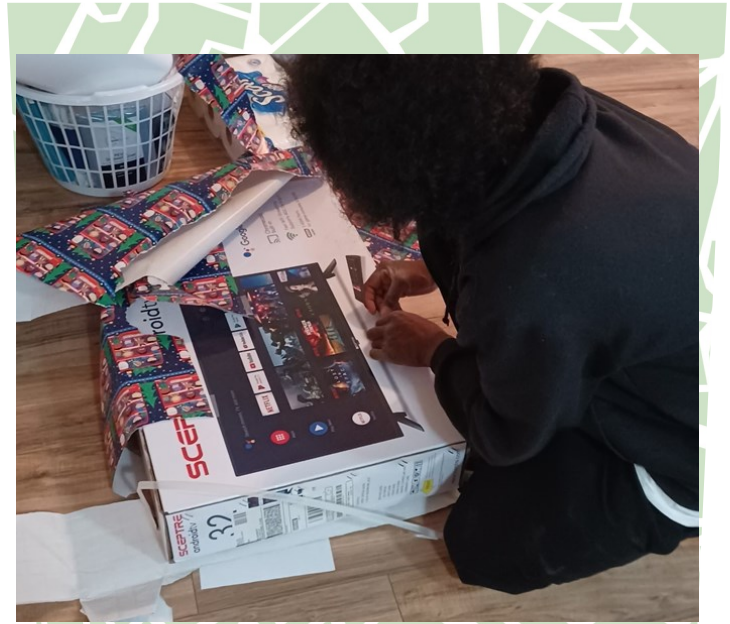


The Light at the End of the Tunnel

Learning to See The Positive

They say that trust is earned in drops and lost in buckets. When we met Matthew, he was the personification of that saying. Suffering from a traumatic brain injury because of the abuse of his father and losing contact with a mother who was wrongfully keeping his Supplemental Security Income, Matthew came to The PLACE with only the clothes on his back. Due to his mental health struggles and paranoia, he did not feel comfortable staying in adult shelters. Luckily our street outreach team was able to connect with him in April 2021 and determined he was eligible for our housing program.

The process of getting housed is fairly straight-forward – IF one has all of their required documents. Matthew was missing many documents, like his birth certificate, which made the process take longer. While waiting for these documents to arrive, his case manager, Casey, couldn't give him any progress updates, other than, "Still waiting." This caused Matthew to become accusatory, impatient, doubtful and withdrawn. Casey admitted that this made her question her effectiveness and abilities as a case manager. However, she continued to listen to Matthew about his qualms, which allowed him



to release his paranoid insinuations. Slowly, trust and understanding grew between them. Though they reached this breakthrough together, Matthew still had trust issues, making it a challenge to get him the mental and physical healthcare he needed.

The PLACE supported Matthew with shelter in motels from April through October. Then, his documents finally arrived. We immediately helped him apply for housing units. Unexpectedly, Casey received a call from one of the landlords stating that Matthew had an active arrest warrant and his application for housing was denied. During his arrest we lost contact with him for a month.

The Light at the End of the Tunnel

Eventually, we reconnected with Matthew through one of our partner agencies. After that we had to obtain a new housing voucher and spent time going to early morning court hearings. Even though this was intimidating and life shattering for him, Matthew showed great bravery in facing the consequences of his actions.

Every part of his journey tested his patience and impulses. For a young person like Matthew, it is easy to live in the moment, giving little thought to years, months, or even weeks into the future. Most in his situation are merely looking to “survive” from day to day. We saw a resolute change in Matthew last December. Housing clients are allowed to choose Christmas gifts up to \$90. For Matthew, this was an overwhelming decision because he associated trauma with the holiday season. Since he knew that he would soon get his own apartment, he asked for a TV. When the time came to open his gift on Christmas, he expressed to his case manager that he wanted to wait to open it until he got the keys to his apartment. Choosing to wait was monumental for Matthew. His case manager honored his wish and kept his gift wrapped in the office. Matthew received the key to his own place in February. As pictured on page 1, he finally got the gratification of opening his brand new TV. Watching his reaction to his new place made this long journey worthwhile.

Beginning this year Matthew started to accept behavioral treatment and is learning how to take his prescribed medications. He has shown significant changes in his anger, anxiety, depression, and independence. Matthew has expressed interest in construction but has a bigger goal of going into culinary arts. We can't wait to see his future become brighter and brighter.

Volunteer Highlight: Garrett Tanner

The people who help The PLACE work toward our mission are truly indispensable and we want to be sure to highlight their impact any chance we get.

This time we caught up with volunteer Garrett Tanner. He makes breakfast for our shelter youth once a week. He says “breakfast is simple, but once in a while I try to spice things up and provide something special.” Garrett’s volunteerism helps create consistency and ensures that staff time is fully dedicated to our youth. He says, “I greatly respect the staff at The PLACE for what they do everyday for the youth. My role is to support their efforts, even if it’s just making pancakes or cleaning the dishes for now.”

The impact Garrett has had on our staff, youth and organization is clear and appreciated. We asked him how has volunteering with us impacted him and he responded, “the smiles and warm thanks given by the youth truly brighten my week.”



From the Desk of Shawna Kemppainen, Executive Director

Drop-In Center Opens!

In early 2021, we collaborated to pilot a temporary drop-in center with another youth organization. As expected, it made a real difference helping more young people get access to basic needs and to work on long-term stability.

We are grateful to share that by the end of 2021, we opened The PLACE's full-time drop in center for youth experiencing homelessness, located on east Fountain Boulevard in Colorado Springs. This long-time-coming program expansion has already changed the lives of young people surviving without housing, sleeping in their cars, tents, or other spaces not meant to be a home.

In the first week of opening, one young woman who asked if we had any food was led to the refrigerator where she opened the door to a choice of sandwich fixings. She made a turkey-cheddar on white bread, heaped with mustard. "This is the most I have felt like home in years," she said. She's not home yet, but we're working on it. For now, she's off the street at least for part of the coldest days, had taken a housing assessment, and is using the computers to look at GED programs.

If you weren't aware, our outreach team had been working out of our shelter in a small room so lacking that youth had to wait outside to get their 20-minute turn for help. The opening of this daytime drop-in center means an immediate place for youth to get off the street. They have access to vital services such as mental health professionals, computers to look for jobs, and case managers who can do housing assessments and link youth to other resources. Now, young people are saying that they are more comfortable and able to take the next steps on their journey off the street.

We have so much more to do in our community to make that journey a faster one. In 2021, there were

1,000 transition age youth (15 to 24 years of age) living in homelessness in El Paso County, according to the Pikes Peak Continuum of Care. Our social workers engage each week with staff from other nonprofits working on homeless solutions to find ways to get these young folks and others into safe, permanent housing. The community collaboration is intense. The housing units are scarce.

That's why The PLACE is partnering with a housing developer to create an apartment community specifically for young people who are experiencing homelessness. We aim to build 50 units of supportive, affordable housing. We are very early in the development phase, and I look forward to sharing much more with you this summer about The Launchpad apartments.

No young person deserves to be on the street. Your help means a trajectory change for so many.





423 East Cucharas St
Colorado Springs, CO 80903

Return Service Requested

OFF THE STREET Breakfast

This year's OFF THE STREET will be held on Thursday, July 14th. We are honored to be sponsored by Picnic Basket again. See you under the bridge!



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DOUG PALMER, *President*
BECKY GUNDRUM, *Treasurer*
MATT HANE, *Secretary*
MIMI BROWN
BRIAN DESANTIS
ROBERT HULS
REBECCA MCCAY
MARCUS SHELTON
and
SHAWNA KEMPPAINEN
Executive Director

THE PATH NEWSLETTER

ANDY PETERSEN
Director of Development
NASTASSIA IDAHOSA
Development Officer