

YEAR OF PIVOTS AND CONNECTIONS

Reflections from Megan Nyce, Grant Manager

Prepared November 2020 by Evan Daly, 7th grade



As we share our final newsletter of the year, we are looking forward to bidding adieu to 2020! I often say the word of this year is pivot. We have all made unexpected changes because of the pandemic. As schools close, re-open, and close again, teachers, parents and students have to pivot their plans almost daily. Educational and financial inequities have increased dramatically. The Hayes Family Foundation continued support of Park Hill Neighborhood for Equity in Education through the [One Park Hill](#) fund to help local families attend one of the four Park Hill elementary schools. And through my family friend, the Executive Director of [Focus Points](#), we fostered a new connection with a local family resource center. We continued our support of [Centus School Counseling](#) and their new counseling programs in two neighborhood Denver Public Schools.

Mental health support

Depression and isolation have been on the rise in youth and our focus on mental health pivoted to online outreach. The Hayes Family Foundation sponsored four Mental Health First Aid Youth courses in partnership with the Denver School of the Arts and Park Hill Library. We invite you to consider a Mental Health First Aid Youth course to be better prepared to help a young person in distress. Find a course near you at <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/take-a-course/>.

Through a connection of the Hayes family, we discovered an organization offering free counseling services to youth ages 12-20 in the foothill communities west of Denver. Since May 2019, [Resilience 1220](#) has provided 270 individuals therapy and supported over 330 youth in groups. Their pandemic groups have also reached parents, grandparents, and educators, with outreach and special programs, including a poetry contest, impacting more than 1,250 community members.

The Hayes Family Foundation has supported Mental Health Center of Denver's [Gifts of Hope](#) annually. This year we pivoted to online sponsorship. We invite you to [view their presentation](#) on mental health and MHCD's mission during the pandemic, including a [program](#) with Rotarians for Mental Health that provides smart phones to vulnerable clients of mental health centers.



Ellena Kuhns and her dog Daisy at the WOW trial summit

Outdoor engagement

Grant Manager, Robynn Kuhns, and her family discovered [Wilderness on Wheels \(WOW\)](#), a one-mile boardwalk at the base of Kenosha Pass that allows people of all abilities, their families, friends and caregivers - young and old, individuals and groups - to roll and stroll through the beautiful Colorado mountains. Turns out, the Hayes Family Foundation is connected to WOW. Twenty-five years ago, the [Denver Cherry Creek Rotary Club](#) helped with the initial construction. Club member and Hayes Family Foundation President of the Board, Richard Hayes, shared that WOW is again on the Club's radar - an outdoor escape seems to be on everyone's minds!

We gathered a crew of Hayes Family Foundation friends and participated in [Brother Redevelopment's Paint-A-Thon](#), which offers income-eligible homeowners the chance to save and devote savings to other important costs, such as medication, groceries and bills, while still maintaining their most important investment - their home.

Hayes Family Foundation friends spent a Saturday painting a home through the Brother Redevelopment's Paint-A-Thon



And in a final pivot back to mental health and [Resilience 1220's](#) poetry contest, I close with the winning poem.

1. Defiance by Maya Dawson - 1st Prize

When life gives you lemons
the juice will dribble into the scars at your wrists

and it will burn-

but for a moment
as your honeyed tongue runs along old wounds,
lips pockering,
bitter juice trailing ribbons down your throat,
eyes squeezed shut in feral ecstasy,
you will be born again.

all sundress and hellfire,
passion and peace.

child of flames.
of harsh words and forked tongues.
the whispers tried to kill you,
and yet,
here you stand.
defiant.

darling girl, you made it out.
and I know you wonder if that is enough,
on the days when your scars
become more failure than success story.
on the days where fighting looks more like giving up.

but here, as you slice lemons on the kitchen counter
and see only the bitter yellow juice
as it traces rivulets down your hands,

I am reminded that
you are stronger than the whispers know.
prove them wrong.