



BRIDGING THE GAP IMPACT REPORT FY20-21

Mile High United Way's [Bridging the Gap](#) program connects young adults who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing homelessness with housing and personalized supportive services that guide them as they transition into economic and financial independence. **THANK YOU for your generous investment in the Mile High United Way Bridging the Gap program.** Because of you, we were able to serve families across the metro area through our programs and initiatives. Through this impact report, we hope you see the lives changed and the tangible impact you have made on our community this year.

Our Community Challenge

- 60% of former foster children experienced at least one specific type of traumatic event and tend to suffer high rates of debilitating depression and low self-esteem.¹
- A recent study found that young adults who had aged out of foster care felt that the 'emotional consequences' of their involvement in the system had a direct impact on all aspects of their lives, especially in education and their ability to manage the demands of school.²
- 36% of former foster youth have experienced homelessness at least once by age 26.³

Your Impact at a Glance

140 PEOPLE participated in the program

1,263 COACHING sessions were conducted in virtual and in-person settings

73 PARTICIPANTS found employment and held a job

10 PARTICIPANTS completed an education program, ranging from a Bachelor's degree to Dental Assistance programs

1 Courtney, ME., Dworsky, A. et al. Mid-West Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Age 26; 2011; www.chapinhall.org/wp-content/uploads/Midwest-Eval-Outcomes-at-Age-26.pdf

2 Clemens et al., Children and Youth Services Review, University of Northern Colorado, The voices of youth formerly in foster care: Perspectives on educational attainment gaps. 2017. www.unco.edu/cebs/foster-care-research/pdf/reports/Youth-Perspective.pdf

3 Dworsky, A. et al; Homelessness During the Transition From Foster Care to Adulthood; American journal of Public Health; 2013; www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3969135/

Mental Health is an Integral Part of the Program

Over the course of the pandemic, and as an integrated part of our Bridging the Gap program, all participants are invited to sessions focused on mental health – from virtual yoga to cooking classes to traditional therapy to other supportive alternatives. Bridging the Gap aims to provide all participants with many ways to engage in mental health support as they plan for their future and support their families.

Bridging the Gap Supports Parents and their Children



Gissel (pictured left, with her son TJ) was 19 and pregnant with her first son when she walked into the Mile High United Way building looking for help. She was experiencing homelessness and looking for resources and urgent support. After getting connected with Bridging the Gap, her Independent Living Coach helped her secure a housing voucher so she could not only support her family but have a stable place to call home.

TJ is now five years old and is enrolled in the Mile High United Way Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) program. Gissel has continued working with her Independent Living Coach to build her life and achieve her own success.

Currently working overnight shifts, Gissel has seen the impact HIPPY has had on her family and is interested in becoming a HIPPY instructor while she works toward her medical field dreams.

“It’s really inspired me watching TJ learn so much so quickly with HIPPY. He knows his colors, his ABCs, he can count to ten, and whenever we read to him he is always reading along with us,” Gissel said. “It’s going to make schooling so much easier knowing he can go into it being proud of what he already knows.”

The support Gissel has received from Mile High United Way allowed her the space to focus on more than the basic needs of her family. Because of the wraparound support from Bridging the Gap and Mile High United Way programs, she can feel confident in working toward her bigger dreams, knowing she is supported along the way.

Bridging the Gap Career Month

Each year, Mile High United Way hosts Career Month for Bridging the Gap participants. Volunteers participate and host resume building classes, mock job interviews, and more, to support our participants as they build their future and work toward their goals.

“The classes that we took, these are things we don’t learn in foster care. This is our chance to learn, because in the future, it’s going to make us a better person – not just for ourselves and our household, but to the whole community.”

– Gloria, Bridging the Gap participant