Since its first member exit in 2008, Pledge 1% Colorado has contributed more than $10 million to Front Range nonprofits and hundreds of hours of volunteer service. Based on its local success, the Community Foundation partnered with Salesforce, Atlassian, and Rally for Impact to establish a global version of the program – Pledge 1%. It was named Most Innovative Not-For-Profit by Fast Company in 2017.

More recently, the Pledge 1% Colorado Nonprofit Pitch Contest – organized by Pledge 1% Colorado and the Community Foundation – recognizes and supports entrepreneurial and innovative nonprofit ideas to solve pressing problems and critical issues facing Boulder County. During Boulder Startup Week, the annual contest seeks proposals that lift up under-resourced communities and advance inclusion, diversity, and equity.

“The Pitch Contest was the perfect opportunity to connect with the startup community, and talk about health equity issues in Boulder County,” said Jorge De Santiago, Executive Director of El Centro Amistad, a contest winner. “We used this platform to present our innovative way to address health equity in our community using our Promotoras de Salud model – a grassroots effort that educates and empowers Latino families to live a healthy lifestyle.”

Learn more at commfound.org/our-impact/programs-initiatives/pledge-1-colorado

— Sabine Kortals Stein
Nonprofits create jobs, boost the economy

Little Bear Preschool in Nederland closed its doors for good in 2019, after 29 years. The closure left families in the remote mountain town with only two preschool options — one of which had no summer hours nor extended care during the school year.

The board of TEENS, Inc., realized it had the capacity and vision to fill the gap. Over the summer, the nonprofit organization struck a deal to help Aspen Grove Community Preschool expand under a new name: The New Explorers Learning Center.

The move aligned with the mission of TEENS, Inc., “To support, educate and empower youth and their families to make healthy choices and thrive.”

“We’re able to provide a meaningful opportunity for people to work right in their own community,” said Stephen LeFaivre, Executive Director of TEENS, Inc.

It’s a shining example of how our nonprofit sector impacts our local economy. A first-ever Colorado Nonprofit Economic Impact Study shows the many ways nonprofits do this.

“We are actually a force — an economic force,” said Joanne Kelly, CEO of the Colorado Association of Funders. Her organization partnered with five other statewide organizations to produce the report.

The report found that more than 13,000 Boulder County residents work for nonprofits — accounting for 1 in 20 jobs. It also found that our county’s nonprofits spend more than $1.3 billion annually, which amounts to more than 5% of all spending.

The vast majority of Boulder County nonprofits provide important services with annual budgets of less than $500,000. For every $1 million spent, nonprofits create 10 jobs, compared to 7 jobs created by the private sector, the report found.

What TEENS, Inc. is doing in Nederland to preserve and create jobs and help families keep their own jobs is a great example of what nonprofits do across the state, Kelly said. The new report is helping the nonprofit industry prove its economic value to lawmakers.

“In the 10 years I’ve been doing this, I’ve definitely noticed that people don’t think of the nonprofit sector as a jobs creator. They think of the good work we’re doing,” Kelly said. “I think it really resonates to have economic data that’s so similar to the way other sectors report their impact.”

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF NONPROFIT IMPACT STUDY:

- Nonprofit Employment (Direct) 13,207
- Nonprofit Spending (Direct) $1,345,653,231
- % of All Jobs 4.97%
- % of All Spending 5.05%

“We are actually a force — an economic force,”
– Joanne Kelly
Reaching out to see what’s needed

Cindy Lindsay’s evolution from startup entrepreneur to philanthropist happened over time.

The east Texas native was working for technology companies in Cupertino, Calif., while also busy raising a family with her husband.

“I was buried under the stuff that was all about me,” she said.

But she also made time to volunteer as a tutor for low-income Latino youth who lived in a barrio across town. She built relationships and began to understand that many people were struggling in Cupertino, despite its tech wealth.

“They’re just people,” she said. “They’re struggling with different things, but they’re no different from you and me.”

Eventually, she and her husband decided to relocate to Boulder, where they went on to found two technology startups in the area.

“At that point, our involvement with philanthropy was to write a check,” she said. “We didn’t participate much in the community.”

Then, she got involved with BoldeReach — an all-female nonprofit grantmaking organization that raised $1 million between 2014 and 2018 and gave it to local nonprofits that work with women and children with limited opportunities.

As in Cupertino, Lindsay realized that poverty and near-poverty is here in Boulder County if people open their eyes.

“The thing I see here is the people in Boulder County who are marginalized or educationally or economically disadvantaged — they are invisible,” she said. “It’s really hard to convince people that the need is there.”

Her work with BoldeReach and as a volunteer trustee of Community Foundation Boulder County has helped her see the great need in Boulder County. She thinks many of Boulder County’s would-be donors are in the same headspace she was: caught up in their busy lives and not noticing the need around them.

However, she has seen firsthand that it’s possible to raise money for the nonprofits supported by both BoldeReach and the Community Foundation.

“That’s the pull for people,” she said. “If they can clearly see their money will make a difference, they will be very generous.”

The importance of connecting with those outside your orbit

Chester Kurtz credits his parents and his upbringing in a hardscrabble Montana town for motivating him to give to and volunteer for nonprofit organizations.

His parents were teachers and civic leaders in the town of Forsyth, which has shrunk from about 3,000 to 1,700 residents in the generation since the nearby coal mine went bust.

Now Kurtz helps run a public accounting firm he co-founded in Boulder. He’s watched some of his clients become millionaires overnight. He has also been astonished sometimes by how little of their newfound wealth they give away. So he was not surprised to learn Boulder County residents donate to nonprofits at lower rates than the national average.

“People are just working hard and busy and haven’t thought about it or made the time for it,” he said.

The son of a kindergarten teacher and elementary school principal who was also the town mayor, Kurtz saw his Montana classmates struggle, and saw how hard his parents worked to support them and their families.

Now he’s married to a municipal court judge and former prosecutor who serves on nonprofit boards, and he serves on the board of Community Foundation Boulder County. He and his wife give generously, and his company, Kurtz Fargo LLP, has an employee-directed giving program.

Raising kids to be aware of the world while growing up in a place largely insulated from those who struggle is a challenge. He and his wife do their best to teach by example.

“There’s a lot of things we’re doing that they see,” he said.
Your Community Foundation

TOGETHER, WE INSPIRE IDEAS

Subscribe to our blog (commfound.org/blog) and follow us on social media to discover who our community is today and who we are becoming. We regularly feature news, announcements, and the innovations and impact of grantees dedicated to aid and empower the most vulnerable among us – as well as stories of inspired giving from donors and partners. Together, we inspire an improved and more equitable quality of life.

TOGETHER, WE IGNITE ACTION

Since the first TRENDS Report was published in 1998, we’ve been refining the indicators we track to more effectively guide and rally our community around our shared values. Because the better we understand our home – the gaps and gifts that set Boulder County apart – the better we work together to identify solutions, and build on our strengths. Together, we ignite community change.

TOGETHER, WE ACCOMPLISH MORE THAN WE DO ALONE

Community Foundation Boulder County, since 1991, has granted more than $90 million to nonprofits focused on health and human services, education, civic engagement, arts and culture, and animals and the environment.

Through competitive grant cycles, we provide funding and create connections between community-minded nonprofits and the resources they need to address local issues. We know that when informed and committed community members come together, inspiration strikes and transformation happens.

Future cultural broker Lyla Fuchs Camden checks out the 2017 TRENDS Report as she is held by her mother, Rachel Fuchs, Intercambio’s Director of Programs, at a Community Foundation event reporting to Boulder County leaders on the importance of Latino bilingual cultural brokers.

Your Community Foundation catalyzes community by facilitating collaboration and partnerships, connecting emerging leaders across sectors, and building networks that advance inclusivity countywide. We convene health organizations working together to improve quality and access...
to care countywide. And we support and enhance the lives of our LGBTQ population, as well as the quality of life for local Latinos. Additionally, we promote community engagement and leadership among local youth and drive early-stage philanthropy among local entrepreneurs. Together, we create opportunities for a stronger, more equitable community.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE? A LOT.

Your donation makes a local impact you can see – whether your passion is helping students get ahead, keeping the arts vibrant, protecting our environment, ensuring access to healthcare, tackling mental health concerns, advancing women, preventing violence and poverty, advocating for LGBTQ rights, or working to overcome walls of division. Learn more about our programs and initiatives countywide: commfound.org/our-impact/programs-initiatives

We invite you to make a gift to your Community Foundation, or establish a donor-advised fund with a variety of assets – from cash, check or credit card to tangible personal property, real estate, business interests, planned gifts, and more. Learn more about ways to give at commfound.org/giving, or send us an email to get started: PhilanthropicServices@commfound.org

Bookmark the full, digital version of TRENDS as your searchable, go-to community guide: commfound.org/TRENDS.

THE HISTORY OF THE TRENDS REPORT:

The TRENDS Report grew out of the Boulder County Civic Forum, which was launched in 1995 as the Boulder County Healthy Communities Initiative. More than 400 residents identified four visions for a healthy community, including: for the people; for the environment; for the economy; and for culture and society. Many of those 50 indicators are included in this expanded TRENDS Report, more than 24 years later.

The TRENDS Report has been a production of Community Foundation Boulder County since 1999. This report relies on more than 150 indicators of our community’s social, economic and environmental health, plus in-depth community reporting. Together, they form the stories, findings and recommendations you see here. All this, plus a searchable indicators database, is available at commfound.org/TRENDS. New this year, our TRENDS podcast, produced in partnership with KGNU Community Radio, 88.5 FM, brings you regular stories about our community’s most pressing needs.

DEFINITIONS TO HELP INTERPRET THE DATA:

This report uses a great deal of data from the American Community Survey (ACS), a nationwide survey to provide communities updated information in between decennial censuses. The most recent data available through the ACS as of mid-2019 was 2017: thus, unless otherwise noted, data reported reflects 2017 numbers.

Slight differences between the Census and the ACS methodology may make for imperfect comparisons. The ACS collects data for all 12 months of the year, not for just a single point in time. Further, while the Census works to count every single person, the ACS is distributed to a population sample and produces estimates more at risk for statistical error. The bulk of the ACS data used here is derived from one-year estimates.

The terms “Latino,” “Latinx,” “Anglo” and “of color”

In this report we use the term “Latino” or “Latinx” to encompass people identified as “Hispanic” or “Latin” by the ACS, or other similar data collecting organizations. People who identify their origin as Spanish, Hispanic, Latino or Latinx may be of any race. We use the term “Non-Hispanic white” or “Anglo” to refer to people who self-identify as white and do not claim Latino heritage. We use the term “people of color” to refer to individuals who identify as something other than Anglo.

Students

Since 2006, the ACS has included group quarters like dormitories or sororities and assisted-living facilities in certain data tables. Students living on campus are NOT counted in poverty estimates. In contrast, students living off-campus have been counted in the data as individuals, including in information on poverty, household income, health care access, etc., since the start of the ACS program. Such students have also been included in decennial Census numbers.

Income vs. Wages

“Income” includes wages, salary, bonuses, self-employment income, gifts, tips, investment income, transfer payments such as social security or food stamps, pensions, rents, and interest income.

“Wages” include only payments received from an employer in an employment relationship that is reported to the State of Colorado for purposes of unemployment insurance. Wages do not include self-employment income.

“Per capita income” is calculated by taking all the income earned in the county and dividing this number by the population.
TRENDS CONTRIBUTORS:

TRENDS is published by Community Foundation Boulder County, with help from the following contributors:

**Chris Barge** – The Community Foundation’s Vice President of Strategic Initiatives, Chris provided editorial and management oversight of this report, wrote the “Executive Summary,” and reported and wrote the chapters on “Our Education” and “Our Civic Participation & Giving.”

**Martin Better Longo** – An Ecuadorian who immigrated with his family to the United States at age 8, Martín is in the process of becoming a certified court interpreter. He translated the CEO Letter and Executive Summary into Spanish.

**Shay Castle** – A Boulder-based journalist who has written and designed for newspapers and magazines, Shay reported and wrote the chapters “Who Are We?” and “Our Economy & Housing.” She covers Boulder City Council, at boulderbeat.news.

**Jeff Hirota** – CEO of the Community Foundation as well as a former documentary filmmaker, Jeff provided editorial guidance and wrote the Letter from the CEO.

**Sabine Kortals Stein** – A member of the Community Foundation’s communications team, Sabine wrote the stories on the Community Foundation’s impact in this edition.

**Gretchen Minekime** – The Community Foundation’s Vice President of Communications, Gretchen wrote pieces on the Community Foundation and managed various aspects of the project, including the public roll-out of the magazine and an accompanying video.

**Cindy Sutter** – A freelance writer who worked as an editor, reporter, writer, wire service aggregator and copy editor during a newspaper career spanning 26 years, Cindy reported and wrote the chapters “Our Health & Human Services,” “Our Environment” and “Our Arts & Culture.”

**Maegan Vallejo** – A former Community Foundation staff member, Maegan wrote the captions for all the indicators found at TRENDS online.

**Julia Vandenoever** – A freelance photographer and former photo editor at Skiing, Backpacker and Outside magazines, Julia shot many of the photos for this edition.

**6162 Productions** – Created a video summarizing top highlights of this 2019 TRENDS Report.

**Daily Camera** – Our thanks to the Daily Camera for contributing many of the photos in this report, pro bono.

**Davis Research** – Conducted Community Foundation Boulder County’s survey on civic participation and giving.

**Sweet Design** – Mary Sweet and Nicole Bizzarro were the lead designers for this report.

THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
2019 BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

Leslie Allen, Chair
Sue Anderson, Vice Chair
Alden Sherman, Treasurer
Rebecca Chávez, Secretary
Jeff Hirota, CEO
Dee Andrews
Joshua Forman
Stanley Garnett
Daniel Hassan
Amy Howard
Chester Kurtz
Cindy Lindsay
Alexis Miles
Jane Caddell Saddison
Kimberly Barr Rutt
Deborah Simmons
Christina Pacheco Sims
TK Smith
Katie Volkmar
Jim Williams
Jeremy Wilson

ON THE BACK COVER: Public art encourages viewers to create their own art, as our photographer did here, on South Boulder Road in Lafayette, with her daughter, Madeleine Vandenoever, left, and Maddie’s good friend, Lyla Lanning. Read more about public art on page 78.

Photo by Julia Vandenoever.
Chris Barge, Vice President of Strategic Initiatives
Community Foundation Boulder County
1123 Spruce Street | Boulder, CO 80302 | Chris@commfound.org

The Community Foundation is a community catalyst that inspires ideas and ignites action to improve the quality of life in Boulder County. We make informed decisions to respond to immediate needs and anticipate future challenges.
Join us to make a difference. We can accomplish more together than alone.

commfound.org