



Mile High United Way

IMPACT REPORT 2019-2020

MILE HIGH UNITED WAY BRIDGING THE GAP

OUR CHALLENGE

Youth that are facing housing, resource, and education challenges and who are transitioning to independence and adulthood often lack the essential support needed to navigate these complex systems and develop basic life skills. As a result, these youth are more likely to face adverse conditions that put them at increased risk for becoming part of Denver's homeless population. These are the challenges our [Bridging the Gap program](#) aims to help Colorado's youth facing education, housing, and resource challenges overcome. **Each year, Mile High United Way's Bridging the Gap program is able to support 150 clients, or nearly 50% of the youth exiting the foster care system in Colorado, with wraparound services and individualized support that helps them reach their goals and achieve more.** Adding a pandemic on top of the already difficult barriers meant our approach this year looked a little different, but the goal remained the same: keep these youth safe, housed, and provide them with critical support so **they can dictate their future**, not the system.

HOW WE'RE HELPING

Mile High United Way's Bridging the Gap program is focused on providing equitable access to economic opportunity and basic needs support for youth ages 18-24 who have aged out of the child welfare system. As part of these wraparound services, Bridging the Gap provides them with safe and stable housing through the Family Unification Program voucher (36 months) and pairs them with an Independent Living Coach that helps them set and achieve goals as well as assists them in navigating the systems and obstacles to those goals. This holistic approach, as part of our United Neighborhoods strategy, positively impacts the youth in our program by providing support through coaching sessions, post-secondary education and training programs, workforce development, financial literacy training, and support services for young parents.

“Foster youth don't want to be asked if they're going to graduate, but when. What we're doing with the Bridging the Gap program is giving youth back their power. We're working to change the statistics and break down the stigmas. And anyone can be a part of that.”

TAWNY, FORMER BRIDGING THE GAP INDEPENDENT LIVING COACH

BY THE NUMBERS:

156

Participants had safe and stable housing last year.

142

Youth participated in workforce development programs.

108

Total employment positions procured for BTG participants.

1,150

Independent Living Coaching sessions held with BTG participants.

32

Participants began a new education program.

OFFERING A STEADY HAND



Growing up in the child welfare system, Gloria never knew what it was like to have stability.

She lived in group homes and never had much that she could call her own. When Gloria had her son, she knew she wanted a different life for him – one with stability and security. After connecting with Mile High United Way's Bridging the Gap program, Gloria's trajectory changed.

“My son would look at me and ask me, ‘Mommy, where are we going to live now?’ I had my son at a young age and moving constantly interrupted his childhood. My son, who is nine now, has seen me struggle and sometimes I feel like I robbed him of part of his childhood,” Gloria said.

Working with her Independent Living Coach, Anna Marie, Gloria finally received support that was steady and consistent. She felt, for the first time, that someone wanted her to succeed.

“The housing voucher gave us everything. Again, the most important thing for someone who's grown up in the child welfare system is having a home and this voucher gave us that,” Gloria said.

With the support of the housing voucher and the other wraparound services Bridging the Gap provides, Gloria has gone on to find stable housing and is an advocate for other foster youth.

[Learn more](#) about Gloria's story.

YOUR IMPACT: ASHLEY



Ashley Hinderes came to our Bridging the Gap program as a young mother in need of housing assistance and was then paired with one of our Independent Living Coaches, Anna Marie.

As a part of our program, Ashley has been able to pay rent, become a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), purchase a new car to ease transportation struggles, and so much more.

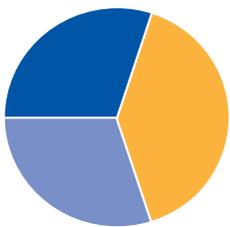
“Bridging the Gap is a support system and I honestly can’t express how grateful I am to be part of such an amazing program. Just this year with COVID-19, Bridging the Gap has allowed me to cut back on

hours and, at one point, to stay home with my children to keep us safe without worrying about rent money,” Ashley said.

Ashley has poured herself into her dream of helping others through her career and in her daily life, attributing much of her ability to do that without obstacles to Bridging the Gap.

“Knowing I can talk to any of the coaches without being judged is so comforting. My coach in particular – Anna Marie – is so wonderful. She has always pushed me to go for what I want and has had so much faith in me – sometimes more faith than I have in myself,” Ashley said.

WHERE YOUR INVESTMENT GOES



● HOUSING – 30%

In order to reach other goals like education, financial stability, and caring for their families, a stable home is the foundation for success.

● EDUCATION – 40%

Access to educational support allows BTG participants the opportunity to achieve greater stability and success so they can provide for themselves and their families.

● FINANCIAL & WORKFORCE – 30%

Financial literacy training builds confidence, helps participants find benefits they are eligible for, and builds up savings.

WORKING VIRTUALLY

When the pandemic hit, we shifted our Bridging the Gap program to be online and worked with participants to walk them through the process of procuring housing quickly and safely. We engaged participants in virtual college and career readiness coaching and offered tele-health counseling to support their physical and emotional well-being.

In October, 15 individuals from our Bridging the Gap program worked virtually alongside our volunteers and our Career Month sponsor BAND-IT to develop new skills and learn more about career readiness with online panels, mock interviews, and more. The week after Career Month ended, at least three of the graduates already had interviews lined up to take the next step in their careers.

THANK YOU for your investment in Bridging the Gap. With your help, more young people in Colorado are accessing services to ensure they have equitable access to opportunities that help them reach their full potential in all that they do.

Learn more and continue your investment in helping us create a Community United at unitedwaydenver.org.