

THE PATH

The Place ignites the potential in youth to exit homelessness and create self-determined, fulfilled lives.



thePLACE

Depression to Inspiration

A journey of growth

Flix was raised by his mother in New York City with his four siblings. Family dynamics caused Flix to examine his relationships with them. "I didn't like living in New York with all the people, I got anxious. But when I lived by myself, I got depressed," Flix said. He considered his mental health to be important enough that he decided to find what he needed – a safe and stable place to live.

Flix traveled to Washington D.C. and Ohio picking up various jobs at a food bank, a thrift store, a college, and even volunteering at a church. But, all of his positions and living situations were inconsistent or short-term. Arriving in Colorado Springs this past January, Flix stayed at an adult shelter and found a job. "It was intense boredom. All that goes through my mind is depression."

The Street Outreach team from The Place found and met with Flix. They

All that goes through my mind is depression.



suggested he apply for housing. He was able to move into an apartment in May.

Megan Trosper, Flix's Housing Case Manager, said, "His depression was really bad when he came to us. He was more in survival mode when it came to his coping skills." Flix had been self-medicating with alcohol to treat his depression. Megan went on to say, "We were able to come up with safety plans with him." Through his own will and self-determination, Flix proudly exclaimed he has

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Depression to Inspiration



Megan and Flix working on his case management.

Megan said, "This position for Flix has helped him rejuvenate and refresh. He is able to focus on his job – a job that he enjoys."

"I came to Colorado because of the mountains, the wilderness, and the fresh air," Flix said. His focus with MHYC is in land conservation and is able to work outside along the Front Range, including camping in the forest. "I like being outdoors! What makes it special are the people I work with. They care."

His job has also allowed him space for creative outlets. Flix dreams of one day starting his own business and also creates music during his time off. These are constructive ways for him to focus and express himself.

been successfully turning down alcohol. Megan told him, "It is a true case for your resolve to overcome your challenges".

In tackling his alcoholism, it was apparent that Flix would accomplish much when he put his mind to it. He had a strong work ethic, but just had not found the right situation. Two months ago, Flix started a position with Mile High Youth Corps (MHYC), where young people from diverse life experiences learn, work hard, and grow in service.

What makes it special are the people I work with.

Even in uncertainty, it can be hard to challenge ourselves to take the next step – even in a positive direction. Fear can be stifling. Flix inspires others to face fears and challenges with resolve, saying, "It is okay to be scared. But, don't let it consume you."

Flix is wise beyond his years.

Volunteers Build a Garden

The pandemic didn't just temporarily take away the meal service of volunteers, it took away some of our food sources, as well. Father-daughter team, Steve and Greta Morath, stepped up to help us find a creative solution to this problem: they spent the summer building a garden to help feed shelter youth. Through their hard work, along with other volunteers, we were able to add fresh zucchini, squash, tomatoes, snap peas, beans, corn, peppers, basil, kale, eggplant, and other fresh vegetables to the meals for the youth staying at our shelter. We are approved to use the same plot next summer and plan to expand both the garden and the programs it serves.

For more information about volunteering at **The Place**, please contact Sarah Obarski @ 303.949.3336 or Sarah.Obarski@theplacecos.org.



From the Desk of Shawna Kemppainen, Executive Director

Meeting Basic Needs

Pandemic causes greater challenge for youth

COVID-19 stalled progress for some of the youth we know. Ashley, a young person in our shelter this spring, was laid off from her dishwashing job in a downtown restaurant just two weeks after getting hired. A job that had changed her entire demeanor, giving her confidence and hope to get on her feet. But Ashley worked with our education and employment case manager, focusing on obtaining her GED. Ashley started college this fall.

In August there were 306 youth experiencing homelessness and on their own in El Paso County. The virus may be among the least chaotic things many of these young people have faced in the past year. Abuse, assault, hunger, human trafficking – these are among the daily dangers of youth homelessness.

When you support The Place, you create the chance for young people to get out of danger and change their lives. That is more important than ever, as we head into the cold winter months still smack in the middle of a pandemic.

The October issue of the *Journal of Adolescent Health (JAH)* reports* that the majority of youth experiencing homelessness are taking measures to reduce the risk of either becoming infected or transmitting the virus. That is true at The Place shelter



Ashley enjoys being outdoors.

where youth are doing a great job following the many changes put in place this spring, from extra handwashing, cleaning, and physical distancing to wearing face masks. To date we have had no known case of COVID-19 among the youth population at The Place. But the prevention efforts and good health news is undercut by some deep concerns we're observing and also pointed out in the JAH article: [the daily danger to youth is increasing](#).

More than half of youth participating in the cited survey report it has been more difficult to meet their basic needs since the Coronavirus hit. Specifically:

- 54% of youth said it was harder to get enough food to eat
- 29% said it was harder to find a safe place to spend the night
- 52% said it was harder to find or keep a job; and
- 44% said it was harder to find mental health services

Under the best of circumstances, the young people we know have an acute need for both basic services such as food, shelter, and hygiene, and higher-level services such as case management, employment training and behavioral health support. The current upheaval is among the worst of circumstances. Within a week, a young person can go from working to job loss, to couch surfing with a family friend, to living in a car, to living on the street.

We need your help right now to turn upheaval to hope via our shelter, outreach, health, education, employment and housing programs for young people like Ashley.

* For the full *Journal of Adolescent Health* [https://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X\(20\)30424-9/fulltext](https://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X(20)30424-9/fulltext)



OFF THE STREET Update



This year's OFF THE STREET Breakfast (OTS) was a first for The Place. Virtual events have become the "norm" for many organizations in 2020 and with mixed results. We did not know what to expect.

Up to the end of March, our team shifted from the in-person event plans under the Colorado Avenue bridge and committed to doing it online. On any given night, there are over 150 youth experiencing homelessness. Knowing that a major portion of our funding to support these young people comes from OTS, we knew we had to push forward.

The Place is thankful to our sponsors. Many committed to be a sponsor prior to the pandemic and stood by us even though the in-person event changed to online.

\$109,235
Received from
OFF THE STREET

still committed to telling their friends and family when and how to tune into OTS. People watched from all around the country.

And so many donors renewed their commitment to The Place and demonstrated their support through financial gifts.

Instead of being under the bridge, we had a socially distanced event at our shelter location. A number of donors came by that day to drop off their gift and received breakfast



Shawna handed out breakfasts by Picnic Basket.

from Picnic Basket. These friends of the organization made a point to join our celebration. We appreciate every single gift that came in for OTS and want to thank you for making our mission stronger. Each gift of the \$109,235 received is used to help ignite the spark in a young person to exit homelessness and live a self-determined, fulfilled life. They can truly understand what it means to by off the street.

We are already planning next year's OTS and hope to see you all again — under the bridge.

Table Captains

OUR 2020 SPONSORS



Spend the night out so young people don't have to.

November is National Runaway and Homeless Youth Month and The Place is asking people to sleep out in the cold to bring youth in from the cold this winter. The NIGHT OUT Project is an experiential project that instructs participants on the silent issue of youth homelessness, elevates discussion among their circles of influence and raises funds for The Place to work with youth experiencing homelessness.

Due to the pandemic, we decided to host the NIGHT OUT experience at the Downtown YMCA Parking Garage, where sleepers will be able to spread out and socially distance from each other, while remaining together in a central, outdoor location.

We will adhere to Colorado State and El Paso County COVID-19 Guidelines and Restrictions to ensure the safety needs of all participants and staff are met. We will be utilizing the 12-foot grid model to maintain adequate social distancing, and we ask that all sleepers wear face masks during waking hours when interacting with others.

To get started go to our website to learn how you can participate by raising funds and awareness for The Place.

<https://theplacecos.org/night-out-2020/>



423 East Cucharas St
Colorado Springs, CO 80903

Return Service Requested

WHAT'S HAPPENING

KILO / RXP DRIVE

Outreach Needs Drive at H&H Tire

November 7, 2020 from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM

Donate your sleeping bags, winter jackets, blankets, and warm gloves. H&H Tire is located at 5770 US 85, Colorado Springs, CO

GIVE! KICK-OFF

November 7, 2020 from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM

Call us to RSVP.

NIGHT OUT PROJECT

November 19—20, 2020

Learn more at <https://theplacecos.org/night-out-2020/>

EMPTY STOCKING FUND BEGINS

November 26, 2020

For more information, contact us at 719.338.9257.

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